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Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for China (2022–2025)

Executive summary

An evaluation of the China country strategic plan for 2022–2025 was conducted between January and December 2024 to serve the dual purpose of accountability and learning, with a view to informing the design of the next country strategic plan.

The evaluation was conducted using a theory-based mixed-methods approach. To assess capacity strengthening, the evaluation team constructed a framework based on WFP's five pathways for capacity change.

The evaluation concluded that there was a strong case for WFP to continue to support China on its development journey with the aim of achieving a transition to a partnership extending beyond the term of the country strategic plan. WFP is providing relevant support as China shifts its focus from poverty alleviation to rural revitalization and common prosperity. WFP aligns its work with these goals through approaches that help to close the rural–urban income gap. It also supports local governments in identifying vulnerable populations and integrating them into national and provincial programmes.

WFP has provided capacity strengthening for both individuals and organizations at the provincial level. WFP's approach to working with provincial partners to pilot and test approaches that can be scaled up at the national level was sound. However, WFP missed opportunities to leverage insights from provincial pilots to generate evidence that could inform national policies. In addition, the piloted approaches lacked clear pathways for scaling up.

While WFP's China country office produces significant evidence, it is not the type needed to adequately inform government decision-making in relation to the scale-up of pilot projects. Key

In line with WFP evaluation policy (2022) (WFP/EB.1/2022/4-C), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings the editing of this report has been limited and as a result some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with the World Food Programme's standard terminology or editorial practices. Please direct any requests for clarification to the Director of Evaluation.

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gaps include limited data on cost-benefits and returns on investment. Although WFP increased the number of project-level evaluations based on recommendations arising from previous country strategic plan evaluations, its limited in-house technical expertise hindered the development of compelling evidence for national-scale projects.

WFP effectively targeted the most vulnerable populations within the framework of China's poverty alleviation strategy, but its plan to take a more ambitious approach to women's empowerment did not fully translate from concept to practice.

The geographic dispersion of projects and short funding cycles made it difficult to achieve sustainable results and create synergies across various areas of WFP's work. In addition, a fragmented strategy hindered the establishment of a clear trajectory for growing the partnership between WFP and China and demonstrating lasting sustainable effects.

The evaluation made five recommendations, which encourage WFP to:

- i) articulate a pathway by which WFP can transition to a relationship with China that goes beyond the term of the country strategic plan and is in line with China's post-2030 development agenda;
- ii) set out an ambitious strategy for growing WFP and China's partnership to address zero hunger worldwide;
- iii) increase the duration and tighten the geographic focus of country strategic plan programmes in China and bring together successes from past pilot projects into a comprehensive package of support;
- iv) develop approaches for sustainable change towards gender equality and women's empowerment to address underlying imbalances and improve women's leadership, resources and finance; include people with disabilities in project design and integrate end-user feedback; and
- v) invest in the capacity of the WFP country office in China to generate credible evidence as a basis for decision-making in relation to efforts to strengthen food security and nutrition in China and around the world.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for China (2022–2025) (WFP/EB.2/2025/6-C/1) and the management response (WFP/EB.2/2025/6-C/1/Add.1).

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.


Introduction

Evaluation features

1. The evaluation of the country strategic plan (CSP) for China for 2022–2025 was undertaken for accountability and learning purposes and to inform the design of the next CSP for China.
2. The evaluation covered the activities implemented by WFP under the CSP from November 2020 to September 2024. It was conducted between May and September 2024 using a theory-based, mixed-methods approach.
3. The main intended users of the evaluation are the WFP country office in China and technical divisions at headquarters in Rome, the WFP Executive Board, the Government of China, partner United Nations entities and donors. Other potential users include civil society and non-governmental organizations in China.
4. Consideration of equality between men and women, disability inclusion, protection, accountability to affected people, nutrition, climate change and environmental issues was integrated into the evaluation. Ethical standards were applied to safeguard the dignity of the people involved and the confidentiality of the information shared.

Context

5. With a population slightly above 1.4 billion people, China has the second largest economy in the world, and its economy is continuing to grow.¹ Since 1978, the country has changed from primarily agrarian society to one that is highly industrialized and urbanized. This transformation has elevated China from lower-middle income status in 2001 to upper-middle income status in 2010, when its per capita gross national income surpassed the World Bank threshold of USD 4,046.
6. Over the past 40 years, more than 800 million people in China have been lifted out of poverty, and extreme poverty was eradicated in 2020 (see table 1).² However, income disparities remain: it is estimated that in 2020, 24.7 percent of the population was living on less than USD 6.85 per day³, and poverty rates in rural areas were three times higher than those in urban areas.⁴

TABLE 1: POVERTY AND EXTREME POVERTY RATES IN CHINA (PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION) (2017–2020)				
	Poverty rate (latest data)		Extreme poverty rate (latest data)	
	2017	2020	2017	2020
 Total	32	24.7	0.7	0

Source: World Bank. 2020. Poverty headcount ratio at USD 2.15 per day (2017 purchasing power parity), poverty headcount ratio at USD 6.85 per day (2017 purchasing power parity).

¹ United Nations China. 2020. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the People's Republic of China 2021–2025*.

² *Ibid.*

³ World Bank. 2024. *The World Bank in China: Overview*.

⁴ United Nations Development Programme. 2023. *Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023 – Unstacking global poverty: data for high impact action. Briefing note for countries on the 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Index: China*.

7. Following the eradication of extreme poverty, national priorities have shifted towards rural revitalization. China's rural areas are largely composed of smallholder farmers who have low incomes, limited technology, weak market links and inadequate financial support. China's efforts have therefore focused on sustaining food security, preventing a return to poverty and improving rural infrastructure and governance.
8. As part of its rural revitalization and development strategy, China has made significant strides in reducing hunger in recent decades, developing a complex food system designed to feed its vast population and support exports. China's achievement of the 2015 Millennium Development Goal target – halving the proportion of its population suffering from hunger – accounted for nearly two thirds of the global reduction in hunger between 1990 and 2015.⁵
9. China has also made significant progress in reducing malnutrition, including achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets for ≤ 2.5 percent undernourishment in the total population, ≤ 5 percent stunting and ≤ 2 percent wasting in children under 5. Since 2013, stunting rates have dropped by more than 50 percent, although nutrition indicators remain worse in rural and impoverished areas.⁶
10. Despite significant achievements, nutrition challenges persist, including overweight, obesity and micronutrient deficiency. More than 34 percent (34.4 percent in urban and 34.2 percent in rural areas) of Chinese residents over 18 were overweight in 2020, and 16.4 percent (17.5 percent in urban and 15.3 percent in rural areas) were obese. Of children under 5, 8.0 percent of boys and 5.4 percent of girls were overweight in 2020 and 3.6 percent were obese (4.2 percent of boys and 2.7 percent of girls). Over half of rural residents' nutrient intake does not meet dietary standards, increasing their risk of nutrition-related chronic diseases. Chinese children also face zinc deficiency. In 2017, zinc deficiency among children was 9.6 percent nationally, but this rate exceeds 20 percent in certain regions such as Fujian and Zhejiang provinces. Over 80 percent of children aged 7–13 in Gansu Province had zinc intake below the estimated average requirement.⁷

WFP country strategic plan

11. The evaluation found that the CSP has provided a strategic framework for collaboration between WFP and China, focusing on both domestic initiatives and contributions to reduce hunger around the world.
12. *WFP programming in China.* Within China, activities under the CSP sought to improve the nutrition status of preschool children and address rural vulnerability in targeted areas. These interventions were also intended to strengthen the WFP–China partnership. Under the CSP, innovative approaches have been piloted with the support of the Chinese Government and the private sector, with the expectation that successful models will be scaled up and integrated into national programmes.
13. *Global contributions.* At the global level, the CSP aimed to generate insights and lessons from China-based pilots that can inform global efforts to reduce hunger and facilitate new fundraising from private and public institutions in China to support WFP programming in China and international programmes. The CSP was built on the assumption that the

⁵ International Food Policy Research Institute. 2024. [2024 Global Food Policy Report: Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Nutrition](#); and [“China country strategic plan \(2017–2021\)”](#) (WFP/EB.1/2017/7/8/Rev.1).

⁶ International Food Policy Research Institute. 2024. [2024 Global Food Policy Report: Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Nutrition](#); [“China country strategic plan \(2022–2025\)”](#) (WFP/EB.A/2022/8-A/1/Rev.1); and WFP. 2024. [China Annual Country Report 2023](#).

⁷ [“China country strategic plan \(2022–2025\)”](#) (WFP/EB.A/2022/8-A/1/Rev.1); International Food Policy Research Institute. 2024. [2024 Global Food Policy Report: Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Nutrition](#); National Health Commission of China. 2024. [Dietary guidelines for adult obesity \(2024 edition\)](#) (in Chinese); WFP. 2024. [China Annual Country Report 2023](#); and WFP. 2023. [Endline report of zinc-enriched potatoes project in Gansu Province](#) (unpublished).

Government of China and the Chinese private sector would be willing to work with WFP to pilot new approaches, that the Government of China would fund the scale-up of successful pilots and consider their integration into national programmes and that the lessons from the CSP could be successfully applied to global efforts to improve nutrition and livelihoods.

14. *Strategic outcomes and activities.* The CSP has been implemented through one strategic outcome and three activities.
15. Activity 1, on value chains, aimed at improving incomes, production and climate resilience among smallholder farmers by piloting new crop varieties, aggregating farmers into cooperatives, supporting better connections to markets through certification and brand development, and piloting innovative approaches.
16. Activity 2, on preschool meal programmes, aimed at improving the nutrition status of children in underdeveloped rural areas by supporting the provision of nutritious preschool meals. WFP has supported six preschool meal pilots across four provinces: Gansu, Sichuan, Guangxi and Hunan. In line with WFP's country capacity strengthening modality, the projects have been implemented by local government project management offices, with WFP providing upstream support for inclusive design, vulnerability targeting, project monitoring and evidence generation to encourage scale-up through provincial and national programmes.
17. Activity 3 focused on building partnerships with the Government of China and the Chinese private sector to fund efforts to achieve zero hunger (in line with SDG 2) in China and around the world (table 2).

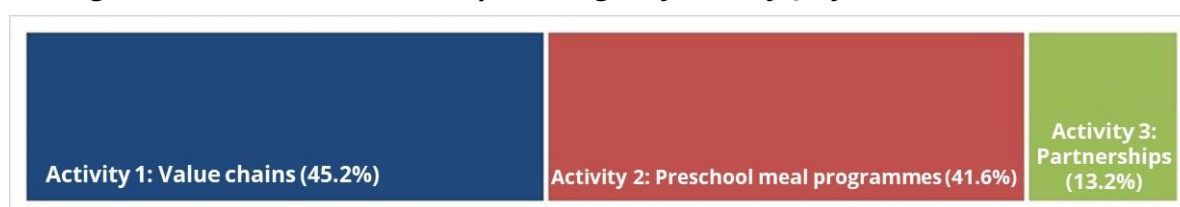
TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF THE WFP CHINA COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2022–2025				
Focus area	Strategic plan outcome	Activities	Modality	Target group
Root causes	1: Left-behind groups in rural areas of China have improved nutrition status and livelihoods in line with national targets by 2025.	1: Value chains	Country capacity strengthening	Smallholder famers, especially women, older persons and people with disabilities in rural counties previously affected by poverty
		2: Preschool meal programmes	Country capacity strengthening	Children aged 3–5 in rural counties previously affected by poverty, especially left behind children*
		3: Facilitation of development and humanitarian cooperation	Global partnerships	Government and Chinese private sector

* The term “left-behind children” refers to children whose parents have moved to urban areas for work, often leaving them in the care of grandparents.

Source: Evaluation team.

18. In China, WFP works solely through country capacity strengthening. The aim of that work is to support local authorities in counties affected by poverty in promoting targeted innovative approaches that address gaps in livelihoods and nutrition in less socioeconomically developed rural areas. China has a strong enabling environment in place to address rural-urban inequality, including large-scale, well-funded national programmes and policies targeted at poverty alleviation and rural revitalization and strong institutional capacity at both the national and provincial levels. WFP has therefore focused its country capacity strengthening efforts on supporting programme design and the engagement of non-government actors.
19. WFP negotiates overall project design and the selection of partner provinces with the national Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. WFP then works with the Department of Rural Affairs in the selected provinces to identify counties suitable for project implementation, which is then undertaken through county-level implementation mechanisms, with WFP supporting project design, beneficiary selection and monitoring. This technical cooperation model ensures strong alignment between WFP and national and provincial priorities.
20. The CSP largely continued the strategic approach of the previous CSP for China, which covered 2017–2021. However, the CSP activities were reorganized, with all activities listed under one strategic outcome instead of five. WFP continued to support preschool meal programmes and value chains and to facilitate fundraising partnerships (with some change to activity numbers). However, support for South–South cooperation was continued outside the framework of the CSP and WFP dropped the objective of supporting disaster preparedness and response due to the high level of existing capacity and lack of government appetite for international support. In April 2020, WFP and the Government announced the establishment of a global humanitarian hub in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Like work on South–South cooperation, work under this hub is also undertaken outside the framework of the CSP. WFP increased its evidence generation under the new CSP and also commissioned many project evaluations following recommendations arising from a 2021 evaluation of the previous CSP.
21. The CSP for 2022–2025 began with a projected country portfolio budget of USD 15,652,925, and neither the CSP nor the budget was revised between July 2022 and September 2024. Work on preschool meal programmes (under activity 2) and value chains (under activity 1) were allocated the largest shares of the budget (45 percent and 42 percent, respectively) under the needs-based plan, with 13 percent for partnerships (under activity 3) (figure 1). As of 31 December 2023 the CSP implementation plan was 92 percent funded (table 3). Notably, WFP’s work in China under the CSP has been fully funded by the Government of China and private donors (table 4). Funding is highly flexible, with less than 3 percent earmarked at the activity level.

Figure 1: Share of needs-based plan budget by activity, July 2022–December 2024



Source: Annual country reports for China for 2022 and 2023, data extracted on 17 June 2024.

TABLE 3: ALLOCATED RESOURCES AS A PERCENTAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN BY ACTIVITY, JULY 2022 TO DECEMBER 2024 (USD)				
Strategic outcome	Activity	Implementation plan	Allocated resources	Allocated resources as a percentage of implementation plan
1	1: Value chains	2 218 999	2 235 262	100.7
	2: Preschool meal programmes	2 625 076	2 708 992	103.2
	3: Partnerships	1 047 533	1 457 707	139.2
Total		5 891 608	6 401 960	108.7

Source: Cumulative financial overview as at 31 December 2024 (CN02), data extracted on 18 April 2025.

TABLE 4: DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CHINA COUNTRY OFFICE, 2021-2024 (USD)					
	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Government of China	1 256 372	1 349 098	1 489 801		4 095 272
Private donors	2 628 663	679 105	279 968	200 000	3 787 736
Other United Nations funds and entities (excluding the Central Emergency Response Fund)	200 000				200 000
Total	4 085 035	2 028 203	1 769 769	200 000	8 083 007

Source: Distribution contribution and forecast stats 2024-03-18.xlsx by donors, data extracted on 18 June 2024.

Summary of key evaluation conclusions and supporting findings

22. The following section summarizes the six key conclusions of the evaluation, which are based on the evidence presented in the evaluation findings.

Relevance and alignment

Conclusion 1: WFP has provided relevant assistance as China shifts its focus from poverty alleviation to rural revitalization. There is a clear case for WFP to support China as the country continues its development journey and for WFP to transition towards a partnership with China that goes beyond the term of the CSP.

23. WFP's CSP for China has appropriately focused on strategically addressing the root causes of food insecurity in China in order to ensure that food security gains are sustainable. This has been done through livelihoods and nutrition interventions, targeting provinces prioritized by the Government because of their high levels of poverty and targeting key vulnerable groups, particularly left-behind children and smallholder farmers.
24. The CSP was strongly aligned with China's national and subnational priorities, as well as those of the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework for China. In addition, WFP's focus on nutrition-sensitive value chains complements the approaches of other United Nations entities such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. WFP has also leveraged the United Nations Children's Fund's support for national nutrition programmes to ensure a coherent approach to nutrition interventions in the preschool meal programmes

that WFP supports in the provinces. WFP's targeted support for children aged 3–5 fills a critical gap in national policies, including the 2024 child nutrition plan, which primarily covers primary schoolchildren, pregnant women and children aged 0–24 months.

25. WFP's approach remained relevant over time, as China transitioned from a focus on poverty alleviation to rural revitalization. WFP's nutrition and value chain capacity strengthening consistently aligned with evolving national priorities, supporting local governments working to pilot new approaches that address gaps in nutrition education. Furthermore, WFP responded flexibly to changing circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic and major shifts in private fundraising, including an economic slowdown and geostrategic shifts that led to a sharp drop in company donations after 2021.
26. WFP activities in China contribute to a coherent strategic logic that is clearly outlined in the CSP, but the division between the WFP's centre of excellence in China and the CSP from 2022 onwards resulted in missed opportunities to leverage synergies between domestic and international projects. A great deal of evidence was generated by a preschool meal project, for example, but was not then showcased through the centre of excellence. The wide geographic area over which CSP projects were spread made it difficult to achieve consistent synergies among them.

WFP partnership model

Conclusion 2: WFP has contributed to stronger individual and organizational capacity at the provincial level but missed opportunities to leverage learning from its provincial-level pilots to generate credible and relevant evidence for informing policies at the national level, and ensuring that the approaches being tested and piloted could realistically be scaled up.

27. WFP's capacity strengthening support led to progress in individual and organizational capacity. Partners increased their capacity in project design and monitoring and inclusive targeting approaches, allowing them to develop and test new ways of delivering nutrition support for preschool children, and climate resilience and market linkages for smallholder farmers, including women farmers, older farmers and farmers from minority communities.
28. A memorandum of understanding between WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs is the backbone of WFP's work in China. WFP improved partnerships with authorities at the provincial level, but stakeholders see opportunities to expand policy engagement with national ministries such as the Ministry of Education and the National Health Commission.
29. WFP expanded the breadth of its partnerships at the provincial level, moving beyond directorates of agriculture to include local education and health departments, maternal and child health offices, and universities. An increased focus on interdepartmental coordination helped to strengthen project implementation.
30. WFP leveraged strong and mutually beneficial relationships with private sector partners and academic bodies to promote innovative approaches to addressing poor nutrition and food insecurity in China and around the world. However, overreliance on private sector funding has at times resulted in geographic fragmentation and short-term programming.
31. WFP collaborates well with United Nations partners, but much of this joint United Nations work remains at the level of information sharing, collaboration on policy strengthening, and advocacy campaigns such as the 16 days of activism to end violence against women. The small scale and dispersed nature of United Nations projects in China means that joint programming is not feasible.

Evidence generation and use

Conclusion 3: WFP's country office in China generates much evidence, but not consistently of the types needed to adequately inform the Government in relation to the value of scaling up pilot activities. Key gaps include limited cost-benefit analyses and insufficient evidence of potential returns on investments. WFP greatly increased the number of project-level evaluations, building on the recommendations arising from the evaluation of the previous CSP. However, a lack of in-house technical expertise limited WFP's ability to develop convincing evidence to support the scale-up of projects to the national level.

32. WFP's strategic approach emphasizes the piloting of innovative interventions, followed by engagement with decision-makers on facilitating the scale-up of successful initiatives into national programmes. During the term of the CSP, WFP increased the volume and types of evidence it produced to support CSP implementation. For example, it increased the number of project-level evaluations conducted with provincial academic partners, which led to improved learning, particularly with regard to social and behaviour change, and inclusion. It launched a South-South knowledge hub outside the framework of the CSP, building on findings from some CSP initiatives. It also partnered with media to disseminate information, using media channels to deliver creative outreach, such as through a livestream cooking show that enabled it to showcase zinc-enriched potatoes.
33. However, WFP's lack of relevant in-house technical expertise, combined with the absence of early planning for scale-up strategies from the beginning of project design, contributed to missed opportunities to collect key evidence on matters such as costs versus benefits, and returns on investment. For example, WFP-supported value chain projects achieved mixed levels of uptake, with further work needed on market linkages and risk insurance for the development of evidence-informed scalable approaches. Gaps in the methodologies used also meant that the evidence generated did not always reflect the extent of the progress made and was not always suitable for informing policy engagement. Partners believe that WFP needs more robust, peer-reviewed evidence on policy that is convincing for decision-makers. Weak links to headquarters in Rome and the regional bureau, and a sense that conditions in China were unique, also acted as barriers to the leveraging of technical expertise from the global WFP partnership.
34. Insufficient understanding of the information needs of national decision-makers, and gaps in the evidence available to them, also hindered the effective implementation of WFP's strategy in China. Collectively, the gaps and challenges in achieving the CSP's goals in relation to evidence generation have constrained WFP's ability to support meaningful engagement with national stakeholders who are positioned to scale up successful programmes when appropriate.

Targeting and prioritization

Conclusion 4: WFP was effective in advocating that targeting focus on the most vulnerable people, but its more ambitious approaches to women's empowerment were not implemented.

35. WFP's 2022 targeting strategy for China, combined with its strong approaches to partnership brokering, allowed it to work effectively with provincial partners on identifying and engaging vulnerable groups at risk of being left behind in relation to national development, including women, girls, older farmers, people with disabilities and members of minority groups. This serves as a model for future work on socioeconomic inclusion in China, such as the establishment of community feedback mechanisms.

36. WFP has been very effective in contributing to targeting approaches at the provincial level, including by supporting local officials and academic and private sector bodies in broadening their understanding of inclusion and tailored approaches to the needs of vulnerable groups. However, WFP has not leveraged this experience to inform national targeting strategies, a crucial step if it is to move beyond small pilot projects and support solutions at scale.
37. WFP worked with provincial partners to achieve near parity between men and women in capacity strengthening activities. However, it missed the opportunity to embed ambitious approaches to women's economic empowerment in the design and implementation of interventions, including by supporting tailored approaches to addressing disparities between women and men and increasing rural women's access to assets and financing and their participation in decision-making. United Nations partners reported valuing WFP's insights on the economic opportunities for rural women, highlighting the potential for WFP to do more in this area.
38. People with disabilities were included as beneficiaries in WFP-supported projects but were not consistently given a role in the design or monitoring of those projects, and many project sites were not accessible to them. Nutrition integration and environmental sustainability emerged as key pillars of WFP's capacity strengthening work, helping to localize nutrition-related goals and support measures aimed at reducing the use of water, fertilizer and chemicals and building climate-related resilience along supply chains. WFP missed the opportunity to work consistently with provincial governments on advocating the use of strong beneficiary feedback mechanisms, building on WFP's successful engagement with regard to vulnerability-based targeting. WFP developed strong capacity strengthening approaches to building eco-friendly agriculture, environmental sustainability and nutrition integration, which it can leverage for future programmes.

Sustainability of results and synergies across the portfolio

Conclusion 5: Geographic dispersion and short funding cycles made it harder to demonstrate sustainable results and achieve synergies among WFP's various areas of work.

39. Overall, the evaluation highlights mixed results in relation to the sustainability of CSP activities. WFP-supported value chain projects demonstrate varying levels of sustainability. Provincial authorities have maintained projects beyond the end of WFP's support, but there is no evidence of national scale-up. Short project cycles, gaps in the branding and marketing of beneficiaries' produce, market volatility and climate change risks are key barriers to the broader adoption of project activities. Nutrition projects showed stronger sustainability resulting from effective efforts in social and behaviour change and localized capacity strengthening, but faced challenges caused by rising costs. Gaps in planning and evidence hindered WFP's ability to inform national-level planning for securing sustainable funding and taking projects to scale.
40. Private sector donors were the primary funding source for WFP's activities in 2021, but private sector funding declined sharply from 2022 onwards owing to a broad economic slowdown and shifts in the priorities of private sector donors. Short funding cycles were also highlighted in the evaluation as a key factor undermining long-term sustainability. Many private sector organizations were unable to sustain support beyond their initial three-year investments, compromising the sustainability of the results achieved.
41. Alignment with private sector interests often led to the dispersion of WFP projects across a wide geographic area. This dispersion limited the opportunities to build programmatic synergies and reduced the likelihood of sustainable gains. While WFP worked hard to promote synergies among its various areas of capacity support, vast distances meant that links between programmes were often ad hoc. For example, WFP integrated support for smallholder farmers into its nutrition programme, helping farmers to establish supply chains

for providing vegetables to schools and central kitchens. However, these relationships often did not continue after WFP's support ended. For example, one private sector partner supported a one-time purchase of zinc-enriched potatoes produced under activity 1 for a local preschool meal programme, but the initiative was not sustained.

Strategic direction

Conclusion 6: Fragmented strategy has made it more challenging to set a clear strategic trajectory for growing the relationship between WFP and China and demonstrating sustainable results.

42. The hybrid nature of WFP's presence in China, which is part country office, part global office and part centre of excellence, combines multiple strategic models. The formal separation between the centre of excellence and the CSP from 2022 onwards has made it more challenging to define a coherent engagement strategy. This division has also contributed to a disconnect from WFP's global-level technical approaches and systems.
43. The split contributed to a lack of programmatic clarity as WFP's China-focused, international, South-South cooperation and humanitarian hub activities were split among multiple strategies and managed by different units at WFP headquarters in Rome. This made it more challenging to reach a common understanding with regard to priorities and to report on progress and challenges in a holistic way, contributing to confusion among staff and stakeholders, and greater strategic drift. Removing South-South cooperation from the CSP also made WFP's work in China something of an outlier, as 87 percent of WFP's CSPs worldwide include South-South cooperation to some extent.
44. The decision to remove the activities of the centre of excellence from the CSP also contributed to missed opportunities for synergies. For example, there are no policy briefings on WFP's approach to preschool meal programmes, and only two brief case studies on the South-South cooperation knowledge-sharing platform, despite significant investment from WFP. WFP's employees and partners saw potential to increase synergies between CSP programmes in China and international programmes, with small-scale innovative pilot projects contributing to global learning on nutrition and food security approaches while deepening communication and partnerships with the Government.
45. To increase synergies WFP's China country office introduced an integrated organizational chart in August 2024, but it is too early to assess its effectiveness. The office reports to WFP headquarters in Rome, rather than to the regional office for Asia and the Pacific, in recognition of the global partnership function of WFP in China. Given the hybrid role of WFP in China, coordination will be needed at both the country and the global levels for WFP in China to be able to fully articulate its strategic opportunities and leverage its significant global, national and provincial networks in order to grow its partnership with China in line with the country's increasing presence worldwide.

Recommendations

46. The evaluation makes two strategic and three operational recommendations that are based on the key findings and conclusions.

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
Recommendation 1: Use the next CSP to articulate a pathway by which WFP can transition to a relationship with China that goes beyond the term of the CSP and is in line with China's post-2030 development agenda.	Strategic, domestic and global	Country office	Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division, country office South-South cooperation unit, and Supply Chain and Delivery Division	High	November 2025
1.1 Provide a holistic vision for WFP's engagement in China, focusing on the "leave no one behind" agenda, and covering domestic and international programmes and the centre of excellence so as to promote strategic clarity and synergies among programmes.				High	November 2025
1.2 Conduct an independent evaluation of the centre of excellence to provide a basis for setting realistic targets and integrating the centre into WFP's broader strategy for its work in China.				Medium	June 2026
1.3 Focus WFP's efforts in China on the development of comprehensive nutrition-focused, climate-smart and risk-resilient food systems.				High	November 2025
1.4 In the next CSP, embed an ambitious vision of how to grow the partnership with China as an enabler of achievements under the CSP. This will remove the need to include partnerships as a stand-alone area of activity in the next CSP.				Medium	November 2025

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
Recommendation 2: Set out an ambitious strategy for growing WFP and China's partnership to address zero hunger worldwide, in line with SDG 2 and commensurate with China's increasing global presence.	Strategic and global partnerships	Country office	Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division; Private Sector Corporate Partnerships Unit	Medium	June 2026
2.1 Develop a three-phase engagement strategy for building partnerships with the Government by demonstrating results to show that WFP can deliver; expanding the focus of partnerships beyond food assistance to include food solutions; and working with China to secure more funding, including more multi-year funding, based on shared areas of interest.				Medium	June 2026
2.2 Strengthen the country office's partnership brokering capacity by identifying and developing appropriate initiatives for building the global partnership between WFP and China on achieving zero hunger.				High	June 2026
2.3 Test the effectiveness of increasing investment in private fundraising initiatives, track the returns on investment, and build evidence of the optimal levels of investment.				High	June 2026
Recommendation 3: Increase the duration and tighten the geographic focus of CSP programmes in China, and bring together successes from past pilot projects into a comprehensive package of support.	Operational and domestic programmes	Country office		Medium	January 2026
3.1 Pilot the use of a ten-year project design cycle. Three years is a too short period for implementing a pilot project, learning from it, and demonstrating the results.				Medium	December 2026

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
3.2 Pilot area-based programming. Combine successful approaches and learning from past programmes into a holistic, geographically focused package of support that promotes synergies among nutrition, value chain and climate smart approaches.				Medium	December 2026
3.3 Blend public and private financing with a view to increasing the predictability of financing for projects.				High	June 2026
3.4 Develop detailed scale-up plans during project design and review and update them annually.				High	January 2026
Recommendation 4: Develop approaches for sustainable change towards gender equality and women's empowerment to address underlying imbalances and improve women's leadership, resources and finance; include people with disabilities in project design, and integrate end-user feedback tailored to conditions in China.	Operational and domestic programmes	Country office	Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service	Medium	September 2025
4.1 Develop a tailored strategy for identifying opportunities to address underlying imbalances and promote gender-transformative approaches that foster women's leadership, control over resources and assets, and access to financing.				High	September 2025
4.2 Consult organizations of people with disabilities and women's organizations during project design and monitoring.				High	June 2026
4.3 Develop targeted approaches to ensure that project designs are suitable for older people, who make up an increasing proportion of China's rural population. Collect age-disaggregated data, building on the successful approach to the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data under the previous CSP.				Medium	June 2026

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4.4 Test approaches appropriate to conditions in China to ensure that the end-users of projects can provide feedback, and lessons can be used to improve delivery.				Medium	December 2026
Recommendation 5: Invest in the capacity of the WFP country office in China to generate credible evidence as a basis for decision-making in relation to efforts to strengthen food security and nutrition in China and around the world.	Operational, domestic and global	Country office	Multilateral and Programme Country Partnerships Division	High	June 2026
5.1 Complement WFP's partnership brokering skills with collaboration with technical experts to support the gathering and use of robust data; the preparation of peer reviewed policy papers; and engagement with experts and decision-makers on domestic and international approaches to strengthening food security and nutrition.				High	June 2026
5.2 Measure cost-efficiency and returns on investment to provide credible evidence as a basis for the development of effective and sustainable approaches to improving nutrition and food security.				High	June 2026
5.3 Build a robust knowledge management system for capturing and disseminating evidence and lessons for use in domestic and international programmes.				High	December 2026

Acronyms

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal