



*The recipe for*

# local and environmentally responsible food procurement

*in Quebec institutions*



Healthcare sector fact sheet

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# Preamble



Photo: Équiterre

This fact sheet is intended as a practical tool to support food service managers and employees in the healthcare sector in their efforts to transition to a more sustainable food system that prioritizes healthy, local and environmentally responsible food. The step-by-step guide is based on best practices that have been implemented in healthcare institutions throughout Quebec. To learn more about the fact sheet project, see [The Recipe for Local and Environmentally Responsible Food Procurement In Quebec Institutions](#).

The link between the food we eat and our health is a well-established fact. Adopting a healthy diet is one of the best ways to improve our overall well-being and prevent unwanted health problems. Healthcare institutions are dedicated to offering the highest quality of care to their patients, and the quality<sup>1</sup> of the food they serve is an essential part of the equation. With this perspective in mind, we must consider the food offered in healthcare institutions' food services. Several institutions have begun the transition towards healthier food in the healthcare sector by taking actions within their institutions' food services. Going forward, it is essential that the necessary resources be made available to ensure the continuous improvement of the food supply in the healthcare sector in keeping with the essential role of food in health.

**Choosing to offer healthy, local and environmentally responsible food in healthcare settings results in offering the very best to clients by directly enhancing the quality of patient care.** It also allows you to take advantage of the educational and awareness-raising opportunities that sustainable food initiatives offer for healthcare staff and patients. When sustainable food procurement initiatives come from our public health institutions, this shift sends a clear message to the community regarding the power of food to improve the health of people and the planet.

"Food is a powerful leverage point for the health care sector, that can lead to benefits which are felt throughout the system for patient, institutional, community and planetary health."<sup>2</sup>

## Overview of the sector

The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux describes the healthcare sector in Quebec as follows:<sup>3</sup>

"Health and Social Services Institutions provide general and specialized assistance to the population that corresponds to the five major missions defined in the Act Respecting Health Services and Social Services (CQLR c S-4.2) and varies according to whether they are a:

- Local community service centre (CLSC);
- Hospital centre (CH);
- Residential and long-term care centre (CHSLD);
- Child and Youth Protection Centre (CPEJ);
- Rehabilitation centre (CR)."

As of March 31, 2019, Quebec's health and social services network (RSSS) had **142 establishments**: 51 were public and 91 were private (including 39 private and contracted). These establishments managed **1,609 facilities** (or physical locations) offering healthcare and social services to the population of Quebec.

The RSSS's 51 public establishments are administered by 34 chief executive officers or general directors. They include all the integrated centres, grouped institutions and other establishments that are neither merged or consolidated:<sup>4</sup>

- 22 integrated health and social services centres (CISSS), including 9 institutions designated as integrated university health and social services centres (CIUSSS);
- 7 institutions that are not merged with an integrated centre, including 4 university hospital centres (CHU), 2 university institutes (IU) and 1 institute. These establishments are identified as "non-amalgamated institutions" in the LMRSSS;
- 5 institutions serving Northern and Indigenous communities.

Each of the institutions can offer services in several facilities that have physical locations in which healthcare or social services may be administered.

In addition to the services offered by public institutions, the population has access to the services of private institutions that offer residential and long-term care services.

Additionally, in 2018-2019, there were **1,791 private seniors' residences** in Quebec.

The public and contracted health care network employs over **275,000 staff** (health care personnel, administration, food services) and nearly **20,000 professionals** (general practitioners, medical specialists, optometrists, pharmacists, dentists, etc.).



Photo: Équiterre

# Food service management in this sector

Many of the institutions in Quebec's healthcare network offer food services. Hospitals, long-term care facilities (CHSLD), youth centres, rehabilitation centres and seniors' residences are all facilities that offer a food service to their patients, residents and, often, employees.<sup>5</sup> **Food purchases in the healthcare sector represent 58% of the total share of food purchases made in Quebec's institutional network (health, education, businesses, etc.).** Food sales in healthcare institutions account for 61% of overall food service sales in the institutional network, representing a total of over \$1,449 million in annual sales.<sup>6</sup>

In 2019, 87% of the food sales in the healthcare sector came from internally managed (self-operated) food services, compared to



87% self-operated food services



13% contracted food services

13% for food service operations under contracted management.

All healthcare institutions in Quebec are subject to the Act Respecting Contracting by Public Bodies (LCOP), which is largely aligned with the principles set out in Canadian Free Trade Agreement and other international treaties to which Canada is a party. The food procurement process in the healthcare sector must therefore comply with the regulations established by the various interprovincial and international agreements for the granting of contracts once the threshold at which the Act becomes applicable is reached.

## Act Respecting Contracting by Public Bodies: Contracting process based on the current threshold<sup>7</sup>

**Purchases under \$105,700:** Under this threshold, the public health and social services institution can use the contracting process of its choice, and therefore has greater flexibility to favour local food procurement in its contract. It can, for example, consider issuing a regionalized public call for tenders, launching an invitation to tender or entering into a contract by mutual agreement with the producer. Because the institution has the freedom to approach the companies of its choosing, it can exclusively target local stakeholders or favour certain local products, as long as it respects the principles of the Act.<sup>8</sup>

The regionalized tendering procedure is addressed in section 10 of the LCOP. This type of tendering is only for contracts that are not subject to intergovernmental agreements, and must be considered by a public body that intends to enter into this type of public contract. The regionalization of the tendering process allows the public institution to exclusively target producers or suppliers in a specific region, thereby ensuring that local purchasing is favoured.

**Purchases of \$105,700 and over:** In this case, the possibilities are much more limited as the free trade principles apply. The objective of market liberalization significantly limits the flexibility of public institutions to prioritize local products, since it prohibits giving favourable treatment to local goods over products from other provinces and countries. It is important to note that contracts cannot be split to avoid the Act Respecting Contracting by Public Bodies and the obligation to issue a public call for tenders. However, there are certain mechanisms that can be used to indirectly favour the purchase of local products:

- Without discriminating or favouring a specific country of origin, the institution can add a requirement in the tender documents that the country producing the product be clearly indicated;
- It is possible for the institution to give added value to Canadian products for a maximum of 10% of the amount of the contract and to limit the tendering process to Canadian companies;
- The institution can include criteria related to sustainable development, quality and the environment in the tender document, and can offer a preferential margin of 10% to suppliers who meet the related requirements (ex.: geographic location of production of final products, organic production, product freshness, etc.);
- The institution can specify the desired product characteristics, such as nutritional quality, quality of ingredients, etc.;
- The institution can specify conditions for carrying out the contract, and even impose obligations related to sustainable development (ex.: bulk delivery, delivery in reusable containers, delivery outside of rush hour, etc.).

Healthcare facilities in Quebec are members of group purchasing organizations (GPO) that handle a large proportion of their food purchases. In fact, according to the results of a MSSS survey conducted in 2013, 62% of institutions carried out at least 76% of their food procurement through group purchasing.<sup>9</sup> Following new recommendations by the MSSS in 2017,<sup>10</sup> this figure is most likely higher today. The main food categories that are not procured through grouped purchasing are meats as well as fresh fruits and vegetables, as they are perishable. Until 2020, the province of Quebec had three GPOs (GAC in French) that centralized purchasing for healthcare facilities by geographic area (western Quebec, eastern Quebec and Greater Montreal):

- GAC de l'Ouest du Québec
- GAC de l'Est du Québec
- SigmaSanté (for Greater Montreal)

Each of these GPOs operates independently. Bill 37, which was passed in 2020<sup>11</sup> sought to reorganize procurement by public bodies and generate additional economies of scale by establishing two new purchasing organizations for all of Quebec – the Centre d'acquisitions gouvernementales and Infrastructures technologiques du Québec. The three former GPOs were dissolved and incorporated into the Centre d'acquisitions gouvernementales.

The CISSSs and CIUSSSs, under which several institutions are grouped, handle very large purchasing volumes, therefore nearly all of their purchases are subject to **public calls for tender**, the majority of which are made through the GPOs. Certain non-merged institutions have some flexibility for the purchase of perishable goods. Due to their smaller size, most of their procurement contracts fall under the threshold of \$105,700, making it possible for them to launch an invitation to tender or to enter into contracts by mutual agreement.

Since 2017, new MSSS guidelines for food services have led food service teams to make changes to different aspects of their practices, including computerizing purchases, standardizing recipes, harmonizing menus, grouping procurement, centralizing production and distribution, applying fair pricing to meals, integrating principles of sustainable development, etc. The aim of these guidelines is to integrate practices in food services within the healthcare network and encourage collaboration between the various teams within each CISSS or CIUSSS.



# The basic recipe



For local and environmentally responsible food procurement in the healthcare sector

## Ingredients

### Organizational levers

There are a number of organizational levers within the healthcare sector that can facilitate sustainable development initiatives with lasting impacts:

- **Support from management;**
- Sustainability-oriented organizational culture;
- **Motivated human resources:** employees and interns who can be encouraged to help implement sustainability initiatives;
- **Knowledge of the legislative framework,** tendering procedures and the tools for incorporating sustainable development criteria in public tenders;
- **A proactive approach toward sustainable development by GPOs;**
- The ability to raise awareness and motivate the food services team towards the sustainable food procurement goal;
- The implementation of complementary measures that generate savings which can be reinvested in the food services team (reduction of food waste, fewer processed products, an on-demand meal service similar to that implemented at the [CHU Sainte-Justine](#));
- **The high revenue generated by dining areas for visitors and employees** can be invested in sustainable food while protecting cost-per-meal efficiency;
- **The desire to innovate and stand out.**



### Challenges

There are several constraints in the healthcare sector that can impede the transition to sustainable food procurement:

- The cost of healthy, local and environmentally responsible food;
- The centralization of purchases;
- **High purchase volumes;**
- Small volumes in certain cases (niche products or more expensive products);
- **Product availability;**
- Limited choice due to legislation and a framework that favours the lowest bidder;
- The difficulty for small and medium businesses to qualify or even respond to calls for tender;
- **The specific formats and quality** of the products desired;
- A local institutional market that is poorly equipped to meet the healthcare sector's needs;
- **Distribution issues** (multi-site management, frequency, logistics, punctuality);
- Cost-per-meal efficiency and importance;
- **The issue of allergies and dietary requirements** (limits competition);
- Work organization (lack of availability of pre-peeled and pre-cut local vegetables);
- The time investment required for the initiative.



## Instructions

This step-by-step guide provides an example of identified best practices. It is intended for healthcare institutions that have a self-operated food service. Feel free to adapt it to reflect the situation of your establishment. For a contracted management food service, please refer to the fact sheet for CEGEPs.



### 1. Lay the groundwork for your initiative

To get your initiative off to a good start, certain preliminary steps are necessary before taking concrete action.

- **Start with a simple and attainable goal.** Achieving this first step helps to generate motivation within the team and facilitate the development of an action plan!
- **Seek support at the organizational and decision-making level.** Sustainable food procurement must become a priority for the institution;
- **Promote your actions and projects to the entire organization.** This will make it easier to rally your internal troops;



Photo: Équiterre

- **Foster collaboration** between the different departments and stakeholders concerned by food procurement both within your institution and beyond (food service managers, buyers, procurement managers, group purchasing organization, etc.);



- **Create a working committee** comprised of the various stakeholders involved in the different steps of the initiative;

- **Secure funding for your initiatives**

The search for funding should be geared toward finding resources that can help you carry out your project. This financing will not be easily linked to the purchase of raw materials;

- **Update your knowledge of the legislative framework that applies to procurement processes for public institutions.** This will help you determine which actions are possible. (This point is less important if you have people from your institution's procurement department among your internal collaborators, as they will have the necessary expertise.):

- Consult the relevant documents and tools:

- [Tendances et risques légaux associés aux achats publics responsables](#). [in French]
- [Cadre de référence pour l'achat d'aliments dans le marché institutionnel: règles applicables et modalités de prise en compte du développement durable et de l'environnement \(MAPAQ\)](#) [in French];
- [Report: Projet d'approvisionnement alimentaire responsable du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux, CHU de Québec - ULaval](#) [in French]



### **Allow for sufficient time to work toward your goals:**

- Allocate the necessary human resources;
- Solicit interns or applied student research projects and plan the tasks that can be assigned to them:
  - quantifying food;
  - developing theme-based menus;
  - searching for new products;
  - conducting audits and surveys;
  - organizing and facilitating awareness-raising activities.

- Offer information:
  - Presentation of the toolkit for sustainable food procurement ([gacouest@ssss.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:gacouest@ssss.gouv.qc.ca))
  - Presentation of the [Guide to Sustainable Menus](#)



- Define your food service vision and develop your action plan. Use your establishment's existing food, sustainable development or procurement frameworks as your starting point:
  - Establish a communication plan, and adapt the management and training plans to carry out your initiative.

## **2. Take advantage of available resources**

Sign up for a recognition or assistance program to help organize your overall initiative and obtain support. Experience shows that these types of programs can lead to a more structured approach, while offering significant visibility for your project and raising awareness in the community.

In addition to the learning, training and networking opportunities they offer, these resources can also help you reflect on and plan each

step of your process. Your affiliation with such programs adds weight to the requests you make to your distributors and food service providers.

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



- [Aliments du Québec au menu](#)
- [Nourish](#)

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 highlight six participating institutions, including the CHU Ste-Justine, [here](#).



## **3. Analyze your establishment's menus and purchasing processes**

Understand your starting point. Your menu probably already contains several sustainable products. In addition to providing encouragement, knowing where you're starting from can help you to identify the foods to look for and set new goals based on your situation.

- Define the different types of food you want to quantify: local, organic, GMO-free, free of growth hormones, aesthetically imperfect ("ugly") fruits and vegetables, etc.
- Quantify the different types of food on your menus using your purchasing inventory:
  - Identify the companies on your list of suppliers that offer products that are:

local, organic, fair trade, etc.;

- Calculate the proportion (%) of food that meets each criterion (local, organic, fair trade, etc.) already present in your orders over a year or another period. This exercise will help you identify your establishment's strengths and weaknesses and set goals to improve your performance for certain types of foods or products. Use a [quantification table](#):
- Look over your menus and identify products that could potentially be substituted or modified: refer to the [Guide to Sustainable Menus](#) to help you set your priorities.



- Increase the potential to add local food to your menu:

- Start by integrating a symbolic element into your food offering: ex., salad bar, patient snacks, or a Quebec staple that's available year round (apples, carrots, maple syrup, etc.);
- Integrate more seasonal recipes into your menu cycle;
- Develop theme-based seasonal menus;
- Build greater flexibility into your menu preparation process so that local products can be added when they are in season and changes can be easily made to recipes if certain ingredients are temporarily unavailable (substitution);
- Spread your fresh fruit and vegetable budget throughout the year so you can spend a bit more during the harvesting season (seasonal local food is generally most abundant from June to October). Lower expenses for the rest of the year will help balance the budget.

- Give yourself the tools needed to change your existing menu:

- Set aside time to obtain assistance and training for targeted employees;
- Encourage applied student research projects with interns in nutrition or dietary technician studies.

- Optimize your processes and allocate a budget to invest more in sustainable food:

- Increase preparation of home-made products such as baked goods, soups and salads and reduce purchasing of processed food;
- Reduce food waste at the source. [Store your food optimally](#), use every food part or develop a market for food surpluses (ex.: take-out meals);
- Rationalize energy and material costs. Repair or replace outdated or energy-consuming equipment and make investments to reduce expenses in the long term.



Photo: Myriam Baril-Tessier



Photo: Équiterre

#### ***4. Encourage procurement managers to target more sustainable food by integrating sustainable development criteria in calls for tenders***

For all purchases made through a GPO:

- Raise awareness among your organization's members by sharing relevant documents and tools and proposing training workshops;
- Define the sustainable development criteria to prioritize within your GPO;
- Encourage the incorporation of these criteria within calls for tenders.

For non-pooled purchases involving expenditures over \$105,700:

- Collaborate with your buyer and/or procurement office;
- Share the relevant tools and information and offer training to the people involved;
- Encourage the integration of sustainable development criteria in your institution's calls for tenders.

For non-pooled purchases involving expenditures under \$105,700 (public contracts not subject to the rules of public contracting arising from the free trade agreements):

- Apply your internal procurement policy;<sup>12</sup>
- Determine the types of sustainable food you want to integrate in your food offering and move on to the next step!

#### ***5. Encourage your current suppliers to offer more local food and to identify food origins 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 them 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;
- Target companies that offer food that is local, organic, GMO-free, fair trade, etc. and ask your distributors for these products. The more institutional clients demand them, 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.

#### ***6. Seek out new suppliers (non-pooled purchases under the \$105,700 threshold and based on your internal procurement policy)***

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

- Consult existing local supplier lists (See Resources section); 
- Participate in networking events such as producer-purchaser meetings in order to establish contact with producers and processors in your region. Get in touch with your Table bioalimentaire régionale for more information;
- Share your findings with other institutions that have launched similar initiatives;
- Make direct contact with the producers of products that interest you;



Photo: Myriam Baril-Tessier

- Gradually integrate sustainable food:
  - Start with a few meaningful or symbolic products (local staples);
  - Identify the products that have the most impact, with little or no extra cost;
  - Focus on food categories that are aligned with your criteria and latitude in terms of contract regulations (ex., seasonal vegetables, apples available year round, meats).

- Analyze the new products to ensure they meet your institution's standards (allergens, total bacteria count);

- Negotiate contracts with each new food product supplier;

- Establish agreements with small suppliers. They tend to respect your requests if you purchase from them on a regular basis.

## 7. Promote your initiative

Share your approach with your employees, customers and community in order to get their feedback and help guide your future actions.

- **Highlight local foods:** Promote the changes made to your menu on posters or displays. Spread the word!
- **Engage and train your food service employees: make them the ambassadors of your initiative.** The pride of participating in efforts to offer high-quality food services that have a positive impact on health, the community and the environment is a powerful source of motivation.
  - Organize a visit to the producer's site (farmer or local processor). Alternatively, have them come to you so that your employees get a chance to meet with them;
  - Organize a training workshop;
  - Create awareness-raising tools;
  - Inform your customers of your initiative through your menus, monthly or annual theme-based events, information booths, etc.
- **Organize theme-based events** to promote your initiative, such as, a fall harvest festival;
- **Take part in Institutions Eat Local! events**, which offer a perfect opportunity to promote local Quebec food.

## 8. Evaluate and document your initiative

Conducting a qualitative and quantitative analysis of your initiative will provide support for your actions and help you make informed decisions going forward. It will also allow you to document the experience and inspire your peers:

- **Quantify food products on a regular basis** in order to keep track of your efforts, identify challenges, and set new targets;
- **Evaluate the financial impact of changes;**
- **Survey your customers to assess the impact of your actions on them;**
- **Survey your employees to assess the impact of your actions on them.** This will allow you to obtain additional information and address any issues;
- **Share your results and help advance the movement.**

### Strength in unity

To facilitate the institutional transition toward healthy, local and environmentally responsible food, here are some additional global actions you should consider:

- Collaborate with other institutions to develop the local institutional market and increase the availability of preferred products and formats (already processed products, such as pre-peeled carrots and potatoes);
- Demand a systematic identification of food origin by distributors;
- Create templates for quantification and research tools to circulate them throughout the network.



# Good to know



## An investment that pays off!

It is important to keep in mind that these steps will require a number of changes to the food service team's routine in the short and medium terms.

- Investment of **time** (analysis, research, recipe and menu development, development of new partnerships, etc.);
- Increase in the **number of suppliers**;
- Increase in the **number of purchase orders, deliveries and invoices**;
- Heavier **workload** (ex., new preparation routine and tasks related to food preservation and optimization, surplus management, etc.).

In return, the steps you take are a great opportunity to offer the very best to your community!

Not to mention the positive impact on your food service:

- They send a positive perception of your food service to your clients and both the internal and external communities;
- They offer you an opportunity to **stand out and boost your visibility**;
- They raise awareness about the close links between **food and the health of individuals, communities and the planet**.

# *Tips and tricks*

## *Change your practices and generate long-term savings!*

In addition to their positive environmental impact, each of the following actions allows you to save money in the long run, which 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. Opt for more home-made products;
- **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. 
- **Vary procurement sources** by supporting local food systems (short supply chain) such as direct procurement from farmers.

## *Opt for seasonal menus!*

To facilitate the use of seasonal local food and take advantage of volume discounts, the following practices should be considered.

- **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, bell peppers, squash, leafy vegetables, etc.).

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



Photo: Équiterre

# Inspiring Institution

A recipe personalized by the  
CHU Sainte-Justine



Photo: CHU Sainte-Justine

## Montreal

The Centre hospitalier universitaire (CHU) Sainte-Justine is widely recognized for its innovative approach to sustainable food procurement. With the goal of **humanizing care and making healthy eating an integral part of the patient's care plan**, Ste-Justine's team of nutritionists made a major transformation beginning with reconstructing the institution's meal delivery model. In 2016, **they implemented an on-demand room service model for patient meals**. Instead of receiving their meals at set times, patients can now order from a menu offering several choices and decide when they want to eat. In addition to being better adapted to the patients' needs, this model has **significantly reduced food waste and the associated costs**.

Building on the success of this initiative and as part of an ongoing commitment to offer the best to patients, staff and visitors, Sainte-Justine's food services team then turned their attention to increasing local food procurement (fresh, simple and without additives). To encourage these efforts, the institution joined the Canadian cohort program, in 2016, organized by Nourish. Their first step was to quantify all of the institution's food purchases, which revealed that 45% of the hospital's overall procurement was already locally sourced. To increase this proportion the following year, the team targeted commonly used products that wouldn't have a significant impact on cost, such as eggs. At the same time, efforts were made to find and integrate symbolic niche products that had the potential to directly impact the quality of the patient's experience, such as jams, honey and maple syrup.

Determined to pursue this initiative, the food services manager contacted Équiterre to obtain its support for additional actions. Through this partnership, the goals were expanded in the second year to include a local and organic component for the procurement of fresh fruits and vegetables. With Équiterre's assistance, the food service team developed a direct relationship with a network of farmers, Bio-Locaux, which made it possible **to cook and serve a larger share of local and organic vegetables from June to November**. To increase local procurement, the food service team's purchaser prioritized locally sourced items within the contracted suppliers' catalogues and systematically asked suppliers to identify the origin of food products when this information was not provided. Thanks to these efforts, **locally procured food accounted for 55%** of the hospital's overall food purchases for that year.

The experiment with the network of farmers, Bio-Locaux, was renewed the following season and a project was implemented to sell organic baskets to staff in order to make deliveries more cost-effective. Awareness-raising activities were also organized to help strengthen the partnership between the hospital and farmers, **including farm visits, tours of the kitchen facilities, a harvest festival, and promotions to increase the visibility of the new foods offered on menus and in dining areas**. Local snacks and beverages were also added to the food offering, and ground meat free of hormones and antibiotics was integrated into patient menus. Despite the continuous addition of new products, the proportion of local food

products seems to have reached a plateau. The team has noted that changes in contracts with suppliers have an important impact on the percentage of local food and that the institutions in the network are highly dependent on these changes. One year, the contracts might favour local businesses, while the next, they might favour foreign companies. The hospital continued to progress in its efforts and initiatives in 2020! To promote further improvement, the CHU Sainte-Justine's role is to lead the way within its GPO by serving as a model for other healthcare institutions. In addition to their food initiatives, the food services team has also adopted a number of sustainable practices, such as composting, as part of a commitment to improve practices at each step of the life cycle of food products. The food service team has established a sustainable action plan from now until 2030!

## Key ingredients for success

- ✓ The passion, motivation and engagement of the food services team;
- ✓ The close relationship with local farmers, which gave each stakeholder the opportunity to better understand the other's reality and find common ground.

## Words of advice from the team

*"Believe in your initiative and use your leadership skills to engage others within your management team and employees. You will need other people; this initiative cannot be carried out by one person alone. Be prepared to invest time and energy. After all, you're building the future."*

Caroline Champoux, P.Dt., Administrative Procedures Specialist - Nutrition, CHU Sainte-Justine

*"Taking small steps at a time is certainly the best way to ensure successful initiatives. Completing the first step provides the motivation to continue and shows your team that it's possible, realistic and fun! Through the progress we've made over the past few years, we have built the foundation for a rich and sustainable food offering for our clients and for a future in which we intend to continue in our role as an educator and influencer."*

Josée Lavoie, P.Dt., M.Sc., Food Services Manager, CHU Sainte-Justine



## Recap



- 5,449 employees
- 420 beds

### Food system

- 1 cafeteria, 1 snack bar, 1 bistro, 1 mini-market, 1 catering service, vending machines

### Food services analyzed

- The entire food system
- 120 employees
- 2,000 meals per day

### Main suppliers

- Broadline and specialized distributors (Sysco, Natrel, Gadouas, etc.)
- Fruit and vegetable distributors (Hector Larivée, Canam, Directo-fruit)
- Ferme la Berceuse (Bio-Locaux)
- Several local niche product suppliers

### Certifications and/or recognition

- Aliments du Québec au menu
- Les Prix d'excellence du réseau de la santé de des services sociaux, Prix Personnalisation des soins et des services (2019)
- DUX 2018, winner in the Projects and Jury's Favorite categories (2018)



# Inspiring Institution

A recipe personalized by the Centre hospitalier universitaire de Montréal - CHUM



Photo: Myriam Baril-Tessier

## Montreal

Inspired by the CHU Saint-Justine, the manager of the CHUM's food service department was ready to apply her own recipe for local food procurement within the institution. Having grown up with the Atwater Market as her pantry, **making the shift toward fresh, local and organic food** was the natural choice. She questioned what more her department could implement to **enhance the quality of the patient and employee experience**: "If we can make a difference for our clients, if we can raise the awareness of 13,000 people, that's something!" The initial idea involved not only developing more sustainable food procurement, but also integrating sustainable practices within the food service operations, including composting and finding a substitute for disposable containers in the longer term.

The food services team was able to count on the support of management for the implementation of this large-scale project with an educational component that was perfectly aligned with the innovative vision of the institution and its executive director. The food services team within the new CHUM decided to innovate by going back to the basics: "Make it simple, with few ingredients that are as fresh as possible." In their new kitchen facilities, the food services staff set out to add more **homemade products** such as baked goods, soups, salads and veggie-pâté! This institutional choice resulted in a substantial reduction in the purchase of processed foods.

To boost the share of local and organic procurement, the food service manager launched an initiative to introduce local and organic vegetables sourced directly from a local farm and offer vegetable baskets to employees for the 2019 season. The food service manager turned to Équiterre to obtain support for the implementation of the project, starting by identifying a farmer capable of supplying the hospital's kitchens as well as offering organic baskets. Priority was given to items that the farm was able to provide based on availability,

while any remaining needs were filled through the hospital's usual food suppliers. The season ended on a positive note. With purchases totalling \$23,000, or 20% of the hospital's overall procurement of fresh produce for the period of June to October, the cooperative farm Les Jardins de Tessa and the CHUM agreed to repeat the experience in 2020. This time, their goal was to add a second weekly delivery and to increase the share of local and organic vegetables to 30%. In the winter of 2020, the farm planned its production quantities based on the CHUM's projected needs.



To compensate for a lack of fresh local and organic vegetables during the winter, the head of food services turned to a company that sells non-standard or aesthetically imperfect vegetables that are difficult to sell on the regular market. In doing so, the food service department was able to continue to procure vegetables in a more sustainable way during the winter, while also helping to reduce food waste.

## Key ingredients for success

- ✓ Support from the executive director;
- ✓ The willingness and strong enthusiasm of the project initiator;
- ✓ Perfect match between the farm and the institution.

## Word of advice

*"You can't be afraid of ideas that may seem overwhelming to you or your organization. These are innovative projects that help us move things forward and overcome barriers. Don't be afraid of being turned down."*

Annie Lavoie, Food Service Manager, CHUM



Photo: Myriam Baril-Tessier

## Recap



- 12,850 employees
- 772 beds

### Food system

- Patient food service, catering service and self-operated cafeteria, 5 franchises (commercial banners), 2 food kiosks located at the Centre de recherche du CHUM and at Hôtel-Dieu

### Food service analyzed

- Cafeteria, patient food service and self-operated catering service
- 3 production areas
- 300 employees
- 7,000 meals per day

### Main suppliers

- Broadline distributor (Sysco)
- Distributors of fruits and vegetables (J-G Rive-sud, Duval et fils)
- Coopérative les Jardins de Tessa
- Seconde vie
- Several small niche product suppliers

# Inspiring Institution



Other initiatives in the healthcare sector



Photo: CHU de Québec

## Centre hospitalier universitaire (CHU) de Québec-Université Laval: For a united approach to sustainable food procurement

In 2016, the CHU de Québec launched an initiative to conduct a comprehensive analysis of its consumption of local products in order to better meet its food traceability requirements. They wanted to:

- Obtain an up-to-date portrait of the institution's purchases of Quebec-sourced food products;
- Set targets aimed at increasing the proportion of Quebec food on plates;
- Measure the economic impact of their food purchases.

To help quantify the hospital's local food procurement, all products produced in Quebec were extracted from the CHU's material resources management database according to the name of the manufacturer and the location of its plant. This extraction made it possible for the CHU de Québec to establish the percentage of local food being purchased.

- The CHU's procurement of Quebec-sourced food accounted for 67.2% of its overall food supply;
- This represented a purchase volume of \$4,182,057 from companies established in Quebec out of a total \$6,236,882 in annual food purchases;
- The CHU de Québec was purchasing from approximately 150 Quebec food manufacturers;
- It is interesting to note that the majority of food products purchased by the CHU de Québec, mainly through the **Groupe d'approvisionnement en commun de l'Est du Québec (the group purchasing organization for Eastern Quebec), was supplied by Quebec companies.**

To implement concrete sustainable development measures and enhance the nutritional experience of patients and clients, the CHU de Québec-Université Laval focused on establishing a collaborative approach to sustainable food procurement by joining forces with the GPO of which it was a member, the Groupe d'approvisionnement en commun de l'Est du Québec (GACEQ).

*"The goal of this initiative was to share the expertise of the main stakeholders and to establish criteria<sup>13</sup> and tools to support and facilitate food procurement practices that respect the principles of sustainable development in the health and social services network."<sup>14</sup>*

This extensive work generated [a comprehensive report](#) and [a toolkit](#) that can support purchasing agents within GPOs and institutions in the Health and Social Services Network, as well as the food service managers within these institutions. Pilot projects carried out as part of the initiative have provided valuable learning opportunities and have made it possible to apply the tools developed and fine-tune them when necessary. Key components of the toolkit are the technical and information sheets on how to include sustainable development requirements in public calls for tenders for institutional food procurement while complying with the legal framework applicable to such tenders. Products data sheets have also been developed for the fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy and baked product categories, while information sheets have been produced for meat, poultry and fish. These high-quality adapted resources are an important source of



information and guidance for any sustainable food procurement initiative within Quebec's healthcare institutions. For more information, please contact the Groupe d'approvisionnement de l'Ouest du Québec. ([gacouest@ssss.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:gacouest@ssss.gouv.qc.ca))

## Illustration of a project in a Centre hospitalier de soins de longue durée (CHSLD)

Residential and long-care care homes (CHSLD) are for adults whose decreased independence prevents them from continuing to live without special care or requirements. A CHSLD is more than a hospital; it's a supportive living environment.

The Pavillon Lapointe CHSLD in Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts is home to 260 patients and is part of the Laurentians CISSS. Between 2014 and 2016, the cafeteria set the goal of promoting **regional products** in its food services. In addition to integrating more regional and local products in its non-contracted procurement (berries, fresh vegetables, meat, etc.), the food service team chose to focus its project on **the direct experience of clients**.

### The following actions were taken:

#### Procurement:

- Quantification of local products;
- Identification and development of partnerships with regional producers;
- Purchasing of local and regional foods when possible;
- Preparation of take-out dishes made from 50% seasonal local ingredients;
- Promotion of the local foods served in the cafeteria.

#### Awareness-raising and participation of patients:

- Nearby gardening activities offered to patients and integration of the harvested food in the salad bar;
- Preparation of recipes using in-season local ingredients (apple pie, strawberries, etc.);
- Invitation to farmers to meet patients;
- Organic food baskets made available for purchase to employees;
- Promotion and visibility for regional producers.

In addition to mobilizing the CHSLD team, the project generated a lot of enthusiasm among the facility's patients, who were grateful for the food being offered. This type of project requires time and engagement of the food service team.



Photo: Aliments du Québec au menu



Photo: Équiterre

# Resources



## Support, recognition, certification, accreditation and funding 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.
- [Nourish](#) is a Canada-wide cohort dedicated to empowering healthcare leadership in climate action and health equity. It works across community, institutional, and policy scales to steward innovation to transition to a more sustainable, equitable and preventative health system.
- The [Marine Stewardship Council \(MSC\)](#): is a traceability certification program promoting sustainable seafood. 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]
- [MAPAQ](#) funding program (framework program...) [in French]

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## Directories, lists and networks for finding local products

- [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: Directory of Quebec fish and seafood](#) (MAPAQ) [in French]
- [Fraîcheur Québec](#) [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)
- [Trousse d'outils: Approvisionnement alimentaire responsable du Réseau de la santé et des services sociaux](#). Contact: [gacouest@ssss.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:gacouest@ssss.gouv.qc.ca)
- [CAPÉ](#): technical guide: For information on the effective storage and conservation of local and organic products, contact: [info@capecoop.org](mailto:info@capecoop.org)



## Reference documents

- [Cadre de référence pour l'achat d'aliments dans le marché institutionnel: règles applicables et modalités de prise en compte du développement durable et de l'environnement](#) (MAPAQ) [in French]
- Tendances et risques légaux associés aux achats publics responsables: Final report presented to the Groupe d'approvisionnement en commun de l'est du Québec (GACEQ), Geneviève Dufour, Professor, and David Pavot, Post-Doctoral Student and Lecturer, Université de Sherbrooke, 2014.
- [Rapport final du projet d'approvisionnement alimentaire responsable du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux](#), CHU de Québec - Université Laval, 2019. Contact: [gacouest@ssss.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:gacouest@ssss.gouv.qc.ca)

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- CHU de Québec - Université Laval, Projet d'approvisionnement alimentaire responsable du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux, Rapport final, 2019.
- Équiterre, [Étude de cas sur l'approvisionnement en fruits et légumes locaux dans les établissements de santé au Québec](#), 2013.
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- Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec, [Le Bottin/Édition 2017 : consommation et distribution alimentaires en chiffres](#), 2017.
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- Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec [Politique bioalimentaire 2018-2025 : Alimenter notre monde](#), 2018.
- Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation, [Stratégie de positionnement des aliments du Québec sur le marché institutionnel](#), 2013.
- Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux Québec, [Rapport annuel 2018-2019 ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux](#), Government of Quebec, 2019
- Santé et Services sociaux Québec, [Cadre: Miser sur une alimentation de qualité](#), 2009.
- Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux Québec, [Lignes directrices pour les services alimentaires](#), 2017.
- Nourrir la Santé, Fondation McConnell et Réseau pour une alimentation durable, [Nourrir l'avenir de l'alimentation dans les soins de santé, recensement des politiques au Canada en 2018](#), 2019.
- Food Secure Canada (FSC), “[Purchasing Power: 10 Lessons on Getting More Local, Sustainable, and Delicious Food in Schools, Hospitals and Campuses](#),” March 2017.

## Websites

- [Nourrir la santé, Pourquoi?](#) accessed February 2020
- [Ressources humaines, Santé et services sociaux, Québec](#), accessed February 2020
- [Santé et services sociaux Québec, Réseau, Établissements de santé et de services sociaux](#), accessed January 2020

## Credits

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## Notes

- 1 Nutritional quality, freshness, fewer additives, minimal processing, organic, etc.
- 2 [Nourish Health Care, Case for Change](#), accessed February 2020.
- 3 [Santé et services sociaux Québec, Réseau, Établissements de santé et de services sociaux](#), accessed January 2020.
- 4 [Rapport annuel 2018-2019 ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux](#), Government of Quebec, 2019 [translation].
- 5 [Ressources humaines, Santé et services sociaux, Québec](#), accessed February 2020.
- 6 Recent MAPAQ data, 2019.
- 7 [Thresholds applicable in 2020](#). These thresholds are subject to change.
- 8 [Chapter C-65.1. Act Respecting Contracting by Public Bodies, Chapter 2, Publications Québec](#), accessed March 1, 2020.
- 9 [Lignes directrices pour les services alimentaires, Santé et Services sociaux](#), Quebec, 2017.
- 10 [Lignes directrices pour les services alimentaires, Santé et Services Sociaux](#), Quebec, 2017.
- 11 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing public health state of emergency, [the government of Quebec suspended the coming into force of certain provisions of Bill 37](#).
- 12 If such a policy exists within your institution, check whether it applies to food products.
- 13 The LCOP allows for sustainable development criteria to be included in tender documents, but the integration of this type of criteria is still marginal.
- 14 “[Projet d'approvisionnement alimentaire responsable du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux ; Rapport final](#),” CHU de Québec-Université Laval, 2019.

If you use the print version of this fact sheet, all of the websites identified can be accessed by clicking on the link provided in the fact sheet.



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This project was made possible with the collaboration of



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