

Revision of the EU GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT CRITERIA FOR FOOD AND CATERING SERVICES

EEB comments to the JRC's 3rd Technical Report

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Carsten Wachholz, EEB, Brussels

Dr. Jennifer Teufel, Oeko-Institute, Freiburg/Germany

Background

The European Commission (EC) is revising the EU Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria for Food and Catering Services. In July 2017, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the EC published the 3rd Technical report including their final proposal for the updated GPP criteria.¹

The criteria themselves are formulated either as Selection criteria (SC), Technical specifications (TS), Award criteria (AC) or Contract performance clauses (C). For each set of criteria there is a choice between two levels of environmental ambition: core criteria and comprehensive criteria.

Based on the discussions in two meetings of the Ad hoc Working Group (ADHWG) and two previous rounds of written consultation, the EEB has consulted the final JRC's final proposal on the revised GPP criteria for food and catering services with its member organisations and other environmental NGOs.

Our appraisal of the final GPP criteria proposal

The EEB appreciates that some of its recommendations for improvement have been incorporated into the final GPP criteria proposal. We welcome particularly:

For food procurement

- The ambition levels proposed for purchasing organic food products (TS1, AC1);
- The ambition levels proposed for purchasing fair and ethical trade products (AC4);
- The ambition levels proposed for purchasing environmentally responsible fats, covering now palm oil, palm kernel oil or their derivatives as well as food and/or drink products containing soybeans and/ or soy oil (TS 4).

For catering services

- The clarity and ambition provided on the provision of plant-based menus (TS2, AC1);
- The criteria on food/beverage waste prevention, including the recommendation for a system that allows customers to provide their feedback on the size of food portions and the quality of prepared meals (TS 3.1);
- The criteria on environmental management measures and practices (TS8, C3);
- The provision of low impact drinking water (C1).

¹ http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/Food_Catering/stakeholders.html

For vending machines

- The ambition levels proposed for share of organic food products (TS1, AC1);
- The specific measures addressing energy consumption and GWP of refrigerants (TS3, AC3, AC4, C1);
- The mandatory provision to allow for reusable cups (TS 4).

The EEB also acknowledges the compromises found on the following issues as acceptable:

For food procurement

- The criteria tackling animal welfare (TS3, AC3);
- The reasons for removing criteria on purchasing food from integrated production.

For catering services

- Competences of the tenderer (SC1);
- Prevention, sorting and disposal of other waste (TS4.1+4.2);
- Use of chemical products and consumable goods (TS 5, AC 2);
- Energy and water consumption in kitchens (TS6, AC3);
- Food transportation (TS7, AC4);
- Purchase of new kitchen equipment (C2);
- Staff training (C4);
- Environmental management measures and practices (TS8).

Outstanding issues

Nonetheless, the EEB regrets the following shortcomings:

For food procurement

- The lack of an award criteria for purchasing organic meat (as part of AC1);
- The low ambition on the sustainability of marine and aquaculture food products (TS2, AC2);
- The lack of award criteria for reusable packaging and return systems;
- The lack of guidance on purchasing seasonal produce that would avoid air transportation.

For catering services

- The list of generic exemptions for the use of disposable items (TS 5.1);
- The award criteria for purchasing a low share (0-50%) of eco-labelled chemical products, paper products that are widely available on the European market (AC2 core criterion).

For vending machines

- The lower ambition on the share of fair and ethical trade products as well as of environmentally responsible fats in comparison with direct food purchases.

Therefore, the EEB recommends addressing at least the following issues before the final adoption of the revised EU GPP criteria for food and catering services:

For food procurement

- Integrate the purchase of organic meat into AC 1 of the comprehensive criteria proposal;
- Reconsider the formulation of T2 regarding the proposed marking as green in the list coming from the yearly fishing quotas and allowable catches of the European Commission²;
- Increase the share of sustainable marine and aquaculture food products in AC 2 to 10-30% in the core and to 30-60% in the comprehensive criteria;
- Removal of the Red Tractor Farm Assurance scheme from the referenced list of third party certified, widely accepted and recognised standards for animal welfare in AC3³.

For catering services

- Either transform the AC2 core criterion for purchasing 0-50% of eco-labelled chemical products, paper products into a technical specification or increase the share towards 50-100%.
- Clarify what is required in terms of the *“operational procedure describing the measures to be deployed to minimise the environmental indicators listed in point 1) and in accordance with the criteria listed in 2)”* of TS 8. This kind of language is completely incomprehensible to us and the meaning or purpose of it might also be unclear to procurers. The EEB clearly understands and supports the list in point 1). But the criteria mentioned in 2) overlap to a very large extent, excluding basically the last two bullet points under 1) which refer to two crucial indicators on satisfaction of both the clients and the contracting authority with the provided services. We do not see any reason why those indicators should be dropped or *“minimised in the sense of “reduced or kept at the minimum feasible level”???*

Contact

Carsten Wachholz – carsten.wachholz@eeb.org

² The EEB would like to support the comments submitted by WWF on 11 August 2017: **“We strongly advise against such a wording as there is no accessible current green listing of fishing quotas or allowable catches to our knowledge and no reference on where to find this information is included in the draft technical report. In addition, we would like to stress that quotas are still regularly set higher than scientific advice in numerous cases and are therefore an unfit sustainability criterion. We would also like to flag that numerous fisheries in EU waters do not have a quota and would be lacking a comprehensive sustainability criterion. Furthermore, such a wording would only refer to catches in the EU and therefore lack a sustainability criterion for the more than 50% of seafood imports coming from third countries on the EU market.”**

³ Red Tractor does not require milk cows to have access to pasture during the grazing season. It does reflect EU legislation in prohibiting routine tail docking of pigs. However, this requirement is poorly enforced. A 2017 publication by the UK Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board entitled *Real Welfare Baseline Report* found that 70% of pigs had their tails docked despite the prohibition on routine tail docking. Red Tractor does not cover slaughter and so does not ensure that animals are stunned before slaughter. It does not stipulate maximum transport times for pigs or dairy cows. It does lay down a maximum transport for broiler chickens of 12 hours between the start of loading and unloading at the slaughterhouse. This is far too long. In contrast to this, one of the other schemes referred to in footnote 2, RSPCA Assured, provides a shorter maximum transport time of four hours from when the birds leave the farm to arriving at the slaughterhouse.

We believe that the Red Tractor scheme should be removed from footnote 2 as in general it does not require welfare that goes beyond the minimum requirements of EU legislation.