



## School Meals Coalition Monthly Newsletter

March 2024



Welcome to the Government of Guinea Bissau and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in addition to these new partners: Amis des Étrangers au Togo, School Food Matters from the UK, the Workshop for Africa from Sierra Leone, the Academy for Strategic Analysis and Leadership in Somalia, and the Socio-Economic Research and Development Centre (SERDEC) from Nigeria. The Coalition now stands at 97 member countries, 3 regional bodies and 124 partners.

## Happy International School Meals Day!

### International School Meals Day



We are pleased to join the rest of the world in celebrating the International School Meals Day, in recognition of the importance of school meals in improving learning and wellbeing of children globally. Together we can make sure that by 2030 every child, across the world, receives a healthy, nutritious daily meal in school. As part of our celebration, please find our social media toolkit to amplify advocacy efforts on your platforms.



## Highlights of the Africa Day of School Feeding



President of Burundi, H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye (middle) shares a lighter moment with the First lady, H.E. Angeline Ndayishimiye, and Burundi's Minister of Education, Professor Francois Hakizimana at the Africa Day of School Feeding ceremony in Burundi. Credit: WFP/Burundi.

This year's Africa Day of School Feeding was celebrated in Burundi's capital Bujumbura on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, and was officiated by Burundi's President, H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, and the First Lady, H.E. Angeline Ndayishimiye. The President highlighted Burundi's efforts to expand and improve the national homegrown school feeding programme, including the tripling of the school meals budget allocation for the 2023/2024 school year. As a member of the School Meals Coalition, Burundi is working hard to achieve universal coverage by 2032 and to foster partnerships with smallholder farmers to deliver school meals prepared exclusively with locally sourced ingredients.

A total of 13 government representatives, at ministerial level, shared their countries' progress in school meals. This included:

- **Guinea-Bissau**, whose Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Henry Mané, announced they have joined the School Meals Coalition.
- **The Republic of Liberia**, Minister of Education, Dr. Jarso Maley Jallah, announced the Ministry of Agriculture has allocated US\$1.5 million dollars from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) to support Liberia's Homegrown School Feeding initiative.
- **Chad, Secretary of State for National Education and Civic Promotion Mr. Mahamat Ibet Bekla Abakar** announced the development of a homegrown school feeding strategy to diversify school meals and support smallholder farmers and adoption of a school feeding law with a dedicated budget for school feeding.

A session to promote planet-friendly school meals was held under the theme: "School meals, a lever for social, economic, and environmental transformation," with many participants sharing their experiences in break-out discussions. Key highlights included:

- Ms. Thuto Ntsekhe, Chief Education Officer for pre-primary and primary education, shared insights from **Lesotho's** recent case study that piloted use of electric pressure cookers in 5 schools in 2022, benefitting 1,716 students.
- Ms. Rose Baguma, Director General for Education Policy and Analysis announced **Rwanda** was piloting fuel-efficient cooking to protect the environment. She shared the government's plans to have a zero-waste economy in Rwanda by 2030.
- Ms. Betty Kibaara, Director of the Food Initiative, **The Rockefeller Foundation**, highlighted the Foundation's interest in supporting countries to promote local food production and for governments to transition to sustainable cooking solutions.
- Find a video showcasing Africa's strong leadership in school meals [here](#).



## Quotes of the month

Find quotes of the month to include in your advocacy messaging, social media content and in presentations.

*"The Africa Day of School Feeding is a moment to remind all leaders in Africa of their financial and political*

*commitments, to move the talk and be realistic about how they can mobilise additional domestic resources to scale up school feeding programmes, and how to sustain moving the talk in materialising this inclusive approach to record more champions who can effectively run school meal initiatives.”*

*H.E. Haladou Salha, Senior AU, and NEPAD Technical Advisor to the Group of Rome-based African Ambassadors.*

*“What we really believe is that the multi-sectorial and context specific and rights-based approach is essential to end child hunger and malnutrition. What we are doing is investing heavily in local production to empower smallholder farmers and ensure food sovereignty, food security and diversification of school meals. We do believe that plant-based and animal sources, such as fish, are essential for growing and learning children.”*

*Ms. Marieta Jager, Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation and Development, European Commission*



## Voices from the field

In this section we share school meal experiences from various countries for you to further amplify the stories through your communication products, networks, and online platforms.

**Guatemala:** [Invests in nutritious home-prepared school lunches.](#)

**Namibia:** [Fights climate change through planet-friendly school meals.](#)

**Nepal:** [Sharmila endures long walks to school in the mountains of Bajhang.](#)



## Event digest

**International School Meals Day commemoration in Libya**



The chairperson of the School Feeding committee, Dr. Saif Elnasr Bel-Hassan, and WFP Country Director in Libya Mr. Tarek Elguidi (in the middle of the back row) with some members of the school feeding committee and other stakeholders who attended the International School Meals Day commemoration in Libya on 7 March. Credit: WFP/Libya

The Government of Libya hosted the International School Meals Day in Tripoli on 7 March, bringing together multiple actors from government, donors, civil society organisations, UN Agencies, and other school meal champions. Speakers including the Minister of Education, Dr. Mussa Mohamed Almgrif, the Chairperson of the School Feeding Committee, Dr. Saif Elnasr Bel Hassan and WFP Country Director in Libya, Mr. Tarek Elguidi stressed the importance of government ownership of the programme and aligning actions with the School Meals Coalition's objectives. Discussions highlighted the importance of school meals, emphasising programmes are not only for poor communities and countries but a fundamental necessity for every child to receive adequate nutrition.

### **School Meals Coalition celebrates Africa Day of School Feeding**

An event to commemorate the Africa Day of School Feeding was held at the First Regular Session of the World Food Programme Executive Board on 28 February. With the theme "Africa Day of School Feeding: Enhancing Education and Human Capital," actors showcased progress on generating better education outcomes and impacting human capital development. Conversations highlighted Africa's leadership within the School Meals Coalition and how the continent is shaping global and regional discussions. Find the key highlights of the event [here](#).

### **Making free school meals a reality in USA's New Mexico**

Recently, over 150 advocates for child nutrition and free school meals, including students, parents, and community champions from all corners of New Mexico—gathered to thank lawmakers and the governor for making history with their ongoing support and full funding for the [Healthy Universal School Meals Act of 2023](#). This landmark bill, championed by State Senators Michael Padilla and Leo Jaramillo, ensures that every child in the state has access to free, nutritious, and quality meals at school, regardless of their family's income or background. Find the full article [here](#).

### **A case study writing workshop**

The Research Consortium's Good Examples Community of Practice recently held a national school meals case study writing workshop in Benin. This capacity building exercise targeted countries in the region seeking to develop a case study of their national school meals programme. Interested to learn more about this Community of Practice send your inquiries to the Research Consortium at [shnconsortium@ishtm.ac.uk](mailto:shnconsortium@ishtm.ac.uk). More information can also be found [here](#).

### **A spotlight on investing in school meal nutrition standards**

The recording of the recent FAO-WFP Expert Panel on "nutrition standards and the right to adequate food" in the framework of the 16th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, held in Germany, is now available [here](#). During the panel, stakeholders discussed how-to step-up actions to meet commitments and targets in relation to schoolchildren's right to food. Contributions by experts from FAO and WFP highlighted the role of school meal nutrition standards as tools to support children's right to food in schools, while a Member of Parliament of Tanzania, Hon. Neema Lugangira emphasized the influence of parliamentarians in ensuring their inclusion into legislation. Youth advocates were encouraged to continue advocating for healthier school meals and school food environments. As the co-chair of the School Meals Coalition, alongside France and Finland, Brazil sent their remarks on the benefits they envision for member countries if they can

adopt holistic mandatory nutrition standards for their meal programmes.



## Upcoming Events and Initiatives

### A Webinar on Aquatic foods in school meals

On **Monday 25 March, 10am-11am GMT**, the Research Consortium's *Diet & Food Systems* Community of Practice, FAO and WorldFish, will co-host a webinar on the important role that aquatic foods play in school feeding, as well as some of the international research projects and programmes demonstrating their effectiveness. [Register here](#).

### School meals impact: Gathering evidence from Ethiopia

Join the Research Consortium's *Analytics & Metrics* Community of Practice on **Wednesday 20 March, 12pm-1.30pm GMT** to discover what the Consortium is learning about the impact of investing in school meal programmes in Ethiopia. [Register here](#).

### Global Plant-based School Food Network inviting new members

ProVeg UK's Global Plant-based School Food Network is supporting plant-based change in schools worldwide. This new initiative serves as a platform for sharing insights and learnings with like-minded organisations across the globe who are working to provide healthy, affordable, and planet-friendly school meals. The Network currently has over 50 members across more than 30 countries in five continents. If your organisation is working to include more plant-based food in schools, and interested in joining, please reach out to [schools@proveg.org](mailto:schools@proveg.org)

### HarvestPlus Zambia scoops the Seeding the Future Grand Prize

IFPRI-HarvestPlus' nutrient-dense porridge varieties designed for school meals in Zambia won the Seeding the Future Grand Prize and Growth Grant for the Seeding the Future Global Food System Challenge. The International Food Technologies (IFT) recently announced the winners, with IFPRI-HarvestPlus, a partner of the School Meals Coalition, recognised for transformative innovations that promise to reshape food systems for greater equity and nutrition. The award-winning porridge utilized biofortified traditional food crops that are farmed and produced by women and supplied to school meal programmes in Zambia. Find more information [here](#).

### AU Launches a Roadmap to drive education priorities in 2024

The African Union has launched a Road Map to guide the implementation of activities promoting the AU's theme of the year, focusing on Education. One of the top priorities is "strengthening homegrown school feeding" by advocating for cost-effective school meal programmes. The African Union will drive actions aimed at improving monitoring and evaluation of programmes, expanding investment in evidence generation, and increasing peer learning opportunities.

### Rwanda to expand the One Cup of Milk per Child Initiative

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is strengthening Rwanda's "One Cup of Milk per Child" Initiative to expand the consumption of milk in schools. The second phase of the Rwanda Dairy Development Project will be launched this year with the aim to connect every three schools to a milk collection centre, a total of 273 schools. Between 2018 and 2019, the project supplied 325,000 litres of milk to more than 20,000 students in 26 schools. The project has established 36 milk zones, with local processing and selling points piloting distribution in public places. This initiative along with others are the foundation of the Government of Rwanda's launch of a nation-wide school feeding system. Currently every child in nursery, elementary school and secondary school receives a meal.

### Take-home rations support continuous studying beyond the classroom

World Vision International aims to expand its successful "Take-Home Rations" initiative used to complement the School Feeding Programme in Cambodia to provide further nutrition support to children from poor families. The initiative that ran from 2017 to end of 2023, supported 21,000 children from grades 4 to 6, alongside their families, with food packages, including rice, canned fish, soya bean and vegetable oil. Lessons learnt from this initiative show that boosting nutrition at household level supports children's continuous studying beyond the classroom, contributes to families' food security, motivates parents to support their children's education, and discourages negative coping mechanisms such as child labour, and child, early and forced marriages. World Vision International is supporting the World Food Programme to develop the capacity the Royal Government of Cambodia in its national Homegrown Grown School Feeding programme, targeting 179 primary schools in 11 districts.

### Join the Young food changemakers challenge

Three NGOs from Central Europe invite students, young food changemakers, and their teachers to employ their imagination, passion, and hard work to generate [ideas addressing current challenges in the food system](#). Find details [here](#). Schools are expected to start implementing their projects on 22 April and upload their project summaries on [this online platform](#) through 3 May 2024.

### Governments invited to participate in 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. Collection of data will run through May 2024. To learn more visit GCNF's [website](#).



## Resources and Publications

**School Meals: the transformative potential of urban food policies:** The [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#) has produced a report that underscores the pivotal role of school meals within urban food policies worldwide. It emphasizes their significance in promoting healthy diets, addressing food poverty, strengthening rural-urban linkages, raising awareness among children on food waste and educating them about nutrition. The report identifies potential challenges along with benefits of school meal programmes, illustrating different approaches and models related to the governance and infrastructure, with case studies from cities including Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, Bangkok in Thailand, Sao Paulo in Brazil, and Berlin in Germany. Find the full report [here](#).

**Studies surface fresh evidence on benefits of free school meals:** A team of researchers at the University of Essex's Institute for Social and Economic Research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, has revealed universal free school meals in primary schools resulted in reduced childhood obesity and an improvement in reading scores. The study examined why nutritious school meals should be a universal and well-integrated part of the school day everywhere. Find the study [here](#).

**A study in the state of Oregon, USA, found that [providing free school meals to all students](#)** regardless of their families' income lowers discipline rates. Researchers from the University of North Carolina and the U.S. Census Bureau compared schools in Oregon that started offering universal free school meals through the federal school meals program's community eligibility provision to those who did not. Find the post [here](#).

**School Meals fostering a new healthy eating culture:** SchoolFood4Change has developed a [Policy Brief on "Tackling inequality through healthy and sustainable school food,"](#) recommending stronger and well-integrated policies to unleash the true potential of healthy, sustainable school food. Among its recommendations is to increase support of EU member states to provide at least one healthy and sustainable school meal daily, aligning with [the EU San Sebastian Declaration on School Meals](#) and drawing from the [Principles of the EU Child Guarantee](#).

**The Sustainable Financing Initiative for School Health and Nutrition (SFI)** has released a brief on their offer of support, aimed at helping countries identify multi-year financing opportunities for school feeding programmes in 2025: "[Developing Sustainable Financing Strategies for National School Feeding Programs](#)." Find more information [here](#).

**The Swedish Food Agency** has now published its National Guidelines for School Meals in English. The guidelines include a holistic view of school meals called 'the meal model' which includes the following six areas: 1) tasty, 2) safe, 3) nutritious, 4) eco-smart, 5) pleasant and 6) integrated as part of education. Find the guidelines [here](#).

**New profiles and updates on the School Food Global Hub:** The country profiles of Colombia and Dominican Republic were added to the FAO-WFP School Food Global Hub, and new information was included in the existing United Kingdom profile. Visit the [Hub](#) to find out more.



## We Would Like to Hear from You!

Please share with us your upcoming events and key results of your ongoing initiatives related to school meal programmes. We would like to celebrate your achievements, follow you, and showcase how you are championing school meals, highlighting the impact your actions are making in the lives of children, your community, and country. Contact us today at [tsitsi.matope@wfp.org](mailto:tsitsi.matope@wfp.org).

With regards to the submission of commitments, all countries are encouraged to share 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](mailto:global.smcsecretariat@wfp.org).

In case you missed the **report on the School Meals Coalition Global Summit held in Paris France on 18 to 19 October 2023**, please find it [here](#) to discover all the commitments and announcements made at the event.

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](mailto: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