

FROM FARMS TO SCHOOLS

WFP SCHOOL KITCHEN MODEL IN LEBANON

Background and Purpose

As part of the WFP school meals programme, WFP and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) established the school kitchens model in 2021 to enhance the nutritional content of meals provided to primary school students. Under this model, each student is provided with a daily meal consisting of a **traditional cold sandwich**, complemented with a serving of **fresh fruits or vegetables**. The programme is implemented by WFP cooperating partners who initially procured the food ingredients centrally from their contracted wholesaler while 110 mothers of children enrolled in the programme prepare the cold meals. This personal investment of mothers ensures that every meal is prepared with care.

By 2023, the school kitchens model had expanded to serve **11,000 students across eight schools**. In March 2023, WFP introduced the **Satellite School Kitchen concept**, extending the meal production of existing school kitchens to cater to additional students in nearby schools. The women caregivers operating the school kitchen received training on food safety and kitchen management skills, with a monthly stipend, providing economic opportunities for women who often face unequal access to income-generating activities in the regular job market.

The school meals programme sources food commodities locally through a centralized procurement process supporting the local suppliers and economy. **Ninety-two percent of student-consumed food is procured locally**, out of which **around 70 percent is local fruits and vegetables**.

Aiming to optimize the procurement process of the school kitchens model and to stimulate the local economy during the peak of the economic crisis, WFP launched, in May 2023, a pilot project in two schools to explore the benefits of decentralizing the procurement process of school meal ingredients. In this model, **schools directly procure meal ingredients from nearby WFP-supported retail shops** using electronic Cash-Based Transfer (CBT) cards, enabling transparent monitoring and recording of all transactions.

The decentralization of the procurement process has yielded dual benefits: boosting local retailers' business and income while streamlining delivery, resulting in reduced lead time and delivery costs of fresh produce to the schools. Following the successful pilot implementation, during the 2023-2024 school year, the Farm to School model was expanded to reach nine school kitchens serving 17 schools and locally purchasing school meals ingredients from six WFP-contracted retailers.

Furthermore, as part of its commitment to develop comprehensive resilience-focused interventions and promote the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) model, WFP launched, in 2024, a new pilot project aimed at **connecting school kitchens with local agri-food businesses** supported by the [WFP Food System Challenge](#) or other emerging local agri-businesses. Among the potential suppliers identified, four small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were considered. **Agrifresh, a WFP-supported SME**, was selected to provide fresh produce to designated school kitchens in 2024. WFP plans to build the capacity of the remaining three SMEs to meet WFP's food safety and quality standards, facilitating their integration with the school kitchens by the end of 2024.

School Meals Menu

Pitta bread filled with
dairy products (Labneh,
White Cheeses, Kaval Cheese)

Pitta bread filled with
hummus

Fresh **fruits and
vegetables**



Selection Methodology of Food Suppliers

Based on comprehensive assessments conducted by WFP, six WFP contracted shops and four small agri-food businesses were selected to be part of the Farm to School model.

Selection criteria of WFP-contracted shops included:


- Proximity to the schools
- Long history of working with WFP
- Strong track record in food safety and quality
- High level of responsiveness to WFP's requirements


As for the selected agri-food SMEs, key criteria included:

- Capacity to produce the required quantities of food items supplied by WFP to its school kitchens while maintaining existing customer relationships and preserving market share.
- Proximity to schools and the ability to ensure consistent and timely delivery.
- Commitment to sourcing raw materials from local producers and farmers.

Implementation Framework

The implementation framework for the Farm to School model involves **three key levels**:

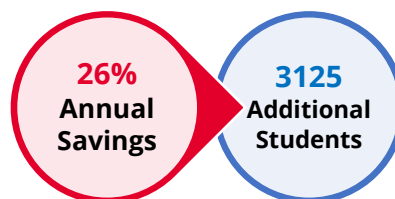
 **The school and supplier level:** the school, with the support of the cooperating partner, submits weekly orders for food items to the supplier, whether it is a retailer or an agri-food producer, who then delivers the requested items to the school. The school's director or health educator ensures the compliance of the delivered items with WFP's food safety and quality assurance guidelines. The payment is directly made to the supplier using a dedicated card issued by WFP. The card is kept under the school's custody while the card PIN is securely entrusted to the cooperating partner's focal point managing the kitchen operation.

 **The central level** comprises WFP country office and MEHE: WFP issues the card and loads it with a monthly value corresponding to the planned number of meals to be distributed. WFP Country Office reconciles the redeemed cash values at month-end, matching them with the school kitchen meals distributed and the remaining inventory.

 **The governorate level** involves WFP cooperating partner and WFP field offices: both entities conduct routine monitoring visits to the school kitchens, while a third-party company engaged by WFP conducts regular Food Safety and Quality Assurance inspections in the school kitchens to ensure high standards are maintained.

Process and Cost Analysis

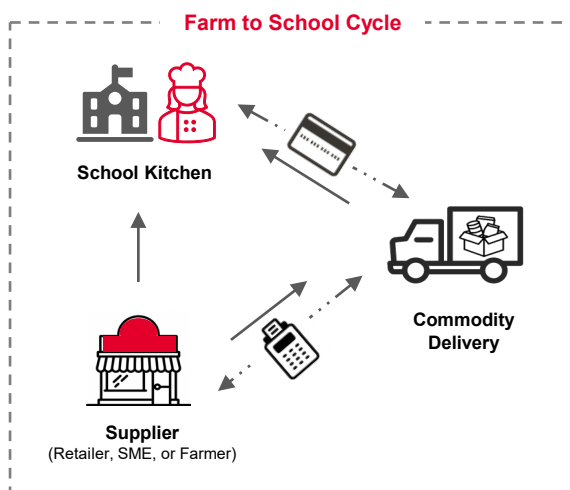
During the pilot period of the Farm to School model linking WFP-contracted retailers with two schools, the weekly commodity cost comparison between the decentralized retail procurement model and the centralized procurement model revealed an overall cost saving of US\$ 2,600 per week after the introduction of the retail-based model. The cost saving allowed the program to extend its support to an **additional 624 students** through the Farm to School model.



Projecting the analysis on all nine established school kitchens, the total savings of the school kitchens operating under this new model amount to US\$ **364,374**, representing an annual **reduction of 26 percent**, which can support **3,125 additional students** through this model.

Additionally, the pilot of the Farm to School model shows significant advantages in comparison to the centralized model:

- **Efficiency of deliveries:** Shorter delivery distance from the retailer's branches (10 to 15 minutes).
- **Flexibility in replacing damaged products:** instant replacement of damaged items on the same day instead of waiting for the second day.
- **Higher involvement of the schools:** especially in the payment process
- **Digitalized reconciliation of purchases and payments:** no manual data entry with zero errors and total reconciliation within 48 hours with automated waybills and a redemption report generated from the POS machine.
- **Instant payment to the retailer** upon food delivery without the need to wait for the completion of the monthly reconciliation.

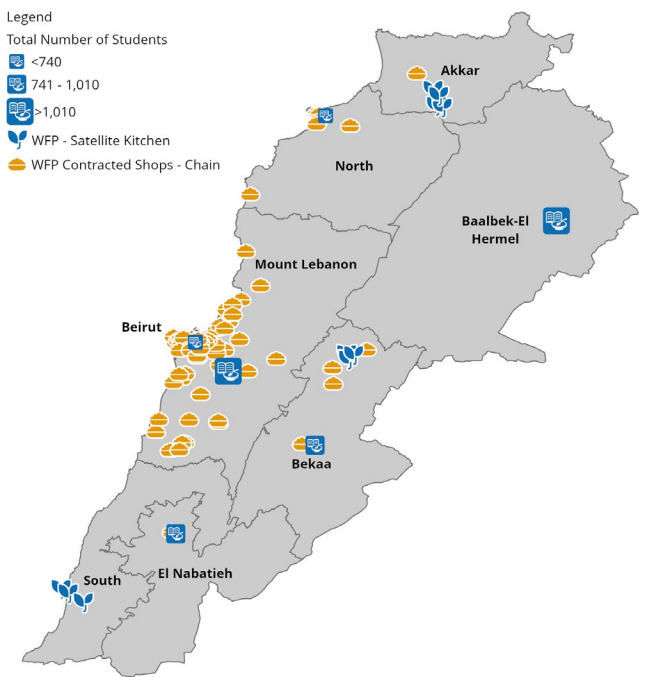


Risks and Mitigation Measures

WFP identified several risks that could affect the efficient implementation of the Farm to School model and developed mitigation measures for each risk.

Risks	Mitigation Measures
School closure due to teachers' strikes or weather conditions	Notification of fresh food supplier about possible closure 16 hours ahead of delivery time Orders of non-perishable items can be cancelled on the delivery day
Inadequate stock of an ordered item from the same brand	Identify in advance a list of approved brands by item to replace non-available brands when needed
Delayed delivery of commodities by the supplier	The kitchen's focal point shares the delivery time and location with the supplier 48 hours ahead of the delivery The supplier provides details about the delivery truck and contact information to the kitchen's focal point 24 hours ahead of the delivery
Suspension of payment due to technical issues with the POS	A delivery note shall be filled as an alternate option. Once the issue is resolved, an electronic invoice will replace the delivery note.
Delivery of defective or non-compliant commodities with food safety or quality standards	Contract a supplier with high safety standards that applies supplier vetting procedures in place The delivery driver shall stay on-site for one hour, allowing the kitchen's focal point to inspect the goods and facilitate the replacement of any non-compliant item before departure.

Legend
Total Number of Students
740
741 - 1,010
>1,010
WFP - Satellite Kitchen
WFP Contracted Shops - Chain



Outlook 2024 and Beyond

In line with its strategic direction to strengthen food systems in Lebanon by sourcing locally produced commodities for the school feeding programme, WFP plans to extend its support to two additional WFP-supported businesses in 2024, helping them obtain ISO 22000 certification, a prerequisite for supplying food commodities to the schools under the Farm to School model. Thus, WFP will be supporting these SMEs and building their capacity to meet the required standards across three key pillars:

- **The companies' infrastructure**, which includes upgrading the internal layout to optimize the flow of materials, products, and personnel while installing physical separations between reception and processing areas to mitigate potential contamination risks.
- **The companies' essential programs**, such as the establishment and monitoring of water supply systems, the maintenance of air quality and ventilation systems, the introduction of proper systems for waste disposal and cleaning utensils, the development of a preventive maintenance program for each machine for the monitoring and control of food safety hazards, the testing of incoming material requirements to assess quality and safety parameters.
- **The companies' standard operating procedures** across various areas, including production, warehousing, management, operations, human resources, and documentation control.

Additionally, WFP has identified a fourth agrifood business specializing in hummus production, slated to attain ISO 22000 certification in 2024. Upon completion of the certification, this company will be integrated into the school feeding program.

In 2024 and beyond, WFP aims to expand connections with more local women-led businesses and farmers including SMEs and retailers led by women, to broaden the supplier network for the school feeding program. Prioritizing local suppliers ensures wider distribution of financial benefits, stimulating job creation throughout the food system, from producers to retailers. This approach also contributes to reducing environmental impacts by promoting the development of local supply chains.