



Organización de las Naciones
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Mesoamérica
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AMEXCID

AGENCIA MEXICANA DE COOPERACIÓN
INTERNACIONAL PARA EL DESARROLLO

LOCAL PROCUREMENT FROM FAMILY FARMING FOR THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM

THE EXPERIENCE OF BELIZE

**LOCAL PROCUREMENT FROM FAMILY FARMING
FOR THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME
THE EXPERIENCE OF BELIZE**

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
BELMOPAN, 2022**

Required citation:

FAO. 2022. *Local procurement from family farming for the school feeding programme – The experience of Belize*. Belmopan.
<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0198en>

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ISBN 978-92-5-136255-6

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was based on the sustainable schools model implemented in four pilot schools of the Toledo district in Belize. Both the model implementation and the development of this document were carried out within the framework of Mesoamerica Hunger Free AMEXCID-FAO programme (MHF), an initiative jointly led by the Government of Mexico, through the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

We gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the Belizean Government through the Prime Minister, Hon John Briceño; Deputy Prime Minister Hon Cordel Hyde; Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, Hon Jose Abelardo Mai; Chief Executive Officer Mr Servulo Baeza; Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, Hon Francis Fonseca; Chief Executive Officer, Mrs Dian Castillo-Maheia; Minister of Health and Wellness Hon Michel Chebat; Chief Executive Officer Dr Daisy Mendez; Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon Eamon Courtney; Chief Executive Officer, Mrs Amalia Mai; FAO National Correspondent, Armando Aban, and Mesomerica Hunger Free Coordinator, Emilio Montero.

Particular gratitude is owed to the National Sustainable School Feeding Technical Monitoring Committee, to school principals, as well as to all the people and organizations involved in this experience – teachers, cooks, schoolchildren, school feeding committees and the parent and teacher associations (PTAs) of the Toledo Roman Catholic Schools; as well as to the alcaldes (mayors), chairpersons, farmers, extension agents, and the Toledo Catholic School management for sharing their time and valuable knowledge.

A grateful acknowledgement must be made to the support provided by the Mexican Government through AMEXCID: Executive Director, Dr Laura Elena Carrillo; Director General of the Mesoamerica Project, Act Gloria Sandoval; and Director of Social, Human and Sustainable Development, Dr José Alfredo Galvan. Mexican Embassy to Belize: Ambassador of Mexico in Belize, Hon Martha Zamarripa; Cooperation at the Mexican Embassy in Belize Embassy, María Fernanda Garrido.

This document was developed by FAO, under the coordination of Adoniram Sanches, Regional Coordinator for Mesoamerica, and the technical direction of Israel Ríos, Nutrition Officer; Crispim Moreira, FAO Representative for Belize; Franssen Jean, Food Security Officer for the Caribbean; Jorge Ulises González, Coordinator of MHF in Belize; Najla Veloso, Coordinator of the project “Consolidation of School Feeding Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean”; and Alfredo Mayén, Programme Officer for the MHF programme. The document was written by Flavia Schwartzman, Food and Nutrition Specialist. Edition and layout were in charge of the MHF regional coordination team.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AMEXCID	Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation
BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FNE	Food and nutrition education
HFLAC	Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative 2025
MHF	Mesoamerica Hunger Free AMEXCID-FAO
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSME	Micro, small and medium enterprises
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
NSSFTMC	National Sustainable School Feeding Technical Monitoring Committee
PTA	Parent and teacher association
SFP	School feeding programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SS	Sustainable schools
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization



SUMMARY

Over the past decades, through school feeding programmes, several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in other regions, have made significant progress and have established important intersectoral public policies for the fulfilment of the human right to adequate food, inclusive development and the realization of food security and nutrition.

When well designed and properly implemented, these programmes have the potential to contribute to the achievement of various Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), such as SDG2, eradicating hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition; SDG3, supporting health promotion through the provision of adequate and healthy food; and SDG4, promoting quality education. They also contribute to the fulfilment of SDG5 by promoting girls' access to education and SDG1, eradicating poverty.

In addition, when school feeding programmes are linked to local family farmingⁱ production, they also promote decent work and economic growth (SDG8) and sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG12).

Family farmers occupy around 70 to 80 percent of farm land and are responsible for more than 80 percent of the agricultural production in the world, constituting important food suppliers. In Latin America and the Caribbean, family farming represents about 81 percent of farms and provides, at a country level, between 27 and 67 percent of the total food production.^{1, 2}

At the same time, governments in all countries, through their institutions and programmes such as schools, hospitals, universities, prisons and the military, are big food buyers. These markets represent a large, stable and predictable source of demand for agricultural and other products (structured demand).

The strategy of directing at least part of public food procurement to the family farming sector is a great opportunity to develop and strengthen local agricultural production and local trade circuits, stimulating local economy and contributing to communities' food security and nutrition and to poverty reduction. Concurrently, the aforementioned markets are benefited by a wide range of fresh, healthy, seasonal and culturally appropriate products that this sector is able to produce, contributing to the promotion of healthy eating habits and the prevention of malnutrition.

Belize acknowledges the importance of school feeding and family farming through various national and sectoral policies and plans, as well as the potential of linking the school feeding programme to family farming production for the promotion of health and food security and nutrition in the country.

In 2014, the Government of Belize requested FAO's technical support to redesign, scale up and strengthen its school feeding initiatives in the southern district of Toledo.

ⁱ The terms "family farming" and "family farmers", used by FAO, will be adopted in this document. Other similar terms that can be used by other organizations and countries are "family agriculture", "smallholder farmer", "small producers" or "small-scale farmer".

FAO has been assisting countries of the region over the past few years through the Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative 2025 (HFLAC) on developing and strengthening food security and nutrition public policies, such as school feeding programmes. Brazil has been a partner of FAO in the strengthening of this programmes under the framework of several projects based on best practices gathered from Brazil's own experience.

The methodology adopted is known as the sustainable schools (SS) model, which has been already implemented in 12 countries and establishes the necessary steps and parameters for a sustainable national school feeding programme, based on the human right to adequate food.

Mesoamerica Hunger Free AMEXCID-FAO is a South–South and Triangular Cooperation initiative, jointly led by the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), currently under implementation in nine countries (Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama). A pilot project of the SS model in Belize has been implemented in four communities in the Toledo district (Pueblo Viejo, Santa Elena, Santa Cruz and San Antonio) within the framework of this programme, which contributes strengthening institutional mechanisms and public policies focused on eradicating hunger and promoting rural development.

The SS school feeding model includes the following six components:

- I. Interinstitutional and intersectoral coordination
- II. Social participation
- III. Adoption of healthy, adequate and culturally appropriate menus
- IV. Food and nutrition education using educational school gardens
- V. Establishment of direct purchases from family farming for school feeding
- VI. Improvement of school infrastructure

This guideline outlines the step-by-step implementation of direct purchases from family farming for school feeding, considering the experience of the four pilot sustainable schools in Belize.

Primarily, a brief introduction is made on the importance of school feeding programmes for the development and well-being of individuals and communities, focusing on benefits and challenges of the connection between school feeding and family farming.

Secondly, a brief context of food and nutrition policies and programmes, public procurement mechanisms, agriculture and family farming status, and the school feeding initiatives in Belize is presented.

The following section addresses the SS model and its implementation in Belize, detailing the process of the direct procurement from local family farming for the school feeding programme component.

This guideline presents general recommendations for the adequate design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this component, trying to consider the realities of different school feeding programmes in the caribbean countries. At the same time, it presents some details on how the various steps of the process have been implemented in Belize, as part of the SS pilot project.

It is expected that this publication will contribute to a further integration of family farmers into the national school feeding programme of Belize. The scaling up of direct procurement from family farmers to the 22 schools currently covered by the national government, and eventually to other schools in the country, is a great opportunity to strengthen the country's food security and nutrition strategies, and to contribute to the human right to food, as well as to health, social and economic development of its citizens and communities.





INTRODUCTION

School feeding programmes of many countries worldwide, and especially in Latin America and the Caribbean region, have undergone major paradigm shifts from purely welfare-based programmes, based solely on the provision of a few foods targeted at vulnerable students, into programmes based on the human right to adequate food which promote students' health and education, and communities' social development.

In addition to offering healthy, culturally appropriate and local foods, based on nutritionally adequate menus, in many countries these programmes are now linked to other important elements such as food and nutrition education (FNE), school gardens with an educational approach, better equipped kitchens and cafeterias, healthy school vendors or kiosks and stronger social participation. They are also linked to other health actions, such as oral health, deworming, vaccination and nutritional surveillance. More recently, these programmes have begun to direct a portion of financial resources earmarked to the purchase of food to the direct procurement from family farmers.

Given its importance, school feeding programmes are included in the agenda of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, in Spanish), under pillar 3: "Nutritional wellbeing and assurance of nutrients for all vulnerable groups, respecting the diversity of eating habits". The CELAC Plan for Food Security and Nutrition also recognizes the importance of supporting the family farming sector to strengthen food security in the region through, among many strategies, the linkage of family farmers to government food purchase, including school feeding programmes.

The institutionalization of national public purchases policies and programmes from family farming can be considered a milestone in countries' food security and nutrition policies, as it contributes to increasing farmers' incomes, tackling the poverty and hunger cycle and promoting the development of communities, especially in rural areas. It also fosters more sustainable food systems and promotes the strengthening of social participation by encouraging civil society involvement in the implementation, execution and following-up

Family farming concept

There is a great diversity of family farms worldwide, which vary according to forms of access to land and its occupation, land size, labour employed, source and amount of income, and farming activities and systems, resulting in different classifications for this group.

Despite the differences among various definitions, some common elements can be identified: (a) reliance on family labour and (b) management and operation of the economic unit by the family. The size of the property and the scale of production are other determining factors for the designation as family farming.^a

The following is the conceptual definition of family farming, according to the International Steering Committee for the International Year of Family Farming:

Family farming (including all family-based agricultural activities) is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production that is managed and operated by a family, and is predominantly reliant on the family labour of both women and men. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, social and cultural functions.^b

Notes:

^a Schneider S. 2016. *Family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean: looking for new paths of rural development and food security*. Working Papers 137. Brasília, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG).

^b FAO. 2014. *The State of Agriculture 2014*. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/i4040e/i4040e.pdf>

of public initiatives. At the same time, this strategy encourages the development of healthy eating habits, the appreciation of cultural food traditions and the consumption of fresh, seasonal, varied and local products.^{3, 4}

The following definition of public food procurement is considered in this document:

Public food procurement refers to initiatives that aim at providing a market channel to smallholder farmers by removing key barriers to entering public food procurement markets.⁵



1.1. Benefits and challenges of the direct procurement from family farming for the school feeding programme

The linkage between school feeding programmes (SFP) and local family farming production has various benefits for schools, students, farmers and the whole territory.

The purpose of linking the procurement process for school feeding to local producers, and not just to large suppliers and producers from distant municipalities, goes beyond simply switching suppliers, as this linkage is not just a commercial relationship with these new actors in which the lowest price is the main focus.

This strategy fits within a new intersectoral view of school feeding policies and should be understood as a strategy for:

- improving quality of school feeding;
- creating a structured demand for locally produced food;
- strengthening local development; and
- promoting the realization of food security and nutrition, and the fulfilment of the human right to adequate food.⁶

However, the adequate implementation and execution of this initiative is a complex process, since it requires a series of conditions that go beyond the field of operation of the institution directly responsible for school feeding. In fact, it involves different sectors of government and society, at national, state and local levels, calling for concrete dialogue mechanisms among all the different spheres and sectors involved.

Direct procurement from family farming for the school feeding programme contributes...

- supporting diversification of production and more sustainable agricultural practices;
- improving association, production and marketing capacities of farmers;
- developing and strengthening local agricultural production and local trade circuits;
- creating more efficient supply chains, shortening intermediation and inserting family farmers into other local markets;
- promoting employment and income generation for family farmers;
- generating income redistribution and strengthening local economies;
- improving farmers' quality of life (improved self-esteem, eating habits, financial conditions);
- diversifying eating habits and developing healthy dietary practices;
- encouraging appreciation of native crops and local foods;
- increasing participation of government actors, the school community and family farmers in the discussion about students' development of eating habits;
- promoting recognition by the school community, programme managers, farmers and society about the importance of school feeding and the family farming sector;
- creating an institutional link among education, agriculture and health sectors;
- encouraging the development of food and nutrition, social and environmental education processes in schools; and
- strengthening social participation.^{a, b}

Notes:

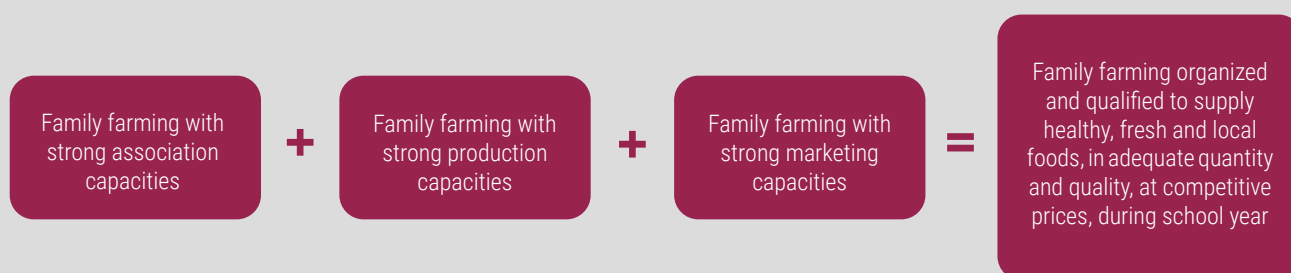
a. FAO. 2017. *Agricultura Familiar en América Latina y el Caribe: Recomendaciones de Política*. Santiago. <https://www.fao.org/3/i3788s/i3788s.pdf>

b. Schwartzman, F., Rodríguez, C., Bogus, C. & Villar, B. 2017. Background and elements of the linkage between the Brazilian school feeding program and family farming. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, 33 no.12: 1–13

Family farmers usually face several obstacles such as lack of credit policies, infrastructure and, mainly, marketing channels aimed specifically at their agricultural production. They also have difficulties in competing with large producers and suppliers, and accessing markets, particularly public programmes –including school feeding programmes–, due to weak association capacities, lack of consistent and adequate production, and bureaucratic barriers and requirements for their inclusion in tendering processes, which the vast majority of local producers fail to meet. Other challenges that make difficult the linkage of family farmers to school feeding programmes, as well as other institutional markets, are precarious transport routes and farmers' distrust due to late payments by the state.^{7,8}

In order to tackle all these difficulties and effectively link the school feeding programme to family farming, adequate conditions, in terms of association, production and marketing capacities of the family farming sector, should exist. And for these conditions to occur, the small-scale agriculture sector must be well developed, for which policies, strategies and mechanisms aimed at strengthening association capacities, stimulating and optimizing production and promoting fair trade with the farmers are required.

Figure 1. Family farming capacities needed to effectively link this sector to school feeding



Additionally, legal and regulatory frameworks for public purchases which facilitate the insertion of this group in state purchases should be developed. In that sense, it is important that the SFP establishes conditions to facilitate participation of family farmers and their organizations in its procurement process.

A very strong coordination is required among all actors and bodies from different sectors – education, agriculture, planning, procurement, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGO), family farmers and their representations – at the various levels (national, regional and local) under their various structures (ministries, secretariats, public enterprises).

And, very importantly, public procurement from family farming policies should be developed and implemented as part of other comprehensive food security and nutrition strategies, programmes and actions, and not as isolated initiatives.

Some countries have already institutionalized direct procurement from family farmers and their organizations for their SFP. This is the case of Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Peru, which enacted legal frameworks facilitating procurement from these groups and which mandate the use of, at least, a portion of government resources to purchase food for school meals for the direct purchasing from family farming.



BELIZE

2.1. Food and nutrition policies and programmes

The Food and Nutrition Policy and Plan of Action for Belize 2010–2015 highlights the need for coordination across sectors (education, health, agriculture) to ensure that there is a comprehensive food security and nutrition information system in place, as well as the implementation of sustainable mechanisms, such as integrated farming systems.

The school environment and school feeding have been identified as one of the key strategies for intervention, under the Programmatic area 3. Maternal and child care, school feeding and caring for the socioeconomically deprived and nutritionally vulnerable. The document recommends the institutionalization of the national SFP and the availability of healthy and local food options at schools, both through the SFP and through vendors or canteens.^{9, 10}

At the same time, on the National Agriculture and Food Policy of Belize 2015–2030, the government also recognizes the need for a competitive, diversified and sustainable agriculture and food sector, which enhances food security and nutrition and contributes to the achievement of the socioeconomic development goals of the country. The linkage of the family farming sector to specialized markets, such as school feeding, is also established as a priority.

Ensuring the involvement of the family farming sector in agriculture development is key, which would include raising the level of productivity of family farmers and promoting the linkage of this group to specialized markets, such as schools.¹¹

2.2. Public procurement in Belize

Belize has a decentralized public procurement system, in which each ministry is responsible for its budget and acquisitions. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the supervision of the procurement processes.

Belize's public procurement system has undergone a process of reform over the last years, in order to make the system more transparent and accountable. Laws that regulate the country's public procurement are outdated (1965, 1968, 2005), and, in 2010, amendments to the Financial and Audit Reform Act were made.¹²

As a result, the Public Procurement Procedures Handbook was issued in 2013 by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, as an answer to the need for improving and updating budget and financial management of the government's procurement system, and aligning Belize procedures with the procurement procedures of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the European Union.

The handbook establishes the procedures that all public entities should follow for procuring goods, works and services at ministry, district, local government and statutory body level, unless specifically excluded.

As in other countries, public procurement processes in Belize impose various challenges for the participation of family farmers (as well as of micro, small and medium enterprises) who face many obstacles.

Challenges faced by family farmers to access institutional markets in Belize:¹³

- high complexity of processes;
- inability to meet the requirements for becoming a registered vendor;
- poor market access and competitiveness;
- no access to credit;
- not having a bank account;
- delayed payments to suppliers;
- weak enabling environment;
- weak logistics and transportation capacity; and
- hesitancy of some farmers to work in groups due to history of mistrust and mismanagement.

Legal instruments for public procurement in Belize:

- the Financial Orders (FO) of 1965, Circular No.2 of 2018 Amendment to Financial Orders #701;
- the Stores Orders (SO) of 1968;
- the Circular No. 8 of 1992, Amendment to Stores Orders #13 & 15;
- the Financial and Audit (Reform) Act of 2005 (No.12 of 2005), and the Financial and Audit (Reform) (Amendment) Act, 2010; and
- the Public Procurement Procedures Handbook of 2013.

In order to facilitate access of these groups into institutional businesses, the Government of Belize now encourages procuring entities “to identify contracting opportunities for products and services of which Belize micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) may participate, and establish an appropriate purchasing percentage and product categories there from.”

Even though these recommendations may represent an opportunity to include family farming in government’s purchases, they may still not be enough, due to the aforementioned obstacles. Legal frameworks aimed specifically at prioritizing this group of producers are essential to support family farming’s increased participation in public purchases processes.

2.3. Agriculture and family farming in Belize

Agriculture, along with tourism, is the main source of income and employment in Belize. However, the high incidence of climate-related natural disasters makes the agricultural sector particularly vulnerable to shocks and volatility, affecting the country's food production and food security.¹⁴

Agriculture in Belize is characterized by three main subsectors: a) a fairly well-organized traditional export sector for sugar, banana, citrus and marine products; b) a more traditional, diverse, small-scale farming sector, producing a wide range of food crops, especially vegetables, mainly for subsistence and local markets; and c) a well-integrated large-scale commercial sector producing cereals and livestock products for both local and export markets.^{15,16}

Although family farmers contribute significantly to the economy of the country, they face considerable challenges to improve their production capacity and to access markets and technical assistance. Many of them and their families suffer from poverty. The need for alternative solutions to diversify production and promote a better integration of these farmers into the Belizean economy constitutes one of the greatest challenges related to food security and nutrition in the country.¹⁷

Challenges faced by family farmers related to production capacity in Belize¹⁸:

- no access to credit;
- high cost of inputs;
- lack of post-harvest management and facilities;
- lack of established relief funds or some sort of insurance that assists small farmers in spreading out production risks and recovering from natural disasters; and
- predial larceny.

Small farmers in Belize

Belize does not yet have an official classification for "small farmer", which is currently under definition by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA).

The existing officially documented definition is for "farmers" in general, which, according to the Belize Farm Registry (2002), is an individual who generates:

- at least 50 percent of his or her income from the farm
- rears ten or more heads of livestock
- cultivates 0.5 acre of any crop or a combination of crops

The National Agriculture and Food Policy of Belize 2015–2030 embraces the urgency to address these challenges. Among the objectives set to strengthen the agricultural sector are: improving the competitiveness of agricultural products, with particular emphasis on raising the level of productivity of family farmers; supporting market driven production; promoting domestic and regional trade opportunities; and increasing resilience of the sector to both natural and economic shocks. Therefore, and as mentioned before, ensuring the involvement of the family farming sector in agriculture development is key, raising the level of productivity of family farmers and promoting the linkage of this group to specialized markets, such as schools.¹⁹

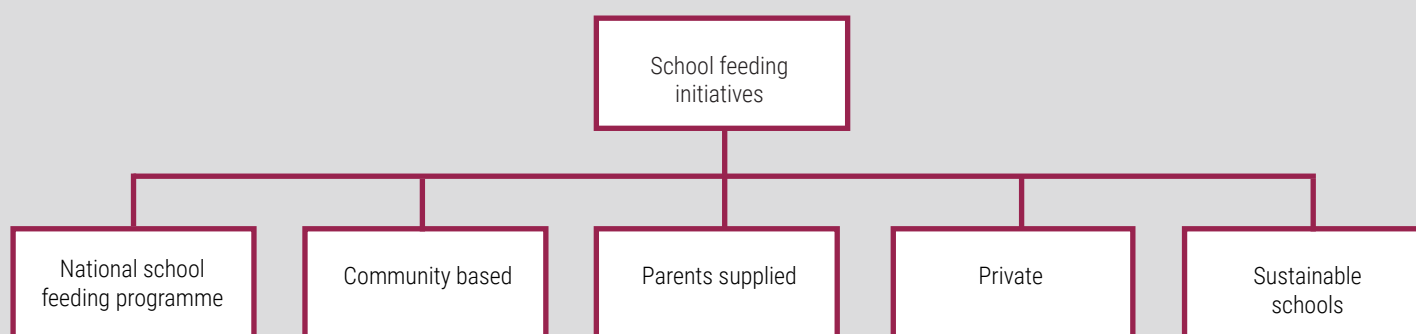
2.4. School feeding in Belize

Belize does not have a school feeding policy as a single document yet. However, it does have a national SFP and other different modalities of school feeding initiatives, with limited coverage and targeting only the most vulnerable students. A great number of schools still do not offer students any meals.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is the institution responsible for overseeing the school feeding initiatives in the country.

As for the food procurement procedures for the school feeding modalities, there is no national policy that mandates direct procurement from the family farming sector. All existing programmes receive foods from smallholder producers, but mostly through an indirect process; and even when there is a direct link, it is not an institutionalized and systematic process.

Figure 2. School feeding initiatives in Belize



Source: Adapted from FAO. 2018. *Assessment of the national school feeding programme Belize*. Internal document.

Table 1. Main characteristics of school feeding initiatives in Belize

Characteristic	School feeding initiative	
	National School Feeding Programme	Other school feeding initiatives
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Falls under the office of the Chief Education Officer, managed by the District Education Center of the MoE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseen by the district offices of the MoE jointly with the school feeding committees (formed by members of the parents and teachers association, principals, students)
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-funded programme Annual budget: approximately BZD 650 000 (USD 322 720) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church or contributions from the school feeding committee and parents, who usually contribute from BZD 0.25 to 2.00 (USD 0.25 to 1.00) per child, per day With the exception of some children who are unable to pay, only those who contribute receive school meals
Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twenty-two government primary schools (25 sites), located in Belize City (15), Dangriga (6), and Belize River Valley (4) Lunch for 1 200 vulnerable students, for approximately 180 days per school year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All districts have at least some pre-primary schools, primary schools or secondary schools with school feeding The frequency of food provision in some schools may vary to as low as once a week
Management and implementation at local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed by school principals with teachers' support The majority of schools do not have kitchens Menus are developed by the Chief Education Officer from the MoE Service providers or caterers are responsible for purchasing, preparing and delivering foods Meals usually prepared offsite at approved premises or, less often, onsite at the schools, when they have kitchens Providers selected through bidding processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed by school feeding committee jointly with principals, teachers and parents They develop menus, collect money, purchase food items and distribute meals to the students Meals prepared by volunteer parents
Procurement process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food procurement process decentralized Service providers purchase food based on two-week menu cycles Fresh produce is bought from vendors at Belize City markets weekly, and the bulk dried goods (rice, beans, pasta, oil, etc.) at supermarkets on a monthly basis. Chicken and rice are acquired from local mobile distributors <p>These purchases are made with cash and some on credit based on the relationship between the provider and the vendor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food procurement process decentralized and administered at each school Majority of food items obtained in the communities. Fresh produce and fruits are bought at grocery stores, local market vendors and directly from local farmers Some vegetables can also be obtained from school gardens Schools may receive contributions from community members and parents, and occasional donations from the NGO Hands for the Needy through the MoE, other NGOs and private sector, as well as confiscated goods from the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA)^a
<p>Notes:</p> <p>^a Cruickshank, D. 2019. <i>Draft document. Belize Public Procurement Review</i>. FAO.</p>		

There are also some private school feeding initiatives that are funded with local financial support, concerts or other efforts. Examples of such programmes are: Dara's Feeding Programme, St. Paul's Feeding Programme, Red Cross Feeding Programme, among others.²⁰



SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS MODEL IN BELIZE

3.1. Sustainable schools model

The strategy of direct procurement from family farmers for school feeding in Belize was carried out under the SS model pilot implementation in Toledo district. The SS pilot implementation was intended to present to the country a SFP model; one that is based on the human right to adequate food and that incorporates, in addition to food supply, other important basic components, as shown in the figure below:

Figure 3. Sustainable schools model components



Although each component has its specific goals and scope, they are all interdependent and, for the success of the SS model, they all must be properly implemented and executed in a coordinated manner.

The implementation always starts with Component 1 – Inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination, which will set the ground for and guarantee the establishment of the other ones, followed by Component 2 – Social participation. These are considered cross-cutting to all the other components and are, therefore, essential to the whole process. The remaining components are implemented in parallel, according to the social and political conditions as well as priorities of each country.

The implementation of the SS pilot in Belize was carried out within the framework of Mesoamerica Hunger Free AMEXCID-FAO programme.

According to the SS model's methodology, after the pilot implementation period is over, the national stakeholders are expected to be sensitized about the model in order for the country to continue with the activities in these pilot schools and to replicate the model in other districts of the country.

3.2. The implementation of sustainable schools model in Toledo district

The SS model was implemented in Toledo district in the southern part of the country, a region that is home to a wide range of cultures: Mopan and Kekchi Maya, Creole, Garifuna, East Indians, Mennonites, and Mestizos.

Toledo is one of the poorest districts and concentrates the largest percentages of indigence and malnutrition in the country. It contains 25 percent of all farms in Belize, with a high concentration of small farms (77 percent below 20 acres). The area comprises a large proportion of the country's production of rice, corn and peas, mostly from family farmers.^{21, 22}

Four villages were selected for the pilot project: Pueblo Viejo, Santa Elena, Santa Cruz and San Antonio. And, within those villages, one school in each one.

Table 2. Location, name, grades and students enrolled in the four schools selected for the pilot project

Village	School name	Grades	Total No. of students enrolled in 2018
San Antonio	San Luis Rey R. C. School	Primary	315
Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz R. C. School	Primary	126
Santa Elena	Santa Elena R. C. School	Primary	61
Pueblo Viejo	San Francisco de Jeronimo R. C. School	Kindergarten to primary	150
TOTAL			652

Prior to the implementation of the SS model pilot, these schools provided school meals a few days, with a frequency ranging from one to three times a week. Students paid approximately BZD 1.00 (USD 0.50) per lunch per day. Frequency of the school meals provided depended on the number of families that could afford to pay and the availability of mothers volunteering to cook.

The school feeding committee of each school was responsible for developing the menus, purchasing the food items, and preparing and distributing food. Food was bought in their own communities in grocery stores, local markets or, less often, directly from farmers. Some vegetables came from the school gardens, when existing and active. Volunteer teachers and members of the school feeding committees executed and monitored products' purchases and meals' distribution.

The experience of the pilot project has already contributed to the improvement and strengthening of the national school feeding programme. All four schools have a school garden in place and have adequate infrastructure for school feeding, including well equipped kitchens, storage and lunch rooms.

The pilot project strengthened food and nutrition education actions in the four schools, and has demonstrated that the school community is strongly committed to contributing with the successful implementation and sustainability of the school feeding programme.

Family farmers of Toledo district were able to supply the four schools with quality food items in the amounts and time required during the pilot project, and have been strengthening their capacities in order to continue providing healthy, fresh and culturally appropriate food to this initiative.

Some details about the pilot implementation of the SS model in Toledo district are presented in the next section, especially those related to the direct procurement from family farming mechanism, as it is the focus of this document.



DIRECT PROCUREMENT FROM LOCAL FAMILY FARMING FOR THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME

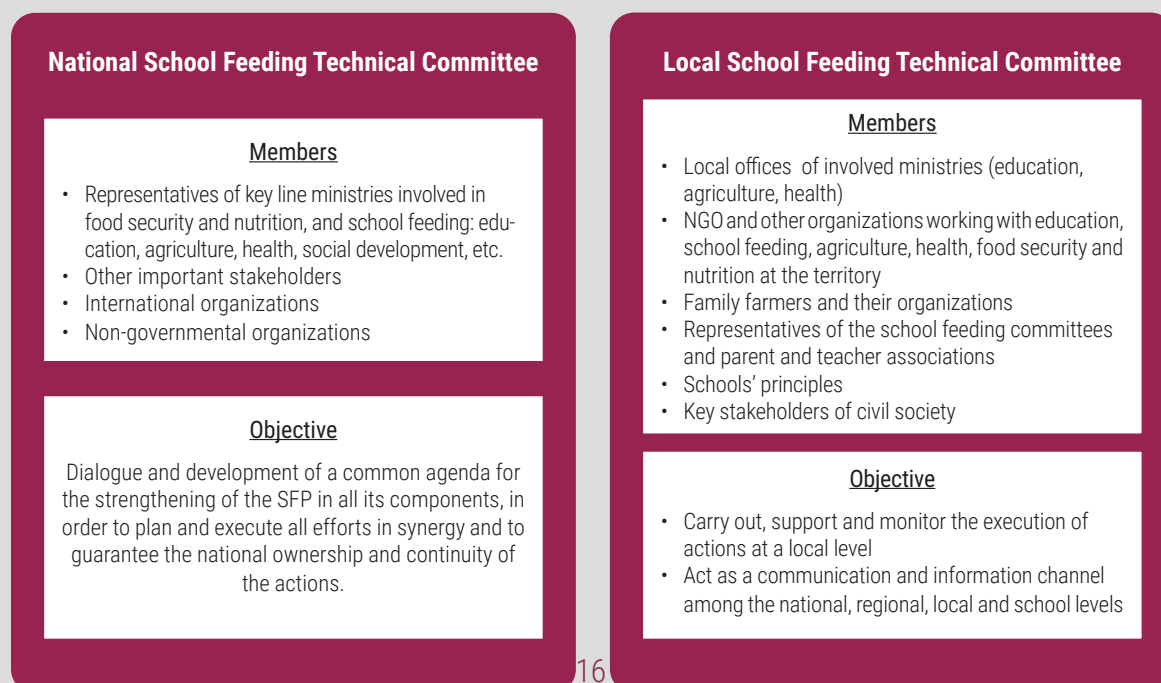
It is important to reemphasize that procurement from family farming is only one of the six components of the SS model and, therefore, it should be planned and implemented within the framework of other actions aimed at strengthening the SFP, and in conjunction with the other components.

For the development of this guideline, emphasis is given to processes and activities directly related to the local procurement component. However, when planning of this component begins, several other processes and activities which are key for the success and sustainability of the local purchases should have already been implemented. Therefore, even though they are not the focus of this document, their implementation and strengthening should be considered in previous stages, in order to set the ground for public purchases.

4.1. Setting the basis for local public purchases for the school feeding programme

An essential element for local procurement and the development and sustainability of any component of a sustainable SFP is the strengthening of governance through the creation of strong coordination mechanisms. With this in mind, an intersectoral and interinstitutional committee should be created, at national and at local level, before starting the planning process of public procurement.

Figure 4. Mechanisms for strengthening institutional school feeding programme governance



Another key element for the sustainability of the SFP and local food procurement is the community involvement in and monitoring of all the processes related to the SFP, from the development of menus, to food procurement and meals distribution to the students.

The processes of implementation or strengthening of these other two components, interinstitutional and intersectoral coordination and community involvement in and monitoring of the SFP, will not be detailed here as a whole. However, given their importance, they should be considered as crosscutting components of the entire SS model implementation process.

Figure 5. Steps for local procurement for the school feeding programme



STEP 1.

Strengthening intersectoral and institutional coordination for local procurement from family farming for the school feeding programme

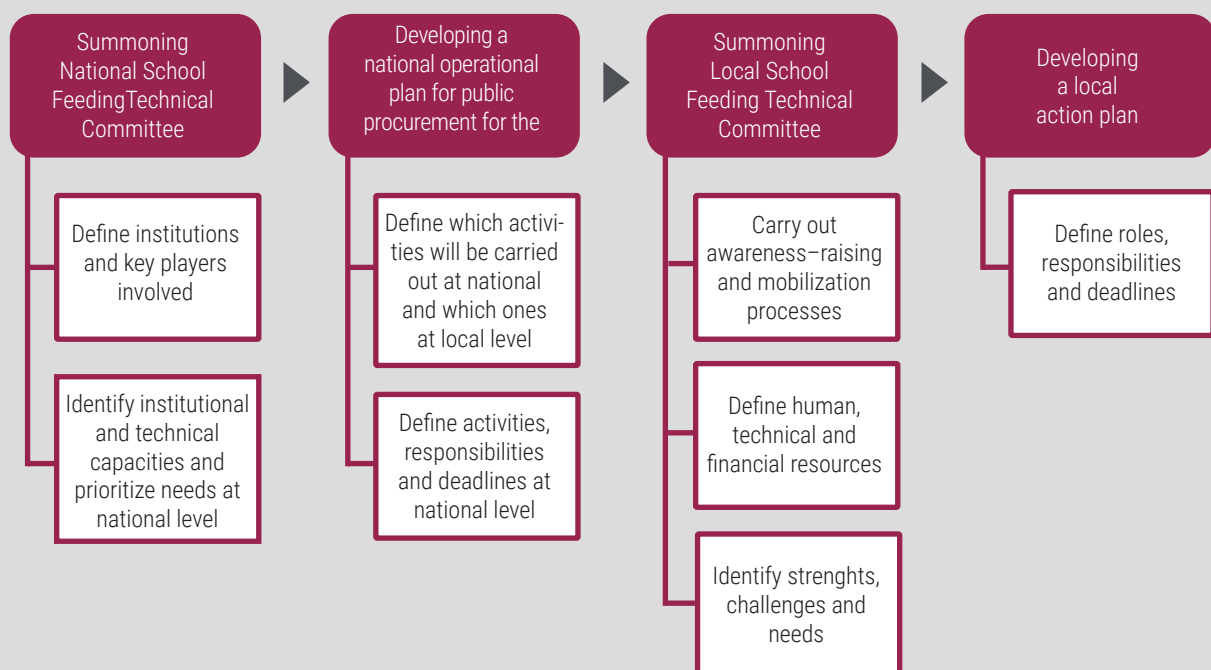
Objective: Establish coordination mechanisms, at national and local levels, for the implementation of local procurement.

The first efforts should be dedicated to the strengthening of institutional capacities of institutions and actors involved in local procurement, which include those directly or indirectly related to each of the two ends of the process –purchase and sale– from the central level through the local level, all the way to the schools.

All institutions and stakeholders involved should be sensitized about the importance and objectives of the strategy of linking the SFP with local family farming production and their roles and responsibilities, so the required processes can be adequately planned and implemented.

The various sectors, institutions and government and non-government actors should understand clearly that this initiative involves not only one specific sector or programme; rather, it is a comprehensive country initiative towards the realization of food security and nutrition, health, and social and economic development of students and the community. And, as such, these public purchases should be included in the national and local government and institutions' agendas, establishing coordination with existing policies in a synergistic manner.²³

Figure 6. Step 1 entails the following actions:



I. Summoning the National School Feeding Technical Committee

It is important to define which institutions and key players should be involved, which one will coordinate the whole process, and which ones will carry out and monitor which operations, considering planning and execution of each activity.

The institutional and technical capacities of each ministry (agriculture, education, health, others), as well as of their offices at a local (district) level and of the other institutions and stakeholders participating should be identified, in order to establish the existing opportunities and the priority needs to be addressed so as to execute the activities planned.

The committee should meet periodically to monitor and evaluate the implementation of activities, existing bottlenecks and advances, so as to adjust the process as needed.

Strengthening interinstitutional coordination of the SFP at the national level in Belize

- In November 2017, within the framework of Mesoamerica Hunger Free AMEXCID-FAO programme, a memorandum of agreement was signed by the MoE, MoA and MoH, through which they agreed to allocate resources for technical, administrative and financial collaboration to strengthen the SFP and the school gardens, and to support the implementation of the six components of the Sustainable Schools model.
- The National Sustainable School Feeding Technical Monitoring Committee (NSSFTMC) was set up as a steering committee for technical discussion and decision making, with the main objective of strengthening planning and coordination for a national sustainable SFP, and also coordinating and overseeing the implementation of the SS model.
- The NSSFTMC was comprised of representatives from the MoE, MoH, MoA, the Mexican Embassy, and representatives of MHF, FAO, PAHO/WHO and UNICEF.
- The committee met monthly to monitor the activities, identify bottlenecks, evaluate progress and readjust plans.
- Until 2018, the MoA was the ministry in charge of spearheading the efforts and actions related to the SS model. In 2019, the MoE assumed the coordination of the activities.

II. Developing a national operational plan for public procurement for the school feeding programme

Next, a coordinated national operational plan should be developed, considering the necessary efforts, partnerships and resources needed to carry out the process.

It is important to establish the activities that will be carried out at the national level, and the ones that will take place also or only at a local or school level. With that in mind, the plan should clearly reflect how each sector, institution or actor will contribute to the process and what their roles will be.

General coordination and follow-up of the whole process should be overseen by the NSSFTMC, while coordination among all local actors and institutions involved, as well as the execution of processes locally, should be directly overseen by the local technical committee.

Each activity, responsibility and deadline should be established, in order to guarantee the proper execution and monitoring of all the phases of the procurement process. These arrangements must be established in the form of agreements or commitments so as to ensure compliance with the established plan.

It is advisable to always consider some degree of flexibility in planning and execution, in order to allow adjustments according to local and country circumstances. In addition, the plan should also establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms so as to facilitate feedback and timely adjustments along the process.

III. Summoning the Local School Feeding Technical Committee

First, the local technical committee members should be summoned and an awareness-raising and mobilization process must also be carried out with them in order to explain the whole process of local procurement from family farmers for the SFP and what it will entail in terms of human, technical, financial and administrative resources.

The involvement of the main local stakeholders, such as community representatives and leaders, school representatives, the PTA, school feeding committees, as well as community-based organizations that are directly and indirectly involved in the SFP, is crucial for the active participation of the local community and the initiative's success. This is also the moment to identify and involve other partners at the local level that may be key to the process. Next, the local strengths, weaknesses and the priority needs should be identified.

IV. Developing a local plan of action

The next step is the contextualization of the national operational plan into a local plan of action. This should be a participatory process, carried out jointly by the national and the local technical school feeding committees.

The plan of action will define roles, responsibilities of each local sector, institution and stakeholder, as well as deadlines.

Activities such as: a) contact with schools; b) development of menus (establishment of demand); c) identification of local family farming production (identification of supply); d) articulation between supply and demand; e) technical assistance to farmers; and f) establishment of price mechanism should be discussed, agreed on and developed at local level, under the supervision of the national and local technical committees.

Important aspects to consider during Step 1:

The whole process of planning, implementing and monitoring procurement for the SFP should be participatory and include government and non-government institutions, civil society and the school community.



It is important to establish one ministry to spearhead all efforts. Usually, the process is spearheaded by the institution directly responsible for the SFP in the country, often the MoE.



Ensure a smooth and quick communication line among the national and local committees and the schools, in order to guarantee the adequate execution and monitoring of all phases and the necessary adjustments along the way in a timely manner.

STEP 2. Establishment of a procurement mechanism from family farming for the school feeding programme

Objective: This step aims at identifying a) the institutional and policy enabling environment related to local procurement for the SFP; b) institutional and policy enabling environment related to family farming; c) existing public policies on family farming; d) existing initiatives of public procurement from the family farming sector; and e) opportunities and bottlenecks for implementing local procurement from family farming for the SFP.

Public purchases from family farming for the SFP must follow the legal and administrative guidelines established by legal frameworks of each country regarding public procurement procedures, as well as the specific regulations of the national SFP.

Experiences from countries in Latin America and the Caribbean show that different types of existing public procurement procedures and SFP management systems may allow different mechanisms of local procurement from family farming that are specific to their conditions. In other situations, new policies and smallholder-friendly procurement legislation and procedures may need to be implemented.

Figure 7. Step 2 entails the following actions:



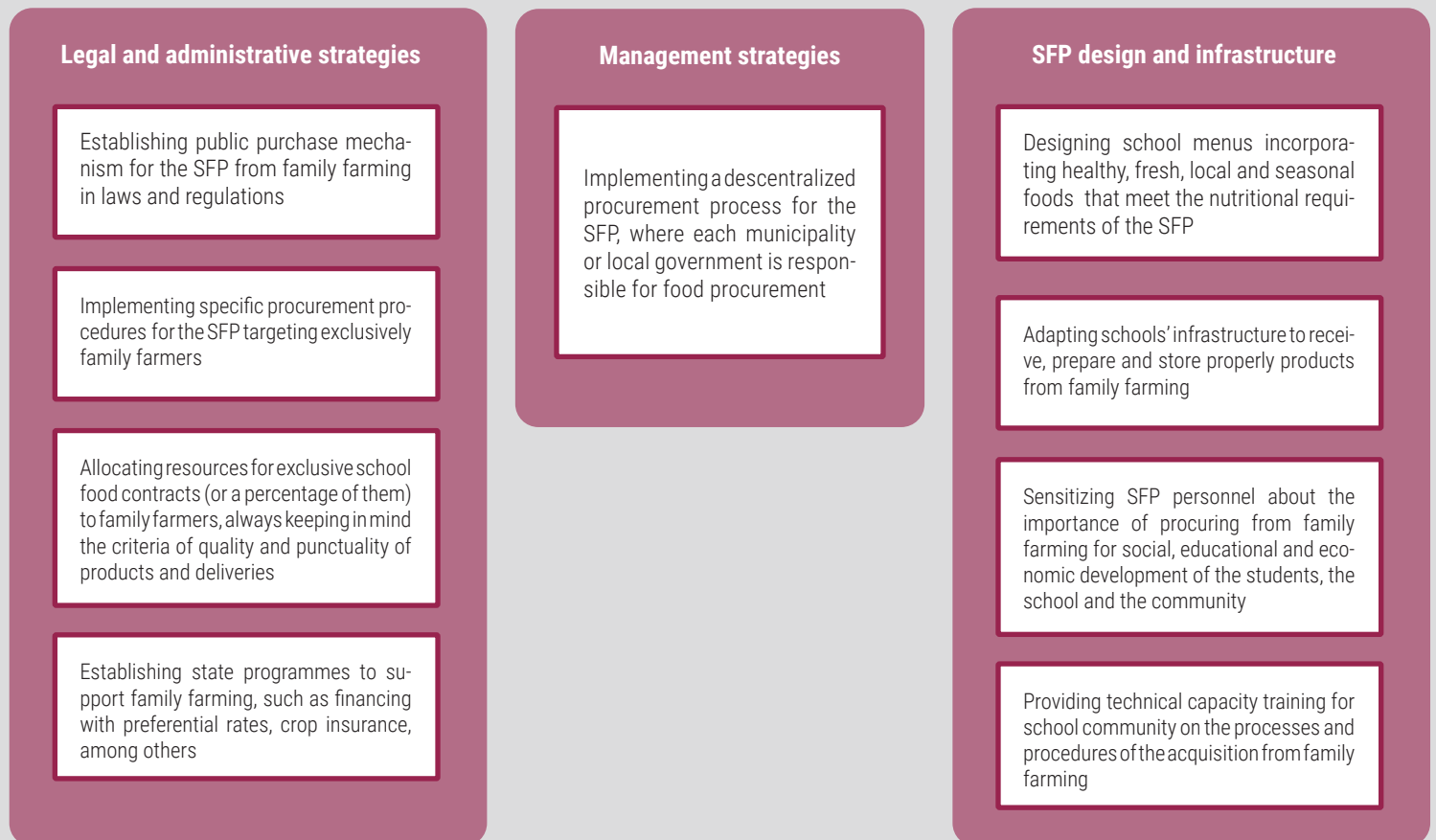
I. Reviewing existing legal frameworks and public policies related to school feeding programmes and family farming

Legal frameworks and public policies related to school feeding

A review of the legal frameworks related to the school feeding programme, seeking to understand the systems of management and transfer of resources for the execution of the programme, as well as the modalities of food purchases practiced, will provide information on the existing possibilities and challenges to establish the local procurement from family farming for the SFP.

It is important that the government and the SFP establish legal, regulatory and administrative mechanisms that not only promote, but, above all, facilitate the participation of family farmers in institutional procurement. Often, the creation of new legislation and administrative mechanisms may be required.

Figure 8. Possible government strategies to facilitate local procurement from family farmers



Experiences on facilitating local procurement from family farming

Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras and Paraguay have passed school feeding laws prioritizing local family farmers and their organizations as school feeding suppliers, or setting a mandatory quota of financial resources to be used with them.

- In Guatemala, parents organizations act as local buyers for school feeding and manage the supplementation of resources required for the preparation and distribution of food. This type of decentralized management represents a great advantage, as it allows each educational institution to decide where and from whom to purchase school meals, provided that the supplier issues an accounting invoice. This becomes an opportunity to link the SFP with family farming.
- In Bolivia and Nicaragua, laws of public procurement for goods and services establish the possibility of “contracting by exception”, which allows the purchase of fresh and perishable food, which could be covered by the local farmers. Another existing possibility would be the “purchase by quotation”, for contracts that do not exceed an established amount. This modality represents an opportunity to make smaller purchases adjusted to the requirements of the municipalities, allowing farmers to compete in the purchase processes of the State with lower volumes of products.
- In Peru, the procurement process for the SFP is not regulated by the Law of Public Contracts; instead, direct transfer systems to regions and states (departments) have been created. Purchases are the responsibility of the purchasing committees.

Legal frameworks and public policies related to family farming

Concomitantly, a brief diagnosis of the country’s policies, legal frameworks and documents regarding family farming should be carried out, in order to determine the level of support for its development and strengthening. The National Agriculture Census, when updated, is a document that should be used as a source of information.

It is important to identify:

- if the country has an official and legal definition of “family farmers” (or any other term used to address this sector), therefore establishing objective criteria to identify them;
- if there are national and local registry (database) systems of these farmers and their capacity, the variety and quality of their products, if they are organized in associations or cooperatives, and if these registries are constantly updated;
- existing efforts and initiatives to promote the direct linkage of family farming to institutional markets; and
- information on family farmers who have already sold to institutional markets, at a national or local level: daily and annual production, storage capacity, quality control mechanisms, minimum processing conditions, product life, delivery logistics, among others.

The existence of detailed and up-to-date information on agriculture and specifically on family farming enables the understanding of the real conditions of these actors, their location and production, facilitating the elaboration of public policies directed to the sector and their particular needs and challenges.

Experiences on family farming registry systems

In Brazil, due to the strong organization of family farmers, there are already in place national and local government and non-government registry systems that compile their information, which is available for those who are interested in purchasing their products.

Some data base systems belong to different ministries and institutions that work with family farmers (there are data base systems from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Social Development, Secretariat of Family Farming and Agrarian Development, NGO).

In some states, there are online registry systems to which the farmers have access, and where they can include their personal (name, address, phone number) and their production information (what, how much and when they produce).

This updated database has proven to be extremely important when the government needs to purchase a large volume of products in the context of an emergency.

II. Reviewing existing public procurement systems and legal instruments

It is necessary to know the legal frameworks and public procurement mechanisms of the country, seeking to identify possibilities of inclusion of family farmers and their organizations or cooperatives in the tendering processes for food purchases. Some countries have public procurement modalities aimed at specific situations, which could be used for direct local purchases.

III. Securing a budget allocation for purchases from family farming for the SFP

The process of securing resources entails identifying funding sources and establishing a budget for local purchases.

Procurement can be funded by the ministry or institution responsible for financing the SFP, usually the Ministry of Education, or by another ministry. Also, an international organization may finance the process, which was the case for the pilot implementation of the SS model in Belize within the framework of Mesoamerica Hunger Free AMEXCID-FAO programme.

Budget allocation will depend on food demand, production capacity of the farmers, estimated cost of the school feeding per child per day, and the available funding from the government or whoever is financing these purchases.

There are several criteria for establishing the budget line for local purchases, such as establishing quotas or defining coverage of a specific number of students, for example.

Experiences on securing resources for the procurement from family farming

In Brazil, School Feeding Law No. 11.947 of 2009 establishes that, of the total financial resources transferred to states and municipalities for the SFP by the national government, at least 30 percent should be used to purchase foods directly from family farmers and from the rural family entrepreneur or their organizations. States and municipalities also supplement the budget for school meals and, in order to define the budget for family farming purchases, they consider several factors such as the number of students served (according to certain age groups or regions), per capita values established by the Ministry of Education (for school feeding per student per day) and the available supply of the products from family farming.

In Guatemala, of the total financial resources assigned to each educational centre, at least 50 percent should be allocated for purchases of family farming products, as long as the necessary supply exists in the local market. After five years, the financial resources assigned to each educational centre for purchases from family farming must be increased to 70 percent, as long as the necessary supply exists in the local market and the quality of the product is guaranteed.

IV. Defining a local procurement mechanism

With all the necessary information gathered, it is possible to define the ideal procurement mechanism, that is, one that considers the reality and conditions of family farmers.

Experiences on establishing mechanisms of local procurement from family farming

In Brazil, the School Feeding Law waives family farmers from participating in the traditional bidding process to sell to the SFP. Instead, they do it through an alternative procurement mechanism called public call, which is directly and specifically addressed to these farmers, provided that their prices are compatible with those in force in the local market and that foods meet the requirements of quality control established by the rules that regulate the matter.

It is important to establish a local procurement mechanism that encourages the farmers and their organizations to participate. One essential aspect to consider, for example, is the establishment of efficient and quick payment mechanisms.

Establishing a financial–administrative mechanism for procuring from family farmers for the SS model in Toledo district, Belize

- An agreement was signed between FAO and the MoA (within the framework of MHF programme) on December 2017, with the objective of contributing to the implementation of the SS pilot project, with a particular focus on facilitating procurement from local family farmers to the four schools.
- The agreement established the design of an administrative–financial mechanism for food procurement and expedited payment to family farmers residing in the area where the four pilot schools are located.
- The administrative–financial mechanism for food procurement for the four schools was put in place by the MoA, through the Toledo Catholic School Management, a non-government organization responsible for managing the arrangement and for the expedited payment to family farmers.
- The overall mechanism for disbursement of funds for local purchases from family farmers for the SS model in Belize is presented below:



Important aspects to consider during Step 2:

This entire process must be spearheaded to the competent body, which is usually the MoE, in conjunction with the MoA.

Budget allocation for school feeding must be constant and sustainable over time, and should specifically allocate resources for the acquisition of food from family farming.

In the long term, it is crucial to establish, in a legal framework, the mandatory allocation of at least a quota of SFP resources to local purchases from family farming, in order to guarantee the commitment with and sustainability of this strategy.

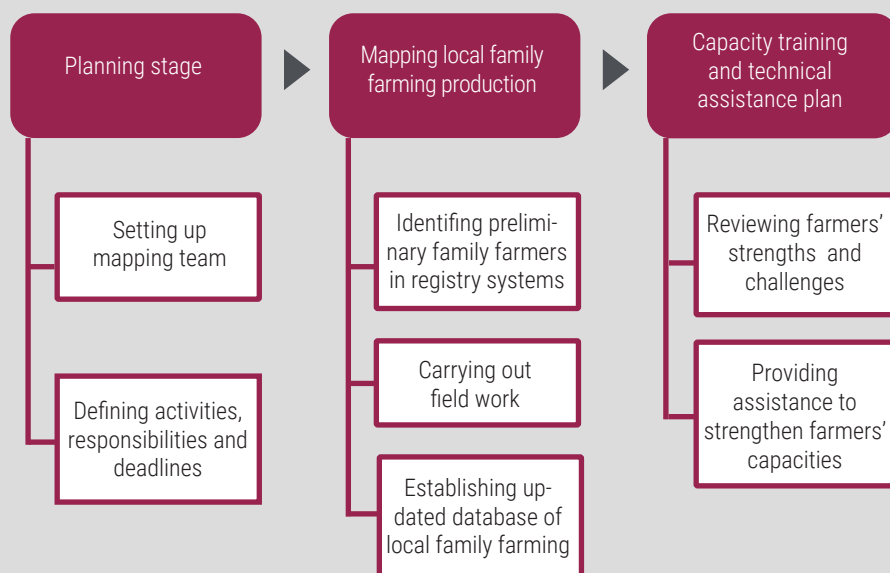
STEP 3. Identification of local supply from family farming

Objective: Identify the situation of family farmers and their organizations and cooperatives situated in the same area where the schools are located, in terms of their institutional, production and marketing capacities, and identify those who are able to provide for the SFP in the short, medium and long term. The information collected will allow the articulation between local supply and school demand.

Both the national and the local school feeding technical committees should oversee this step. This process will be the direct responsibility of the MoA, and monitoring should be carried out by the body responsible for school feeding, which is usually the MoE.

This step should be developed concurrently with step 4, the development of the school menu, because the information obtained in these two moments will serve as an input for both.

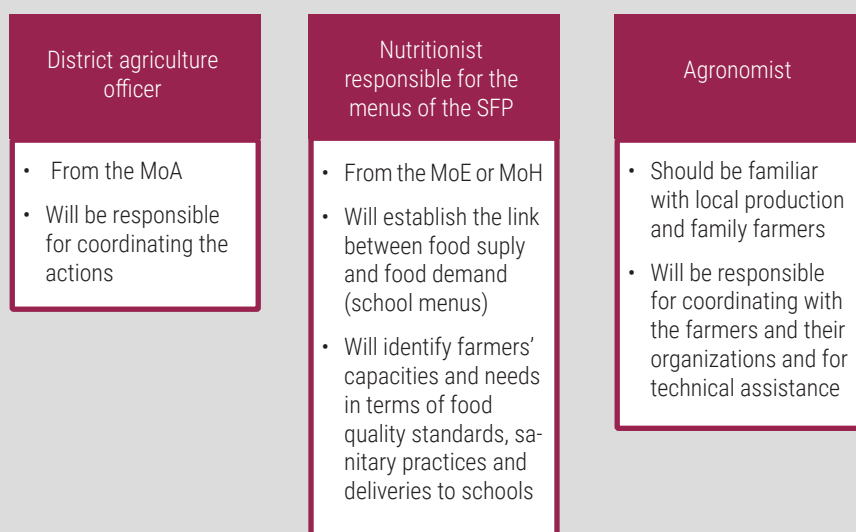
Figure 9. Step 3 entails the following actions:



I. Planning stage

First, the national and the local technical committees should assemble the team that will be directly responsible for carrying on the mapping. It is very important to have on the mapping team local technical personnel familiar and with a good rapport with the farmers, their organizations and the institutions that work with them.

Figure 10. Key members of the mapping team



It is worth emphasizing the importance of the nutritionist of the SFP or the professional who is responsible for developing the SFP menus in the mapping process, not only because they will use the information obtained to develop the menus, but also because they will have the opportunity to talk to farmers, verify if their products comply with the required quality and sanitary standards, and establish their challenges and needs in terms of capacity development on sanitary practices, products size and shape and packaging requirements, for example.

The mapping team should gather with the local technical committee to plan and organize the necessary actions. Also, at this initial phase, it is important to identify other local key institutions and stakeholders that will contribute to this step (rural extension and technical assistance institutions, NGO, international organizations, etc.).

II. Mapping local family farming production

The mapping consists of gathering information about family farmers' capacities and identifying those potential producers who are able to provide for the SFP. This process should be done, initially, through an active search of farmers. Eventually, as the procurement from family farming becomes more organized and established, the farmers and their organizations may start offering their products to the SFP.

For farmers to be included in the mapping, it is essential that they comply with the definition criteria for "family farmer" adopted in the country, even when an official definition is still lacking. Somehow, it is necessary to have clear and transparent criteria about the farmers that are eligible to participate in the process.

Preliminary information: This information can be obtained, at first, in national or local registry systems of family farmers and their organizations, and other database from the Ministry of Agriculture and others institutions, NGO, or international organization agencies that work with this sector. Also, in smaller localities, agriculture offices are a good source of updated information.

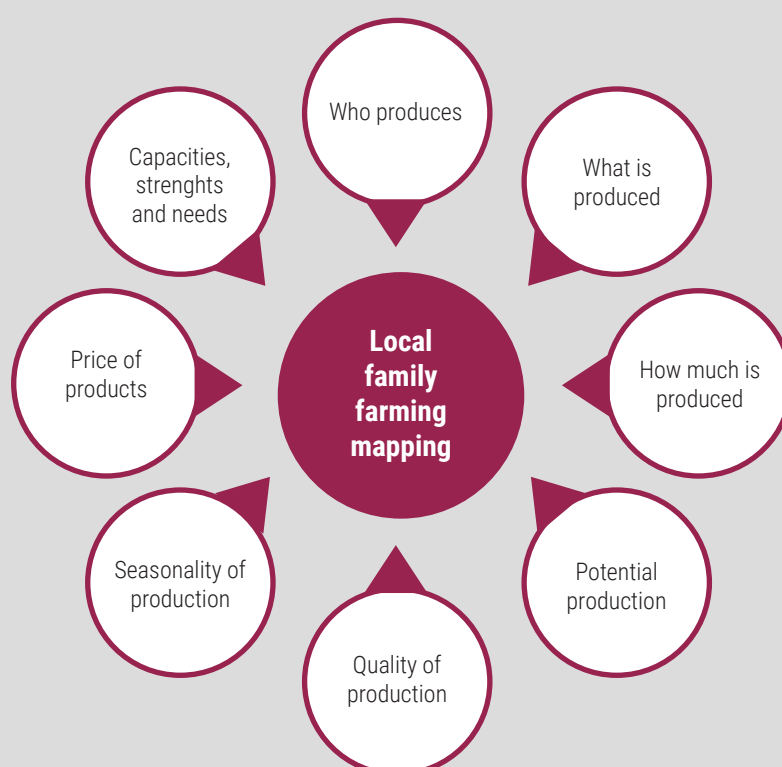
Field work: Through field visits, the mapping team will have the opportunity to:

- I. talk to the farmers in person;
- II. sensitize them about the importance of selling directly to the SFP and encourage them to participate;
- III. validate the preliminary information obtained;
- IV. identify other potential local suppliers; and
- V. determine preliminary farmers' needs in terms of technical assistance and rural extension.

Involvement of the local community is very important during this process. Often they are the ones who know better who and where the producers are. Talking to principals can also be very useful, especially in small towns and communities, as it may happen that some schools already buy from family farmers in their own communities from time to time. In this case, these producers should also be contacted.

The team should collect as much information of the farmers and their organizations' capacity as possible, in order to establish their ability to supply the school feeding, and to meet the quantity and quality demanded during all school year round.

Figure 11. Information to be gathered during the mapping



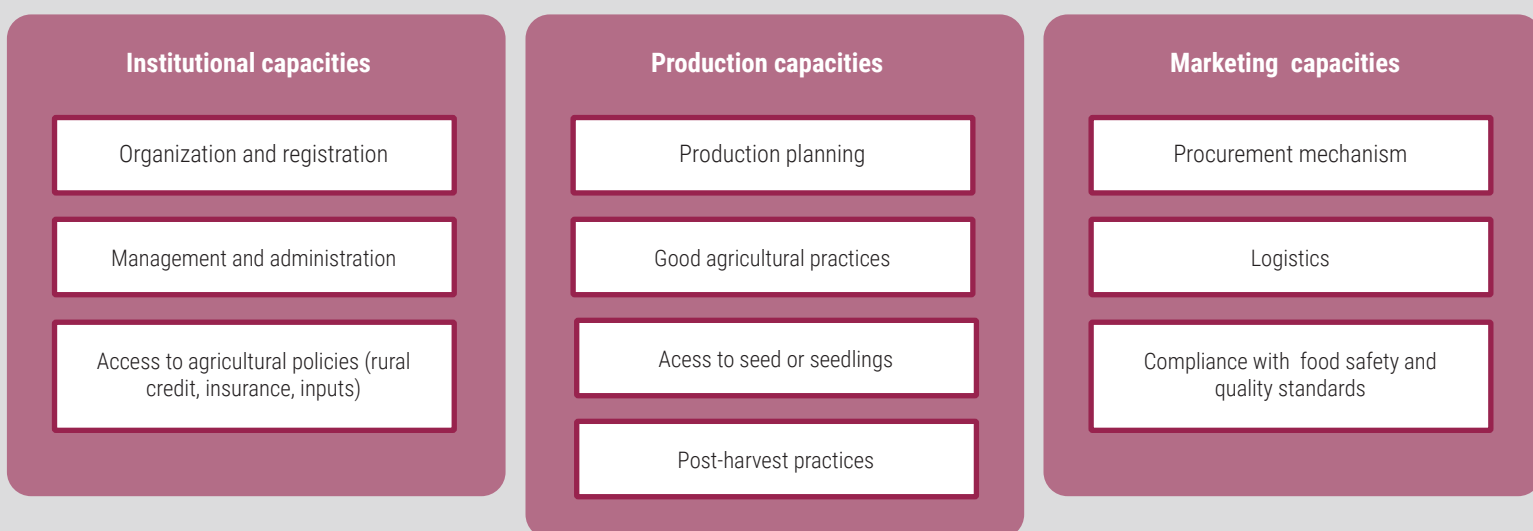
Prices obtained at this moment are a preliminary reference. Other issues that interfere with the price should also be considered, such as logistics and transport costs. Later on the process, when the final food demand is established according to the school menus, both parties involved in the purchase and sale process – the farmers and the MoE – with the support of the MoA, will discuss the final price.

Ideally, all the information obtained should go into a data base of the MoA with potential local producers, organizations and cooperatives with capacity and interest on selling to public markets, including the SFP. When it is not possible to have such a data base, a list with all the information collected should be sent to the MoA and shared with the national and local technical committees.

III. Capacity training and technical assistance plan

After the identification and certification of potential producers, their needs and existing bottlenecks, a capacity training and technical assistance plan should be developed, considering the available agriculture extension policies and programmes and personnel of each locality. Special attention must be given to guaranteeing that the quality and sanitary conditions of farmers' products conform to technical regulations established by the ministries of health and agriculture. Family farmers may need support in various aspects.

Figure 12. Potential aspects to be considered for technical assistance to farmers



Mapping of family farming in Toledo district, Belize, for the sustainable schools pilot project

- In 2017, mapping of family farmers in Toledo district was carried out by a team comprised of the nutritionist responsible for developing the menus, a staff from the MoA and an agronomist.
- Initially, the MoA, through the Department of Co-operatives, prepared a diagnosis about the status of local farmers' organizations, identifying the existence of family farmers in the area, as well as the technical capacity of extension workers who would provide technical assistance to this process.
- Subsequently, a preliminary diagnosis was made to identify both the availability of products and the ability of local producers to supply the demand for school feeding.
- A list of the products regularly offered by the farmers in the area (box below) throughout the year was obtained with their prices, which were obtained through the weekly report of market prices monitored by the MoA. Prices of some products were obtained through interviews with the local farmers.
- A list of 21 potential farmers, distributed throughout the four villages of the SS model pilot, was compiled based on their expression of interest at village meetings.
- The products available, at the mapping time, were as follows:

Staples	Fruits	Vegetables	Meat
1. Cassava 2. Rice 3. Red beans 4. Sweet potato 5. White potato 6. Yellow corn	7. Banana 8. Calaloo 9. Cantaloupe 10. Lime 11. Orange 12. Papaya 13. Watermelon	14. Boiled corn 15. Bok choy 16. Cabbage 17. Carrots 18. Chocho 19. Cucumber 20. Jipijapa 21. Lentils 22. Lettuce 23. Okra 24. Onion 25. Radish 26. Split peas 27. String beans 28. Sweet pepper 29. Tomato	30. Beef 31. Chicken 32. Eggs 33. Pork 34. Turkey

Important aspects to consider during Step 3:

The ministries involved and the technical assistance institutions should encourage the participation of the farmers and their organizations in this new procurement process, sensitizing them and answering questions they might have.



Close coordination among the nutritionist, technical assistance institutions and the farmers will ensure the supply of products that comply with technical quality standards for school meals and the appropriate delivery practices to the schools, all year round.



Joint collaboration and strong articulation among education, agriculture and health sectors at a local level is essential, and also among them, the farmers and the local institutions that work with them, such as technical assistance and rural extension entities.



The establishment of up to date family farming registry systems at a local level can contribute to the creation of a national registry system.

STEP 4. Identification of school demand

Objective: Determine the demand of the school feeding programme, which is based on the school menu. The establishment of foods that make up the menu – their type, quantity, frequency and offer period – will serve as a guide for family farmers to plan their production and logistics accordingly.

As previously mentioned, this step is done simultaneously with the mapping of family farmers, as the information obtained in both steps will complement each other.

The goal is to have menus developed according to appropriate nutritional guidelines and recommendations, meeting the nutritional needs of students during the school period, considering their nutritional status and different age groups, and including healthy, fresh, culturally appropriate foods from family farming.

As well as in all the other steps, active participation of social actors, especially the local school community, namely, principals, the school feeding committee, school cooks and the students and families, is essential to the success of the actions.

Figure 13. Step 4 entails the following actions:



I. Carrying out technical meetings

Technical meetings spearheaded by the NSSFTMC in order to review the methodology and the actions planned, both at a national and local level, will allow for the successful development of the nutritional plan and implementation of the other activities under this component, as well as assigning responsibilities and establishing a timetable for the process.

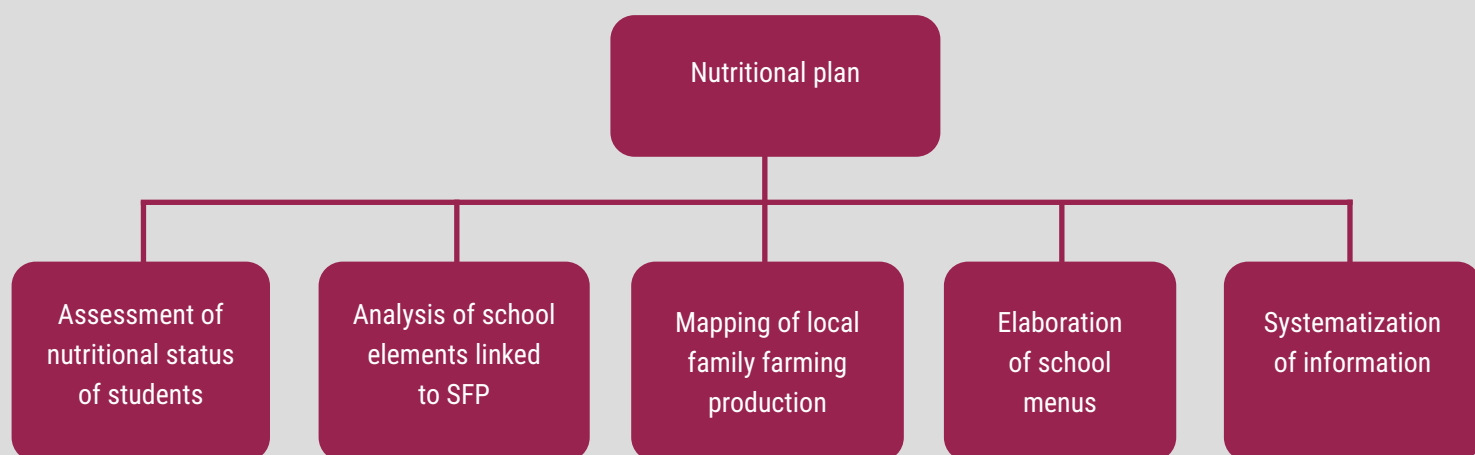
The nutritionist responsible for the development of the school menus, who participated in the family farming mapping, will lead the whole process, in close collaboration with the MoH and others institutions responsible for the country's nutritional guidelines and standards, the MoA and MoE.

II. Developing a nutritional plan

The nutritional plan is a tool that organizes and systematizes the necessary processes for the elaboration of the school menus, and which has been created under the framework of the SS model. It is important to highlight that the school menus are extremely important for the various components of a sustainable SFP, because from there:

- the school community understands, in practice, what it means to eat healthy, seasonal and local;
- the types, quantity, and frequency of foods that will be purchased from family farmers can be obtained;
- family farmers can diversify, plan and increase their production to meet the school demand;
- it is possible to diversify school feeding including food crops produced locally by family farmers and which are part of local food habits;
- teachers can plan their food and nutrition education activities, especially actions in the school gardens, so that students grow and taste the food that will be bought from farmers and served at school; and
- the school community can exercise social control of the SFP, making sure that the planned menu is, in fact, offered.

Figure 14. Components of the nutritional plan



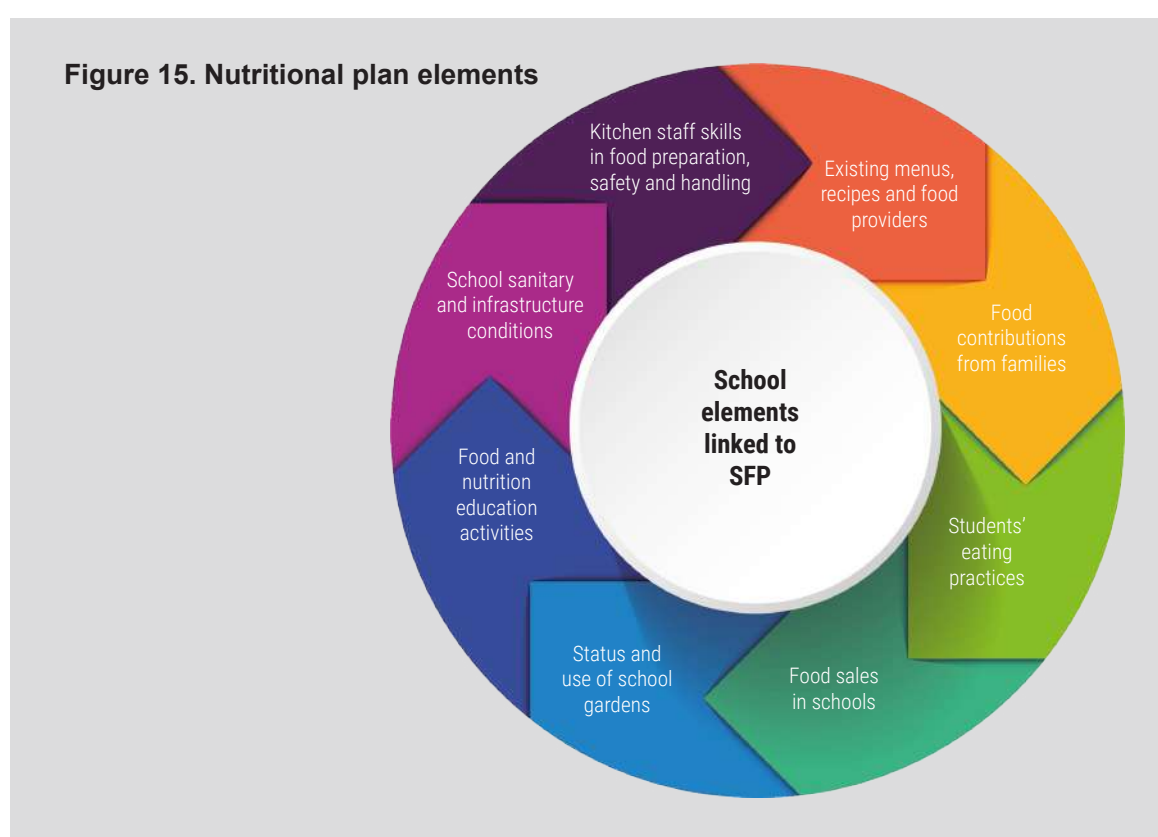
Assessment of the nutritional status of the students

Very importantly, menus should be developed considering the nutritional status of students and, if there is no current data available, it is recommended that this assessment be carried out as a first step in the process of the nutritional plan, so that the menu is aligned with the student's nutritional needs.

Analysis of school elements linked to the SFP

Menus must be developed according to the local reality of students and schools and, for that, it is necessary to carry out a process involving the collection and analysis of preliminary information, which will contribute to a better understanding of the public who will receive the meals, meals currently offered, existing school practices related to the SFP, schools' conditions related to the provision of a healthy school feeding, and the kitchen staff's capacities.

In this sense, it is important to establish an initial communication with the schools, aiming at sensitizing everyone, including the students' parents, regarding the importance of carrying out the nutritional plan, as well as to plan the necessary actions in a jointly manner.



Existing school menus, food recipes and preparations should be revised to identify the need for adjustments in terms of quantities, quality, diversity and sources of the food supplied.

Other elements described in the figure below must also be analysed. It is important to identify infrastructure conditions of schools and kitchens, regarding access to electricity, safe water and kitchen equipment, such as refrigerator, stove, and an appropriate food storage area. At this preliminary evaluation, it is also necessary to identify the capacities of the kitchen staff in relation to food safety and handling practices.

All this information was collected for the implementation of the SS model in the four pilot schools in Toledo; however, due to the main focus of this document, only some details about the mapping and the elaboration of the menus will be presented.

Mapping of family farming

The nutritionist should include in the menus the products identified in the mapping process, considering their availability, quality, seasonality and prices.

Elaboration of school menus

For the development of the school menus, various elements should be taken into consideration:

- specific national and local dietary culture and practices of the population, considering national food-based dietary guidelines;
- sound nutritional guidelines and recommendations;
- nutritional needs of the students;
- different portion sizes for different age groups;
- local family farming production; and
- infrastructure conditions of schools.

Nutritional contribution of the school meals – in terms of kilocalories, macro and micronutrients – should be established according to the nutritional status, gender and age group of the students, and the number of hours they spend in the educational institution.

Generally, cyclical menus are elaborated, for every three or four weeks. For each preparation, it is important to establish the per capita (per student) quantities of each food item, considering the portions served for each age group established, as shown below.

Table 3. One week menu

WEEK 1				
Monday – Day 1	Tuesday – Day 2	Wednesday – Day 3	Thursday – Day 4	Friday – Day 5
Stewed chicken with white rice Chicken – 1 piece (1 oz) Onion/tomato for chicken – ½ cup Split peas – ½ cup Rice – ½ cup Steamed carrots/chocho – 1 cup Ingredients Vegetable oil – 3 tsps Salt, achiote, chicken consommé, black pepper Dessert: fruit (cantaloupe) – ½ cup Drink: water	Eggs with calaloo Egg – 1 unit Calaloo – ½ cup Corn tortillas – 1 unit Refried beefed beans – ½ cup Salad: cucumber/tomato – 1 cup Ingredients Vegetable oil – 3 tsps Salt, black pepper Drink: juice (orange) – ½ cup	Chicken vegetable soup Chicken – 1 piece (1 oz) Corn tortillas – 1 unit Potato – ½ unit Tomato, sweet peppers, and jipijapa for soup – 1 cup Ingredients Vegetable oil – 3 tsps Salt, black pepper, chicken consommé, bay leaf Dessert: fruit (banana) – 1 unit Drink: water	Stewed pork with boiled cassava Pork stew – 2 cubes (1 oz) Onion/tomato for stew – ¼ cup Boiled cassava – ½ cup Salad: carrots/radish – 1 cup Ingredients Vegetable oil – 3 tsps Salt, black pepper, achiote, garlic Drink: juice (lime) – ½ cup	Chicken fried rice Chicken breast – 1 oz Rice – ½ cup Carrots, cabbage, and jipijapa for rice – ½ cup Steamed string beans – ½ cup Ingredients Vegetable oil – 3 tsps Salt, black pepper, soy sauce Dessert: sweet potato pudding Drink: water
>10 years: 1 cup rice, 1 cup split peas	>10 years: 1 cup beans, 2 corn tortillas	>10 years: 2 corn tortillas	>10 years: 1 cup cassava, 2 oz pork	>10 years: 1 cup rice

To determine the necessary amounts of each food item for the recipes and preparations and, consequently, for purchases, the nutritionist should consider the net weight, gross weight, and food correction factor of foods.

Often, procuring from family farming results in new products or new recipes and preparations being incorporated into the menus. Whenever novel foods are introduced in the menus or

innovative changes in food preparations are made, the acceptance of foods and preparations by the students should be assessed, in order to determine the quality of the school meals and to prevent food waste. Different methodologies to measure acceptance need to be applied considering the different age groups. If a rejection occurs, there should be an effort to identify the reasons and to make the necessary adjustments or changes.

III. Strengthening of school capacities to receive family farming products

It is very important to guarantee adequate conditions in schools in terms of food safety, handling and sanitary practices when receiving, storing, preparing and distributing foods, especially when fresh and new products from family farming are incorporated.

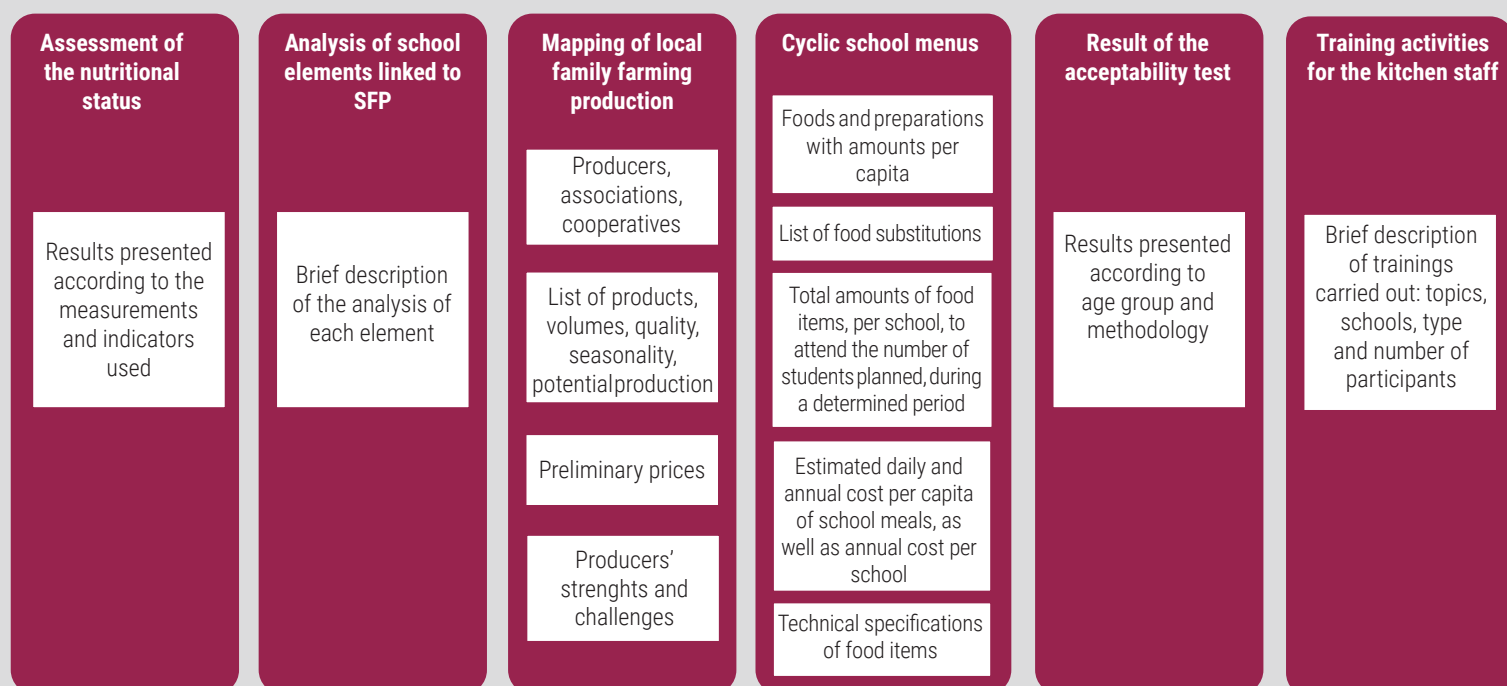
This means, on the one hand, providing awareness raising trainings for school cooks and members of the school feeding committee about the importance of buying from local farmers and including these products in the school menus, and, on the other hand, providing trainings for school cooks on food quality and hygiene, food handling practices, new recipes and preparations. At the same time, it means making sure the schools have adequate facilities, kitchen equipment and utensils to manage all food items.

These capacity development trainings should be carried out by the nutritionist responsible for the SFP, jointly with staff from the MoH.

IV. Systematization of information

The systematization of the information in a document will serve as an important input for procurement planning by the various actors and institutions involved in the process, at a national and local level. The final document of the nutritional plan should systematize all the processes involved in this stage.

Figure 16. Components of the nutritional plan



Important aspects to consider during Step 4:

Menus should be flexible, especially in relation to the products of family farmers, so that timely substitutions can be made when food prices are too high, when a specific product is not in season or when there is a problem with the harvest, for example.

The elaboration of the menu should facilitate the incorporation of new locally produced foods from family farmers into the school meals, and also encouraging the production of new products by family farmers to attend the school demand.

Products from family farming should meet the standards of food safety and sanitary conditions at all stages of procurement, delivery, storage, preparation, consumption and disposal of foods.

Nutritional plan for the SS model pilot in Toledo district, Belize

After finishing the analysis of the school elements linked to the SFP, and with the list of foods produced by family farmers obtained in the mapping, the nutritionist proceeded to elaborate the menus.

- Food Based Dietary Guidelines of Belize were used as a reference.
- For the estimation of the amount of kilocalories and nutrients of the menus of the four pilot schools, energy and nutrient recommendations from FAO and WHO for children from four to 19 years of age were used as reference.
- Three-week cycle menus were developed to meet a daily average of 35 percent of these standards, considering that most of the students said that they did not receive a complete breakfast and that they would not receive a meal after school at home, according to the interviews.
- The distribution of macronutrients were as follows:
 - Carbohydrates: accounted for 50–60 percent of the total caloric daily intake, with less than 10 percent from simple sugars.
 - Fats and oils: accounted for 25–35 percent of the total caloric daily intake, with less than percent from saturated fats and less than 1 percent from trans fats.
 - Proteins: accounted for 10–15 percent of the total caloric daily intake.
- Recommendations were established for two different age groups (4–9 and 10–19 years old), to allow distinct kilocalorie and nutrient recommendations, as well as different servings (portions).
- A distribution of equivalents by food groups using 35 percent of the recommended daily intake for the lunch meal was calculated to estimate portions for each age group.
- Two of the four pilot schools did not have access to electricity, therefore limiting the possibility of storing foods that required refrigeration. Two distinct menus were elaborated to facilitate the storage and preparation of foods and to avoid food-borne illnesses that can derive from inadequate storage and handling of products, one with animal source foods that required refrigeration and another menu without such foods, such as meats and poultry, but including eggs.

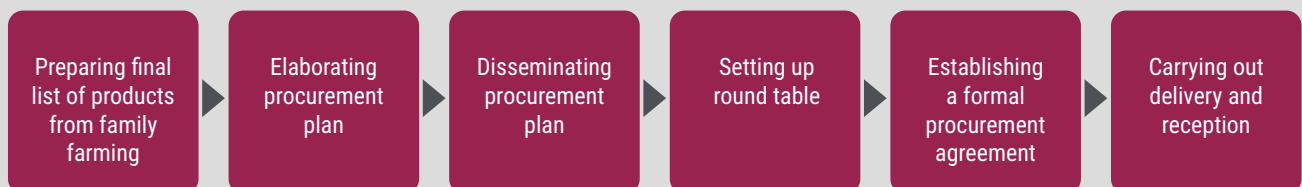
STEP 5. Execution of local procurement

Objective: Materialize the articulation between family farming supply and school demand through the acquisition of healthy, fresh, local and seasonal products, with consistent quality, at fair prices and timely deliveries to schools, throughout the school year.

This process should be spearheaded by the unit responsible for the procurement of the SFP, usually within the MoE, involving the sellers – the farmers, their organizations and cooperatives – and with the participation of the MoA, extension officers, representatives of the school feeding committees, and other actors and institutions that are involved in supporting the procurement process (NGO and international organizations, for example).

There must be a very fluid and ongoing communication among all the aforementioned actors, in order to facilitate the adequate implementation of the process, solution of the problems that may arise and the necessary adjustments in a timely manner, as well as to support the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the purchase process.

Figure 17. Step 5 entails the following actions:



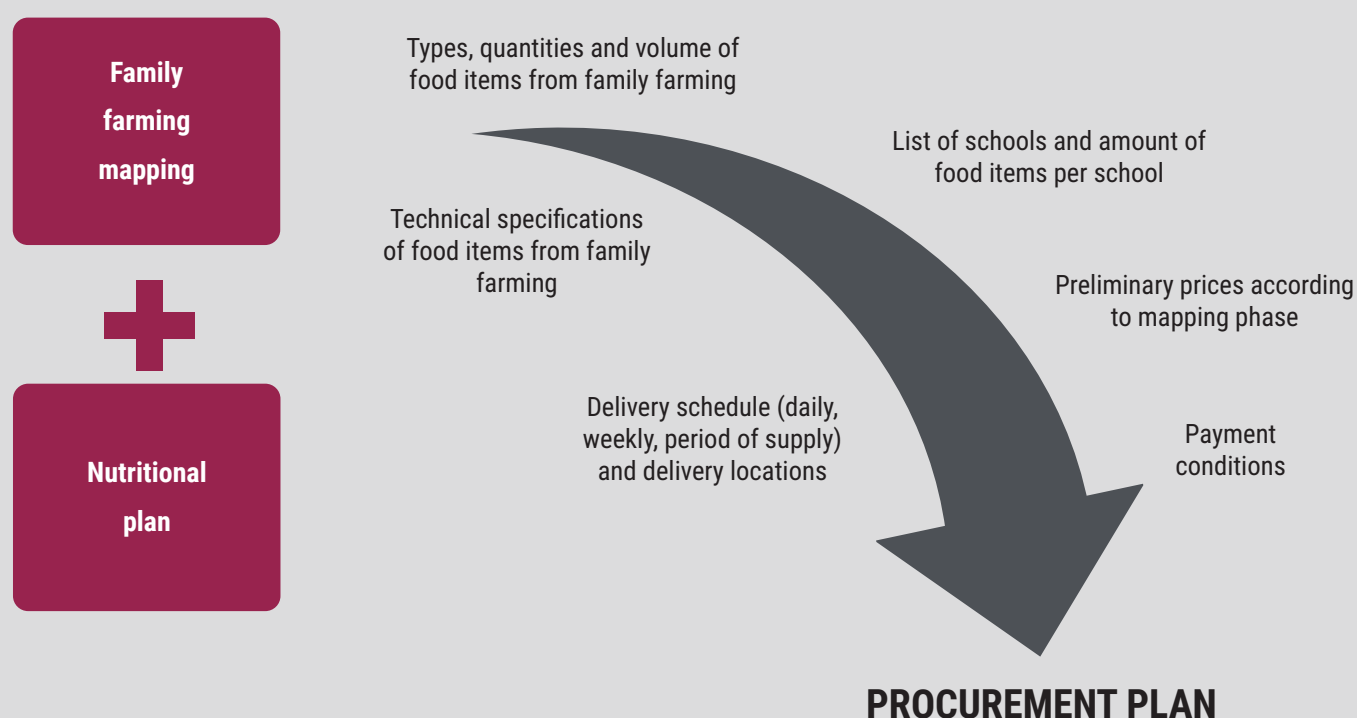
I. Preparing final list of food products from family farming for the SFP

At this moment, the objective is to review the list of food items for the SFP presented in the nutritional plan, and select those that can be purchased from family farmers and their organizations or cooperatives, considering the family farming mapping.

II. Elaborating procurement plan

The procurement plan should include a list of the food products that will be acquired from the farmers and their organizations, with all the information that will be necessary for them to plan and organize their production and deliveries.

Figure 18. Flowchart process for the development of the procurement plan



Once developed, the procurement plan should be submitted to the national and local school feeding technical committees for validation and, subsequently, to the institution responsible for the procurement of the SFP, which is usually established under the MoE.

III. Disseminating procurement plan

Next, the procurement plan should be disseminated to farmers and their organizations, considering the financial–administrative mechanism for procuring from family farming established in Step 2. The main goal is to let the farmers and their organizations know about the interest of the SFP in acquiring those food products, so that they can participate in the process.

The method for disseminating the procurement plan may vary, depending on the various specificities of each SFP, country and locality (centralized or decentralized resource system, size of the community or city, volume of purchase, number of family farmers available to participate, and even the level of access of farmers to internet and technologies). The important thing is that the information is highly publicized and that farmers have access to it.

In larger cities, where the volume of purchase is very high, where there may be many farmers and associations or cooperatives interested, the financial–administrative mechanism may establish the recommendation for farmers to submit their sales proposals to the procurement unit. In small communities, farmers may be invited to participate in a round table. Whatever

the process, it is important to establish on the procurement plan the exact date in which the proposals from the farmers are expected, or, when appropriate, to set up a round table to define prices and other important elements of the process.

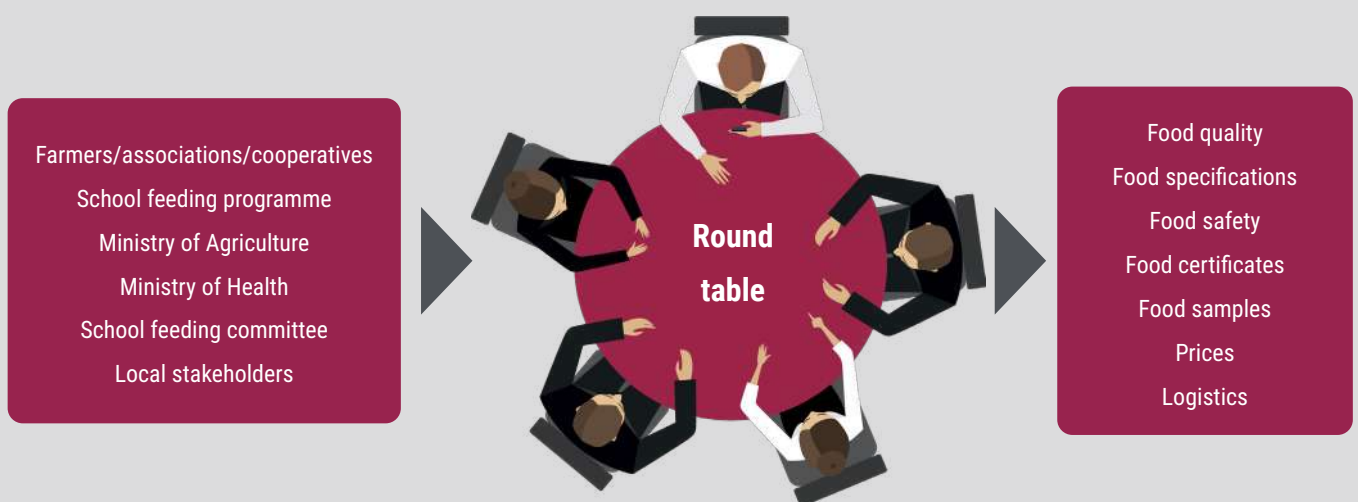
It would be important to disseminate the procurement plan ahead of time so that the farmers can plan their production and be able to ensure that their produce would be available when the school needs it.

IV. Setting up a round table

In small localities, when the procurement system for the SFP is decentralized, some countries have established round tables or procurement committees as dialogue mechanisms between the parties involved – the buyers and the sellers – to come to a consensus on prices, logistics, quality and safety control, and other important elements on which negotiation will be necessary.

At this moment, it may also be important to request the farmers to bring samples of their products so that they can be assessed for their organoleptic conditions (flavour, odour, appearance and mouthfeel) on the spot or taken to laboratory testing when necessary.

Figure 19. Main participants of and elements to be agreed upon at the round table



It is important that all actors directly involved in this process – farmers, the institution in charge of the SFP and the procurement unit – understand that this is not a regular procurement process, carried out through a bidding mechanism where the lowest price is the main determinant. Nor is it a simple relationship between a supplier and a customer.

Very likely, some flexibility may be required from both sides, based on the understanding that this purchase is much more than just a commercial transaction; it is a strategy that will have nutritional, economic, social, educational and environmental effects on students and communities.

In this sense, support from the local government may be needed to transport the products from the place of production to schools or other distribution points, and stronger support from the SFP nutritionist may be required to train farmers in food safety and delivery conditions.

Experiences on the establishment of prices for family farming products

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To achieve the goal of ensuring fair prices in public purchases, formulas can be created based on average prices over a longer period of time, to minimize price shocks. These mechanisms can serve to establish lasting relationships between the actors involved.

At the same time, it will be important for farmers to understand that they are not selling to a middle man or any trader, and that they should not necessarily expect to receive the highest value. On the other hand, they may have a guaranteed market throughout the school year, in addition to being able to contribute to the SFP of their community. Therefore, prices should be fair for everyone involved, considering all these conditions.

For the establishment of prices, it is important to consider all necessary inputs – freight, packaging, charges and any other expenses necessary for the product supply – in order to guarantee the conditions for the acquisition from family farming for school meals, which also includes transportation and delivery of products from the local area of production to the schools or the central distribution location, when that is the case.

Additionally, clear mechanisms for the establishment of prices guarantee transparency along the process for all involved.

V. Establishing a formal agreement of purchases from family farming for school feeding

The contract must establish all specifications that were agreed on during the round table, including the possibility for food product substitutions, according to the criteria established by the nutritionist in the nutritional plan.

VI. Carrying out delivery and reception

Farmers should distribute their products according to the specifications of the contract. Points of delivery will vary according to the type of SFP management system, and they can be directly to each school, to points of distributions or centralized school kitchens. Whatever the situation, there should be monitoring and control mechanisms in place, with the involvement of the government or the civil society.

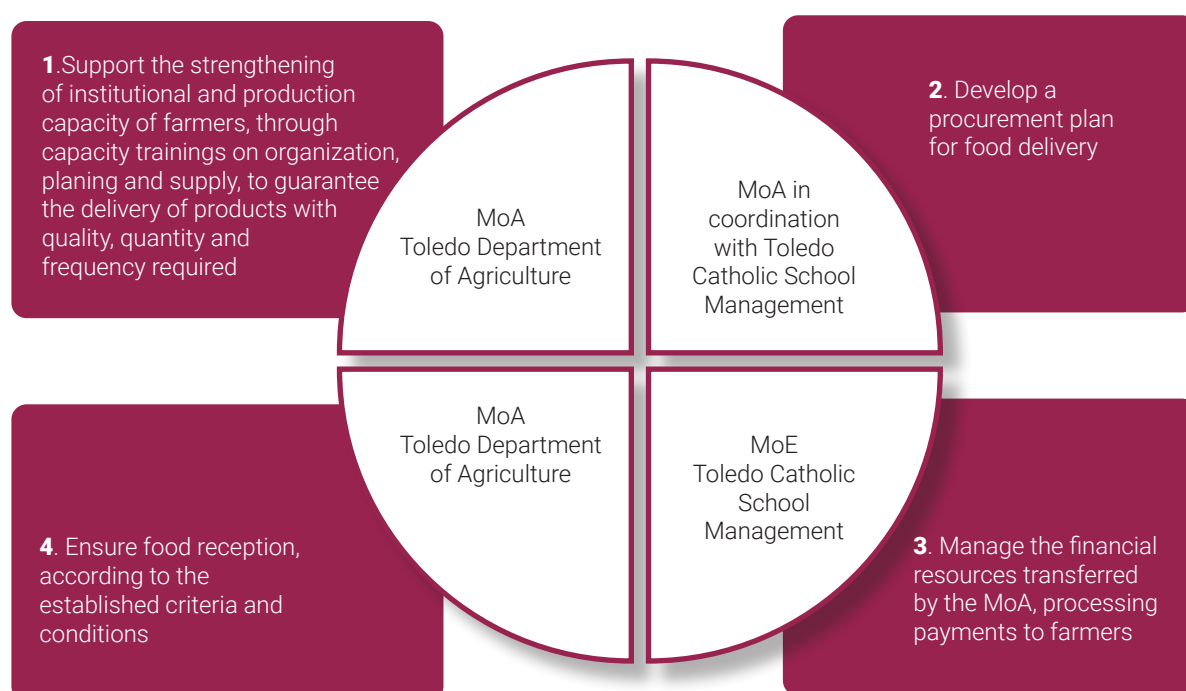
In that sense, the role of the school community, the PTA and the school feeding committee in making sure the products delivered at schools comply with all the specifications established is extremely important. That is why it is so important to strengthen their capacities in aspects related to food quality, food hygiene and food practices.

Execution of local procurement for the SS pilot project in Toledo district, Belize

- Actors involved in each round table: MoA, MoH, MoE, school principal, school feeding committee, alcalde (major), chairman.
- As stipulated in the agreement established for this purpose, procurement for the four pilot schools allowed for 53 to 60 days of school feeding, five times a week, to all students in each school.

Number of schools	Average days with school feeding	Cost per child, per day	Number of students	Average monthly expenditure
4	60	USD 0.82	652	USD 32 000

- The following process was carried out to purchase foods from family farming for the four pilot schools:



Important aspects to consider during Step 5:

Payment periods to farmers must be clearly established, and the established deadlines must be met.



It is important that PTA and school feeding committees' members are properly trained for reception and storage of food

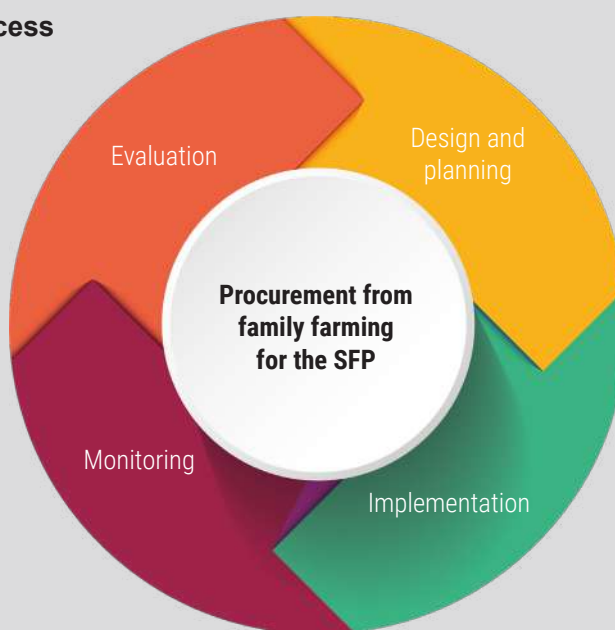


Active participation of the school community, parents and school feeding committees will contribute to the transparency and social control of the SFP

STEP 6. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation should be carried out at all stages of the procurement process, in a continuous cycle. In that sense, it is important that effective interinstitutional monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for all the steps of the process at a national, local and community level are in place.

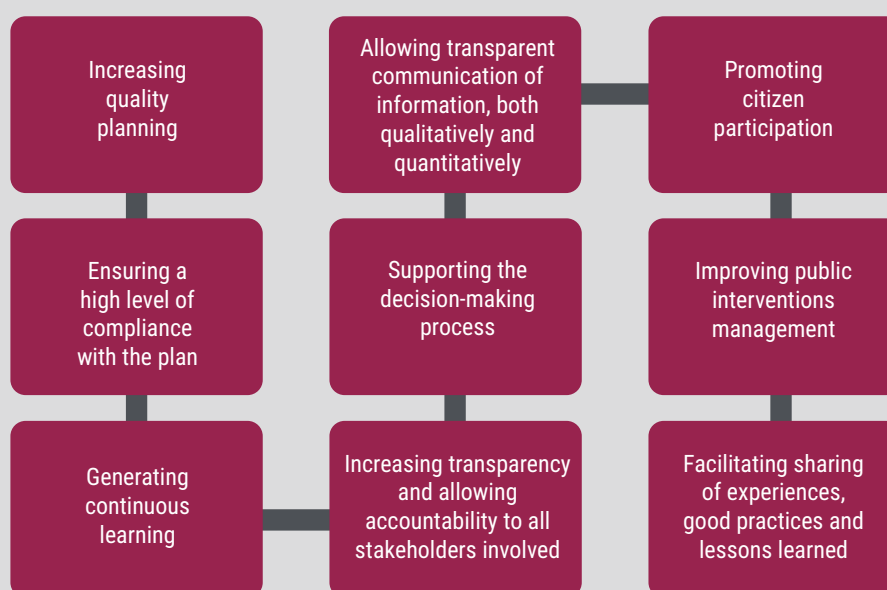
Figure 20. Monitoring and evaluation cycle of the procurement process



There are different types of evaluation, and each country should decide the objectives, methodology and mechanisms used for monitoring and evaluating the procurement process. The important thing is to guarantee resources, time and technical staff for carrying out:

- **process evaluation**, which allows monitoring all the steps of the procurement initiative, collecting qualitative and quantitative information on how the processes and actions are being implemented, and identifying strengths, advances and challenges along the way; and
- **results evaluation**, which allows identifying a) if the most immediate and direct objectives initially planned have been accomplished; b) the effects of the process on schools, school community, farmers and the community as a whole; and c) the cost (human, material and monetary resources) of the initiative.

Figure 21. Contributions of a monitoring and evaluation system



All the information obtained in the monitoring and evaluation process should be used to implement timely adjustments along the way, guide new decisions and redirect planned actions, so as to achieve the successful implementation of procurement from family farming for the SFP, within the framework of the SS model. To support monitoring and evaluation, it is essential to have systematized records of all processes.

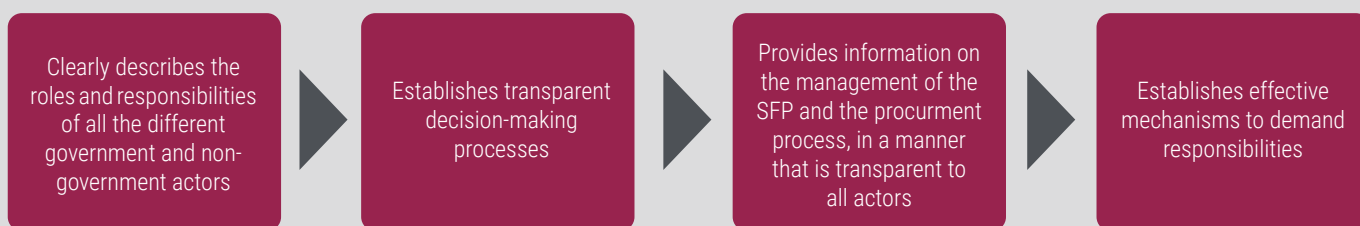
Both the National and the local school feeding technical committees are key in the monitoring and evaluation process, and a fluid channel of communication between them is essential. At the same time, a close dialogue between the local committee and the community contributes to guaranteeing that the process is adequately implemented at local level.

Civil society has a fundamental role in social control of this procurement initiative. In fact, it is extremely important to guarantee that social participation is a transversal axis of the implementation of local procurement, which will also be key to guarantee the sustainability of the SFP.

Local stakeholders such as community leaders and representatives, the school community – including the PTA and the school feeding committee – the family farmers and their organizations and cooperatives, community-based organizations, NGO, all have rights and responsibilities in this process. They should be involved through participatory processes that respond to the specificities of and that empower each actor of the community.

In order to implement an effective monitoring and evaluation process, it is necessary to establish a transparent and accessible accountability system.

Figure 22. Elements of a transparent and accessible accountability system



Important aspects to consider during Step 6:

The number of farmers participating in the process, considering gender, volumes sold and amounts paid must be recorded.

A fluid dialogue among institutions, stakeholders and the community is essential to promote transparent planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation processes, at national, local and school levels.

Active participation of the school community, parents and school feeding committees contribute to the transparency and social control of the SFP.



Next steps and further recommendations for Belize

The implementation of the SS model pilot in Toledo district has contributed to promoting a new vision of a sustainable school feeding programme in the country, changing the paradigm from a food assistance programme to a rights-based programme linked to health, education, agriculture and social and sustainable development.

The establishment of the NSSFTMC has shown that different sectors and institutions can work in a coordinated manner towards a common agenda. The pilot project has demonstrated that the school community is strongly committed to contributing with the implementation of a sustainable school feeding programme.

The methodology for the direct purchase from family farming for school feeding, which has been the focus of this document, has been established among all the institutions and key players involved at a national and local level. Family farmers were able to supply the four schools with quality food items, in the amounts and time required during the pilot project.

It is important to continue strengthening this component by promoting and diversifying family farming production, and using the school feeding programme as a strategy to support production and access to healthy and culturally appropriate food.

Strengthening of agricultural extension services to provide information, technology and knowledge to family farmers is advised, so that they can produce the food needed to supply the school feeding programme, in sufficient quantity and quality, at a fair price, using sustainable production techniques.

It is recommended that the line ministries, with the support of other institutions and national and international agencies and organizations working with social food transfer programmes, strengthen the advocacy process to promote or reinforce the linkage between school feeding and family farming sector by creating specific policies, programmes and strategies.

The lessons learned through the pilot implementation of the SS model in Toledo district could be used to strengthen the direct procurement modality in the Toledo area and to replicate the experience to other districts of the country, as well as to implement the model at a national level.



Notes

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ISBN 978-92-5-136255-6



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CC0198EN/1/07.22