

# School Meals Provide and Promote Nutrition



## What we're learning from the Global Survey of School Meal Programs ©



Investing in a child's nutrition not only in the first 1,000 days, but in the first 8,000 days of life is critical for establishing lifelong health and full future potential.<sup>1</sup> School feeding is a powerful tool to meet the nutritional needs of children and adolescents.

GCNF conducted the 2019 Global Survey of School Meal Programs © to establish a comprehensive database of school meal programs. **Eighty-five of the 103 countries that responded have large-scale programs, of which:**



**66%**  
HAD NUTRITION LAWS, POLICIES, AND/OR STANDARDS.



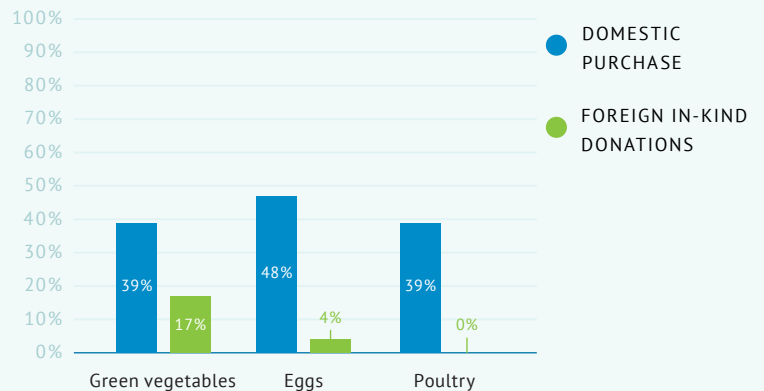
**87%**  
CITED IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENTS' NUTRITION AS A GOAL.



**91%**  
PROVIDED NUTRITION EDUCATION.

## IMPROVING NUTRITION WITH SCHOOL MENU DIVERSITY

**Programs that rely on domestic purchase help support local agricultural development and also more commonly report diverse and nutritious food items:**



## DELIVERING FORTIFIED FOODS THROUGH SCHOOL FEEDING MENUS

Where access to nutritious food is limited, fortification strategies can address hidden hunger.



**68%**  
OF PROGRAMS SERVED FORTIFIED FOODS.

BHUTAN PROVIDED FORTIFIED OIL AND RICE.



**12%**  
OF PROGRAMS SERVED BIOFORTIFIED FOODS.

GAMBIA, MALAWI, MOZAMBIQUE, AND NIGERIA SERVED VITAMIN A-RICH SWEET POTATOES.

1. Bundy, D. A. P., N. de Silva, S. Horton, D. T. Jamison, and G. C. Patton 2018. Re-Imagining School Feeding: A High-Return Investment in Human Capital and Local Economies. Washington, DC: World Bank.

# ADDRESSING OBESITY WITH SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

School meal programs provide a clear opportunity to tackle the global obesity epidemic.



**25%**

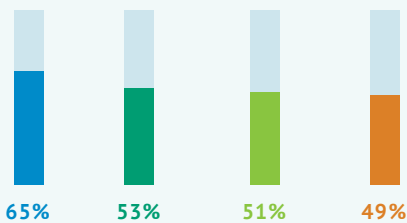
LESS THAN 25% OF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS LISTED OBESITY REDUCTION AMONG THEIR GOALS.



**47%**

OF PROGRAMS HAD NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS INTENDED TO ADDRESS OBESITY.

NUTRITION EDUCATION, HEALTH EDUCATION, FOOD EDUCATION, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION WERE INCORPORATED IN **65%**, **53%**, **51%** AND **49%** OF PROGRAMS, RESPECTIVELY.<sup>1</sup>



Mexico noted that the school environment tends to inhibit progress toward a healthy food culture, while Greece reported that overweight and obesity decreased in schools where the Food Aid and Promotion of Healthy Nutrition Program (DIATROFI) is implemented.



## What's Next?

- Work with GCNF to address the gap in nutrition data and interventions after the first 1,000 days of a child's life, to cover the full 8,000-day continuum.
- Advocate for school meal programs to be included in nutrition commitments within global frameworks like the Global Nutrition Report and the UN Food Systems Summit.
- Work with GCNF to leverage school meal program investments in nutrition-sensitive agriculture to improve dietary diversity and micronutrient adequacy for children.
- Advocate with GCNF to use the power of the school food market and other public food procurement to increase production of sustainable, nutritious, and affordable foods.
- Work with GCNF to show how school feeding can reduce and help prevent child obesity.



Reach out to us at [info@gcnf.org](mailto:info@gcnf.org) to discuss how we can advocate together!

*The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on school systems and deprived vulnerable children of a daily school meal. At the peak of school closures in April 2020, 1.5 billion children were out of school,<sup>2</sup> and 370 million were not receiving the school meals they depend on.<sup>3</sup> The upcoming 2021 Global Survey of School Meal Programs © aims to capture the impact of the pandemic for at least one full school year.*

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1. Food education is focused on facilitating the consumption of food that contributes to one's health and well-being.

Nutrition education is closely related but is focused on nutrition and nutrition-related behaviors.

2. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

3. <https://cdn.wfp.org/2020/school-feeding-map/>