EU School Fruit Scheme – North Rhine-Westphalia

North Rhine-Westphalia – Regional Strategy for the EU School Fruit Scheme

Implementation period: 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013
1. Outline of the initial situation and the aims of the school fruit scheme in NRW

The EU school fruit scheme has been in operation in North Rhine-Westphalia since 2010, having first been launched towards the end of the 2009/10 academic year. The scheme was rolled out in March/April 2010 in 350 primary schools and special schools which have been providing pupils with free fresh fruit and vegetables ever since. Uptake of the scheme has been growing steadily and now over 520 schools are enrolled for the 2011/12 academic year. Community aid covers 50 per cent of the cost of the produce, logistics, distribution and communications. Co-financing for the initiative in North Rhine-Westphalia has so far been provided exclusively by the federal state. This co-financing model is set to remain in place for the 2012/13 academic year.

The budgetary provisions required for implementation in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 are established through decisions of the North Rhine-Westphalia state parliament on the 2012 budget. This means that it is likely that the North Rhine-Westphalia school fruit scheme will continue in the 2012/13 school year.

This strategy document serves as the basis for the continued implementation of the North Rhine-Westphalia school fruit scheme for the period 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013.

The aims of the NRW school fruit scheme are set out in the NRW guidelines on the school fruit scheme. They are:

• to make positive and lasting changes to children’s habits regarding the consumption of fruit and vegetables by making fruit and vegetables available to schools and to increase children's acceptance of these products,

• to use fruit and vegetables to improve nutrition levels and thus contribute to healthier school meals, and

• to show children how to prepare fruit and vegetables and to teach them how flavours vary according to the seasons and growing region.

2. Target group and organisational aspects

The school fruit scheme is aimed first and foremost at children in primary education including primary age children in special schools. In special schools the scheme is permitted to continue until year six as these schools are structured differently and have multi-level classes. Alternative arrangements can also be made for other schools, irrespective of their structure. These will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

The most important feature of the North-Rhine Westphalia school fruit scheme is its continuity. The longer the children are provided with fruit and vegetables (ideally throughout the primary school years), the more likely it is that the scheme will have a lasting positive impact and will improve nutritional habits. For this reason, the participating schools can take part in the school fruit scheme on a permanent basis provided that they fulfil the entry criteria and submit an annual report. The 2012/13 reporting process will also feature an online evaluation element which will enable teachers, pupils and possibly even parents to rate their satisfaction with the scheme or leave comments.
So far the number of schools participating has always increased at the beginning of each academic year. A slight increase is also expected in 2012/13. The funding for this has been made available by reducing the supply frequency. In practice this means that participating schools can no longer choose between three or five portions per week. Those schools which are currently receiving three portions a week will continue to do so. Any new schools admitted to the scheme will also receive three portions of fruit per week. Schools which are currently receiving five portions per week may, during a transition period, opt to receive either three or four portions per week. From the start of the 2013/14 academic year, however, every school will receive three portions per week.

It is expected that admission to the scheme will be on the basis of an application. As in the previous year, only online applications will be accepted. Schools are selected on the basis of fixed criteria. These include social criteria, the regional distribution of participating schools and the efforts schools have made so far to promote health. The application process will be launched in spring 2012 on the school fruit website to ensure that participating schools have been selected before the start of the summer holidays. At this stage we cannot predict how many new schools will be added to the scheme.

At the moment, 521 schools are participating in the North-Rhine Westphalia school fruit scheme. In practice this means that around 100,000 children are regularly receiving free fresh fruit and vegetables. In addition to encouraging more schools to join the scheme in 2012/13, another important aim is to ensure that schools which have previously participated in the scheme continue to do so.

Any eligible body within the meaning of Article 6(2) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 34/2011 may apply for authorisation to supply school fruit. The authorisation conditions are specified in the federal state’s funding guidelines. Currently around 110 suppliers are actively involved in the North Rhine-Westphalia school fruit scheme. Details of the selected schools and the authorised suppliers are published on the fruit scheme website. Schools and suppliers decide on the terms and conditions of supply and are responsible for implementing the scheme at a local level. Fruit deliveries are made to the schools several times each week. In the schools the fruit and vegetables are cut into small pieces for the children to eat as finger-food. The fruit and vegetables are then distributed in class. Experience so far and feedback have shown that teachers and pupils are very satisfied with the school fruit scheme. The schools put a great deal of effort into organising and running the scheme and the children are very enthusiastic about it. Feedback from schools has been entirely positive.

3. Products eligible for aid

Fresh fruit and vegetables (including bananas) are eligible for aid, as are fruit and vegetable products prepared and/or packed in ready-to-eat pieces (e.g. pre-packed slices of apple or carrot sticks). Wherever possible, preference should be given to products which are grown locally and which are in season, and to organic products. The product list is given in Annex 1 and is intended as a guide to selecting fruit and vegetables whilst taking into account regional specialities and seasonal availability. This list is not exhaustive, however.

The health authority was consulted throughout the planning stages and approved the use of the products. The products listed in Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 288/2009 are excluded, namely products containing
– added sugar
– added fat
– added salt
– added sweeteners.

4. Stakeholder involvement

The EU school fruit scheme in North-Rhine Westphalia is being implemented by the Ministry of Climate Protection, Environment, Agriculture, Nature and Consumer Protection in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education. There are plans to improve the range of accompanying educational activities, and discussions involving the North Rhine-Westphalia Association for Women in Agriculture, the Regional Milk Association, and the North Rhine-Westphalia School Food Network are ongoing. In addition there is regular dialogue with the agricultural associations.

5. Accompanying measures

In North Rhine-Westphalia there are a variety of initiatives aimed wholly or partially at increasing the number of children and young people who consume fruit and vegetables on a regular basis. These include:

• ‘Healthy Eating at School’ (‘Schule isst gesund’) scheme
• North Rhine-Westphalia School Food Network
• ‘Education and Health’ scheme

When applying to participate in the scheme, schools had to undertake to offer a complementary educational programme. Schools were free to decide what form this would take, for example lesson modules, farm visits, action days, etc. The following accompanying measures are particularly noteworthy:

- In the 2011/12 academic year, the federal state of North-Rhine Westphalia began supporting lesson modules in year three in schools enrolled on the school fruit scheme. Specially trained women from the agricultural sector visit year three pupils in schools which are participating in the school fruit scheme and talk to the children about healthy eating and present healthy breakfast options. Through play, the children learn what constitutes a healthy breakfast and in a practical exercise they have the opportunity to prepare their own breakfast. In this way they are able to practice key skills at an early age.

- In addition, the association ‘aid infodienst’ (‘aid information service’) provided teaching materials. The materials were specially designed to accompany the school fruit scheme. Theory and practice are combined in an engaging way and children learn to recognise different types of fruit and vegetables. The comprehensive teaching materials also cover food preparation and hygiene. One pack was made available to each school free of charge. Further copies may be requested if required.
(for a complete list of accompanying measures please see Annex 3)

6. Supervisory measures

The supervisory measures consist of the administrative checks and on-the-spot checks provided for in the Implementing Regulation. On-the-spot checks apply to both schools and suppliers. The checks examine the implementation and organisation of the scheme. The overall efficacy of North Rhine-Westphalia’s school fruit scheme is being evaluated as part of a detailed study by the University of Bonn. The findings will be published in the form of a report in early 2012.

7. Programme financing

Funding for the implementation of the school fruit scheme from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013 is based on the following eligible costs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Costs eligible for aid under Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 288/2009 (for the distribution of fruit and vegetables, including logistics and monitoring and evaluation, where applicable)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Member State (in this case NRW) with possible private sector involvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EUR 5m</td>
<td>EUR 2.5m</td>
<td>EUR 2.5m</td>
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In the event of a redistribution of EU funding, North-Rhine Westphalia currently requires no further support for the 2012/13 academic year. In addition to the above eligible costs there are costs for accompanying measures and administrative costs, which are still borne exclusively by the Member State. The accompanying measures (lesson modules, teaching materials) have up to now been covered by the available budgetary funds. For the 2012/13 academic year co-financing will be sought for the accompanying measures, if necessary.

**Important note:** All statements as to the proportion provided by the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia are provisional pending the final decision of the North Rhine-Westphalia state parliament.

**Concluding remark:**
As a result of the gradual shift from five fruit portions a week to three, the total amount of funding sought in the two transitional years will be somewhat reduced. However, North-Rhine Westphalia is still keen to expand the scheme.