

School Meals Coalition: Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child ***Declaration of Support***

We the leaders of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO) express our strong support to the School Meals Coalition, being established on the occasion of the Food Systems Summit 2021.

School meal programmes do more than provide food, particularly when they are linked with other health and nutrition interventions that further contribute to children's growth, development and learning¹, such as food education, creating healthy food environments, deworming and access to clean water and sanitation. These integrated school health and nutrition programmes are impactful interventions to support schoolchildren and adolescents' growth and development. They can help to combat child poverty, hunger and malnutrition in all its forms. They attract children to school and support children's learning, and long-term health and well-being.

These programmes can also promote gender equity by supporting girls to attend and graduate from school, reducing the risk of child marriage, early pregnancies and gender-based violence. School meal programmes can also provide children with opportunities to learn about nutritious diets and healthy and sustainable lifestyles. They can serve as platforms that enable a more holistic approach to child well-being through the integration of nutrition, education, health, and social protection interventions.

Schoolchildren are not the only ones who benefit. School meal programmes can also serve as springboards for agri-food systems transformation. Where possible, they can use locally grown food, supporting national and local markets and food systems, improving opportunities for smallholder farmers and local catering businesses, many led by women.

These integrated programmes are impactful and efficient interventions that can contribute to human development and the achievement of at least seven of the SDGs, including those related to poverty (SDG1), hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG2), health (SDG3), education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), sustainable consumption and production (SDG12) and partnerships (SDG17).

To ensure that every child has the opportunity to grow, learn and thrive, a group of countries is forming a School Meals Coalition. The goal is to improve or restore national, sustainable school meal programmes, and strive for every child to have the opportunity to receive a safe, healthy, nutritious meal in school by 2030. The coalition aims to do this by:

- Restoring what we had (by 2023) by supporting all countries to re-establish effective school meal programmes and repair what was lost during the pandemic.
- Reaching those we missed (by 2030). The most vulnerable, in low and lower middle-income countries, were not being reached even before the pandemic.
- Improving our approach (by 2030) by improving the quality and efficiency of existing school meal programmes in all countries by facilitating a healthy food environment in schools and promoting safe, nutritious and sustainably produced food, linked to local production where appropriate.

To support the achievement of these objectives, the five organizations commit to:

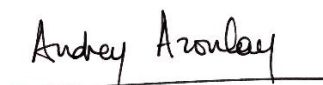
1. **Working together to support governments determine their priorities and commitments towards the Coalition's goals and objectives** and assist government counterparts in working towards their implementation and achievement.

¹ WFP. 2021. State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/state-school-feeding-worldwide-2020>

2. **Supporting countries to re-open schools safely and restore access to integrated school meal and school health and nutrition programmes.** The agencies will provide guidance and technical support to national planning and implementation processes, as part of overall public health, nutrition and education planning processes.
3. **Providing operational support, depending on agency mandate, to scale up integrated school meal, health and nutrition programmes in low- and lower-middle income countries,** where vulnerable school-age children are not yet supported, with a special focus on the 73 million children living in extreme poverty that do not have access to such programmes.
4. **Providing policy and technical guidance to enhance the quality of national programmes by ensuring the complementarity of interventions and inter-sectoral collaboration.** Agencies will jointly support the assessment, design and/or revision of national policy and legal instruments based on a holistic approach. In countries with emerging capacities, the agencies will work across ministries and sectors to ensure the best package of health and nutrition interventions is provided to children, focusing on those that need it the most. Where possible, agencies will support governments to better connect school procurement to local production, prioritizing healthier food, and providing adequate support to smallholder farmers and businesses.
5. **In partnership and coordination with the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition led by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine support the collection, analysis and dissemination of more and better data and evidence** on school-age children and adolescents' health, nutrition and wellbeing, including the development of validated metrics, indicators and necessary tools for countries to monitor progress, measure effectiveness and impact and take corrective action for school meal integrated programmes.
6. **Ensuring that each agency reflects the health, nutrition and educational outcomes of schoolchildren and adolescents as a programmatic priority** in internal policies and strategies, providing guidance to their regional and country teams to work jointly in support to national and local governments. Each agency will take responsibility for ensuring that the wellbeing, health and nutrition of school-aged children is reflected in international sectoral priorities (especially the agricultural, education, food security, health, nutrition and social protection sectors).
7. **Jointly advocating and calling for increased investment** for enhancing the quality and reach of school meal and school health and nutrition programmes, as central to the growth, development, learning and wellbeing of schoolchildren and adolescents.



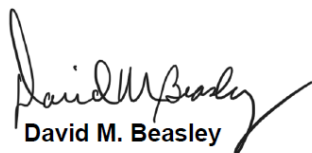
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