

School Meals Programmes are a powerful driver of urban food policies, enabling cities to achieve multiple cascading objectives, such as promoting sustainable food consumption for children, facilitating the shift to healthier and more sustainable diets, combating food poverty, strengthening rural-urban linkages, and raising awareness among children on food waste.

National governments are typically responsible for the regulatory aspects by enacting framework laws or guidelines, which are then passed on to local governments for implementation.

In many countries, school meals programmes are established and managed directly by local governments, which are the primary providers of the service. On one hand, cities serve as the entry point for the effective and efficient implementation of national legislation; on the other hand, only through the deep understanding cities have of their citizens' needs can they provide meaningful and robust support, not just in implementing, but also in designing these policies.

As a result, **the relationship between national governments and cities is crucial.**

Cities Feeding the Future Initiative

The Cities Feeding the Future Initiative was launched in October 2023 at the School Meals Coalition First Global Summit in Paris.

Led by the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP), **it aims to support municipalities in their responsibility of implementing school meals programmes**, while fostering links between local and national governments. It was established as part of the School Meals Coalition strategy to effectively align the efforts and commitments of the Coalition Member States, facilitating the successful implementation at city level.

Vision and objectives

The Cities Feeding the Future Initiative primarily works with Mayors, city officers and local governments around the world **to establish and enhance school meals programmes**. This is achieved by **sharing best practices** from selected cities within the MUFPP.

Leveraging a network of over 340 cities, the MUFPP aims to amplify its global impact on transforming local food systems, with a specific focus on improving school meals and enhancing the overall service.

The initiative works towards three main objectives:

- **Empowering cities** in implementing effective school meals programmes;
- **Facilitating the sharing of knowledge** among peer cities and global actors;
- **Supporting local decision-making processes.**

Key actions

To achieve its objectives, the *Cities Feeding the Future* initiative focuses on **three main areas of action**:

1. ADVOCACY

Through the **identification of Champion Mayors** and the **organisation of National Dialogues**, the Initiative aims to promote advocacy actions towards national governments and international organisations, emphasizing the importance of school meals and highlighting best practices worldwide. Within this, the initiative organizes events and technical field visits. Simultaneously, the Initiative commits to playing an active role in key meetings of the Coalition.

2. BEST PRACTICES

To facilitate the **exchange of best practices** among relevant cities, the Initiative aims to complement the SMC database with an urban perspective. In addition, it aims at organising **technical workshops** focused on sharing best practices and highlighting different approaches from various cities.

3. RESEARCH

To support cities with specific learning needs to co-design new school meals programmes or to improve existing ones. This is achieved by offering **technical assistance** in selected cities through the development of **feasibility studies**.

Structure and partners

The initiative is led by the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Secretariat, with a dedicated team overseeing its activities, guided by a shared action plan.

To ensure coherence within the Coalition, it collaborates closely with other SMC initiatives.

School Meals Coalition

Launched in 2021 at the UN Food System Summit in New York, the School Meals Coalition aims to improve and scale up school meal programs to ensure that every child has access to healthy, nutritious meals in school by 2030.

Today the Coalition network features over 110 governments, 160+ partners and 6 regional bodies, working together to transform food and education systems through school meals.

schoolmealscoalition.org

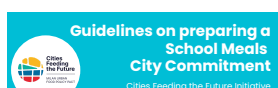


Deliverables

So far the initiative has carried out several activities:

Champion Mayors

- **Identification of two cohort of Champion Mayors**, who are city leaders among the MUFPP cities of country that are part of the School Meals Coalition, who act as school meals pioneers and political ambassadors of the Cities Feeding the Future Initiative.
- Development of **Guidelines on preparing a School Meals City Commitment** to further reinforce the Champion Mayors' involvement by submitting concrete time-bound pledges for strengthening and improving their school meal programmes, to turn commitments into action.



Who are the Champion Mayors?
Champion Mayors are MUFPP city leaders from School Meals Coalition countries. They promote school meals and act as ambassadors of the Cities Feeding the Future Initiative, playing a role in mobilising and coordinating local actors at the national and sub-national levels to ensure the success of the initiative.

How to become a Champion?
The MUFPP Secretariat selects the most innovative practices submitted by cities for inclusion through the **School Meals Survey**. Mayor leading cities with a commitment to school meals are invited to become Champion Mayors.

Lead by example – with innovative practices that inspire others, support policies, and environmental impact and food systems and strategies.

Advocate – bringing other cities into global movements, such as the **100+ Cities for School Meals** initiative.

Build coalitions – engaging new cities, partners and resources to expand impact.

Being a Champion Mayor means having political will and action with clear goals, volunteer engagement, and shared priorities, as well as city-level actions, leadership, innovation, and resources.

Through the Cities Feeding the Future Initiative, city leaders receive knowledge, tool case studies, and resources to strengthen their programmes and global standards, and showcasing their city as a leader in the global school meals agenda.



Research

- Publication of the two **flagship City Case Studies** on **Milan** and **Montpellier** in collaboration with the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition to support cities in showcasing the knowledge on city efforts on school meals.
- Contribution to the **State of School Feeding Worldwide 2024** publication with city-led solutions and innovation, the enrichment of the Data and Monitoring Initiative's **Global Database on school meals with data from MUFPP cities**. The data gathered from 156 cities of the MUFPP network have enriched the Global Database on School Meals of the Data and Monitoring Initiative, with a specific new section dedicated to city-level data.
- Publication of the report **School Meals: the transformative potential of urban food policies**, presenting virtuous examples coming from the MUFPP community.



Read the report on
School Meals
here!



MUFPP cities in SMC countries

266
cities

71
SMC countries

Spreading Experiences and Knowledge on School Meals Programmes in ASEAN Cities Project

- Developed in partnership with ASEAN and funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.
- Organisation of the MUFPP-ASEAN School Meals Summer School in ASEAN Cities (July 2024, Bandung, Indonesia) to increase the capacity of city officers and member states from ASEAN countries to develop school meals programmes.
- Development of Feasibility Studies on school meals programmes for selected cities with the technical support of Milano Ristorazione.

Boosting School Meals in ASEAN Cities Project

- Building on the success of the above mentioned project, **participating cities submit a project to work through high-level coaching sessions** to further develop their proposal and identify financing needs toward investment readiness. The cities will deliver pitches of their projects in a match-making event with potential donors. These activities are being developed in collaboration with the **Sustainable Financing Initiative**.
- Within the advocacy activities, a **National Dialogue in Indonesia on school meals** has been organized in April 2026, hosted by the City of Semarang, to support collaboration across different levels of government to strengthen cities' role in the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals programme, with key experts sessions and facilitated group discussions among 150 participants representing different Indonesian Ministries and cities.

Trainings

- **MUFPP Regional Forum in Africa** (Addis Ababa - October 10-11, 2024) on **"School Meals Programmes for Healthier and Sustainable African Cities"**.
- Organisation of the high-level conference **The Power of Public Food Procurement** (17-18 June 2024, Copenhagen).
- **Upcoming Training on School Meals for in Rotterdam** (4-6 November 2026)

Milan Urban Food Policy Pact

Launched by the Municipality of Milan in 2015, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) is the leading international agreement among cities, committed to developing sustainable, inclusive, resilient, safe, and diverse food systems. It aims to create a permanent platform for knowledge exchange, best practices, and capacity-building activities.

Today, it brings together over 340 cities worldwide.