



STATEMENT OF THE SCHOOLFOOD4CHANGE PROJECT FOR THE CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO HEALTHY FOOD CONFERENCE

SAN SEBASTIÁN 2023

Guaranteeing a healthy nutrition for all children in the European Union

San Sebastian, Spain, 21 November 2023

Food and nutrition insecurity hinders a child's ability to learn and fully develop. The 2023 State of Food Security and Nutrition Report makes it clear: **child nutrition should be prioritised by ensuring access to affordable, nutritious diets** but also by protecting children from nutrient-poor, ultra-processed foods. School meals are at the heart of the solution. The provision of nutritious and sustainable school meals carries a large potential to support children's health and wellbeing, promote social justice, fight against poverty while protecting the environment. Throughout the world, school meals offer a key opportunity to tackle child hunger and malnutrition, which often results from climate change. Not only will school meals address childhood hunger, but when paired with food education, they can empower children to become agents of change and carry this message forward. Today, we want to amplify the voices of youth and children to demand ambitious action for every child to access a healthy school meal – as stated in our [petition](#) which now (October 2023) reached over 50,000 signatures.

School food needs a change, and the time is now.

SchoolFood4Change (SF4C) sees schools as catalysts for systemic and multi-actor change towards a sustainable and healthy food system. The project is committed to engage and collaborate with vulnerable children and families. To deliver on this promise, collaborating with local and regional authorities is crucial: they have the power to be the change they want to see in the world. The City of Milan (Italy), for example, managed to reduce GHG emissions related to their **food procurement** by 43% between 2015 and 2021 by investing in plant-based meals, seasonal and organic products, shorter food value chains and 100% sustainable dishes and cutlery. Likewise, the City of Ghent (Belgium) achieved a 38% reduction of CO₂ emissions between 2019 and 2023, notably by limiting animal-based proteins to 50% of their dishes' protein content. In this way, cities like Milan and Ghent support the seven targets as defined in the Report on '[Innovative Criteria and Models for Procurement of Sustainable and Healthy School Meals](#)' and showcase that food system transformation can be significantly advanced through changes in the procurement process and menu planning.



GUARANTEEING A HEALTHY NUTRITION FOR ALL CHILDREN IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Towards a greater commitment to the provision of school meals building on the European Child Guarantee

SAN SEBASTIÁN DECLARATION

On November 21, Member States, representatives of the European Union Institutions, civil society, academics and policy experts gathered at the Palacio de Miramar, San Sebastián, a day after the World Children's Day, which marks the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, at the event 'Guaranteeing a healthy nutrition for all children in the European Union. Towards a greater commitment to the provision of school meals building on the European Child Guarantee'. Following the proceedings of the event, the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union declares:

Considering that

- The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, ratified by all EU countries, sets out that States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24) and that States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the physical and social development and shall, in case of need, provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing (Article 27)¹.
- The European Union, together with its Member States, is committed to the full achievement of the **United Nations 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, including those on ending poverty, reducing inequalities, and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education².

¹ The General comment no. 15 of the **Committee on the Rights of the Child** also states that "school feeding is desirable to ensure all pupils have access to a full meal every day, which can also enhance children's attention for learning and increase school enrolment", recommending this to be combined with nutrition and health education.

² The **SDG 4 Quality education** included the thematic indicator 'Proportion of school attending children receiving school meals' in the early 2023 revision to monitor the progress of 'Target 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all'.

- The **UN treaty on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, ratified by all Member States, recognises “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food” and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger (Article 11).
- The **European Pillar of Social Rights** establishes in its ‘Principle 11. Childcare and support to children’ that children have the right to protection from poverty and that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.
- The **Porto Social Summit** welcomed the EU headline targets for 2030 on jobs, skills and poverty reduction presented in the **European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan** and, accordingly, all Member States have established national headline targets. One of the complementary targets sets to reduce the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 5 million.
- The **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child** establishes that the protection and promotion of the rights of the child is a core objective of the European Union, as well as the need to strengthen the mainstreaming of children’s rights across all relevant EU policies. The Strategy includes, as some of the targeted priority actions to guarantee children’s rights, combating child poverty, fostering equal opportunities and building inclusive, quality education.
- The **Farm to Fork Strategy**, within the framework of the **European Green Deal**, aims to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly, particularly by promoting healthy and sustainable diets, including organic products, in schools and public institutions. In addition, it identifies as a priority action to review the **EU school scheme** legal framework with the view to refocus the scheme on healthy and sustainable food and, in particular, to strengthen educational messages on the importance of healthy nutrition, sustainable food production and reducing food waste.

Recognising that

- One of the main instruments of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child is the **Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee**, which aims to break the cycle of disadvantage and reduce the impact of poverty on child development through guaranteeing for children in need access to six key services including free and effective access to at least one healthy meal each school day and effective access to healthy nutrition.

- The **Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion** states that Member States should seek to rise the effectiveness and efficiency of their social protection systems and their monitoring. The Recommendation also highlights the potential of integrated robust social safety nets (including in-kind benefits) to improve social and health outcomes and deliver lasting social and economic benefits, including more specifically that social safety nets should help increase access to healthcare and healthy food for those in poverty.

Affirming

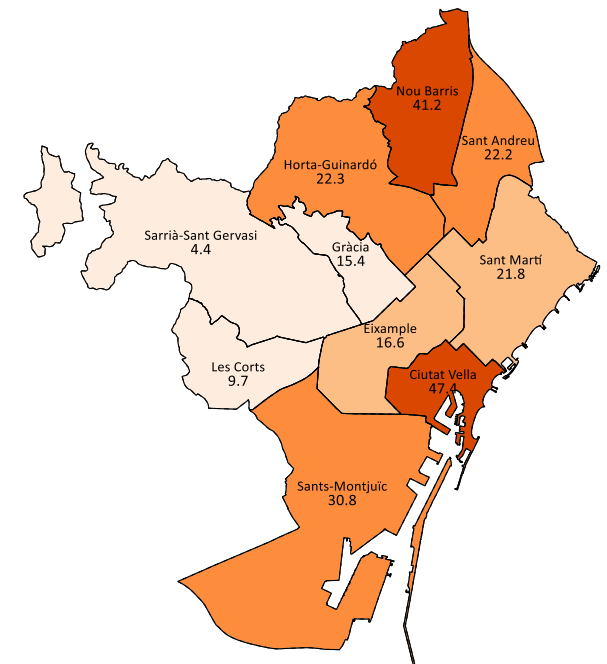
- In recent years, both the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a temporary closure of schools, and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, with important consequences in terms of the rise in food prices and the increase in the cost of living in general, have evidenced the need to guarantee the right to a healthy nutrition for all children and, in particular, for children in need and the youngest children, who are in a more vulnerable situation given their more sensitive health and development needs.
- The provision of free school meals is one of the most effective policies to fight against the food insecurity faced by a significant number of children and adolescents in the European Union and can contribute significantly to reduce child poverty and social exclusion. An effective school meals policy has the potential to improve several children and families' outcomes (e.g., disposable income, nutrition, education, health, well-being or work-life balance), both in the short and the long term, generating a high rate of return. Moreover, it presents also an opportunity to rethink and transform our food systems by increasing the demand for sustainable and local products.
- For these reasons, strengthening the commitment of Member States to this policy is key to moving towards greater social justice and a smarter social investment model. In this regard:
 - The key priority should be, according to the Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee, to ensure effective and free access to at least one healthy meal each school day to all children in need, expanding the coverage progressively for all children. At the same time, the provision of healthy meals during non-school periods should be expanded.

- In parallel, it is crucial to guarantee the provision of quality and sustainable food by setting common standards and menu planning; promoting and supporting a 'whole school food approach'; and deepening on the complementarity of this policy with a broader set of social, educational, health, agricultural and environmental policies to obtain multiplier effects.
- To properly monitor progress and the impact of this policy at the national and the EU level there is a need for targeted, reliable, timely and comparable indicators, prioritising those allowing to monitor the number of children, and especially children in need, benefiting from school meals programmes (e.g., using administrative data).
- Children are the present and the future of Europe. Investing in healthy, nutritious and sustainable school meals today can be a catalyst for broad transformations and systemic changes contributing to a fairer, more social and greener Europe.

Why did you decide to research on school-meal subsidies and which is the design and objectives of your research?

- As a poverty scholar, I am always interested in the evaluation of those policies that can have a **direct and permanent impact on vulnerable children**.
- Our main objective is to evaluate the **causal impact** of the school-meal subsidies **on three important dimensions** of child development: (i) academic achievement; (ii) subjective well-being, and (iii) health.
- The subsidies programme in Barcelona has some features that make it particularly interesting: it is **means-tested** (mostly dependent on income); **treatment varies in intensity** (70% or 100% of the meal price); and, subsidies are **paid directly to the schools**. This allows us to apply a Regression Discontinuity Design.

Figure 1. Ratio of the number of school-meal recipients to the total number of pupils enrolled, districts of Barcelona, 2021–2022



What are the main difficulties to carry out such kind of research in Spain, in particular, and in the European Union, more broadly?

There are **three main hurdles** that a researcher needs to overcome in order to pursue research on school meals:

1. Particularly in Spain, **access to data** that links school-meals participation and child outcomes.
2. Programme settings often lack the **quasi-experimental variation** that allows the causal effect of different interventions to be teased out.
3. Research **funding** – being particularly difficult to obtain when intending to collect experimental data (for example, from Randomized Controlled Trials).

Professor Donald Bundy

Director, Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition

Professor of Epidemiology and Development, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

The impact of access to school meals on children's outcomes

Garantizar una alimentación saludable para toda la infancia de la Unión Europea

21 November 2023

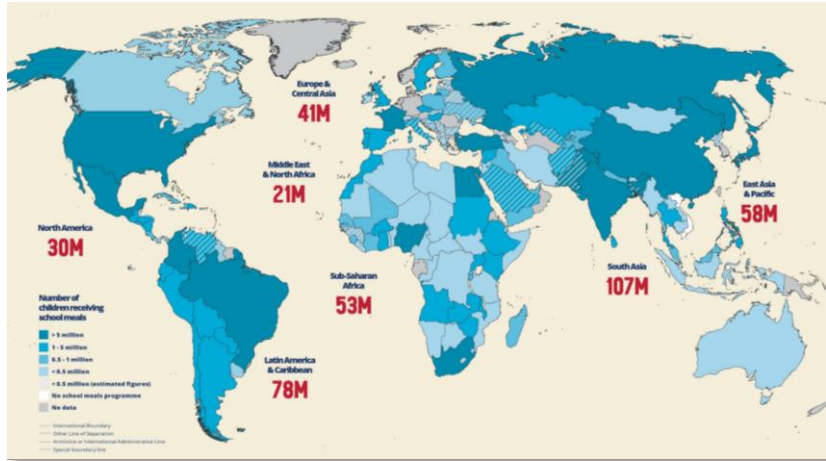


دبي العطاء
Dubai Cares

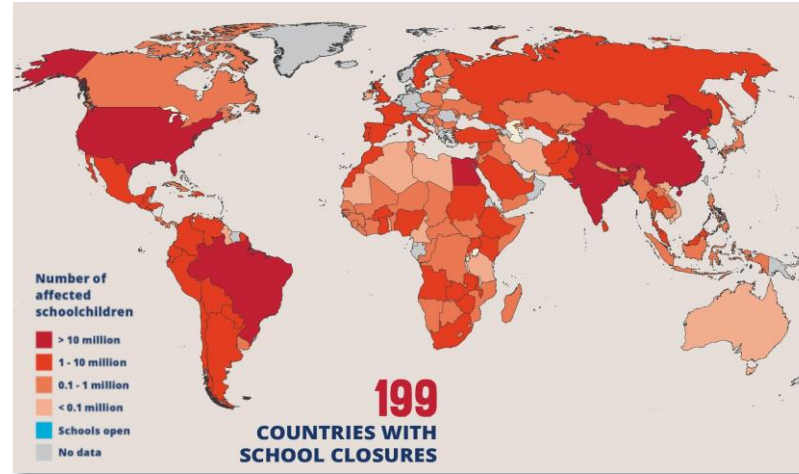


School Meals: Before, During, and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

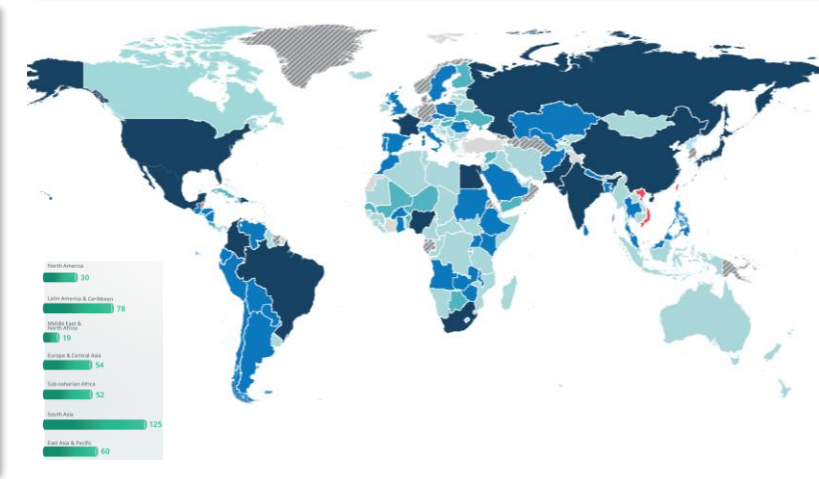
January 2020



April 2020



March 2023



388 MILLION CHILDREN

RECEIVING SCHOOL MEALS GLOBALLY

370 MILLION CHILDREN

MISSING OUT ON SCHOOL MEALS GLOBALLY

418 MILLION CHILDREN

RECEIVING SCHOOL MEALS NOW

Research Consortium organizational structure

Small Secretariat based in London:

LONDON SCHOOL of HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE



School Meals Coalition



Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition

Led by 94 member states:



Impact & Evidence



Analytics & Metrics



Good Examples



Nutrition Measurement



Diet & Food Systems



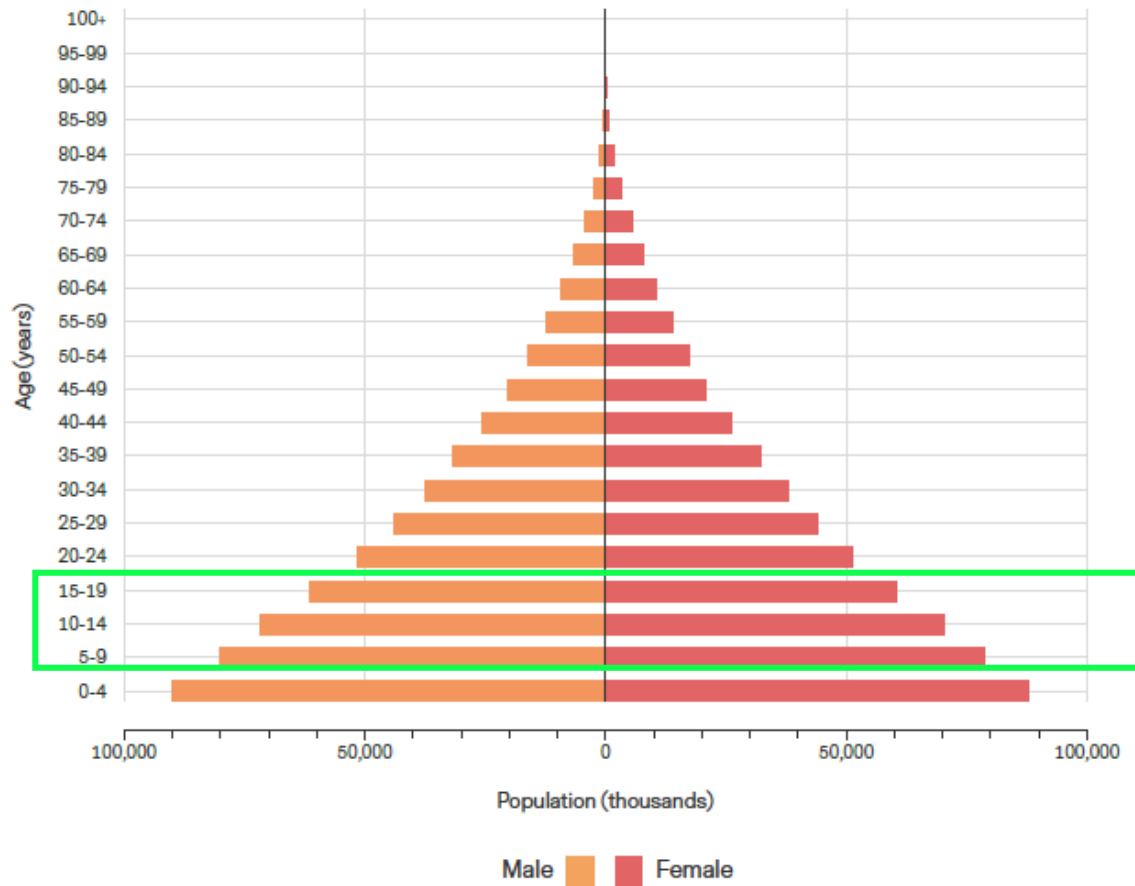
Early Career Researcher & Young Scientist Network

Six global Communities of Practice made up thought leaders based at research institutions all over the world

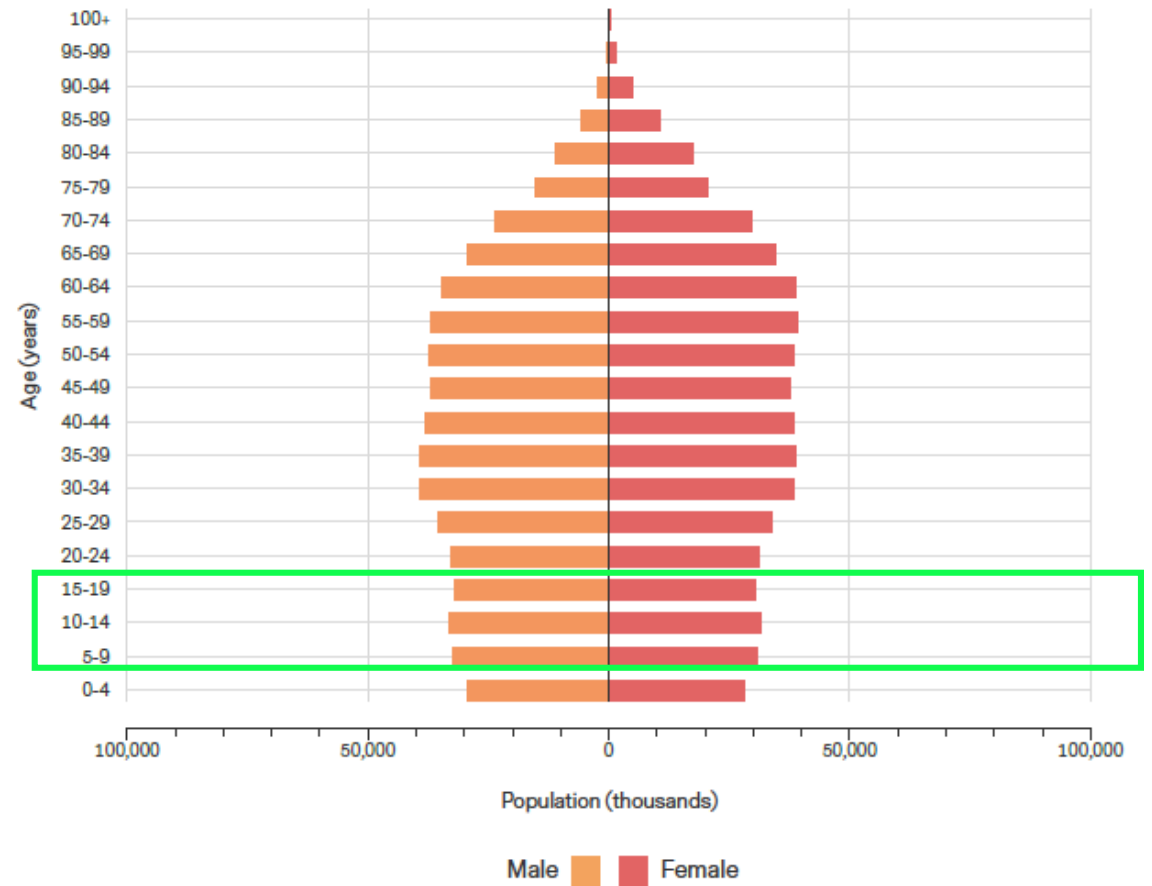


Proportion of population that is of school age

Sub-Saharan Africa population by age and sex

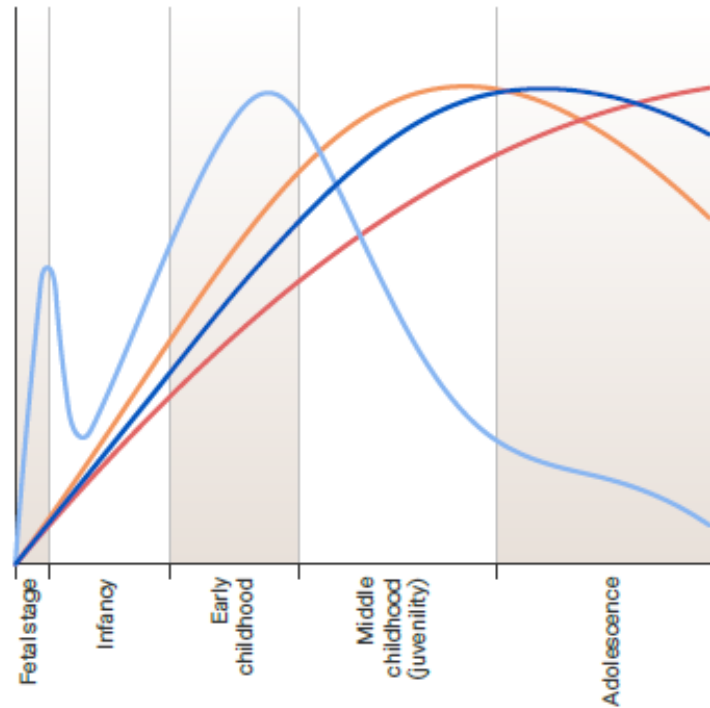


Europe and Northern America population by age and sex



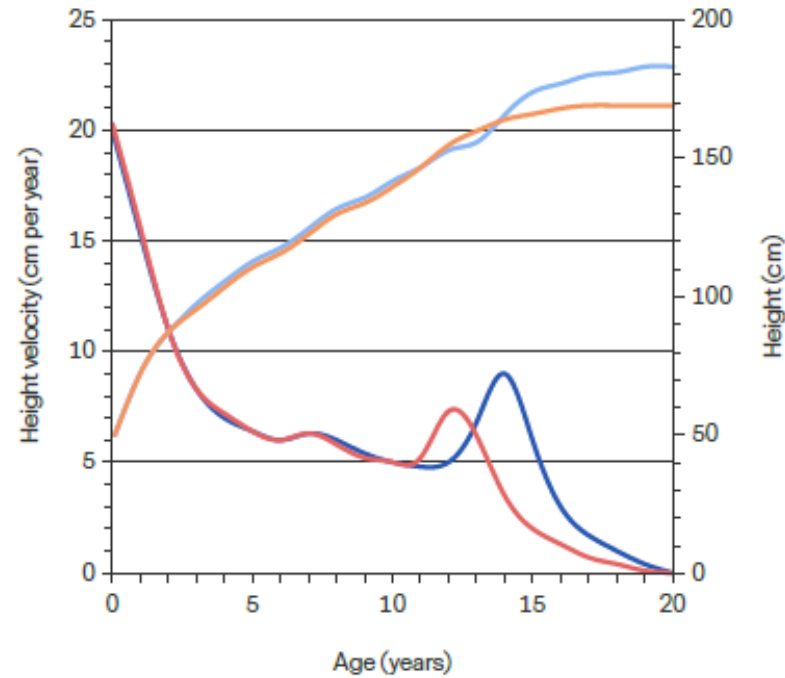
Developmental stages sensitive to intervention across the first 8,000 days of life

Brain development



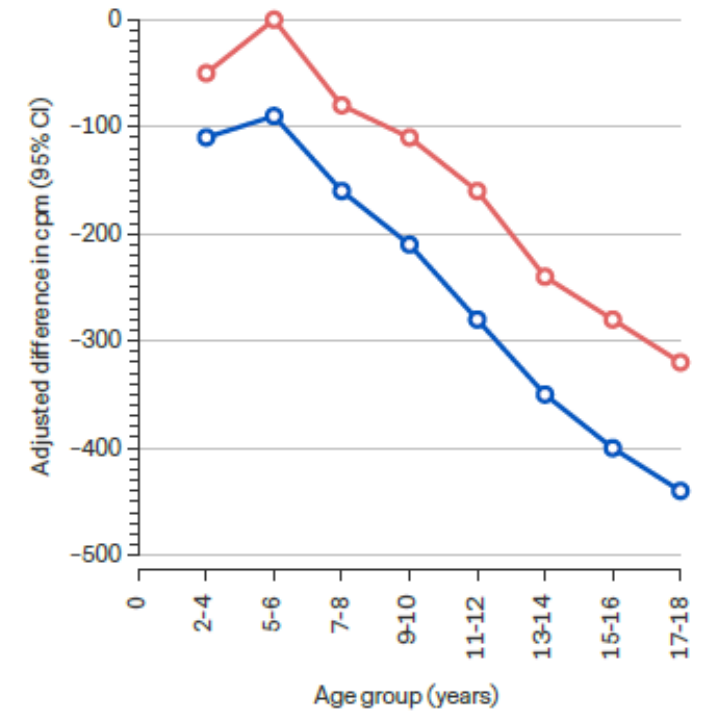
— Total volume — White matter
— Grey matter — Glucose utilisation

Linear growth



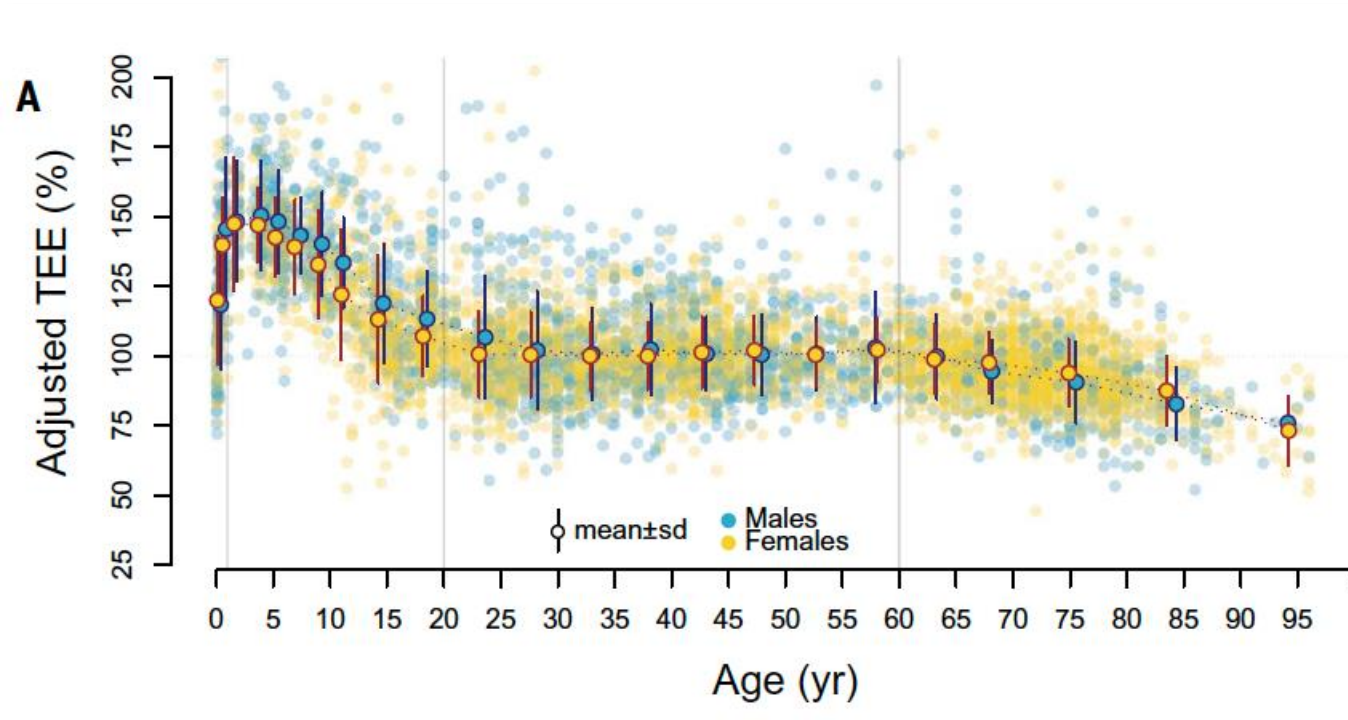
— Male velocity — Female velocity
— Male height — Female height

Physical activity



—○— Male —○— Female

Developmental stages sensitive to intervention: Energy expenditure



Pontzer et al., Science 373, 808–812 (2021)

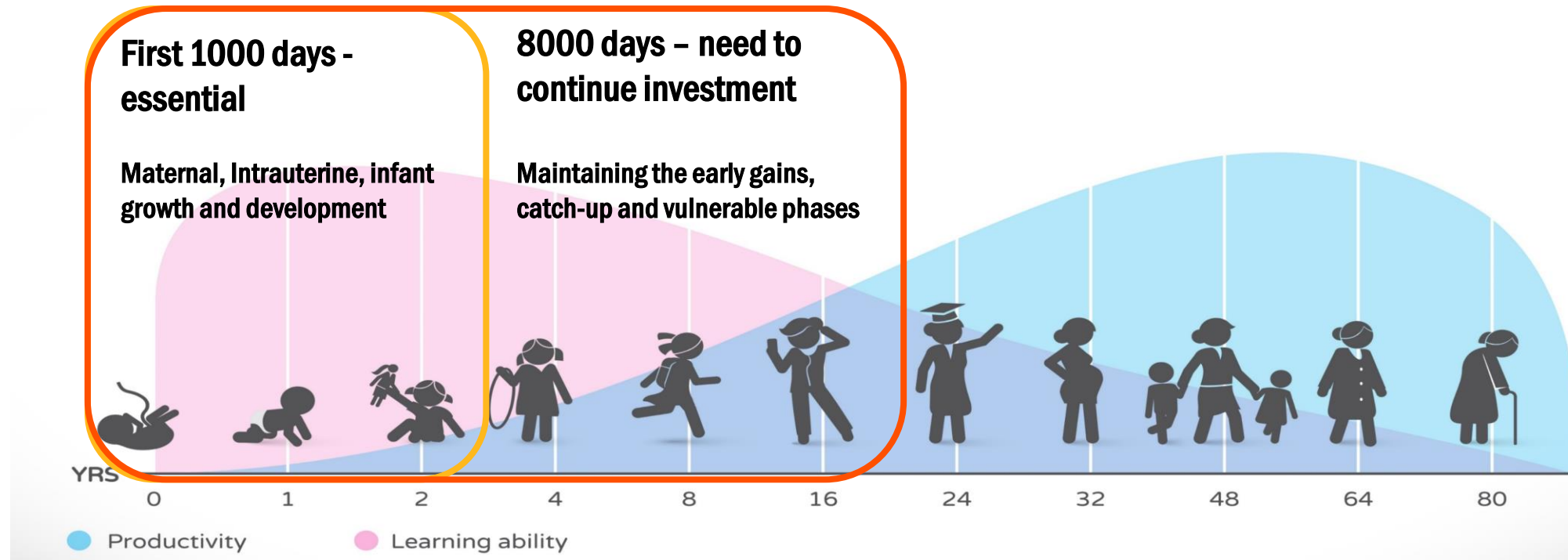
The BOND-KIDS Project

“While considerable attention...justifiably continues to be paid to...“the first 1000 days” ..., significant gaps exist in our understanding of the biology and role of nutrition in the next “7000 days” ... Children of school age (5-19 yrs) represent a range of ...developmental stages [which] demand...a high-quality diet to meet nutritional requirements.”

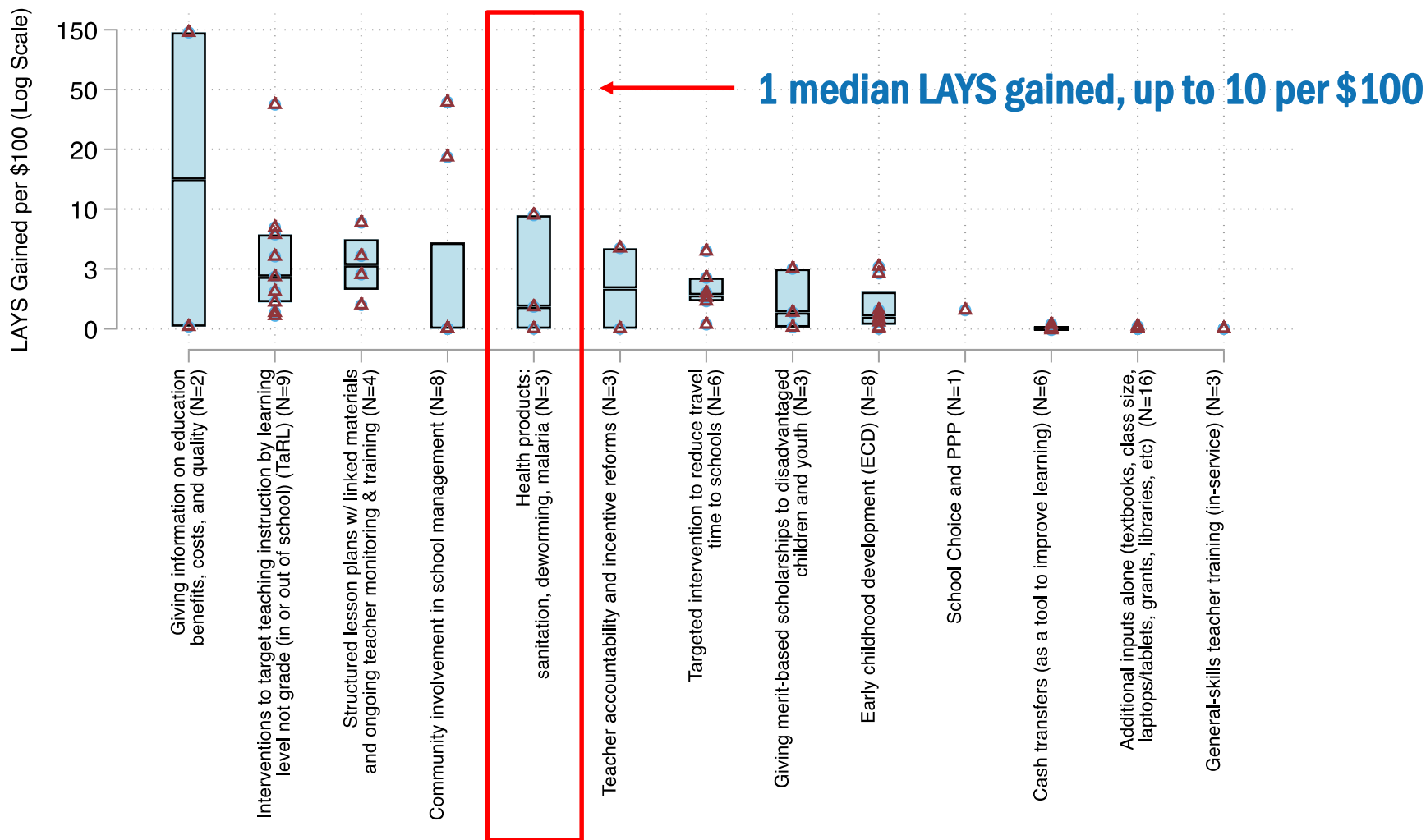
NICHD/NIH; LSHTM; USDA/FAS; Academy for Nutrition and Dietetics, 2023

Supporting mission-critical research along the lifecycle

The importance of promoting health, well-being and education throughout the first 8,000 days of life



Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS)

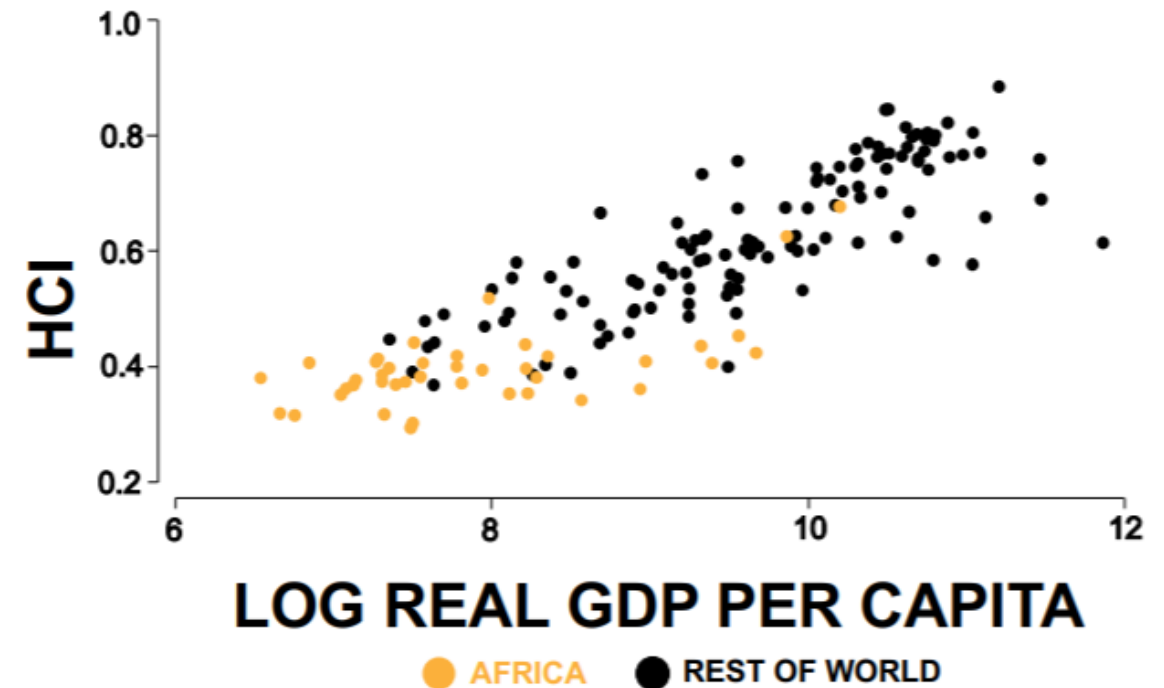


Human capital makes its greatest contribution to national wealth in rich countries

Human Capital Index (HCI)

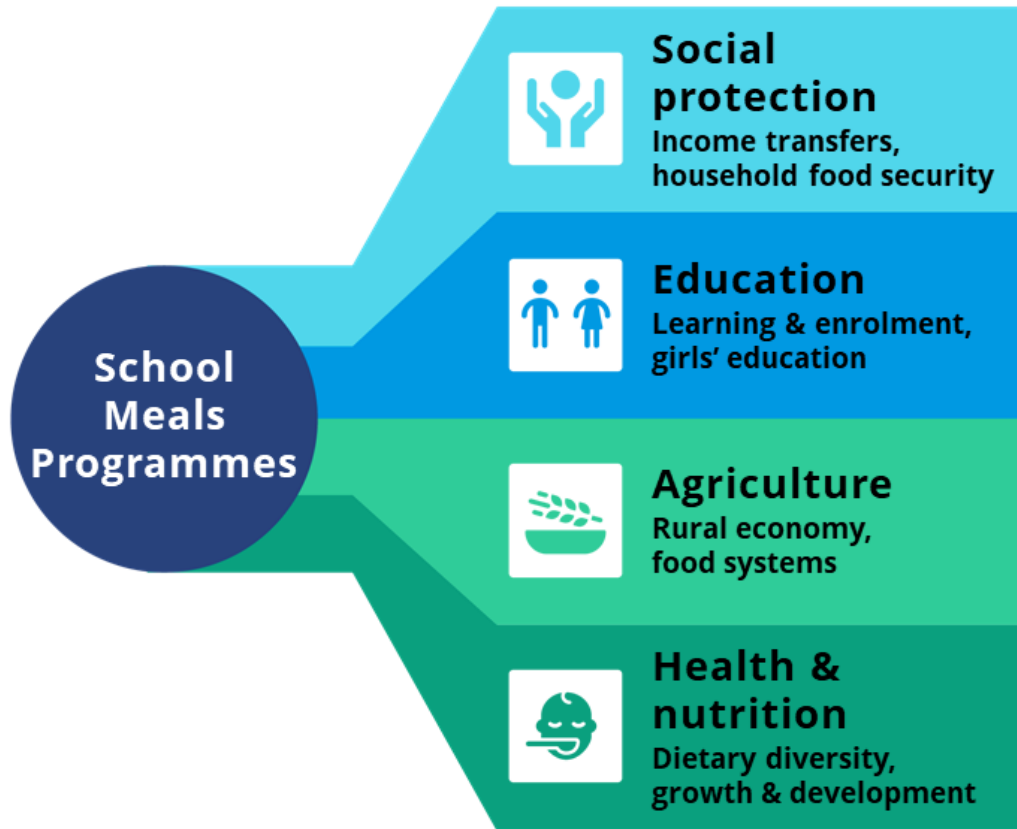
- Human capital is defined as the sum of a population's health, skills, knowledge, experience, and habits and seeks to quantify scale of human capital in all countries
- Human capital - largest component of global wealth, but its contribution to wealth in rich countries (70%) far exceeds that in poorer countries (41%)

Human Capital Index is lowest in Africa



Source: World Bank

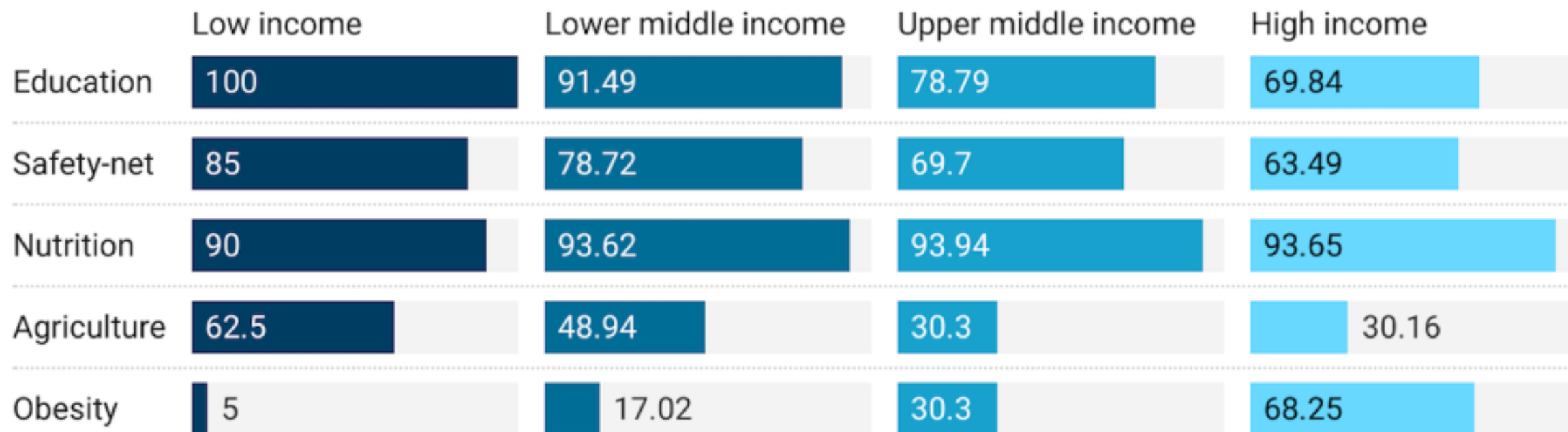
Well designed school meals and complementary programs can have large multi-sectoral returns



- **Large returns, potentially between \$7 and \$35 for each \$1 of investment**
- **Extensive safety net**
- **New markets and jobs for local farmers - 2,000 new jobs created for every 100K children fed**

School meals for pursuing multiple policy objectives

Percentage of countries identifying domain as objective



Created with Datawrapper

Learning from national school meals programmes in Europe



WORKING PAPER

School Meals Case Study: Finland

Prepared by the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition, an initiative of the School Meals Coalition

Submitted by:

Heli Kuusipalo, Senior adviser, Nutrition and health policies, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)
Marjaana Manninen, Senior Adviser, Education, Finnish National Agency for Education (OPH)

November 2023

- Finland operates the longest-running universal free school meals programme in the world, established in 1943

Eustachio Colombo et al. *Nutrition Journal* (2020) 19:61
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12937-020-00579-z>

Nutrition Journal

RESEARCH

Open Access



Sustainable and acceptable school meals through optimization analysis: an intervention study

Patricia Eustachio Colombo^{1*}, Emma Patterson^{1,2}, Anna Karin Lindroos^{3,4}, Alexandr Pariesak⁵ and Liselotte Schäfer Elinder^{1,2}

Abstract

Background: School meals hold considerable potential to shape children's diets and reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE)—in the short and long term. This study applied linear optimization to develop a GHGE-reduced, nutritionally adequate, and affordable school lunch menu. The effects on food waste, consumption and pupils' satisfaction with the meals were evaluated.

Methods: A pre-post design was employed to assess the effects of implementing an optimized lunch menu on daily food waste, consumption, and pupils' school meal satisfaction in three schools (grades 0–9) from one Swedish municipality. A food list containing amounts, prices, nutrient content, and GHGE-values of all foods used for a previously served (baseline) four-week lunch menu was created. Using linear programming, this food list was optimized for minimum deviation and constrained to ensure nutritional adequacy and a reduced climate impact. The optimized food list was developed into a new (intervention) four-week lunch menu by a professional meal planner, following the baseline menu as closely as possible. The baseline and intervention menus were served for four weeks, respectively, with a two week break in between. Prepared, wasted and leftover food were weighed daily by the school kitchen staff during both periods. Interrupted time series analysis assessed mean and slope differences in daily food waste and consumption between the two periods. School lunch satisfaction was assessed with an online questionnaire at baseline and during the intervention.

Results: Optimization resulted in a food list that was 40% lower in GHGE, met all nutrient recommendations for school meals, and cost 11% less compared to baseline. The intervention menu was served as planned, with only minor changes required (for practical reasons). Plate waste, serving waste, consumption and school lunch satisfaction did not differ significantly from baseline, in any of the schools.

Conclusions: The findings demonstrate that school meals can successfully be improved regarding health and environmental sustainability using linear optimization, without negative effects on food waste, consumption or cost. This approach offers the necessary flexibility to tailor menus towards different priorities and could therefore be transferred to other types of meal services.

(Continued on next page)

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- Sweden introduced UFSM two years later (1945)
- Sweden is now a leader in understanding how to optimize the environmental impact of school meals



A global move towards Universal Free School Meals (UFSM)?

Doctopic: Analysis and Interpretation

Comment

[THELANCET-D-23-02013]
[PIL_REPLACE]
Embargo: August 7, 2023—23:30 (BST)

Universal free school meals: the future of school meal programmes?

School meal programmes create one of the world's most extensive social safety nets, with 83% of countries providing school meals to an estimated 418 million children daily.¹ But this ubiquity conceals inequity; on average, 41% of the world's primary schoolchildren are fed, with coverage at about 61% in high-income countries but only 18% in low-income countries where food is needed most.² When schools closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of millions of children worldwide lost access to school meals, and food insecurity rates increased by about 17% worldwide, particularly affecting children in lower-income countries.³ These school closures also highlighted the value of school meal programmes as an investment in students' physical, mental, and cognitive health, refocusing attention on the barriers to receiving school meals, especially stigma when free meals are only available to children from lower-income households.⁴

Several diverse high-income and low-income countries provide free school meals to students from lower-income households while charging other students for meals.⁵ By contrast, universal free school meals (UFSM) is a policy whereby all students within a school, region, or country receive a school meal at no cost. UFSM policies are expanding in some settings to support nutrition and academic equity. For example, in 2022 the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe called on authorities in the UK to address barriers to accessing school meals and to work towards a UFSM provision to reduce childhood poverty and food insecurity.⁶ Similarly, in 2022 the Community Preventive Services Task Force in the USA recommended a UFSM policy, on the basis of scientific research showing UFSM reduce child food insecurity and absenteeism while improving diet quality and academic outcomes.¹⁴ Although UFSM policies have gained attention recently, this concept is not new; multiple countries have implemented UFSM policies over the past 80 years (table).¹⁴

With the rise of compulsory universal education globally, countries have implemented school meal programmes for effective learning, thus supporting educational achievement and the creation of human capital.⁷ Additionally, these policies typically encourage

or require the use of nationally grown foods, thereby supporting domestic agriculture.⁸ UFSM can also support gender equity. For example, in India the midday meal policy was expanded in 2008 as a legally mandated requirement, alongside the introduction of compulsory universal education to promote gender equity and social equality by caste; research suggests this UFSM policy is successfully helping to reduce these disparities.¹⁴ More broadly, a World Food Programme strategic evaluation found widespread evidence of the positive impact of school feeding programmes on gender equity with regards to school enrolment and attendance.⁹

UFSM policies can provide a good return on investment for all students globally.¹⁰ First, research suggests that UFSM policies improve school meal participation among all students, partly due to reductions in stigma that arises when meals are only available to those from lower-income households.¹¹ Additionally, with less staff time needed for processing school meal applications, efforts can be redirected to improving meal quality.¹² Importantly, even as childhood obesity rates increase globally,¹³ UFSM policies are not associated with unhealthy weight gain.³ Healthy foods are often provided by schools and research suggests that in some settings school meals can be healthier on average than meals brought from home.¹⁴ Research has also shown that UFSM policies benefit students academically, potentially through improvements in school attendance and diet quality and reductions in behavioural incidents and suspensions.³

Importantly, UFSM policies are cost-effective. Multiple studies have found that UFSM policies are associated with a lower cost per meal, partly due to economies of scale.³ With UFSM, debt from unpaid school meal balances is eliminated for families.¹⁵ Furthermore, short-term investments in school meals can have long-term economic benefits. For example, US school meal programmes cost about US\$19 billion annually, but provide a \$40 billion return per year in human health and economic benefits through decreases in diet-related diseases, poverty, and food insecurity, and UFSM policies could lead to an additional \$7.5 billion annual return on investment.¹⁶ Additionally, a study in Sweden showed

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)00101-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)00101-6)

www.thelancet.com Published online August 7, 2023 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)00101-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)00101-6)

03/08/2023 19:40:27

- COVID-19 demonstrated the importance of school meals for many children's health, education and wellbeing.
- In response, Universal Free School Meals policies are now expanding in some settings.
- In the **United Kingdom**, the Mayor of London announced that all primary school children in London will now receive a meal at school.
- In the **United States**, 8 states have moved towards providing UFSM in recognition of their positive impact on learning outcomes.

School Meals and Food Systems: Rethinking the consequences, for climate, environment, biodiversity, and food sovereignty

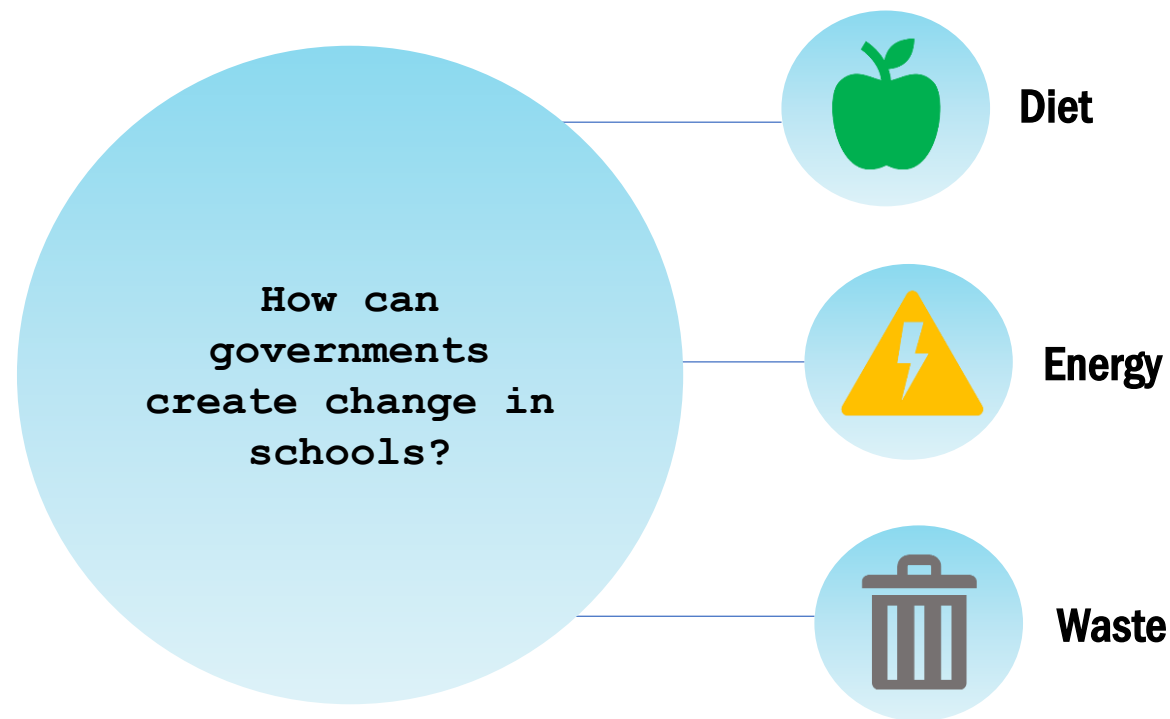
Why Planet-Friendly School Meals?

Food systems are responsible for a **third** of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

School meals programmes are among the **most politically influential** and extensive public food systems.

The **policy levers** are in the hands of governments which are already committed to school food system change.

Changes to national school meals programmes can **create demand** for home-grown regenerative agriculture systems that promote biodiversity, resilience and food sovereignty.





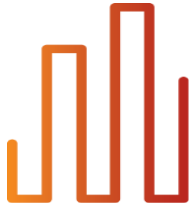
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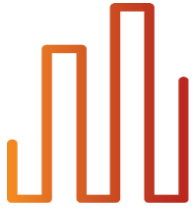
Access for children in need to school meals

Anne-Catherine Guio

Deputy Project Director of the European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN) &
Scientific coordinator of the European Child Guarantee feasibility studies

Towards a greater commitment to the provision of school meals building on the European Child Guarantee

21 November 2023



Mapping of free school meal provision to low-income children



MAPPING

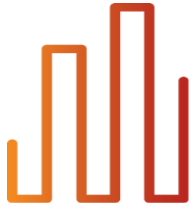
Source: Baptista, I., Guio, A-C, Marlier, E. and Perista, P. (2023), [Access for children in need to the key services covered by the European Child Guarantee: An analysis of policies in the 27 EU Member States](#), European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN), Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Based on National reports prepared by the ESPAN country teams in the 27 EU Member States (MSs).

Objective: Provide an EU comparative overview of the national situations to set a baseline for monitoring the European Child Guarantee (ECG).

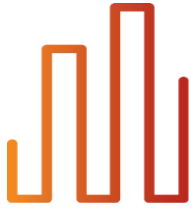
Focus: Access for **low-income children** to each of the 6 services covered by the ECG:

- (i) **effective** and **free** access to high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC)
- (ii) **effective** and **free** access to education and school-based activities
- (iii) **effective** and **free** access to at least one healthy meal each school day
- (iv) **effective** and **free** access to healthcare
- (v) **effective** access to healthy nutrition
- (vi) **effective** access to adequate housing.



FOCUS ON LOW-INCOME CHILDREN

- In the ECG Recommendation, the focus is on “children in need” – *proxied* in the ESPAN report as children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), i.e. children living in a household that is at risk of poverty and/or severely materially and socially deprived and/or (quasi-)jobless.
- AROPE is a statistical indicator... and **low income** is the best proxy to capture access of AROPE children in national policies.
- But the population of AROPE children is wider (in some countries much wider) than the population of low-income children. → This needs to be kept in mind.
- In each country, the criterion/criteria used for defining “low income” is/are the one(s) used in **national policy** related to the service.
- The focus here is on access to school meals **as it is in reality**, rather than what is said in principle in the constitution or in the law. Hence, ESPAN country teams have been asked to identify (if any) the financial and non-financial barriers which, in practice, (may) hinder access in their country.



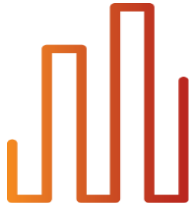
EFFECTIVE AND FREE ACCESS TO SCHOOL MEALS

Three main types of provision in 22 MSs:

- Seven MSs prioritise universal free provision in compulsory education (EE, FI, SE), or at least at some ages (HR, LT, LU, LV)
- Ten MSs target their free provision at (some) low-income children (CY, CZ, DE, ES, HU, MT, PL, PT, SI, SK) → risk of missing many children in need (depending on criteria and take-up).
- Five MSs target some schools/areas (BE, EL, IE, NL, RO) → risk of missing many children in need (poor children in non-poor areas, disadvantaged schools not applying)

Five MSs have no or almost no provision of free school meals (AT, BG, DK, FR, IT).

Compared to the mapping provided in the 2020-2021 ECG Feasibility Study, the situation has improved: some MSs have either launched new schemes for certain age groups for whom no provision existed (e.g. NL) or have extended/ are extending the existing schemes (e.g. CY, HR, IE, LU, SK).



MAIN BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE AND FREE ACCESS TO SCHOOL MEALS

Financial barriers:

- Where access to school meals is not free for all or for low-income children, parental contributions to the cost of school meals may be a significant financial barrier to participation.

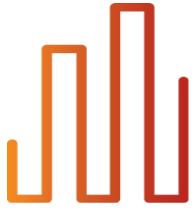
Non-Financial barriers:

Geographical disparity	Limited scope of provision	Lack of infrastructure/ staff/ food suppliers	Lack of full-time classes	Fear about quality/ taste of food	Administrative burden for schools/ low application rate by eligible schools	Administrative burden for parents/ low take-up	Stigma of targeted children
AT, BE, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, LV, RO	BE, CZ, EL ES, IE, RO	BG, ES, IE, IT, HR, HU, NL, SI, SK, PT, RO	AT, CY, DE, IT	EE, HU, IE, PT, SI	CZ, RO	CZ, DE, ES, MT, PL	CY, CZ, DE, HU, LT, PL

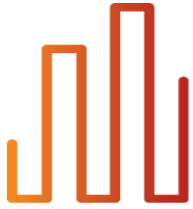


AGE COVERAGE

- In both universal and targeted schemes, there is a tendency in many Member States not to provide school meals in secondary education.
- This raises the question of equity between age groups.
- Whether the aim is to ensure that all children have adequate nutrition, to improve health or to boost educational progress, these objectives can only be achieved if school meals are available across the whole of childhood and adolescence.
- Maintaining the provision until the end of compulsory schooling is essential to maintaining healthy eating habits during adolescence.



Cost estimation of free school meal provision to children “at risk of poverty” (AROP)



ESTIMATION OF THE COST FOR GUARANTEEING ACCESS TO SCHOOL MEALS TO CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY (AROP)

Source: Guio, A-C., Frazer, H. and Marlier, E. (eds) (2021), [Study on the economic implementing framework of a possible EU Child Guarantee scheme including its financial foundation](#), Second phase of the Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee (FSCG2): Final Report, Brussels: European Commission.

Based on: Information on (1) number of low-income beneficiaries of free meals; (2) number of low income children not receiving free school meals; and (3) unit cost for low-income parents.

Example: In a MS where reduced-price school meals are provided at €1 to children living in a household benefiting from the minimum income, and where children from other households have to pay the full price, the estimated cost covers:

- a) the cost of providing **free** school meals to AROP children currently paying **a reduced price** according to the existing national policy; and
- b) the cost of providing **free** school meals to AROP children **who do not benefit from a reduced price**



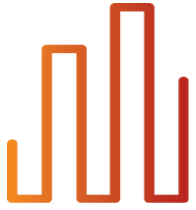
ESTIMATION OF THE COST FOR GUARANTEEING ACCESS TO SCHOOL MEALS TO CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY (AROP)

In Member States where the provision of free (or reduced-price) school meals is targeted at some age groups (e.g. Lithuania, Latvia), this was taken into account.

In terms of the number of days, we computed **two alternative scenarios**:

- one in which school meals are provided for free during **all school days (incl. half days)**; and
- one in which free school meals are also provided **during school holidays** (i.e. during 261 days per year).

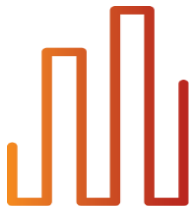
The variations in the national number of school days were taken into account in our computations, based on Eurydice figures.



LIMITATIONS

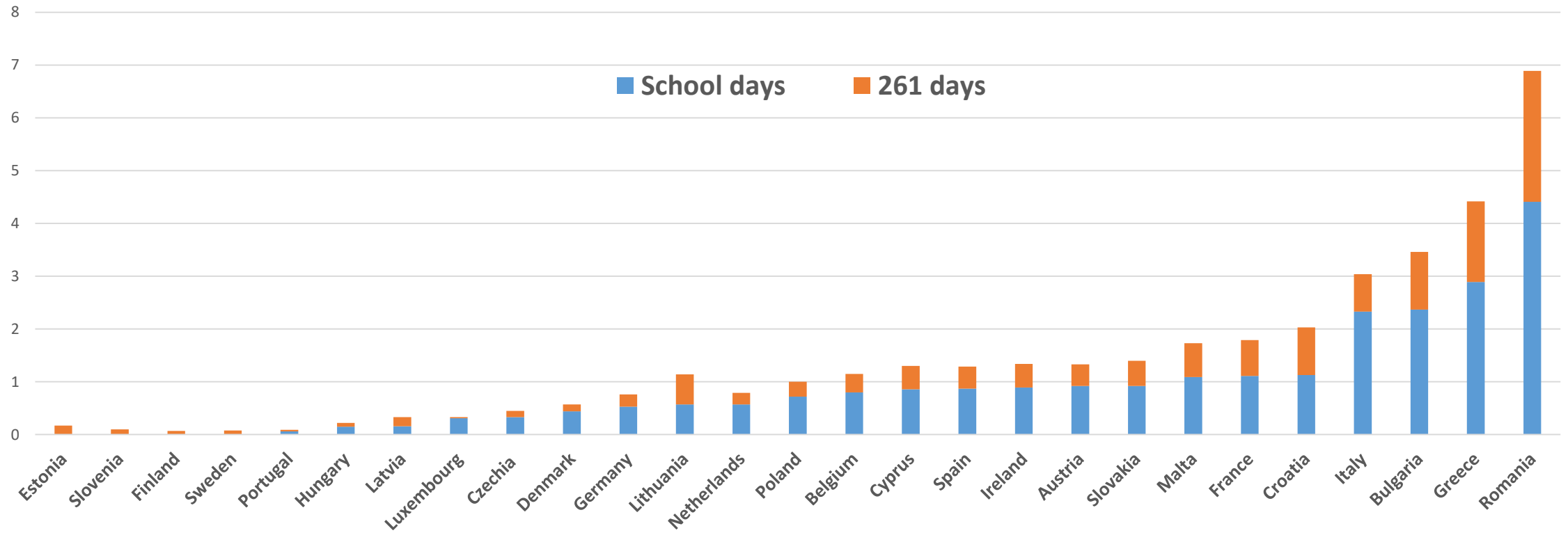
We could **not** take into account:

- the possible cost variations of different types of school meals delivery (kitchen services in the school, provision of meals by school catering companies, new infrastructures needed);
- the implementation cost of targeting poor children, nor the cost of reaching out;
- the possible need to increase the quality of the current school meal provision, and the cost of promoting healthier eating.



ESTIMATION OF THE COST FOR GUARANTEEING ACCESS TO SCHOOL MEALS TO CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY (AROP)

In % of (primary and secondary) education expenditure





CONCLUSIONS

- Many remaining challenges and barriers to access in a non negligible N of countries.
- Many good practices across the EU, lessons to be learned from other countries.
- Positive impact of school meals provision (health, food security, learning, parents' budget and time, healthy eating habits) for a "low" public cost investment
- Universal programmes effectively ensure that all children in need are covered.
- In theory, efficient targeting can reduce costs as compared with universal provision, but in practice there are challenges linked to means-based or rules-based criteria:
 - difficulties in defining and reaching out the "right" targeted groups and in fighting against non take-up;
 - risk of stigmatising targeted children;
 - administrative burden or shame of parents when they have to prove their eligibility.



EU food security

Martin van Driel,
Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development
Unit A1



Food security

*"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to **sufficient, safe and nutritious** food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". (World Food Summit, 1996)"*

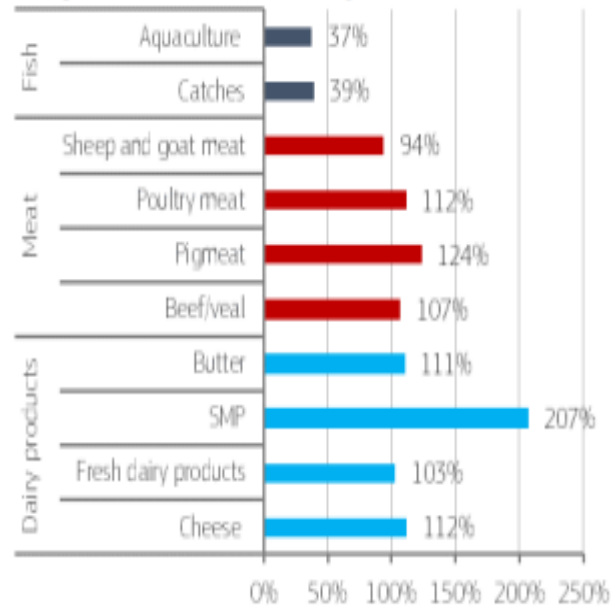


Food security

- *Availability*
 - *Now*
 - *Long term*
- *Access - Affordability*
- *(Healthy) Diet*

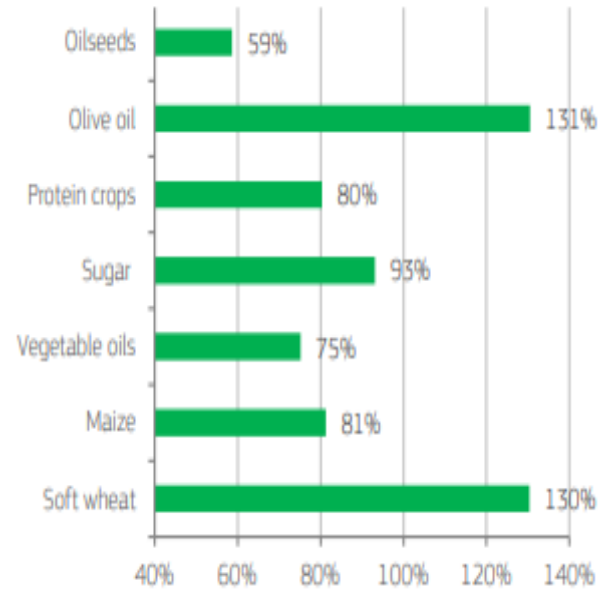
Availability – now - self sufficiency

Figure 4 EU self-sufficiency rates for selected animal products (average 2020-2022) and fish (average 2020-2021)



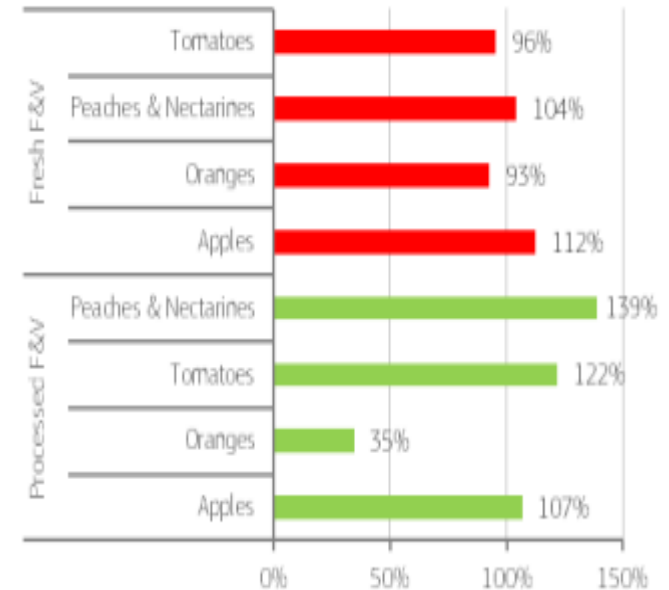
Source: DG Agriculture and Rural Development, based on Short-term outlook and EUMOFA.

Figure 5 EU self-sufficiency rates for selected plant products (average 2020-2022)



Source: DG Agriculture and Rural Development, based on Short-term outlook.

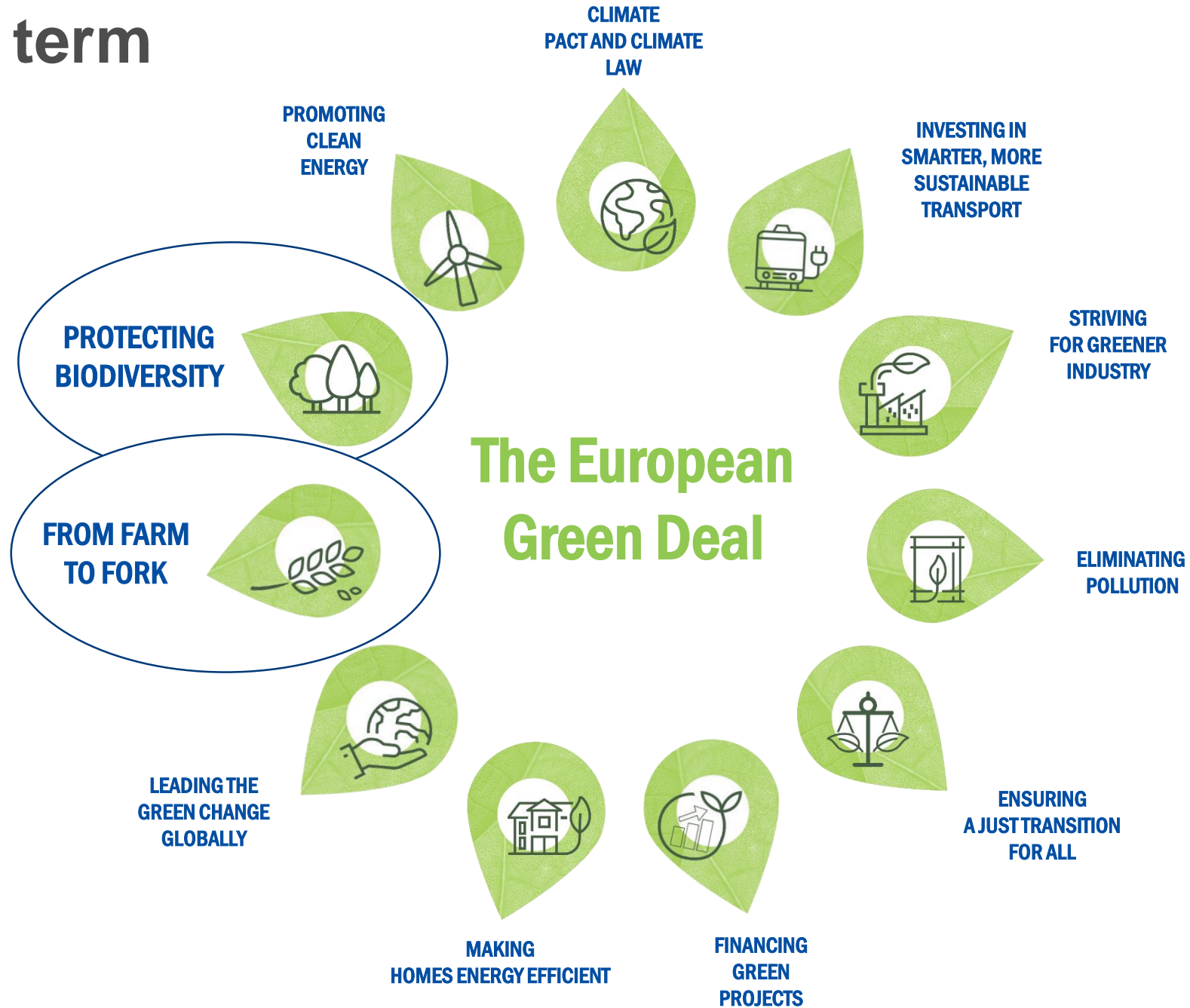
Figure 6 EU self-sufficiency rates for selected fruit and vegetables (average 2020-2022)



Source: DG Agriculture and Rural Development, based on Short-term outlook.



Long term



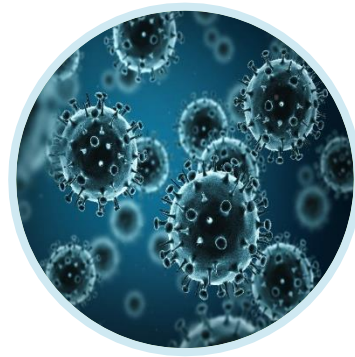
Targets in the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies



Reduction by 50 % of the overall use and risk of **chemical pesticides** and reduction use by 50 % of more hazardous **pesticides** by 2030



Achieve at least 25 % of the EU's agricultural land under **organic farming** and a significant increase in **organic aquaculture** by 2030



Reduced sales of **antimicrobials** for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50 % by 2030

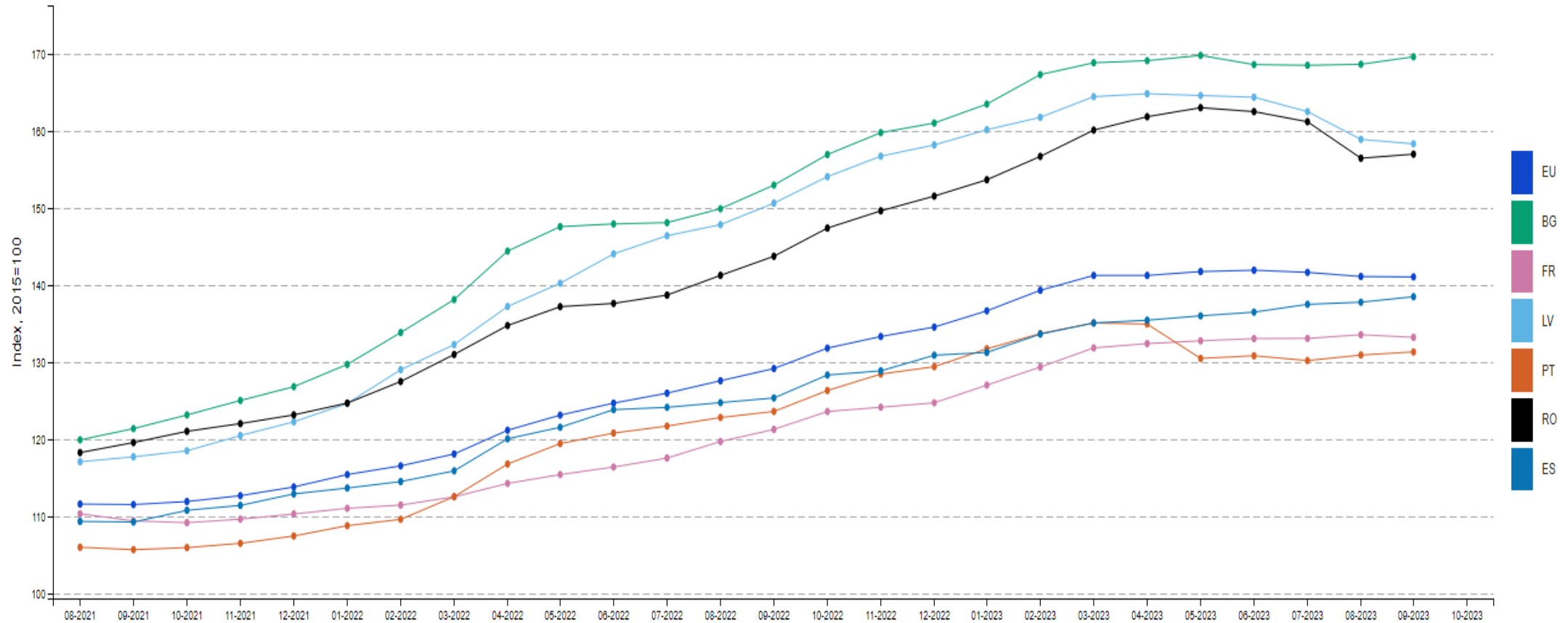


Reduce **nutrient losses** by at least 50 % while ensuring no deterioration in soil fertility; This will reduce use of **fertilisers** by at least 20 % by 2030



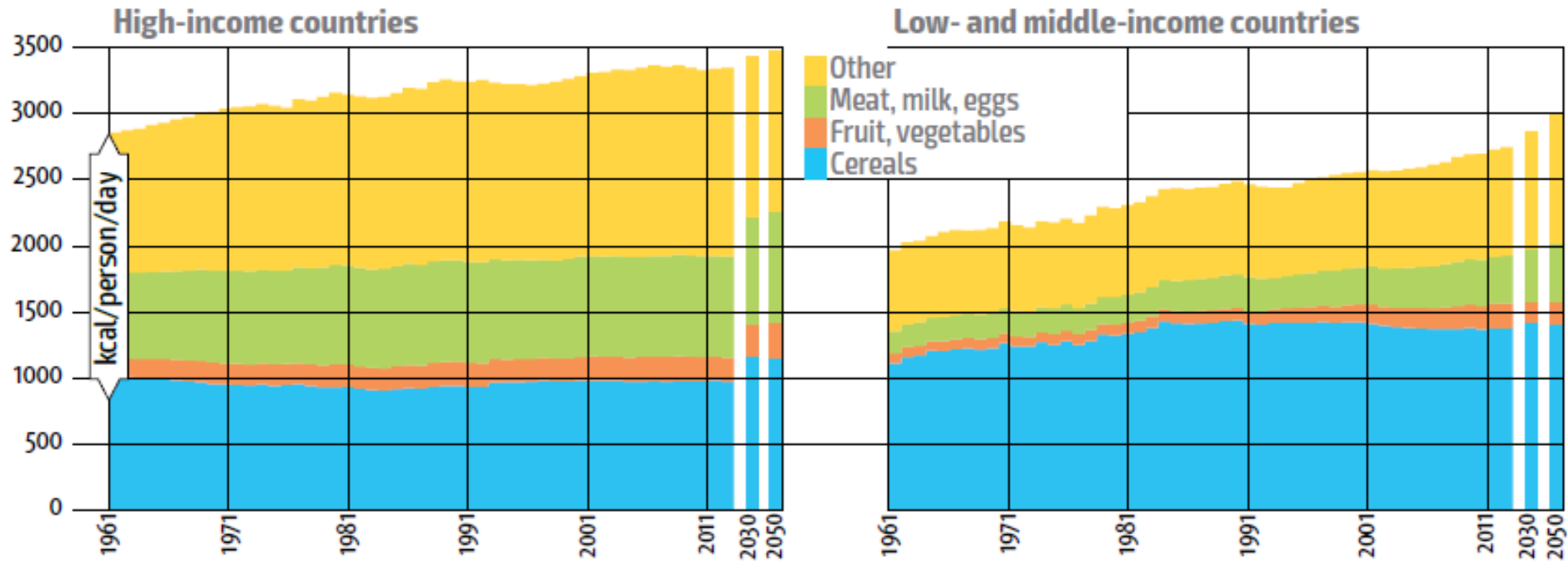
Bringing back at least 10 % of agricultural area **under high-diversity landscape features** by 2030

Affordability: food price inflation



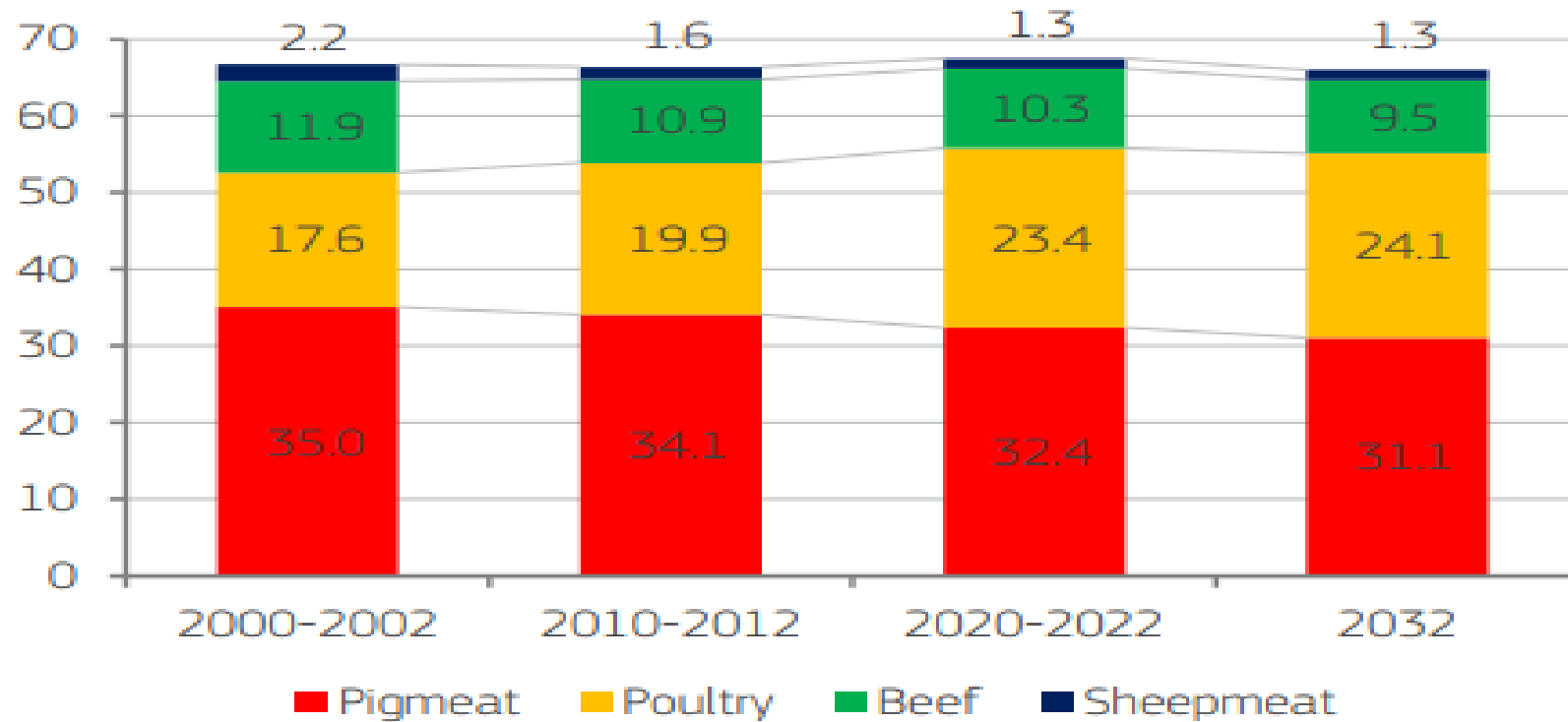
Diets

Figure 9.1a Per capita calorie intake by source, 1961-2050



Meat consumption EU – Outlook 2032

GRAPH 4.3 EU per capita consumption by meat type (kg)



Healthier diets - EU policy

- EU consumption is relatively high in calories and in animal proteins
- A reduction of both would be (1) healthier, (2) beneficial for the environment and (3) provide higher food security.
- In EU Agricultural policy
 - School schemes
 - Promotion schemes
 - Organic production

Farm to Fork Strategy

Key initiatives

Actions to ensure sustainable food production

- Develop a contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security, establishment of European Food Safety crisis mechanism
- Action plan for the organic sector
- Revision of Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive
- Action plan for integrated nutrient management
- Proposal for a new Regulation on plants produced by certain new genomic techniques



Actions to promote shift towards healthy, sustainable diets

- Revision of existing animal welfare legislation



- Proposal for a legislative Framework on the Sustainability of Food Systems
- Review of the EU promotion programme
- Review of the EU school scheme
- minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement to promote healthy and sustainable diets.
- Legislation and targets on food waste



Actions to stimulate sustainable practices by food industry and food service

- EU code & monitoring framework for responsible business and marketing conduct in the food supply chain



- Strengthen the legislative framework on geographical indications



- Enhance coordination to tackle Food Fraud



- Revise EU marketing standards



Thank you

21 November 2023



**School
Meals
Coalition**

Nutrition, Health and
Education for Every Child

Guaranteeing healthy nutrition for all children in the European Union

Toward a greater commitment to the provision of school meals building
on the European Child Guarantee

Presented by: Ms. Flavia Brunetti, Head of Resource Mobilization
Partnerships, UN World Food Programme (WFP) School-based Programmes
and Secretariat of the School Meals Coalition



Now more important than ever: 153 million children are impacted by the rising food crisis.

- The global food crisis has pushed 345 million people to face acute hunger.
- The result: a once-in-a-generation set of conditions creating devastating reversals in the health and wellbeing of children and future generations.
- For this crisis, school meal programmes are one of the most powerful tools we have to protect children and their families.
- By providing the potentially only nourishing meal of the day to children, their health, education and well-being can be protected. The resilience of whole communities to crises can be increased.
- Governments and partners have recognized the need to strengthen and scale these programs.

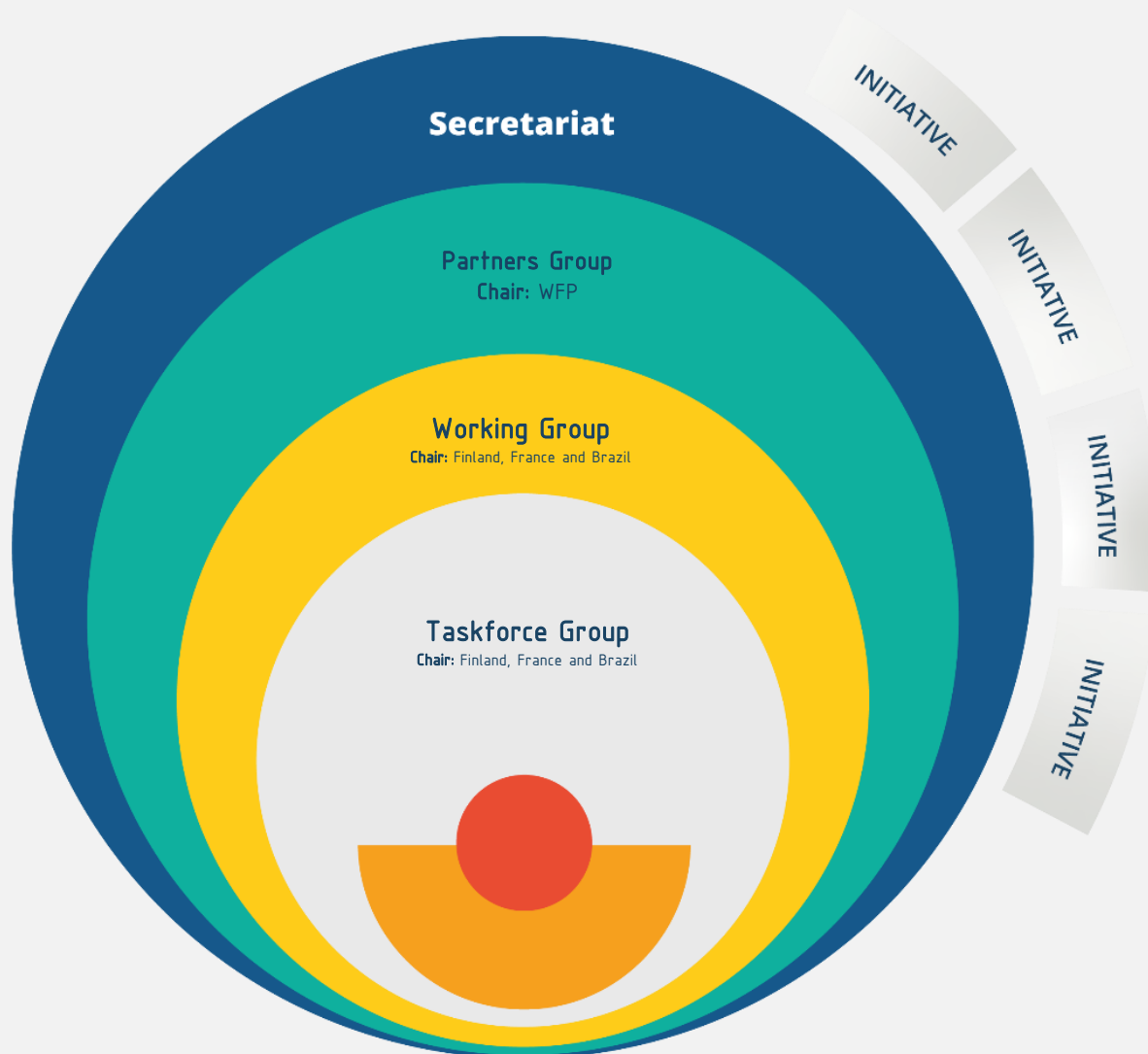


HOW DOES THE COALITION WORK:

[Video](#)



HOW THE COALITION WORKS



Research Consortium
Lead: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine



Sustainable Financing Initiative
Lead: Education Commission



Data and Monitoring Initiative
Lead: World Food Programme



Cities Feeding the Future
Lead: City of Milan



Proposed - International Cooperation Strategy on School Feeding
Lead: Brazil

* Peer to Peer engagement at regional level

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR





418

MILLION
CHILDREN

reached by school meal programmes from
388 million in 2020

4

MILLION
DIRECT JOBS



created, most of them for women



5

BILLION US\$

In additional domestic funding, from
US\$ 43 Billion in 2020
to US\$ 48 Billion

15%

INCREASED
DOMESTIC
FINANCING



by low-income countries,
despite fiscal crunch



EU countries developed ambitious and actionable national commitments, representing a global endeavour to drive concerted action



Government of Finland committed to implement school meals procurement criteria that include environmentally friendly cultivation methods, food safety, nutrition as well as animal welfare and health aspects. Furthermore, Finland will provide technical expertise for countries wishing to develop their school meals programmes.



Government of Luxembourg committed to make school meals more sustainable by promoting 0 km food purchasing to avoid environmental impacts. Moreover, it will increase organic, seasonal and local production as well as diversified balanced diets, with at least 50% local products of which 2/5 stem from organic farming and with 50% of plant-based proteins on all menus.



Government of France – committed to ensuring that school meals contain at least 50 percent sustainable and quality products, with at least 20 percent being organic. Moreover, it has also implemented legislation for a compulsory vegetarian menu every week and will ban plastic containers for cooking, heating or serving school meals by 2025.



Federal Government of Germany pledged to provide €22 million in multi-year funding to support a holistic home-grown school feeding programmes in Laos and Sierra Leone, aiming to catalyze food systems transformation, promote clean cooking technologies and practices in schools and advance gender equity.



Early success thanks to country leadership have also been achieved across the world



President Patrice Talon of Benin announces a national budget commitment of US\$270 million dollars over the next five years to scale up Benin's national program.



President Lula da Silva of Brazil committed to exercising global leadership on school meals through Brazil's active involvement in the School Meals Coalition's Task Force.



President William Ruto of Kenya committed to introduce universal coverage, meaning a scale up from 1.8 million to 10 million children by 2030. In 2023 the President has more than doubled the budget for school meals to ~ US\$35 million.



President Paul Kagame of Rwanda scaled up the national school meals program from 660,000 million children in 2020 to 3.8 million children in 2022.



President Macky Sall of Senegal was the first president to personally sign the declaration of commitment of the coalition and has increased his country's budget for school feeding in 2022.



President Biden of USA of the United States announced in 2022 the provision of US\$1 billion in additional funds to national school meals.



Government of Bangladesh committed to launching a national school meals programme, with a funding allocation of US\$200 million that will reach 3.2 million children across 15,000 schools in high prone areas. There are intentions to scale-up to reach 9.6 million children in 45,000 schools by the 4th and 5th year of the programme.



United Arab Emirates committed to elevate the climate-friendly school meals agenda COP Presidential Action Agenda, including through commissioning an evidence-based *Climate-friendly School Meals: a White Paper* led by the Research Consortium



[National Commitment](#)
examples



Global School Meals Coalition Summit in Paris

- Main Outcomes



The government of Brazil joined France and Finland as a co-chair of the Coalition and the SMC welcomed **9 new country members and partners**



Support to countries for the scale-up of programmes was announced and discussed (IsDB, GPE, Dubai Cares, Rockefeller Foundation)



28 countries reported on progress since joining the Coalition and 6 countries made new commitments



Launch of a new initiative led by municipalities, called "Cities Feeding the Future".



5 regional groupings announced common actions in support of the scale-up of school meal programmes, including the launch of regional networks



The International Parliamentary Network for Education launched a **toolkit to enhance parliamentary engagement** on school meals.



Countries made commitments to use **school meals as vehicles for food system transformation** and to continue this discussion at COP28



More than 100 civil society organizations, led by World Vision and Plan International, issued a **Joint NGO Call to Action** on School Meals



The European commission announced a USD 10 million contribution to the WFP-supported school meal programme in Afghanistan.



Avenues of engagement in the Coalition for EU Member States and partners



Advocate for other EU member states to join and develop bold and ambitious national commitments.



Engage in the Coalition initiatives

- Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition
- Sustainable Financing Initiative
- Data and Monitoring Initiative
- Cities Feeding the Future (Municipalities)

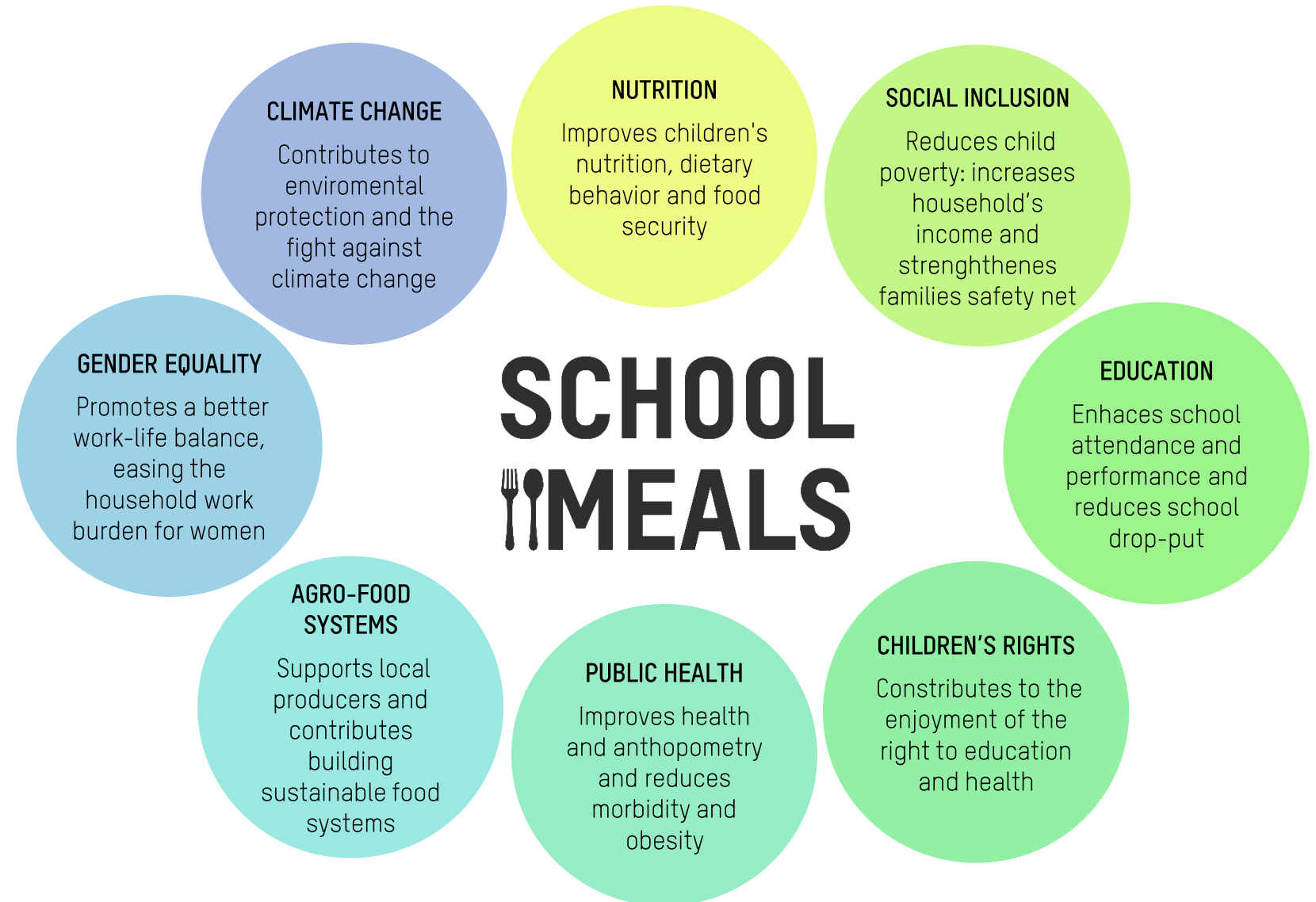


During international fora and regional events such as G7, EU Council, EU Humanitarian Forum, advocate for support to school meals.

Thank you!

WHY SHOULD WE PURSUE A MORE AMBITIOUS SCHOOL MEALS POLICY IN THE EU?

AN OPPORTUNNITY
TO GENERATE A
SYSTEMIC CHANGE



We hope that these good practices can also inspire other municipalities to start their food system transformation journey.

Despite this progress, actors on the ground need to be supported by an enabling policy environment. On this matter, **minimum mandatory sustainability criteria** (as proposed in the [Sustainable Food Procurement Manifesto](#)) act as a critical tool to ensure that entities in charge of food tenders have the same level of ambition when addressing public food procurement. To deliver these criteria, schools should also invest in **effective monitoring systems** while engaging in continuous **dialogue** with suppliers - in particular small-scale farmers - from their region, thereby enhancing urban-rural linkages and resilience.

But public food procurement is only one part of a larger food picture: once high-quality ingredients are carefully sourced, leaving them in the hands of skilled cooks will make a real difference in preparing delicious, healthy, and nutritious meals. On this matter, the Department of Dordogne (France) leads by example by serving 100% local, organic and home-made meals in their school canteens. Dordogne offers fresh and seasonal food made with natural and whole ingredients. Investing in training for kitchen staff and the purchase of equipment was a necessary step to make this transition successful. The kitchen staff is encouraged to interact with children and teach them the importance of cooking and eating consciously. **Lunch time** is now an **educational and enjoyable moment** - something to look forward to. The programme had many positive outcomes on nutrition and the environment, while curbing food waste, creating a better working environment for cooks, benefiting the economy of local small-scale farmers, and saving public money. Luckily, the case of Dordogne is not an isolated phenomenon: other local authorities such as Copenhagen (Denmark) and Malmö and Umeå (Sweden) improved the quality of their school meals by **training their canteen and kitchen staff** to integrate values related to health and environmental sustainability in their menu planning and cooking practices. These best practices show that uplifting the role of cooks by giving them the skills to prepare meals that are nutritionally balanced, respectful of the environment, while being appreciated by children, can nurture a positive food culture among children and their families, in addition to creating a **sense of community around food in schools**.

To support such changes, governments should create and extend **training of cooks** in all canteens, creating linkages with dietitians to reshape the menu together and integrate nutritional and environmental criteria in menu planning. Moreover, public authorities should support the **relocalisation of kitchens in schools** whenever possible, to create a closer relationship between children and kitchen staff.



However, cooks cannot realise this change alone: they need to involve pupils to bring change in and around the school. The SchoolFood4Change consortium is united in its policy ambition to **bring food education into schools and make lunch time an integrated part of the pedagogic mission**. A fact worth considering over the course of a child's schooling, the lunch hour makes up thousands of opportunities to learn. Let's not waste it, let's use it! This is why SchoolFood4Change developed a joint framework called the **Whole School Food Approach (WSFA)**. In short, the holistic WSFA approach can be described as good school food accompanied by food and nutrition education that is well integrated into the curriculum and learned in an enjoyable school food environment. A "WSFA school" creates space for exchange - bringing in caregivers, farmers, local shops, communities, restaurants, and retailers - and shows children how food is grown, processed, and sold, all while engaging them actively in school decisions regarding food. Currently piloted in Belgium and Spain, farm-to-school twinning is a concrete example of the WSFA in practice. The pilots have confirmed that bringing students to farms and farmers to schools helps young people gain practical experience and knowledge of where their food comes from and appreciate the way food is produced.

To mainstream the WSFA across cities and schools, national and federal education governance should recognise and prioritise school meals as part of their mission, and governments should develop national strategies for sustainable food systems that integrate food education. Municipalities, in parallel, can use various levers - including food procurement - to ensure that food education is an integral part of the school curriculum.

In a nutshell, the comprehensive approach outlined in SchoolFood4Change holds the promise of transforming the nutritional landscape for children while addressing broader societal challenges as growing social and health inequalities. **The emphasis on school meals as a tool for change, aligned with food education and innovative sustainable food procurement practices, is a powerful step towards fairer and more sustainable food systems.** Today, we call on governments to create ambitious policy frameworks to drive systemic changes that not only benefit the health and nutrition of current and future generations but also contribute significantly to social justice and sustainability on a global scale.



It's time for a new menu

This project has received
funding from the European
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and innovation programme
under grant agreement
No 101036763.

