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Home-Grown School Feeding: Case Studies on Procurement and Financing

A report by
the Sustainable Financing Initiative (SFI)
for School Health & Nutrition

June 2025

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the Sustainable Financing Initiative (SFI) for School Health and Nutrition of the School Meals Coalition. Funding was provided by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The SFI is led by the Learning Generation Initiative at the Education Development Center in Washington, D.C. The views presented are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the perspectives of the School Meals Coalition and its members.

The report summarizes four cases exploring the procurement models and financing for home-grown school feeding programmes (HGSF) in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Bolivia, Brazil, and Cambodia:

1. Rapid assessment of the Addis Ababa city school feeding programme, by Biniam Bedasso
2. Home-grown school feeding (HGSF) case studies – Bolivia, by Anabel Ariñez and Andres Peñaranda Muñoz
3. Financing of a home-grown school feeding programme in Brazil, by Instituto Comida do Amanhã
4. Sustainable financing for home-grown school feeding: a case study of Cambodia, by Kuntheara Tep and Sebastien Dubost

Special thanks are due to authors Helene Gourichon (SFI Country Lead) and Kevin Watkins (SFI Special Advisor). Members of the SFI team provided valuable input and support throughout, including Mohamed Abdiweli (SFI Lead for advocacy and Research); Amy Bellinger (Director, Learning Generation Initiative); Katie Cuthbert (Communications Lead); Katherine Kullman (Associate Project Director for School Health and Nutrition); and Oxcence Nyalundja (SFI Country Coordinator). The report also benefited from the review of HGSF experts Sokrathna Pheng (WFP) and Matthew Dearborn (WFP). Copy editing and references by Léa Rival. Graphic design by Garth Stewart. Any errors in the report are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Disclaimer

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Abbreviations

AU	African Union
CEASA	Central Food Supply Station (Brazil)
CSM	Complementary School Meals (Bolivia)
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FNDE	National Education Development Fund (Brazil)
GCNF	Global Child Nutrition Foundation
HGSF	Home-Grown School Feeding
IDH	Direct Hydrocarbons Tax (Bolivia)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (Cambodia)
MUFPP	Milan Urban Food Policy Pact
NHGSFP	National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (Cambodia)
NSPC	National Social Protection Council (Cambodia)
OECAS	Peasant and Indigenous Economic Organisations (Bolivia)
OECOM	Community Economic Organisations (Bolivia)
PNAE	National School Feeding Programme (Brazil)
PSA	Health and Happiness Project (Brazil)
SEMED	Municipal Department of Education (Brazil)
SFI	Sustainable Financing Initiative
SFPM	School Feeding Programme Mechanisms (Cambodia)
SICOES	State Contracting System (Bolivia)
SIREMU	Municipal Regulation and Supervision System (La Paz, Bolivia)
SUSAN	Office for Food Security and Nutrition (Belo Horizonte, Brazil)
UNFSS+4	UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake
USDA	US Department of Agriculture
WFP	World Food Programme

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Executive Summary

Well-designed home-grown school feeding (HGSF) programmes succeed in doing much more than providing children with a nutritious meal. Because they source their ingredients locally, these programmes can improve livelihoods, integrate smallholder farmers into local economies, and bolster the health and well-being of children and of the planet. For countries with high levels of rural poverty, food insecurity, and climate risk, procurement for school feeding can support a broad range of policy objectives, from improving nutrition to promoting the transition to planet-friendly agri-food systems.

This report, prepared by the Sustainable Financing Initiative (SFI) of the School Meals Coalition, considers how HGSF procurement models and financing mechanisms work by looking at four case studies, in Ethiopia, Bolivia, Brazil, and Cambodia.[a]

By examining how the HGSF programmes are structured, financed, and implemented at both national and municipal levels, the report aims to provide insights into how policies, procurement models and financing mechanisms influence programme implementation and vice versa, including smallholder farmer participation and local food system development.

The case studies illustrate the diverse and context-specific operating environments facing national and sub-national governments as they seek to develop HGSF programmes. Given this, the report does not attempt to provide specific recommendations on the design or implementation of the HGSF programmes, rather it draws conclusions along some of the themes that emerge.

Municipal-level procurement (decentralised procurement) can promote smallholder participation, but faces challenges

Procurement in all four countries is largely implemented at the municipal level, shaping how funds are allocated and food is sourced. Local governments seeking to integrate local food producers into supply chains must balance efficiency, cost, smallholder farmer participation, food safety, and the capacity of farmers and value chains. Brazil stands out for its 30% procurement mandate for smallholder farmers, which requires local authorities to ensure compliance. This two-tier system allows administrative pricing for small farmers while maintaining competitive bidding for larger suppliers. Bolivia's La Paz municipality has reduced barriers for smallholders by linking them with food companies supplying school meals. In other cities, however, many barriers remain, including overall access to credit, infrastructure, value chain development, and compliance with food safety standards.

Market structure, product types and capacity constraints matter

The characteristics of markets and products, particularly the distinction between perishable and non-perishable foods, strongly influence procurement strategies. Addis Ababa prioritises cost efficiency and scale, with HGSF dominated by the national food industry and, in the case of perishable foods, city-based wholesale markets. Bolivia's municipalities of Mecapaca and Comanche source all products domestically but struggle to buy locally due to quantity, quality, food safety, and distribution requirements that smallholder farmers find challenging. In La Paz, the authorities foster connections

a The national policy and institutional arrangements and financing mechanisms are analysed at both national and sub-national levels and the procurement and operational models are analysed at sub-national with assessment of the following municipalities Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, Belo Horizonte and Santarém in Brazil, Comanche, Mecapaca, and La Paz in Bolivia. For Cambodia, the case study focuses on the national level.

that ensure 80% of the products supplied come from local producers. Brazil's decentralised approach allows direct school-level purchasing of highly perishable foods from local suppliers, strengthening community-based food systems.

The case studies show that aspirational national policies can be difficult to implement with on-the-ground constraints and various factors—such as food type, supply chain logistics, food safety requirements, and local market structures—shaping procurement models at the municipal level. To overcome these challenges, municipalities have tailored their approaches, for instance by adjusting their budget cycles and payment processes, connecting directly with cooperatives, and offering some autonomy at school level.

Financing sources range from municipal budgets to national revenues

Addis Ababa's programme is fully funded from the municipal budget through local revenue taxation, emphasising cost-efficiency through large-scale procurement. In contrast, Brazil's programme is jointly financed by national and municipal budgets, incorporating local procurement policies that allow municipalities to work with producer cooperatives to achieve economies of scale. Bolivia and Cambodia rely on national government funding. Bolivia's programme is primarily funded by hydrocarbon taxes earmarked for school meals, supplemented by limited and variable contributions from municipal governments.

HGSF programmes need to be aligned with broader efforts to transform food systems for greater impact

The report also emphasises the challenge of using a single policy instrument—procurement for school meals—to pursue multiple policy objectives, such as improving nutrition among school children, making rural livelihoods more resilient, enhancing opportunities for smallholders, and developing dynamic economic linkages. This is a complex exercise at best.

The case studies suggest that food system policies, including investments in production capacity, infrastructure, and supply chain linkages, are needed to enable smallholder farmers to reap the benefits of school meal programmes. To overcome these barriers, HGSF cannot be treated as an isolated policy tool; instead, it should be integrated into broader food system transformation efforts. For instance, to enable small producers to participate effectively in institutional food programmes, production capacity might have to be strengthened or training on food safety standards might be needed to ensure compliance with procurement requirements. Forming strategic alliances among producer organisations, as well as partnerships with larger companies, can also help small producers meet quality standards and become reliable supplier.

As the global community prepares for the second UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4) in Addis Ababa (July 27–29, 2025), these lessons on procurement models, financing, and smallholder inclusion are especially timely. HGSF should be a key element of country-led strategies to transform food systems, complementing efforts to bolster rural livelihoods, improve children's education, health and well-being, and foster agri-food systems that are more planet-friendly.

Introduction and overview

School meal programmes have multiple objectives. While most started out with narrowly defined health and education goals, national strategies now have a wider range of aims, including social protection, support for agriculture, and the creation of dynamic linkages with rural livelihoods. Over half of the national programmes covered in the 2024 Global Survey of School Meals explicitly aimed to develop markets for smallholder agriculture, rising to four-fifths of programmes in low-income countries (GNCF, 2024). The African Union has identified home-grown school feeding (HGSF) as a critical link between its Agenda 2063, which sets out the region's long-term ambition, and the Sustainable Development Goals (AU, n.d.).

Even if only a small percentage of food is purchased locally from smallholder farmers, a programme can be considered as "home-grown" provided that procurement is designed to support and foster local food markets and that this objective is taken into consideration during programme design and implementation and institutionalized in related policies and regulations.

BOX 1. What is home-grown school feeding (HGSF)?

HGSF constitutes a school feeding model that is designed to provide children in schools with safe, diverse, and nutritious food, sourced locally from smallholder farmers.

Source: FAO & WFP, 2018

Public procurement for school feeding is a critical link in the HGSF chain. Procurement creates markets and provides government authorities with a mechanism to support specific groups of producers and specific food stakeholders along the value chain, and/or provide incentives for identifiable production practices. For example, municipal authorities participating in the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) are using procurement to advance wider goals related to low-carbon sustainable production, for instance by allocating a specific share of spending towards organic products (MUFPP, 2024). In the United States, a national 'farm-to-school' programme uses school meal procurement to support local livelihoods (USDA, 2025).

The idea of building a bridge from school meals to rural livelihoods has an intuitive appeal. For countries with high levels of rural poverty, food insecurity, and climate risk, procurement for school feeding has the potential to support wider strategies aimed at building more resilient peri-urban and rural livelihoods. It can inject demand into local, sub-national, and national markets, while creating jobs and investment opportunities. Public procurement can also bolster progress towards wider sustainability goals, providing support for smallholder agriculture, regenerative farming methods, and crop varieties suited to local inter-cropping systems that can enhance resilience and biodiversity (School Meals Coalition, 2023).

None of the prospective benefits are automatic. Policymakers face constraints and a range of trade-offs. Countries highly dependent on food imports may have limited national and local procurement options. Where imports are cheaper, local purchase will imply less supply for schools from an equivalent budget. Some countries may subsidise food imports, further undermining the competitiveness of domestic producers and posing challenges to national food production.

Additionally, there may be inherent tensions between providing what smallholders see as a remunerative price and what the private and public agents responsible for providing school meals see as an affordable price. Some research suggests that even large-scale national programmes may have limited effects on farm incomes, market incentives, or market structures (Gelli et al., 2021). Opportunities to source food locally may be limited in some countries by underdeveloped food value chain or food products of inadequate quality. Therefore, an important question for governments developing HGSF programmes is how best to structure and allocate scarce budgets to advance wider policy goals.

Approach and methodology

This brief report summarises four case studies of HGSF procurement and financing arrangements. The study locations were selected with a view to exploring policy environments and identifying lessons from very different contexts. They include one of Africa's largest municipalities (Addis Ababa), three municipalities in the Department of La Paz, Bolivia (Comanche, Mecapaca, and La Paz), two municipalities in Brazil (Belo Horizonte and Santarém), and a Cambodia rapid assessment study.

Our emphasis on municipal bodies was guided by two considerations. First, municipalities play a significant – and growing – role in providing school meals. Second, while each country in our case studies has a national programme (albeit of recent origin in Ethiopia), procurement policies are implemented locally.

The research methodology applied across the case studies combines analysis of official policy documents, secondary literature, key informant interviews, and a review and analysis of sources on qualitative and quantitative impacts. Key informant interviews included senior government officials, municipal authority staff, and representatives from school feeding agencies and caterer associations. The research does not provide an evaluation of programme effectiveness, but it offers insights into structures, practices, the regulatory environment, and the perceptions of actors involved in implementation. One of the limitations is the level of detail available in the Cambodia case study. Others include more information on food provenance, procurement process for specific products or more detailed data on budget allocated. More details on methodology can be found in the case studies.

Key themes from the paper

Evidence from the case studies highlights policy issues which go beyond the very immediate policy environments. Three themes stand out.

First, the links with smallholder agriculture and local production are not automatic. Brazil's programme is distinctive in that it reserves 30% of procurement for smallholders and requires local procurement agencies to report on compliance. The programme operates a two-tier pricing system, combining competitive public bidding for non-smallholder suppliers and administrative pricing for smallholders (typically based on market averages). Smallholders often face barriers to procurement markets because they find it difficult to access credit, infrastructure, and other productive inputs, and to comply with health and safety requirements. In Bolivia, the municipality of La Paz has lowered these barriers by linking farmers to larger food companies that supply schools.

Second, product markets play an important role in structuring opportunities, as well as the nature of the product (perishable versus non-perishable). In Addis Ababa, school meal procurement focuses on wheat flour, bread, rice, teff (a grain native to Ethiopia), injera (a local bread, made from teff), and vegetables. On behalf of the school feeding agency, municipal authorities negotiate pricing and delivery

arrangements with major contracted suppliers for bread and wheat flour while caterers purchase vegetables. While a significant (though uncertain) share of wheat is imported, teff, injera, and rice are nationally produced. Municipal authorities have made some efforts to build local linkages, though these have received a lower priority than wider efficiency goals and economies of scale. In Bolivia, high-energy processed food bars figure prominently on school menus, which has created a direct market for national food companies and an indirect market for the farmers who supply them with cereal, fruits, and nuts. In Belo Horizonte, the Office for Food Security and Nutrition (SUSAN in its Portuguese acronym) is responsible for purchasing non-perishable and perishable food, while the school unit buys highly perishable food directly from local suppliers.

Third, HGSF programmes differ markedly in their procurement and financing mechanisms. In Addis Ababa, HGSF is dominated by procurement from national food distributors and, in the case of perishable foods, city-based wholesale markets. There is a strong emphasis on securing economies of scale. Municipalities in Brazil place greater emphasis on local procurement, working through producer cooperatives that can generate economies of scale that would be unavailable through contracting arrangements with multiple small farmers. Municipalities in Brazil and La Paz in Bolivia have been able to create conditions conducive to local suppliers through prompt payments and (in the case of La Paz) a predictable two-year budget cycle. In Cambodia, procurement is managed at commune level through a competitive process prioritising local suppliers. Regarding financing sources and mechanisms, in Addis Ababa, the programme is entirely funded from the city's budget. In Brazil, the programme is funded through national and local government budgets while in Cambodia and Bolivia, it is entirely funded by the national government, in Bolivia this is largely funded by a hydrocarbon tax.

This report is organised in three sections. Section 1 outlines the context in which programmes are implemented and key features. Section 2 turns to the regulatory environment and institutional governance arrangements. Section 3 examines procurement models, while Section 4 looks at financing. The report concludes by considering some of the broad lessons to emerge from the case studies.

1. Selected case studies and key features

The countries and municipalities selected vary enormously in average income, agricultural production, infrastructure, and – critically – the history and political economy of school feeding. They were chosen because of these differences, to explore policy conditions and lessons in widely varying situations; the case studies were not developed to identify best practices or to compare efficiency across countries and contexts but were identified to shed light on the procurement and financing of HGSF in different contexts.

The case studies identify several distinctive models:

- **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,** has a hybrid model funded by the municipality with school meal provision outsourced to caterer associations, while municipal school feeding agencies facilitate agreements with large suppliers of industrially processed goods to obtain economies of scale.
- **Comanche, Mecapaca and La Paz, Bolivia,** follow a model in which procurement is led by municipalities. Cities with reduced budgets make direct contracts with local suppliers, while larger cities use a public bidding process. Financing is national, with limited contributions from municipalities.

- **Belo Horizonte and Santarém, Brazil,** follow national rules with procurement led by municipalities. Public auctions are held for non-family farming, with suppliers tendering at national level, while food is procured directly from family farming at stipulated prices. For highly perishable products, procurement at the school level is possible in some cities. Financial contributions come from national and decentralised levels.
- **Cambodia** has a decentralised procurement model, led by municipalities through competitive bidding. Funding is national, with implementation at an early stage.

Table 1 – Overview of case studies

	Coverage	Policy framework	Institutional arrangements	Procurement	Financing mechanism	Incentives for local suppliers
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	All children in public primary and pre-primary schools within the city and peri-urban special zone (779,000 children) (2024).	2020: National School Feeding Policy 2019: Addis Ababa city school feeding programme.	Implementation and financing executed by city administration (Addis Ababa School Feeding Agency).	Hybrid model: meal provision by caterer associations; municipal school feeding agency facilitates agreements with larger suppliers for industrially processed goods.	Entirely funded by the city's budget from the city's general revenue. Budget per child per day for two meals: USD 0.29 (2024/25).	Subsidies to bread supplier.
Comanche, Mecapaca and La Paz, Bolivia	2.6 million children benefit nationally in 99.4% of municipalities, in all educational levels in public schools (2022).	2000: National Health and School Feeding policy 2006: National policy consolidated and beginning of the Complementary School Feeding programme.	Central budget transferred to municipalities responsible for providing school meals.	Led by the municipalities through public bidding processes; cities with reduced budgets can purchase directly from local suppliers.	National funding with ¾ of the budget funded by revenue from the Direct Hydrocarbons Tax and limited contributions from municipalities. Budget per child per day: USD 0.22 (2022).	La Paz: Fairs and business-to-business roundtable to link local farmers with companies awarded contract. Budget planned in a 2-year cycle, facilitating planning and predictability for producers.
Belo Horizonte and Santarém, Brazil	National: 40 million students enrolled in 150,000 public basic education schools (2021).	2009: National School Feeding Programme (second version)	Programme coordinated by the Ministry of Education which transfers funds to local governments for implementation.	Procurement led by municipalities. Public auctions for non-family farming, with suppliers tendering at national level. Procurement directly from family farming at stipulated prices. In Belo Horizonte: procurement at school level for highly perishable products.	National fund transferred at federal levels to cover the costs of food; other costs covered by municipalities. Budget from national government differs according to the type of school: from 0.09 in elementary and high schools to 0.47 for full-time high school support programme, per student per day.	Possibility to purchase food from family farmers or cooperatives without public bidding but through public calls, no price competition.

Table 1 – Overview of case studies continued

	Coverage	Policy framework	Institutional arrangements	Procurement	Financing mechanism	Incentives for local suppliers
Cambodia	National, benefiting 113,319 students at 427 schools (2022/23).	National school feeding policy operates under Sub-Decree #65 (2023) aligned with the national social protection policy.	Supervision under the National Social Protection Council (NSPC). Implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS). Decentralised procurement.	Managed at commune level through competitive biddings prioritising local suppliers.	Government funding with annual budget reviewed and approved by NSPC. Budget per child per day: USD 0.20 (2024).	

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

With a population of 5.7 million, Addis Ababa is growing rapidly. Due to the city's devolved authority under Ethiopia's federal system, the administration has been able to implement school feeding in all public primary and pre-primary schools. In the rest of the country, by contrast, school feeding coverage stands at 38% as of 2024 (GCNF Survey, 2024). The Addis Ababa city school feeding programme was established in its current form in 2019 by the mayor of the city. Coverage more than doubled between 2020 and 2024, from 375,000 to 779,000 children (Bedasso, 2024). The programme provides two meals per day. The Addis Ababa school feeding directive mandates that each child receives at least 205 grams of food per day, providing approximately 803 calories (ibid.). This is equivalent to 38% of the average daily intake for the age range covered by the programme. According to the most recent menu (approved in March 2024), the main food items in the school feeding programme are injera (Ethiopian flatbread), bread rolls, rice, and lentil/split pea or vegetable stew.

The Addis Ababa school feeding programme requires 11,975 tonnes of teff annually, about 11% of the city's teff market (ibid.). Most supply comes from teff growing districts bordering the city, particularly in the southeast and along a corridor to the northwest. These areas are best suited for supply-chain links due to proximity and transport infrastructure.

The programme requires 12,384 tonnes of wheat flour annually, mainly for bread rolls served at breakfast. While wheat is sourced from all cereal-producing regions, northern districts near Addis Ababa are key suppliers. Despite Ethiopia's 2023 self-sufficiency declaration, the programme probably relies heavily on imported wheat, which accounted for 16% of the national supply in 2022, due to unmet demand and lower international prices.

The programme's menu requires rice to be served twice a week, creating an annual demand of around 1,241 tones. Given that imports account for less than 1% of Ethiopia's rice supply as of 2022, it is likely the programme's rice demand is met almost entirely through domestic production, which has increased significantly in recent years.

Mecapaca, Comanche, and La Paz, Bolivia

Children and adolescents in Bolivia attending public schools started to benefit from a national school meals programme in 2000. The programme, initially known as Desayuno Escolar (School Breakfast) was renamed Complementary School Meals (CSM) in 2006.[b] Today, the programme covers all children attending public schools, around 2.6 million children. CSM encompasses both school breakfast and/or lunch programmes, though most municipalities primarily provide breakfast or afternoon snacks. The national policy has embraced the HGSF approach. Law 622, which governs Bolivia's CSM programme, mandates that municipal governments procure high-quality food at fair prices, with priority given to local family and small-scale producers.

The case study focuses on three municipalities in the Department of La Paz: Comanche, Mecapaca, and the city of La Paz. They vary in important respects. La Paz is the third-largest city in the country by population (755,000) and is overwhelmingly urban. The city provides daily school meals to almost 127,000 children across 366 schools. Mecapaca (population 20,000) is a small municipality with many schools in sparsely populated areas. Currently, 3,050 students are receiving the CSM in 31 public schools. Comanche is a small, largely rural municipality (population 5,000), where the school meals programme covers fewer than 800 children in 20 public schools.

In Mecapaca and Comanche, all products are sourced from producers located in Bolivia. However, none are locally produced, as small-scale farmers and producers lack the capacity to meet the CSM's requirements for quantity, quality, food safety, and distribution (Ariñez & Peñaranda Muñoz, 2024).

Food served in Mecapaca includes nutritious bars made from the grains quinoa, amaranth, and oats, along with such ingredients as raisins, cocoa chips, dried fruit, and nuts. Other offerings include cereal cakes, flavoured milk, yogurt, and fruit beverages. In Comanche, weekly menus feature sweet bread, cheese bread (empanadas), fruits (banana, orange), oats, whole grain cookies, yogurt, pilfrut (a dairy beverage), and fruit juices (ibid.).

In La Paz, the municipality fosters connections between local producers and the companies awarded CSM contracts, ensuring that 80% of the products supplied come from domestic producers (including small producer associations). Since 2024, the city has offered children highly diverse menus, including products from different regions, nutritionally designed recipes and exclusive packaging. Menus are tailored to different age groups and students with special dietary needs.

Santarém and Belo Horizonte, Brazil

The National School Feeding Programme (PNAE – Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar) allocates federal funds for the purchase of food by state and municipal education departments, establishes rules for federative entities to access these resources, and ensures students' food and nutritional security. PNAE is considered a key way to include family farmers and traditional communities in the economy, as it determines which foods and processing levels should be prioritised or avoided on school menus (WFP, 2025) and simplifies the bureaucracy for access to public procurement.

b In 2006 the term *Desayuno Escolar* (School Breakfast) was changed to Alimentación Complementaria Escolar (Complementary School Meal).

The programme provides meals to more than 40 million students enrolled in 150,000 public basic education schools – federal, state, and municipal. The schools are located in 5,570 municipalities all around the country. In all Brazilian public schools school meals are free of charge for all children and partly funded by the federal government.

According to the programme's regulation, meals must be defined by nutritionists and meet nutritional requirements. In traditional communities, meals also must respect traditional food habits.

Since 2009, PNAE has ruled that at least 30% of its federal funds be spent on purchasing food directly from family farms or traditional community farms, preferably local ones (Tângari et al., 2024). The '30% rule' also requires that procurement procedures remain easy and prohibits competition among suppliers. Prices for farmers must be fair and set in advance at the public procurement call (ibid.).

Two case studies were selected for this research: Belo Horizonte[c] and Santarém.[d] In Belo Horizonte, all 514 public schools are served by the school feeding programme, which reaches 194,361 students (ibid. p. 9). A combination of local and non-local food is served.

In Santarém, all 442 schools are served by the school feeding programme (ibid. p. 21). In these schools, all of the 43 fresh and minimally processed products in school meals come from local family farmers.

Cambodia

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in Cambodia, initiated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) with WFP support, began to aid vulnerable children in 1999. HGSF pilots were initiated in 2014. In 2020, the government began funding the national HGSF programme, targeting 205 schools in six provinces (Tep & Dubost, 2024). By 2022-2023, NHGSFP reached 427 schools in 10 provinces, benefiting 113,319 students. The programme aims to enhance food security and stimulate local economic development by sourcing 70% of food from smallholder farmers, while the remaining 30% is outsourced to ensure that meals are provided even when local supplies are insufficient (ibid.). However, food provenance is not monitored.

The HGSF programme adheres to portion size and food frequency recommendations from the Operational Guidelines of MoEYS but lacks specific targets for meeting children's daily nutrient needs through school meals.

The programme plays a significant role in empowering women economically. Women comprise 75% of smallholder farmers, 74% of suppliers, and 66% of cooks (WFP, 2024).

c Located in Minas Gerais state, in Southeast region, which is the transition between the Atlantic Forest and Cerrado biomes.

d Located in Pará state, North region, within the Amazon biome.

2. Policy framework and institutional arrangements

The four case studies span very different policy environments. Cambodia's school feeding programme has grown rapidly from a small pilot project but is not yet universal. By contrast, both Brazil and Bolivia have well-established universal programmes. The school meals programme in Addis Ababa is an exception as it operates in a decentralized framework, with regional states and municipalities taking on an implementation role and the federal government playing a coordinating and standard-setting role.

Ethiopia

While school feeding programmes have been deployed extensively in Ethiopia in response to food shortages, it was not until 2021 that the government adopted the National School Feeding Policy under the Federal Ministry of Education. The policy identifies local agricultural development as an objective and explicitly adopts a 'home-grown' implementation strategy. This approach includes creating linkages with local smallholder farmers and stimulating the development of large-scale farms (Bedasso, 2024 p. 8). The promotion of local procurement extends beyond agricultural produce to include manufactured products from local suppliers. The policy also allows for international food sourcing during emergencies. At the subnational level, a Guide for School Feeding Menus for Addis Ababa, has also been recently developed to support the implementation of the programme and ensure that meals served align with national nutritional guidelines (Ethiopian Public Health Institute, 2025).

The Federal Ministry of Education coordinates policymaking and coordination and can mobilise resource for regions lacking funding. However, implementation is decentralised, reflecting the autonomy granted to regions by the federal constitution, and there is no dedicated federal budget for school feeding. The Regional states and city administrations are responsible for establishing programmes and allocating budgets.

In Addis Ababa, the city government manages the universal school meals programme through the Addis Ababa School Feeding Agency, created in 2021, which reports to the mayor's office. In contrast with the national policy, the city's directive on school meals suggests a preference for local producers but does not explicitly mention a HGSF approach. The contrast between national policy goals and local implementation highlights challenges in aligning policy, given competing priorities and practical constraints.

Strategic and technical guidance for the programme is provided by the city's food and nutrition taskforce, which consists of 16 bureaus and agencies across various sectors. The education bureau is inevitably the primary stakeholder as it is responsible for the city's schools and the education system. However, it does not exercise direct authority over the agency or the operation of the school meals programme. This governance arrangement provides the School Feeding Agency with a degree of autonomy.

Bolivia

Bolivia has established specific laws and regulations for procuring and distributing of school meals and supporting small-scale producers.

The success of Bolivia's school meal programme relies on coordination between different levels of government, community involvement, and parents, with support from relevant ministries.

Law 622 (2014) grants municipalities the authority to directly provide school meals, with procurement processes overseen by municipal autonomous governments. The legislation encourages sourcing from local producers, but there is no legally mandated percentage of local food procurement.

Law 338 further supports the participation of Peasant and Indigenous Economic Organizations (OECAS) and Community Economic Organizations (OECOM) in supplying food for school meals, aiming to integrate them into sustainable family agriculture.

As a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Bolivia has also established a broader national framework to uphold the right to food and promote food security and sovereignty.

Brazil

The National School Meal Programme in Brazil (PNAE) is coordinated by the National Education Development Fund (FNDE). This regulatory agency in the Ministry of Education is responsible for defining the programme's technical and financial rules, controlling fund transfers, and ensuring that implementing institutions and local governments comply with PNAE rules.

The National Policy for Family Farming and Rural Family Enterprises establishes specific criteria for family farming. These include ownership of a stipulated land area up to a specified ceiling and predominant use of family labour. In addition, income from the farm must not be lower than income from other sources (Tângari et al., 2024 p. 3).

At the state and local levels, the state and municipal education secretaries are responsible for implementing the programme, in accordance with the federal regulation. They can also go beyond the federal regulation, defining additional requirements and rules, as well as complementing the funds needed to assure universal and healthy free school meals.

In Santarém, the municipality follows PNAE regulations, while a municipal decree regulates sanitary inspections of food for public school feeding. Management of the school feeding programme is entirely centralised in the Municipal Department of Education (SEMED), which coordinates the programme with the School Feeding Council, the Health Surveillance Office, and the Municipal Department of Agriculture.

Cambodia

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Cambodia (NHGSFP) operates within a well-defined policy framework, with significant coordination among various ministries and sub-national administrations (WFP, 2024). The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) takes the lead, ensuring integration with national educational policies, while the National Social Protection Council (NSPC) establishes and oversees school meals policies. The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) reviews and approves budgets for the programme, providing financial backing since 2020.

The government is also empowering sub-national authorities through the decentralisation of education functions, aligned with broader democratic reforms that seek to enhance the autonomy and responsibility of district and municipal administrations.

The School Feeding Programme Mechanisms (SFPM) at the sub-national level include three distinct levels:

- The Provincial School Feeding Programme Committee, chaired by the provincial governor, with the provincial education offices serving as the secretariat. Provincial line departments from the relevant national ministries are also members.
- The district/municipal School Feeding Programme Committee, chaired by the district governors, with the district education offices serving as the secretariat.
- The Commune School Feeding Programme Committee, chaired by the commune chief, with directors from target schools as permanent members, alongside other councillors and village chiefs, as well as additional members from communities, such as elderly people, as needed.

Of the schools involved, 92% have a functioning school feeding committee to oversee the implementation at school levels.

3. Procurement and operational models

The contexts for the case studies vary enormously. Brazil is a middle-income country and one of the world's largest agricultural exporters, with a highly developed agricultural infrastructure. By contrast, Ethiopia is a low-income country highly dependent on food imports. The case studies capture a broad array of procurement arrangements, but procurement at local level is a common feature. Within the same city, a combination of mechanisms can be identified. In Addis Ababa, city-level contracts for key staples are complemented by school-level provision for other products. In Belo Horizonte, Brazil, perishable and non-perishable food is sourced at city level and highly perishable food at school level. Several factors influence operational models: type of food sourced; offers, including the possibility to buy large quantities, and stakeholders involved; the possible economies of scale; food safety and policy objectives (local food or family farming).

Procurement policies and the design of school menus can have a significant bearing on access to markets. The position of smallholder farmers, wholesalers, and other intermediaries in value chains is highly differentiated by product, market relations, and the profile of farm production. Market opportunities and the distribution of benefits among suppliers to school meals programmes depend on market structures, purchase arrangements, and the profile of value chains.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The school meals programme in Addis Ababa operates through an outsourced model in which caterers' associations manage daily operations, including procurement of some products. The associations are organised by the city's Bureau of Women and Children Affairs, with catering contracts awarded for five-year periods. The official directive stipulates one caterer for every 50-70 children. Currently, 678 caterer associations are providing services (Bedasso, 2024 p.6).

These associations, each led by an executive committee, enjoy significant autonomy in selecting suppliers. There are only two procurement clauses in the directive. The first requires that injera and stew ingredients be prepared on-site, while the second mandates that bread and other inputs be sourced from dedicated suppliers. For industrially processed goods like bread, wheat flour, and cooking oil, procurement is centralised through city-negotiated contracts with companies such as Sheger Bakery and Gift Trading (ibid. p. 13). These arrangements enable economies of scale and logistical efficiencies, including subsidies for bread production and delivery services.

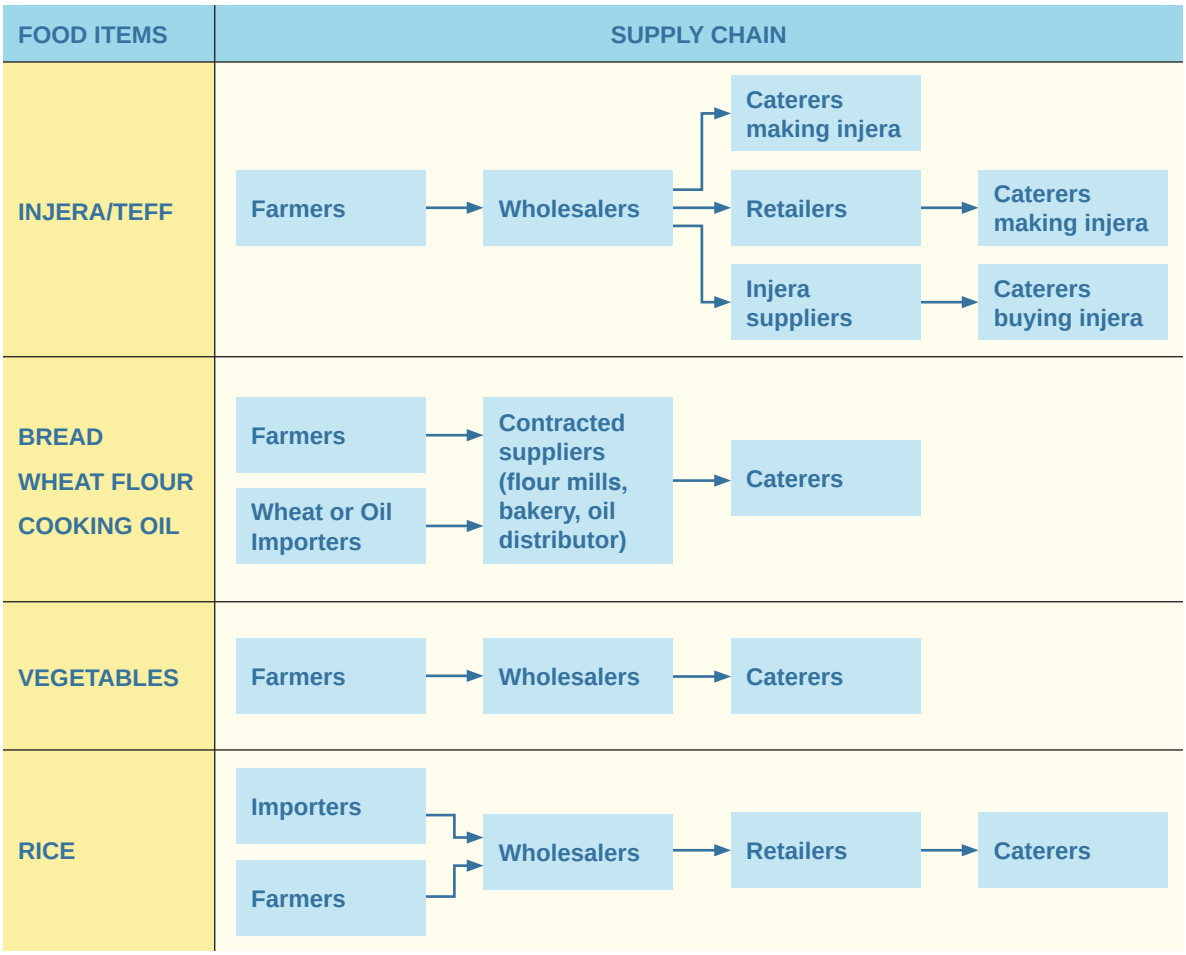
The procurement 'market' is defined by the school menu (Figure 1), which is set at the start of each academic year by a taskforce of officials representing various bureaus in the city administration.[e] In the case of injera, caterers' associations can source teff – the grain used to make injera – directly from wholesalers in central markets or from local neighbourhood retailers – which offers credit flexibility despite higher costs. Alternatively, they can buy injera from bulk suppliers. Vegetables are typically procured from the central city market, with wholesalers aggregating produce from across the country. Rice is sourced from local retailers who may supply imported or domestically produced grain.

While the city's directive on school meals suggests a preference for local producers, it does not explicitly mention a HGSF approach and in practice, they prioritize food safety contrasting with the national policy's 'home-grown' vision. Efforts to link procurement with local farmers have faced challenges. Notably, attempts to establish contracts with teff-producing farmers' cooperatives were hindered by legal and operational ambiguities. For instance, the Agricultural Production Contract Proclamation (2023) requires purchasing parties to provide inputs and technical support to contracted farmers, and it was unclear how the caterers' associations could fulfil this obligation. Moreover, the programme's two-week reimbursement cycle conflicted with the bulk payment schedules required by farmers. Leadership turnover within the city administration further disrupted these negotiations.

Despite these setbacks, the school feeding agency remains committed to exploring local procurement opportunities. Current initiatives include assessing the feasibility of incorporating milk and eggs into the menu through partnerships with small-scale poultry farms and large-scale dairy farms near Addis Ababa. Development partners involved in dairy value chains have shown interest in collaborating on a pilot milk supply project. This operational model highlights a balance between decentralised autonomy for caterers and centralised interventions for key supplies.

e The Addis Ababa school feeding directive mandates that each child receives at least 205 grams of food per day, providing approximately 803 calories - equivalent to around 38% of the average daily intake for the age range covered.

Figure 1. Current supply chain for major food items procured for the Addis Ababa school feeding programme



Mecapaca, Comanche and La Paz, Bolivia

There are marked differences in procurement and marketing practices both within and across municipal bodies in Bolivia.

Municipalities are responsible for overseeing procurement. Each year, municipalities issue open public tenders in compliance with the laws and regulations governing public procurement. When the budget is less than 50,000 bolivianos (approximately USD 7,000), some municipalities are allowed to directly contract local suppliers for school meals, provided these suppliers operate within the municipality and meet the required conditions. Otherwise municipalities must follow standard public bidding processes, with procedures regulated and approved by the municipal executive body.

The municipalities of Mecapaca and Comanche have unique approaches to delivering the Complementary School Meals programme (CSM), while complying with all relevant laws and regulations. In both municipalities, schools represented by the school administration and school board (which includes parents, teachers, students and community representatives) evaluate the school meal programme each year and formulate requests for the following year. The school boards oversee the programme's hygiene and nutrition standards and play a role in selecting suppliers. Both municipalities issue public calls for proposals to source, distribute, and manage the CSM programme. The municipalities use Bolivia's State Contracting System (SICOES) to publish procurement information (Ariñez and Peñaranda Muñoz, A, 2024 p.11).

In Comanche, the education board, local authorities, and parents collaborate to determine whether food will be sourced through a public bidding process for processed food or through a more direct arrangement involving food preparation in schools and local distribution. In principle, Comanche has a direct purchase option because of the smaller size of its budget. But the municipality cannot take advantage of this opportunity because small farmers and producers cannot meet the school's demand. In 2024, Comanche opted for the public bidding process.

Authorities in Mecapaca are legally required to issue public calls for proposals rather than make direct purchases. The successful companies are responsible for buying raw materials to produce the school meals, or the final food products from smaller producers,[f] and delivering them to schools. While Mecapaca ensures its schools have the infrastructure to store and distribute meals, Comanche faces challenges as not all schools have essential kitchen appliances.

Procurement and contracting decisions are based on cost, nutrition, delivery capacity. Most products delivered through the CSM in Mecapaca and Comanche are provided through large-scale producers and food processors operating at national scale. No local farmers or suppliers serve the CSM programmes, as they lack the productive or logistical capacity to meet the municipality's demand. They are also unable to fully comply with the certification required by law.

La Paz is legally required to issue public calls for proposals rather than making direct purchases, due to the amount of the budget allocated for the CSM. The city has developed internal legislation for managing the CSM, with the municipal government issuing six public bids every two years. After the bidding process, six companies are selected to manage the production, packaging, distribution, and delivery of meals.

Schools in La Paz follow three distinct schedules: morning, afternoon, and night shifts. Consequently, companies awarded contracts through bids are required to distribute the rations three times a day, every day.

The education boards, municipal authorities, and the Municipal Regulation and Supervision System (SIREMU) oversee the programme's hygiene, safety, and nutrition standards, and they participate in selecting suppliers. The Municipal Secretariat of Education provides the recipes and nutritional guidelines for the meals. SIREMU has the authority to sanction companies that fail to meet nutritional standards, deliver poor-quality food, or deliver food late.

The procurement process for La Paz has two distinctive features. First, municipal nutritionists stipulate the recipes to be followed in the production of high protein bars, limiting the scope for companies to introduce sugar, salt, or fat-intensive recipes. Second, the biannual nature of the contracting provides companies with a strong incentive to participate in the bidding process and to invest in developing competitive capabilities.

La Paz has also developed several innovative programmes aimed at integrating local farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) into the CSM supply chain. While the municipality has only a small number of small-scale farmers, authorities have used state fairs and business-to-business roundtables to link SMEs, local farmers, and small farmers from other areas with companies awarded CSM contracts. One result is that around 80% of the products supplied come from domestic producers, including small producer associations.

f Including small and medium farmers, SMEs, local producer associations and other food companies.

Another instrument that the municipality of La Paz uses to support entrepreneurship among emerging SMEs is an initiative called Yapita Paceña. This programme offers an additional food serving, distributed three times a year alongside the CSM by local SMEs to celebrate special occasions.

The budget of the CSM in La Paz is planned on a two-year cycle, so the contracts with the awarded companies are also valid for two years. This facilitates longer-term investment and planning for producers.

All CSM products delivered in La Paz are required to be environmentally friendly. The selected companies must place significant emphasis on such considerations as packaging, waste disposal, and recycling.

Comparisons of supply chains in La Paz and Mecapaca illustrate the strong presence of local farmers and small-scale agri-food companies at the base of the system (Figure 2 and Figure 3)

Figure 2. Value chain in the municipality of Mecapaca

Farmers	Food production	Food procurement	Food processing	Logistics (storage and distribution	Storage and delivery of CSM	Consumption by students
Farmers **Food producers** **Farmers associations**		**Municipal Government of Mecapaca and awarded company**	**Awarded company: SOALBO – Panissimo**		**Public schools**	**Consumption by students**

Figure 3. Supply chain in the municipality of La Paz

Farmers	Food production	Food procurement	Food processing	Logistics (storage and distribution	Storage and delivery of CSM	Consumption by students
Farmers **Small holder farmers** **Farmers associations:** • **UNAPO** a producers association of bananas and citrics from the Department of La Paz **Food producers:** • Irupana • Cóndor • Pexbol • Alianza Nuez Amazónica • Fundeco • El Ceibo		**Municipal Government of La Paz and awarded company**	**Awarded companies:** • **SOALPRO SRL** • **Compañia de Alimentos Pan Casero** • **La Francesa** • Tecalim – Tecnología en Alimentos • Sociedad Industrial Molinera • Unapo		**Public schools**	**Consumption by students**

Santarém and Belo Horizonte, Brazil

While Brazil has a well-defined national policy, states and municipalities can tailor it to their specific needs. Procurement mechanisms are decentralised. For non-family farm purchases, they include tendering with suppliers through electronic public auctions or wholesale tendering at national level.

Procurement also takes place directly from family farmers at stipulated prices – basically estimated average prices for prevailing market conditions. There is a high degree of localisation in purchase arrangements for highly perishable foods.

In Belo Horizonte, procurement of non-perishable and perishable food is centralised through the Office for Food Security and Nutrition (SUSAN), which is part of the city administration. SUSAN is responsible for planning, procurement, quality control, and distribution of food to school units. SUSAN employs 75 nutritionists for menu planning, nutritional education, and quality control. Deliveries are mainly made at the Food Supply Center for School Feeding, managed by SUSAN. From there, food is distributed to school units, where meals are prepared. The cooks are employees hired by a company outsourced by SUSAN. In the partner schools, management of the cooks is handled by the schools themselves.

Most perishable foods, such as fruits and vegetables, come from traders sourcing at the Central Food Supply Station (CEASA). Non-perishable foods are purchased from wholesale suppliers by SUSAN.

Centralised procurement for general purchases occurs through competitive public bidding for SUSAN contracts in an electronic auction. This allows suppliers from all over Brazil to tender for contracts on the Federal Government's Purchasing Portal.

Another share of the food procurement – still centralised at SUSAN – is not made through public bidding but through public calls for family farmers (as mandated by a PNAE national rule). This is a slightly different procedure, where there is no competition but a predefinition of prices to be paid for the produces, and beneficiaries are only family farmer associations or cooperatives. The price to be paid in these processes is defined based on a market average.

There is no monitoring of the origin of food, as the 30% family farming share rule is not linked to the locality of the producer. FNDE only asks municipalities to account for the share of the budget used for purchasing food directly from family farmers, regardless of these family farmers being local or from other regions of the country.

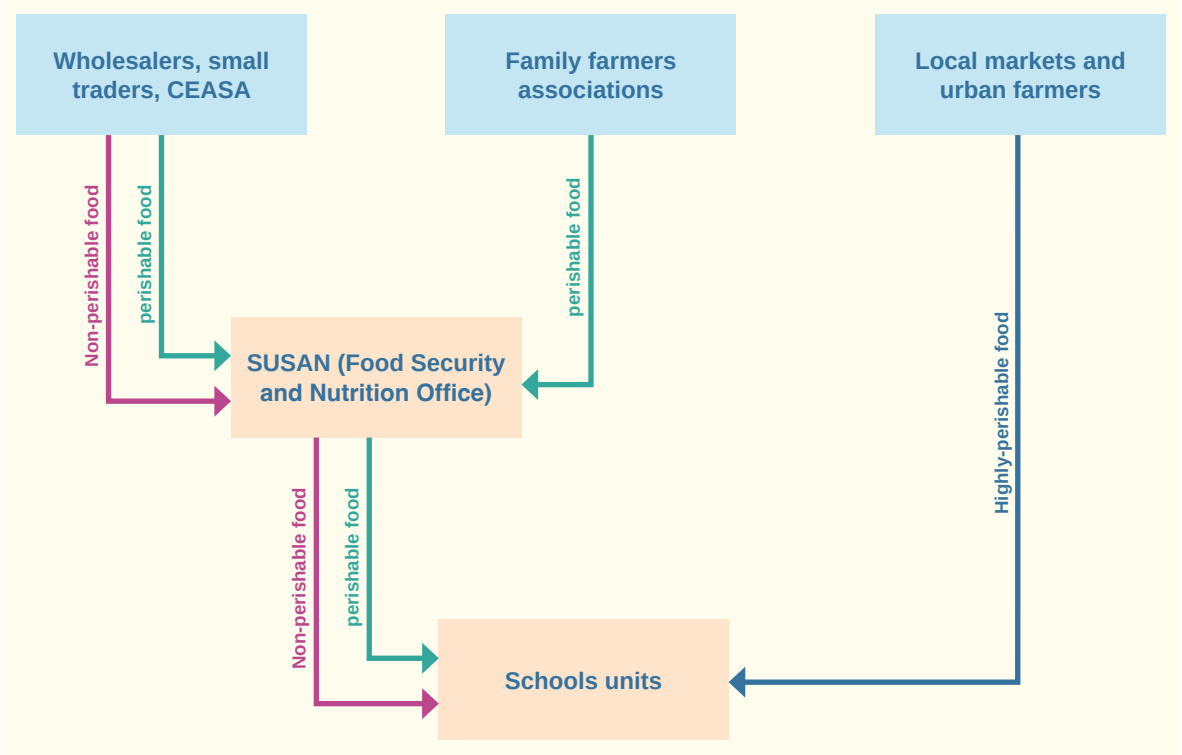
Highly perishable items, like leafy greens and special diet foods, are purchased locally by schools from small markets or urban farmers. School units get a small credit from the school meals budget to make these purchases. The volumes and values of food purchased within this exceptional format are not monitored by SUSAN, but they represent a great opportunity to promote local food supply chains.

Procurement structures in Belo Horizonte are summarised in Figure 4.

For seven school regions, perishable food is supplied by traders that purchase their produce at CEASA, while two other regionals schools purchase fruits and vegetables directly from family farmers. Logistical challenges prevent expansion to all regional schools. Family farmers include a total of six associations or cooperatives, two of which are local farmer cooperatives located in the Belo Horizonte Metropolitan Region.

As in other states, family farmers in Belo Horizonte are supported through infrastructure and extension services. There is also a major initiative aimed at developing urban agriculture through the Belo Horizonte Urban Agriculture Productive Units Programme, which, besides the food security and nutrition aspects, focuses on transforming unproductive and abandoned areas into agro-ecological production sites.

Figure 4. Food purchasing for school meals in Belo Horizonte



Source: Comida do Amanhã Institute, from data provided by Belo Horizonte City Hall.

Procurement arrangements in Santarém share some features with those in Belo Horizonte, but there are also significant differences, partly reflecting the extent of its territory and the remoteness of many schools.

Food procurement for PNAE purchases is centralised in SEMED. Schools have no financial autonomy for food purchases, though menus are determined through consultations and advice from nutritionists.

Administrative arrangements are organised in three regions:

1. the urban central region
2. the plateau region, where schools can be reached by road
3. the river region, where schools can only be reached by river.

As in Belo Horizonte. non-perishable foods are purchased using regular public bidding. SEMED operates a distribution centre to which the food from these suppliers is delivered for later distribution to school units. In 2023, there were six suppliers, five of them located in the Santarém Region.

The cooperatives receive an online list from SEMED detailing the items and quantities needed for the schools and then organise themselves to consolidate the deliveries from all members. Fresh food is delivered directly to school units by local farmers. Food is prepared directly by the school cooks, employed by the municipality. The direct relationship between local producers and schools is recognised as an important feature of the arrangement.

Farm cooperatives occupy a critical position. All fresh food is supplied by five family farming cooperatives in the Santarém Region, along with an association of organic and agroecological producers, Associação dos Produtores Orgânicos do Tapajós, made up of 21 local farmers, and various informal groups.

As in Belo Horizonte, producers have access to technical assistance for family farming, in this case through the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company of the State of Pará (EMATER Pará) and the Health and Happiness Project (PSA). In addition, the Municipal Department of Agriculture and Fisheries supports producers with equipment, technical assistance, seed distribution, and infrastructure development.

Also as in Belo Horizonte, purchases from family farmers in Santarém are not subject to competitive bidding. Prices are determined by a complex process that is performed each time a public call is organised. First, SEMED's tendering department conducts market research by visiting fairs and markets to get three prices per type of product, from which it derives an average price. Before launching the tenders at this price, SEMED staff consult with local cooperatives and producers to ascertain potential interest and capacity to supply. The price is therefore fixed or adapted and paid to farmers during the agreement period, even if the market price fluctuates throughout the year. Payments to farmers are made promptly, with transfers through SEMED taking an average of 10 days from the delivery of food.

Cambodia

Procurement in Cambodia is managed by a commune School Feeding Programme Committee, chaired by the commune chief, with school directors and other local officials. They are responsible for planning, selecting food suppliers, preparing menus, placing orders, receiving supplies, cooking, and making payments.

The procurement process encourages competitive bidding and suppliers are asked to provide prices for both dry and rainy seasons. Bids exceeding the estimated price by 10% or more are rejected or further assessed by the local procurement committee (Tep and Dubost, 2024 p.14). The lowest acceptable bid is awarded the contract, and supplier performance is monitored to ensure compliance with contract terms.

Priority for cost negotiations is given to potential suppliers or businesses residing within the commune, but the food might not be necessarily produced locally. Most suppliers cited convenience as the primary factor influencing their own purchasing decisions in local markets. Challenges also include the difficulty bidders face in factoring in all costs, which can affect bid accuracy, and the focus on selecting the lowest bids, which may overlook other important factors like quality and sustainability. The local food procurement environment is influenced by cheaper imported products, which can undercut local suppliers.

There is no rigorous monitoring of purchase arrangements, making it difficult to determine how much is obtained from local producers and markets. However, localised evaluations indicate that the major beneficiaries of HGSF procurement are smallholder farmers, who are mostly women.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS), with support from WFP, sets the official list of food prices annually. This guides procurement at the local level. The WFP Mobile Vulnerability Analysis tool helps monitor market prices but faces challenges at the local level, where discrepancies between estimated and actual market prices can lead to inefficiencies in procurement including over payment or under payment for commodities.

4. Financing mechanisms

Financing mechanisms differ not only between countries but also from one municipality to another within the same country, depending on the financing capacity. In Addis Ababa, the school meal programme is exclusively funded using the city's own revenue and budget. While the school meal programmes are fully funded by the national government in Bolivia and Cambodia, in Brazil, they are co-financed by the federal government and municipalities, with the contribution ratio varying by municipality. A common element across the case studies is the absence of funding from parents, community groups, and the private sector.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The Addis Ababa school meals programme is predominantly financed by the city's administration, drawing nearly all its recurring budget from the city's general revenue. The programme benefits from Addis Ababa's unique fiscal capacity, which stems from its status as the country's economic hub. The city generates 97% of its revenue from tax and non-tax sources (Bedasso, 2024 p.15), providing substantial flexibility to fund initiatives like universal school meals for public primary and pre-primary schools.

The programme is treated as a special initiative under the mayor's office, with its own budget line separate from other sectors. The budget is appropriated annually at the start of the fiscal year, based on enrolment estimates and a per-child daily allocation. For the 2024/2025 academic year, the allocation is set at 32 Ethiopian birr (ETB) per child for two meals (approximately USD 0.29). The programme's share of the city budget has ranged from 2.2% in 2020 to 2.9% in 2023. Nonetheless, according to the School Feeding Menu Booklet for Addis Ababa (2025), the estimated daily cost of covering two-thirds of primary students' daily calorie needs is 54.6 ETB (Ethiopian Public Health Institute, 2025)

Budget adjustments are made annually based on menu changes and inflation. Mid-year adjustments occur when food price inflation surpasses allocated budgets. A market survey by the school feeding task force informs cost adjustments, which are then submitted to the city cabinet for approval. For instance, in early 2024, a caterer's association appealed to the mayor for a menu adjustment due to food inflation, which had made it impossible to provide meals within the allocated budget.

Subsidies indirectly reduce the programme's costs. For instance, Sheger Bakery, which supplies bread, benefits from city subsidies (ETB 309 million in 2021), enabling lower bread prices. School-paid utilities, such as electricity for baking injera, further subsidise caterers' costs. These factors imply that the effective budget is higher than the officially allocated funds.

While the city initially funded dining hall construction through loans and grants, there is no ongoing budget for capital expenditure. Infrastructure such as kitchens, water supply, and power lines is insufficient, but intersectoral coordination challenges hamper infrastructure development.

Payments are disbursed by the sub-city finance bureau every two weeks directly to each school's account based on attendance records. Funds are then released to the caterers' associations. Streamlined processes have reduced payment delays, but the associations have to rely on short-term loans or supplier credit to cover initial costs at the start of the school year.

The absence of long-term capital funding, reliance on subsidies, and inflation-driven budget pressures underscore the need for a sustainable financing strategy to ensure programme continuity and scalability.

Bolivia

The national treasury funds most of the budget for the Complementary School Meals programme (CSM), with over 85% coming from domestic sources and 72% from the Direct Hydrocarbons Tax (IDH). IDH resources must go exclusively to social programmes, including the CSM, which faces financial instability due to fluctuations in Bolivia's hydrocarbon revenues.

Each municipality is responsible for deciding the amount to be allocated to the programme. Some municipalities contribute a limited and variable amount using revenue from local taxes.

The country's 340 municipalities are responsible for initiating funding requests, budget execution, and managing disbursements to the contracted companies. Municipalities have some latitude in allocating their own resources, but Bolivia lacks a standardised methodology for CSM funding, leading to varying municipal allocations.

Based on official data from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economics and Public Finances, the average annual per capita expenditure for the CSM programme in 2022 was approximately USD 40. Given that a typical school year in Bolivia consists of 180 days, the estimated daily expenditure per student at the national level was USD 0.22 for 2022. Financing arrangements for the programme in Bolivia have been detailed in an earlier report published by the Sustainable Finance Initiative (2022).

Brazil

As mentioned above, the National Education Development Fund (FNDE) encompasses the transfer of funds from the federal government's budget to state and local governments, as well to federal schools, to cover part of school meal costs. While FNDE transfers are meant to supplement municipal resources, many Brazilian municipalities rely heavily on them. Financial transfers to municipal authorities are based on spending per pupil. These federal funds must be used exclusively to buy the food needed for school meals. Non-food costs, such as human resources, equipment, kitchen appliances, water and energy, are covered by municipal and state budgets. The funds allocated to school meals represent 8.7% of the budget designated for basic education.

The funds transferred by FNDE to municipalities to co-finance school meals are based on a fixed amount of money per student. This value is the same for the entire country, which leads to budget distortions depending on the region. For some regions the value is enough (or almost enough) and for others it is too little to cover the true costs of food procurement. Belo Horizonte, for example, is the fourth Brazilian city in terms of GDP while Santarém is around 200th on the GDP list (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, n.d.).

In Belo Horizonte, the 2024 school meals budget was 89.6 million Brazilian reals (USD 16.4 million), with 45.6% coming from FNDE and 54.4% from the municipality. In Santarém, 82.7% was provided by the federal government, 8.7% by the municipal government, and 8.7% by the state government (2021 figures) (Xavier et al., 2024). Funds from the federal and state governments are used to pay for the food procured directly from family farmers. The resources from the Municipal Treasury are used to pay for non-perishable food procured through regular public bidding.

Cambodia

The financing mechanisms for Cambodia's HGSF Programme have evolved significantly, with the budget increasing from 7,072 million Cambodian riels (KHR) in 2019-2020 (USD 1.8 million) to KHR 29,606 million Riels in 2024-2025 (USD 7.4 million). This is an annual average increase of 53.1%.

The new school meals policy for 2024-2035 further supports the programme, and establishes food stipends for students, allowances for cooks, and guidelines for determining the number of necessary participants and resources. This policy update increases the per-meal rate from KHR 780 to KHR 820 (USD 0.19 to USD 0.20).

The financing process involves the provincial departments of education preparing annual budget plans, which are reviewed and consolidated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, then submitted to the National Social Protection Council for approval. Once approved, funds are disbursed by the National Treasury to provincial and school accounts in three parts (January, April, and June), ensuring the timely flow of resources for the programme's operations.

5. Conclusion

The four case studies illustrate the wide range of operating environments facing national and sub-national governments as they seek to develop home-grown school feeding, as well as their diverse financing capacities and motivations for financing school meal programmes. Even within a single country, such as Bolivia or Brazil, school feeding programmes can differ markedly, depending on factors such as whether they operate in urban or rural settings. Such differences highlight the need for caution when attempting to derive blueprints for good practice and recommendations from case studies. Governments and sub-national authorities must navigate trade-offs that are shaped by local conditions and factors. Nonetheless, good practices drawn from individual case studies are provided below as well as suggestions that could help improve the respective programmes.

Case studies	Key challenges in procurement	Key challenges in financing	Good practices and success factors	Suggestions for improvement
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Procuring local food in Addis Ababa would require more advanced enterprise development given the large demand.	No dedicated capital budget for infrastructures. Payment schedule of current outsourced model misaligned with farmers' needs.	Hybrid models combining outsourced provision with selective municipal intervention. Strong political and institutional commitments.	Take a more deliberate approach to monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge generation to enhance sustainability.
Comanche, Mecapaca and La Paz, Bolivia	Local food producers often lack the capacity and technical expertise to meet demand and standards for school meals. Municipalities have limited control over contractors, especially regarding payment schedules for suppliers, including farmers.	Reliance on an unstable funding source: the Direct Tax on Hydrocarbons (IDH).	Diverse and sufficient food supply for school meals within the country. Strong national and sub-national commitments. City council in La Paz linking farmers with larger suppliers. Inclusive local monitoring mechanisms.	Provide training and incentives for small producers to expand their capacity. Promote strategic alliances among producer associations for qualification in the CSM. Encourage partnerships between producers and medium-to-large suppliers.
Belo Horizonte and Santarém, Brazil	Procurement focuses on family farming, but food provenance is not monitored. Complex logistics in urban areas reduce participation of local farmers.	Budget distortions: national per-student funding is the same for all cities despite cost differences. Municipal revenues vary based on size and economic status.	Public, intersectoral, and participatory management enables coordination across government levels and civil society. Direct purchasing from family farmers/ cooperatives without public bidding is possible. Success of local procurement depends on strong ties between local governments and farming communities.	Strengthen provenance monitoring. Support urban-rural logistics solutions.
Cambodia	Food provenance is not monitored.	No multi-year funding commitments. Per-student allocation is considered too low to effectively deliver the programme.	Decentralised governance and strong community engagement. Procurement flexibility allows adaptation to price fluctuations.	Secure dedicated budget for monitoring, evaluation, and capacity building.

Moreover, the report draws from the case studies to identify the common features below.

Financing mechanisms are more effective when they are tailored to needs and capacities.

Financing mechanisms for school meal programmes differ significantly across the case studies. In Cambodia and Bolivia, the programmes are fully funded by the national government, with only limited and variable contributions from municipalities in Bolivia. In Brazil, a combination of national

and sub-national funding is used with contributions varying across municipalities. In Addis Ababa, the programme is exclusively funded through the city's budget from its own revenue. However, the council does not allocate budgetary provisions for infrastructure development.

A common feature across all case studies is the absence of monetary contributions from parents, community groups, or the private sector.

Financing needs also vary from one programme to another including within the same country. Food—particularly fresh and perishable items—tends to be more expensive in major cities and highly urbanised areas than in smaller cities and rural regions, primarily due to higher logistical costs. Conversely, larger cities and capital regions typically generate more tax revenue and receive a greater share of the national tax system as illustrated by the case study on Addis Ababa.

Procurement at the sub-national level is well suited to HGSF models, in particular when they are adapted to local contexts.

In the four case studies, food is procured at the sub-national level by either the municipality or schools/caterers, or a combination of both. Several factors influence operational and procurement models: type of food sourced (e.g. perishable vs. nonperishable); the offer, including the ability to purchase in large quantities, stakeholders involved, and their level of organisation; logistical considerations; opportunities to benefit from economies of scale; food safety regulations; and policy objectives, such promoting local food and supporting family farming.

Although policy objectives may support HGSF, practical constraints can hinder its implementation.

The case studies reveal a stark contrast between national policies' ambitious emphasis on a home-grown approach and the realities of the outsourced models adopted by cities faced with competing priorities and practical constraints. City authorities recognise the importance of home-grown approaches to school feeding, but they must also be pragmatic as they balance wider considerations of economic efficiency, the budget cycle, agricultural capacity, product quality and safety, and support for caterers.

HGSF programmes require an inclusive food system policy approach to strengthen local procurement and producer revenues.

Governments seeking to generate benefits for smallholder farmers and the rural poor through HGSF need to see procurement not as a stand-alone strategy, but part of a broader policy framework that supports inclusive growth of the food system. This means that, to achieve its goal, HGSF must be supported by reforms to the networks that produce, process and distribute food, along with long-term policy commitments backed by sustained investment.

For example, where local farmers' capacity is limited because of weak infrastructure, along with limited access to credit, productive inputs, and market information, a 'buy local' orientation is unlikely to meet HGSF demand unless accompanied by integrated strategies aimed at raising productivity.

In Brazil, highly interconnected policies combating food insecurity, multilevel coordination and integrated governance are central features of the food policy system, helping align national and local objectives, including for HGSF. PNAE not only explicitly mandates earmarking for smallholder

farmers but is also linked to wider policies aimed at facilitating their participation in procurement markets. Brazil's pricing arrangements and payment process for smallholder farmers suggest that it is possible to combine market-based efficiency with equity. The organisation of farmers into cooperatives enables them to pool their efforts and food supplies to meet the school's demand. The distribution of benefits in HGSF value chains is determined by the interaction between farmers and schools through traders, food processors, and caterers.

Integration of farmers in school meal programmes also depends on the relationships between local administration and the local farming community, and between small producers and medium to large companies. Incentives provided either by the national or sub-national government, including in public tendering processes, also play a key role in fostering integration of farmers.

In the absence of wider strategies to develop the food system—such as access to credit for producers, infrastructure for food production and commercialisation, productive inputs, extension services to meet food safety requirements, and market information systems—farmers are unlikely to secure more than a trickle-down of benefits. Similarly, without long-term investments aimed at creating an enabling environment for regenerative, sustainable farm practices, any incentives for climate-friendly agriculture that could be created through procurement for HGSF might remain muted. A food system approach can facilitate access to resources, including financial support, from other sectors and stakeholders, for the development of school meal programmes.

The case studies turn the spotlight on some of the policy challenges and potential trade-offs at play. Pursuing multiple policy objectives (improved nutrition among school children, more resilient rural livelihoods, enhanced opportunities for smallholders, and the development of dynamic economic linkages) through a single policy instrument (procurement for school meals) is a complex exercise but one that has the potential to reap multiple benefits if integrated into efforts to broader food system reform efforts.

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