



Home Grown School Meals

Benefit Children, Farmers and Communities

Home Grown School Meals (HGSM) programmes provide safe, diverse, and nutritious food, sourced locally from smallholders, to children in schools.

Multiple Benefits and Beneficiaries

Governments increasingly invest in home-grown school meals programmes because they are an effective safety net for children, farmers and communities, with the potential to foster development and well-being in the long term.

Home-grown school meals programmes contribute to achieving various sustainable development goals: they facilitate access to education (SDG4), help improve nutrition (SDG2), and address the structural poverty of smallholder farmers (SDG1).

Education

School meals increase school enrolment, attendance and completion rates. They also relieve hunger and malnutrition, which then enhances children's ability to learn. When offered in combination with quality education and health interventions, school meals help children achieve their full learning potential.¹

Better education has important impacts on a child's future seen through better lifelong health, lower child marriage rates, lower maternal and infant mortality rates, and a higher income throughout his or her adult life.²

Nutrition

By using locally available food, home-grown school meals programmes provide meals that are nutritious, diverse, fresh and culturally appropriate.

In addition, these programmes may promote diet diversification and healthy eating habits for children and their families.

The quest for a diversified menu at school can also trigger the rehabilitation of "disregarded" crop varieties that are more nutritional than usual staples.

Agricultural Sector and Food Systems

By buying part or all of the food for the school meals from local smallholder farmers, home-grown school meals programmes strengthen local agriculture.

Stimulated by the stable and sizeable demand for food, smallholders are more likely to invest in agricultural inputs, reach out to extension services, gain access to credit, and hence increase their productivity.

Home-grown school meals programmes generally include activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of farmers to store, transport and market goods; negotiate deals; or understand market dynamics.

Eventually, by boosting local agricultural production and encouraging crop diversification, home-grown school meals reinforce local food systems and increase the community's food security.

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A Social Protection Instrument

Social Protection

As home-grown school meals programmes provide poor children with a daily meal, generate a predictable income for smallholder farmers, create local employment, and increase communities' food security, they improve social equity and reduce vulnerability.

Therefore, they have great potential as a social protection instrument. By embedding them in the national social protection system, governments can increase their effectiveness and sustainability.

Home-grown school meals programmes also create opportunities for innovations, such as cash-based transfers or alternative procurement models, which can improve their flexibility and efficiency.

National and Local Ownership

Home-grown school meals programmes typically involve the education, health and agricultural sectors, requiring significant coordination, hence they can only be successful when there is clear political commitment and government ownership.

Also the communities benefiting from the programme and all actors along the value chain need to be deeply involved in order to increase programme sustainability.

Community engagement, especially when combined with training, allows beneficiaries to cultivate skills that can extend to other spheres of their lives and strengthen their livelihoods.

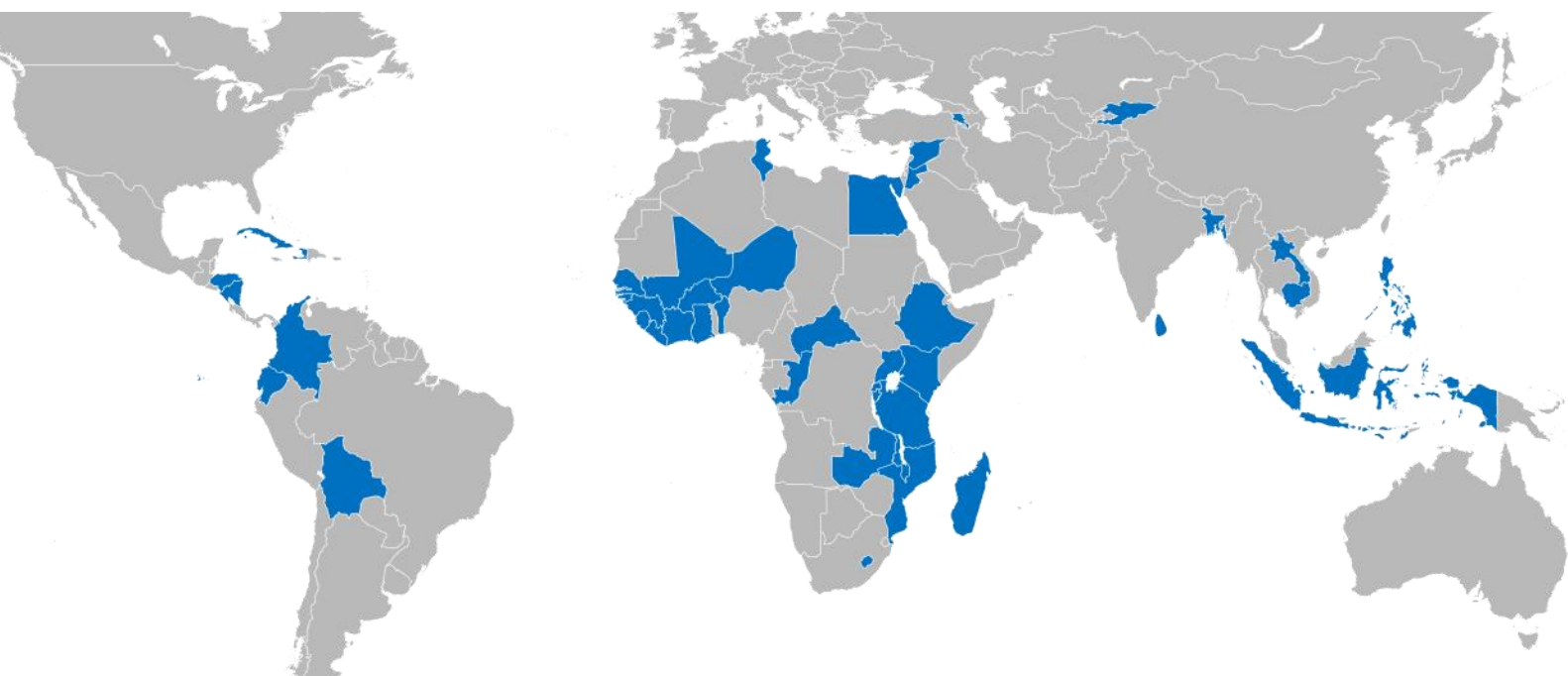
What WFP does

WFP supports Home Grown School Meals programmes in 46 countries, usually with a combination of direct implementation and technical assistance. WFP works with governments to develop national policies and strategies and then helps design or implement such initiatives according to government capacities and priorities. For instance, by facilitating a Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) assessment or a cost assessment of the national school meals programmes, WFP helps governments understand where they stand in terms of school meals policy, implementation, and cost effectiveness.

As a global leader in school meals and an expert in procurement, logistics and food safety, WFP is uniquely positioned as the nexus for governments, the private sector, donors, UN agencies, civil society and academic institutions to set up successful home-grown school meals programmes worldwide — and thus forge global partnerships for sustainable development (SDG17).

WFP supports south-south and triangular cooperation on home-grown school meals through the WFP Centre of Excellence in Brazil.

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¹ Kristjansson et al. (2016) *International Journal of Educational Development* 48:79-83

² Wigley et al. (2006) *Social Indicators Research* 78(2):287-304