

# IMPACT OF THE ECO-COMEDORES IN CANARY ISLANDS, SPAIN

Implemented since 2013 in Spain, the [Ecocomedores de Canarias](#) Programme has managed to significantly expand its impact during ten years by offering organic, local and seasonal food in public canteens of the seven islands composing the Islas Canarias region.

The Programme improves the quality of food by investing on the development of ecological agricultural production in the regional territory and by incorporating ecological products in the menus of schools, social, health and collective restoration centers in the Canary Islands.



The data presented by the Programme demonstrates its success: a network of 60 collective canteens that operate on all the islands; 11,500 users who benefit from the services; 99 local organic producers involved; 210 tons per year of local, organic, fresh and seasonal product consumption. The Map published on the website shows the producers and the centers of collective catering associated on each island.



The structural result achieved by the Regional Government of Canary Islands consists of a complex and permanent system that directly involves the centers managing the eco-canteens and the local organic producers through rigorous standards, agreements and technical instructions that ensure the conditions of quality and continuity. Through this set of consolidated management mechanisms and tools, the system is organized to progressively expand its impact in the regional territory. These materials developed to ensure their design and management could also inspire local governments of other countries interested in replicating this innovative practice to promote the production and use of organic food in the territories, generating benefits for health and environment.



The website *Ecocomedores de Canarias* offers all the information that can be used and adapted to other contexts. In the document [Bases reguladoras del programa de Ecocomedores](#) published in September 2022, an updated presentation of its main characteristics and tools is also available.

The *Ecocomedores de Canarias* Programme is promoted by the General Directorate for Educational Planning, Innovation and Promotion of the Canary Islands Government in collaboration with the [Institute for Agri-food Quality \(ICCA\)](#) an autonomous body attached to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of the regional Government. The Programme is part of the [Action plan for the development of organic production in the Canary Islands](#), the result of a participatory process initiated in 2010 with the involvement of organic producers and the public administration. In the pilot phase, the Government of the Canary Islands and the ICCA Institute implemented the Programme in public schools for infant and primary education, and in 2017 they decided to expand its



action to the canteens of any school, university, hospital, social center of the Islands that would be interested in participating.

The Programme promotes the use of products that are defined as:

- *Organic*. Certified organic production, respecting good environmental practices, the preservation of natural resources and animal welfare.
- *Local*. Commitment with the territory and its development, supporting certified organic production managed in the Canary Islands.
- *Fresh*. Directly from the garden to the table, with an insular and regional distribution system based on a quality protocol.
- *Seasonal*. Respecting the natural cycles of food production and adapting the menus to the seasonality of fruits and vegetables.

Through specific *Technical Groups*, the Programme develops its initiatives to ensure agronomic advice to producers, efficient distribution at the insular and regional level of products with adequate quality conditions to the centers organizing the Eco-canteens, the nutritional balance of the menus designed for the week and the recommended healthy cooking recipes, public information on the importance of ecological food.

The Centers are identified by the Programme on the basis of their requests and defined criteria, and all establish a specific commitment to be part of the Network of *Ecocomedores Canarias*. The design and elaboration of the menu that is served in these Centers favors the consumption of products with the mentioned characteristics and at the same time pay attention to the nutritional values for the reduction of overweight and obesity problems, providing a considerable benefit to the health of the users. The [Ecorecettario prepared by the Technical Group for Food](#) offers an example of the instruments adopted by the Programme to guide the work of the *Ecocomedores* managers.

In order to encourage the participation of organic agricultural producers, the Programme has established specific criteria to follow. The network of producers is made up of people and companies formally accredited in the *Register of Ecological Operators of the Canary Islands* and linked to the Programme through specific commitments. The fair price for each product is set and reviewed annually in agreement with the producers and does not vary throughout the entire period, avoiding market uncertainties. The [price list of the products for 2022-2023](#) offers an example of the program's regulatory framework.

For the organic producers of the Canary Islands, the Eco-Canteens Programme represents a great opportunity, based on a reliable short supply chain because it is supported by local institutions and services, which allows them to plan their crops (in varieties and quantities), reducing risks and boosting their activity. In addition, these short supply chains are more energy sustainable and reduce polluting emissions derived from marketing and distribution trips. In addition, these producers adopt organic farming management techniques that favour biodiversity and reduce the accumulation of pollutants in the environment. Being the care of the soil one of their priorities, in addition to improving its fertility they also reduce soil erosion and increase its level of organic material.

Through its *Technical Awareness Group*, the Programme also undertakes and promotes a wide range of initiatives with the aim of broadening the participation of new actors and the entire population. Events, forums, seminars, conferences, open-days for the public and training courses on organic production and its benefits for food and health are regularly organized. The purpose of all these initiatives is to inform, stimulate debate and provide constructive proposals about production and consumption of local organic food.



With the *Ecocomedores de Canarias* Programme, the Government of the Canary Islands and the ICCA Institute offer an example of an innovative practice that can be replicated by any regional or local government interested in enhancing the seasonal and ecological products of the territory, improving the nutrition and health of the population and creating a new generation of ecological consumers.

### To know more

[Ecocomedores de Canarias website](#)

[Bases-reguladoras-del-Programa-Ecocomedores-de-Canarias septiembre-2022](#)

[Ecocomedores de Canarias in Facebook](#)

[El potencial de la agricultura ecologica en Canarias](#)

[Ecorecettario - ecocomedoresdecanarias.com](#)

[Recetas ecosaludables](#)

[Instituto de Calidad Agroalimentaria ICCA](#)

[Ecocomedores in Gobierno de Canarias website](#)

[Instrucciones para los comedores escolares | Consejería de Educación, Universidades, Cultura y Deportes | Gobierno de Canarias](#)

[Agricultura ecológica y tradicional en Canarias in Rincones del Atlántico website](#)

[Article in Teachers For Future Spain](#)

[Ecocomedores in madridecologico.org](#)

[Article in ull.es Universidad de la Laguna portal](#)

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