

Consultation Response: Healthy Eating in Schools

Global Climate Justice Cymru

15th July 2025

General Support for the Proposals

Global Climate Justice Cymru welcomes the Welsh Government's commitment to improving the nutritional standards of school meals and promoting healthier, plant-based diets for children and young people across Wales. The emphasis on increasing the availability and visibility of healthy food, especially fruit and vegetables, is an essential step toward tackling rising childhood obesity, improving long-term health outcomes, and aligning with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

We believe the proposals could be significantly enhanced by:

- A more **holistic food education** programme promoting gardening, cooking, and mindful eating integrated into the curriculum.
- **Supply chains rooted in fairness** prioritising organic Welsh veg, deforestation-free and fair trade imports, plant-based options.
- **Reducing food waste** working with local schemes
- **Continuous monitoring** of food and environmental outcomes, coupled with transparent reporting and supportive budgets.

1. A Holistic Food and Learning Approach.

Healthy eating is most effective when combined with **food literacy and hands-on experience**. We encourage the Welsh Government to expand the scope of the proposals to:

- Promote food growing in schools (e.g., school gardens) and link this to curriculum-based learning.
- Offer cooking and meal-preparation activities, particularly at secondary school level. A whole school approach where teachers, pupils, governors, families and carers are

involved can have a transformational community impact. Examples of this have been piloted by Size of Wales and Cegin y Bobl.

- Integrate food preparation into the lunchtime experience—allowing young people to participate in cooking meals and even take family portions home.
- Allow longer lunch breaks in secondary schools to encourage mindful eating, social interaction, and appreciation of food.

2. Ethical Procurement and locally produced food

To create a food system fit for future generations, Wales must lead by example through **ethical, sustainable public procurement**. The Healthy Eating in Schools regulations should be updated not just in terms of nutritional quality, but also to reflect **social and environmental criteria**, such as:

- Making **deforestation-free and Fairtrade** certified ingredients the default for imported goods (e.g., cacao, coffee, soy, palm oil, beef).
- Prioritising **local, seasonal and organic Welsh-grown produce**, aligning with initiatives such as *Welsh Veg in Schools* (<https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/what-we-do/pilot-project-welsh-veg-in-schools/>), which aims for 25% of all school vegetables to be locally grown and organic by 2030.
- Supporting farmers and growers with the necessary infrastructure, training, and incentives to meet this demand.
- Embedding healthy & sustainable approaches like the **Livewell diet** (<https://www.wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/livewell>) and sustainability standards into procurement frameworks to drive wider change in the food sector.
- Reducing the prevalence of **ultra-processed foods (UPFs)** in school meals, given their links to health issues and unsustainable supply chains.
- Supporting plant-rich menus that are better for both children's health and planetary sustainability, as highlighted by the EAT-Lancet Commission (chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://eatforum.org/content/uploads/2019/01/EAT_brief_policymakers.pdf) and UN SDGs.
- Ensuring that **global responsibility** principles are reflected in Wales' food policy—by actively avoiding supply chains linked to deforestation, biodiversity loss, and labour exploitation. Standards should focus on less, but better quality meat, such as chicken from organic, regenerative and nature friendly farming systems. The cost differential could be balanced out by reducing the meat content of meals and supplementing with protein-rich plants, such as legumes, beans and peas, which the guidance already suggests as a way of reducing meat content. Furthermore, there is a need for more nature friendly meat, dairy and eggs on school menus, to reduce the amount of embedded soy and palm in school meals (palm oil and soy are found in animal feed used to feed livestock). We should increase the purchasing of meat, fish and dairy products that are certified e.g. organic, pasture for life, certified grass fed and MSC logos. These certifications reduce the risk of embedded soy in animal products.

3. Reducing Food Waste

Efforts to promote healthy eating should also include strategies to **reduce food waste and ensure food dignity**:

- Partnering with redistribution organisations like [FareShare Cymru](#) or schemes like [Big Bocs Bwyd](#) to reduce surplus food waste and support families in need.
- Expanding access to **free school meals** to all children whose families are on Universal Credit or in financial hardship, and maintaining dignity-based models of support.

3. Targets, Monitoring, and Accountability

To ensure the success of these initiatives, the Welsh Government should:

- Set measurable targets, e.g., 50% of Eatwell vegetable recommendations to be met with Welsh-grown sustainable produce by 2030.
- Monitor compliance with nutritional standards and sustainability criteria through regular audits and transparent reporting.
- Embed **global responsibility and agroecological principles** in school food policies, supported by a cross-sector Food System Commission as advocated by Food Policy Alliance Cymru.
(chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/app/uploads/2021/10/FPAC_English2021.pdf)

The Welsh Government has a unique opportunity to lead the way in building a food system that is not only healthy but just, sustainable, and rooted in the wellbeing of future generations.

Schools are a vital entry point to instilling these values in the next generation—not only through what is served on the plate, but through what is taught, grown, shared, and celebrated around food.

We urge the Government to integrate this broader vision into the final policy design, ensuring that schools become spaces where children learn to value and enjoy food that is good for them, good for their communities, and good for the planet.