

## Buying local: at the heart of a trend

### HOW TO SEIZE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES WHILE MANAGING RISK

Groupe AGÉCO guides different types of organizations that want to improve their local purchasing practices in a rigorous way. The process toward local procurement can be part of a social life-cycle assessment (S-LCA) where we evaluate the organization's behavior with suppliers.

### QUEBECERS WANT TO EAT LOCAL PRODUCTS

More than 60% of Quebecers claim that they favor local products.<sup>1</sup> For many consumers, buying local is good for the planet and the local economy. In the case of local food products, the taste factor is also raised.



More and more important food buyers take into account this trend to buy local. Procurement professionals in grocery retail, hospitals, hotels and restaurants are going over their procurement policies and are asking questions on the origin of products. Groupe AGÉCO has built expertise to help them in this process.

### BUYING LOCAL, NOT AS SIMPLE AS IT LOOKS

Adopting a local purchasing policy requires thought and prior analysis. Firstly, one must define what local buying means. Depending on the context, local buying could be regional or provincial, for example. Then buyers could identify their stakeholders and begin a dialogue with them. Who are their actual suppliers? Does their existing offer correspond to local purchasing standards? Who are the potential suppliers for commodities that are produced or processed locally? Who are the other sectorial players involved?

In the public sector where calls for proposals are required, commercial regulation may interfere with the implementation of a sustainable procurement policy based on local buying. As for the private sector, competitive positioning is essential and must be documented.

### ON THE ROAD TO CHANGE

Groupe AGÉCO guides organizations through these steps: establishing criteria regarding the origins of the product and its main ingredients, listing suppliers and existing purchasing habits, understanding upcoming regulation and ways to meet the standards. Depending on the situation, the consulting work can be focused on fresh and agricultural products or include processed food.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: The most recent *Baromètre de la consommation responsable* by Protégez-vous and the *Observatoire de la consommation responsable de l'Université Sherbrooke*.

Following the prior analysis, change scenarios are evaluated for best impact on the economic, social and environmental levels. We adapt to different situations where issues differ: in a hospital where the food is served hot to many users and in a grocery store where local garlic is next to Chinese garlic, for instance. In both cases, cost is a main concern.

### AN ENGAGEMENT TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

Local purchasing goes further than marketing positioning. It can also be part of a sustainability strategy. In the public sector, namely in hospitals, the link between local procurement and sustainability has been clearly stated. The *Cadre de référence à l'intention du Réseau de la santé et des services sociaux pour l'élaboration de politiques alimentaires adaptées* states rules regarding healthy diet and takes in consideration the principles of the *Loi sur le développement durable*.

One thing is certain, in the consumers and the users mind, the link between buying local and sustainability is clear. Major buyers are getting the message.

Over 13 000 products are certified Aliments Québec or Prepared in Québec.  
These products are supplied by more than 600 certified suppliers.

For nearly 15 years, Groupe AGÉCO is active in the agriculture and agri-food sectors, sustainable development and social responsibility. The recommendations of the consulting firm facilitate the implementation of concrete improvements in your organization.

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