

School Meal Programs in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Based on the results of the 2024 Global Survey of School Meal Programs ©

The **Global Survey of School Meal Programs** © aims to strengthen the work of the global school meal network by developing a comprehensive description of all the core aspects of large-scale school meal programs around the world.

The **Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF)** is committed to helping governments build national programs that provide nutritious, locally-sourced meals for all children.

School Meals in ECOWAS at a Glance



24 million children received school meals, including **32%** of primary school-age children and **2%** of secondary school-age children.



100% of states had a national school feeding policy.



\$551 million USD was allocated to school meal programs in ECOWAS. **93%** of states had a national budget line item dedicated to school feeding.



97% of states purchased at least some food from domestic sources.

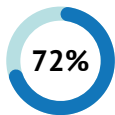
School Meal Programs in Action

- **Ghana's** program created jobs for approximately 34,000 cooks/caterers, who were paid by the government.
- **Guinea's** Home-Grown School Feeding program prioritized small-scale farmers in competitive procedures, offering them resources and training to enhance crop production.
- In **Sierra Leone**, cooks received specialized training in nutrition and food hygiene.
- In **Senegal**, the state-funded school feeding program encouraged women to take leadership roles on School Management Committees.

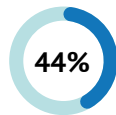
Ensuring Healthy Diets & Food Systems

97% of programs in ECOWAS had an objective to meet nutritional and/or health goals. On average, school meal programs served foods from **6.8 healthy food categories**, matching the global average of 6.8 healthy food categories.

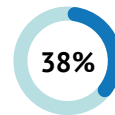
Program Approaches to Prevent or Mitigate Overweight/Obesity



of programs incorporated food and nutrition education



of programs incorporated health education

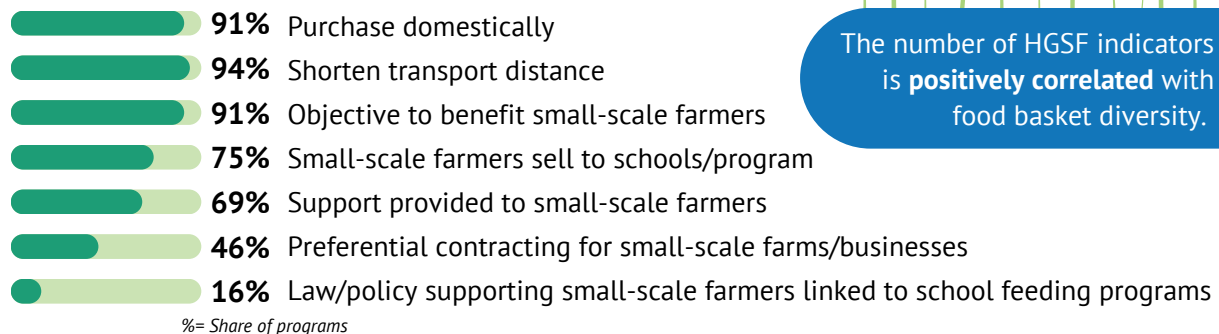


of programs had nutritional requirements for food baskets

Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Indicators

The HGSF approach **enhances food diversity** and strengthens local food systems.

On average, **78%** of programs in ECOWAS exhibited **4 or more HGSF indicators**, compared to the global average of 47%.



The number of HGSF indicators is **positively correlated** with food basket diversity.

Building Livelihoods through Employment

School meal programs directly **employ a vast local workforce** including cooks, caterers, and food handlers, making them a powerful driver of employment and community development.

At least **129,466 jobs** were linked to school meal programs in ECOWAS.

Creating Employment Opportunities

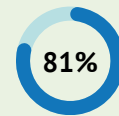
School meal programs have potential to shape local economies by purposefully creating jobs for those often excluded from the labor market, aligning employment practices with their values.



40% intentionally created jobs for disadvantaged groups



50% intentionally created jobs for youths



81% intentionally created jobs for women

%= Share of programs

Empowering Women

100% of programs **employed women** as a majority of cooks and **40%** of programs **remunerated at least half** of their cooks.

Women's Engagement

- In **Nigeria**, women and women-led cooperatives were prioritized in the selection of cooks and caterers.
- In **Benin**, women were encouraged to take on leadership roles within management committees.
- In **Liberia**, the Liberia School Feeding Program focused on employing young women in program implementation and leadership positions.
- In **Guinea-Bissau**, the program focused on creating jobs and income-generating opportunities for women by encouraging local production and purchase from women farmers.

Resilience in the Face of Emergencies

School meal programs are **vital safety nets** during emergencies, finding ways to reach children even under the most challenging circumstances.

Of programs that experienced an emergency, **33% increased funding or the budget allocation** for school meals.

Strategies to Cope with Emergencies

- In **Liberia**, despite supply chain challenges and food price inflation, school feeding continued without interruption, and local cooperatives began working to supply schools with locally produced rice.
- Although emergencies in **Sierra Leone** created serious challenges, they also prompted an increased program budget from government sources and expanded the use of home-grown food products.
- In **Ghana**, a key response to high food costs and supply chain disruptions was to urge the government to boost the national food supply.
- In **The Gambia**, domestically produced foods were introduced to replace imported staples in the school feeding program.