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Home-Grown School Feeding in Ghana

GHANA COUNTRY CONTEXT

Ghana is a lower middle-income and food-deficit country, with an estimated population of 29.6 million, and a gross domestic product per capita of USD 1,340 in 2015.

After a decade of providing hot school meals in the most food-insecure parts in northern Ghana, WFP has handed over assisted schools to the Government and currently works with its Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil, to provide technical support to the national school feeding programme. WFP provides take-home rations to 30,000 adolescent girls in food-insecure areas where girls' school

attendance is low. The Government of Ghana has aspired to improve access to and quality of education especially at the primary school level. Education delivery in Ghana is devolved to various institutions under the Ministry of Education at the regional and district levels, while the Ghana Education Service is responsible for implementing pre-tertiary education programs. The **Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP)**, launched in 2005, serves as the basis for Ghana's social protection strategy, which encourages more children to attend school and have daily access to a meal.



OVERVIEW OF HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING IN GHANA

The GSFP was launched in 2005 with the goals of contributing to poverty reduction and increasing food security in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on hunger, poverty and malnutrition. The pilot programme was introduced between 2005 and 2006, while the first phase of programme implementation at scale took place during 2006–2010. Today, the GSFP is implemented as a social protection strategy across the 216 Ghanaian districts. The programme is implemented by the GSFP National Secretariat under the oversight supervision from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. As an umbrella ministry, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development is able to mobilize other relevant sectors to coordinate on programme implementation through the Programme Steering Committee and the District Implementation Committees.

Targeting takes place at the school level and all children in the beneficiary schools are entitled to a free school meal. All 216 districts in Ghana are participating, resulting in 1,642,271 school children in approximately 4,952 primary schools (38% of the total school population).

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

Ghana's programme pursues the following objectives:

- Reduce short-term hunger and malnutrition;
- Increase school enrolment and retention; and
- Increase domestic food production and the incomes of poor rural households.

To achieve these aims, the programme requires that at least 80 percent of the food used be purchased from local smallholder farmers, putting emphasis on home-grown school feeding.

NUTRITION AND MENU DESIGN

Ghana's school feeding programme seeks to enhance the nutrition quality through effective design of menus, using the Partnership for Child Development's country meal planner tool. For example, the nutritional content of the school menu for the Savelugu/Nanton District was measured with this tool. At the beginning of the school feeding programme, menus were prepared for all regions, based on the Food and Agriculture Organization's minimum nutritional requirements per child per day. Now, a menu plan is designed by the Ghana school feeding programme Nutrition Department with the aim to reflect the local seasonal production and nutritional needs of the school children. Daily food provision is envisaged for 195 school days per year.

WHICH INSTITUTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS ARE INVOLVED?

Home-Grown School Feeding is an integral part of the GSFP, which uses a third-party decentralized operating model, which is shown in Figure 1 with a diagram of Ghana's supply chain operating model. The model usually involves the services of caterers, where district authorities contract small catering companies – often managed by women – to provide school meals to individual schools, and pay them a flat rate per child per day.

Caterers who are awarded contracts by the District Assembly procure, prepare and serve food to school children. The advantage of this modality is that schools can focus on their educational duties rather than food preparation. It also creates jobs for smallholder farmers and local communities.

To further sustain the decentralization system of governance in the country, the government has mandated the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to oversee the implementation of the GSFP.

Smallholder farmers are fully integrated into the supply chain, providing food either directly to the caterers or through a trader in exchange for cash. Funds are transferred from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development sent to the various District Assemblies, who finally disburse payments to caterers based on the number of days for which funds have been received. Caterers can then purchase food either directly from smallholder or farmer organizations or from traders, who in turn source food from smallholder or farmer organizations,

from larger farmers or from wholesale markets at the regional, national or even international level.

The institutional coordination system of Ghana’s school feeding programme is also highly elaborate in comparison to similar programmes from other countries. From national to district levels, Ghana’s school feeding programme has well-established systems of coordination such as the reporting mechanism present with caterers, the school meals committee, the Ministry of Education and the District Assembly.

Programme managers can influence and monitor the flow of funds and food, which includes:

- The contract with the catering company, outlining the likely size of and timetable for payments;
- The numbers of meals served to students, captured by the programme’s monitoring system;
- The bridging loan from the financial institution to the catering company; and
- Payments made to the catering company.

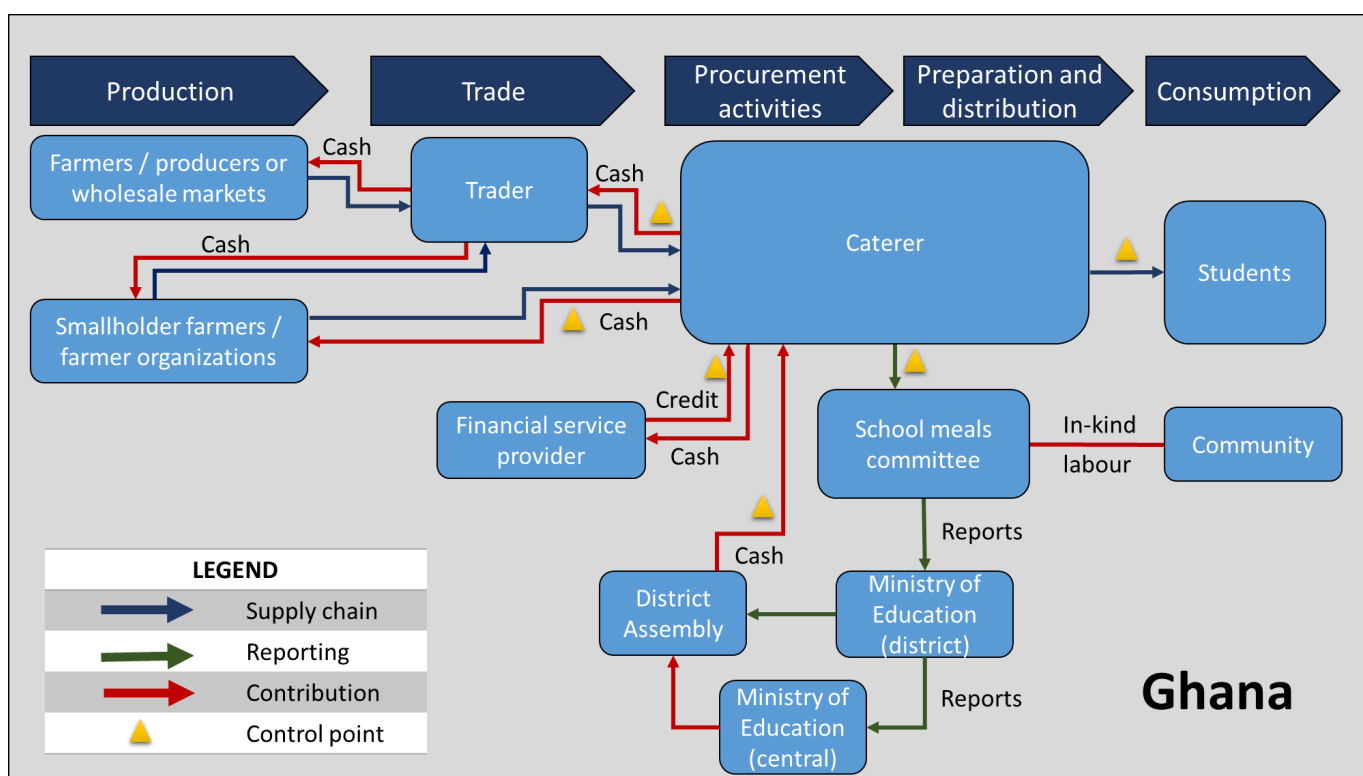


Figure 1: Supply Chain for Ghana’s Decentralized Operating Model

With the food procured, caterers then prepare and distribute meals to children in school. In addition, partner organizations provide technical inputs to the farmers and relevant institutions in order to strengthen the productive sector.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure effective programme implementation, the Government of Ghana established an agency, the Ghana School Feeding Programme National Secretariat, with a team of professionals to oversee the implementation of the programme. Thus, whilst policy oversight is provided by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, implementation is performed by the National Secretariat.

In collaboration with the District Assemblies, the Secretariat is responsible for coordinating the targeting and selection of schools. They are also responsible for the development programme (usually bi-annually) and coordinates partner relations and external projects by development partners related to Ghana's school feeding

programme. Lastly, there are regional coordinators and monitoring officers across 10 regions of Ghana to ensure effective coordination and monitoring.

PROGRAMME IMPACT

The positive impact the Ghana school feeding programme has had on the country cannot be understated. A study conducted by Ernst and Young in 2012 showed that the programme, since its inception, has been able to contribute to the attainment of some of the Millenium Development Goals and other sector policies. The programme also helped increase school enrollment while at the same time improving child nutrition and local agriculture production.

In the future, Ghana may consider a more strategic approach to linking smallholder farmers to their school feeding programme, with the involvement of government agencies and development partners. There is significant amount of documented knowledge and experience that exists in Ghana, showcasing the potential for an improved programme with better dialogue and planning.



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