Public Food Programme

Join us to cultivate a world where the food we eat is good for all people, animals, and our planet.

Every day, public institutions decide what millions of people eat. Schools, hospitals, universities, and public canteens shape diets at a scale that few private companies can match. Yet despite their reach, most public food systems were not designed around health, climate, or equity outcomes.

ProVeg International's Public Food Programme works with governments, caterers, healthcare providers, and educational institutions to increase the proportion of plant-rich meals they procure and serve, while making those meals practical, appealing, affordable, and scalable.

Rather than relying only on individual behaviour change, the programme focuses on structural change: procurement standards, menu design, chef training, and policy integration. The aim is to make healthier and more sustainable food the default option in public settings.

Our Vision

By 2030 schools, universities, and hospitals are playing an instrumental role in driving the worldwide protein transition. This shift will be accelerated by increasing the proportion of plant-based and plant-rich meals procured and sold, and making plant-based defaults the norm.

Our impact to date

Below shows the impact of ProVeg UK School Plates since 2018. While other ProVeg countries also run public food and school plates programmes, we are still refining data collection to meet ProVeg's rigorous standards. Global cumulative impact will be incorporated soon.

72.47

million meals swapped from meat-based to meat-free or plant-based since 2018

2.3 million

children and students reached with our plant-rich menus in 2025 alone*

118

partnering schools, local authorities, contract caterers, and more, as of 2025

**This number refers to the maximum number of students that our plant-based menus can reach.*

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Why public food matters

Globally, at least 466 million children receive school meals through public programmes every day. Public food procurement therefore represents one of the largest opportunities to improve nutrition, reduce emissions, and influence long-term dietary habits at population scale.

Institutional settings also reach groups that are often missed by consumer-led interventions. Children in schools, patients in hospitals, and people in care settings do not choose from a fully open market; they eat what institutions provide. This means that even modest changes to procurement and menu design can shift outcomes for entire populations.

A school that improves its menu does not change one child's diet. It changes the diet of every child in that school, every day.

This is the difference between changing behaviour at the margins and changing the system itself.

How the programme works

Menu transformation and culinary training

Institutional kitchens often lack the tools, recipes, or confidence to deliver plant-rich meals at scale. ProVeg provides chef training, menu consultation, and implementation support designed for real-world catering environments. The focus is on meals that are nutritionally balanced, affordable, culturally adaptable, and realistic for high-volume food service.

Changing the choice architecture

The way food is presented strongly influences what people choose. The programme uses evidence-based approaches such as menu positioning, naming conventions, and plant-based defaults to increase uptake without removing choice.

Procurement and policy integration

Long-term impact depends on institutional standards. The programme supports governments and public authorities in embedding plant-rich procurement principles into frameworks, tenders, and institutional policies so that change continues beyond individual projects.

Programme highlights

United Kingdom

The School Plates programme expanded to **12,000 schools in 2025,** delivering more than **25 million meal swaps.** We also launched the Hospital Plates initiative and the Plants First Healthcare Coalition, working with NHS hospital trusts to support the healthcare sector in increasing plant-based meal provision.

Portugal

Through the Prato Sustentável programme, ProVeg supported **more than 90 schools, four universities, and four hospitals,** switching nearly **210,000 meals** from meat-based to plant-based in 2025.

Germany

ProVeg continued work with **schools, healthcare providers, and welfare institutions** through menu optimisation, stakeholder engagement, and educational workshops for students and kitchen teams.

Belgium

ProVeg worked with the Flemish government and higher education institutions to **increase plant-forward menus** in universities and colleges.

Czechia

The team provides **chef training workshops and sustainability assessments** in universities and is expanding into school canteens.

Poland

ProVeg contributed to the passage of new national regulations requiring schools and nurseries to provide **one plant-based meal per week** from September 2026.

Brazil

ProVeg is developing a partnership with Brazil's national school meals programme which serves more than **50 million meals daily.**

Netherlands

ProVeg supports Dutch retailers and engages with major contract caterers to work towards a **60/40 plant-to-animal protein target** by 2030.

What's next

The Public Food Programme is designed to scale. Its implementation model has been refined across multiple countries and adapted to different institutional and cultural contexts. Future growth will focus on:

Expanding support for hospitals and universities

Embedding procurement standards into public policy

Strengthening climate and health impact measurement

Supporting institutional adoption of plant-based defaults

Building stronger regional supply chains for plant-rich food provision

The long-term opportunity is significant: public institutions already purchase and serve food at enormous scale. Aligning those systems with evidence-based nutrition and sustainability goals has the potential to improve public health outcomes, reduce emissions, and normalise plant-rich eating for millions of people worldwide.

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