



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

# School Food and Nutrition **Global Action Plan** 2022–2026



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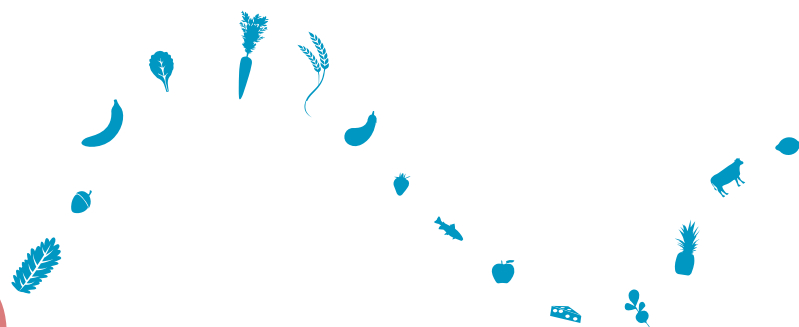
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# Foreword

Poor diets and malnutrition have adverse effects on children's health and ability to learn, reducing their productivity and earning potential and, with it, their country's human capital. Current agrifood systems are not delivering healthy diets for all and are marked by critical inequities along the production-consumption continuum – from stark disparities in the distribution of inputs, services and opportunities among food supply chain actors, to restricted access to nutritious foods in vulnerable groups (FAO, 2020a).

School-based policies and programmes have been recognized globally as a means of addressing some of these interconnected issues. Yet, despite commendable progress by many countries, challenges persist that impair their success towards achieving improved nutrition in the long run. These include limited capacities, insufficient budgetary allocation, absence of institutional coordination, lack of transparency and accountability, and low participation from families and children themselves. The current COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions have placed further obstacles on these programmes' ability to reach those children that depend on them the most (WFP, FAO and UNICEF, 2020).

In 2019, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) adopted a corporate framework for holistic action in school food and nutrition (SFN), as a direct response to the call for better nutrition and agrifood system transformation in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025 (FAO, 2019a). To this end, FAO has been supporting countries in the development and implementation of policies, legislation and programmes to improve school food environments, ensuring consistency between healthy and culturally appropriate available foods at school, and school-based food and nutrition education to improve behaviours and practices. FAO also works with local smallholder producers and wider institutional structures so that the circuits for delivering foods at school are shorter, more inclusive and more sustainable.

As part of its mandate, FAO champions the realization of the right to adequate food for all schoolchildren, as well as – more importantly – of their right to claim it. Thus, we have made a strong commitment to sensitize all actors on the need for healthy diets that will ensure a better quality of life, and for better opportunities for children in the medium and long term; we have also undertaken to help governments, parliamentarians, civil society, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders to collectively achieve this task.

The SFN Global Action Plan, like the Framework from which it builds, is underpinned by a holistic approach that strategically addresses gender issues, poverty, foodborne diseases and other factors that often impair environmental, social and economic development in schools. At the same time, it is anchored in international human rights structures.

The Plan seeks to consolidate and guide FAO's synergistic efforts, setting out priority and concrete outputs to be achieved by 2026. It is the result of a collective effort, and includes contributions from the different technical units of FAO across global, regional and country levels. The SFN Global Action Plan identifies key areas that frame FAO's main activities in support of school food and nutrition, and are aligned with the Organization's new nutrition strategy. Most importantly, the implementation of this plan will be guided by the FAO

Strategic Framework (2022-31), for the achievement of the four betters (better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life), and with a main focus on the programme priority area – Nutrition for the most vulnerable.

This Plan comes at an opportune time, when action for agrifood system transformation is more necessary than ever and the role that schools play in this transformation is high on the global political agenda, as reflected by the recent establishment of the Global School Meals Coalition as follow-up to the United Nations Food Systems Summit (2021). The proposed actions, therefore, have been defined strategically to support these global and country priorities, with a vision of safeguarding a better world for our children and future generations.



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Regional inputs and other technical revisions were provided by (in alphabetical order): Cristina Alvarez, Manuela Cuvi, Jorge Ulises Gonzalez, Yenory Hernández, Fransén Jean, Kankou Kaba, Mary Kenny, Warren Lee, Luisa López, Aniko Nemeth, Joseph Nyemah, Israel Ríos, Ilean Russell, Dia Sanou, Najla Veloso and Margret Vidar.

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>HGSF</b>	home-grown school feeding
<b>NGS</b>	nutrition guidelines and standards
<b>SFN</b>	school food and nutrition
<b>SFNE</b>	school-based food and nutrition education
<b>TOC</b>	theory of change
<b>UN</b>	United Nations

# Background

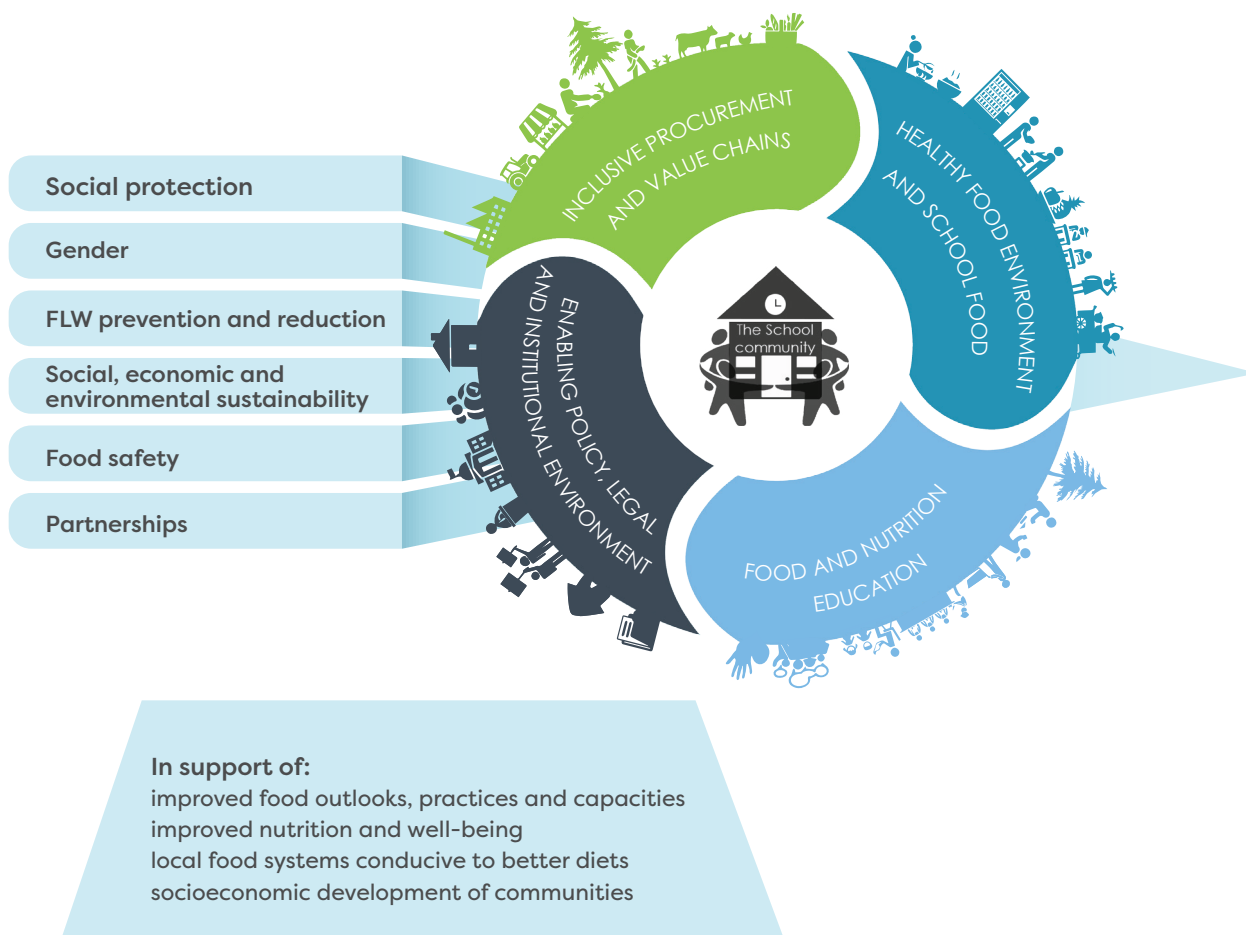
In 2019, FAO launched a corporate School food and nutrition (SFN) Framework to create a strategic, systematic and efficient way to guide its support, mobilize resources and work with partners.

The Framework aims to support governments and institutions in developing, transforming or strengthening school-based or school-relevant policies, programmes and other initiatives for an enhanced and synergistic impact on diets, child and adolescent nutrition, community socio-economic development and local agrifood systems. As such, it contributes to the Organization's mandate and builds on its areas of expertise and comparative advantage.

The SFN Framework is based on a systemic approach that leverages on and purposely creates synergies between four main areas of work that are at the heart of the Organization's mandate and capacity. These four areas are:

- ✓ promoting a healthy school food environment and adequate and safe school food;
- ✓ integrating effective food and nutrition education throughout the school system;
- ✓ stimulating inclusive procurement and value chains for school food; and
- ✓ creating an enabling political, legal, financial and institutional environment.

Figure 1. FAO's areas of work in school food and nutrition



Source: FAO. 2019. School Food and Nutrition Framework. Rome.

The implementation of the FAO SFN Framework will result in:

- ✓ a harmonized technical approach to SFN across FAO, including within headquarters, regional and country offices;
- ✓ effective capacity and commitment to SFN across FAO;
- ✓ a coherent portfolio of financial engagements supporting SFN with measurable results at regional and country levels;
- ✓ a strengthened global evidence base in the area of SFN; and
- ✓ widened partnerships and an increased leadership role at country, regional and global level in supporting SFN.

This Global Action Plan is the companion of the SFN Framework and provides the roadmap to attain the abovementioned expected results. This plan is therefore directed primarily to FAO staff in headquarters and regional and country offices. It is also intended to guide the expectations of all FAO Member States and governing bodies of the Organization, and to guide concrete collaborations with partners in this area of work.

# I. The School food and nutrition theory of change

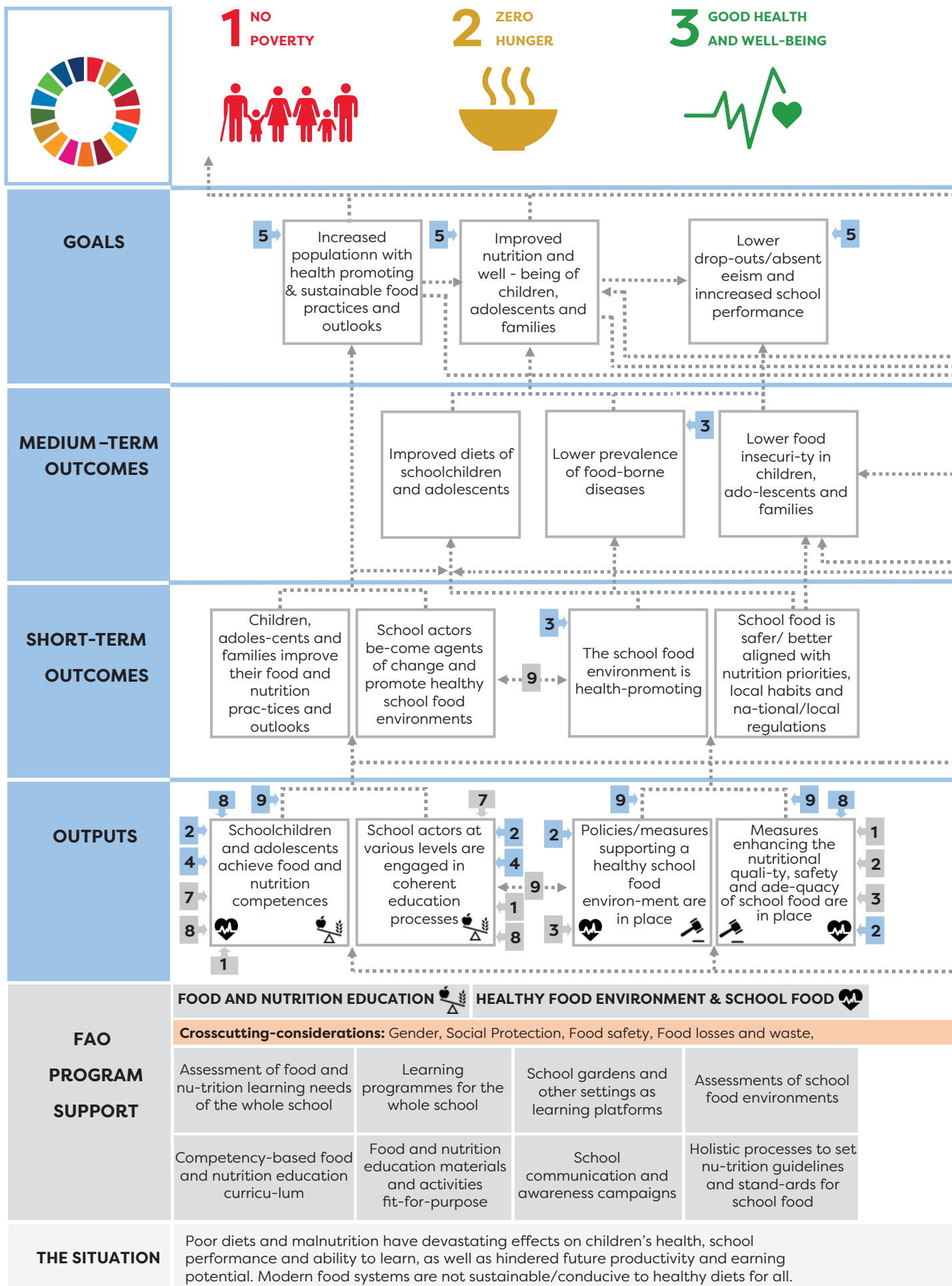
The FAO SFN theory of change (TOC) displays the synergies between the components of the SFN approach and their impact pathways, with the associated assumptions and risk considerations. It has been developed to guide programme design and thinking at country level, and encompasses four states of change that may occur beyond intervention results (short- and medium-term outcomes, goals and Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]).

The SFN TOC begins at the bottom, with a generic situation (that can be adapted to the specific context) in which impact can be achieved through synergistic SFN interventions. It is deliberately structured around a comprehensive set of entry points for SFN activities and their potential outputs and outcomes that project and programme designers can use in order to build their own logical framework and risk analysis, or to develop monitoring and evaluation plans. Therefore, the SFN TOC provides a simple basis to design, transform, compare and assess interventions at the local, regional or national levels. It is a tool for decision-makers and programme designers within and beyond FAO to understand potential synergies and gaps, and to support, through the use of complementary mapping tools, discussions on how and who should fill these potential gaps. While all SFN programmes and interventions will have somewhat different entry points, the SFN TOC enables identification of possible connections along the four pathways.

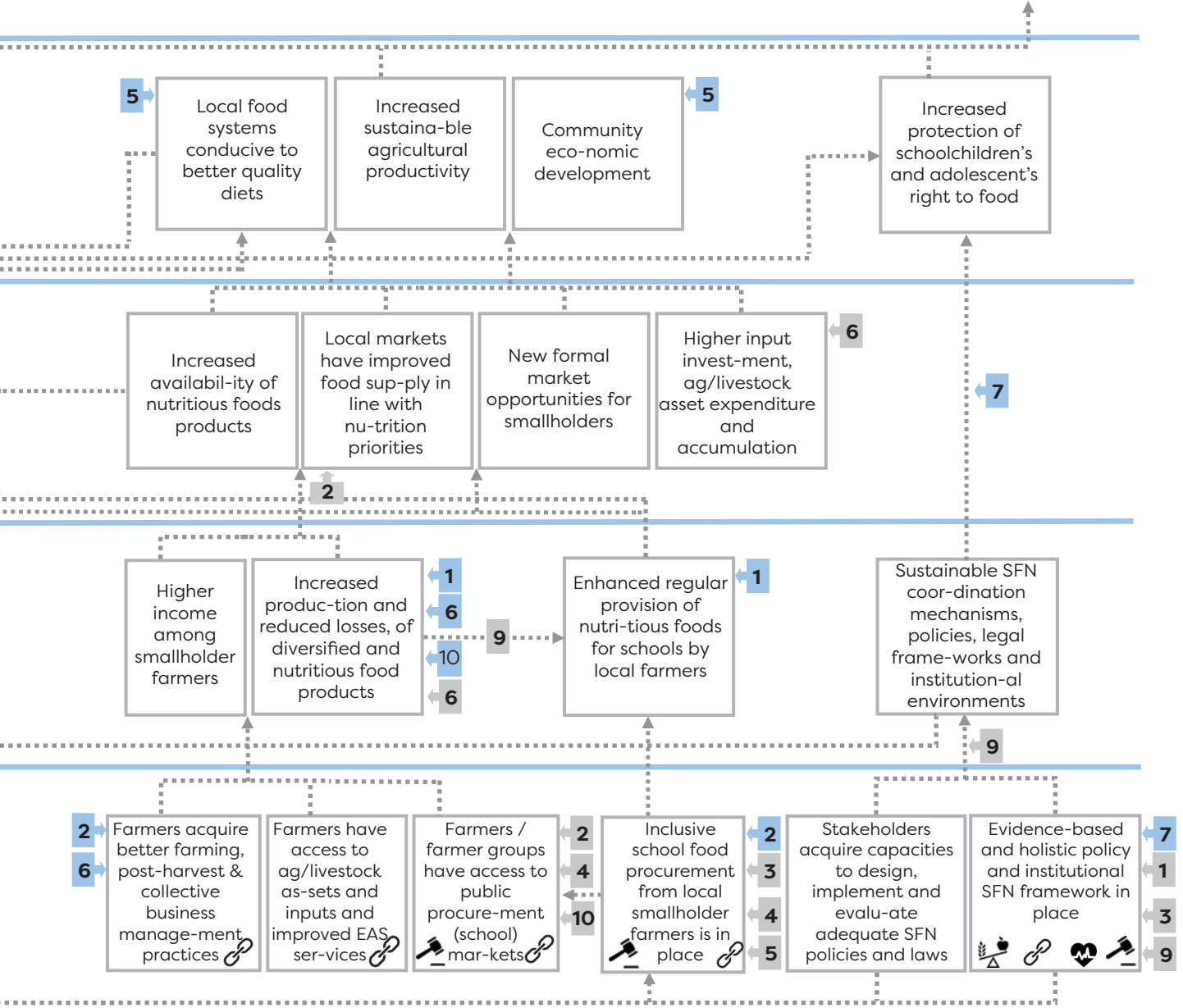
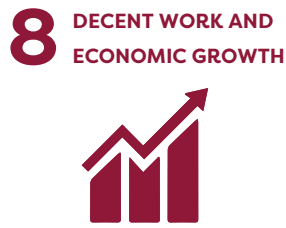
The TOC shows how creating synergies among the four core areas of the SFN approach can support the delivery of sustained improvements to children's and adolescent's food practices, nutrition and school performance, as well as local socio-economic development and local agrifood systems. Thus, it highlights the importance, for Member States and FAO, to promote more systematically integrated approaches that operate strategically in these four areas.

Along with the corporate SFN Framework, the TOC represents a second companion to the SFN Global Action Plan.

Figure 2. School food and nutrition theory of change



See Annex 2 for a description of general drivers (grey boxes) and assumptions (light blue boxes) relating to the TOC.



**INCLUSIVE PROCUREMENT & VALUE CHAINS** **POLICY, LEGAL & INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

Sustainability, Monitoring and evaluation

School food environment policies and actions	Local food system and value chains assessments	Training of extension services and farmers (prod, processing, storage, collective action and marketing)	Mapping stakeholders and policy and legal assessment	Capacity development on legal aspects of SFN
Capacity development of local institutions, school staff, volunteers and food suppliers	Value chain development	Design and implementation of smallholder friendly procurement mechanisms	Awareness raising, advocacy, resource mobilization and policy dialogue	Legal advice to draft legislation for SFN and knowledge generation

Public institutions are not able to provide regular access to adequate or foods prioritize optimal food environments for all schoolchildren and adolescents. Smallholder farmers and other vulnerable actors do not have regular access to markets or opportunities to enhance their production and income potential.

Source: Authors

## II. The School Food and Nutrition Global Action Plan

The Global Action Plan presents a set of core FAO activities to achieve key outputs under four action areas below. These activities are based on identified gaps and needs, and considering the Organization's technical competence and organizational comparative advantage. Such activities are meant to be adapted, contextualized and implemented according to regional and national priorities (see section III).

### Action areas

1

Promote the uptake of and investment in holistic approaches to SFN

2

Enhance capacities to design, implement and monitor effective SFN interventions

3

Strengthen policy and legal frameworks that enable SFN implementation

4

Mobilize resources for ensuring regular and better support to countries

# 1. Promote the uptake of and investment in holistic school food and nutrition approaches

The work done by FAO in SFN is framed around a holistic approach that aims at achieving an enhanced and synergistic impact on diets, child and adolescent nutrition, community socio-economic development and local agrifood systems. Therefore, promoting a holistic approach and the means to implement it in a sustainable manner, through awareness raising, advocacy and policy support, evidence generation, knowledge sharing, and partnership consolidation activities, is the first essential area of FAO's action plan.

This area also aims to support the design and application of monitoring and evaluation schemes that provide evidence for policy analysis and accountability.

## Output 1.1. Awareness of the **need for and benefits of a holistic approach** to school food and nutrition is improved among education, health, food and agriculture, nutrition and social protection stakeholders

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ developing a digital communication strategy to raise awareness of the catalysing potential of holistic SFN approaches to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- ✓ developing wide-reach media products that clearly communicate the benefits of holistic approaches to SFN;
- ✓ disseminating FAO's SFN framework and normative guidance products that evidence key synergies and linkages between school interventions, in global and regional webinars, workshops and relevant events; and
- ✓ identifying and engaging key media figures that support holistic approaches to SFN and help expand communication of their benefits among the general public.

## Output 1.2. **Partnerships and collaborations** for advancing holistic school food and nutrition approaches are consolidated

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ identifying and implementing concrete actions to support the Global School Meals Coalition set under the umbrella of the 2021 Food Systems Summit, particularly those relevant to improving the quality of school meal programmes;
- ✓ developing a concrete and strategic partnership and collaboration plan with key United Nations (UN) agencies, exploring complementarities for the design, implementation and evaluation of holistic SFN approaches;
- ✓ developing strategic partnerships with research institutions and academia, exploring complementarities for conducting practice-based research to highlight the effectiveness, impact and implementation processes of holistic SFN approaches;
- ✓ complementing country-level agency resources and expertise to scale up holistic SFN approaches; and
- ✓ building partnerships at international level for project proposals and contributing to other partners' international projects on SFN and its multiple components.

### Output 1.3. School food and nutrition is integrated into relevant **global and regional policy and governance dialogue**

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ advocating for the importance and impact of holistic SFN in high-level meetings and platforms (the Committee on Food Security, FAO conferences, etc.);
- ✓ organizing and participating in relevant global, regional and national events in partnership with other organizations (e.g. Global Child Nutrition Forum, school feeding days);
- ✓ providing regular input and strengthening FAO's presence in inter-agency communities of practice and other international platforms and networks relevant to SFN (the UN Nutrition Community of Practice on School Nutrition, the School Health and Nutrition Group, One Planet Network Programmes on Sustainable Food Systems and on Sustainable Public Procurement, among others); and
- ✓ supporting the organization of and providing technical inputs to the various events proposed as part of the Global School Meals Coalition agenda.

### Output 1.4. **Evidence base and knowledge-sharing** in school food and nutrition is strengthened

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ disseminating a scoping review on school-based food and nutrition education (SFNE) interventions in low- and middle-income countries;
- ✓ promoting formative research on emerging environmental influences on children's school food behaviours;
- ✓ mapping simple indicators to determine the effectiveness of SFNE;
- ✓ promoting the measurement of the quantitative contribution of school meals to children's diets (using individual food consumption data);
- ✓ identifying multilevel indicators for monitoring adherence to school meal nutrition guidelines and standards;
- ✓ developing a global online knowledge hub on healthy school meals and SFNE (including a country repository), in consultation with key UN agencies and other relevant partners;
- ✓ publishing methodological guidelines for the evaluation of home-grown school feeding (HGFS) programmes, considering the agricultural impacts for farmers and conducting impact evaluations in selected countries;
- ✓ conducting and publishing case studies and assessments of HGFS and implementing innovative mechanisms (such as learning routes) for experience sharing;
- ✓ publishing and disseminating a publication developed with partners that analyses low-, middle- and high-income countries' experiences on sustainable public food procurement for school meals;
- ✓ supporting the execution of legal analyses and legislative studies, and providing evidence-based analytical contributions to the global debate for scaling up SFN programmes, in partnership with academia and research institutions;
- ✓ organizing and participating in seminars, workshops and conferences on the various components of SFN to enhance knowledge-sharing, including with practitioners and the academia;

- ✓ mapping the types (and nature) of reactive interventions to support schoolchildren's food security and diet quality during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- ✓ actively participating in the definition of research priorities and supporting the advancement of those priorities as part of the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition, framed under the Global School Meals Coalition.

### Output 1.5. National and local **investments and budget allocations** for school food and nutrition are increased

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ supporting the inclusion of SFN programmes and initiatives in multisector strategies and planning documents in a coherent way, to better enable the allocation and distribution of funds;
- ✓ carrying out advocacy for increased allocation and mobilization, and for a more efficient use of funds from multiple sectors for SFN at local and national levels; and
- ✓ promoting multisector collaboration and coordination to identify complementary funds and capacities in other sectors that can be leveraged to support common goals on SFN.

### Output 1.6. **Country COVID-19 recovery efforts** relevant to school food and nutrition are prioritized and supported

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ promoting the uptake of joint guidance from FAO, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's and adolescents' food security and nutrition;
- ✓ disseminating lessons learned and successful experiences of how SFN programmes and initiatives were adapted to the evolving conditions brought by the pandemic;
- ✓ providing technical support and advice to national stakeholders on how to adapt SFNE learning plans to new school learning formats, and how to integrate new food- and nutrition-related resilience competences into the national curriculum;
- ✓ providing technical advice to countries on how to adapt food baskets and school meal composition to an evolving pandemic situation (and the associated restrictions); and
- ✓ supporting the development of economic recovery plans linked to smallholder local procurement as part of SFN programmes.

## 2. Enhance capacities to design, implement and monitor holistic and effective school food and nutrition interventions

Assessing capacity gaps and addressing those gaps with a multilevel approach is essential to the quality design, fidelity of implementation, revision and sustainability of holistic SFN programmes. The FAO SFN Global Action Plan will prioritize the strengthening of internal FAO capacities, as well as the assessment and development of institutional capacities in priority and interested countries.

Technical capacity development will focus particularly on the main capacity gaps identified for each area of the SFN approach.

### Output 2.1. **FAO's internal capacities** to support countries in school food and nutrition are strengthened

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ strategically disseminating the SFN framework and related guidance products, in the various official languages, to FAO regional and country offices;
- ✓ promoting the integration and adaptation of the SFN approach into relevant FAO projects and investments;
- ✓ developing simple internal tools (generic ToC and a suite of indicators) to support FAO SFN project formulators;
- ✓ publishing internal virtual masterclasses for major products providing normative guidance; and
- ✓ co-creating regional virtual workshops and trainings on key aspects of the SFN approach with FAO staff, service providers and partners.

### Output 2.2. **School systems stakeholders' capacity to design, implement and evaluate holistic school-based food and nutrition education is improved**

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ advocating for the need for and comparative advantages of integrating FAO's SFNE vision and approach into new and existing SFN-related policies and programmes (through webinars, conferences, meetings);
- ✓ supporting the uptake of the FAO SFNE learning model and normative guidance at country level (through direct technical assistance);
- ✓ conducting country-level capacity needs assessments, to identify major capacity gaps and develop national roadmaps to address these gaps;
- ✓ organizing exchanges of experiences, best practices and lessons learned between countries;
- ✓ developing a structured package of capacity development materials for curriculum developers and learning-plan implementers, based on the FAO SFNE learning model;
- ✓ integrating principles and processes of effective SFNE into the work of collaborators at country level;

- ✓ integrating principles and processes of the SFNE White Paper (FAO, 2020a) into the work of collaborators;
- ✓ supporting the design of regional and national SFNE capacity development strategies and training materials for teachers and learning-plan implementers, curriculum developers, and local and national government staff; and
- ✓ promoting and repurposing school gardens as learning platforms for SFNE.

### Output 2.3. Multisector (education, food and agriculture, nutrition and health) and multilevel capacities to foster healthier and more sustainable **school food environments** are strengthened

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ conducting multidimensional capacity needs assessments and setting capacity targets regarding technical aspects of school food nutrition guidelines and standards (NGS), complementary measures and the right to adequate food;
- ✓ designing a global methodology to develop cost-effective, feasible, participatory, context-specific, culturally appropriate, gender-sensitive, flexible and (food) systems-based school food NGS, and promoting tools and manuals and complementary measures that can enhance their impact;
- ✓ piloting the application of the NGS methodology in selected countries; and
- ✓ developing a global series of targeted webinars and interactive regional workshops to support capacity development of various actors and institutions in the methodology.

### Output 2.4. Multisector (education, food and agriculture, nutrition, procurement, finance) and multilevel capacities to implement **inclusive procurement and value chains and home-grown school feeding** are strengthened

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ organizing technical regional workshops on sustainable public food procurement and HGSF for multisector actors at national and local levels (including the analysis of gaps and opportunities to link school programmes with local agriculture);
- ✓ supporting the operationalization of policy and supply chain assessments to identify bottlenecks in linking local smallholder producers (farmers and small- and medium-sized enterprises) to school markets, including in urban contexts;
- ✓ supporting stakeholders in improving value chain efficiency and inclusiveness, to promote smallholder producers' access to school food markets with more diversified and sustainable products;
- ✓ disseminating and promoting the uptake of home-grown school feeding e-learning modules;
- ✓ supporting the design of national capacity development strategies and training materials for farmer organizations, procurement entities, schools, and local and national governments; and
- ✓ developing and enabling the uptake of global guidelines for sustainable public procurement for school meals, with a focus on linking NGS with procurement processes and criteria.

### 3. Strengthen policy and legal frameworks that enable school food and nutrition implementation

Political commitment and buy-in are essential to achieve effective results over time and to ensure the adequate allocation of resources to SFN. At the same time, the sustainability and long-term implementation of school-based programmes require a strong legal and regulatory framework that translates political aspirations into tangible legal entitlements, investments and concrete mechanisms for cross-sectoral and multistakeholder coordinated action.

Through this SFN Action Plan, FAO will prioritize the assessment of system, policy, legal and institutional arrangements at country level and support tailored and feasible solutions that enable the adequate implementation of complementary and synergistic SFN interventions. The support and recommendations addressed are based on international law and standards applicable to SFN, highlighting the different legislative options<sup>1</sup> available for regulating the various pillars of SFN in a holistic manner and in line with a human-rights-based approach.

#### Output 3.1. Improved **awareness of and access to meaningful information and guidance** on policy- and decision-making and legislative action on school food and nutrition

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ developing, publishing and disseminating studies on legislative and regulatory approaches to SFN;
- ✓ promoting the dissemination and uptake of the FAO legal guide on SFN by developing user-friendly tools and materials for policy- and decision-makers, legislators and advocates for legislative change;
- ✓ developing a global database on legislative and regulatory measures relevant to SFN that is regularly updated;
- ✓ developing global guidelines for the incorporation of nutritional standards into national legislation, in collaboration with other agencies, as appropriate;
- ✓ producing case studies on the implementation of policies and legislation in support of SFN to provide evidence-based information; and
- ✓ analyzing policies, laws and regulations relevant to Indigenous Peoples' contribution and issues relating to SFN, and providing recommendations for action.

#### Output 3.2. Countries **develop and revise policies and legal frameworks** related to school food and nutrition (through a holistic approach and in accordance with international law and standards)

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ conducting assessments in support of SFN legislative processes, and providing

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<sup>1</sup>FAO has been supporting countries in revising and strengthening their legal frameworks to guarantee the right to adequate food and nutrition in schools. Those good practices and legislative experiences are an important source of knowledge for other countries wishing to follow a similar path.

recommendations for legal reform tailored to the specific context, in coordination with and at the request of government stakeholders;

- ✓ providing technical support and capacity development to countries and regional organizations to develop, revise and implement legislation related to SFN with a holistic approach,<sup>2</sup> and in accordance with international law and standards; and
- ✓ promoting broad participation of stakeholders in the development and review of SFN policies and legislation, ensuring the inclusion of the most vulnerable sectors.

### Output 3.3. National school food and nutrition policy and regulatory frameworks are **aligned with public procurement instruments and strategies**

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ building partnerships with public procurement authorities (including for the development of guidelines and capacity building) and promoting their participation in multistakeholder mechanisms and discussions on HGSF;
- ✓ carrying out assessments of school food procurement practices, to identify bottlenecks and support their alignment with national public food procurement instruments and strategies;
- ✓ supporting the implementation of policies, regulatory frameworks and strategies (based on identified constraints) that enable linkages between local food producers – particularly smallholders – and HGSF; and
- ✓ promoting linkages between school food procurement and the broader sustainable public procurement agenda, on one hand, and SDG Target 12.7, on the other, at both national and international levels.

## 4. Mobilize resources to ensure regular and better support to countries

Adequate resources and their optimal distribution are essential for FAO and development partners to support quality SFN approaches at country level.

### Output 4.1. FAO's **resource availability** to support countries in school food and nutrition is strengthened

The main activities to achieve this output include:

- ✓ strategically mapping key donors and funding sources around the four areas of SFN;
- ✓ developing suitable and high-quality project proposals to address key identified implementation and operational gaps in national SFN programmes, policies and regulatory frameworks, in partnership with relevant UN agencies; and
- ✓ promoting the integration of SFN into organizational priorities and elevating core activities within corporate planning processes.

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<sup>2</sup> That is, supporting countries in revising their legislation to enable local food procurement from smallholders, in compliance with nutritional standards and food safety requirements, while integrating nutrition education as an essential component of primary and secondary school education systems.



# III. Regional priorities for School food and nutrition

The priorities below were defined by regional, subregional and country offices, and were based on results from regional assessments, high-level workshops, regional body and coalition objectives, and current and evolving emergencies and crises.

## FAO Africa region

### **Policy and legal frameworks**

- ✓ Support the development of national policies and frameworks to strengthen the sustainability and accountability of school feeding and HGSF programmes.

### **Coordination**

- ✓ Strengthen coordination of school-feeding-related initiatives across various African Union departments and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.
- ✓ Support the establishment of and strengthen national and regional coordination platforms to deliver effective support and governance for school meal and HGSF programmes.

### **Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, accountability and learning**

- ✓ Enhance and update national knowledge on school meal and HGSF for policy making and programme implementation.
- ✓ Establish effective monitoring and evaluation, accountability and impact assessment for school meal and HGSF at the national level.
- ✓ Support the establishment of a continental knowledge-sharing platform on HGSF.

### **Developing and strengthening capacity**

- ✓ Enhance the capacity of Member States to design, implement and deliver school meal and HGSF programmes.

### **Advocacy for political commitment and resource mobilization**

- ✓ Support advocacy processes to enhance national budgets for school meal programmes.
- ✓ Increase predictable and multi-year funding for coordination of school meal programmes.

A full list of FAO Member countries for this region is available at: [www.fao.org/africa/countries/en/](http://www.fao.org/africa/countries/en/)

## FAO Asia and the Pacific region

### **Policy and legal frameworks**

Working with existing frameworks and partnerships to:

- ✓ Support the formulation of policies and legal instruments that enable the setting up of national SFN programmes, particularly within the Pacific Islands.
- ✓ Support the implementation of policies, regulatory frameworks and strategies that enable linkages between local food producers – particularly smallholders – and the supply for school meals.

### **Provision of technical support and capacity development**

- ✓ Adapt and promote the use of existing guidance to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on schoolchildren's food security and nutrition.
- ✓ Adapt and contextualize existing guidance on integrating effective food and nutrition education into school systems, including the use of pedagogic school gardens.
- ✓ Adapt guidance and support capacity development efforts for setting context-specific NGS for school meals.
- ✓ Provide technical guidance and support capacity development among smallholder suppliers for improved administrative and financial management, and quantity and quality assurance of their products.

### **Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, accountability and learning**

- ✓ Assist countries in the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for SFN programmes.

A full list of FAO Member Countries for this region is available at: [www.fao.org/asiapacific/countries/en/](http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/countries/en/)

## FAO Europe and Central Asia region

### **Policy and legal frameworks**

- ✓ Raise awareness among the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of the contribution holistic SFN programmes make to good health, and of the economic benefits of investing in it.
- ✓ Conduct a regional landscaping of school feeding programmes to inform evidence-based policy making in the region.
- ✓ Promote the establishment of policies of preferential taxation for food products that promote child nutrition; establish regulations on the marketing of school food.

### **Coordination**

- ✓ Promote and support the establishment of country-level coordination mechanisms between UN organizations for supporting sustainable SFN programmes.
- ✓ Provision of technical support and capacity development.

- ✓ Adapt and promote the use of existing guidance to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on schoolchildren's food security and nutrition.
- ✓ Support the development of smallholders' production, post-harvest, storage, processing, organizational and marketing skills, as well as market diversification and nutrition-sensitive value chain development.
- ✓ Adapt guidance on the design and implementation of smallholder-friendly procurement mechanisms.
- ✓ Help countries set requirements for food product ingredients and energy levels for food supplied to preschool and school meal programmes.
- ✓ Adapt and contextualize existing guidance on integrating effective food and nutrition education into school systems.
- ✓ Provide technical support to relevant ministry staff and other education stakeholders on SFNE.
- ✓ Develop guidance on feasible and adequate integration of sustainability considerations into SFN programmes.

A full list of FAO Member Countries for this region is available at: [www.fao.org/europe/countries/en/](http://www.fao.org/europe/countries/en/)

## FAO Latin America and the Caribbean region

### Policy and legal frameworks

- ✓ Assist Member Countries in improving SFN policies and programmes within the context of wider transformation of agrifood systems for healthy diets, and in collaboration with the Sustainable School Feeding Network.
- ✓ Consolidate support to the drafting, revision and updating of legislative and regulatory instruments that enable quality implementation of SFN programmes.
- ✓ Establish institutional mechanisms that enable scale-up and sustainability of activities supported by FAO, such as improvement of school meal menus, infrastructure development, SFNE, and strengthening of local procurement, among others.
- ✓ Promote the implementation of policies that aim at improving the healthiness of school food environments.
- ✓ Support policy and legal development, adaptation and revision to catalyse post-COVID-19 recovery.

### Developing and strengthening capacity

- ✓ Regularly support capacity development processes of national school meal programme teams and staff, for the smooth implementation of synergistic activities.
- ✓ Strengthen the methodological approaches of SFNE initiatives and trainings.
- ✓ Provide trainings on how to reduce food waste and strengthen the gastronomic features of school meals and other types of school food.

## Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, accountability and learning

- ✓ Support the planning and execution of programme impact assessments, particularly on priority nutrition, educational and socio-economic development outcomes.
- ✓ Support the quality control of monitoring, evaluation and accountability processes related to SFN programming.

A full list of FAO Member Countries for this region is available at: [www.fao.org/americas/paises/en/](http://www.fao.org/americas/paises/en/)

## FAO Near East and North Africa region

### Policy and legal frameworks

- ✓ Support policy and legislative development, adaptation and/or revision for catalysing post COVID-19 recovery.

### Provision of technical support and capacity development

- ✓ Adapt and promote the use of existing guidance to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on schoolchildren's food security and nutrition.
- ✓ Provide technical assistance for countries to enhance the nutrition adequacy of school meals and other school food.
- ✓ Adapt and contextualize existing guidance on integrating effective food and nutrition education into school systems.
- ✓ Provide technical support to improve SFN programme quality and efficiency, including setting of common minimum standards for the region, in collaboration with UN partners.

A full list of FAO Member Countries for this region is available at: [www.fao.org/neareast/countries/en/](http://www.fao.org/neareast/countries/en/)



# IV. Monitoring of the School food and nutrition Global Action Plan

The framework below is meant to guide FAO's programming for the duration of the action plan and will be tailored and adjusted as needed, in order to better respond to emerging challenges and evolving global circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and commitments to address climate change.

The indicators are aimed to monitor FAO's progress in the implementation of the activities that are at the core of the SFN action plan. Further development of indicators for monitoring the achievement of outcomes will follow the publication this document.

## Action area – Promote the uptake of and investment in holistic SFN approaches

### Outcome – Strengthened investment in holistic SFN programmes and interventions

Outputs	Indicators
Output 1.1. Awareness of the need for and benefits of a holistic approach to SFN is improved among education, health, food and agriculture, nutrition and social protection stakeholders	<b>1.1.i.1</b> Number of SFN communication and awareness raising products developed by FAO
	<b>1.1.i.2</b> Number of webinars, workshops and global/regional events relevant to SFN organized by FAO
Output 1.2. Partnerships and collaborations for advancing holistic SFN approaches are consolidated	<b>1.2.i.1</b> Number of actions conducted to support the Global School Meals Coalition
	<b>1.2.i.2</b> Partnership and collaboration plan developed and with inputs from UN agencies
	<b>1.2.i.3</b> Number, level and nature of partnerships and collaborations in SFN
Output 1.3. School food and nutrition is integrated into relevant global and regional policy and governance dialogue	<b>1.3.i.1</b> Number of high-level advocacy events where FAO has a key role
	<b>1.3.i.2</b> Number of advocacy and other high-level government-centred events organized by FAO or in which FAO has a key role
Output 1.4. Evidence base and knowledge sharing in SFN is strengthened	<b>1.4.i.1</b> Number and scope of SFN scientific publications with FAO authorship
	<b>1.4.i.2</b> Number of SFN technical reviews, assessment reports and evaluations published by FAO

Outputs	Indicators
	<b>1.4.i.3</b> Number and type of actions carried out aligned with the priorities of the Research Consortium on School Health and Nutrition
Output 1.5. National and local investments and budget allocations for SFN are increased	<b>1.5.i.1</b> Number of countries supported to include SFN into multisector strategies and planning documents <b>1.5.i.2</b> Financing capacity integrated into needs assessments and capacity development strategies supported by FAO
Output 1.6. COVID-19 recovery country efforts relevant to SFN are prioritized and supported	<b>1.6.i.1</b> Number of country requests to support recovery efforts relevant to SFN <b>1.6.i.2</b> Number of SFN-relevant assessments, publications, reports and projects that integrate support, guidance or lessons learned for COVID-19 recovery and adaptation

### Action area – Enhance capacities to design, implement and monitor holistic and effective SFN interventions

#### Outcome – School food and nutrition interventions are designed with a holistic approach, better implemented and monitored

Outputs	Indicators
Output 2.1. FAO’s internal capacities to support countries in SFN are strengthened	<b>2.1.i.1</b> Number of FAO new projects that integrate the SFN holistic approach <b>2.1.i.2</b> Theory of change guidance for project formulation developed and shared with FAO focal points at regional and subregional levels
Output 2.2. School system stakeholders’ capacity to design, implement and evaluate holistic SFNE is improved	<b>2.2.i.1</b> Number of capacity needs assessments in SFNE supported by FAO <b>2.2.i.2</b> SFNE capacity development package developed <b>2.2.i.3</b> Number of countries using the capacity development package
Output 2.3. Multisector (education, food/ agriculture, nutrition and health) and multilevel capacities to foster healthier and more sustainable school food environments is strengthened	<b>2.3.i.1</b> Global methodology developed and validated for countries to set NGS for school food <b>2.3.i.2</b> Number of countries supported to develop NGS for school food <b>2.3.i.3</b> Number of CD regional workshops to facilitate uptake of the methodology for countries to set school food NGS

Outputs	Indicators
Output 2.4. Multisector (education, food and agriculture, nutrition, procurement, finance) and multilevel capacities to implement inclusive procurement and value chains and homegrown school feeding are strengthened	<b>2.4.i.1</b> Number and nature of participants attending technical regional trainings organized by FAO
	<b>2.4.i.2</b> Number of users that completed the HGSE e-learning

## Action area – Strengthen policy and legal frameworks that enable SFN implementation

### Outcome – Strengthened SFN policy and legal frameworks

Outputs	Indicators
Output 3.1. Improved awareness and access to meaningful information and guidance for policy- and decision-making and legislative action on SFN	<b>3.1.i.1</b> SFN legislative database developed
	<b>3.2.i.2</b> Step-by-step guidance developed on how NGS for school food can be integrated into policy and legal frameworks
	<b>3.2.i.3</b> Global knowledge hub (with global country database) on school food published
Output 3.2. Countries develop and revise policies and legal frameworks related to SFN (through a holistic approach and in accordance with international law and standards).	<b>3.2.i.1</b> Number of SFN relevant policy and legislative assessments and studies carried out by FAO, or with FAO's support
	<b>3.2.i.2</b> Number of countries that formulated, reformed or passed SFN-related policies and legislation with FAO's support
Output 3.3. National SFN policy and regulatory frameworks are aligned with public procurement instruments and strategies	<b>3.3.i.1</b> Number of countries that developed, revised or updated procurement policies, regulatory frameworks and strategies to improve linkages between local smallholders and HGSE programmes with FAO's support

## Action area – Mobilize resources for ensuring regular and better support to countries

### Outcome – FAO resource allocation is enhanced to better support countries in strengthening the quality and sustainability of SFN approaches

Outputs	Indicators
Output 4.1. FAO's resource availability to support countries in SFN is strengthened	<b>4.1.i.1</b> School food and nutrition activities and outputs are adequately reflected in FAO's new strategic programming
	<b>4.1.i.2</b> Number and regional distribution of SFN technical cooperation programme projects approved
	<b>4.1.i.3</b> Total FAO funds allocated to SFN projects within a biennium
	<b>4.1.i.4</b> Number of SFN project proposals or proposals with an SFN component approved for extra budgetary funding

# Annex 1.

## Key relevant publications

### Frameworks

**FAO.** 2019a. *School food and nutrition Framework*. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/ca4091en/ca4091en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca4091en/ca4091en.pdf)).

**FAO & World Food Programme (WFP).** 2018. *Home-Grown School Feeding. Resource Framework*. Technical Document. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/ca0957en/CA0957EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca0957en/CA0957EN.pdf)).

### Guidance documents

**Cruz, L.** 2020. *Legal guide on school food and nutrition – Legislating for a healthy school food environment*. FAO Legal Guide No. 2. Rome, FAO. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/ca9730en/ca9730en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca9730en/ca9730en.pdf)).

**FAO.** 2019b. *Strengthening sector policies for better food security & nutrition results*. Education. Policy Guidance Note No. 13. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/ca7149en/ca7149en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca7149en/ca7149en.pdf)).

**FAO.** 2019c. *Legislating for adequate food and nutrition in schools*. Legal Brief for Parliamentarians in Latin America and the Caribbean No. 3. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/cb0442en/CB0442EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb0442en/CB0442EN.pdf)).

**FAO.** 2020a. *School-based food and nutrition education – A white paper on the current state, principles, challenges and recommendations for low- and middle-income countries*. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb2064en](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb2064en)).

**FAO.** 2021a. *Including gastronomy in the School Feeding Programme – A necessary change to guarantee children’s right to healthy, tasty and waste-free food*. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB3430EN](http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB3430EN)).

**Swensson, L.F.J.** 2018. *Aligning policy and legal frameworks for supporting smallholder farming through public food procurement: the case of home-grown school feeding programmes*. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) Working Paper No. 177. Rome, FAO and New York, USA, United Nations Development Programme. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/ca2060en/CA2060EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca2060en/CA2060EN.pdf)).

**WFP, FAO & United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).** 2020. *Interim guidance note: Mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and nutrition of school children*. Rome, FAO. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/ca8434en/CA8434EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca8434en/CA8434EN.pdf)).

### Reports and case studies

**FAO.** 2014. *School feeding and possibilities for direct purchases from family farming: case studies from eight countries*. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/a-i3413e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3413e.pdf)).

**FAO.** 2019d. *Nutrition guidelines and standards for school meals: a report from 33 low and middle-income countries*. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/CA2773EN/ca2773en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/CA2773EN/ca2773en.pdf)).

**FAO.** 2021b. *Fish in home-grown school feeding: Angola, Honduras and Peru*. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/cb3708en/cb3708en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb3708en/cb3708en.pdf)).

**FAO & United Arab Emirates University.**

2019. *Stepping up school-based food and nutrition education: Exploring challenges, finding solutions and building partnerships*. Rome, FAO. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/CA3063EN/ca3063en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/CA3063EN/ca3063en.pdf)).

**FAO & Procasur.** 2021. *Compendium of case studies: Successful practices, tools and mechanisms to design, implement and monitor Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programmes in Africa*. Nairobi, FAO. (also available at [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb3911en](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb3911en)).

**FAO & The University of West Indies.** 2021. *A review of school feeding programmes in the Caribbean Community: A driver for food and nutrition security*. Saint Augustine. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/cb4650en/cb4650en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb4650en/cb4650en.pdf)).

**Kelly, S. & Swensson, L.F.J.** 2017. *Leveraging institutional food procurement for linking small farmers to markets: Findings from WFP's Purchase for Progress initiative and Brazil's food procurement programmes*. FAO Agricultural Development Economics Technical Study 1. Rome, FAO. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/a-i7636e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7636e.pdf)).

**Prifti, E. & Grinspun, A.** 2021. *Impact evaluation of the Home Grown School Feeding and Conservation Agriculture Scale-up programmes in Zambia*. Rome, FAO. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/cb1841en/cb1841en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb1841en/cb1841en.pdf)).

**Swensson, L.F.J.** 2018. *Aligning policy and legal frameworks for supporting smallholder farming through public food procurement: the case of home-grown school feeding*

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**Swensson, L.F.J.** 2019. *Aligning public procurement rules and practices to support the implementation HGSF initiatives: The case of Ethiopia*. Rome, FAO. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/CA3614EN/ca3614en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/CA3614EN/ca3614en.pdf)).

**Swensson, L.F.J.** 2020. *Aligning public procurement rules and practices to support the implementation of home-grown school feeding (HGSF) initiatives: the case of Senegal*. Rome, FAO. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/cb1204en/cb1204en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb1204en/cb1204en.pdf)).

## E- learning

**FAO.** 2020b. Home-grown school feeding. In: FAO elearning Academy [online]. Rome. [https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=529&lang=zh\\_cn](https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=529&lang=zh_cn)

## Advocacy documents

**FAO.** 2020c. *Boosting school-based policies and programmes for an enhanced impact on child nutrition, community development and local food system transformation*. Rome.

(also available at [www.fao.org/3/cb0645en/CB0645EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb0645en/CB0645EN.pdf)).

**FAO.** 2021c. *Improving nutrition of school age kids through nutrition-sensitive food system approaches*. Rome. (also available at [www.fao.org/3/cb7208en/cb7208en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb7208en/cb7208en.pdf)).

# Annex 2. Assumptions and drivers of the School food and nutrition theory of change

## Assumptions

The following assumptions operating over different scales and at different points along the causal chain may impede the likelihood of achieving the expected SFN effect and impact.

1. Areas of implementation are not excessively affected by severe climate phenomena and crop diseases and farmers are able to produce and commercialize enough surplus to contribute or respond to school needs. Agricultural climate change adaptation strategies are in place at national and local levels to increase farmers' resilience to climate change, and to produce enough surplus to contribute to school meals.
2. National and local authorities, including education, health and agriculture extension services, have enough logistic and human resources to monitor schools and farmers, as well as to enforce nutrition, food quality and safety standards, and quality management systems.
3. Government, non-governmental organizations and donors support water and sanitation interventions, contributing to the achievement of universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene infrastructures in all schools and households, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and of people in vulnerable situations.
4. Programme designers, curriculum developers, learning material writers, teachers and educators involved in SFNE initiatives are sufficiently experienced in general educational best practices to respond to children's age and stage of cognitive development, learning style, mixed-level classes and remedial needs.
5. There is a continued commitment of the government and donors to support, implement and institutionalize SFN initiatives in face of other development priorities. This assumption applies across all the higher levels of the SFN causal change up to its final impact, as without continued commitments of the stakeholders to sustainable SFN, there will be no long-term improvements.
6. An enabling public procurement legal framework is in place and provides instruments to support inclusive school food procurement from local smallholder farmers.
7. The government recognizes and supports the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.
8. The government, non-governmental organizations and donors support the development of adequate infrastructure and equipment for school food that are needed to ensure local food supply and food safety, and to promote experiential food and nutrition education and related activities.

9. National and subnational organizational capacities, leadership and conditions allow for implementation of the “right mix” and scope of activities and measures needed to achieve change.
10. The government, non-governmental organizations and donors support rural infrastructure and technical assistance in order to enhance organizational and commercialization skills, as well as agricultural productive capacity diversity and quality.

## Drivers

Drivers that stakeholders involved in the implementation of SFN actions could influence, to make progress along the causal chain more likely.

1. The analyses of the national and subnational situations provide an in-depth examination of local determinants of food and nutrition issues and into dietary patterns, food-related behaviours and their influences; this enables the identification of priority SFNE learning needs, target food competences and food environment supports.
2. People in charge of selecting, purchasing, receiving, preparing and distributing food have the necessary motivation, tools and skills to follow the procedures and criteria of the NGS for school food.
3. People in charge of selecting, purchasing, receiving and preparing food have the necessary motivation, tools and skills to prioritize and implement local purchase of food from smallholder farmers.
4. National and local coordinating mechanisms are sufficiently representative of each SFN area of work, enabling the promotion of an integrated approach, improving implementation effectiveness, avoiding overlaps and contributing to the production, for farmers’ organizations, of reliable information on the estimated quantities of commodities to be purchased.
5. School food procurement modalities are defined through national consultations and situation analysis initiatives that are based on a bottom-up approach, so that the needs and interests of local primary cooperatives and smallholder farmers are taken into consideration.
6. There are no delays in the transfer of funds to schools that could affect schools’ ability to purchase food and provide meals every day of the school calendar. Strategies are in place to protect schools from price increases.
7. Thanks to technical and administrative support, smallholder farmers comply with national and local quality and food safety standards, and there is no time lag between the delivery of commodities by the farmers and the receipt of payments.
8. Food and nutrition education interventions combine mental (knowledge), motivational and practical focuses, and prioritize experiential learning, development of skills and practice in real-life settings, which are conducive to a greater chance of changing or improving food behaviours and outlooks.
9. SFNE learning programmes are fully supported by coherent changes in curriculums, educator capacity development, school food environments and school policies.
10. Government multisector and multistakeholder coordination mechanisms and procedures allow for integrated action in the main areas of SFN work.
11. There are linkages with existing programmes and projects to support farmers’ collective capacity, planning and actions.





