

School Meals Coalition: Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child

Commitment Document for Germany

School meals programmes are the most important social protection instrument worldwide: In early 2020, 388 million children were delivered a meal at school every day. Yet at the same time, more than 70 million children from particularly vulnerable groups did not have access to school meals. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation even further: 199 countries closed their schools, so that children were missing out on what was often their only proper meal of the day.

This underlines the important role that healthy and sustainable school meals have, and it shows the importance of supporting school meals worldwide to fight hunger and poverty, secure health, well-being and learning skills, promote school attendance and create equal opportunities for boys and girls. In addition, sustainable and healthy school meals have positive effects on food systems, they can strengthen local and national markets and support small-scale farmers and local micro-businesses that are often managed by women.

As early as during the 46th Plenary Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the German Federal Government emphasised that it will work towards improving the quality of school nutrition worldwide. By organising the 13th “Policies against Hunger” Conference we have provided a platform for experts to draw up specific recommendations on how to design school meals so they can better contribute to the global fight against hunger. We hope that the continued debates at the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UN FSS) will advance the necessary steps.

Against this backdrop, we - the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and the Foreign Office - declare our willingness to jointly support the School Meals Coalition and its goals for the improvement of school meals programmes worldwide, which will also contribute to achieving the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. We will actively engage in the Coalition and maintain measures at national and international level:

- I. We are striving to establish a peer-to-peer network under the umbrella of the School Meals Coalition to promote of the exchange of experience between interested experts of national governments and regional organisations and thus support countries that are willing to establish, adjust or expand their school meals programme.

- II. We also declare our willingness - within the limits of our possibilities - to be actively involved in the Advocacy & Outreach Group of the School Meals Coalition and thus contribute to continued visibility of school nutrition in international processes.
- III. At national level, we strongly advocate supporting a balanced and sustainable diet, in particular for children and adolescents, while also specifically bearing in mind organic produce. We aim at feeding the lessons learnt and findings made in the context of the School Meals Coalition - where feasible and appropriate - into our national action to promote school meals.
- IV. In addition to that, the Federal Government will continue to promote the development and implementation of integral quality standards for school meals as a pilot project under the Bilateral Trust Fund with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Based on the lessons learned, a validated method for establishing dietary guidelines and quality standards will be developed, which will be disseminated in more low- and middle- income countries and hence contribute to improving children's food and nutritional situation.
- V. We will furthermore provide recovery and rehabilitation support for school meals programmes in order to improve the nutritional situation of children and their families and strengthen their resilience to future crises. These programmes offer nutritious locally produced foods to children who are affected by multiple crises. Together with the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the FAO, we will continue to implement programmes in several contexts and countries and complement them by WASH action or by improving income-earning opportunities for neighbouring communities. We will strengthen our partners' capacities at national and local levels to sustainably enshrine these programmes and hand them over to governments in the long term.
- VI. To further contribute to social protection, we are committed to implementing school meals programmes in their specific contexts and dovetailed with other initiatives focussing on the transformation of our food systems. At the same time, we we will strengthen mutual learning by adopting integrated, multisectoral approaches for enhancing resilience together with our implementing partners even beyond the UN FSS.

- VII. We will continue to provide assistance to the WFP's school meals programmes in special humanitarian emergency contexts. By supporting these programmes, we want to ensure that the affected population groups, especially children, are able to cover their basic nutritional needs in times of crisis. Our support is meant to contribute to food security and children's health; in addition we intend to enable schools to create incentives for families to send their children to school and thus re-establish their access to education.

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Julia Klöckner

Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture
of the Federal Republic of Germany