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Comparing programmes to promote organic food consumption in public sector institutions in Denmark, Norway and Sweden

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Summary

The governments in Denmark, Norway and Sweden have launched policy initiatives to increase the consumption of organic food within the public sector. Comparing achievements in 2019, Sweden comes out as the most successful with 39 percent of the food purchased by public sector institutions being organic, while Denmark has reached 22 percent. The Norwegian policy initiative has only resulted in an organic share of 1 percent.

In a Scandinavian context, Sweden and to a lesser extent Denmark can be considered the two success cases while the intention to promote organic food in the public sector in Norway has failed so far. Policy programmes are different in the three countries. Therefore, the question examined in this report is whether programme differences can explain the considerable variation in performance in terms of growing organic food consumption within the public sector.

The policy strategy in Sweden to a considerable extent has relied on setting a consumption goal and, importantly on framing the issue of organic consumption in relation to broader concerns – public health and sustainability. By framing organic food consumption in relation to such broader ideas possessing a high degree of positive appeal, the Swedish programme has relied on broader emotional appeal aimed at reaching out to public health, human nutrition professionals and frontline staff as well as to environmental policy makers and administrators. Policy instruments designed to create incentives to convert kitchens played only a modest role.

While the Danish government also established a relationship between organic farming and sustainability, the attempt to link between organics and public health has been much weaker. In comparison with the Swedish strategy, the Danish strategy has been strongly policy instrument oriented, using a mixture of policy instruments creating incentives and motivation for converting kitchens in the public sector to purchase more organic food. These instruments were backed by considerable capacity to implement them, resulting in significant impact, suggesting that the existence of relevant policy capacity is a crucial pre-condition for successful implementation of policy instruments.

The Norwegian government did not attempt to establish a connection between organics, sustainability and public health; rather the link was questioned in the government's strategy for organic agriculture. Similarly to Denmark, the emphasis of the strategy has been on policy instruments. The Norwegian kitchen conversion programme had a regional focus in which the idea was to convert kitchens in the capital region and scale up such regional experiences to the national level. However, in terms of consumption impact, the Norwegian programme failed as very little consumption increase occurred. In light of the experiences in Denmark, this report indicates that insufficient generation and mobilisation of policy capacity within the Norwegian organic food sector may have been an important factor explaining the limited consumption impact.

An important factor influencing the transferability of policy strategies from abroad is the comparability of the political, institutional and economic contexts in the host and receiving country.

The report identifies contextual differences across the three countries, which raise questions about the transferability of policy experiences and designs between the three countries. Sweden has benefitted from a policy context more favourable to increasing organic food consumption within the public sector than the two other countries. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Swedish framing strategy can be directly and successfully transferred to other countries. Relying on policy instruments in combination with building capacity to implement the instruments, as practised in the Danish case, appears to be a more transferable policy strategy.

Introduction

The Nordic countries are often considered pioneers in environmental policy (e.g. Andersen & Liefferink 1997). However, this overall characterisation hides significant variation in policy design and performance across individual environmental policy programmes. This is particularly true in relation to government promotion of organic farming and food consumption. Though committed to promote organic food and farming, the Nordic countries have adopted different policies, resulting in very different outcomes. Therefore, the Nordic countries offer favourable conditions for comparing how different policies can affect performance in terms of growing the organic food market.

Denmark emerged early as the Nordic as well as the global forerunner in growing organic food consumption. By 1997, 2.5 percent of the food purchased in Denmark was organic while Sweden was trailing with 0.6 percent. No data were reported for Iceland, Norway and Finland (Willer & Yussefi 2000, 52). Two decades later (2018), Denmark was still leading with 11.5 percent. Sweden had to a considerable extent caught up and was ranked third globally with 9.6 percent. Finland and Norway were well behind with 2.4 and 1.7 percent respectively (Schlatter *et al.* 2020, 68-69).[1] Growth in organic consumption is mainly driven by private purchases, but consumption initiatives within the public sector have also had an impact. The governments in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have launched policy initiatives to increase the consumption of organic food within the public sector. Comparing achievements in 2019, Sweden comes out as the most successful with 39 percent of the food served in the public sector being organic, while Denmark is at 22 percent.[2] Finland reached 12 percent and Norway comes out as the Nordic laggard with only 1 percent (Ekomatcentrum[3] 2020, 20).

Organic food policy design can help explain the different performance in relation to growing organic consumption. Comparing national organic policies and organic food consumption in four countries (Denmark, Sweden, the UK and the US), Daugbjerg and Sønderskov (2012) concluded that policy design had a significant impact on consumption levels. With such support for the *policy matters* thesis, this report undertakes a comparison of policy programmes designed to motivate kitchens in the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish public sectors to increase their consumption of organic food products. The purpose of the comparative analysis is to establish how policies may impact on organic consumption in the public sector.[4] In a Scandinavian context, Sweden and to a lesser extent Denmark can be considered the two success cases while the intention to promote organic food in the public sector in Norway so far has failed. Policy programmes are different in the three countries. Therefore, the focus of the analysis is to explore whether a link between programme differences

[1] No data were recorded for Iceland over the two decades.
[2] Statistics Denmark reports 23 percent for 2019 (Danmarks Statistik 2020)
[3] Ekomatcentrum is an NGO which organises organic farmers, food processors, food retailers, wholesalers, restaurants and larger kitchens, municipalities, regions and consumers.
[4] Finland is not included in the analysis because the linguistic skills to examine Finnish government documents were not available within this project.

and performance in terms of growing organic food consumption within the public sector can be established.

While Daugbjerg and Sønderskov (2012) focussed on policy design as the explanatory variable, this report takes a broader policy perspective by also including the framing of organic food consumption in relation to other objectives pursued within the public sector. To make sense of a problem and to suggest solutions to the problem, policy actors engage in a process of framing in which some facts are selected over others and linked to political, moral or ethical values (Schön & Rein 1994). Hence, a policy frame is a mixture of facts and emotional appeal which serves to recommend and justify certain courses of action (Baumgartner & Jones 1993; Bomberg 2017).

Promotion of organic food within the public sector in Sweden has been framed broader than in Denmark and Norway. The Swedish effort has relied more on appeal by setting a goal for organic consumption (Jörgensen 2012) and framed organic food consumption within the public sector in relation to broader objectives carrying positive valence, i.e. positive emotional appeal. Organic food is framed broadly as a positive contribution to public health and sustainability objectives. While the Danish initiative was also considered a measure to pursue sustainability objectives, no connection to public health objectives was established. In Norway, organic food promotion within the public sector was not linked to public health and sustainability objectives. In Denmark and Norway the policy strategy adopted by the governments has been policy instrument oriented, using a mixture of policy instruments to stimulate kitchen conversions.

In this report, the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish strategies for promoting organic food within the public sector are compared, and it is discussed whether and to what extend differences in policy strategy can help explain cross-country variation in the shares of organic food consumption with the public sector. The three Scandinavian countries share many similarities. This makes them almost ideal for comparative analysis based on the most-similar systems research design which is used when the scholar wants to explore why different outcomes have occurred in similar contexts. When comparing similar countries, a number of factors, which from a theoretical perspective can potentially explain differences in outcomes, can be kept constant across the countries. Factors that are constant across cases cannot explain variation in outcomes. Only factors varying across cases can be considered potentially explanatory and should be subject of further analysis. On a fundamental political level, Denmark, Norway and Sweden are often considered very similar in terms of their political systems (parliamentary democracy with minority government as the predominant mode of government) and policy styles (corporatist and consensual decision making). They share fairly similar ambitions in relation to sustainable development in a more general sense and specifically in relation to the agricultural and food sector. In all three countries, the government has engaged in promoting organic farming, including expressing aims for organic food consumption in the public sector. Increasing organic food consumption has been motivated in a similar manner as it is seen as a measure to grow the organic farm sector (Ministeriet for Fødevarer, Landbrug og Fiskeri 2012; Jordbruksdepartementet 2006, 16; Jörgensen 2012, 32; Landbruks- og matdeparte-

mentet 2009). Hence, these factors can be held constant in the comparative analysis. However, the three cases are not completely comparable as there are differences in policy context. Relatively speaking, many more meals are served in the public sector in Sweden compared with Denmark and Norway. In Sweden, as well as in Finland, taxpayer funded meals are served in primary, secondary and vocational schools, while in Denmark and Norway, most students bring their own food (Koch *et al.* 2018, 39; Risku-Norja & Løes 2017, 112). In the conclusion, it will be discussed what this means for the transferability of policy lessons between the three Scandinavian countries.

The next section of this report outlines the concepts of policy instruments and framing. These concepts are used as the analytical lenses through which the policy programmes in the three countries are analysed in the subsequent section. The final section summaries the findings, discusses the extent to which the different programmes aimed at increasing the consumption of organic food in the public sector can explain the differences in achievements in the three countries and whether the experiences with the programmes are transferable from one country to another.

Analytical framework: framing and policy instruments

Broadly defined, public policy is the government courses of action or inaction directed towards a problem (Heidenheimer *et al.* 1990, 3). Unpacking the concept of policy, May (2003) argues that public policies "typically contain a set of intentions or goals, a mix of instruments or means for accomplishing the intentions, a designation of governmental or nongovernmental entities charged with carrying out the intentions, and an allocation of resources for the requisite tasks." In policy analysis, the focus would often be on the policy instruments when explaining outcomes. Policy instruments are the nuts and bolts of public policy as it is through these that government can bring about the desired change of behaviour. Policy instruments can be defined as the "the set of techniques by which governmental authorities wield their power in attempting to ensure support and effect or prevent social changes" (Vedung 1998, 21). In his classic policy instrument typology, Hood (1983) distinguished between instruments based upon information (informative instruments), authority (regulatory instruments), treasure (economic instruments) and organization (Hood 1983). These types of instruments are based on different motivational rationales. Informative instruments use learning or persuasion to motivate people to change behaviour. Regulatory instruments use rules backed by authority to apply force if necessary to bring about compliance with prescribed or prohibited behaviour. Economic instruments use economic incentives to motivate people to behave in a particular way by rewarding desired behaviour or increasing the cost of continuing undesired behaviour. Finally, organisation uses *architecture*, i.e. building or shaping organisations in a way inducing people to behave in particular ways. Organisation is often associated with the use of one or more of the other three instrument types (Hood 1983; Vedung 1998). For instance, implementing an organic certification and labelling scheme requires an organisation to certify and monitor compliance with the standards. This instrument typology has proven very robust and continues to be widely used (Hood 2007). Policy instruments can be used to directly affect the motivations of individual target group members in order to change behaviour or indirectly through particular organisational designs which facilitate a certain type of behaviour.

While an instrument perspective would take us quite far in explaining impact, it only focusses on one set of policy-related factors influencing outcomes. Another factor which can influence outcomes is the way in which policy is framed in relation to the ideas and values underpinning public policies. The concept of framing is

mainly applied as a perspective to explain why a particular discourse dominates the policy debate. But it can also help us understand policy performance, particularly in situations in which policy applies relatively weak instruments but nonetheless produces a significant impact.

Ideational foundations and framing in relation to these can have an important impact on motivating those who are responsible for implementing policy and those who are the targets of policy, i.e. those whose behaviour must change to bring about the desired outcome. All policies rest on more or less developed and articulated ideas. Policy ideas can be defined as causal beliefs about economic, social and political phenomena. As Béland and Cox (2016, 430) states, "As beliefs, they are interpretations of the material world, shaped as much by the material world as by our emotions and values. As causal beliefs, ideas posit relationships between things and events". They "help to construct the problems and issues that enter the policy agenda … and shape the assumptions that impact the content of reform proposals" (Béland 2009, 702; see also Béland & Cox 2011; Blyth 2002; Campbell 2002; Hall 1993). Without having ideas it would be impossible to form an understanding of a policy problem and how it can be addressed (Blyth 2002).

Some ideas have more emotional appeal than others do. To help understand this phenomenon, Cox and Béland (2013) apply the concept of valence, which they define as "as an emotional quality of an idea that can be either positive or negative in its character, or high or low in its intensity" (p. 308). If policies can be based on such ideas or framed in relation to them, they are more likely to generate support. When framing a policy issue in relation to ideas, policy makers "invoke ideas that evoke positive feelings to build support for a particular policy option, and they tend to downplay less desirable aspects of the policy option" (Cox & Béland 2013, 317). Framing a policy in relation to an idea with positive valence can make certain courses of action more appealing to not only the public but also to people with expert knowledge (Cox & Béland 2013, 308, 312). Linking a policy issue to an idea can take place through rhetorical framing in which policy advocates create storylines focussed on using persuasion and argument to legitimate policy decisions (Schön & Rein 1994, 32). Rhetorical frames are selective in terms of which sort of information is given weight in the storylines and what is omitted or downgraded (Nisbet 2009, 16; Whitley *et al.* 2018). As Schön and Rein (1994, 26), point out, "Things are selected for attention and named in such a way as to fit the frame constructed for the situation".

New policy initiatives can be framed differently and this may have an impact on the performance of policy. Framing policy in relation to an idea possessing a high level of positive appeal may have an independent influence on policy performance. It legitimises policy to staff assigned with implementation responsibilities, target groups, other stakeholders as well as the public, and creates motivation and engagement within these groups of actors.

Organic food can be framed in relation to a number of ideas with positive appeal. The intergovernmental standardisation organisation Codex Alimentarius Commission (2007, 2) defines organic agriculture as

> … a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agroecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. This is accomplished by using, where possible, cultural, biological and mechanical methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials, to fulfil any specific function within the system

The definition frames organic agriculture rather narrowly as a production management system which positively affects the agricultural eco-system such as improving biodiversity and soil health. The framing in relation to these benefits has positive appeal, but to a more limited constituency.

While Codex Alimentarius Commission's framing more or less explicitly underpin organic food and farm policies in most countries, organic farming and food can also be framed in relation to a broader set of ideas with emotional attraction. It can be linked to sustainability objectives for the farming industry or the public sector. Sustainability is an idea in which economic growth can co-exist with healthy eco-systems. The idea is based on the presumption that technologies and social organisation can be managed and improved to allow growth in an environmental friendly manner (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). This is appealing to most people (Cox & Béland 2013). Organic food can also be framed as measure to promote a healthy diet. The World Health Organization defines a healthy diet as composed of meals which "achieve energy balance and a healthy weight, limit energy intake from total fats and shift fat consumption away from saturated fats to unsaturated fats and towards the elimination of trans-fatty acids, increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, and legumes, whole grains and nuts, limit the intake of free sugars, and limit salt (sodium) consumption from all sources and ensure that salt is iodized" (World Health Organization 2004, 38).[5]

Framing organic food as a contribution to more sustainable food production and consumption and/or as a measure to achieve a healthy diet can generate increased support for government efforts to promote organic farming and food as it would appeal broadly. As sustainability is a policy idea that cuts across all policy sectors, framing organic farming and food in relation to this idea may result in organic farming becoming integrated in other policy domains as a measure to achieve objectives. Framing organic food in relation to a healthy diet could potentially integrate organic food in nutrition policies or food policy strategies. Hence, if such framings succeed, the constituency supporting organic farming and food can be widened and result in a stronger efforts to pursue consumption objectives.

The argument highlighted here is that framing is a political exercise aimed at setting agendas and shaping, justifying and mobilising support for policy. It is a process in which some facts are highlighted and others downgraded. The selected facts are combined with appeal to broader ideas with positive valence. Framing is frequently used as a political tool to generate support for certain policy objectives and to shape policies in ways believed to enable attainment of the objectives. It may also produce a significant impact as it generates support for policy, mobilises the effort of people involved in implementation as well as policy takers through emotional appeal. The alternative policy strategy is to rely less on appeal and framing and focus on using policy instruments to provide incentives, govern by rules or use persuasion and learning to achieve policy objectives.

The remainder of this report compares how the governments of the three Scandinavian countries have shaped their policy programmes for increasing consumption of organic food within public sector institutions. The aim is to establish whether a link between programme design and effectiveness can be found.

[5] See also, https://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/nutrientrequirements/healthydiet_factsheet394.pdf

Comparative study

Denmark, Norway and Sweden have promoted organic farming by supporting conversion and organic production through farm subsidies. They have also launched initiatives to promote organic food consumption within the public sector. These initiatives were based on voluntarism and therefore local and regional government and state institutions have had the final say on whether and how they would respond to the initiatives. While Sweden has been successful at a national level, it is important to bear in mind that there are huge differences across the Swedish municipalities with the Municipality of Lund topping the list with 83 percent of the food purchased being organic while the Municipality of Klippan and the Municipality of Robertsfors only reached 6 percent in 2018 (Ekomatcentrum 2020). There is no similar Danish ranking but the Municipality of Copenhagen is believed to be leading with a share of 84 percent organic food (Københavns Kommune undated). The Swedish data suggest that there is a huge variation in how and with which intensity local and regional governments have engaged in kitchen conversion. Hence, comparing central government policies can only tell us how national policies can provide different opportunities to pursue a national organic consumption ambition.

Sweden

In 2006, the Swedish government expressed concern that only 35 percent of the organic production was marketed as organic and therefore it was keen to ensure that a larger proportion would be marketed as certified organic. Swedish organic farmers were not required to be certified to receive organic farm subsidies as long as they complied with the EU regulation on organic farming. Most organic food products marketed in Sweden were certified by the private, state-recognised certification body KRAV (Miljödepartementet 2006, 6-7). To create incentives for farmers to become certified, organic farm subsidies were partially reshaped. Another measure to promote organic food was to adopt a goal for consumption of certified organic food in the public sector. It was stated that the organic share of food purchases in the public sector should increase to 25 percent by 2010 from around 6 percent in 2006 (Miljödepartementet 2006). This would be a major task as approximate 3 million meals are served on a daily basis within the Swedish public sector.[6] Not surprisingly, this proved too ambitious as the organic share had reached only 15 percent by 2010, but the 25 percent goal was achieved in 2013 (Koch *et al.* 2018, 22, 38, Jörgensen 2012, 28). There was no follow-up decision on a consumption goal until it was revived again in 2017 as part of the Swedish government's new food strategy.

In the government's proposal for a food strategy put forward in early 2017, it was stated that more organic food should be purchased by public sector institutions (Näringsdepartementet 2017a, 66); however, no specific measures were suggested to assist the conversion of kitchens in the public sector. In the government's action plan following the adoption of the food strategy, it was stated that by 2030, 60 percent of the food purchased in the public sector should be certified organic (Näringsdepartementet 2017b, 5), but there were no specific proposals on instruments to back the objective. Sweden set national goals for consumption of organic food within public sector institutions before any other country, but the Swedish government used the ambitious goals adopted by the Municipality of Copenhagen as an example which could inspire Swedish municipalities (Miljödepartementet 2006, 99) and to show that is was indeed possible to achieve high organic consumption levels (Miljö- och jordbruksutskottet 2010, 25, 116).

[6] https://www.livsmedelsverket.se/matvanor-halsa--miljo/maltider-i-vard-skola-och-omsorg/fakta-om-offentliga-maltider#:~:text=Antal%20m%C3%A5ltider%20i%20v%C3%A5rd%2C%20skola%20och%20omsorg,-I%20Sverige%20serveras&text=Skola%20cirka%201%2C3%20miljoner,cirka%2074%20000%20m%C3%A5ltider%2Fdag

Both consumption goals adopted by the Swedish government were voluntary, and therefore local and county governments and state institutions were not obliged to reach them. Discussing the importance of the 25 percent goal, Jörgensen (2012, 73) argues that local politicians and public servants do take such goals set by central government seriously and strive to achieve them. In a similar vein, the Environment and Agriculture Committee in the Swedish Parliament reported that counties and municipalities expressed a positive view on the consumption goal and found it helpful in increasing organic food procurements (Miljö- och jordbruksutskottet 2010, 122). By 2013, 85 percent of the Swedish municipalities had adopted goals on organic consumption (Riksrevisjonen 2016, 82). However, considering the huge variation from 3 to 82 percent in goal achievement across municipalities, it is probably more correct to argue that the goal can contribute to legitimise decisions by local government to convert kitchens to serving organic food. For local governments deciding not to prioritise serving organic food, the goal is probably more likely to be considered an option rather than something they are morally committed to achieve.

The way in which organic food is framed locally and regionally is to a large extent influenced by the framing in central government policies. Organic farming was originally framed as an environmental policy measure in the late 1980s (Daugbjerg & Møller 2010). In a government commissioned report on sustainable consumption published in 2005, organic food was framed as a measure to achieve sustainable consumption. To promote sustainable consumption, the report recommended the adoption of an objective stating that 25 percent of the food purchased in public sector institutions should be organic by 2010 (SOU 2005, chapter 3). The argument for considering organic food as an example of sustainable consumption was that "organic production to a high extent promotes national environmental quality objectives and includes ethical values and global solidarity" (ibid., 65, author's translation). The government document announcing the consumption objective in 2006 subscribed to this argument and linked organic food to sustainability, arguing that "to stimulate a positive development of the market and a sustainable development, the consumption of certified organic food in the public sector should increase" (Miljödepartementet 2006, 15, author's translation). The framing of organic food consumption as sustainable reflected earlier government statements on the link between organic farming and sustainability in which the government saw "organic production … as part of a strategic investment in a sustainable Swedish agricultural sector" (Jordbruksdepartementet 1997, 72, author's translation). Interestingly, the strong linkage between organic farming and consumption and sustainability is not highlighted in the recent government proposal for a food strategy though the proposal puts considerable emphasis on achieving sustainable food production (Näringsdepartementet 2017a).

As argued above, organic food can also be framed in relation to a healthy diet. Such a link was established in the government commissioned report on sustainable consumption in 2005. The report highlighted the organic food consumption component of the S.M.A.R.T. human nutrition concept (SOU 2005, 79-83). The S.M.A.R.T. concept recommends reducing meat consumption; minimising empty calories; increasing the amount of organic produce; carefully choosing the right sort of meat and vegetables from an environmental and health perspective; and increasing transport efficiency.[7] Thus, the S.M.A.R.T concept is well aligned with the World Health Organization's definition of a healthy diet.

[7] **S** = Större andel vegetabilier, **M** = Mindre andel "tomma kalorier", **A** = Andelen ekologiskt ökar, **R** = Rätt kött och grönsaker, **T** = Transportsnålt.

Though the Swedish government did not link organic food to the S.M.A.R.T. concept when announcing the 25 percent consumption goal in 2005 (Miljödepartementet 2006), it has figured frequently in government publications. For instance, it was discussed as a framework for promoting more sustainable food habits by the Swedish Food Agency (*Livsmedelsverket*) in 2007 (Livsmedelsverket 2007b, 20) and is still considered a sound dietary guideline by municipalities. Most municipalities describe their public health priorities in a municipal public health plan, and it is recognised by the Food Agency that this can include the municipality's objective for organic food consumption (Livsmedelsverket 2007a, 5; 2016a, 44; 2019, 46; see also Jörgensen 2012, 31).

The Swedish government has very much relied on the consumption goal and framing as measures to promote consumption of organic food within public sector institutions. Policy instruments to support the goal were calibrated at a very modest level, and there was no specific policy programme designed to support conversion of kitchens in the public sector. There was modest funding available from 2008 to 2010 under the rural development programme which was administered by the Swedish Board of Agriculture (*Jordbruksverket*). Kitchen conversion projects could obtain government funding for up to 50 percent of the costs (Jordbruksdepartementet 2008). 14 projects obtained funding over the three-year period, and the government grants amounted to a total of 9.2 million Swedish kronor of which 2 million kronor were granted for the collection of consumption data and a conference (Miljö- och jordbruksutskottet 2010, 101-103). No single central government agency was granted responsibility for coordinating efforts to reach the consumption goal in the public sector. It has been mainly private organisations and NGOs, such the certification body KRAV, *Ekomatcentrum, Ekocentrum, Hushållningssällskapet and Miljöresurs Linné* which have delivered education and advisory services related to kitchen conversion (Ibid., 122; Koch *et al.* 2018). Under the food strategy adopted in 2017, the Board of Agriculture spent a total of 3 million Swedish kronor on organic education activities within the public sector in 2018 and 2019 (Burman *et al.* 2020, 93).

After the funding programme expired in 2010, the government has refraining from providing subsidies for kitchen conversion. Asked in Parliament in 2014 about government's position on setting a new consumption goal and on introducing new kitchen conversion measures after the 25 percent goal had been achieved in 2013, the Minister for Rural Affairs (Centre Party) replied that the government had decided not to set a new goal and neither was it considering to introduce further measures to support kitchen conversion. The argument put forward by the minister was that "the Government does not see it as its role [to promote kitchen conversion in the public sector] but would leave it to each municipality and county to choose whether or not to set such goals" (author's translation).[8] Asked a similar question in 2018, the subsequent Social Democratic and Green Party coalition government stated it wanted to maintain the existing goal of achieving 60 percent in 2030, but did not commit to introducing new measures to support the goal.[9]

An organic cuisine label has existed in Sweden since 1996 when the organic certifier KRAV launched such a label.[10] Under the KRAV label, kitchens can achieve the one-star label if at least 25 percent of the food purchased is organic (alternatively at least 15 organic products), the two-star label is awarded if the share is at least 50 percent, and three stars can be achieved if the share is 90 percent or above (KRAV 2019, 219-222).

[8] https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/interpellation/mal-och-stod-for-ekologisk-produktion-och_H110362.

[9] https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svar-pa-skriftlig-fraga/malen-om-ekologisk-odling-och-konsumtion_H612881.

[10] https://www.krav.se/om-oss/historia/

In addition to meeting organic share requirements, KRAV certified kitchens are required to use environmentally certified detergents, renewable energy, comply with national and international rules on social responsibility and contribute to conserve the natural and cultural environment (ibid., 21-23). In 2016, the Swedish Food Agency put forward a proposal which would change the kitchen certification regime to consisting of both a private and a government certification and labelling scheme by suggesting a set of government certification rules which would be inspected by local government authorities. The proposal distinguished between three types of organic labelling. A kitchen could be labelled according to particular organic products being used by the kitchen (e.g. organic carrots). The second option outlined labelling according to the specific dishes on the menu card which were organic (e.g. organic lasagne). Thirdly, a kitchen could be labelled according to the share of organic food products used, similarly to the existing KRAV model (Livsmedelsverket 2016b). No government decision has been made on the proposal and it is still uncertain whether and to which extent the proposed rules will be adopted (Personal communication KRAV, 17 September 2020).

The number of kitchens certified under the KRAV label is around 1500-1600, of which approximately 75 percent are awarded to public sector kitchens (Personal communication KRAV, 3 September 2020).[11] Kitchen certification under the label is open for both private and public sector kitchens. The Swedish organic food policy does not include the label as a tool that can be used to motivate municipalities and other public institutions to purchase more organic food products. There is no mentioning of the KRAV cuisine label in the official documents referring to the organic consumption goals for the public sector. But the government has emphasised that to count towards the consumption goal, organic produce must be certified (Miljödepartementet 2006, 15). Why the government has not required or urged kitchens to certify under one of the KRAV organic cuisine label can most likely be explained by three conditions. Firstly, KRAV is a non-governmental organisation operating a purely private label. There may be some reluctance amongst local and regional government and individual public kitchens to subscribe to a set of private rules guiding their practice.[12] Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, when the government goal was adopted in 2006, there was already a system of benchmarking in place. *Ekomatcentrum* has collected data on organic shares in public kitchens since 1999 on a continuing basis (Ekomatcentrum 2020). It publishes an annual ranking of municipalities, regions and counties according to their organic shares. The list is referred to as the organic food league table (*Ekomatsligan*) (e.g. Ekomatcentrum 2020). Individual kitchens are also ranked (e.g. Ekomatcentrum 2018; Ekomatcentrum 2019a). Thus, for kitchens, the organic food league serves both branding and benchmarking purposes. An *Ekomatcentrum* spokesperson believed that the collection of consumption statistics and rankings allowing benchmarking had contributed positively to increasing the consumption of organic food in the public sector (personal communication Ekomatcentrum, 4 September 2020). The KRAV organic cuisine label can be used for kitchen branding but are less useful for benchmarking at kitchen, municipal and regional level as they do not publish the kitchens' exact organic shares. Finally, there is both a license fee[13] and a certification fee[14] to be paid if a kitchen wants to be certified. Though these

[11] The exact number of kitchens operating under the KRAV label is estimated as company or municipality/county can obtain chain certification which covers all or some of their kitchens.

[12] Thanks to Carmen Calverley for suggestion this explanation

[13] KRAV charges a license fee of 1,000 SEK, https://wwwkravse.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2020/05/kravs_licenspriser_2020.pdf

[14] KRAV has licensed a number of certification bodies to undertake certification. Fees may vary. For instance, SMAK Certifiering charges 4,500 SEK for KRAV certification, https://smak.se/data/uploads/d9.2-2-eko-prislista-2017.pdf

fees would only amount to 5,500-6,000 Swedish kronor, the amount can be prohibitive for smaller kitchens in the public sector, such as in kindergartens.

To explore whether the framing of organic food consumption at the central government level has trickled down to the local government level, local government documents in four selected municipalities were examined. Two of the municipalities, Lund and Malmö, are at the top in the list of the organic food league table which ranks municipalities according to the share organic food purchases measured as a percentage of total food purchases, based on purchasing prices. The two other municipalities, Umeå and Ystad, were ranked lowly in the league table in 2018 when evidence for this report was collected in mid-2019 (Ekomatcentrum 2019b). Since then, Umeå has doubled its share and moved up the ranking (Ekomatcentrum 2020). It varies a lot how much detail on their organic food consumption policies that local governments make available on their websites. Even high achievers, such as the Municipality of Vellinge (ranked second in the 2019 version of the organic food league table), may publish very little information about their organic food purchasing programmes. Therefore, the choice of the four municipalities is selective according to how much material is available.

The Municipality of Lund in Southern Sweden topped the organic food league table with an organic share of 83 percent in 2019. Despite being at the top of the list, the municipality has only published limited material on its organic food programme. Organic food consumption is framed as a measure to achieve sustainable consumption. In its nutrition policy, it is argued that to promote continuing sustainable development, it is important to require organic food products in public procurement (Lunds Kommun 2014). Similarly, in the municipality's programme for ecological sustainability, organic food purchases are seen as a measure to achieve sustainability (Lunds Kommun 2018, 13). Neighbouring Malmö was ranked third in the organic food league table in 2018 with 65 percent of the food purchased being organic. The foundation of its nutrition policy is the S.M.A.R.T. concept which provides a guideline for a healthy diet and urges increased use of organic food products. As stated in its policy for sustainable development and food, "all in Malmö has a right to good food as part of an economically, socially and ecological sustainable development. This is possible by following the 'Eat S.M.A.R.T.-model' which aligns health and environment without increasing expenditure" (Malmö Stad 2010, 11, author's translation). In other words, organic food consumption is framed in relation to a healthy diet and sustainable development (ibid., 7).

The Municipality of Ystad could be found towards the end of the organic food league table with an organic share of 12 percent of the food purchased. Despite its modest achievement in a Swedish context, its sustainable food policy is well-described. The policy links organic food to health, arguing that "the food should largely be ethically and organically certified, seasonal, locally produced and based on the S.M.A.R.T.-model" (Ystads Kommun 2016, 7, author's translation). As part of implementing the S.M.A.R.T. model, Ystad aims at achieving an organic share of 35 percent by 2020. In addition to linking organic food to public health, the 35 percent target is framed as a measure to achieve sustainable food consumption (ibid., 5, 9). The Municipality of Umeå ranked lowly in the 2019 version of organic food league table with 15 percent. The local government had set high ambitions, aiming to reach 25 percent in 2020. It is likely to achieve this as it reached 24 percent in 2019. The desire to increase organic food consumption in Umeå is framed under the heading "Climate smart, organic and locally produced food" and the effort to reshape menus and adjust them

to seasonal supply is guided by the S.M.A.R.T. model (author's translation).[15] This framing of organic food consumption in the two municipalities demonstrates that even low achievers subscribe to central government framings.

Denmark

The Danish organic food policy is unique compared with other countries. It applies a wide range of policy instruments that affects both the supply and demand-side of the organic market. Comparing the impact of national organic policies on organic food consumption in four countries, Daugbjerg and Sønderskov (2012) have shown that the Danish organic food policy with its relatively strong focus on demand-side policy measures had a significant positive effect on consumption.

Some municipalities experimented with organic food already in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but it was not until 1997 the government allocated 39 million Danish kroner for the promotion of organic food consumption within the public sector. This resulted in a number of regional and municipal organic procurement projects. In 2001, the Innovation Law was altered in order to allow applications for funding of kitchen conversion projects in the private as well as in the public sector. By the early 2000s, a survey reported that 48 percent of the Danish municipalities had obtained experiences with serving organic food, 10 percent had plans to procure organic food while 40 percent had no plans. It was mainly the larger municipalities that had obtained experiences (Kristensen *et al.* 2002, 15-21). While there were grants available for kitchen conversion, the government did not develop a kitchen conversion programme at that time and did not set a consumption goal for the public sector. I was not until 2011 that the newly elected Social Democratic led coalition government considered a kitchen conversion programme.

The Municipality of Copenhagen had emerged as a pioneer in public kitchen conversion in the late 2000s. The appointment of the former social democratic Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and former EU Environment Commissioner, Ritt Bjerregaard, to Lord Mayor of Copenhagen in 2006 had provided a conducive political environment at the top of the municipal organisation to promote organic food. With this high level political support, the Municipality of Copenhagen emerged as a pioneer in public sector kitchen conversion in the late 2000s. In 2007, it had established The Copenhagen House of Food (*Københavns Madhus*) to improve the meals provided by the municipality's kitchens, and in 2009 it was given responsibility for converting the kitchens to using organic food products. Already in 2011, the Municipality of Copenhagen had succeeded in converting its kitchens to using up to 75 percent organic food products without increasing catering budgets (Daugbjerg 2020).

This inspired the Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Mette Gjerskov, to communicate her plans for a kitchen conversion scheme in November 2011. Her aim at that time was that all kitchens in the public sector should have achieved certification under the silver cuisine label by 2020, implying that at least 60 percent of the food served should be organic. It was estimated that public kitchens served 500,000 meals a day (Fødevareministeren 2011). However, in comparison with her initial intentions put forward in November 2011, the 60 percent goal was severely watered down in the conversion programme launched in June 2012. As it was stated, a bit cryptically, in the Action Plan, when receiving government support for kitchen conversion, state institutions, regional and local governments "were committed to work towards, and

15 https://www.umea.se/umeakommun/utbildningochbarnomsorg/matlunch/matenviserverar/klimatsmartekologiskochnarproduceradmat.4.16f6133114e3fb40885c76e.html (link no longer active)

prioritise using the tools [of the conversion programme] for converting their kitchens to using as a minimum 60 percent organic products". Participation in the conversion programme was voluntary (Ministeriet for Fødevarer, Landbrug og Fiskeri 2012, 12, author's translation). Nor was there a requirement for the kitchens to obtain certification under the organic cuisine label, and municipalities (and regions) obtaining conversion support were not required to include all their kitchens in a conversion project. Making the participation mandatory was strongly opposed by the Ministry of Finance as it feared that local and regional governments would use such a requirement to demand that central government compensated them for any extra expenditure associated with kitchen conversion (Interview Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA), May 2019). While the 60 percent goal had been significantly watered down, ambitions remained high. In relation to promoting the organic cuisine label, the aim was to reach 6000 organic cuisine labels by 2020 (Fødevarestyrelsen 2012c, 13). This objective included certification in the private sector as well.

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA) was given responsibility for designing and implementing the kitchen conversion programme. A combination of policy instruments were introduced to motivate more kitchens to use organic food products. Economic subsidies for training and advice of kitchen staff were combined with informative tools in the form of information dissemination and persuasion. Further, the desire to promote the organic cuisine label as part of the conversion programme added a regulatory layer to the programme, though not a formal requirement. The government granted 28 million kroner annually for the activities supporting the conversion of kitchens in 2012 and 2013 (Ministeriet for Fødevarer, Landbrug og Fiskeri 2012, 32). 29 million kroner were later granted for 2014. There were legal restrictions on how to use the grants as they were allocated under the Organic Promotion Scheme which was co-funded by the European Union and the Danish government. Municipalities and other public authorities were not eligible to apply for subsidies under the scheme. Under the scheme, funding could be provided for information, advisory and educational activities. As the Organic Promotion Scheme was mainly directed at farmers and smaller food manufacturers, kitchen conversion projects in the municipalities or regions had to include such entities (Fødevarestyrelsen 2012a, 4, 6-7; 2012c, 6; Ministeriet for Fødevarer, Landbrug og Fiskeri 2012, 12). The design of the funding scheme meant that subsidies did not provide direct economic incentives for municipalities and public sector kitchens to sign up to conversion projects. Some of the funding was used for information activities, but a considerable share was used to pay conversion consultants for running kitchen conversion projects and vocational educational institutions for offering courses for kitchen staff.

A government organic cuisine label was introduced three years prior to the kitchen conversion programme as an attempt to facilitate growing use of organic food products by public and private food services. The Danish cuisine label shares features with the Swedish label as it distinguishes between three levels of organic kitchen certification, but the levels are differently defined. Under the Danish label, the bronze label can be obtained when 30-60 percent of the food products used are organic, the silver label when the organic share is between 60 and 90 percent, and the gold label when it is between 90 and 100 percent.[16] It was believed that the branding effect of the label would sustain certification, and that it might even nurture an ambition to increase the share of organic products in the future (Niras 2014; *Økologi & Erhverv* 2013, issue 520, 2).

Though falling short of reaching the original intention to increase the share of the food in public sector kitchen to 60 percent and reach 6000 kitchen certifications by 2020, the kitchen conversion programme did boost the consumption of organic food products in the public sector as well as kitchen certification. Even

[16] https://www.oekologisk-spisemaerke.dk/om-spisemaerket/

after the subsidy scheme ended in 2014, organic consumption and the number of certifications have steadily increased. Evaluating the programme, Sørensen *et al.* (2016, 3431) found that for 622 (of 666) kitchens enrolled in the conversion programme in the autumn of 2012 and the spring of 2013, organic food purchases increased by 24 percent. Before enrolling in the conversion programme, only 352 of the 622 kitchens (57 percent) qualified for being certified under the organic cuisine label (minimum bronze). This number increased to 559 (90 percent) after having taken part in the conversion programme. 342 of these (61 percent) applied for and obtained certification under the label (personal conversation with DVFA, 30 September 2019). Prior to the introduction of the conversion programme, only 138 kitchens had been certified under the cuisine label in 2011. This increased to 960 in 2014, and to 3340 as of 1 October 2020 – 75 percent of these in the public sector. Sales of organic food in the Danish food service sector more than doubled from 519 million Danish kroner in 2010 to 1.3 billion in 2014 and had doubled again in 2019, reaching 2.6 billion (Fødevarestyrelsen undated; Danmarks Statistik 2020; personal communication, DVFA 16 November 2020).

These achievement were not only a result of policy instrument design. Building capacity to implement the instruments effectively was a key factor. There was a strong reliance on information dissemination and persuasion as the means to activate various types of organisations to engage in kitchen conversion efforts. It required significant assistance from the DVFA's partners to bring about behavioural change which would work either directly towards the aim of conversion or provide the conditions enabling conversion. Organic Denmark, which represents organic farmers, consumers, food companies with an organic production line and food retailers, had a pivotal role in the implementation stage. Therefore, the DVFA coordinated a number activities with the association (personal communication DVFA, 21 November 2019).

The DVFA engaged its central and regional nutrition teams to promote the conversion programme in relation to individual municipalities (Fødevarestyrelsen 2012e; Interview DVFA, May 2019). Organic Denmark also held meetings with them and used these events to match municipalities with conversion consultants (interview Organic Denmark, June 2019). People with expertise in kitchen conversion were important actors as they had to be engaged as consultants to provide practical advice and organise and lead conversion projects which could obtain government funding for the training of kitchen staff (Fødevarestyrelsen 2012a, 5-7). As the funding model required that the conversion contractor shouldered the expenditure until the project was successfully delivered, conversion consultants partnered with organisations which had the financial capacity to meet this requirement. This meant that the Organic Denmark as well as the Agriculture and Food Council became the main contractors. The latter is the main association for farmers and food industries but also organises and represents organic farm interests. The two main contractors collaborated with organisations possessing kitchen conversion expertise such as the Copenhagen House of Food (*Økologi & Erhverv* 2012, issue 506, 8-9; 2013, issue 529, 8; interview DVFA, September 2019).

Food wholesalers held the key to the success of the conversion programme, and therefore the DVFA and Organic Denmark jointly met with wholesaler executives to activate them. It was essential that the wholesalers offered an organic product assortment and that they agreed to assist kitchens in calculating the organic share to document that they had increased the share of organic food purchases or if certified under of the organic cuisine label to meet its requirements (Interview DVFA, September 2019; Fødevarestyrelsen 2012b). The initial statement by the Minister in 2011 that 60 percent of the food served in the public sector should be organic, though it did not become the official objective, and the fact that the programme was backed by 56 million kroner to be spent in 2012 and 2013 was an important motivational factor for the food wholesalers to engage in implementing the programme (interviews DVFA, May and September 2019). It

conveyed a message that the government was serious about converting public sector kitchens and that there would be a new and potentially large market for organic produce. This effort was successful as the three major food wholesalers soon offered an organic product range and were seeing this as an important aspect when competing for contracts (Pedersen & Jensen 2017, 60). Already by early 2013, it was possible for kitchens to source all the organic food products that they demanded from the wholesalers (*Økologi & Erhverv* 2013, issue 518, 9; Operate 2014, 109).

To support the implementation of the conversion programme, work on developing tools and methods for kitchen conversion was initiated. For this task, the DVFA relied on Organic Denmark and the Agriculture and Food Council as well as the Copenhagen House of Food (Fødevarestyrelsen 2012a, 9; 2012c, 9). The last mentioned organisation had relevant practical and specialist knowledge obtained when supervising the conversion of public sector kitchens in Copenhagen. A qualitative evaluation conducted in 2014 reported that municipal decision makers and kitchen managers found that there were lots of information available to guide decisions on conversion, much of it provided by the DVFA, Organic Denmark and the Copenhagen House of Food (Niras 2014, 6). Food fairs were an important venue for information dissemination to kitchens and food wholesalers and for connecting the two parties (*Økologi & Erhverv* 2012, issue 503, 8; 2012, issue 511, 7; 2013, issue 518, 8-9). The DVFA took part in various food fairs to promote, inform and advise on certification under the organic cuisine label. A public servant in the DVFA asserted that the high level of visibility was important in conveying the message that there was considerable political and administrative determination to make the conversion programme successful (personal communication DVFA, 21 November 2019).

Training and motivating kitchen staff to use organic produce without exceeding existing catering budgets were important components in supporting kitchen conversion. In addition to providing kitchen skills, an important dimension was to change the mind-set of kitchen staff (Interview DVFA, September 2019). In 2012, there was not much teaching material available. Therefore, Organic Denmark engaged with three educational institutions to provide such materials (*Økologi & Erhverv* 2012, issue 494, 3). As part of the training effort, a number of course modules were offered. These included introduction to organic farming, lessons learned from past conversion projects, practical cooking, menu planning, nutrition and budgeting, food waste management and reuse of leftovers, introduction to the organic cuisine label, networking with suppliers and visits on organic farms and processing facilities (Sørensen *et al.* 2016, 3242; see also Niras 2014, 49-50).

To engage the food wholesalers, Organic Denmark built on its expertise previously obtained from demand-side activities directed at food retailers over a number of years (interview Organic Denmark, June 2019). Organic Denmark had been instrumental in engaging food retailers in promoting organic food. The engagement with food retailers involved market coordination with the organic food manufacturers and suppliers to ensure that those products the food retailers wanted to market could actually be supplied (Schvartzman 2012, 163-174). The association used its market coordination expertise in a similar fashion in relation to ensuring that the food products which wholesalers wanted to market could be supplied. They also helped food wholesalers introducing tools to calculate organic shares for their customers (*Økologi & Erhverv* 2013, issue 520, 2; Interview Organic Denmark, June 2019).

In parallel with the kitchen conversion programme, two other government initiatives supported the promotion of organic food consumption in the public sector. In 2006, the then Ministry of the Environment established a partnership with municipalities, regions, state and other public institutions. The overall purpose of the partnership was to develop common procurement objectives that could push the market towards

providing less environmentally harmful goods and services.[17] For organic food procurement, the partnership stated as an ambition that its members should strive to achieve a share of organic food procurement which is as high as possible. It is recommended that the members reached 30 percent by the end of 2018 and 60 percent by the end of 2020. Further, it is recommended that the members use the organic cuisine label to verify the achievements.[18]

Another government initiative to promote of organic food in the public sector was the *Wise Food Procurement* project. Based on a joint proposal from the Danish Council of Agriculture and Food, Organic Denmark, the Copenhagen House of Food and the Food Culture institution, the government granted 12.4 million Danish kroner over the period 2013-2016 for establishing a task force to provide advice and information on procurement of organic food products within the public sector. The task force was operating under the auspices of the Food Culture institution which is an independent institution under the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries (Pedersen & Jensen 2017).[19]

The latest initiative to promote consumption of organic food in the public sector is the *Green Procurement for a Green Future* proposal, published in October 2020. The government sets out to require all canteens in state institutions to serve at least 60 percent organic food (Finansministeriet 2020). Whether the canteens will also be required to certify under the organic cuisine label is not clear, but the fact that it is mentioned in the proposal that the 60 percent target corresponds to the silver label could be seen as a hint that there may be a requirement.

As the analysis above shows, the policy programmes aimed at increasing consumption of organic food in public sector institutions relied to a large extent on varies sets of policy instruments. Framing of organic food in relation to broader ideas with positive appeal played a limited role. In comparison with the framing in Sweden, organic food is more narrowly framed in Denmark though there are similarities. In both countries, increasing organic consumption within the public sector was motivated by a desire to grow the organic food and farming sector (Fødevareministeren 2011; Fødevarestyrelsen 2012d). The Danish Green Growth Agreement adopted in 2009 stated that the area farmed organically should increase from 6 percent of the utilised agricultural area in 2007 to 15 percent in 2020. It was emphasised that the increase should be market-based, meaning that farm conversion should be driven by increasing demand for organic food (Miljøudvalget 2009, 5, 14).

Though there were references to healthy food in the government's *Action Plan 2020*, which launched the kitchen conversion programme, organic food was not an integral component of a government recognised healthy diet concept such as the S.M.A.R.T. concept in Sweden. However, the communication plan, which was part of the conversion programme, did set out to link the promotion of the organic cuisine label to the Keyhole label (*Nøglehullet*) (Fødevarestyrelsen 2012a, 10-11). This label was originally Swedish and was later developed into a joint Nordic scheme operated by the governments of Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. It was introduced as a Nordic label in 2009. The purpose of the label is "to help the consumer … to choose the healthier alternatives with less fat, salt and sugar, more dietary fibre and more whole grains" (author's translation).[20] As the Keyhole label does not include organics as a component, it could not be used

[17] https://ansvarligeindkob.dk/partnerskab/
[18] https://ansvarligeindkob.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/1_F%c3%b8devarer_2018-final.pdf
[19] See this source for an evaluation of the project.
[20] https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/retsinfo/2019/9665

to establish a direct link between organic food and health. However, there was an attempt to promote the keyhole label in parallel with the organic cuisine label to signal a link between organic food and a healthy diet. The initiative was terminated because of low interest in the food service sector (personal communication with DVFA, 16 November 2020).

Organic food was not explicitly framed as sustainable consumption, but the *Organic Action Plan 2020* linked organic farming to sustainability. The minister of food, agriculture and fisheries stated in the action plan that organics was a cornerstone in the green transition of the Danish farm industry (Ministeriet for Fødevarer, Landbrug og Fiskeri 2012, 4). Further, she highlighted that transition from conventional to organic farming means that "biodiversity increases, the drinking water is not contaminated [*belastes*] by pesticides and animal welfare improves" (Ibid., 4, author's translation). Later on, the DVFA and Organic Denmark followed up on the minister's message by launching the joint information campaign *Choose Organic Because …* which also added less food additives and no pesticide residues in food as important reasons to buy organic (personal communication with DVFA, 16 November 2020).

Norway

In the 2005 accord on the government policy programme agreed by the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party (the so-called Soria Moria Declaration), it was stated that by 2015, 15 percent of the agricultural production and food consumption in Norway should be organic (Plattform for regjeringssamarbeidet 2005, 21; Miljøverndepartementet 2007, 38). The declaration also stated that the public sector should take the lead as a responsible consumer and demand commodities produced in environmentally, ethically and socially sustainable ways (Plattform for regjeringssamarbeidet 2005, 55). In 2006, an interdepartmental working group was set up to suggest how the public sector, directly or indirectly, could increase the consumption of organic food (Knutsen et al. 2007, 3).

There had already been local experimentation with kitchen conversion, for instance in the Municipality of Oslo and at the St. Olav Hospital in Oslo. The conversion projects had been financially supported by the Norwegian government and the private foundation NORSØK. These experiences were evaluated in a report commissioned by the interdepartmental working group and authored by the Norwegian Agricultural Economics Research Institute (NILF). The report also described the experiences with promoting organic consumption within the Danish and Swedish public sectors (Knutsen et al. 2007), but it is not clear whether these experiences actually influenced the Norwegian policy measures.

The working group's work materialised in the *Action Plan for Environmental and Societal Responsibility in Public Procurement* which outlined the programme *Organic Municipalities*. The initiative was also referred to as the *organic lift (Øko løft)* programme. A number of municipalities would be selected to become lead municipalities in organic production and consumption (Miljøvernsdepartementet, Fornyings- og administrasjonsdepartementet & Barne- og likestillingsdepartementet 2007). 20 million Norwegian kroner were granted for the lead municipalities over the period 2008 to 2009 to promote consumption of organic food within the public sector (Landbruks- og matdepartementet 2007, 15, 30). Experiences with kitchen conversion from Denmark, the St. Olav Hospital in Oslo as well as the Norwegian Defence Forces were used as successful examples that could inspire the Norwegian conversion projects (Pedersen et al. 2012, 94). The organic municipalities project was terminated after two years as a result of lacking goal achievements, but less than ten specific municipal projects were allowed continue with grants from the government in 2011 and 2012 (Pedersen et al. 2012, 95; Riksrevisjonen 2016, 77).

Another key programme was outlined in the Department of Agriculture and Food's 2009 action plan for reaching the 15 percent production and consumption goals by 2020. The core measure to increase consumption within the public sector was the selection of lead counties (*foregangsfylker*) which would receive programme funding to promote organic production and consumption within their area and to disseminate their experiences to other counties and municipalities. A lead county could be composed of a number of counties establishing a collaborative arrangement. The lead counties were selected on the basis of a set of criteria relating to their previous achievements and future ambitions in promoting organic production and food consumption, including plans to increase the consumption of organic food within public sector institutions (Landbruks- og matdepartementet 2009). The action plan recognised that the experiences with previous kitchen conversion projects within the public sector had been mixed. As it was concluded, "The projects have often led to a lot of enthusiasm and commitment, but conditions outside the control of the projects have proven to impact greatly on goal achievement" (Ibid. 19, author's translation). This did not, however, stop the Ministry of Agriculture and Food from moving forward with selecting lead counties (Skjelvik et al. 2017).

A cooperative arrangement between the counties of Oslo, Akershus and Østfold was appointed lead counties for large kitchen conversion (*storhusholdning*) and known under the acronym ØQ. The three counties had implemented local action plans to promote organic farming and food in the past, and they had appointed *organic lift* municipalities. Their experiences with organic kitchen conversion went back to 2002 and they had worked with Nofima (a semi-public food research institute) on conversion projects. The idea was that ØQ should obtain experiences with kitchen conversion and disseminate these to other parts of the country. ØQ started out with engaging conversion consultants, developing course and information material and preparing conversion and follow-up plans. In the years to follow, ØQ assisted in developing individual kitchen conversion plans, advised kitchens, offered courses and organised field trips. In 2014, ØQ's responsibility as the national coordinator of initiatives aimed at developing competences in kitchen conversion and providing advice to other lead counties was emphasised.[21] A year later, this responsibility was handed over to the private entity Debioinfo, part of Debio which operates the Norwegian private organic certification and labelling schemes. Already from the initial phases, ØQ sought to draw on experiences from Denmark and Sweden and a field study in Copenhagen was organised. Conversations with the counterparts in the two countries continued throughout the programme period. The collaboration with Nofima which went back 2002 also continued (Skjelvik et al. 2017, 57-60). From 2010 to 2016, almost 17 million Norwegian kroner were spent on ØQ's kitchen conversion initiatives, which in the later years of lead county programme period consumed 28 percent of the total annual programme spending (Ibid., 28, 58). The goal to be achieved for organic consumption was set for the country as a whole. A specific goal for organic consumption within the public sector was not decided as in Sweden nor indicated as in Denmark. The main policy instrument in the Norwegian kitchen conversion programme was advice. Government funding was spent on building an advisory service and providing conversion advice to public sector kitchens.

Inspired by the Danish organic cuisine label, a similar label was introduced in Norway in 2013, but it was owned and operated by the private certification body Debio (Skjelvik et al. 2017, 23). Similarly to the Danish (and Swedish) organic cuisine label, the Norwegian label operates with three levels – bronze, silver and gold certification. A bronze label can be obtained already at an organic share of 15 percent, silver at 50 percent and gold at 90 percent. Though part of the policy effort was to ease certification of public sector kitchens

[21] The other lead counties were responsible for other aspects of organic farming and food promotion.

under the Debio cuisine label (Pedersen et al. 2012, 94), the labelling scheme has not been an integral part of the government conversion programme, and kitchens have not been urged to certify under the label. This probably explains why only few public sector kitchens have been certified under the label. In 2019, 356 companies and individual kitchens were certified under the organic cuisine label. It was estimated that only 15 percent of these were kitchens in the public sector (Personal communication Debio, 3 September 2020). The certification cost for individual kitchens are approximately 4,600 Norwegian kroner.[22]

The Office of the Auditor General of Norway (*Riksrevisjonen*) published a report in 2016 which evaluated the policy instruments introduced to promote the organic farming and food. It concluded "that these instruments as a whole have not worked well enough to increase organic production and consumption in accordance with goals set by the Storting [Norwegian Parliament]" (Riksrevisjonen 2016, 94, author's translation). The report highlighted the lack of an organic consumption goal for the public sector and lack of guidelines for how the consumption could be increased as the main reasons why the consumption of organic food in public sector institutions remained low. The report concluded that where there had been increases in consumption, it could mainly be put down to the initiatives of individual public institutions (Riksrevisjonen 2016, 97). An evaluation of ØQ's activities conducted by the private consultant company *Vista Analyse* concluded that ØQ had made a contribution to developing competences, generating knowledge and experience in kitchen conversion. But the *Vista Analyse* team found that it was difficult to demonstrate an actual positive impact of these activities on the consumption of organic food within the public sector. Rather than focussing on this objective, ØQ had focussed on objectives related to its activities and was keen to report these (Skjelvik et al. 2017, 60). As a result of the unclear impact on consumption, the *Vista Analyse* team recommended that the ØQ was dismantled and its activities taken over by Debioinfo which should be remunerated for its activities directly by the Norwegian Agriculture Agency (*Landbruksdirektoratet*) rather than through the counties (Ibid., 8).

Despite the Office of the Auditor General's recommendation to adopt national consumption goals, the government had no appetite for maintaining the national consumption goal, or for setting a goal for organic food consumption within the public sector. As it was stated by the Conservative and Progress Party coalition government:

> The government asserts that development in organic production and consumption will be demand-driven as for other agricultural products, and therefore believes that there should no longer be a specific quantified target for organic production and consumption. The government does not consider it a public task to lay down guidelines for what consumers should eat by setting a goal for organic consumption, and believes that it must be the choice of the individual consumer (Landbruks- og matdepartementet 2016, 152, author's translation).

In the national strategy for organic agriculture for the period 2018 to 2030, the government did not launch new initiatives to support the increase in the consumption of organic food within the public sector. It limited itself to mention the lead county programme, that a team of kitchen conversion advisors had been established and trained, and that a methodology for kitchen conversion had been developed. Rather than launching new initiatives, and perhaps as a reflection of the fact that the previous ten years of kitchen

[22] https://debio.no/gebyroversikt-valormerker/

conversion efforts had fallen short of the expectations, the government only committed itself to build on the existing experiences (Landbruks- og matdepartementet 2018, 27).

Pedersen et al. (2012) and the Office of the Auditor General (Riksrevisjonen 2016) in their evaluations of the Norwegian subsidy programmes for organic production and consumption provided descriptions of the Danish and Swedish experiences with promoting organic farming and food. But the experiences of the two neighbouring countries did not make it into the white paper on the future of Norwegian agricultural production published by the government in late 2016 (Landbruks- og matdepartementet 2016), nor into the strategy for organic agriculture published in 2018 (Landbruks- og matdepartementet 2018).

Increasing consumption of organic food in the public sector was not framed as part of public health initiatives. Nor was it framed in relation to sustainability. In fact, the 2009 action plan for promoting organic production and consumption stated that there was no scientific evidence supporting claims that organic food was healthier than non-organic food (Landbruks- og matdepartementet 2009, 9). Nor was organic food consumption in the public sector framed as an example of sustainable consumption in the plan. The 2018 strategy for organic agriculture followed a similar line and did not attempt to frame organic agriculture as sustainability or public health measures. It was argued that there was a lack of knowledge on these issues. As the strategy paper stated, “There is … a need for more knowledge to be able to describe the effect that organic food has on food production, climate, environment and health” (Landbruks- og matdepartementet 2018, 15).

The evaluations of the Norwegian programmes for increasing consumption of organic food within the public sectors demonstrates that the barriers to convert kitchens only to a very limited extent have been overcome (Riksrevisjonen 2016; Skjelvik et al. 2017). Norway has applied policy instruments similar to those used in Denmark though the Norwegian lead county programme operated at a regional rather than a national scale. Therefore, the interesting question is why the impact in Norway was much more modest than in Denmark. The evaluations suggest lack of a specific consumption goal, lack of guidelines on how to convert and to some extent goal displacement as important factors explaining the limited consumption impact of the programmes. In both Denmark and Norway, the policy instruments were not designed to provide direct incentive for municipalities and individual kitchens to engage in conversion processes. As suggested above in the analysis of the Danish case, it is the way in which capacities are mobilised to support the implementation of the instruments and to create the conditions for them to work which is the decisive factor achieving maximum impact of the policy instruments. Unfortunately, the Norwegian evaluations do not include this important aspect in their analyses, but it might well have been a key factor explaining the failure to significantly increase the consumption of organic food within the public sector in Norway.

Conclusion and policy considerations

In all three countries, there has been a political desire to promote organic farming as well as organic consumption, but the way in which they have gone about it varies. Promotion of organic food within the public sector was seen as a measure to increase the consumption of organic food, and in turn the increased demand could be a driver for conversion of more farm land into organic production. But the governments of the three countries have shaped their policy programmes differently.

The policy strategy in *Sweden* has to a considerable extent relied on setting a consumption goal and importantly on framing the issue of organic consumption in relation to broader concerns - public health and sustainability. By framing organic food consumption in relation to such broader ideas possessing a high degree of positive valance, the Swedish programme has relied on emotional appeal aimed at reaching out to public health, human nutrition professionals and frontline staff as well as to environmental policy makers and administrators. Policy instruments designed to create incentives to convert kitchens played a modest role. While the *Danish government* also established a relationship between organic farming and sustainability, the attempt to link organics and public health remained much weaker. In comparison with the Swedish strategy, the Danish strategy has been strongly policy instrument oriented, using a mixture of policy instruments which would create incentives and motivation for converting kitchens in the public sector to purchase more organic food. These instruments were backed by considerable capacity to implement them. The *Norwegian government* did not attempt to establish a connection between organics, sustainability and public health; rather the link was questioned in the government's strategy for organic agriculture in 2018. The emphasis of the strategy was on policy instruments. But in comparison with the Danish strategy, the Norwegian kitchen conversion programme had a regional focus in which the idea was to convert kitchens in the capital region and scale up the regional experiences to the national level. However, in terms of consumption impact, the Norwegian programme failed as very little consumption increase occurred. In light of the experiences in Denmark, this report indicates that insufficient generation and mobilisation of policy capacity within the Norwegian organic food sector may have been an important factor explaining the limited consumption impact. Detailed research is needed to substantiate this argument. Nevertheless, the comparison of the Danish and Norwegian experiences suggests that the existence of relevant policy capacity is a crucial pre-condition for effective implementation of policy instruments to promote organic consumption within the public sector.

An interesting observation relates to the organic cuisine labels. All three countries have introduced such labels, but only Denmark has opted for a state label. In the Danish debate, the label is considered an important tool for kitchen conversion as it is assumed that the three-step design enables kitchens to start with conversion at a relatively modest level. Certification at bronze level can then aspire the kitchens to seek certification at a higher level at a later point. Kitchen certification under an organic cuisine labelling scheme has been most attractive for kitchens in the public sector. In Denmark and Sweden, 75 percent of the kitchen certifications are awarded to public sector kitchens. The Danish state label has obtained twice as many certifications than the Swedish private label. One possible obstacle a private organic cuisine labelling scheme would have to overcome is convincing public managers to operate public sector kitchens under a set of private rules. While this does not seem to have been a blocking issue for a substantial number of kitchen managers in Sweden, it may have been an issue for some. While the kitchen certification is free of charge in Denmark, a fee is charged in Sweden, which may have discouraged some smaller public sector kitchens from seeking certification. A further explanation for the lower number of certifications in Sweden is most likely

the existence of the organic league table which may have satisfied the benchmarking and branding needs of individual kitchens, municipalities and counties. Finally, promoting kitchen certification was not an integral part of the Swedish government's policy programme to increase the consumption of organic food in public sector institutions, unlike in Denmark where promotion of the organic cuisine label was a stated programme objective. In Norway, the use of the private organic cuisine label is the reverse of the Danish and Swedish situation with only 15 percent of the certifications awarded to public sector kitchens.

The Swedish case highlights the power of framing in pursuing policy objectives. This strategy appears to have been the most effective in terms of growing organic food consumption in the public sector. However, on the basis of the findings of this report, it cannot be firmly concluded that a framing strategy is better than a policy instrument strategy. In addition to different policy strategies, differences in context can most likely contribute to explain why the Swedish government was more successful than the two other governments in increasing the consumption of organic food in public sector institutions. An important contextual difference is that taxpayer funded meals are served in Swedish primary, secondary and vocational schools, while in Denmark and Norway, most students bring their own food. Hence, it can be assumed that there are better conditions for increasing organic food consumption in Sweden since a larger share of younger people (pupils and indirectly their parents) are targeted by policy than in the other two countries. It is typically the younger parts of the population who have preferences for organic food and therefore can be assumed to be more supportive of organic food promotion initiatives.

Another contextual factor which could possibly have impacted positively on the ability of the Swedish government to reach a higher share of organic food in the public sector is the legitimacy of central government objectives in local and regional government. As suggested by Jörgensen (2012) and by the Environmental and Agricultural Committee (Miljö- och jordbruksutskottet 2010) in the Swedish Parliament, in general the national goal on organic food shares was positively received by local and regional governments. Whether Danish or Norwegian local governments would have received similar official goals just as positively is difficult to predict. Establishing whether national policy goals adopted by central government would have similar or different impacts in Denmark and Norway requires further research comparing the relationship between central and local government in the three countries more generally and specifically in relation to organic food promotion within the public sector.

Further, the Norwegian and Danish contexts differed. This questions whether Norway could have achieved the same level of organic food consumption within its public sector institutions as Denmark. As pointed out in two of the evaluations of the Norwegian policy measures to promote organic food and farming, consumer confidence in relation to the Norwegian conventional farm sector is high in Norway, and this was believed to be an important factor explaining why, in general, the demand for organic food is low (Pedersen et al. 2012, 14, 99; Riksrevisjonen 2016, 88). This may explain why there has been less enthusiasm in public sector kitchens in Norway to engage in kitchen conversion in comparison with Denmark and Sweden.

While this report has identified national policy strategies as an important factor explaining cross-national variation in increasing organic food consumption in the public sector, conditions at local or regional level can potentially contribute to explain variation across the three countries. These could for instance be differences in public procurement rules, budget conditions or subcontracting to private partners. As highlighted above, there is significant within-country variation in organic food consumption across municipalities and regions particularly in Denmark and Sweden. Therefore, cross-jurisdictional research within each country can also contribute to identify conditions for successful conversion of kitchens in the public sector.

The contextual differences across the three countries raise questions about the transferability of policy experiences and designs between the three countries. Though Denmark, Norway and Sweden share ambitions in promoting organic farming and food, the policy context in the three countries was and is not similar. Studies on policy transfer show that an important factor influencing whether transfer of a policy programme from abroad will be successful is the comparability of the political, institutional and economic contexts in the host and receiving country (Dolowitz & Marsh 2000). Given that Sweden seems to have benefitted from a policy context more favourable to increasing organic food consumption within the public sector than in many other countries, it is unlikely that the Swedish framing strategy can be directly and successfully transferred to other countries. Relying on policy instruments in combination with building capacity to implement the instruments, as practised in the Danish case, appears to be a more transferable policy strategy.

None of the three policy cases analysed combined strong emphasis on both framing and policy instruments. Theoretically, it can be argued that a combined framing and policy instrument strategy would prove the most effective to grow the consumption of organic food within the public sector. However, we would still find significant variation between countries as the contexts within which such a strategy would be implemented are different. Some contexts would be conducive to successful implementation of a combined framing and instrument oriented strategy, whereas other contexts would have a dampening effect, resulting in weaker policy impact.

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