

Background note on the
Special Address of the Vice-President of the Republic of Benin

Annual session of the Executive Board

Monday, 20 June 2022, 15:00–15:30

Hybrid event in the Auditorium at WFP headquarters and on Zoom

Benin values human capital as its most precious resource and has thus put investment in people at the heart of its development strategy since 2016. For Benin, school feeding is an important investment in the country's development thanks to its impact on performance in schools and to the return on investment it provides. In 2018, a cost benefit analysis showed a USD 5.2 return for every dollar invested in school feeding with clear links and contributions to local agriculture. A multisectoral approach has also been implemented to ensure primary schools serve as platforms to address other issues relating to hygiene, water, nutrition and healthy food, local production or social cohesion.

Today, three out of four children in Benin benefit from a warm meal every school day, compared to only one in five in 2016. Political will has made this significant achievement possible and to reach these results, the Government has simultaneously increased its allocations to the school feeding programme and changed the governance model by moving to a partnership with WFP. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, the Government managed to stabilize the national school feeding programme and to increase investments to ensure this broad scale coverage, reaching over 1 million children since April 2022. The Government has also confirmed its commitment for the next five years with an investment of 150 billion CFA, with the long-term objective of providing universal access to the school feeding programme by 2023. The Vice-President will take the opportunity of this forum to advocate an increased support in terms of technical assistance to integrate school feeding with domestic production in order to build national capacity.

With the recent and on-going crises, too many children are returning to under-funded school systems with the disadvantages of increased poverty and hunger. Out of this recognition and the need for action, Benin proudly joined the School Meals Coalition which leads efforts to improve the quality, sustainability and scale of national school meals programmes and complementary interventions. The coalition already includes 67 countries, out of which 29 are from the African continent. In addition, 68 partners have now signed up and committed to its goals. The President of Benin has expressed strong support for the coalition and has become a champion of school feeding by making health and nutrition of school children a priority for the country and by advocating other countries to join the coalition across the region, the continent and globally.