



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES

CHANGING LIVES

# Healthy and nutritious meals for children at schools

## WFP goals to ensure healthy school meals

Since 2013 the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has been supporting the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to optimize the national school meals programme (NSMP) by upgrading a school menu from 'bun and tea' to hot and diverse meals for primary schoolchildren.

The programme aims to ensure that all primary schoolchildren have **access to safe, adequate and nutritious food** all year round.

Under the Country Strategic Plan 2023-2027, WFP together with the Government will focus on strengthening capacities of national counterparts towards a sustainable NSMP that can potentially expand to preschool-level and reach adolescents.

These activities will aim to strengthen technical and financial capacities of schools and involved institutions, and pilot innovative solutions to enhance sustainability. Schoolchildren and their caregivers will continue to benefit from activities promoting healthy diet and hygiene.

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Malnutrition is not only hunger associated with a lack of calories, but also micronutrient deficiencies, vitamin deficiencies, and under/overweight and obesity. Malnourished children are caught in a vicious cycle of constant exposure to disease, as well as disrupted growth dynamics, reduced learning ability, and reduced future productivity in adulthood.

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## Why are school meals important?

School meals programme is a **social protection measure for children from vulnerable families**. Children from families, who cannot afford nutritious meals at home during a difficult period of time, receive hot nutritious meals at schools.

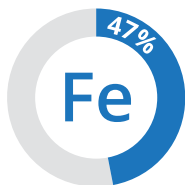
Healthy and diverse school meals can contribute to preventing malnutrition and non-communicable diseases and **maintaining the health** of the younger generation. Diverse and nutrient-rich dishes (soups, porridges, salads,

fresh pastries, vitamin-rich drinks, etc.) and fortified food items provided at schools can **improve micronutrient intake among children**.

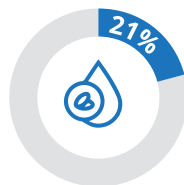
School meals contribute to a healthy learning environment, preventing loss of concentration and improving performance.

The NSMP creates **additional jobs** for kitchen workers and cooks. School meals provide new opportunities for local companies to sell agricultural products to schools.

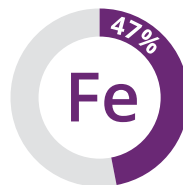
### Nutrition status of children in the Kyrgyz Republic according to the National Integrated Micronutrient and Anthropometric Survey (2022)



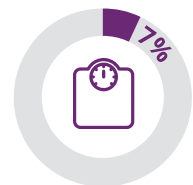
47 percent of children aged 6-59 months have iron deficiency



21 percent of children aged 6-59 months have anemia



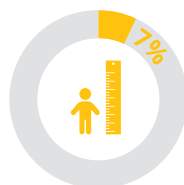
47 percent of adolescent girls have iron deficiency



7% of children 6-59 months are obese



30 percent of children aged 5-9 years have iron deficiency



7% of children 6-59 months are stunted



Only 26 percent of children aged 6-59 months achieve minimal dietary diversity



Only 2 percent of households consume adequately fortified flour

Other micronutrient deficiencies (folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin A, etc.) have also a high prevalence among these groups

## Planned activities in 2023-2027 to optimize the National School Meals Programme (NSMP):

1. WFP will roll out hot meals in up to **additional 300 schools** to support the Government expansion of the enhanced NSMP through provision of modern kitchen equipment, fortified wheat flour and capacity strengthening of school cooks, staff and partners.
2. WFP will carry out canteen infrastructure repair works for 30 emergency schools.
3. WFP will provide policy, technical and advocacy support to further improve regulatory framework, M&E system and continue the institutionalization of the programme.
4. WFP will support an assessment to inform how capacities of institutions on the NSMP should be strengthened, including through robust M&E systems. WFP will provide technical support to district and school staffs on efficient **implementation of the NSMP**.
5. WFP will support the improvement of centralized and decentralized **procurement systems** for school meals, including through advocacy for changes in legal frameworks, as well as support farm-to-school linkages with logistics hubs and warehouses.
6. The **home-grown school meals** will be piloted to further improve the nutritional value of school dishes with locally produced foods and establish better linkages between local farmers and procurement for school meals.
7. WFP will support the implementation of a sustainable model for Urban School Meals by investing in an Urban School Meals Innovation Center and piloting Central Kitchens to reach up to 20,000 school children.
8. WFP will support the financial sustainability of the NSMP model by **promoting income-generating activities** for schools and the parents (e.g., school gardens and farms, green-houses, municipal bakeries, etc.)
9. WFP and partners will advocate for scaling up of the Government feeding models to **include secondary schools and improve preschool meals models**.
10. Technical support (capacity strengthening, fundraising, partnerships) will be provided to up to 18 schools that have the potential to replicate optimized meals models independently from WFP.
11. As a basis for advocating greater resources for the NSMP and making it financially sustainable, WFP will conduct a **cost analysis** to develop a resource mobilization strategy for the Government and advocate that the NSMP budget is indexed to the inflation rate annually.
12. A **gender-transformative social behavior change communication approach** will be applied to schools and communities to enhance awareness of healthy diet and its importance for children.



# Achievements



## The number of schools supported by WFP to provide hot school meals has increased

More than **850 schools** have rehabilitated infrastructure of school kitchens and canteens, including cold and hot water supply, sewerage and more, with the financial support from local authorities, parents and local sponsors (~KGS 500,000 soms per school). These schools received more than 30 different types of modern kitchen equipment and 4.5 thousand tons of fortified flour and replaced “bun and tea” with hot, diverse and healthy meals to schoolchildren in grades 1–4, meeting their energy and nutrition needs. In total, around 65% of schools in the country provide hot meals.



## More diverse and nutritious meals for children

WFP jointly with the Service and Industry Foodservice Institute (SIFI) developed a Cookbook for school meals with **over 100 recipes** and ‘Healthy Recipes for families’ Book, taking into account children’s needs for energy and nutrients, local traditions and food availability in the regions.

The energy value of school meals increased from 335 kcal to over 550 kcal. **The consumption of micronutrients has improved:** school meals meet the recommendations of the Ministry of Health on the intake of iron and protein.

Parents’ satisfaction with school meals has increased from 26% before the programme to 98% in 2022.



## Increased knowledge on healthy diets

WFP jointly with SIFI developed **information materials** (videos, vlogs, brochures, games, tales, webinars, study materials) on healthy eating for schools and an **informational web portal** on school meals to raise public awareness about the programme. Every year, primary schoolchildren and their parents take part in various activities that promote a healthy lifestyle.



## Improved regulatory framework

In 2019, the Government passed the **law on school meals**, which ensures the right of every primary schoolchild to receive safe, diverse, and nutritious school meals. The following by-laws and necessary regulations were developed and endorsed as well as Cooks positions in schools, Control Commission to monitor school meals quality, Sanitary and Nutrition Standards and Rules for school meals, the responsibilities of district-level authorities on supervision over school meals.



## Increased national capacity to manage the programme

Over 1,500 school cooks were **trained on school meals** preparation, nutrition standards, sanitary norms, and monitoring of quality, safety and efficiency. More than 9,000 stakeholders passed training on various aspects of school meals preparation, sanitation and monitoring.

**The Republican Competence Centre** to train school cooks was established. The Center aims to strengthen capacities of school personnel and improve school meals’ quality, safety and efficiency.

**Guidelines for procurement specialists** were developed to effectively organize procurement of the quality food products

**School menu calculator software** was developed to quickly and effectively develop school menu as per nutrition standards

**Logistics Centre** (including Mobile laboratory, an isothermal van, and processing equipment) was established in Kadamjai district of Batken oblast in order to create better linkages between schools and local smallholders for the needs of the Programme. It will also have a function to facilitate product quality certification coming from local food producers.