



*United States' Declaration of Commitment to the
School Meals Coalition: Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child*

On the occasion of the UN Food Systems Summit, the United States, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), joins with countries around the world in the Global School Meals Coalition to work together to ensure that every child has access to a healthy meal every school day. In joining the Coalition, the United States commits to working together with Coalition members to: i) restore access to school meals for children who lost access during the pandemic; ii) reach those children previously left behind, especially in low-income countries; and iii) collaboratively improve our approach to providing school meals by sharing best practices and evidence on what has worked well, tailored to national and local contexts. The United States welcomes the approach of the Coalition to address bottlenecks and boost actions with the potential to scale progress through a research consortium and community of practice, a multi-sectoral financing task force, an advocacy and outreach taskforce, and other initiatives around best practices and accountability.

School meals programs are the largest social protection measure in the world. USDA is a leader in school meals, both domestically and internationally. USDA's domestic school meals program reaches millions of children every day. Research shows that updated program standards have had a positive and significant influence on nutrition quality over the last decade for school meal recipients in the United States. USDA is investing in additional research and innovation over the coming years.

Internationally, through the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition (McGovern-Dole) program, the United States is the largest donor for school meals in low- and middle-income countries, with an annual budget of approximately \$220 million and active multi-year projects across 30 countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The McGovern-Dole program supports integrated school meals programs that address children's nutrition, health, and education, and the multi-year funding cycle promotes program continuity and stability, positioning beneficiary countries to strengthen national capacity and gradually take over funding and management of school meals.

Even during the pandemic, in fiscal year 2020 (October 2019-September 2020), the McGovern-Dole program supported school meals programs in 30 low- and middle-income countries, and directly benefitted more than 3.6 million children by providing nutritious school meals. Following the closure of schools due to COVID-19, the McGovern-Dole program was able to pivot to providing take-home rations for children and their families, making the necessary structural changes to school meals programs to address urgent food and nutrition needs during the crisis.

The United States looks forward to being part of a Coalition that has the potential to bolster global food security, build resilience to future shocks, and foster multilateral collaboration in support of the nutritional, health, and educational well-being of school children and adolescents worldwide. The United States commits to working with Coalition members, building on contributions and lessons learned from the U.S. McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, to advance the day when every child is well nourished and well educated.

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