

**STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL SCHEME IN CYPRUS
FROM 2023/2024 TO 2028/2029 SCHOOL YEAR**

DATE OF ADOPTION: 28 APRIL, 2023

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1. ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION

Article 23(8) of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 (hereafter, the basic act) and Article 2(1)(a) of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/39 (hereafter, implementing regulation)

National	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Regional	<input type="checkbox"/>	

2. NEEDS AND RESULTS TO BE ACHIEVED

2.1. Identified needs

An important success of the Scheme during the period under evaluation is its expansion to the target population, covering in 2022 37,902 students and raising the coverage rate from 32% (baseline 2016) to 58% (2022). This success was limited by the budgetary constraint, resulting in a decrease in the average annual distribution of portions per student from 27.51 to 19.78 in fruit and vegetables. In contrast, the transfer of budget from the fruit and vegetable program to the milk distribution program allowed an increase in the distribution of portions per student from 7.15 to 14.60 and allowed a 78% increase in student participation.

It is obvious that the improvement of the Scheme's implementation procedures and the involvement of the School Regional Offices in funding schools for the needs of the school scheme, not only did it lead to the resolution of procedural issues but also to an increase in the participation of schools.

The answer to the common evaluative questions was particularly difficult, especially in matters of changes in children's behaviour and knowledge regarding healthy eating attitudes since there is no other prior research to serve as a starting point. Another significant weakness in the evaluation work was the lack of secondary sources, i.e. recent research regarding children's eating habits.

A critical question for the evaluation work is the extent to which the Scheme has increased children's overall consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products. Having the data of the strategic document of the Scheme (year 2016) as a baseline, it is concluded that the Scheme

has not brought about a substantial improvement in the consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk by children, but it has confirmed that the consumption profile remains essentially unchanged. This is a finding of a field survey in a sample of 560 students where it is also concluded that only 9% of children consume the recommended portions of fruits and vegetables daily.

In the second critical question concerning the extent to which the Scheme has contributed to the behaviour and improvement of children's knowledge regarding healthy eating habits, the following conclusions have been reached:

- only 11% of children have the knowledge of 'five portions a day' with the majority of 68% identifying the consumption of 2 to 3 fruits and vegetables daily as appropriate for a proper healthy diet,
- 50% of children do not associate any time of day or activity with fruit consumption,
- there is a clear preference for children to eat fruit and vegetables cut on a plate or in a fruit salad rather than being offered whole.

The field research conclusion leads to concerns about the adequacy of knowledge of the children in the target group regarding the number of portions of fruits and vegetables required for a healthy eating attitude. The concern is also strengthened by the fact that the field research was carried out mainly on children aged 10 to 12, who should logically have a clearer understanding of the rules of healthy eating.

It is obvious that the implementation of the Scheme with the limited budget and without other actions from national resources or any broader National Strategy on healthy nutrition for children, cannot lead to lasting effects in increasing the consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk by children and in improving attitudes and knowledge.

The evaluation report from the implementation of school scheme in 2017-2023, concluded with a series of recommendations which were divided into the three evaluation fields – implementation-effectiveness-collaborations and listed below in brief.

Improvement of the project implementation and evaluation framework

- Extension of the time of implementation of the Scheme, through additional national resources or its integration in a national strategy
- Creation of a framework for continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of the Scheme, or sample surveys before and after the implementation of the Scheme in the same sample of children
- Creation of assessment forms for accompanying Measures

Enhancing the effectiveness of the Scheme

- Increasing the involvement of nutritionists with the aim of improving knowledge about healthy eating habits

- Implementation of additional actions from national programs to support healthy nutrition for children.

Strengthening of collaborations

- Expanding the collaboration of teachers and canteen managers with producers
- Greater use of organic products through information on producer collaborations with the schools participating in the Scheme
- Improving the role of parents in the Scheme

- Article 23(8) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(b) of the implementing regulation

The needs to be met ranked by order of importance and that underpins the objectives to be achieved, indicated under section 3.2, are listed below:

- 1) Promote healthy diet of children.
- 2) Increase the consumption of fruit, vegetables and fresh milk in the long run.
- 3) Change eating habits of children.

2.2. Objectives and indicators

Article 23(8) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(c) of the implementing regulation

General objective(s)	Impact indicator(s)	Specific objective(s)	Result Indicator(s)	Output Indicator(s)
<i>Increase share of fruit/vegetables/milk consumption in children's diets and achieve healthy eating habits</i>	<i>% change in direct and indirect consumption of fruit/vegetables/milk by children after 6 years of intervention</i>	<i>Increase fruit/vegetables/milk consumption by children in schools</i>	<i>% of children participating in the school scheme per school year on total number of children in the target group</i>	<i>Number of children participating in the school scheme per school year</i>
			<i>% of schools participating in the school scheme per school year on total number of schools in the target group</i>	<i>Number of schools participating in the school scheme per school year</i>
				<i>Average consumption of school fruit and vegetables/milk per child and per school year (quantity or portions)</i>
		<i>Increase knowledge by children in schools about</i>	<i>% of children involved in accompanying educational</i>	<i>Number of children involved in educational</i>
		<i>the variety of agricultural products and about healthy eating habits</i>	<i>measures per school year on total number of children in the target group</i>	<i>measures per school year</i> <i>Expenditure on educational measures per school year</i>
<i>Increase children awareness on local and sustainable agricultural production as well as food waste reduction</i>	<i>Change in children's attitudes</i>	<i>Increase knowledge by children in schools about sustainable agricultural production as well as food waste reduction</i>	<i>% of children involved in accompanying Educational measures per school year on total number of children in the target group</i>	<i>Number of children involved in educational measures per school year</i> <i>Expenditure on educational measures per school year</i>

2.3. Baseline

Article 23(8) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(d) of the implementing regulation

The initial situation against which the achievement of the identified objectives for fruit, vegetables and milk consumption will be measured, by the School Scheme evaluation report published in 2023 and are presented in Tables 1a, 1b, 1c and 2 below:

Table 1a: Daily fruit consumption by children participating in School Fruit Scheme during School Year 2021 - 2022

Number of portions consumed per day	
None	5 %
One	31 %
Two - Three	49 %
Four -Five	11 %
More than five	4 %

Table 1b: Vegetables consumption by children participating in School Scheme during School Year 2021 - 2022

Number of portions consume per day	Vegetables
Every day	36 %
One or two	27 %
Two or three times	28 %
Never	9%

Table 1c: Daily milk consumption by children participating in School Fruit Scheme during School Year 2021 - 2022

Number of portions consumed per day	
None	16%
One	47%
Two	27%
More than two	10%

Table 2: Participating Schools and Children in School Scheme during School Year 2021 – 2022

Number of Schools participating in School Fruit Scheme	Number of children School Fruit Scheme	% of participating Schools of the total number of schools	% of participating children of the total number of children
301	37902	44%	58%

3. BUDGET

3.1. Union aid for the school scheme

Article 23a of the basic act and Article 2(1)(e) of the implementing regulation

EU aid for the school scheme (in EUR)	Period 1/8/2023 to 31/7/2029		
	School fruit and vegetables	School milk	Common elements if applicable
Distribution of school fruit and vegetables/school milk	1564000	1335912	
Accompanying educational measures	150000	100000	66000
Monitoring, evaluation, publicity ⁴			40000
Total	1714000	1435912	106000
Overall total	3255912		

3.2. National aid granted, in addition to Union aid, to finance the school scheme ⁵			
Article 23a(6) of the basic act and Article 2(2)(d) of the implementing regulation			
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		
If yes, amount (in national currency)	Milk/milk products ⁶		
	Fruit/vegetables	Milk/milk products other than Annex V	Annex V products
Supply/distribution			
Accompanying educational measures			
Monitoring, evaluation, publicity			
Total			
<p>Comment/explanatory text (eg. name of the national aid, legal basis, duration). <i>In the event that national aid is granted to finance common elements, please add a column (common elements) to report it.</i></p>			

3.3. Existing national schemes	
Article 23a(5) of the basic act and Article 2(2)(e) of the implementing regulation	
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If yes (=existing national schemes extended or made more effective through Union aid under the school scheme), please indicate the arrangements to ensure added value of the school scheme through:</i>	
- Extension of the target group	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Extension of the range of products	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Increased frequency or duration of distribution of products	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Enhanced educational measures (increased number or frequency or duration or target group of those measures)	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Other: please specify (e.g. if products originally not free of charge and that are provided free of charge)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment/explanatory text	

4. TARGET GROUP/S

Article 23(8) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(f) of the implementing regulation

School level	Age range of children	School fruit and vegetables	School milk
Nurseries	3-5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pre-schools	5-6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Primary	6-12	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Secondary		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. LIST OF PRODUCTS DISTRIBUTED UNDER THE SCHOOL SCHEME

Article 23(9) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(g) of the implementing regulation

5.1. Fruit and vegetables

5.1.1. Fresh fruit and vegetables and fresh products of the banana sector -
Article 23(3)(a) of the basic act

Apricots, cherries, peaches, nectarines, plums	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carrots, turnips, salad beetroot, salsify, celeriac, radishes and other edible roots	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Apples, pears, quinces	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cabbages, cauliflowers and other edible brassicas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bananas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Berries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cucumbers, gherkins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Figs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lettuces, chicory and other leaf vegetables	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Grapes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lentils, peas, other pulses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Melons, watermelons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tomatoes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Citrus fruit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other vegetables: please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tropical fruit	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other fruit: please specify (e.g. kiwis, persimmons, nuts)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
.....			

Average diversity of fresh fruit products envisaged by the strategy, per establishment for one school year:		Average diversity of fresh vegetable products envisaged by the strategy, per establishment for one school year:	
1-6 products	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1-3 products	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7-14 products	<input type="checkbox"/>	3-6 products	<input type="checkbox"/>
> 14	<input type="checkbox"/>	7-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
		> 10	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.1.2. Processed fruit and vegetable products – Article 23(4)(a) of the basic act

Products distributed under the school scheme		Added salt			Added fat			Comments (optional)
		No	Yes		No	Yes		
Fruit juices	<input type="checkbox"/>							
Fruit purées, compotes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If yes, please indicate the limited quantity</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If yes, please indicate the limited quantity</i>	
Jams, marmalades	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>			
Dried fruits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Organic raisins
Vegetable juices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>			
Other: please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>			
.....								

5.2. Milk and milk products

5.2.1. Milk - Article 23(3)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013

Drinking milk and lactose-free versions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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5.2.2. Milk products - Article 23(4)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013

Products distributed under the school scheme		Added salt			Added fat			Comments (optional)
		No	Yes		No	Yes		
Cheese and curd	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If yes, please indicate the limited quantity</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If yes, please indicate the limited quantity</i>	
Plain yoghurt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Fermented or acidified milk products without added sugar, flavouring, fruits, nuts or cocoa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>			

5.2.3. Milk products - Annex V to Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013

Products to be distributed under the school scheme	Added salt				Added fat			Added sugar
	No	Yes		No	Yes			
Category I (milk component $\geq 90\%$). Fermented milk products without fruit juice, naturally flavoured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If yes, please indicate the limited quantity</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If yes, please indicate the limited quantity</i>	%
Category I (milk component $\geq 90\%$). Fermented milk products with fruit juice, naturally flavoured or non-flavoured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		%
Category I (milk component $\geq 90\%$). Milk-based drinks with cocoa, with fruit juice or naturally flavoured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		%
Category II (milk component $\geq 75\%$). Fermented or non-fermented milk products with fruit, naturally flavoured or non-flavoured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		%

5.3. Prioritisation of fresh fruit and vegetables and drinking milk

Article 23(3) of the basic act

Except for organic raisins, only fresh fruit and vegetables are eligible for support. In addition, regarding milk products only drinking milk/lactose-free versions is eligible for support.

5.4. Scheme products & other agricultural products in the educational measures

Article 23(7) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(g) of the implementing regulation

Scheme products		
Yes		No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Please list the products: All fresh fruit and vegetables listed in Annex IX of Regulation (EU) 1308/2013	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other agricultural products		
Yes		No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please list the products:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

5.5. Criteria for the choice of products distributed under the school scheme and any priorities for the choice of those products

Article 23(11) of the basic act and Article 2(2)(a) of the implementing regulation

Health considerations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental considerations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seasonality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Variety of products	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Availability of local or regional produce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Any comments – including e.g. on the required quality of products	
Any priority/ies for the choice of products:	
Local or regional purchasing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any comments	
Organic products	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

only for organic raisins	
Short supply chains	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any comments	
Environmental benefits (please specify: <i>e.g. food miles, packaging ...</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any comments	
Products recognised under the quality schemes established by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any comments	
Fair-trade	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any comments	
Other, please specify:	

6. ACCOMPANYING EDUCATIONAL MEASURES

Article 23(10) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(j) of the implementing regulation

Title	Objective	Topics	Description
School gardens	Make children aware of the origin/growing process	Reconnection of children to agriculture, healthy eating habits, local food chains, organic production, sustainable production and food waste.	Setting up and maintenance of a school gardens. Provide necessary physical equipment and preconditions for planting and tending trees, bushes or plants to grow using environmentally friendly techniques fruit & vegetables in the limited scope of an educational establishment.
Visits to farms/ farmers' markets/dairies	To provide children with an understanding of where their food comes from.	Reconnection of children to agriculture, local food chains, organic production, sustainable production and food waste.	Children visits to farm / farmers, farmers' markets, warehouses for sorting and packaging of fruit and vegetables, milk processors, with guided tours focusing on fruit and milk production and quality, welfare practices on the farm and environmental issues
Tasting classes/cooking workshops	Make children familiar with a variety of fruit and vegetables and make children aware of the production method of traditional dairy products and be familiar of the taste.	Acquaintance with the variety of fruit and vegetables and discovery of a variety of fruit and vegetables through positive experiences. Practice cooking skills using fruit, vegetables and milk and associate healthy eating with fun.	Organisation of tastings classes, repeated tasting (products), cooking workshops with fruit, vegetables and milk. Food/sensory laboratories.
Lessons, lectures, workshops	Make children aware of the nutritional value of fruit, vegetables, milk and dairy products, their benefits and promote healthy eating habits.	Developing a plan for healthy eating based on the Pyramid for healthy eating and making healthy choices.	Lectures will be organised by nutritionists at schools participating in the scheme.

7. ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

7.1. Price of school fruit and vegetables/milk

Article 2(2) of Delegated Regulation 2017/40.

School fruit and vegetables and the school milk distributed under the scheme are made available free of charge to children.

7.2. Frequency and duration of distribution of school fruit and vegetables/milk and of accompanying educational measures

Article 23(8) of the basic act and Article 2(2)(b) of the implementing regulation

Envisaged frequency of distribution:

	School fruit and vegetables	School milk
Once per week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twice per week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Three times per week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Four times per week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other : please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any comments:		

Envisaged duration of distribution:

	School fruit and vegetables	School milk
≤ 2 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
> 2 and ≤ 4 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
> 4 and ≤ 12 weeks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
> 12 and ≤ 24 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
> 24 and ≤ 36 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entire school year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any comment:		

Envisaged duration of accompanying educational measures during the school year:

(3 hours)

7.3. Timing of distribution of school fruit and vegetables/milk

Article 23(8) – and 23a(8) if supply in relation to the provision of other meals – of the basic act and Article 2(2)(b) of the implementing regulation

Envisaged timing of distribution during the day (*please tick one or more of the checkboxes below*):

	School fruit and vegetables	School milk
Morning/morning break(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lunchtime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon/afternoon break(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

7.4. Distribution of milk products in Annex V to Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013

Article 23(5) of the basic act, Article 5(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1370/2013 ('the fixing regulation'), Article 2(2)(f) of the implementing regulation

No

Yes

7.5. Selection of suppliers

Article 23(8) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(l) of the implementing regulation

The procedures to select the organisations or bodies that will distribute school fruit, vegetables and drinking milk and carry out educational measures are left to participating schools through public procurement procedures.

The procedures to select the organisations or bodies that will carry out monitoring, evaluation, information activities and part of educational measures, are centralised at national level and will be outsourced through public procurement procedures.

7.6. Eligible costs

7.6.1. Reimbursement rules Article 23(8) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(i) of the implementing regulation

Costs incurred under the school scheme are reimbursed based on invoices (cost-based system) and all procedures will be covered by tender procedures.

7.6.2. Eligibility of certain costs

Article 23(8) of the basic act and Article 2(2)(b) of the implementing regulation

The costs of purchasing, renting, hiring and leasing of the equipment used in the supply and distribution of products are not eligible for support.

7.7. Involvement of authorities and stakeholders

Article 23(6) and (9) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(k) of the implementing regulation

The public authorities and private stakeholders in public health/nutrition, education, agriculture and other sectors, to be involved through consultation, steering groups and meetings are:

- Department of Agriculture
- Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organisation
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Health
- Pancyprrian Parents' Association
- Educational establishments
- School Regional Offices
- The Cyprus Dietetic and Nutrition Association

7.7.1. Authorities and stakeholders involved

			Complete Name	Involved in Planning	Involved in Implementation	Involved in Monitoring	Involved in Evaluation	Other (if yes, please specify)
Public authority/ Private stakeholder	Agriculture	Authority	Department of Agriculture	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	
		Stakeholder						
	Health and Nutrition	Authority	Ministry of Health	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	
		Stakeholder	The Cyprus Dietetic and Nutrition Association	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	
	Education	Authority	Ministry of Education, School Regional Offices and Educational establishments	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	
		Stakeholder	Pancyprian Parents' Association	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	
	Other	Authority	Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organisation	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	
		Stakeholder						

7.8. Information and publicity

Article 23a(8) of the basic act and Article 2(1)(m) of the implementing regulation

Posters, brochures and relevant articles in magazines and newspapers.

7.9. Administrative and on-the-spot checks

Article 2(2)(g) of the implementing regulation

Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organisation will be responsible for administrative and on the spot checks

7.10. Monitoring and evaluation

Article 2(2)(g) of the implementing regulation

The Department of Agriculture in co-operation with Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organisation will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation will be carried out by an independent organisation through public tender procedure.