



NUTRITION AND FOOD QUALITY

Lessons from Peru

Strengthening linkages between social protection and food systems to enhance nutrition



World Food Programme

**SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES**

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Executive Summary

Peru has been classified as an upper-middle income country since 2008 but has seen a resurgence in monetary poverty since 2017¹, alongside persistent socio-economic inequalities. These have resulted in a lack of access to nutritious and diverse diets in both urban and rural areas, contributing to a population that now experiences the double burden of malnutrition. Specifically, Peru is characterized by a continued anaemia prevalence that is higher than the rest of the region, concomitant to significant overweight and obesity rates².

In response, the World Food Programme (WFP) has adopted a Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) approach, leveraging social protection institutional demand, national policies and legislations to enhance the food system's contribution to improved nutrition. This has been implemented by leveraging the national school feeding programme *Qali Warma*³ along two cases: 1) combating anaemia through large-scale rice fortification, and 2) improving diets and contributing to the prevention of overweight and obesity through local food procurement.

Background

Peru, a middle-income country with a population of 32 million (10 million in Lima), is renowned for its rich cuisine and biodiversity, encompassing the Andes, Amazon, and coast. Its GDP expanded by 3.3% in 2024, leading the region's growth, together with Brazil⁴.

Climate events significantly impact agriculture and rural populations. Nutrition challenges include the double burden of malnutrition and significant inequalities, particularly in rural areas.⁵ Notably, while chronic malnutrition stands at 8.1% in urban areas, it reaches 20.3% in rural regions. National anaemia rates are particularly high, reaching 43.1% in children under 3 and 21% in women.

On the other hand, the prevalence of overweight and obesity is above the regional average (8,6%) and has progressively increased over the last 10 years. During 2022, the excess weight among children under 5 years old was 8.4% (6.4% overweight and 2.2% obesity). This prevalence increases significantly in the group of children aged 5 to 9 years old, reaching 37.4% (21.8% overweight and 15.6% obesity), while among adolescents, excess weight affects 25% of the population (19.5% overweight and 5.5% obesity).

Thanks to the positioning of WFP as a key food security and nutrition partner following its 2018 Country Strategic Plan (CSP) launch, over USD 48 million were successfully mobilized from the government to combat child anaemia.

¹ National Institute of Statistics and Informatics. 2018. Evolución de la Pobreza Monetaria, 2007–2017 (from Peru Country Strategic Plan 2023-2026).

² Peru Upcoming Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) 2025; UNICEF, Childhood overweight on the rise, Report 2023; [World Bank Data, 2019](#)

³ The Government of Peru is currently in the process of redesigning its National School Feeding Programme

⁴ [El Perú fue uno de los países con mayor crecimiento en América Latina en 2024 - Noticias - Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas - Plataforma del Estado Peruano](#)

⁵ Peru upcoming Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) 2025; Peru Country Strategic Plan (CSP) 2023-2026.

Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) Approach

WFP supports the Peruvian government mainly through a Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) strategy. This essentially considers research, development, and innovation (R&D&I) as key contributors for advocacy, necessary to trigger programmatic shifts and improve public policies. It starts with the generation of evidence at regional and local level (e.g. generation of models, methodologies, procedures and instruments, pilots). If the evidence generated has provided positive results, these will then inform the development of national level policies with WFP support, that will then come back to the regional and local level with the provision of normative guidance and budget allocated by the national government for specific interventions. This approach has been leveraged and used also to advance the work around nutrition sensitive social protection (NSSP).



Comprehensiveness: Leveraging institutional demand and legislation to enhance the food system's contribution to improved nutrition

Two prominent cases demonstrate how the CCS model is used to enable the Peruvian National School Feeding Programme *Qali Warma* to serve as a key platform that contributes to enhancing human capital, improving diets, supporting national efforts to reduce anaemia, and strengthening the local economy through the inclusion of smallholder farmers.

Case 1: Rice Fortification Law to Combat Anaemia through the National School Feeding Programme

In 2017, WFP began working to introduce fortified rice into national social assistance programmes that reach millions of Peruvians, particularly those in the most nutritionally vulnerable and poorest segments of society. Given that rice was already included in these programmes, replacing it with fortified rice was seamlessly achieved, capitalizing on existing distribution systems and requiring minimal behaviour change from participants. This approach not only facilitated the improvement of nutritional adequacy, but also minimized additional implementation costs.

The introduction of fortified rice in *Qali Warma* school meals began with a small-scale pilot and later scaled-up, establishing institutional demand. This incentivized the private sector to produce and market fortified rice, while prompting the government to establish micronutrient standards for fortified rice. This was part of WFP broader strategy in Peru, which initially generated demand by introducing fortified rice in social assistance programmes reaching millions

of people, and subsequently encouraged the private sector to respond to this new demand. WFP provided support by implementing capacity-building activities to medium- and large-scale millers while coordinating efforts to meet the demand created by social assistance programmes. This helped pave the way for the enactment of a mandatory fortification law for all rice intended for human consumption in 2021, resulting from WFP support to the public sector in advocacy and drafting. The approach was strongly effective, as the law was enacted just four years after fortified rice was first piloted in school feeding programmes.

Most crucially, the demand generated by the *Qali Warma* school meals platform, which targets school-aged children, significantly boosted national production of fortified rice. This has helped create a favourable environment for other programmes to consider the inclusion of fortified rice in their baskets, particularly those focused on critical life stages such as the “1000 days” (from conception to the child’s second birthday) – a period when effective nutrition interventions have the highest potential for long-term impact. In 2022, fortified rice was included nationwide in *Cuna Mas*, a large-scale early childhood development programme which provides meals to children under 3 living in poverty at early childhood day-care centres.

hot meals and local purchases from family farming are currently being conducted by WFP under the *Qali Warma* school feeding programme, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, and local authorities, funded by WFP’s Changing Lives Transformation Fund (CLTF) and the private sector. Using the CCS model, the pilot is now going through the evidence generation phase to evaluate the potential introduction of hot meals and transition towards a home-grown school feeding programme (HGFSF). This approach involves purchasing the food provided from local smallholders, primarily fruits, vegetables, and Andean grains, ensuring the inclusion of fresh food in school meals. This initiative is expected to promote healthier diets among students as well as boosting the economic prosperity of smallholder farmers, a systemically disadvantaged group in the country.

Case 2: Public Procurement Law to Improve Students’ Diets and Support Smallholder Farmers through the National School Feeding Programme

In 2021, a Public Procurement Law was endorsed, mandating state entities to purchase at least 30% of their food from family farming. Besides having contributed to the development of the law, WFP is now supporting its implementation. Two pilot projects for



Key Lessons

- The **launch of the CSP** in 2018 allowed WFP to position itself as a strategic partner in food security and nutrition to the government, enabling **the mobilisation of both government and private resources**.
- A **WFP restructured office and the recruitment of personnel** with expertise in public policy, government, communications, media, advocacy, and nutrition, bolstered the success of these initiatives.
- **Starting on a small scale within existing programmes** allows the public and private stakeholders to "see to believe," effectively testing the feasibility, cost-effectiveness, acceptability, and sustainability of the proposed programmatic shifts.
- **High-level advocacy to governments** is crucial to scale-up interventions to address nutritional policy challenges with WFP technical support.
- **Generating demand first**, through social assistance programmes, **and then supporting the private sector to meet the new demand**, is a successful strategy to stimulate the market and to advance lawmaking.
- **Platforms that do not target the "1000 days" specifically, such as schools, can be leveraged to enable a conducive environment to tackle malnutrition also for this group** (Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women and Girls and Children under the age of 2)

Way Forward

Moving forward, WFP Peru aims to continue leveraging its strategic partnerships, scaling successful interventions, and further integrating its efforts with national policies

to sustainably improve nutrition and food security outcomes across the country. Furthermore, the national government has recently announced that, over the year 2025, *Qali Warma* will be substituted by the communitarian school feeding programme *Wasi Mikuna*. This will advance the local purchase of fresh food, will include a greater involvement of parents, and will go even further by including a nutritional objective in its design. WFP is providing a continuous support in this transition and will continue to do so in the implementation of the new programme.



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