



We are grateful for all your contributions and collaborative efforts in support of school meals in the past year and look forward to a successful 2024!

In this first edition of the Newsletter for this year, please join us in welcoming the Government of Uganda to the School Meals Coalition, in addition to Charity Right, China National Institute for Nutrition and Health and Paul Gérine-Lajoie Foundation. The Coalition now stands at 96 member governments and 114 partners.

School Meals Coalition hosts “Nourishing the planet, Sustaining Futures” at COP28



Key speakers at the “Nourishing the planet, Sustaining Futures,” event, from far right, Research Consortium Director, Professor Donald Bundy; The Rockefeller Foundation Senior Vice President, Dr. Roy Steiner; Finland’s Special Envoy for Climate and Environment, Ms. Kristin Standal; School-Based Programs Director in WFP, Ms. Carmen Burbano de Lara, Kenya’s Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change, and Forestry, Hon. Soipan Tuyu; Deputy CEO of the Global Partnership for Education, Mr. Charles North, and Special Envoy on Climate and Security for Norway, Mr Hans Olav Ibrek. Photo: School Meals Coalition.

At the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) held in the UAE from 30 November to 12 December 2023, the School Meals Coalition hosted the “Nourishing the Planet, Sustaining Futures: Reimagining School Meals for Planetary and Child Health” event to mobilize stakeholders working on school meals, food systems and climate and rally behind Kenya’s pioneering planet-friendly school meals programme. Kenya is among the first countries to integrate in its school meals programme recommendations from the White Paper, “[School Meals and Food Systems: Rethinking the consequences for climate, environment, biodiversity and food sovereignty](#),” by the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition. Watch the full event [here](#).

In keynote remarks read by **Kenya’s** Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry, Honourable Soipan Tuyu on behalf of Kenya’s First Lady, H.E. Rachel Ruto, the Government of Kenya stated its commitment to providing nourishing, climate-smart meals to 10 million children by 2030, an increase from the current 2.3 million children being reached. To achieve this, the national government is partnering with 47 county administrations and matching funding allocated by each county to school meals. “In this pivotal moment as Kenya strides forward with a bold commitment to our school meals initiative, we extend our call for global collaboration and solidarity. We invite countries around the world to draw inspiration from our efforts and join us in this transformative journey,” she said.

Speaking during the panel discussion, Hon. Tuyu shared how Kenya is leading at the global level, advocating for integration of food systems with education and environmental policies as an imperative for a sustainable future. Read the full article [here](#).

At the same event, Director of the **Research Consortium**, Professor Donald Bundy explained the wide consultations with over 85 organisations and 160 contributors that led to the emerging findings and policy recommendations of the White Paper.

Senior Vice President for the Food Initiative at the **Rockefeller Foundation** Dr. Roy Steiner urged governments to invest in adopting planet-friendly actions in their school meal programming, including reviewing school menus to include wholegrain food and drought tolerant food varieties such as, millets and other small grains and using clean energy cooking solutions alongside methods that preserve nutrients in food such as electric pressure cookers. He also urged governments and partners to consider innovative financing options to create greater fiscal space to reach these goals.

Norway’s Special Envoy for Energy, Climate and Food Security in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hans Olav Ibrek, commended Kenya’s leadership and its efforts to act at scale. He highlighted that school meal programmes are a tool to address hunger and malnutrition while also providing a platform for promoting climate-smart agriculture. Mr. Ibrek reiterated Norway’s commitment to supporting the Research Consortium to strengthen research, evidence-generation, and impact-evaluation.

Deputy CEO of the **Global Partnership for Education (GPE)** Mr. Charles North highlighted how school meals “enable us to simultaneously tackle the education and learning crisis, the climate crisis and the transformation of food systems.” Mr. North announced a new GPE initiative, the School Nutrition Technical Assistance Facility, that will be piloted in Kenya. This facility will improve the quality of school meals by providing capacity assistance to governments to achieve increasingly sustainable, gender-responsive and nationally owned school meals programmes.

In her closing remarks **Finland’s** Special Envoy for Climate and Environment in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Ms. Kristin Standal, congratulated Kenya for taking a bold step in committing to a planet-friendly school meals programme. As the co-chair of the School Meals Coalition, she further explained Finland is pleased to see the Coalition's continued momentum and committed to continue providing financial and technical support to help countries and partners achieve its goals.

Other Highlights and Events that featured School Meals at COP28

The **Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action** signed by 134 Heads of State highlighted the importance of social protection systems such as school meals in promoting food security and nutrition. You can find the full declaration [here](#).

The school meals agenda was included at **several other events hosted by Coalition partners at COP28**. A session to discuss the Research Consortium's [white paper](#) in more detail took place on 8 December at the [RewirEd Summit](#), hosted by Dubai Cares. Speakers exchanged experiences and discussed next steps in view of the White Paper's recommendations.

At a second session of the RewirEd Summit, "Cultivating Wellness: School Health and Nutrition for a Sustainable Future," Professor Bundy presented evidence about a holistic approach to promoting the health and wellbeing of school-aged children through school-based health interventions.

School meals also featured strongly at a session hosted by the **Aquatic Blue Food Coalition** on 10 December. The session, "Little Fish, Big Impact: Transforming School Meals Through Local Aquatic Foods," highlighted the significant positive impacts of "flexitarian" menus on the health of people and the planet. Watch the event [here](#).

Also on 10 December, the SDG2 Good Food for All – Beans is How campaign highlighted the power of beans, an affordable, nutritious, and environmentally sustainable solution for accelerating climate adaption through school food menus in Africa.

Plan International and CARE hosted an event: "Harvesting Solutions: Addressing the Global Hunger and Climate Crisis Through Multisectoral Collaboration," on 10 December. School meals were discussed as an evidence-based solution to addressing the global hunger and climate crises.

On 12 December, a UNESCO-UNFCCC webinar series on climate change education put a spotlight on greening schools. The webinar expanded on discussions from previous webinars held between May and October 2023. It discussed how schools can become "green schools" by embedding a whole-institution approach to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in their teaching and learning, facilities, and operations such as school meals, school governance and community engagement. Watch the event [here](#).



Quotes of the month

"By integrating local supply chains into our school meals programme, we are opening doors for smallholder farmers, especially women, enabling them to become key players in the local food system. This approach provides markets for their produce and empowers them with the skills, knowledge, and the resources they need to thrive in a changing climate."

Her Excellency, the First Lady of Kenya, Mama Rachel Ruto, in her speech at "Nourishing the planet, Sustaining Futures."

"Building a more resilient world requires policies that tackle several challenges at once. The school meals programmes bring fantastic local level solutions with both positive and multifaceted ways of creating change. They aid us in combatting climate change and supporting climate action and biodiversity protection. In addition, they also produce high returns in education, gender equality, health, social protection, and agricultural and economic development."

Ms. Kristin Standal, Special Envoy for Climate and Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland at "Nourishing the planet, Sustaining Futures."



Country spotlights

Sweden launches "New Recipe for School Meals" pilot project

The Government of Sweden has launched a pilot project to help improve its school meals system to become more sustainable, connect transformation within the food system to changes in the education sector and promote more collaboration. Read the full article [here](#).

Armenia steps up efforts to build a more efficient school meals program

The Government of Armenia is strengthening its capacity to efficiently manage the National School Meals programme with technical support from partners such as the World Food Programme. In 2021, a year before it took over full ownership of the programme, Armenia joined the School Meals Coalition demonstrating government's commitment to fully own, finance and institutionalise the programme to become more inclusive, planet-friendly, resilient, and sustainable. Read the full article [here](#).

Children's Voices: "We need to not only eat delicious foods, but they should also be nutritious"

Nine-year-old Yosin Shamsulloev, a grade three pupil at school number 36 in Jaloliddini Balkhi District, Tajikistan, takes us through his normal day at school and shares his love for mathematics and healthy herbs that make his school meals tasty. Find out more about his school meal experiences [here](#).



Event digest

Guaranteeing healthy nutrition for all children in the EU

Held on 21 November, this event discussed the role of school meals programmes in the fight against child poverty and social exclusion, including evidence on the impact programmes have on different child outcomes, and aimed at strengthening the commitment of governments to guarantee all children and adolescents the right to one healthy and nutritious meal each day. Watch a recording [here](#).

Ensuring healthy nutrition for children in the EU: The High Commission for combating child poverty held an event to define the role of school canteen policy at Palacio Miramar in San Sebastián, Spain. Representatives from the School Meals Coalition joined discussions aiming to lay the foundations for greater commitment by member states to guarantee all children the right to at least one healthy meal a day throughout the Union. Find details of the event [here](#).

The **report on the School Meals Coalition Global Summit** is now available! Discover all the commitments and announcements made during this inspiring event [here](#).



Upcoming Events and Initiatives

Governments invited to participate in the 2024 Global Survey of School Meal Programs

The Global Survey of School Meal Programs, administered by the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF), is the most comprehensive data collection on national and large-scale school feeding programs. The resulting data fills a critical knowledge gap by creating and maintaining an up-to-date global database of standardized information on school meal programs. The survey collects data directly from government sources. To learn more visit GCNF's [website](#).

For implementing partners, GCNF recently held a webinar explaining their potential role in Global Survey data collection. The recording of the presentation can be found at [this link](#).

Call for school food advocates

The call, being led by FAO and WFP through their collaboration on the School Food Global Hub, has been extended until 31 January. More information is [here](#) including suggested posts and social media cards in English, French and Spanish to promote the call throughout your networks.

Research Consortium: Diet & Food Systems Community of Practice Winter Webinar

SAVE THE DATE: On 24 January 2024 the Research Consortium's Diet & Food Systems Community of Practice will host a webinar to share progress so far and future plans for building the global evidence base on school meals and food systems transformation.



Resources and Publications

The European Parliament has adopted a report, "EU Development cooperation to enhance access to education and training in developing countries," that identifies challenges affecting access to education and highlights actions needed to achieve SDG4. The report stresses, among other strategies, the importance of investing in free school meals to combat hunger and malnutrition and calls on the EU to increase financial support to countries to expand access to free school meals.

The Silent Heroes of COP28: The Power of School Meals in Climate Action, by Amanda Rives Argeñal and Charlotte Masiello-Riome of World Vision International, focuses on school meals as a solution for hunger but also for building resilience against challenges related to climate change. Read the full piece [here](#) and reference a Joint Civil Society Call to Action for equitable access to healthy and nutritious, sustainably sourced school meals, being led by World Vision along with Plan International [here](#).

Unlocking opportunities of planet-friendly school meals, by Aulo Gelli and Marie Ruel, senior research fellows with IFPRI's Nutrition,

Diets, and Health Unit. The post examines how a widely used school meals framework could be extended to optimize school meal programmes to meet food and nutrition quality requirements, alongside food safety, cost, buying from local smallholder farmers and environmental considerations. You can read the full research post [here](#).

We Would Like to Hear from You!

All countries are encouraged to submit their initial commitments or to provide updates on previous commitments. The Coalition has issued updated [Commitment Guidelines](#) to support countries in this process. The secretariat is happy to be a resource as needed. Please send any inquiries to global.smcsecretariat@wfp.org.

If this newsletter was forwarded to you and you would like to be on our regular mailing list, please contact us at global.smcsecretariat@wfp.org. Please use the same email address if you would like to join the School Meals Coalition.

Yours sincerely,
School Meals Coalition Secretariat

