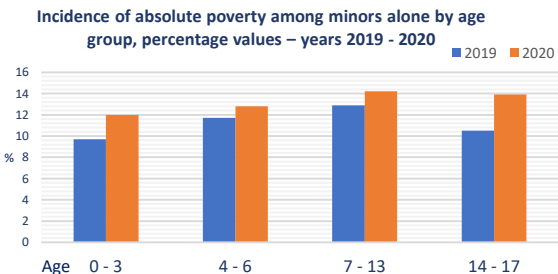


# Assessment of COVID-19 pandemic impact on guaranteeing food security in local school catering

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## Background

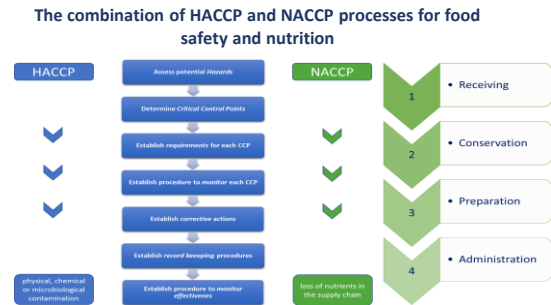
The Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) in its latest reports on poverty highlights that in 2019 10% of the Italian population could not afford an adequate meal every 2 days. In 2020, in Italy absolute poverty affected 13% of minors. Compared to 2019, in 2020 in Northern Italy the incidence of absolute poverty among minors increased from 10.7 to 14.4%. Disaggregating by age, the incidence is confirmed to be higher among those in the 7 - 13 age group.



Families with several children were the most affected, for these children school meals represented the only access to a healthy diet. The European Commission Farm to Fork Strategy, concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, underlines the need to act to ensure access to a sufficient supply of affordable food for all. In the Province of Trieste over 90% of pupils eat in school canteens (12,000 meals per day). The aims of the project were to verify, from January to March of 2021, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food security of public school canteens and determine any Nutritional Critical Points and Corrective Actions to guarantee healthy equity meals for all pupils.

## Methods

The content of "Public food procurement and service policies for a healthy diet" published by the WHO, the guidelines for school catering by the Friuli Venezia Giulia region and the Nutrient Analysis Critical Control Points (NACCP) process, as indicated by the Ministry of Health in the State Regions Agreement 222/2016, were applied.



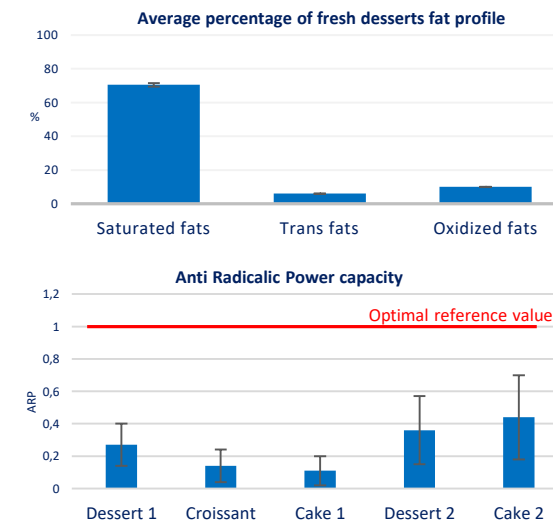
In the first quarter of 2021, in order to give continuity to the essential levels of assistance provided by the National Health System in the program F6 "Promoting nutritional quality in collective catering and data acquisition", the following items were verified:

- all food procurement contracts for public school catering services (n=6) to detect possible simplifications both in the procurement of raw materials and in the structuring of meals served to children;
- all school kitchens (n=45) of public school canteens in the Province of Trieste; and
- the composition of fresh desserts administered in 7 consecutive weeks.

## Results

The verification of public contracts and the NACCP process showed the following Nutritional Critical Points:

- the introduction of pre-packaged afternoon snacks instead of peeled fresh fruit, as an application of the regional guidelines for the prevention of the risk of COVID-19; and
- critical issues on the quantitative and qualitative fat profile of fresh desserts served at lunch. The analyzes carried out by the University of Trieste on the lipid fraction showed a content of 69 to 72% of saturated fatty acids, of 5 to 7% of trans fatty acids and of 8 to 12% oxidized fatty acids, and of 0,11 to 0,44 of Anti Radicalic Power capacity, similar to that of the dual quality food items.



Corrective Actions have been activated to support all public school canteens to:

- reformulate fresh desserts;
- plan regular monitoring of contracts compliance, and
- re-evaluate food supplies more adherent to WHO, UE recommendations.

## Conclusions

The Project outcomes highlight the importance of taking action to continuously support public school canteens in order to ensure healthy and equitable food environments for all and to contribute to building a fair, strong, sustainable and resilient food system.

The process of assessing the impact of the Covid - 19 pandemic on food safety and nutrition in school canteens made it possible to highlight the recommendations indicated by the WHO, FAO and UE to ensure food security and social Rights. In particular some key responsibilities indicated by the WHO for healthy food procurement and the service policy working group suggested in the "Public food procurement and service policies for a healthy diet".

The main responsibilities we might follow are:

- aid in assessment of the food procurement landscape;
- support public campaigns and communication of the new policy to all stakeholders;
- identify resources required to support implementation;
- develop on going processes to identify and address challenges;
- support regular monitoring of compliance;
- support evaluation, as needed; and
- share best practices.