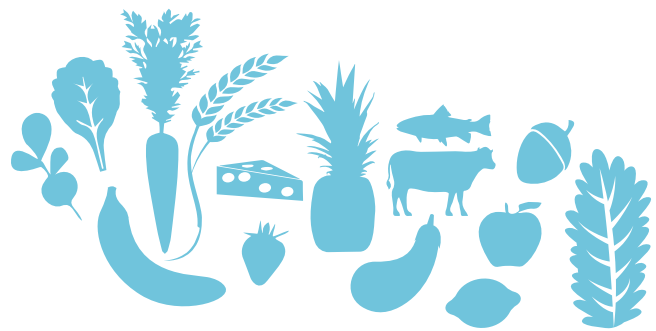




Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



FAO School Food and Nutrition Framework





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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
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Foreword

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) provide an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate investments in and scale-up of programmes and policies for improved food security and nutrition.

Formal education systems, such as pre-primary, primary and secondary schools are considered favourable settings for advancing nutrition and sustainable development, and as such have been one of the targets for key recommendations adopted during the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2). The Conference highlighted the importance of accessible healthy diets and safe drinking water, effective nutrition education and coherent food policies in schools, as well as of strong nutrition capacities in school front-line staff. Linkages to nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food procurement by local smallholders, especially women, were also prominent recommendations resulting from the ICN2.

All these recommendations are at the heart of the School Food and Nutrition Framework, which presents a harmonized vision and blueprint of FAO's work to support countries in identifying and exploiting the synergies that can take place in and around the school setting. These synergies are aimed at benefiting children and adolescents' diets, nutrition and well-being, as well as the school community's development and empowerment.

This document is the result of an extensive consultation process and describes the key areas of work in school food and nutrition that represent FAO's comparative advantage. At the same time, it stresses the need for strategic partnerships to better support countries' priorities and targets.

As the Framework is a living document, we look forward to its continued evolution and, most importantly, to see it put into action for the meaningful contribution of school programmes and policies to better nutrition and sustainable development.



Anna Larley
Director

Nutrition and Food Systems Division

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Introduction

The objective of this Framework is to guide the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in supporting governments and institutions to develop, transform or strengthen school-based or school-relevant policies, programmes and other initiatives¹ for an enhanced and synergistic impact on diets, child and adolescent nutrition, community socioeconomic development and local food systems. As such, it contributes to the Organization's mandate and builds on its areas of expertise and comparative advantage.

The Framework represents a direct response to the international call for improved nutrition and food system transformation in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025). It provides a holistic approach that capitalizes on complementary interventions and the most effective programmatic options to obtain benefits throughout the food, nutrition and education nexus, using the school setting as the centre for development.

The Framework addresses the needs of FAO as an organization, including all staff in headquarters, regional and country offices. It also benefits FAO's Member States and governing bodies, guiding their expectations of the Organization and framing collaborations with partners in this area.

This Framework is the result of a three-year process of extensive consultation with different FAO technical units and regional offices and with external partners. It is based on the Organization's technical expertise and experience with supporting governments, on regional and global assessments and on available evidence on school-based approaches and complementary interventions relevant to food and nutrition. It has been developed by a technical task force hosted at FAO headquarters, and is designed to be a living document that will evolve and incorporate the latest evidence and lessons learned as they become available.

A series of supporting documents will be developed to accompany the implementation of the Framework over time. In particular, technical and operational guidance will define how to implement the Framework at global, regional and country level in the context of FAO's Strategic Objectives and SDG targets.

¹ E.g. school nutrition policies, school procurement policies, school meal programmes, home-grown school feeding programmes and school health programmes.

Background

Modern food systems are having difficulty in delivering healthy diets for all. Dietary pattern shifts are an important driver of the obesity pandemic in most countries, while chronic and acute undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies continue to be a persistent critical issue in many regions (Best *et al.*, 2010; Gupta *et al.*, 2013; Muthuri *et al.*, 2014; FAO *et al.*, 2018). Concomitantly, current global food production places a high burden on natural resources and jeopardizes environmental sustainability.

These complex and multidimensional food system and nutrition challenges impede progress and sustainable development. In particular, poor diets and malnutrition have devastating effects on children's health, school performance and ability to learn and there is a growing body of evidence confirming their association with hindered productivity and earning potential (Walker *et al.*, 2007; Victora *et al.*, 2008; Black *et al.* 2013).

Schools present an ideal platform for a coordinated and coherent response to address some of the main factors contributing to these challenges. They also offer a variety of entry points and opportunities to engage multiple sectors and stakeholders. For instance, the (regular) provision of nutritious meals through school meal programmes has been shown to improve vulnerable children's diet quality, attendance and enrolment, particularly for girls (Kristjansson *et al.*, 2007; Bundy *et al.*, 2009; Bhutta *et al.*, 2013; Adelman, Gilligan and Lehrer, 2018). When foods for school meals are sourced locally from smallholders the programmes can broaden their benefits to the local economy by providing a structured demand, stable markets and income opportunities (GLOPAN, 2015; FAO & WFP, 2018). Such so-called 'home-grown' programmes have been proposed as 'triple-duty' actions with the potential to achieve multiple benefits across the SDGs (GLOPAN, 2015; FAO & WFP, 2018).

Investments in these programmes also represent an important strategy for capitalizing on a second window of opportunity to support the prevention of malnutrition (in all its forms) in children and adolescents (Bundy *et al.*, 2017).

Likewise, the implementation of mutually-reinforcing school food environment policies² and well-designed food and nutrition education interventions is more effective in improving children's diets and dietary practices than when such policies are implemented in isolation (Verstraeten *et al.*, 2012; Moore, de Silva-Sanigorski and Moore, 2013; Hawkes *et al.*, 2015; Micha *et al.*, 2018).

National governments are increasingly recognizing the potential of such complementary policies and adopting multicomponent school-based programmes as an important programmatic area for sustainable development.

However, even with the commendable progress made by many countries, there are important gaps in school-based approaches that hamper their potential and impact. In particular:

- ✓ synergies between food, nutrition, health, education, socioeconomic and other relevant interventions are not often fully exploited in practice;

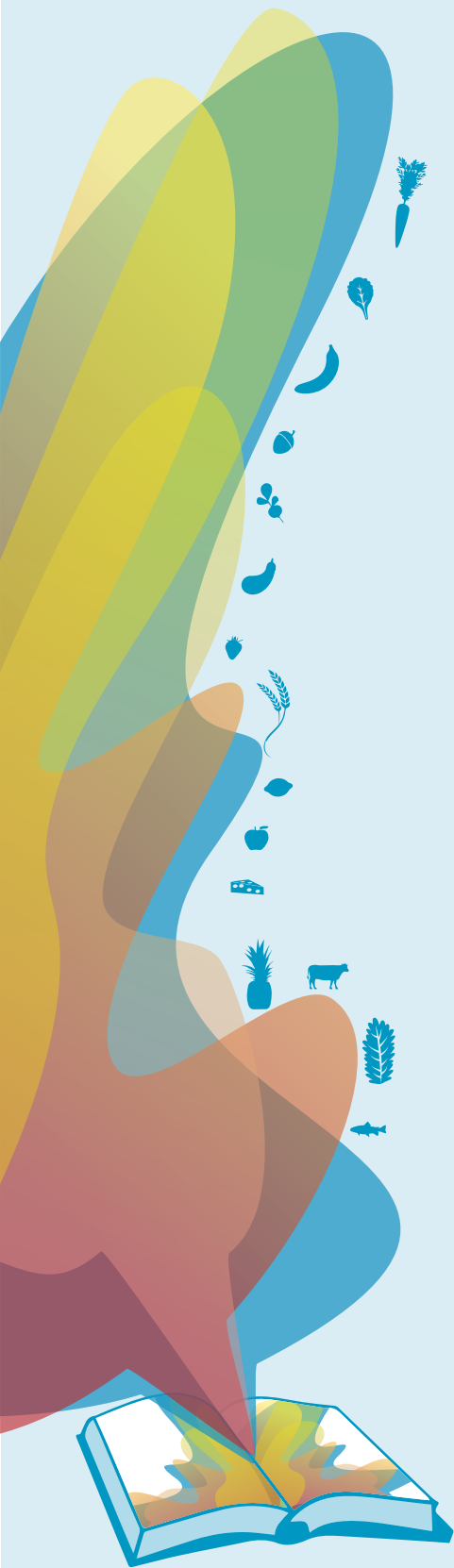
² E.g. institutional nutrition standards for available food; restriction of sale and/or marketing of highly-processed, low-nutritional-value food products to children; taxation of highly-processed, low-nutritional-value food products; subsidies and vouchers to stimulate the consumption of nutritious foods.

- ✓ the evidence on the multiple outcomes and impact of holistic programmes is still mixed (particularly for outcomes relating to nutrition and the local economy);
- ✓ capacities at all levels are lacking;
- ✓ efforts are often small-scale and fragmented;
- ✓ monitoring and evaluation are scarce; and
- ✓ policy implementation, multisectoral collaboration mechanisms and funding often remain inadequate to institutionalize effective initiatives.

This Framework seeks to contribute to filling these gaps, through the unique role that FAO has to play.



Rationale



Comparative advantage

FAO is committed to raising levels of nutrition, reducing rural poverty and enabling inclusive food systems. It recognizes the school setting as an opportune platform for a holistic approach that can support complementary actions and positive outcomes in these areas.

FAO has extensive expertise and decades of field-based experience supporting countries in a range of key areas throughout the food system. This relates particularly to:

- ✓ nutrition-sensitive agriculture and value chains;
- ✓ sustainable and inclusive food procurement;
- ✓ food safety;
- ✓ nutrition education policy and curriculum and learning material development;
- ✓ professional training in nutrition education;
- ✓ setting up of school gardens;
- ✓ junior farmer field and life schools;
- ✓ food loss and waste prevention and reduction;
- ✓ the right to food; and
- ✓ social protection.

Capitalizing on this breadth and depth of technical competence, normative guidance products and regional and global assessments (Annex 1) and building on lessons learned listed in Annex 2, the Organization is strategically positioned to support governments in delivering integrated action in school food and nutrition at policy and programmatic level, through advocacy, guideline setting, capacity development and technical support.

Moreover, as a member of the UN Rome-based agencies (FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD] and the World Food Programme [WFP]), FAO is well placed to leverage collaboration across the UN system and beyond for advancing and scaling up work on school food and nutrition.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and global commitments

School-based multicomponent programmes and policies that purposely create synergies between the food available in schools (including nutritious meals), the food environment, food and nutrition and education, and local food system initiatives have the potential to contribute to multiple SDGs. These include SDG 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). FAO's school food and nutrition approach seeks to foster these synergies to advance sustainable development more efficiently through the school setting.

FAO is also committed to supporting countries in the adoption and scale-up of the recommendations from the Framework for Action (FfA) of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) (FAO and WFP, 2014). The FfA recommends that governments and policymakers promote optimal nutrition across the life cycle. In particular, it recommends harnessing the

potential of schools to reach poor and nutritionally vulnerable populations in order to improve diets and address malnutrition (Recommendations 16, 19, 20 and 23). FAO's approach is rooted in the FfA and thus underlines the importance of food-system interventions, food and nutrition education and social protection in improving nutrition at schools and promoting sustainable and healthy diets.

In addition, the approach is well aligned with other global commitments including the Zero Hunger Challenge³ and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) programme of work (UNSCN, 2017).

Link to FAO's Strategic Objectives

The school food and nutrition approach is aligned with FAO's Strategic Framework and contributes to several of the Organization's objectives. While anchored in Strategic Objective 1 'Eliminating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition,' it also contributes significantly to Strategic Objective 3 'Reducing rural poverty' and Strategic Objective 4 'Enabling inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems.'

FAO Strategic Objective	Outcomes
Strategic Objective 1	OUTCOME 1.1: Countries made explicit political commitment to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition by 2030
	OUTCOME 1.3: Countries made decisions based on evidence for the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition by 2030
	OUTCOME 1.4: Countries implemented effective policies, strategies and investment programmes to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition by 2030
Strategic Objective 3	OUTCOME 3.1: Rural poor and rural poor organizations empowered to access productive resources, services and markets
	OUTCOME 3.3: Countries enhanced access of the rural poor to social protection systems
Strategic Objective 4	OUTCOME 4.2: Countries designed and implemented policies, regulatory frameworks and institutional arrangements supportive of inclusive and efficient agri-food systems development

³ www.un.org/en/zerohunger/challenge.shtml

Alignment with regional initiatives

The School Food and Nutrition Framework is also in line with and responds to the following FAO-supported regional initiatives and priorities:

Latin America and the Caribbean

- ✓ Hunger-Free Latin America and Caribbean Initiative

Africa

- ✓ Africa's Commitment to End Hunger by 2025
- ✓ Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy

Asia and the Pacific

- ✓ Regional Initiative on Zero Hunger
- ✓ Interregional Initiative on SIDS – Pacific Component

Near East and North Africa

- ✓ Small-Scale Family Farming
- ✓ Middle East and North Africa Initiative for School Meals and Social Protection

School food and nutrition technical task force

FAO formed a technical task force on school food and nutrition to coordinate the development of this document, bringing together expertise in the different aspects that FAO works on.

This multidisciplinary task force also routinely discusses FAO-led programmes and projects in this area, and coordinates approaches to ensure quality and integrity of knowledge at different levels. The task force includes representatives from various technical groups and divisions including Nutrition Policies and Programmes, Market Linkages and Value Chains, Nutrition Education and Consumer Awareness, Agro-Food Industries, Food Loss and Waste, Food Safety, Development Law and Social Protection. An extended group will include representatives from the Strategic Programmes, Investment Centre, Gender, Communications, Agriculture Development and the regional offices.



Approach & expected results



Objective

The objective of this Framework is to guide FAO's work to better support governments in developing, transforming or strengthening their national school-based/school-relevant policies, programmes and other initiatives⁴, for an enhanced and synergistic impact on diets, child and adolescent nutrition, community socioeconomic development and local food systems.

The Framework aims to create a more strategic, systematic and efficient way for FAO to guide its support, mobilize resources and work with partners in this area.

Target audience

This document is directed primarily to FAO staff in headquarters, regional and country offices. It is also intended to guide the expectations of all FAO Member States and governing bodies of the Organization and to frame collaboration with partners in this area of work.

Overview of the approach

FAO's School Food and Nutrition Framework is based on a systemic approach that leverages on and purposely creates synergies between four main areas of work that are at the heart of the Organization's mandate and capacity. These four areas are:

- ✓ promoting a healthy school food environment and adequate and safe school food;
- ✓ integrating effective food and nutrition education throughout the whole school system;
- ✓ stimulating inclusive procurement and value chains for school food; and
- ✓ creating an enabling political, legal, financial and institutional environment.

⁴ E.g. school nutrition policies, school procurement policies, school meal programmes, home-grown school feeding programmes, school health programmes.

The approach also integrates key cross-cutting themes that are needed for its success and further build on FAO's comparative advantages. Strategic consideration of these themes address issues that might militate against expected positive outcomes in nutrition, community development and local food systems (such as gender issues, poverty, food-borne diseases) or that are otherwise central to advancing sustainable development (environmental, social and economic sustainability), depending on the context.

Promoting synergies among the four areas of the Framework responds to the needs and outlooks of various countries and different contexts. The premise is to find the most effective and synergistic strategies (including enhanced multi-stakeholder collaboration) that can support various interrelated outcomes using resources efficiently.

The school community⁵ is placed at the centre of the school food and nutrition approach because: a) their active involvement (with defined mechanisms) is critical for sustainability and upscaling of programmes; b) they are essential for expanding some benefits of programmes to the household;⁶ and c) they have the potential to change, update and improve local and school policies. Particular focus is placed on the most vulnerable (considering food insecurity, socioeconomic disparities, gender, ethnicity, migration, displacement status, crises and post-crisis situations).

In accordance with FAO's comparative advantage, the scope of the Framework includes a portfolio of coherent actions and interventions that can be implemented through various mechanisms. These include public health policies, national basic education curricula, school policies,

school meal or home-grown school feeding programmes, catering systems and subnational processes that link smallholder producers to schools.

The approach targets primary and/or secondary education systems, depending on context and priorities.

FAO's roles relevant to this approach involve:

- ✓ advocating for more investment in school-based multicomponent approaches;
- ✓ identifying and disseminating successful, cost-effective strategies in school food and nutrition, drawing on programmatic best practices and lessons learned from country support;
- ✓ contributing to the evidence base on the impacts of school-based multicomponent approaches;
- ✓ identifying entry points and linkages between different interventions and sectors that are relevant to school systems to obtain sustainable multi-win outcomes in nutrition, food systems and community development;
- ✓ providing technical assistance and programmatic advice in the four main areas and cross-cutting themes of the approach;
- ✓ assisting in the creation of enabling legal frameworks for holistic school-based programmes;
- ✓ building or strengthening institutional capacities at the country level; and
- ✓ facilitating mechanisms for improved sectoral coordination, evaluation and accountability.

The goals of implementing this comprehensive approach are to support better diets and nutrition, and foster healthier food practices and outlooks in children and adolescents, thus contributing to the right to food of the school community; as well as to promote community socioeconomic development and local food systems that are conducive to better diets.

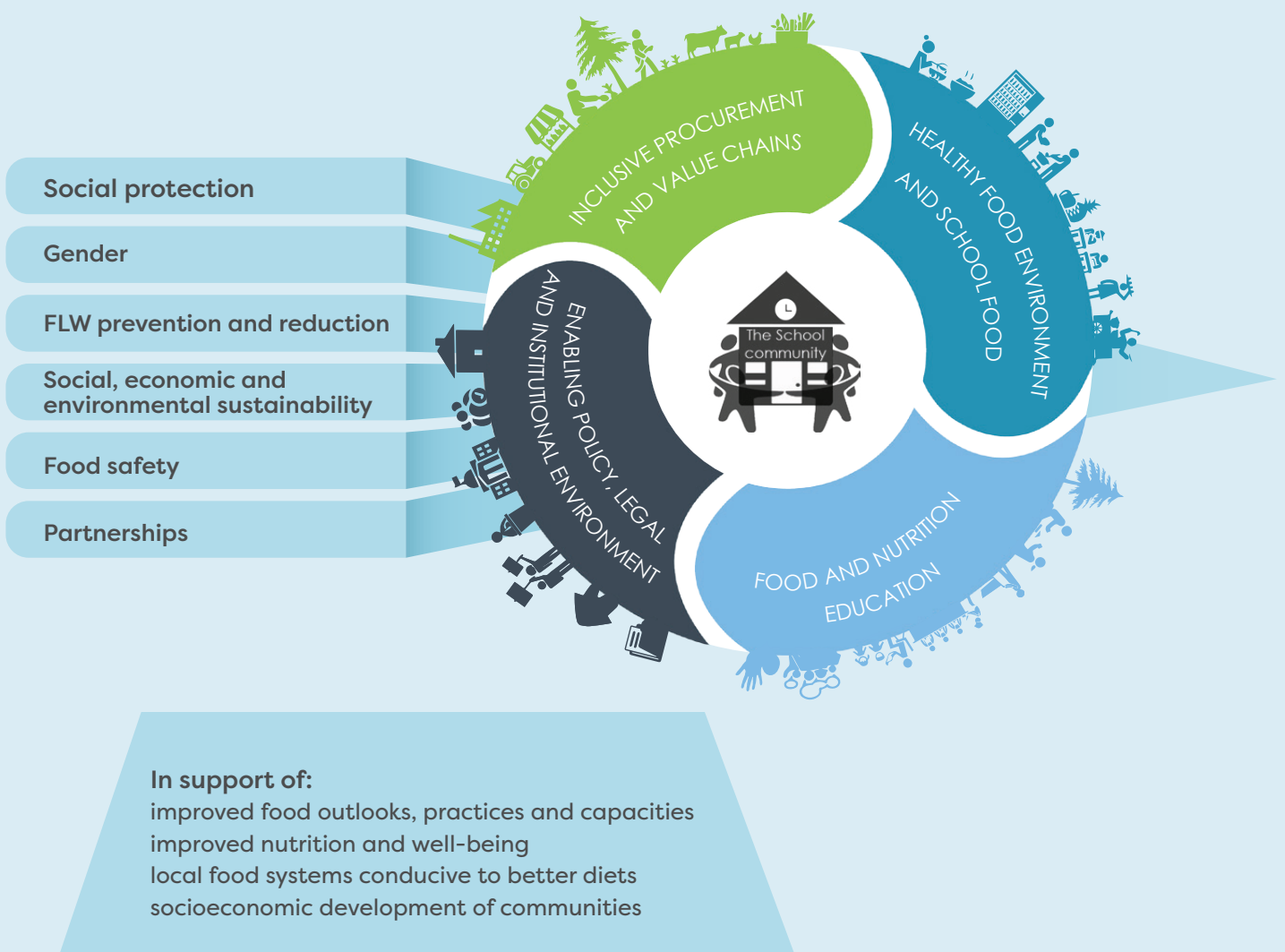
⁵ Taken here to comprise schoolchildren, adolescents, families, school staff, foodservice staff, local governments and leaders, farmers, community volunteers and others.

⁶ E.g. healthy food and food safety practices, homestead production and consumption of nutritious crops, attitudes towards diversified diets, etc.

Areas of work

This section describes the four core areas of work of FAO's school food and nutrition approach. Annex 3 presents the explicit linkages among them, points of entry and areas of technical support that FAO can provide.

Figure 1. FAO's areas of work in school food and nutrition



HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOOL FOOD

The school food environment involves all the spaces, infrastructure and conditions within and beyond the school premises where food is available, obtained or purchased and consumed (tuck shops, kiosks, canteens, food vendors, vending machines) and the composition of those foods. It also involves the information available about food and nutrition and the promotion and pricing of foods and food products (marketing, advertisements, branding, food labels, packages, promotions, etc.). The food environment shapes how accessible, affordable, desirable and convenient specific foods are. A healthy school food environment enables and encourages the school community (children, adolescents, families, school staff, etc.) to make food choices that contribute to better diets.

Nutrition guidelines and standards⁷ and other food environment policies have the potential, when implemented within a coherent and multicomponent approach, to: a) improve the nutritional quality and adequacy of school food and meals; b) support a healthy school food environment; and c) strengthen the linkages with local and smallholder food production. Capacity development at different levels and complementary food and nutrition education interventions are crucial for optimal implementation, monitoring and evaluation of nutrition guidelines and standards.

FAO's approach involves the technical development or revision of national and subnational nutrition guidelines and standards for school meals and/or school food (food available within the school premises and perimeters), based on programmatic objectives and in line with procurement modalities, available resources and infrastructure. It also promotes policies and strategies that aim to improve the school food environment (focusing on both urban and rural contexts) and its linkages with the other components, particularly alignment between food procurement and school meal standards and food and nutrition education.

The approach emphasizes exploring the most effective synergies between food environment policies and the other areas of work to support implementation of country and regional school-based strategies, plans and programmes that address malnutrition in all its forms (including overweight and obesity prevention).

⁷ A set of rules, principles and recommendations, based on sound nutrition science and the national/local situation, designed to improve the nutritional quality and quantity and/or adequacy of foods and meals available or provided in schools.

FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION

School-based food and nutrition education (SFNE) aims to foster long-lasting food outlooks, skills, practices and habits that promote resilience and that are conducive to better health and well-being in children and their families.

To be effective, SFNE should comprise a combination of evidence-based and behaviourally focused educational strategies that are context-specific; involve the active participation of the most relevant influencers of food practices (i.e. schoolchildren, parents, school staff, local smallholder farmers and rural enterprises, community leaders, etc.); and are reinforced by an enabling school food environment. SFNE actions should also be developmentally and culturally appropriate, have an adequate duration and intensity and a practical focus.

FAO's approach promotes a transformative vision for SFNE, where the whole school community⁸ fosters healthier and more sustainable food practices and works together to promote positive changes in the local food system from their various entry points and areas of influence. This means that: a) SFNE is not targeted only to children, adolescents and families, but also to the broader school community; b) children and their communities are not passive actors, but rather take ownership of their food learning processes and can become agents of change in their local food systems; and c) the scope⁹ of SFNE goes beyond transmission of generic and basic nutrition information in the classroom.

The main areas to which FAO provides support include:

- ✓ integrating SFNE into national school curricula and relevant policies;
- ✓ repurposing school gardens as learning platforms;
- ✓ designing, implementing and evaluating SFNE programmes and projects;
- ✓ developing school communication and awareness campaigns, using various media, including social media; and
- ✓ strengthening SFNE capacity development for educators and other actors (including curriculum developers and learning-material writers).

FAO's SFNE model is not meant to be implemented in isolation, but rather is designed to support all other areas, particularly the effects of school meal nutrition standards, food-environment policies, and to strengthen the connection with local procurement and smallholder producers.

FAO has developed a rich set of guidance tools to help countries integrate food and nutrition education into their primary curricula, school gardens and school lessons. FAO has supported many countries to develop contextualized teaching and learning materials for schools, including Argentina, Chile, El Salvador and Zambia. Most recently, FAO has been providing technical support to efforts in Kenya to incorporate nutrition and agriculture into the national curriculum for early childhood development, primary school, secondary school and teacher-training institutions, in order to contribute towards achieving food and nutrition security in the country.

⁸ E.g. principals, teachers, parent-teacher associations, student associations, school meal managers, school food suppliers, health and community front-line staff, etc.

⁹ Scope in terms of traditional educational strategies (top-down, classroom-based) and media, competencies promoted (e.g. for adolescents as future caregivers) and subject matter (e.g. environmental sustainability considerations).

INCLUSIVE PROCUREMENT AND VALUE CHAINS

Linking schools' demand for safe, diverse and nutritious food to local production (prioritizing available supply from smallholders at local or national levels) has the potential to increase the benefits and widen the beneficiaries of school meal initiatives to include not only those who receive and consume the food but also those who produce the food. This strategy, also known as home-grown school feeding (FAO and WFP, 2018), provides an opportunity to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and local communities and to strengthen the connections between nutrition, agriculture and social protection.

In particular, it has the potential to: a) foster increased production and diversification by smallholders; b) stimulate the adoption of nutrition-sensitive and/or environmentally friendly agricultural practices; and c) promote the value of local dietary habits and traditional nutritious foods (particularly when combined with food and nutrition education). This, in turn, can contribute to strengthening local and national food systems and to the promotion of better-quality diets.

The Purchase from Africans for Africa programme utilized public food procurement as a catalyst to facilitate market access for small-scale value chain actors. The programme, through a collaboration between FAO and WFP, supported five African countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal) on policy, programming and implementation for linking school food with local agriculture through tailored public food procurement tools.

The school food and nutrition approach encourages inclusive procurement practices¹⁰, where possible, so that school meals can create meaningful market opportunities for local smallholder producers, including small-scale food enterprises managed by youth and women, and contribute to community involvement and economic development in both urban and rural contexts.

FAO's work in this area supports the design and implementation of nutrition-sensitive value chains for schools that ensure the nutritional quality and safety of school meals along the entire food chain; as well as the development of smallholder-friendly procurement mechanisms. It also supports farmers and their organizations to enhance their production, post-harvest, storage, processing, managerial, organizational and marketing skills to meet the standards set by local governments.

Through the school food and nutrition approach, FAO will also explore the potential of urban and peri-urban agriculture initiatives, transformation of urban-rural market linkages and school/community gardens to supply fresh produce and support the diversification of school meals and diets of schoolchildren and adolescents in cities.

¹⁰ Inclusive procurement is a "deliberate way for governments to purchase goods or services from specific unfavoured or vulnerable supplier categories in order to advance social and economic development" (Brooks, Commandeur and Vera, 2014).

ENABLING POLICY, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

The design and implementation of sustainable holistic school-based programmes, as promoted by FAO's school food and nutrition approach, require political commitment, multi-stakeholder collaboration, accountability and regular funding. This is often underpinned by how education systems work¹¹ (as schools are hosts of these programmes) and how the different sectors and stakeholders share the vision, roles and responsibilities of these programmes.

In 2011, FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO), the WFP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) initiated a four-year joint programme to assist the Government of Cabo Verde in the transition of responsibility for the school feeding programme to FICASE (Cape Verdean Student Foundation), the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Health. The support, coordinated by FAO, was organized in four key areas: enhancing institutional capacities, supply of school canteens, food and nutrition education in schools and managing the school canteens. About 9 000 primary school students benefited from improved school meals, while local smallholders increased their incomes by supplying 49 tonnes of local foods worth a total of CVE 7 million (USD 68 000) over three months. Local producers and suppliers involved cited the importance of an assured market to sell their products and felt socially recognized as promoters of better nutrition in schools. An improvement of their post-harvest practices was also recorded.

Although approaches and policy instruments adopted vary from country to country, the benefits of such programmes are maximized if they are closely linked and aligned with other related programmes and policies in the area of social protection, nutrition, health, education, agriculture, rural development and urban food planning. Institutional capacity is also essential for appropriate implementation and coordination and for achieving the desired impact(s).

Legislation is at the centre of sustainable policies for school food and nutrition. Good legislation for adequate food and nutrition in schools will define precise rights and entitlements of schoolchildren, determine clear institutional responsibilities, establish inclusive participation and ensure coordination among the different stakeholders involved. It will also encourage adequate budget allocation, and provide a framework for monitoring and enforcement.

In Sao Tome and Principe, FAO conducted a comprehensive legal analysis to support the Ministry of Education in strengthening the legal frameworks and implementation efforts related to school feeding in the country.

A human rights focus that recognizes children's right to adequate food and provides for accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment and rule of law will provide a solid grounding for school food and nutrition. It will also support countries' compliance with international human rights instruments, as well as aid greater public awareness of the rights of the child.

FAO's approach emphasizes the assessment of system, policy, legal and institutional arrangements at country level to propose tailored and feasible solutions that enable the adequate implementation of complementary and synergistic interventions in school food and nutrition. Further efforts in this area will also support the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation schemes that provide evidence for policy analysis and accountability.

¹¹ Including their mandates, priorities, concerns, constraints and routines.



Cross-cutting themes

FAO has several themes that are considered as 'cross-cutting' to the school food and nutrition approach.

Social protection

Social protection interventions commonly target poor and food-insecure families that depend for their livelihoods primarily on agriculture and partly on non-farm income and private transfers. Stronger coherence between agriculture, education, nutrition, health and social protection interventions can assist in improving the welfare of the most vulnerable while enabling rural families to gradually move out of poverty and hunger.

If properly designed and adequately linked to other sectoral policies and programmes, school-based programmes (and school meal programmes in particular) can not only function as part of social assistance safety nets, but also provide a good opportunity to promote local economic development.

Through its school food and nutrition approach, FAO will seek to work within school-relevant social protection programmes¹² to integrate priority food and nutrition outcomes and create relevant synergies. For instance, combining accessible school market opportunities with predictable and timely cash transfers may allow vulnerable farmers to enter a virtuous cycle of economic development. Similarly, combining social assistance with community and school food and nutrition education could support food-insecure households in accessing, purchasing, preparing and consuming nutritious foods that meet the specific nutritional needs of each member of the household.

¹² Social protection interventions can help alleviate household liquidity constraints and enhance the ability to plan expenditures, invest and take risks, thus allowing poor households to participate of agricultural activities.

In contexts of protracted crises and post-crisis situations, FAO may explore how to support the recovery, economic rehabilitation and productive inclusion of smallholder farmers and value-chain actors (including displaced people) through local procurement support and job generation relevant to schools. FAO can also explore how to promote resilience and inclusion of displaced children in formal education systems and enhance the quality and adequacy of food available in the school.

Gender

Gender inequalities are an important deterrent to optimal nutrition. Biologically, women are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition due to greater physiological needs, especially during pregnancy and lactation. However, social gender roles in many countries further affect women's nutrition in that they have less access to education, income and resources and limited decision-making power, while bearing significant burdens from childcare, housekeeping activities and agriculture.

Gender inequalities also have a direct impact on women's productive capacity and limit their ability to access and benefit from market opportunities. Although women have increased their role in the rural sector in recent years, women continue to be underrepresented and disadvantaged in participation in formal markets, facing severe constraints associated with their lack of access to productive resources and power.

Knowledge of gender dynamics and roles is key to understanding potential inequalities that affect nutrition, food security and community development. Therefore, FAO's approach supports gender assessments in order to identify constraints and potential pathways to minimize these constraints. It also promotes gender-sensitive strategies, depending on the context, for local

procurement and inclusive value chains, to either understand and take into account gender differences in roles and access to resources; or to address structural constraints to women's empowerment. FAO will also seek to provide opportunities for further supporting women's entrepreneurship and employment.

Other areas of support include the promotion of nutrition education to foster healthy food practices for both girls and boys and for future caregivers. Biological needs are also prioritized when supporting the development or revision of nutrition guidelines and standards for school meals.

Food safety

As food safety and nutrition are inextricably linked, nutritional benefits cannot be attained if the food is not safe. Food-borne diseases can limit nutrient availability. Likewise, food-borne illnesses are more serious in those who are undernourished, creating a dangerous downward health spiral.

The production, transport, storage and preparation of school food, particularly if sourced through decentralized 'home-grown' supply chains, is associated with certain food safety risks that need to be controlled. These include microbiological contamination, mycotoxins in staple foods such as maize and chemical contamination (e.g. pesticides and herbicides). Such food-borne hazards can be introduced at various stages along the supply chain. In order to protect schoolchildren and adolescents from food-borne disease, it is necessary to identify, assess and manage the risks and communicate information about these food safety issues to all stakeholders along the supply chain.

FAO's approach to school food and nutrition promotes a risk-based

framework to the supply chain for school food, embedded in a conducive food control environment. Support focuses on a) developing functional food control systems at different levels; b) promoting enabling policies and legal landscapes for food safety; c) developing capacities to introduce good practices to producers and food handlers along the school food chain; and d) integrating food safety as a key part of school food standards and food and nutrition education.

Prevention and reduction of food losses and waste

Food loss and waste (FLW) is a manifestation of inefficiency, unsustainability and inequality in current food systems and is a significant issue that hampers sustainable development. School-based programmes and policies can tackle FLW through various mechanisms.

One such mechanism is the prevention of unintended food waste consequences of initiatives that aim to increase availability of nutritious foods in schools (e.g. diversification of school meals with fresh produce).

FAO's approach promotes the integration of food waste reduction as a theme in school education projects and in national curricula. This helps to raise awareness of the issue and to engage children, adolescents and the school community in efforts to reduce food waste and alleviate its associated economic, environmental and social impacts.

Moreover, understanding the range of reasons behind a) food losses throughout the school supply chain and/or b) food waste in schools (e.g. acceptability assessments, knowledge, attitudes and practices studies); as well as identifying interventions to address these will be integrated within the four main areas of the school food and nutrition approach.

Social, economic and environmental sustainability

Food systems have considerable impacts on social, economic and environmental sustainability. School-based policies and programmes can be an opportune platform in which to integrate sustainability considerations.

School procurement, for instance, can use its purchasing power to support and promote forms of supply that consider environmental sustainability (e.g. low-impact production methods with reduced carbon inputs and greenhouse gas emissions, use or prioritization of organic or agroecological products, enhanced animal welfare, reduced food packaging, etc.) and fair labour conditions.

Beyond providing food in schools to all children on equal terms, the promotion of equity and social justice through schools depend on employing approaches that purposely assess and address issues of inequality and inclusion throughout food procurement, preparation and consumption. These also depend on the meaningful involvement of local governments, civil society and the wider school community.

FAO's approach considers initiatives for incorporating sustainability considerations and criteria into school-based programmes, including support for local smallholders, standards and guidelines for inclusive and sustainable institutional food procurement and food environment policies. Furthermore, FAO will explore how it can support considerations of other dimensions of sustainability as part of the school food and nutrition approach, including for example revaluing traditional diets or tailoring food and nutrition education to support equity objectives.

Expected results

The implementation of the **FAO School Food and Nutrition Framework** will result in:

- ✓ **a harmonized technical approach to school food and nutrition across FAO, including headquarters, regional and country offices;**
- ✓ **effective capacity and commitment to school food and nutrition across FAO;**
- ✓ **a coherent portfolio of financial engagements supporting school food and nutrition with measurable results at regional and country levels;**
- ✓ **a strengthened global evidence base in the area of school food and nutrition; and**
- ✓ **widened partnerships and an increased leadership role at country, regional and global level in supporting school food and nutrition.**



FAO priorities in school food & nutrition

This Framework guides how FAO can further capitalize on its technical competencies, expertise and resources to achieve the expected results.



Advocacy

FAO will engage in global and regional platforms and forums (including the Committee on World Food Security) and create its own advocacy mechanisms to stimulate investment in school food and nutrition. In particular, it will promote a food systems lens and highlight unexploited synergies between school-based interventions for nutrition, education, food security and community development.

The Organization will facilitate regular dialogue with Member States and other stakeholders to explore and promote national, regional or global policies and regulatory frameworks that take into account synergies between the components of the School Food and Nutrition Framework.

Partnerships and collaborations

FAO recognizes that building strategic partnerships (financial, technical, etc.) is essential to avoid duplication of efforts, synergize areas of expertise and accelerate progress for sustainable development, particularly for school food and nutrition. There are important areas of focus, such as hygiene, health and lifestyle interventions that go beyond the mandate and scope of FAO; therefore, an integral part of the approach will be to build partnerships and develop/strengthen explicit linkages with other UN agencies and international, regional and national organizations. In this context, FAO will:

- ✓ promote horizontal and vertical collaboration at country level, as well as South–South and triangular cooperation;
- ✓ consolidate and seek new partnerships with regional bodies including parliamentary organizations;
- ✓ explore collaborations with academia and research institutions to further advance the evidence base on the impacts of multicomponent school food and nutrition

approaches on nutrition, food security, community socioeconomic development/rural development and educational performance;

- ✓ strengthen collaboration with the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition to promote coherence and complementarity in school food and nutrition actions among UN agencies;
- ✓ expand collaboration with the UN Rome-based agencies (WFP and IFAD), the Global Child Nutrition Foundation, the Partnership for Child Development, the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the WFP Centre of Excellence in Brazil, mainly on providing programmatic and policy support for the implementation of the Home-grown school feeding framework (FAO & WFP, 2018) at regional and country level;
- ✓ capitalize on existing collaborations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to advance the priority and visibility of school-based food and nutrition education; with WHO and UNICEF to strengthen approaches for developing school food environment policies and nutrition standards; and with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to support global capacity development efforts on home-grown school feeding.

Capacity development

FAO will prioritize the development of capacities of staff at headquarters, regional and country levels to support the adequate implementation of the School Food and Nutrition Framework, mainly through videoconferences, face-to-face workshops, webinars and internal seminars.

In parallel, FAO will continue to carry out high-level and institutional capacity development at regional and country

level to implement the school food and nutrition approach sustainably, particularly focusing on multi-stakeholder policy and coordination mechanisms.

Technical capacity development in the specific areas of the approach will be targeted to medium-level decision makers, advisors, technical staff/officers and programme planners in countries, mainly through:

- ✓ the promotion of country capacity needs assessments in the areas addressed by the Framework (with focus on the application of FAO's SFNE capacity assessment tool);
- ✓ the development of e-learning modules on SFNE, application of the home-grown school feeding resource framework, mechanisms for local procurement, and others;
- ✓ global webinar series featuring specific areas of the approach featuring country examples and case studies;
- ✓ regional workshops; and
- ✓ global discussions through multi-stakeholder platforms.

Programmatic and technical support

FAO will focus on, but not limit, its technical support at country level to:

- ✓ conducting needs assessments and analyses of the food and nutrition situation of schoolchildren, system capacity gaps and potential of schools for community socioeconomic development at country and/or subnational levels;
- ✓ developing/revising, implementing and evaluating policies and legislation that are conducive to effective school food and nutrition models;
- ✓ developing food safety, nutrition standards and/or local procurement guidelines and integrating effective

nutrition education in primary and secondary education systems, among other areas depending on the priorities and context;

- ✓ developing tailored models to operationalize the school food and nutrition approach;
- ✓ upscaling successful school food and nutrition pilots to national programmes;
- ✓ transforming existing national models to better achieve set objectives or to redefine objectives in light of needs; and
- ✓ developing indicators and processes for programme monitoring and evaluation.

A series of internal tools, such as checklists and guidance notes, will be developed to aid in the design of projects that include school food and nutrition components.

Evidence and knowledge generation

FAO, together with partners, will work to address the evidence gaps on:

- ✓ the impact pathways and effectiveness of different packages of interventions in programmes that have components of the school food and nutrition approach;
- ✓ estimating cost-effectiveness of implementing multicomponent approaches versus isolated interventions; and
- ✓ implementation research of school-based programmes that integrate school food and nutrition components

As for programmatic global guidance, FAO will disseminate and expand on the Home-grown school feeding resource framework (FAO and WFP, 2018) developed with the Rome-based UN agencies and other key partners, as well as on other key normative and guidance documents (mainly a legal guide on school food and nutrition, and a toolkit for school-based food and nutrition education).

FAO will also disseminate a policy guidance note to country and regional offices to highlight opportunities for leveraging the education sector for improved food security and nutrition outcomes.

Furthermore, emphasis will be placed on developing and disseminating specific methodologies and documenting lessons learned for school meal and school food nutrition standards that are explicitly linked with procurement and food safety standards and supported by SFNE, together with the development of policies and legal frameworks for adequate food and nutrition in schools. The development of guidelines for integrating SFNE in the school curricula and school-based programmes, with a focus on obesity prevention, will also be explored.

Communication

FAO will develop a specific communication strategy for school food and nutrition to support the aims of this Framework. The communication strategy will focus on:

- ✓ Advocacy and outreach to key partners and stakeholders to raise awareness on the catalyzing potential of holistic school food and nutrition approaches to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to foster the uptake of these type of approaches.
- ✓ Mainstreaming of corporate key messages to reposition FAO as a key player in school food and nutrition and to rally and mobilize all the different sectors that have a key role in this arena.
- ✓ Dissemination campaign of knowledge and evidence to strengthen FAO decentralized offices' capacities to support the effective implementation of the school food and nutrition approach.

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Annex 1

FAO's recent assessments and normative guidance relevant to school food and nutrition

Regional and global assessments

- ✓ Regional overview of national school food and nutrition programmes in Africa: fao.org/3/I8063EN/i8063en.PDF
- ✓ School feeding and possibilities for direct purchases from family farming: case studies from eight Latin American countries: fao.org/3/a-i3413e.pdf
- ✓ Global survey on the state of school-based food and nutrition education in low and middle-income countries (in preparation)
- ✓ Nutrition guidelines and standards for school meals: a report from 33 low and middle-income countries: fao.org/3/CA2773EN/ca2773en.pdf

Normative guidance and other documentation

- ✓ Home-grown school feeding: resource framework: fao.org/3/ca0957en/CA0957EN.pdf
- ✓ Leveraging institutional food procurement for linking small farmers to markets: fao.org/3/a-i7636e.pdf
- ✓ Nutrition education in primary schools: fao.org/docrep/009/a0333e/a0333e00.htm
- ✓ The ENACT course in nutrition education: fao.org/nutrition/education/professional-training/enact/en
- ✓ Do good: save food. Education material on food waste reduction for primary and secondary schools: fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA1170EN
- ✓ A new deal for school gardens: fao.org/docrep/013/i1689e/i1689e00.pdf

- ✓ Setting up and running a school garden – teaching toolkit: fao.org/docrep/012/i1118e/i1118e00.htm
- ✓ Setting up and running a school garden – a manual for teachers, parents and communities: fao.org/docrep/009/a0218e/a0218e00.htm
- ✓ Eating well for good health – lessons on nutrition and healthy diets: fao.org/docrep/017/i3261e/i3261e00.htm
- ✓ Legal guide for school food and nutrition (in press)
- ✓ Scaling up the Brazilian school feeding model: fao.org/3/a-i4287e.pdf
- ✓ Policy FIRST guidance note: education (in preparation)
- ✓ Good hygienic practices in the preparation and sale of street food In Africa: tools for training: fao.org/docrep/pdf/012/a0740e/a0740e00.pdf
- ✓ FAO/WHO guidance to governments on the application of HACCP in small and/or less-developed food businesses: fao.org/docrep/pdf/009/a0799e/a0799e00.pdf
- ✓ Food quality and safety systems - a training manual on food hygiene and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system: fao.org/docrep/w8088e/w8088e00.htm

Annex 2

Examples of FAO's work in school food and nutrition

Below are some lessons learned from recent and ongoing projects that highlight the added value that FAO can bring to national programmes and inter-agency initiatives in the area of school food and nutrition.

The programme of local procurement from smallholder farmers (Purchase from Africans for Africa)

The Purchase from Africans for Africa (PAA) programme utilized public food procurement as a catalyst to facilitate market access for small-scale value-chain actors. The programme, through a collaboration between FAO and WFP supported five African countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal) on policy, programming and implementation for linking school food with local agriculture through tailored public food procurement tools. PAA identified the need to couple technical and policy support to African countries to enhance knowledge and evidence-based public procurement practices, as well as to assess their impact on the supply and demand side and linking school menus formulated according to nutritional requirements and local agriculture production.

Sustainable schools in Latin America

Since 2009, within the framework of the Brazil-FAO Cooperation Programme, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, the National Development of Education Fund and FAO have been implementing the project 'Strengthening of school

feeding programmes in the framework of the Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean 2025 initiative'. As of 2018, FAO has provided legal, institutional and capacity support to Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Granada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to strengthen their school meal programmes.

In particular, this programme has successfully reached over 26 000 students with healthy and culturally appropriate school meals and food and nutrition education. School gardening, for example, is used as a tool to teach students about food, the environment, health and hygiene. Moreover, it has engaged other stakeholders such as local authorities, parents and those who have gardens at home. The programme also established a learning platform for technical assistance and school nutrition courses to encourage dialogue and the exchange of experiences among government administrators and stakeholders in the field.

School gardens in Asia

FAO has been supporting the Asia region particularly in the areas of learning and productive school gardens and SFNE for many decades. In 2015, a regional consultation for promoting school gardens recommended the enhancement of research, evaluation and monitoring activities; stronger linkages among key project actors; training and capacity building programmes; full integration of projects within the school curricula as well as within the community and agricultural systems; appropriate dissemination and knowledge packaging; incentives and school-community participation and integration.

Strengthening of school feeding programmes in Africa

The project 'Strengthening of school feeding programmes in Africa' was the result of a partnership between the Government of Brazil and the FAO Regional Office for Africa in which a new model for international technical cooperation was implemented through the principles of South-South cooperation. As a result of this partnership, two tailor-made country projects were successfully implemented in Malawi and Sao Tome and Principe.

One of the main outputs, a regional survey, provided key and original data on the main needs, gaps and priorities from the different areas of the school food and nutrition approach. Lessons learned were key to better respond to the needs of the region. Other key results were obtained in the following areas:

- ✓ Regional knowledge exchanges on school food and nutrition promoted positive feedback from African government representatives.
- ✓ A new school meal menu was designed based on local food production through a multisectoral participatory approach in Sao Tome and Principe.
- ✓ Decision makers were influenced to make nutrition education a stand-alone subject, and the subject was renamed (and rebranded) as 'human ecology' in Malawi.
- ✓ A comprehensive legal analysis was developed to support the Ministry of Education, the national school feeding programme (Programa Nacional de Alimentação e Saúde Escolar; PNASE) and the Government of Sao Tome and Principe to strengthen their legal frameworks and implementation efforts related to school feeding in the country.

Ongoing projects

The Government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Education and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, is carrying out a major reform of the current curriculum for early childhood development, primary school, secondary school and teacher-training institutions, in collaboration with multiple stakeholders. FAO has been providing technical support to incorporate nutrition and agriculture into the curriculum in order to contribute towards achieving food and nutrition security in the country.

Within the project 'Developing Capacity for Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Selected Countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia' funded by the Russian Federation, FAO is assisting the governments of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the development of capacities for improved sustainability and management of their national school feeding programmes. In particular, FAO is supporting infrastructure and capacity development for school greenhouses, which will increase the availability of diverse and nutritious foods for school meals, in addition to legal and policy support for creating an enabling environment. The project is contributing to the development of normative content for FAO's global programme on 'Strengthening Food Systems for Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection' and facilitating interregional exchanges of experiences and lessons learned, including through participation of a broad set of stakeholders in the Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition.

In Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda, FAO is providing support to national governments to create enabling environments and capacity in school food and nutrition. Activities include:

- ✓ the analysis of national legislation from a holistic perspective;
- ✓ the development of guidelines for sustainable school meals designed according to nutritional requirements and local agriculture production;
- ✓ formulating regulatory frameworks and contractual modalities for inclusive public procurement, including local farmer-friendly procurement regulations for school meals; and
- ✓ organizing high-level advocacy and policy dialogues targeting eastern African parliamentarians for increased investments in food system interventions and school meals for improved nutrition.

FAO is providing policy support on food procurement for home-grown school feeding initiatives in Ethiopia and Senegal. The project focuses on strengthening the governments' capacity to operationalize their current home-grown school feeding initiatives, providing evidence-based options for decision-making on supply chain and business models, operational modalities, frameworks and contract modalities for enabling an inclusive public procurement process and adopting a diversified food basket.

Annex 3

School food and nutrition areas of work

Area of work	Main aims	Examples of FAO support	Stakeholders to be involved
Healthy food environment and school food	<p>Ensure that food available in the school is safe and aligned with the nutritional priorities of schoolchildren and adolescents</p> <p>Foster a healthy food environment within the school premises and beyond</p>	<p>Promotion of healthy food environments, through specific food policies</p> <p>Promotion of coherence between school food-environment policies, food provided (e.g. school meals) and sold in the school and national food-based dietary guidelines (where relevant)</p> <p>Technical support for developing, implementing and monitoring nutrition standards and guidelines for school food and meals</p> <p>Technical support and capacity development for menu planning and recipe development (translating guidelines)</p> <p>Capacity development and development of training materials</p> <p>Monitoring, evaluation and evidence generation</p>	<p>Education, health, food safety, agriculture, social protection, WASH,^a PTAs,^b community, student associations, civil society, partners</p>
Food and nutrition education	<p>Foster lasting food-related outlooks, skills and practices for better health and well-being in schoolchildren and families</p> <p>Empower school actors to be agents of change in their local food systems</p>	<p>Awareness raising and advocacy at different levels</p> <p>Support for integrating food and nutrition education in relevant policies (including the national school curriculum)</p> <p>Guidance for the effective design, implementation and monitoring of quality school-based food and nutrition education and other behaviour-change interventions</p> <p>Promotion of active involvement of families, community and school staff</p> <p>Promotion of explicit linkages between policy, procurement, school food and the food environment</p> <p>Capacity development and development of training and learning materials</p> <p>Monitoring, evaluation and evidence generation</p>	<p>Education, health, agriculture, social protection, WASH, local governments, PTAs, community, student associations, civil society, partners</p>

^a Water, sanitation and hygiene

^b Parent-teacher association

Area of work	Main aims	Examples of FAO support	Stakeholders to be involved
Inclusive procurement and value chains	<p>Provide school meals with safe, nutritious, diverse, acceptable and locally produced foods, prioritizing available supply from smallholder farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises (i.e. home-grown school feeding)</p> <p>Create market and financial opportunities for local smallholder producers contributing to community economic development</p>	<p>Technical support on production, post-harvest, storage, processing, organizational and marketing skills of smallholder farmers</p> <p>Technical support for market diversification/nutrition-sensitive value-chain development</p> <p>Technical support for the development of an enabling food safety control environment and capacity to enhance compliance (of stakeholders) along the value chain</p> <p>Guidance on the design and implementation of smallholder-friendly procurement mechanisms</p> <p>Capacity development and training materials (for field officers, procurement authorities, schools, local and national governments)</p> <p>Monitoring, evaluation and evidence generation</p>	<p>Agriculture, health, food safety, education, procurement, finance, trade, local governments, civil society, community, partners</p>
Enabling policy, legal and institutional environment	<p>Improve accountability across sectors and institutions for school food and nutrition</p> <p>Support countries to adopt evidence-based policies, legal and institutional frameworks to effectively implement comprehensive school-based programmes dealing with food and nutrition</p> <p>Advocate for enhanced awareness and knowledge to strengthen political and financial commitment</p>	<p>Provide advice on the development, revision and adoption of national, regional or global policies and legal and regulatory frameworks on SFN (considering agriculture, food-system policies and programmes and all components of the SFN framework)</p> <p>Promote improved coordination mechanisms for delivery</p> <p>Develop/review policies and legal frameworks and facilitate and build capacity for effective evidence-based implementation</p> <p>Advocate for appropriate allocation of financial, human and material resources for desired impact</p> <p>Monitoring, evaluation and evidence generation</p>	<p>Agriculture, health, food safety, education, social affairs, trade, finance, parliamentarians, local governments, gender</p>





The FAO School Food and Nutrition Framework aims to support governments and institutions in developing, transforming or strengthening their school policies, programmes and other initiatives for an enhanced and synergistic impact on diets, child and adolescent nutrition, community socioeconomic development and local food systems.

The Framework represents a direct response to the international call for improving nutrition along the life cycle and for transforming food systems to be conducive of better diets, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025).

It provides a holistic approach that capitalizes on complementary interventions and the most effective programmatic options to obtain benefits throughout the food, nutrition and education nexus, using the school setting as the center for development.

UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF
ACTION ON NUTRITION
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2016-2025

fao.org/school-food