



Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 23rd November 2021

Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food

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#Press Release No7#

Social Safety Nets for Food and Nutrition in West Africa: Contributing to the Improvement of School Feeding Programs

Schoolchildren and adolescents need good nutrition to grow, develop, protect themselves against diseases and have the energy to study and succeed in life. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in West Africa, resulting in fewer children attending school, increased absenteeism, etc. In such a context, the absence of school feeding programs deprives rural zones of opportunities such as improving school success rates, boosting local agriculture, strengthening local food systems, and giving small producers access to markets.

1. ECOWAS Response and Leadership

As part of the implementation of school feeding programs, the ECOWAS Commission has developed innovative models, with the support of its technical and financial partners, specifically through a 5 million euro grant from the Spanish Cooperation. Over the past six years, the ECOWAS Commission has experimented five types of school feeding programs in the Member States.

- One: the promotion of local production and respect for the environment,
- two: the protection of the livelihoods of rural communities,
- Three: the improvement of the diet and nutrition of students,
- Four: food security through the strengthening of productive capacities of vulnerable women's groups,
- And five: improving sustainable household livelihoods.

2. Lessons Learned

Following the implementation of the various actions in the field, stakeholders have drawn three main lessons learned:

- One: the promotion of an integrated system of school canteens and agroecology contributes to an improvement in school success rates and a drastic reduction in absenteeism and school drop-out,
- Two: School gardens and the use of moringa provide vegetables with nutritional value in the preparation and diversification of meals,
- Three: school canteens are an important tool for the development of the entire local economy chain.



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3. Way Forward

School feeding programs, in addition to promoting academic success of vulnerable children, are a tool for economic empowerment of communities. As such, they are essential for the long-term development of human capital. Therefore, the ECOWAS Commission, with the support of its technical and financial partners, will continue to implement this type of program to contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development objectives of its Member States, especially poverty eradication, the fight against hunger and access to quality education.

In this context, the Spanish cooperation wishes to continue its collaboration with ECOWAS in supporting the most vulnerable households in West Africa. Other technical and financial partners are also called upon.

As a reminder and for information purposes, here is the link to the video on contributing to the Improvement of School Feeding Programs: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bF3EevBMpM-Lyyvjs7DHR91LV8hgv-9wB>

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