

*The recipe for*

# local and environmentally responsible food procurement

*in Quebec institutions*



Photo: Cantine pour tous

Step-by-step guide for good service management companies



# The basic recipe



## Instructions

### 1. Take advantage of available resources

Sign up for a recognition or assistance programs to help organize your initiative and obtain support. Experience shows that these types of programs can lead to a more structured approach, offer important visibility and raise awareness in the community. In addition to offering **learning, training and networking opportunities**, these resources can also help you plan each step of your process. If you are already part of a program, contact the coordinators and ask them how they can support you in the process.

Several existing programs are presented in the [Resources](#) section of this fact sheet. Be sure to check them out! 

Did you know that Aliments du Québec and [Équiterre](#) developed a recognition program designed specifically for institutions called [Aliments du Québec au menu](#)? This program recognizes innovative institutions by highlighting their efforts to incorporate more local food into their procurement processes.

Have a look at these [videos](#) that feature six participating institutions, including Collège Trinité and Cégep Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, whose food services are under contracted management.



### 2. Analyze your establishment's menu and purchasing processes in order to target your actions

Get a sense of your starting point: Your menu probably already contains several locally sourced products. In addition to providing encouragement, knowing where you're starting from can help you to identify the local foods to look for and set new goals.

- **Quantify local foods:**
  - Identify the companies in your list of suppliers that offer Quebec-sourced products;
  - Calculate the proportion (%) of local food already present in your orders over a year or another period. [This exercise](#) [in French] will enable you to identify your shortcomings and your strengths and to fix you goals. 
- **Gradually integrate local foods:**
  - Begin with a few local staples that are easy to find (ex., apples, maple syrup, seasonal berries, fall squash, etc.);
  - Identify the products that have the most impact, with little or no extra cost (ex., eggs);
  - Focus on one food category at a time (ex., seasonal vegetables, dairy products, etc.).
- **Make it easier to add local foods to your menu:**
  - Develop a menu cycle that focuses on seasonal recipes;
  - Build greater flexibility into your menu preparation process so more products can be added based on when they are

- in season (substitution);
- Set aside time to train your staff.
- **Optimize your processes and invest in local and sustainable foods:**
  - Reduce food waste at the source (adjust portions and serving practices to reduce waste on the plate, optimize the use of every food part, [store food optimally](#));
  - Purchase some [precut or frozen local vegetables](#) from Quebec to reduce kitchen processing.

### 3. Encourage your current suppliers to offer more local food and

#### Tip:

Adapt your catalogue to facilitate local purchasing! By clearly identifying local products (for example, using a logo), you can make it easier for your buyers to find what they're looking for!

#### to identify food origin in their catalogues

Difficulty finding local products that are offered by distributors or suppliers is one of the main obstacles to increasing local food procurement. Unlike the retail sector, there is no standard requiring distributors and suppliers to identify the origin of their products. Over the last few years, however, more and more distributors and suppliers have been making the effort to address these issues.

- **Ask your suppliers about the origin of their food.** Encourage them to clearly identify food origin in their catalogue or inventory;
- **Ask your suppliers to offer more local and sustainable foods.** The more institutional clients demand it, the more suppliers will have an incentive to make these products available;

- **Mention to your suppliers that you are participating in programs** that require you to know the source of your food, such as [Aliments du Québec au menu](#);
- **Ask your distributors and suppliers** to create identification codes for each product to make it easier to identify them when ordering and verifying invoices.

### 4. Seek out new suppliers

Are your current suppliers unable to satisfy your requests? Find new suppliers that offer a greater variety of local products. To do this: 

- **Consult existing [local supplier lists](#):**
- **Favour exchanges between food concessions** in your network (regional and provincial) that source their food locally;

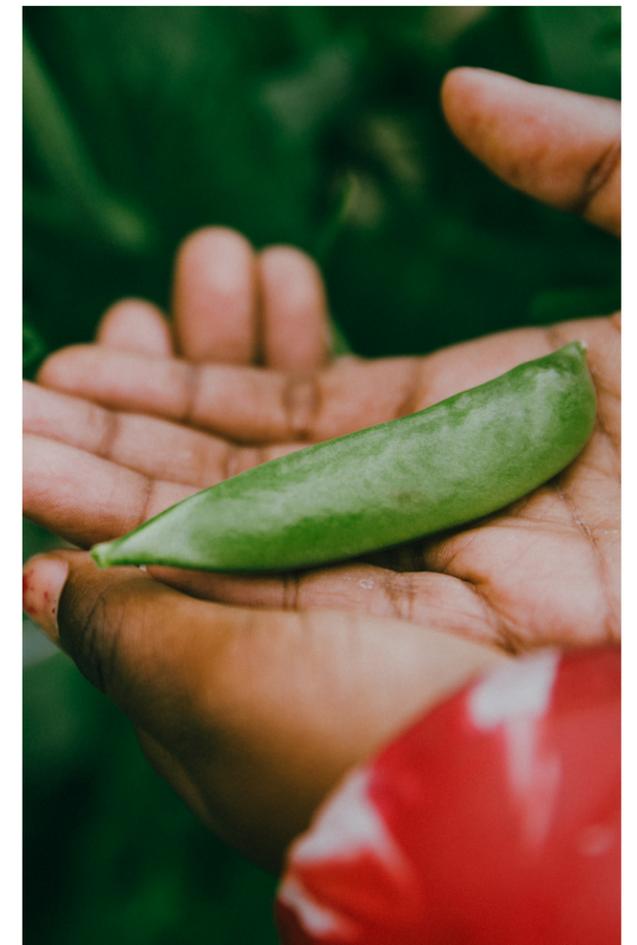


Photo: Myriam Baril-Tessier

- Contact your Table de concertation bioalimentaire régionale for references and networking activities such as producer-purchaser meetings;
- Make direct contact with the producers of the products that interest you;
- Ask potential new suppliers which distributors they are affiliated with.

### 5. Inform and educate your team and community

To ensure the long-term viability of your project, make sure your team is engaged and collaborate with the organization that uses your services.

- Offer training to managers, chefs and cooks, as needed;



Photo: Cégep Saint-Jean sur-Richelieu

- Define the roles of each stakeholder in order to better manage and structure the process;
- Keep your team and clients up to date on developments. Take pride in the progress your team has made;
- Organize theme-based events to promote your initiatives;
- Participate in events related to your project: Défi 100% local, Institutions Eat Local, events, theme-based events promoting different regions of Quebec and their products;
- Ask for information about the sustainable development initiatives of the institution you are working for (Cégep Vert, student committee) and reach out to them to collaborate;
- Spread the word about your project's success within the institution. Find out which communication methods would work best: social networks, student newspaper or other means frequently used by the establishment.

### 6. Draft or amend your food policy to include values and principles that are important to your organization

This step formalizes your project and makes it part of your organization's DNA for the long term.



# Tips and Tricks



## Change your practices and save big in the long term!

In addition to their positive environmental impact, each of the following actions allows you to save money in the long run that can be reinvested in the purchase of local and environmentally responsible food.

- Offer more vegetarian meals to increase your purchasing power, reduce your environmental footprint and add more diversity to your menu:
  - Increase the number of meatless meals served each week;
  - Foster familiarity with legumes by making half-legumes/half-meat recipes.
- Reduce purchases of processed and highly processed food to lower costs and improve the quality of the ingredients in your dishes.
- Vary procurement sources by supporting local food systems (short supply chains) such as direct procurement from the farmer, farmers' markets, public markets, organic baskets, purchasing groups, etc.
- Reduce food waste by storing food in optimal conditions, planning portions and needs, and making better use of leftovers.
- Eliminate disposable containers to reduce purchase costs and environmental impacts.



## Opt for seasonal menus!

To facilitate the use of seasonal local food and take advantage of volume discounts, the following practices should be considered. These types of requirements can also be incorporated in tender documents and the contract.

- **Increase the amount of cold room space** for fruits and vegetables that store well, such as apples, squash, onions, potatoes, root vegetables, etc.
- **Increase freezer space** for the storage of seasonal local products (ex., fruits, vegetables, fish, etc.).
- **Do your own processing and/or freezing** of seasonal products while they are available in abundance (ex., berries, herbs, tomatoes, etc.).

By adopting these practices, you can order larger quantities and reduce the number of deliveries.



## Resources



### Support, recognition, certification and accreditation programs

- **Équiterre** is an environmental organization that offers concrete solutions in order to foster ecological choices that are both healthy and equitable. In the area of food procurement, Équiterre is committed to facilitating the implementation of a sustainable food system by developing joint projects with partners and offering consulting services.
- **Aliments du Québec au menu** is a recognition program created by Aliments du Québec and Équiterre to promote the use of Quebec products in institutional menus.
- **LEAF** (Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice) is a national environmental certification program targeting food services. LEAF's aim is to help businesses of all sizes acquire the knowledge, tools and confidence they need to pursue their environmental actions.
- **MSC** (Marine Stewardship Council) is a traceability certification program promoting sustainable fish products. It offers a certification program for companies and organizations that sell directly to consumers.
- The **Tables de concertation bioalimentaire du Québec** co-facilitate, mobilize and coordinate the efforts of various actors in the regional biofood sector (ex., producers, processors, restaurant owners, retailers, development organizations, regional county municipalities [MRC], etc.). [in French]



Note: For support from nutritionists or dietary technicians when developing your menus, don't hesitate to get in touch with CEGEPs and universities that offer training programs in this field. This type of applied project can be extremely beneficial both for interns and your food service!



### Directories or lists for finding local foods

- [Directory of local and organic food providers](#) (Équiterre)
- [List of livestock and crop producers in Quebec](#) (MAPAQ) [in French]
- [Aliments du Québec directory](#)
- [Quebec Seasonal Produce Calendar](#)
- [Manufacturers, Wholesalers, Industrial-Related Service Companies search engine \(ICRIQ\)](#)
- [Pêchés ici, mangés ici: Répertoire des poissons et fruits de mer du Québec](#) (MAPAQ) [in French]
- [Fraîcheur Québec](#) [in French]
- [Organismes de concertation bioalimentaire régionaux](#) [in French]
- [Family Farmers Network](#)
- [Arrivage: approvisionnement professionnel responsable, local et direct](#) [in French]



### Useful tools

- [Aliments du Québec au menu quantification table](#) [in French]
- [Guide to Sustainable Menus](#)
- Standardized local recipes developed by the ITHQ (look for online recipes on the [Aliments du Québec au menu](#) website)
- **CAPÉ**: technical guide: For information on the effective storage and conservation of local and organic products, contact: [info@capecoop.org](mailto:info@capecoop.org)



## References

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## Credits

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