

School Meals Drive Inclusive Economic Growth



What we're learning from the Global Survey of School Meal Programs ©



School feeding programs provide an opportunity to expand local agricultural economies, support resilience in local supply chains, create jobs, and economically empower women and youth.

GCNF conducted the 2019 Global Survey of School Meal Programs © to establish a comprehensive database of school meal programs. Responses were received from 103 countries, 85 of which had large-scale programs.



EXPANDING THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

When linked with local agriculture, especially procurement from small-scale farmers, school feeding programs can be a powerful tool for economic development. **Of the programs surveyed:**



82%

REPORTED PURCHASING SOME OR ALL SCHOOL FOOD DOMESTICALLY RATHER THAN OBTAINING IT FROM FOREIGN SOURCES; SEVERAL LOW INCOME COUNTRIES VIEWED THIS AS A POSITIVE CHANGE.



76%

REPORTED INVESTING IN LOCAL AGRICULTURE BY PURCHASING AT LEAST SOME FOOD LOCALLY.



43%

DIRECTLY ENGAGED WITH FARMERS; SMALL-SCALE FARMERS WERE MOST LIKELY TO BE TARGETED FOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION, SUBSIDIES, AND TRAINING.

Only a third of countries reported having laws, policies, or standards for agriculture linked to school feeding. Very few countries reported that their ministries of agriculture have decision-making responsibility for key related functions.



LESS THAN **50%** OF THE SURVEYED PROGRAMS REPORTED DIRECTLY INVOLVING FARMERS, AND THE LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH FARMERS VARIED SIGNIFICANTLY ACROSS GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS.



CREATING JOBS WITH SCHOOL FEEDING ACTIVITIES

The lack of employment opportunities—particularly for women, youth, and relatively low-skilled and rural populations—is a significant global problem that is only projected to get worse.¹ By emphasizing fair wages and formalized employment, **governments can meaningfully contribute to women's equitable economic empowerment:**



31%

OF PROGRAMS REPORTED THAT VERY FEW OR NO COOKS RECEIVED PAYMENT FOR THEIR WORK.



78%

OF PROGRAMS REPORTED THAT 75% OR MORE OF FOOD PREPARERS ARE WOMEN.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the Integrated Program for Sustainable School Canteens links canteens with micro-agricultural projects led by women's groups that benefit from **70%** of production sold.

70%

School feeding also presents opportunities to focus on youth empowerment: through school meal programs, youths in Zambia are encouraged to form groups and gain skills in agricultural value and supply chains prior to being provided with soft loans.



30%

OF PROGRAMS REPORTED A SPECIAL FOCUS ON CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH.

What's Next?

- Work with GCNF to catalog best practices and promote economic empowerment for women and youth through school feeding programs.
- Advocate with GCNF for emphasizing formal job creation, training, compensation, and other status-enhancing opportunities for women, youth, and marginalized groups.
- Work with GCNF to improve monitoring and evaluation of school feeding's impact on girls, women, and marginalized groups.
- Work with GCNF to advocate for access to education and school meals for the disabled and other marginalized groups.



Reach out to us at info@gcnf.org to discuss how we can advocate together!

The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on school systems and deprived vulnerable children of a daily school meal. At the peak of school closures in April 2020, 1.5 billion children were out of school,² and 370 million were not receiving the school meals they depend on.³ The upcoming 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs © aims to capture the impact of the pandemic for at least one full school year.

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1. The International Labor Organization "Global Labor Trends for Youth 2020" report from March 2020, for example, states "[t]here are currently around 1.3 billion young people globally, of whom 267 million are classified as currently not in employment, education or training (NEET). Two-thirds, or 181 million, of NEETs are young women." The report indicates that the situation is worsening, both in terms of the number and percentage of NEET youth (ILO 2020). Nevertheless, the potential for school meal programs to play a positive role in this arena remains largely unexplored.

2. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

3. <https://cdn.wfp.org/2020/school-feeding-map/>