

Horta-Cuina: Farmer Economic Stability Through School Catering Partnerships

Problem encountered and objective

Small and medium-scale agroecological farmers in **Valencia's L'Horta region** struggle to access stable markets and fair prices. Traditional direct sales lack volume and regularity for economic stability, while school canteens rely on long supply chains. Horta-Cuina Agricultural Transformation Society (SAT) bridges this gap, connecting **18 agroecological producers across 160 certified hectares directly with school catering services through cooperative organization and transparent pricing.**

Main results / outcomes

- (a) Enhanced economic stability for farmers.** Regular contracts with school canteens provide predictable income streams, reducing dependency on volatile direct sales markets.
- (b) Cooperative capacity and specialization.** Producers receive training in collective catering requirements, production planning aligned with school calendars, and quality standards adapted to institutional kitchens.
- (c) Transparent cost-based pricing.** Production cost calculations for key products ensure fair prices (production costs + 15% profit) while remaining competitive for catering services.
- (d) Scalable model.** Project grew from pilot to serving 100+ educational centers, demonstrating cooperative viability for institutional markets.

Practical recommendations

- (1) Create a legal structure:** Establish a cooperative with participatory governance through "production tables" for collective pricing and planning decisions.
- (2) Secure shared logistics infrastructure.** Access collection center with cold storage at wholesale markets to reduce infrastructure costs.
- (3) Develop cost-based pricing.** Calculate production costs for key products, add fair profit margins, establish collective pricing commitments.
- (4) Create quality standards and training.** Develop guides for institutional requirements (calibers, delivery, packaging) and train farmers consistently.
- (5) Plan production collectively.** Organize bi-annual sessions coordinating crop planning with projected school demand.
- (6) Build catering relationships.** Work with catering companies to adapt seasonal menus and educate school communities.

Further information

Horta-Cuina website: <https://www.hortacuina.org>

About this abstract

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[EU4Advice](#) aims to lay the ground for effective capacity building of Short Food Supply Chain (SFSC) actors, by supporting advisors as catalysers of the knowledge flow from research to practice within an EU network of SFSC advisors, and by promoting the integration of SFSC advisors into national AKIS.

Programa **horta-cuina**

