



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

COMMITMENT DOCUMENT

School Meals Coalition

Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child

Commitment Document for Finland

Finland, as the co-chair of the School Meals Coalition, is a strong and longstanding supporter of school meals globally. We believe that School meals programmes are a policy lever that can drive and strengthen human capital, social and economic growth and sustainable food systems. Finland was the first country in the world to introduce free school meals for all pupils, with legislation passed in 1943 and full implementation achieved by 1948, after a five-year transition period granted to municipalities to organize the necessary arrangements.

We are convinced that school meals programmes are a systemic solution that helps combat child hunger and poverty; supports child nutrition, learning, long-term well-being and health equity; strengthens food systems and local economies; and promotes gender equality by keeping girls in school. In Finland, school meals are a legal right under the Basic Education Act (Section 31), which mandates that the meal must be not only free of charge, but also a properly organised, supervised, and balanced meal.

School meals programmes go far beyond simply providing food in schools. They play a vital role in enhancing and diversifying children's diets, teach children how to eat better and support national and local markets and food systems by using locally grown food where possible, improving opportunities for smallholder farmers and local catering businesses, many led by women. In Finland, school meals are also a pedagogical tool and a learning environment, integrated into the national core curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the planning, evaluation, and even practical arrangements of school meals, for example through work experience programs, which support learning about food, sustainability, and working life skills. This participation is embedded in the school's pedagogical culture and supports pupils' agency and learning. School meal participation, food quality, and the dining environment are regularly monitored and evaluated in collaboration with pupils and families.

At a time when we are confronted with multiple simultaneous crises at once, such as the education, the food and the climate crises, school meals should be positioned as a central, cross-cutting intervention that will contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future. In addition to their educational and nutritional value, school meals also provide economic support to families and form part of student welfare services, especially when pupils have specific dietary needs or restrictions. They also offer time-related benefits by easing the daily routines of families, supporting work-life balance and reducing the burden of meal preparation at home.

Finland as a proud member of the School Meals Coalition announces the following commitments towards its goals:

1. Finland's Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Mr Ville Tavio will continue act as the School Meals Coalition Champion and the co-chair of the School Meals Coalition. In these roles, Minister Tavio will provide high-level advocacy work to generate interest and secure resources for school meals programmes. Finland will also continue to advocate for school meals at the diplomatic level in various international fora.

2. For years, Finland has provided continuous support to school meals activities and remains committed to strengthening these efforts. So far in 2025, Finland is contributing with a total of 4 million euros to WFP's school meals activities. Finland will continue its support to WFP's school meals programmes.

3. Finland will continue to co-lead the School Meals Coalition member state taskforce and the strategic coordination of activities for the Coalition. Finland also co-chairs the Working Group of the Coalition. Finland has joined the Coalition's Sustainable Financing Initiative and the Research Consortium. We will continue our active engagement through various channels to advance the work and goals of the Coalition.

4. In 2025, Finland supported the work of the Coalition secretariat with contribution of 500 000 euros, and Finland will continue its support to the work of the Coalition secretariat.

5. Finland will continue to implement school meals procurement criteria that include environmentally friendly cultivation methods, food products, food safety, nutrition, and health aspects. These criteria are based on national nutrition recommendations, including specific school meal guidelines that ensure the nutritional quality and balance of meals served. In addition, it is encouraged to increase food education and to involve pupils to participate in the planning, implementation and assessment of school meals. School meals also support food education and the development of social skills, as pupils learn about healthy eating, sustainability, and shared mealtime practices.

6. Finland is committed to sharing its expertise and offer technical expertise to countries aiming to develop or strengthen their school meal programs. Drawing on decades of experience in providing free, nutritious meals to all pupils, from pre-primary education through upper secondary education, Finland shares insights not only into nutrition planning, policy development, and implementation, but also into the educational role of school meals. In addition, a subsidized meal is provided in early childhood education (as part of the daycare fee) and in higher education institutions. In Finland, school meals are an integral part of the school day and are closely linked to food education and pedagogical guidance. They support learning about health, sustainability, and social skills, and are further reinforced through home economics education, where pupils gain practical food skills and an understanding of balanced nutrition.

To support international collaboration, Finland provides resources and connections through the **Education Finland website:** www.educationfinland.fi/schoolmeals

Additional information is also available from **the Finnish National Agency for Education** at www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/school-meals-finland, including the **School Meals for All portal:** [School Meals for All | Finnish National Agency for Education](http://SchoolMealsforAll.FinnishNationalAgencyforEducation)

Although some resources are available only in Finnish, such as **the home economics education portal** www.oph.fi/kotitalous and its subpage on **food competence and food culture**

<https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/s1-ruokaosaaminen-ja-ruokakulttuuri>, these can still be accessed and understood using translation tools, which help convey the main messages.

Helsinki, 30 June 2025

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ville Tavio', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ville Tavio
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland