

**Polska**



# Promoting fruit and vegetables

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The campaign, part of a Europe-wide drive co-financed from EU coffers, plugs fruit and vegetables as offering immense health benefits and especially nutritious when freshly harvested.

Although Poland has for years been a top European producer of fruit and vegetables, the average diet in Poland is not sufficiently rich in vitamins from fruit, vegetables and juices, according to experts. This is expected to change as awareness of healthy eating habits is growing among the public due to factors including programs and campaigns to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables.

The Fruit and Vegetables in School campaign seeks to promote healthy eating among children and encourage them to change their nutritional habits by consuming more

fruit and vegetables. Run by the Agricultural Market Agency, the campaign has been a success in Poland ever since the European Commission launched it in the 2009/2010 school year.

Research shows that a quarter of children in the EU are overweight or obese. The problem is escalating, in part due to diets poor in fruit and vegetables. According to the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, it is vital to take wide-ranging measures to improve children's eating habits and encourage them to eat more fruit and vegetables.

Children covered by the Fruit and Vegetables in School campaign receive portions of fresh fruit, vegetables and juices two or three times a week. This includes apples, pears, strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes, carrots, peppers, radishes and cabbage turnips, in addition to fruit and vegetable juices.

Apart from healthy food, the campaign comprises educational activities for children. In elementary schools, such activities are held at least twice a semester, teaching children about healthy eating. The most popular activities include cooking classes, field trips to orchards, and "school gardens" set up by students.

The campaign targets the youngest schoolchildren because healthy eating habits are the easiest to shape in this age group. In the 2014/2015 school year, the target group was expanded to include children from grade "0" of elementary school, covering almost 1.4 million children in all. According to the Education Ministry, in the 2015/2016 school year the campaign will cover over 1.6 million children.

Data from the Agricultural Market Agency shows the campaign is increasingly popular. The number of children covered by the campaign has more than quadrupled since the project was launched in the 2009/2010 school year, the agency says. The number of participating schools has also grown quickly.

Interest in the program is expected to increase further because in the 2014/2015 school year, the European Commission increased funding for the campaign throughout the EU from 90 million to 150 million euros. In the 2015/2016 school year, the Polish part of this EU-wide campaign will be the third largest in terms of funding, after similar campaigns in Italy and Germany. The total budget of the Polish campaign will be around 20.5 million euros, including Poland's own contribution.

According to the Polish Agriculture Ministry, EU funding accounts for 88 percent of the campaign's budget, with the Polish government contributing the remaining 12 percent.

Source: The Warsaw Voice



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