Ministry of Agriculture

Member State: the Czech Republic

Date: 12 January 2015

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Subject:
National Strategy of the Czech Republic under the School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme for the 2015/2016 School Year

In accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) No 288/2009, as in force, we hereby inform you of the national strategy for implementation of the School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme for the 2015/2016 school year.

Geographical coverage: national

A. BASELINE, OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

(i) baseline (initial position):
In 2013 fruit consumption in the Czech Republic was 76.8 kg per person per year, which was 14.3 % down on 2009 (in 2009 per capita consumption was 90.4 kg, as against just 74.6 kg per person per year in 2012). The level of consumption reflects the lower purchasing power of the population in recent years and the higher fruit prices in shops.

In 2013 vegetable consumption was 82.9 kg per person per year and has been fluctuating since 2009, ranging from 77.8 kg per person per year in 2012 to 85.4 kg per person per year in 2011. There has been an increase in consumption of vegetables that are quick to eat, such as lettuce, kohlrabi, radishes, peppers, asparagus and tomatoes (particularly cocktails tomatoes and cherry tomatoes). In contrast, there has been a decrease in consumption of vegetables that take time to prepare, such as cabbage, celeriac, kale, leeks and beetroot.

Consumption is not broken down into children and adults.

Between 1996 and 2012 the absolute number of children up to the age of 14 being treated for obesity, overnutrition and the consequences thereof has trebled to 30.9 thousand.

(ii) objectives:
In the 2015/2016 school year we are planning to focus more on accompanying measures. We will be building on the accompanying measures applied in the 2014/2015 school year, which was a pilot period.

We will also be gradually introducing a maximum price per portion that will be paid from the scheme budget.

(iii) targets:
The objective is to improve children’s eating habits so that they become used to regularly eating more fruit and vegetables, primarily in a fresh state, but subsequently also as part of meals and in soups, which tend to be the least popular with children.

B. BUDGET

The Czech budget will be funded 88 % by a Union contribution of EUR 3 124 660 and 12 % by a national contribution of EUR 426 090.
In accordance with Article 4 of Council Regulation (EC) No 288/2009 the Czech Republic gives notice that it is willing to use more than its initial allocation of EU aid, namely up to EUR 9 271 421 from the Union. This is matched by a national contribution of 12%, which comes to EUR 1 264 285 (CZK 35 million), but the Czech Republic is willing to contribute (CZK 50 million).

Grounds for increasing the allocation:

• There has been a constant increase in the number of children involved in the scheme (year-on-year growth of almost 53 000 children), not just because of growing interest in the scheme, but also because there is an overall increase in the number of children starting primary school (large annual intakes); the number of children in the 6 - 10 age group already exceeds the absolute number of these children given by the EU;
• The financial resources intended for the scheme are now also being used for accompanying measures, which reduces the amount available for delivering the products;
• The amount of the annual limit for products per pupil and the number of deliveries should ideally be maintained at least at the level of the previous school year.

C. TARGET GROUP

The target group selected on the basis of objective criteria as final beneficiaries of the EU aid referred to in Article 23(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 comprises children aged 6 - 10 attending compulsory education in the first tier of primary school (including special primary schools) and preparatory classes (equivalent to primary classes). In the 2015/2016 school year the scheme is likely to involve 520 000 school children from 3 800 primary schools.

In the 2014/2015 school year 509 000 children from 3 741 schools took part in the scheme, which was 211 schools and about 53 000 children more than in the previous school year, 2013/2014. In the 2015/2016 school year more than 100 000 children are due to move up from kindergarten to primary school, while around 90 000 children will be moving up to the second tier of primary school. The difference is about 10 000 children. There are more than 4 000 first-tier primary schools.

D. ELIGIBLE PRODUCTS

Eligible products which are covered by Community aid under this scheme and which are not excluded by Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 288/2009, with a view to ensuring a high level of protection for health, seasonality, product availability and environmental issues, are limited to the following products in accordance with Article 1(2)(i), (j) and (k) (Parts IX, X and XI of Annex I) of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013, including the following in particular:

• Fresh fruit and vegetables, including bananas (whole or sliced or grated into salads) - min. 75 %
• Packaged natural fruit and vegetable juice (free of flavouring and preservatives) and fruit or fruit and vegetable purées – max. 25 %

The selection of agricultural products offered for consumption to pupils should comply with the Nutrition Recommendations for the Czech Population, issued by the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic. This means that the choice of fresh fruit and vegetables should be as varied as possible, and fruits and vegetables from our climate zone, preferably local produce, should be preferred. The inclusion of exotic fruit may be regarded as diversification and the expansion of knowledge within the curriculum by introducing children to the fruit of other
climatic zones, e.g. in connection with the teaching of science and geography subjects. Products must be kept in accordance with good hygiene practice, under the conditions specified by the producer. Children should not be given pieces of fruit or vegetable that have signs of mould or rotting or are damaged in some other way affecting the safety of the products, and any such damaged pieces of fruit or vegetable should not be further processed by slicing or grating.

The eligible products are approved by the Ministry of Health.

E. ACCOMPANYING MEASURES

(i) Aims of accompanying measures

Accompanying measures are taken to support the distribution of fruit and vegetables, to increase the short-term and long-term consumption of fruit and vegetables and to create healthy eating habits. In order to provide access to as many pupils from the target group as possible, the accompanying measures are not limited to a specific geographic area or a specific type of educational establishment.

The accompanying measures have been implemented by the schools involved in the scheme since it began in the 2009/2010 school year. When implementing the accompanying measures, schools are primarily guided by their own teaching conditions and the particular educational needs of their pupils. Activities in the accompanying programmes must be in keeping with the strategy and with the curriculum used by the school concerned. Of the different primary school study areas, the ones thematically best suited to the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme are ‘People and Their Health’ (under ‘Physical Education’) and ‘People and Their World’.

Since the 2014/2015 school year, accompanying measures have also been provided by approved applicants (Article 6(2)(e)(i) of Commission Regulation No 288/2009), who submit a plan for the accompanying measures for the school year in question to the State Agricultural Intervention Fund (SZIF) by 31 October. They coordinate with the school on the accompanying measures, which then also serve as recommendations to the school on how to encourage pupils to eat fruit and vegetables. All accompanying activities must be provided by persons and bodies possessing the requisite professional training and expertise and must be approved under the accompanying measures plan by representatives of the State Agricultural Intervention Fund, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, the National Institute of Public Health and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

(ii) Content:

1. field trips to farms and market gardens;
2. thematic lectures, learning actions and information campaigns, and participation in Health Days at primary school;
3. tasting of fruit and vegetables and fruit and vegetable products;
4. organisation of school competitions that encourage the consumption of fruit and vegetables;
5. support for equipment for school land (supply of tools, compost, seedlings, etc.) linked to pupils’ work on it.

See Annex.
F. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

The Ministry of Agriculture draws up the strategy and national legislation (government regulation).

The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the State Agricultural Intervention Fund are involved in producing the legislation and the strategy, including the list of eligible products and accompanying measures. For the purpose of implementing the National Strategy, the assistance of experts from regional public health centres may be used at local level and, possibly, from the National Health Institute at national level (lectures and professional consultations).

The State Agricultural Intervention Fund (SZIF) is responsible for administration and for monitoring compliance with all project-related legislation.

The public and private entities manage the distribution of the fruit, vegetables and products made of fruit, vegetables and bananas to the schools under the scheme via distributors.

One of the key elements of the whole scheme cooperation with the family, which can take the form of active parental participation in the implementation of school projects, parental involvement in the evaluation of the scheme (evaluation questionnaires) or sponsorship.

G. MODALITIES OF DISTRIBUTION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE:

The minimum number of product deliveries per month is communicated by the State Agricultural Intervention Fund at the beginning of the school year in view of the amount of funding. The target is 4 deliveries per month for all suppliers. The pupils are given the fruit and vegetables outside meal times, most often during breaks between classes. Sometimes the pupils are given the fruit and vegetables during a class in the context of a lesson on fruit and vegetables.

The suppliers of the school fruit and vegetables ( = the applicants) are the public or private entities that manage the distribution of the fruit, vegetables and products to the schools. In order to be approved, the applicants have to meet the conditions laid down in Article 3 of Government Regulation No 478/2009. Applicants are approved by the State Agricultural Intervention Fund.

H. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND CONTROLS

Monitoring and evaluation are conducted annually by means of a questionnaire sent to applicants (suppliers of school fruit and vegetables) and school directors. This is also done every 5 years for parents (the next one will be in 2016).

On-the-spot checks are carried out on the basis of risk analysis and 100 % of applicants are checked several times a year. The monitoring, evaluation and controls are conducted at national level and handled by the State Agricultural Fund.

Distribution list:

EUROPEAN COMMISSION DG Agriculture and Rural Development Rue de la Loi 130 BRUSSELS-BELGIUM (email: AGRI-HORT-SCHOOLFRUIT@ec.europa.eu)

Cc:

State Agricultural Intervention Fund – (Ve Smečkách 801 - 33 00 Praha 1)
Annex:

E. ACCOMPANYING MEASURES

When implementing the School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme, schools can fulfil the objectives of the accompanying measures in the following ways:

• field trips to farms and market gardens that are geared to the production, distribution and processing or sale of fruit and vegetables in order to broaden pupils’ knowledge and skills regarding the growing, processing and other use of fruit and vegetables, also in accordance with the principles of teaching about sustainable development;

• thematic lectures, learning actions and information campaigns on the products supplied under the School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme, on healthy eating habits, on protecting the environment, and on the production, distribution and consumption of fruit and vegetables, with the exception of websites - educational lectures and courses provided by external experts on health, proper nutrition, the importance of eating fruits and vegetables, the rules for the safe processing and consumption of fruit and vegetables (hygiene rules for processing and eating fruit and vegetables, quality assessment, rules for the appropriate selection of fruit and vegetables from the aspect of quality, etc.);

• participation in Health Days in schools to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables - school health days (weeks), focusing on the dissemination of information about fruit and vegetables and the importance of eating more of them (types of fruit and vegetables, the origin of different types of fruit and vegetables, the importance of eating fruit and vegetables to stay healthy, etc.);

• tasting of fruit and vegetables and fruit and vegetable products, encouraging pupils to taste less familiar types of fruit and vegetables and teaching them how to prepare and store them, as well as the hygiene rules for preparing and consuming them;

• organisation of school competitions that encourage the consumption of fruit and vegetables - competitions at class and school level, at local and national level, on the topic of fruit and vegetables;

• support for equipment for school land (supply of tools, compost, seedlings, etc.) linked to pupils’ work on it – practical activities on school land, in the wildlife corner, in the laboratory, etc. offer pupils the chance to acquire practical skills that can be applied in real life (laboratory observations, cultivation, etc.); and in addition:

• games – a variety of educational games related to fruit and vegetables, nature conservation, proper nutrition, health care, disease prevention (types of fruit and vegetables, the importance of eating them, diet structure, recipes for the preparation of simple fruit and vegetable dishes, etc.).

Marian Jurečka
Minister for agriculture