



*Understanding of connections when ...*

## **Improving sustainability of school meals in Finland**

Improving the quality and sustainability of school meals served in schools was considered as the most relevant issue among the students and personnel of both demonstration sites located in Tampere, Finland. Also fostering positive attitudes towards vegetarian food was another common goal for the interventions in both the schools. These issues are very relevant as schools have a remarkable role in sustainable food transitions especially in Finland where there is a long tradition with free school meals. However, these are very complex issues with many interfering factors. Thus, mapping and understanding systemic, regulative, normative, social and practical constraints and possible solutions were very essential for these matters. Moreover, influencing these issues necessitates collaboration with not only personnel within the school but also other stakeholders.

Municipality decision-makers and experts were invited to ECF4CLIM sustainability committee meetings where students, teachers and headmasters discussed together how to improve the quality and sustainability of Finnish school meals. Surveys mapping general attitudes and behavioural choices were conducted in both schools. Vegetarian food cooking events, a tasting day and recipe contest were organized as interventions in the comprehensive school to foster positive attitudes not only among the students but also among teachers and families. In upper secondary school a digital food scale was procured in order to get data, to be able to give exact feedback on the quality and the amount students eat and leftover food at school. All the food interventions were experienced positively. The meetings were interesting but also partly frustrating especially for students to learn how systems and scarce resources restrict possibilities to improve the school meals.