

# HEALTHY MEALS IN SCHOOLS: POLICY INNOVATIONS LINKING AGRICULTURE, FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION

POLICY BRIEF No. 3 | November 2015 | SUMMARY MESSAGES FOR DECISION MAKERS

## SCHOOLS AS PLATFORM FOR POLICY INNOVATION

- Programmes to provide healthy school meals sourced from local farms have the potential to bring multiple benefits to agricultural development, nutrition and education.
- Evidence on locally-sourced school meals reveals a multiple-win opportunity for policymakers in terms of important benefits for school achievement, employment and national economic growth.
- Providing nutritionally balanced school meals with complementary nutrition education and health measures can support improved school performance, nutrition literacy as well as employment and income in later life.
- Procurement of food for schools from local farming communities supports farming households and sustainable local markets for nutritious foods.
- Combined interventions have the potential to deliver more than the sum of their parts – better child nutrition supports better education, which supports improved dietary and health choices by mothers, which in turn leads to better birth outcomes and enhanced educational success for the next generation.

## Policy recommendations

Many local and national governments are today implementing components of this healthy school meals strategy. Few, however, are integrating them to create a multiple-win outcome.

### Achieving multiple benefits requires:

- School meals that are consistent with current national dietary guidelines and formulated to increase the emphasis on nutritious ingredients and food groups such as:
  - Vegetables, fruits, pulses and animal products, such as milk, which meet a significant portion of the nutritional requirements of school-aged children.
- Policies that facilitate local and regional procurement and diversification of foods for schools.
- Predictable national budget allocations to support these integrated activities.
- An effective, inter-sectoral mechanism for managing such programmes, which includes careful measurement and monitoring of their efficiency and of their expected educational, nutritional and agricultural outcomes.
- The ability to promote change in the actual consumption of healthier school meals and encourage children's lifelong healthy eating habits through:
  - Integrated actions that link school meals with nutrition education, family and school community involvement, school gardening, trainings and technical support to help schools achieve a healthier environment overall.

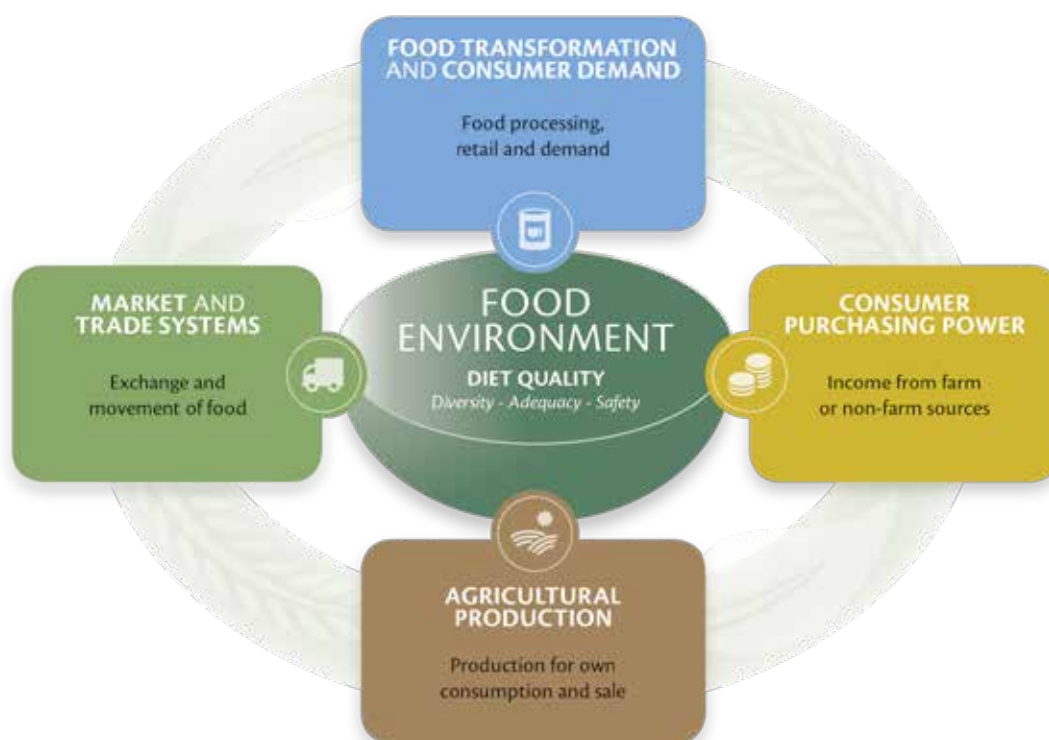


**Global Panel**  
on Agriculture  
and Food Systems  
for Nutrition

# How can Agriculture and Food System Policies improve Nutrition?

The multiple burdens on health created today for low- and middle-income countries by food-related nutrition problems include not only persistent undernutrition and stunting, but also widespread vitamin and mineral deficiencies and growing prevalence of overweight, obesity and non-communicable diseases. These different forms of malnutrition limit people's opportunity to live healthy and productive lives, and impede the growth of economies and whole societies.

The food environment from which consumers should be able to create healthy diets is influenced by four domains of economic activity:



In each of these domains, there is a range of policies that can have enormous influence on nutritional outcomes. In the Global Panel's Technical Brief, we explain how these policies can influence nutrition, both positively and negatively. We make an argument for an integrated approach, drawing on policies from across these domains, and the need for more empirical evidence to identify successful approaches.

**Find out more here: [www.glopan.org/technical-brief](http://www.glopan.org/technical-brief)**



Healthy meals in schools is an example of a policy in the **CONSUMER PURCHASING POWER** domain that can have a positive influence on nutritional outcomes.

Download *Policy Brief No. 3* here: [www.glopan.org/healthy-meals](http://www.glopan.org/healthy-meals)

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