School Meals Coalition Newsletter

May 2025

New Members and Partners

The School Meals Coalition continues to grow, with 108 Member States, 6 regional bodies, and over 140 partners working together to ensure every child has access to nutritious meals.

We welcome new partners: The Egyptian Food Bank, that, through its national school feeding programme, reaches students daily with fortified, nutritious meals that support children's health, growth, and learning; and So They Can, an organization that delivers aid in Africa on behalf of the Government of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade. It partners with primary and secondary schools in East Africa to improve education outcomes, including planet-friendly school feeding programmes.

Highlights

Unlocking innovative finance to scale and sustain school meals

The Sustainable Financing Initiative unveils a new report to help countries bridge the school meals investment gap

Flexible matching grants and debt-to-education financing have successfully catalyzed significant funding for school meals in countries such as Haiti. Credit: WFP/ Maria Gallar

At the recent World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund Spring meetings side event, 'School Meal Programmes: A Proven, Efficient and Resilient Safety Net', the Coalition's Sustainable Financing Initiative launched a new report, *Innovative Financing for School Feeding.* This report provides a roadmap for countries to fund school meals beyond traditional budgets and aid. At the launch, stakeholders explored new innovative financing ways to ensure millions of hungry children remain in school. Watch the discussion and read an article highlighting insights from Somalia and Indonesia.

Debt Swap for School Meals: Lessons from Egypt

The Government of Egypt has developed its debt swap frameworks to further expand partnerships that promote innovative financing to enhance the national school meal programme, nutrition, food systems, and other social protection programmes. In this article, Egypt shares lessons from its debt swap initiatives with Italy and Germany and highlights why these partnerships were very successful.

Can Africa afford school meal programmes that cover all children?

In a recent BBC Africa Daily podcast, Betty Kibaara, Director of the Food Initiative at the Rockefeller Foundation, discusses innovative financing opportunities for school meals in Africa. She highlights an upcoming assessment for schools to evaluate the benefits of clean cooking in Kenya, including climate financing for school meals and calls on governments to take full ownership of programmes.

School meals in action

Niger scales up digital innovation for efficiency in school meals delivery

Following a successful pilot of the School Connect Digital Platform pilot in Zinder, Niger has digitized operations in 488 school canteens. The government plans to expand to 1,178 more schools this year, aiming to enhance transparency, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness in delivering school meals nationwide. Read more

Cameroon invests in data to transform school meals

The Government of Cameroon, in partnership with the World Bank and World Food Programme, launched a Healthy Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) assessment running through to September 2025. This multisectoral assessment will help Cameroon align its school meals frameworks with best practices, boosting children's learning while driving economic and social progress. By investing in data and evidence, the government aims to improve programme quality to reach one million children with nutritious school meals by 2026. Learn more about the SABER assessment tool.

Governments national commitments: Innovative taxes and partnerships fuel school meal investments

Coalition members are exploring innovative financing to sustain school meals. São Tomé and Príncipe mandates diverse funding, including a 2.5% sin tax on alcohol and tobacco and a US$2 levy per metric tonne of imported cement. Benin now fully manages its national school meals programme and is expanding partnerships for new funds.

Feel free to amplify these voices on your digital platforms and connect with us to share what is happening in school meals in your local community and country.

Mark your Calendar

4 June - Nutrition programming for school-age children and adolescents in humanitarian settings

Join UNICEF and the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN) for a webinar as they present a new scoping review of nutrition programming, policy and evidence for school-age children and adolescents in humanitarian contexts. Key findings and recommendations will be presented. It will also feature country case studies from Panama, Palestine, and Ukraine. Register to participate.

Deadline 6 June - Have Your Say: Online public consultation now open for UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake (UNFSS+4)

The draft UNFSS+4 Independent Stakeholder Report is open for public input on SparkBlue until 6 June. This is a key chance for non-state actors—across civil society, Indigenous groups, youth, private sector, and more—to shape the future of food systems. Join and submit here to participate in this important consultation to help shape summit reporting and outcomes.

The 2nd UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4), co-hosted by Ethiopia and Italy, will take place 27-29 July in Addis Ababa. Nearly five years after the landmark 2021 Summit, this global gathering will showcase progress and investments in food systems. Following the preparatory regional meetings, governments will champion school meal programmes rooted in local food systems to improve child health, support farmers, create jobs and unlock their full potential for sustainable development.

- **27 July – Action Day & field visits**
- **28-29 July – UNFSS+4 global summit**

If you're planning activities for UNFSS+4, contact the School Meals Coalition Secretariat to amplify your efforts and increase visibility across Coalition channels.

11 June - Good Examples Webinar: From Latin America and the Caribbean to the World - New Case Studies and Global Reflections

Hosted by the Coalition's Research Consortium, this webinar will highlight the first case studies published in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with recent contributions from other regions. Sign up to participate.

In case you missed it

School meals on the frontlines of food systems transformation

Africa unites at The UN Food Systems Summit +4 Regional Preparatory Meeting to spotlight school meals as scalable solutions for resilient, inclusive food systems.
At the pre-summit talks for Africa in Addis Ababa, Burundi spotlighted Africa's commitment to developing programmes that power food systems transformation and improve the nutrition, education outcomes and economies and advocating for greater investment in school meals. At least 28 African countries have already integrated school meals into their national food systems pathways – demonstrating growing momentum to align nutrition, education and sustainable agriculture.

City to City learning, Indonesia taps Milan's School Meals Model

City leaders from Bandung, Denpasar, and Semarang, along with Indonesian Government officials, visited Milan to explore its school canteen model under the Cities Feeding the Future Initiative. Hosted by the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) as part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) & MUFPP project "Spreading Experiences and Knowledge on School Meals Programmes in ASEAN Cities", the visit showcased how Milan integrates nutrition, sustainability and local sourcing in its school meals. Explore the highlights and connect with the Initiative at MUFPP.Secretariat@comune.milano.it.

Give peas a chance: A Scottish school meals success pilot

The award-winning Give Peas a Chance pilot is transforming school meals in Aberdeen by introducing locally grown organic dried split peas. A collaboration between Soil Association Scotland, Aberdeen City Council, local farmers and education partners, the project showcases how public procurement can boost local food systems, supply chains and sustainability. Watch the film to see the impact and for more information, contact rberry@soilassociation.org

We Would Like to Hear from You!

If this newsletter was forwarded to you and you would like to be on our regular mailing list, please visit this link. If you would like to join the School Meals Coalition, you can find the Declaration of Commitment for governments or the Declaration of Support for partners here.

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