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Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF)

## **ECOWAS and WFP Provide Support to Cabo-Verde National School Feeding Programme**

The Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) has contributed US\$ 1 million to provide daily nutritious meals to 90,000 school children in Cabo-Verde during the 2023-2024 school year.

This contribution comes from ECOWAS' Regional Food Security Reserve built up in February 2013 to respond to food security crises across the region. It complements the efforts already made by ECOWAS and its partners, as well as those already undertaken by the Government of Cabo-Verde.

"ECOWAS strongly supports Cape-Verde National school feeding programme. I have personally benefited from school meals in my home country-The Gambia, as a primary school kid, and this has contributed in making the man I am today", ECOWAS Commission President, Dr Omar Alieu Touray said. "Our intervention in Cabo-Verde today shows how important ECOWAS cares for the well-being of its community members, particularly for children, the future leaders and development actors in the region. We work for peace and prosperity for all" he added.

With this ECOWAS contribution, WFP used its technical and logistical know-how to help purchase and supply the food commodities needed for school meals, including vegetable oil, milk, and canned beef among other products.

"This is an example of a partnership that Cabo-Verde would like to see strengthened. Cabo-Verde takes the issue of school canteens very seriously, to provide children with a hot meal at school, a means of keeping children in school and improving their school results and diet", said the Secretary of State for the Agrarian Economy, Dr Miguel Ângelo da Moura, representing the Minister for Agriculture and Environment.

"In these difficult times, aggravated by the crisis facing the planet, the Government of Cabo-Verde and its partners have helped to improve our response capacity, and we hope to continue to count on the support of ECOWAS and WFP in this major endeavour", he concluded.

In June 2022, a combination of factors such as climate shocks, the disruption of food supply chains, and the economic fallout from both the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine conflict collectively contributed to a surge in the costs of food, fuel, and fertilizer. These challenges exacerbated the food security situation in Cabo-Verde. Consequently, ECOWAS decided to



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support the Cabo-Verdean Government to maintain the national school feeding programme with WFP's support.

“Ensuring food security and access to life-changing education requires collective action, and new ways of working together” said Evelyn Etti, WFP's Deputy Regional Director for Western Africa. “This contribution from ECOWAS is a clear indication that we can find local and strategic solutions to our local food security problems through innovative partnerships. WFP is extremely grateful for this regional solidarity, and we look forward to seeing many more regional contributions and commitments to tackling food insecurity and malnutrition in Western Africa,” she added.

Through a Limited Emergency Operation, WFP has been providing technical assistance, capacity strengthening, and policy support to national institutions and partners to ensure sustainable management and implementation of the national school feeding programme by the Government of Cabo-Verde.

School meals programmes have the potential to mitigate the impact of the global food crisis by improving families' access to nutritious food while promoting community resilience. In Cabo-Verde, the national school feeding programme covers 788 schools across the country, supporting 90,000 pre-school, primary and secondary students. The programme has been fully run by the government since 2010, making it the first nationally owned school feeding programme in West Africa. Cabo-Verde school feeding programme has also been instrumental in achieving high enrolment rates of 96 percent in primary schools, while providing social protection to the most vulnerable families.

Created in February 2013 by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government through a supplementary Act to the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, the Regional Food Security Reserve is a regional solidarity instrument for Member States to (i) improve the response to food and nutrition crises at local, national, and regional levels, (ii) reduce dependence on international aid, and (iii) promote a storage system geared towards emergency response.

In Cabo-Verde, ECOWAS aims to take greater account of the island nature of the country in all development initiatives it undertakes at both regional and national level.

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#### **About ECOWAS:**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in May 1975 to promote co-operation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations-among Member States, and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent.



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