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## **The Commitment of the Government of the Republic of Korea to the School Meals Coalition: Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child**

In the Republic of Korea, school meals are a cornerstone of children's health, learning, and well-being, while contributing to sustainable food systems and environmental goals. What began decades ago as targeted support for children has evolved into a universal, high-quality programme covering nearly the entire school-age population. Today, elementary, middle, and high schools across the nation provide free, nutritious meals to approximately 5.26 million students every school day.

School meals in the ROK are designed to meet children's nutritional needs at each stage of growth, offering balanced diets with a low proportion of ultra-processed foods, and increasingly sourced from local agriculture. Beginning in 2026, the programme will also provide fresh, high-quality fruit snacks to elementary school students. This not only promotes healthy eating habits but also strengthens local farming economies, particularly smallholder farmers, and reduces the carbon footprint of the school food system.

Backed by substantial public investment and policy support, the programme is sustained with high quality and long-term viability. In 2024, the national school meal budget reached 6 billion US dollars, with over half allocated to ingredient costs. The proportion of local produce in school meals continues to grow, supported by policies that link school feeding to local agriculture. The Public food service integration platform (SeaT) has been introduced in 62 local governments, enabling transparent procurement and contract management with an annual transaction volume of 2.8 billion US dollars.

The ROK has also advanced food and nutrition education, integrating dietary life education and food literacy into the curriculum, while maintaining traditional and healthy diets. This policy direction is reinforced by the 4th Basic Plan for Dietary Life Education (2025–2029) and the 1st Comprehensive Plan for International Agricultural Cooperation, which together provide a framework for both domestic improvements and international engagement.

Recognizing school meal as more than a means to safeguard children's health and their right to education; they are also a vital investment that yields broad social and economic benefits. Building upon our proven domestic experience, we are committed to sharing Korea's school meal practices through ODA in partnership with WFP (World Food Programme), thereby contributing meaningfully to the advancement of the international community as well as our own nation.



**Ministry of Agriculture,  
Food and Rural Affairs**  
Republic of Korea

**In order to further these achievements and contribute to the objectives of the School Meals Coalition, the Government of the Republic of Korea expresses its intention to pursue the following actions:**

- **Policy and Institutional Commitments:**

- Making efforts to increase the proportion of local agricultural products in school meals and to reduce the share of ultra-processed foods.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from school meal operations.
- Expanding the adoption of the SeaT platform to achieve transparent procurement and efficient management.
- Strengthening the capacity and professionalism of school meal personnel to promote balanced nutrition and healthy dietary habits.
- Establishing a public–private–academic consultative body for coordinated engagement in the School Meals Coalition and the international school meals agenda.

- **Evidence, Data and Knowledge-Sharing Commitments:**

- Working toward establishing a data-based performance management system integrating student health indicators with environmental indicators.
- Providing SeaT operational data, innovative practices, and lessons learned to the international community to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Sharing experiences and cooperation models through ODA, South–South and triangular cooperation to help adapt the ROK’s school meal system to partner country contexts.

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