

## CHAPTER 8

# Agriculture, Employment, and Community Participation

School meal programs often aim to reinforce the rural economy through the local purchase of food items or more direct engagement with farmers. Among the programs captured here, 43% reported involving farmers directly in some manner in school meal operations (Table 10). Not surprisingly, programs whose objectives included meeting agricultural goals were more likely (at 71%) to directly involve farmers, while this value was 28% among programs without an explicit agricultural objective. Engagement with farmers was most common in the Latin America & Caribbean region (at 64% of programs) and least common in the Middle East & North Africa, where no program reported direct engagement with farmers.

Among programs that involve farmers directly, it was more common for small farms to receive targeted support (Figure 25). This does not necessarily imply that small farmers are more likely to provide food for the school feeding program, but rather that there is an effort to assist them to become involved. Over three-quarters (77%) of these programs offered agricultural extension to small farmers, 52% offered training related to school feeding, and 60% provided agricultural subsidies, including inputs. It was less common for these programs to implement purchase agreements (at 44%) or offer mobile or electronic payments (at 20%).

Survey respondents recounted numerous instances of farmer engagement. Farmers in Nigeria receive subsidies, extension, and mobile or electronic payments, and small-scale farmers receive preferential treatment in the program's competitive procurement processes. The World Food Program's Purchase for Progress (P4P) model is employed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with competitive procedures and forward contracts for commodity purchases that ensure smallholder farmers can participate. In Lesotho, trainings for youths are led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security with a focus on meeting the needs of the school feeding market. In Brazil, both small- and medium-scale farmers are involved in the National School Feeding Program by selling directly to the program. They receive support in the form of agricultural subsidies, extension, mobile or electronic payments, school feeding-specific training, and purchase agreements set prior to harvest. In the United States, the "Farm-to-School" program forges links between individual schools and local producers and brings fresh food into school cafeterias.

The private sector was also reported to be involved in some manner in school meal operations in 36% of the programs. For example, the National School Nutrition Program (NSNP) in South Africa is supplemented by private sector (in-kind) investments in school breakfasts. Private sector engagement seems to be incrementally more common at lower income levels (Table 10). Among programs reporting private sector engagement, it was most common for national-scale companies to be involved (in 75% of the cases), rather than those operating at a subnational level (in 42% of the cases) or a larger (multi-country or global) scale. The dominance of companies that operate at a national or subnational scale was found across all activities associated with school feeding (Figure 26). Among the programs in which private sector companies are engaged, they were most often reported to be involved in transport and the supply of utensils (in 38% and 30% of the cases), but somewhat less likely to be involved in food trading, food processing, or catering.

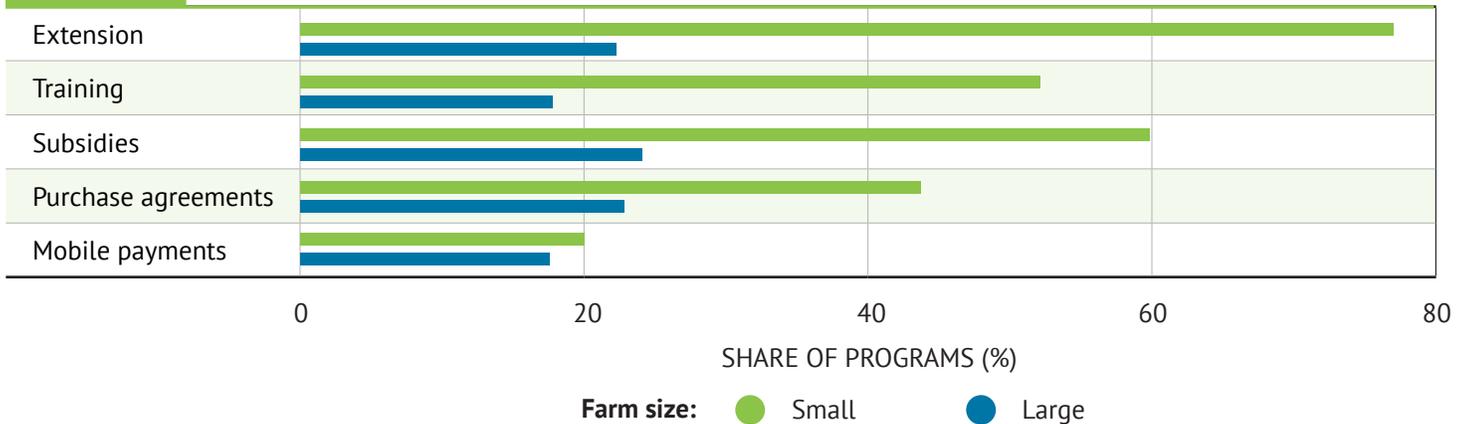
**TABLE 10**

**INVOLVEMENT OF FARMERS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

		Farmers involved (%)	Private sector involved (%)
<b>Region</b>	Sub-Saharan Africa	49	40
	South Asia, East Asia & Pacific	46	36
	Middle East & North Africa	0	38
	Latin America & Caribbean	64	31
	North America, Europe & Central Asia	8	27
<b>Income group</b>	Low income	46	40
	Lower middle income	41	36
	Upper middle income	58	34
	High income	14	32
<b>All</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>36</b>	

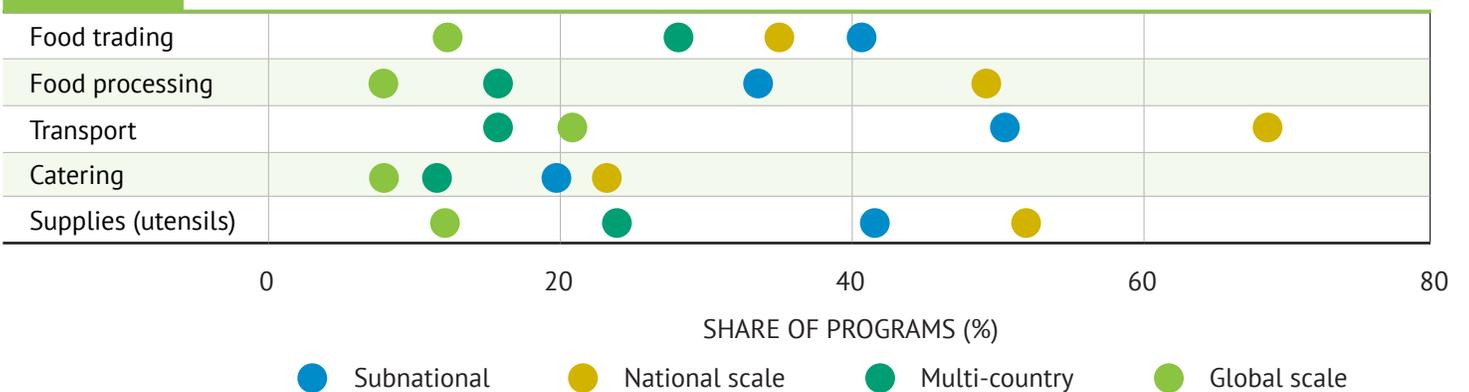
**FIGURE 25**

**TYPES OF SUPPORT PROVIDED TO FARMERS (AMONG PROGRAMS THAT ENGAGE WITH FARMERS)**



**FIGURE 26**

**ENGAGEMENT OF PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS IN SCHOOL FEEDING**



Cooks and food preparers are overwhelmingly female: Over three-quarters of the cooks were women in 78% of the school meal programs that answered this question, and over half were women in 86% of the programs. Eighty-eight programs were able to report on the number of cooks (including paid and unpaid workers) who were involved in the school meal activities. Among these, the median value was 1,210 cooks per program, and the mean value was 41,695 cooks (with large outliers at the high end in the larger school meal programs, such as India). However, 31% of programs reported that very few or no cooks received payment for their work, and it was most common for cooks to work on a volunteer basis in low income countries.



31%

of programs reported that very few or no cooks received payment for their work



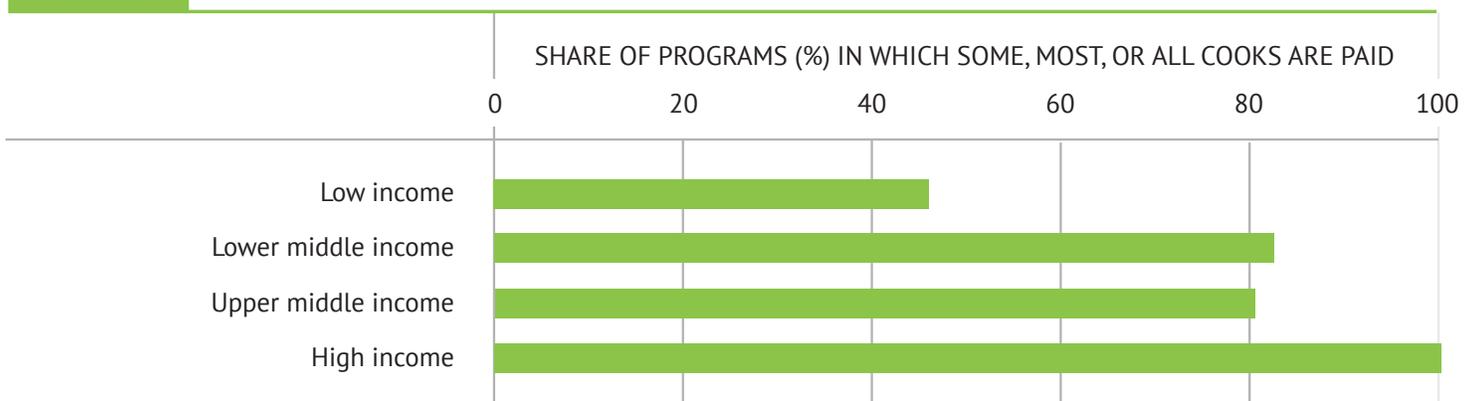
78%

of programs reported that 75% or more of food preparers are women

Specifically, 53% of programs in low income countries reported that very few or no cooks received payment, while this value was zero among the high income countries (Figure 27). Among those cooks that did receive payment, they were paid in cash (in 76% of the cases) and in kind (in 33% of the cases).<sup>27</sup> It was about equally common for these payments to come from the local community (in 44% of the cases) and the national government (at 40%). An implementing partner was cited as the source of cooks' payments in 20% of cases.

FIGURE 27

RENUMERATION OF COOKS ACROSS INCOME GROUPS



<sup>27</sup> Twelve programs report paying their cooks both in cash and in kind.

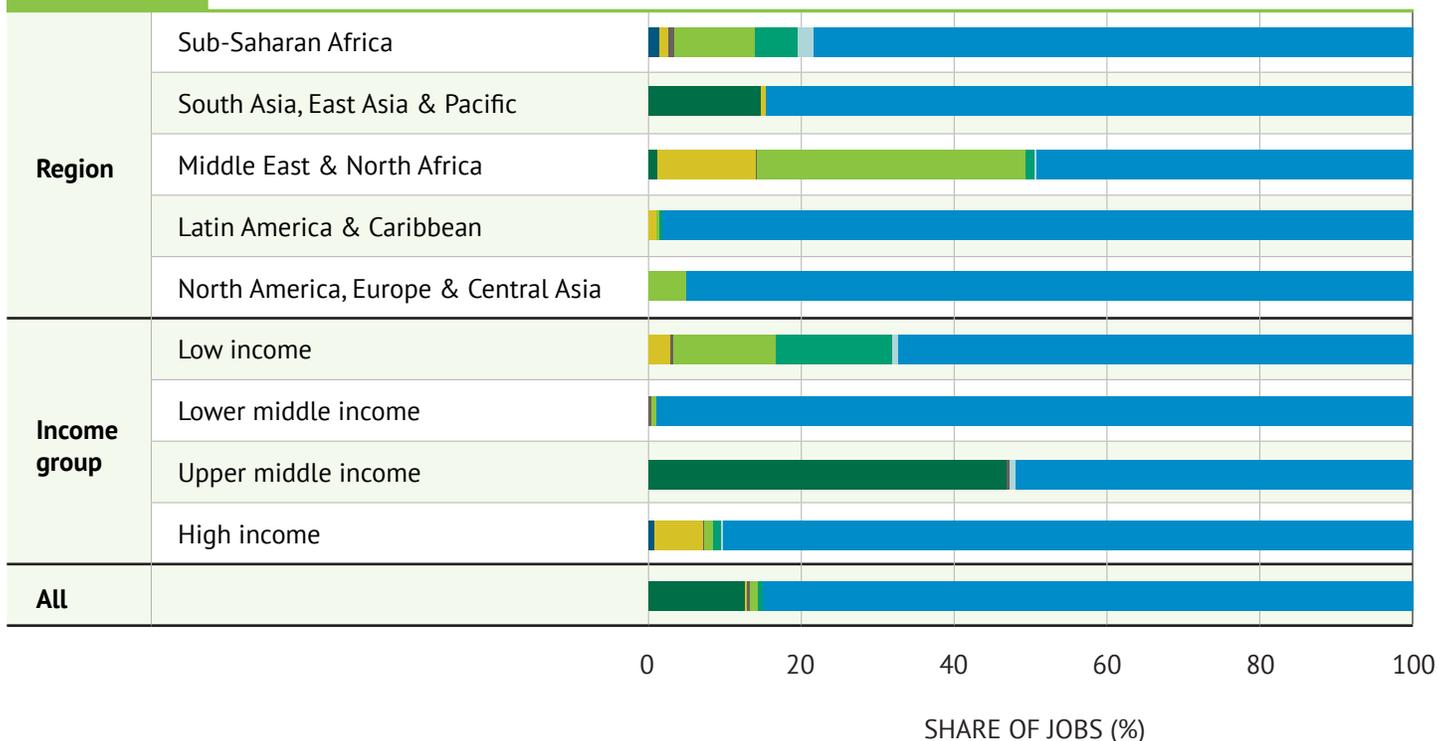
Survey responses reveal a wide diversity in how cooks are remunerated. Thus, in Moldova, all cooks received a salary paid for by the national and local governments. Nigeria reported that cooks have individual bank accounts and are paid via bank transfer. In Nepal, most cooks are school assistants who are paid a bit more by the government, school, or community to expand their responsibilities. In Indonesia, cooking groups receive a percentage of the budget per student meal, to be divided among the group members. In the Republic of the Congo, cooks are not paid (either in cash or in-kind) but are provided training. In the Central African Republic, Madagascar, and Malawi, most cooks are women, and few or none are paid.

A focus on creating jobs or leadership opportunities for women was reported in 67% of the programs, for youths in 30% of the programs, and for other groups (such as indigenous groups) in 32% of the programs. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Integrated Program for Sustainable School Canteens has established micro-agricultural projects linked to school canteens and led by women's groups, with 70% of the production sold to benefit these groups. In Niger, priority in hiring cooks is given to women; women's groups receive training in self-reliance and capacity strengthening; and food purchases are sometimes made from women farmers' organizations. In Senegal, school meal programs support women for leadership positions in the parent-school committees; in Cambodia, each school support committee contains at least one woman; and in Laos, the Lao Women's Union at the village level leads the daily cooking for the National School Lunch Program. In Burundi, women comprised 60% of the cooperatives from which cereals and pulses were purchased, and gender balance on the cooperatives' boards is a requirement. Most employees of Iraq's National School Feeding Project are women.

In Kyrgyzstan, the food storage system of the School Lunch Program is under the responsibility of village youth organizations. In Nigeria, employment opportunities related to the school meal program exist for women (as cooks and aggregators) and also for youths (as program monitors). Youths in Niger are engaged in school gardening and animal husbandry linked to the school meal programs, and youths in Zambia are encouraged to form groups and undergo skills trainings in agricultural value and supply chains prior to being provided with soft loans associated with the school meal program. In China, efforts are also made to employ people with disabilities.

FIGURE 28

DISTRIBUTION OF JOB TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS



**Job type:** ● Cooks ● Transporters ● Processors ● Packagers  
 ● Monitors ● Managers ● Inspectors ● Other

In total, 58% of programs were able to provide estimates of the number of paying jobs created around their school feeding operations. Thirty-two countries were unable to provide any job numbers. Given that not all programs could provide estimates, country-level aggregations for the number of jobs in school meal programs are necessarily a lower bound estimate. Estimates for the number of jobs at the country level, disaggregated by the type of job, are provided in Table A3 in Annex A. In most countries, the most common job associated with school meal programs is the category of cooks and food preparers. In fact, when aggregating the number of jobs across all countries that reported numbers, 85% are of cooks and food preparers (Figure 28). One exception is Bangladesh, with a school feeding program built largely around factory-produced biscuits that require more off-site processors than cooks. Cooks claim an especially large share of the jobs in the Latin America & Caribbean region, while packagers are more prevalent in the Middle East & North Africa region.

## There was community engagement with school meal programs in



**86.5%**  
of programs



**90%**  
of countries

There was community engagement (among parents or others) with school feeding programs in 86.5% of the programs and 90% of the countries. In 13% of the cases, such engagement was only voluntary (not required). In Kenya, students' parents provide water, firewood, and utensils and are encouraged to assist with kitchen construction. In Mauritania, parents cover some of the cooks' wages and the costs of supplemental food items. In Niger, parents specifically provide food in the event of a break in the food supply. In Sierra Leone, community members provide local materials and/or labor to construct kitchens, latrines, and storage facilities. In 43% of the programs covered in this report, students themselves participate in the operation by preparing food, serving food, or cleaning up.

In Guatemala, parent organizations in the schools are responsible for food purchase decisions, preparing and distributing food, and overseeing/monitoring the program. Among other goals, this is intended to improve the nutritional quality of the school meal menu. Along these lines, in Liberia, the Parent-Teacher Associations are encouraged to pay the cooks and contribute condiments for food preparation in schools. In Switzerland, school catering activities are partly run by parent associations.

Civil society was reported to be actively involved in school feeding in just under half of the programs. In Bangladesh, the school feeding program includes an essential learning package, in which one focus area is Social and Community Mobilization Activities for implementation and monitoring of the program. Similarly, in Benin, national NGOs and facilitators are used for community mobilization and engagement, and civil society groups help with the formation of school canteen management committees and program monitoring. In Togo, civil society takes an active part by providing the schools with resources and periodic oversight. In Tunisia, a set of national non-governmental

organizations and rural women's development groups have been identified to participate in the establishment and management of school gardens. A School Feeding Council in Brazil—comprised of civil society representatives, teachers, parents, and students—oversees the transfer of public resources by the National Fund for the Development of Education for the purchase of food for school meals.