

STATE PROGRAMME
ON SCHOOL FEEDING DEVELOPMENT
IN THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN
FOR THE PERIOD OF 2022-2027

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The State Programme on School Feeding Development in the Republic of Tajikistan for the period of 2022-2027 (hereinafter referred to as Programme) was developed building on realization of the Strategy of Sustainable Development of School Feeding in the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2027, approved by Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan as of 29 September 2017, #456 with the purpose to introduce the effective mechanisms for ensuring food security, to create favourable conditions for maintaining and improving health of the population, improving educational outcomes among schoolchildren through sustainable development of school feeding and social security in the Republic of Tajikistan and raising involvement of schoolchildren in the learning process.
2. School feeding is important for social, physical and intellectual development of schoolchildren, it also positively affects learning outcomes in general education institutions.
3. The Inter-sectoral Coordination Council was established under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan and it is functioning now on implementation of the Sustainable School Feeding Strategy in the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2027.
4. Implementation of the School Feeding Development Project with support of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and development partners allows to form the basis for analysing school feeding organization processes, including rehabilitation of the infrastructure and re-equipment of food units (canteens) of educational institutions, establishment of interschool bakeries, construction of school greenhouses, development of refresher course for cooks and directors of general education institutions.

5. The programme has been developed taking into account four priority areas of school feeding development:
 - improving the system of managing the school feeding organization;
 - modernization of the material and technical base of feeding facilities and units in general education institutions;
 - ensuring the school feeding quality and balancedness in accordance with the age and physiological needs of schoolchildren;
 - promoting healthy nutrition culture among schoolchildren in general education institutions.

2. CURRENT SITUATION OF SCHOOL FEEDING IN GENERAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

6. With a purpose to follow instructions and messages of the Founder of peace and national unity, Leader of the Nation, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon on improvement of the health of children and adolescents, ensuring the food security, development of education system and social protection of poor families, a number of programmes, strategies and concepts have been approved and are being implemented, including the Concept of school feeding improvement in general education institutions of the Republic of Tajikistan, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan as of 28 February 2015, #102 and the Strategy on Sustainable Development of School Feeding in the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2027, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan as of 29 September 2017, #456.
7. Adoption of strategic documents and the comprehensive and multifaceted work of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan have promoted achieving the following results:
 - increased coverage of students of secondary schools of the Republic of Tajikistan with free school meals from 21% in 2014 to 45.5% in 2021;
 - increased number of schools that include food products enriched by vitamins and micronutrients into their food rations;
 - increased number of cooks with professional education in school canteens.
8. Currently there are 3,911 general education institutions in the country. 53.4% of them have canteens needed for organization of school feeding.
9. The material and technical base of school canteens has been improved; about one third of general education institutions have been overhauled and modernised and provided with the necessary equipment. Two action plans on

implementation of pilot projects on development of school feeding in the Republic of Tajikistan have been implemented. Due to implementation of these projects food units (canteens) in 58 schools have been renovated and provided with the modern technology equipment.

10. Currently more than 22% of schools have school gardens and plots where food products used for improving school meals can be grown.
11. In the period between 2017 and 2020, the legal and regulatory framework needed for managing the school feeding sector was formed, the procedure for procurement of food and services for school feeding organization has been established and approved by Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, #502 as of 7 October 2019.
12. Issues related to organization of school feeding have been included into professional development programmes for teachers, heads of educational institutions and specialists of education authorities.
13. A package of training and methodological materials on equipping production facilities, organization of workplaces for cooks in compliance with sanitary norms and personal hygiene rules, on conditions for food storage and on other issues related to organization of school feeding was developed and approved.
14. Food rations for schoolchildren have been developed, taking into account availability of local products and national traditions, aimed at reducing the shortage of main dietary minerals.
15. Events are regularly carried out within the frames of which schoolchildren and their parents get the information about healthy diet and healthy lifestyle.

3. PROBLEMS OF SCHOOL FEEDING ORGANISATION

16. For the further development of the school feeding system it is necessary to address the following problems:
 - incompliance of the material and technical base of school canteens with modern requirements. For about 28.1% of school buildings the capital repairs is needed, including rehabilitation of production units and engineering structures. The equipment in canteens has been used in average for 35 - 40 years, with an average depreciation rate of around 85%;
 - inefficient organisation of hot meals supply in schools that do not employ cooks and other workhand in canteens;
 - low nutritional value of diets, low consumption of dairy products, meat, fish, vegetables and fruits, deficiency of micronutrients and vitamins;

- low availability of qualified cooks and workhand responsible for organization of school feeding;
 - difficulties in ensuring the quality control and ensuring the observance of sanitary standards, regulations and production requirements for school feeding in canteens of general education institutions;
 - lack of medical aid posts and of healthcare professionals in schools.
17. The quality of school feeding depends on such factors as sustainable access to clean water, electricity and heating and on availability of the developed transport infrastructure. Currently, only about one-third of schools have a stable drinking water supply. There are problems with the stability of heating and electricity supply during the school year, especially in rural areas. At that it is necessary to solve the problem of transport accessibility in rural areas and to develop the transport infrastructure needed for the timely delivery of food products to schools. The problems of school feeding development are cross-sectoral and for their solution the coordinated efforts of different authorities are needed.
18. There is a growing need to build more additional schools and to increase the capacity of existing schools by developing their infrastructure and taking into account the need to provide all schoolchildren with nutritious school feeding. While in 2020-2021 academic year there were 2.1 million schoolchildren in schools of the Republic of Tajikistan, including 950,3 thousand children in primary schools, in 2027-2028 the total number of schoolchildren will increase to 2.5 million and the number of primary school pupils will exceed 1 million. In this connection, the problem of financing of the school feeding system along with increasing of the number of schoolchildren at general education institutions, becomes particularly acute.
19. It is necessary to further comprehensively develop the school feeding system, ensuring its effectiveness by introducing modern technologies for the storage of raw materials and preparing school meals and particular meals, improving the material and technical base of school canteens and retraining staff for working in canteens.

4. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND TARGET VALUES OF THE PROGRAMME

20. Goals of the Programme include modernization and development of the school feeding system for improving the health of schoolchildren at general education institutions by ensuring the availability of good-quality and balanced meals, through development and implementation of effective technological, organisational, managerial, personnel, financial and economic solutions.
21. To achieve the set goals, it is necessary to complete the following tasks:

- to identify stable sources of financing for the school feeding system;
- to restore the infrastructure of school canteens, including provision of clean water, electricity and heating;
- to equip canteens with modern technological equipment for preparing and delivery of school meals;
- to begin training and retraining of the personnel directly involved in organization of school feeding;
- to develop mechanisms of public-private partnership and to engage local farmers in food products delivery as full-fledged participants of the system of school feeding organization.

22. The programme implementation will be assessed with the use of following target indicators:

- the level of coverage of schoolchildren of primary school by hot lunches;
- the share of school canteens fitted with modern technological equipment;
- the share of schools providing the balanced meals and using food products enriched with vitamins and micronutrients;
- the share of general education institutions that have introduced new forms of nutrition;
- the share of school canteens' staff that have the required qualification;
- the share of heads and teachers of general education institutions who have attended qualification upgrading courses on healthy diet culture;
- the share of local farmers and entrepreneurs participating in the system of school feeding organization.

23. Realization of the Programme will promote achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as: eliminating hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable development of agriculture, ensuring healthy lifestyle and promoting well-being for all at all ages, ensuring the inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, ensuring availability and sustainable use of water resources and sanitation for all, building the resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and innovations.

24. Realization of the Programme will allow to ensure:

- the gradual transition from the school feeding development project of the UN World Food Programme funded by development partners to a National School Feeding Programme funded from the national budget;
- improving the effectiveness of the school feeding system and ensuring access and coverage of primary school pupils by hot meals;

- modernization and technological restructuring of the sector, development of a modern production and logistic infrastructure;
- improving nutrition of schoolchildren and raising living standards of families, especially of poor families
- reducing the burden of diseases among schoolchildren, particularly of chronic diseases, improving public health, including by development of the healthy diet culture;
- development of a sustainable market for agricultural products, including for products of local producers, increasing volumes of agricultural production and improving incomes in the agricultural sector;
- establishment of stable, long-term relations between agricultural producers and school feeding establishments;
- the accelerated development of sectors involved in the processing, transportation, storage and marketing of food products;
- improving protection against internal and external threats, ensuring the food security.

5. PRIORITY AREAS OF THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME

§ 1. Improving the system of school feeding management

25. Activities on improvement of the system of school feeding management will be aimed at improvement of effective mechanisms, including the legal and regulatory framework and its financing, coordination between the government and non-government agencies, availability of hot meals to a wide range of schoolchildren and development of human resources in the school feeding system.
26. At realization of the project in this direction the methodical support for activities on improving the school feeding organization will be continued; the targeted use of the budget means allocated for the Programme implementation will be ensured.
27. Development of a modern school feeding management model will be achieved through the following activities:
 - ongoing analysis of the current status of school feeding;
 - accounting available reserves and mobilization of additional resources;
 - annual planning, adjusting goals and targets of the school system depending on current conditions, preparing annual plans for the Programme implementation that include measures on improvement the school feeding system and determining the needed volume of financing;
 - defining the powers, rights and responsibilities of Central executive authorities, of the Inter-sectoral Coordination Council for Implementation of the Sustainable School Feeding Strategy in the Republic of Tajikistan for the

period until 2027, of local executive government bodies and general education institutions as participants in the school feeding organization process;

- exchange of experience between regions where projects on improvement of school feeding organization have been successfully implemented;
- monitoring of school meals organization, including monitoring the health of schoolchildren, especially of primary school pupils;
- analysing the level of schoolchildren's and their parents' satisfaction with the quality of school meals and setting new goals on this basis.

§2: Improvement of the material and technical base of facilities and canteens at general education institutions

28. Modernisation of the material and technical base of school canteens is aimed at creation of conditions for provision of the safe and high-quality food for schoolchildren. For this purpose, it is necessary to renovate the canteens for observing all sanitary and hygiene rules and to equip them with modern technological equipment.

29. Implementation of activities will be aimed at achieving the following target indicator: the share of school canteens fitted with modern technological equipment.

30. Local executive authorities shall allocate additional land plots to schools for organizing production of foodstuff, which will be used for schoolchildren food.

§3. Ensuring the quality and balancedness of school meals

31. The quality and balancedness of school meals according to the age and physiological needs of schoolchildren shall be ensured by optimizing the food rations, diversification of used products, using products enriched with vitamins and microelements, provision of education institutions with products compliant with approved standards, regulations and sanitary requirements.

32. For implementation of this course, in addition to financing sources, it is necessary to carry out the following activities:

- justification and selection of ways of organizing feeding in general education institutions, taking into account local peculiar features (school canteens, on the basis of which the food production is organized for supplying food to schoolchildren from underfilled schools or schools which do not have conditions for cooking by their own; prepared food canteens, where school meals are prepared from semi-finished products; centralized baking of bakery

products on the basis of one school and their further delivery to neighbouring schools);

- ensure development of scientifically grounded diets, model menu cards, taking into account the seasonality, availability of food products (vegetables, fruits), receiving the necessary nutrients and calories by schoolchildren.

33. The work in this area is aimed at achieving the following targets: the level of reaching schoolchildren of primary schools with hot lunches, the share of general education institutions providing balanced diets, using products enriched with vitamins and micronutrients.

§ 4. Development of the healthy lifestyle and healthy diet culture among schoolchildren of general education institutions

34. A culture of healthy lifestyles and healthy diet among schoolchildren at general education institutions will be developed through working in the following areas:

- educational work aimed at gaining knowledge about healthy diet and healthy lifestyle;
- carrying out regularly personal development trainings, seminars for teachers, heads of general education institutions and the staff of education authorities on up-dated organization of school feeding and promotion of healthy diet among schoolchildren and their parents;
- inclusion of lessons on the basics of a healthy lifestyle and healthy diet into the list of general educational disciplines;
- development and dissemination of information materials on the culture of healthy lifestyle and healthy diet, including through the media
- publication on special sites of local executive authorities of the information about activities conducted at regional level on improvement of school feeding, as well as about legal norms regulating issues related to the functioning of school feeding system.

35. Implementation of activities in this area will be aimed at achieving the goal of increasing the number of participants in the educational process who have received training on development of a healthy diet culture. Realization of this initiative will be based on carrying out the necessary awareness-raising and educational activities on popularization of a culture of healthy diet among teachers, schoolchildren and their parents.

§ 5: Improvement of the legal and regulatory framework in the sphere of school feeding

36. To develop the effectively working sector of school feeding in the Republic of Tajikistan it is necessary to analyse and study the system of legislative acts.
37. To develop school feeding system it is necessary to elaborate and adopt the following documents:
- the order of organization of meals for schoolchildren of general educational institutions in the Republic of Tajikistan;
 - the order of financing of school feeding;
 - development and introduction of amendments and additions to existing normative legal acts on the safety of raw materials and food products for schoolchildren of general education institutions, aimed at improving the regulation of issues related to provision of the safety of raw materials and food for schoolchildren of general education institutions, for example: the order on regional nutritional standards; instructions on development of a single universal menu for schools of cities and districts; instructions on observing the hygiene of food, packaging, tableware, equipment and others.
 - normative legal acts regulating and providing for making amendments to existing standards and requirements for improvement of the material and technical base of canteens, such as: requirements for canteens: planning, equipment; instructions for assessing the material and technical conditions of canteens; schools overhaul programme and others.

6. SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

38. It is supposed that the school feeding system will cover all regions of the country, at that the sustainability of the established system will be provided first of all at the account of financing from the state budget, close cooperation and active participation of the private sector and local community, development of self-production mechanisms of schools, comprehensive solution of problems with the material and technological support for school feeding.
39. In the light of requirements of the National Strategy on the Education Development of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period until 2030 approved by Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan as of 29 September 2020, #526, the mapping of needs of general education institutions in water, electricity, heating and transportation supply for the period until 2024 will be drafted that will increase opportunities to justify needs of cities and regions of the country in schools and school feeding.
40. The programme will provide a rationale for the necessity to finance the school feeding system and gradually expand the coverage of districts of the country by school feeding system, taking into account demographic and socio-economic trends in certain regions.

41. Depending on specific features of certain regions, specifically taking into account the income of the population, the access to resources, availability of raw materials and products, infrastructure, availability and space of canteens, completeness of the equipment and the personnel staffing, the school feeding will be organised with the use of following models;
- Industrial complexes on school feeding. This model involves the centralized preparation of hot meals in production facilities with their delivery to individual schools, where canteens are not suitable for the full cycle of hot meals preparation and are fitted out with a minimum set of equipment. This will allow to save state budget funds for re-equipping of canteens, further expenses for running canteens and will also allow to keep the centralised control over the quality of food products;
 - Full cycle canteens. Production of hot meals, starting from preparing raw materials and up to distribution of finished products is carried out directly at school. This model can be used in schools with sufficient floor space for placing all the necessary equipment, with the necessary infrastructure and access to raw materials.
 - Preparatory canteens. Hot meals can be prepared in the school with the use of half-finished products. This model will be implemented mainly in schools with an average number of people eating and with the availability of minimum necessary production facilities as well as a space for taking meals. Realization of this model is closely linked to activities of industrial plants on production of semi-finished food products and is mainly suitable for schools in large cities.
 - Canteens with lunch-counter and a kitchen line meant for the delivery of ready-made meals. This model is realized mainly in small schools which do not have capacity for cooking meals by their own. At implementation of this model, much attention should be paid to improving the transport infrastructure for the delivery of hot meals.
42. Bread and flour products and vegetable products will be provided to schools with the use of following mechanisms:
- Provision of schools with bread and flour products by baking bread on a centralised basis at a school-bakery or at a district bread-baking plant. It will allow to take a higher level control over the production process in compliance with all sanitary and hygienic requirements and to organise a more stable provision of bread for children in schools that do not have capacity to organise their own bread production. This model will allow to reduce expenses for hiring separate bakers and for installation of equipment in bread-receiving schools.
 - School farms, including school gardens, greenhouses and land plots allocated to schools for organisation of food production, which will be used for improving the quality of school meals;

- Farmers' associations; cooperating with them will allow to increase participation of local farmers and entrepreneurs in the system of school feeding organization by supplying locally produced food products to school canteens.

7. RESULTS OF THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

43. Results of the Programme implementation will be reviewed every year by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan.
44. The efficient implementation of the Programme will allow to improve the students' food intake, raise the living standards of families, especially of low-income families, improve the quality of education, reduce the incidence of diseases among children, especially of chronic diseases, and thereby improve the health of the population as a whole.
45. As a result of the Programme implementation during the next six years, there will be provided conditions for development of a national school feeding system, the accessibility and quality of school meals will be ensured, the culture of food consumption in schools will be improved, free meals for children from poor families will be provided as well as the partial payment for school feeding for low-income families.
46. Implementation of the Programme is directly linked to implementation of periodical plans of the Strategy for Sustainable Development of School Feeding in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2027, as well as to formation and development of mechanisms for the gradual coverage of all regions of the Republic of Tajikistan by school feeding.

8. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

47. The authorized body for monitoring the Programme implementation is the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan.
48. Monitoring and assessment of the State Programme on the Development of School Feeding in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2022-2027 shall be carried out in accordance with requirements of the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan as of 29 December 2018, # 615 "On rules of carrying out monitoring and evaluation of implementation of national level strategic documents, of sectoral and regional development programmes in the Republic of Tajikistan".

9. SOURCES OF THE PROGRAMME FINANCING

49. The Programme will be financed from the following sources:
- state budget funds;
 - grants from international organizations and foundations;
 - other sources not prohibited by the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan.
50. Effectiveness of the school feeding system will be ensured through development and introduction of modern funding mechanisms.
51. The Programme will be financed in accordance with the National Strategy on the Education Development of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period till 2030 approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan as of 29 September 2020, #526.
52. Financing norms of school feeding in state educational institutions of the Republic of Tajikistan shall be provided at the expense of the state budget and of development partners. They have to be indexed every year in accordance with the inflation rate for the relevant year. The share of budget means in the financial provision of school feeding system has to be gradually increased for formation of a sustainable and constantly developing national system of school feeding.
53. In the course of the Programme implementation, it is planned to cover schoolchildren in grades 1-4 by school feeding.
54. At that, in the first year of the Programme implementation it is planned to provide school feeding to 15,400 schoolchildren of 1-4th grades in 42 pilot schools in 24 towns and districts of the country (Shugnan, Rushan, Nurek, Yavan, Vakhsh, Jaloliddin Balkhi, Farkhor, Dangara, Shamsiddin Shohin, Vose, Spitamen, Bobojon Gafurov, Zafarobod, Jabbor Rasulov, Asht, Ayni, Mastchoh, Rogun, Rasht, Nurobod, Tojikobod, Snagvor, Lakhsh and Hissar). Expenses for implementation of this pilot project will make up 5.5 million somoni (in average, with the rate of 2.1 somoni per pupil).
55. Financing of school feeding shall be provided for state educational institutions that have school canteens meeting the specified requirements.
56. When assessing the required amount of financial support from the state budget, the following was additionally taken into account
- funding in the amount of 34.0 million somoni per year allocated for food products for schoolchildren at general education institutions within the frames of the project of the World Food Programme on School Feeding Development;
 - funds in the amount of 7.5 million somoni per year, allocated by local executive authorities;

- parents' funds (donations) in the amount of 1.4 million somoni per year.
57. The funds allocated from the budget for school feeding shall be provided only to state general education institutions that have functioning school canteens, as well as cooks and other staff required for organization of feeding. For organization of school feeding in other state general education institutions it is necessary to renovate and equip school canteens.
 58. For the repair and re-equipment of canteens of general education institutions the targeted financing in the amount of at least 672 million somoni will be required.
 59. The total amount of financing for achieving the Programme objectives shall be subject to annual adjustment as a part of the Programme Action Plan implementation, taking into account the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of its implementation as well as the objective means of the state budget.