Improving links between smallholder farmers and school feeding programmes

Home Grown School Feeding programmes implemented by governments with the support of partners, including WFP, are increasingly providing assured markets for smallholder farmers. At least half of the 20 P4P pilot countries report linking smallholder farmers’ organizations to school feeding programmes. By strengthening government ownership and fostering community engagement, this should enhance sustainability.

By linking local agricultural production to school meals, Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programmes multiply benefits for rural communities. They can increase enrolment, improve nutrition, boost local economies, improve smallholders’ livelihoods and develop government capacity. Due to varied country contexts, each HGSF programme is unique, but are generally characterized by the incorporation of local food purchases into government-run school feeding programmes.

In Ethiopia, Malawi and Mozambique the link between P4P and HGSF has been strengthened by the Purchase from Africans for Africa (PAA) initiative.

Benefiting rural communities

In Malawi, smallholder farmers are providing 10 primary schools with locally available foods, including fish, groundnuts and bananas, as well as staple grains. The project is currently being scaled up. Since the beginning of the HGSF pilot in Malawi, enrolment has increased by approximately 15 percent in participating schools. Serving nutrient-rich meals made from fresh, traditional foods can promote diet diversification, a lesson which many schools, such as the Hanja Chafa Primary School in Ethiopia reinforce through nutrition education. These efforts support improved nutrition at both household and community level, as children take this knowledge home with them. In Malawi and Ethiopia, through the PAA Africa partnership, FAO supports these efforts by providing inputs and training smallholder farmers in improving production.

The assured market presented by HGSF programmes can work as an incentive for smallholder farmers to invest in increasing agricultural production. In 2014, Malawian farmer Clara Bamusi earned nearly 80,000 kwacha (US$ 200) from her sales of maize, soya, sweet potatoes and ground nuts to the Ching’ombe Primary School. “The greatest benefit has been the reliable

Continues on page 2
market,” says Clara. “With my earnings I bought double the fertilizer and hybrid seed, and because of these inputs I was able to grow and harvest more bags of maize this year compared to last.” HGSF programmes can specifically support women farmers through an emphasis on crops which women traditionally farm and market, such as pulses. This has been a focus in Zambia, where 30 to 50 percent of pulses required for HGSF are procured from P4P-supported farmers’ organizations.

Ensuring sustainability
Ownership by governments and communities is vital for the success and sustainability of HGSF programmes. National governments have already demonstrated their full commitment, in many cases seeking guidance on how to best link smallholder farmers to school feeding programmes. For example, in Honduras, WFP has worked with the national government to improve these links, including through exchange visits with WFP’s Centre of Excellence in Brazil. The national school feeding programme in Honduras reaches 90 percent of schoolchildren in the country. In 2013, nearly half the maize and beans required for the programme were provided by P4P-supported farmers’ organizations. In Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal government partnerships are further strengthened through PAA Africa, which is inspired by the Brazilian learning with institutional local procurement. Strong partnerships between national and district governments and WFP have allowed for more effective uptake by schools and farmers’ organizations.

The HGSF model has the potential to increase community engagement and participation. This is particularly true when procurement is decentralized, enabling district authorities or schools to purchase food directly from local smallholder farmers and their organizations. In Malawi, procurement committees composed of parents, community members, teachers and pupils receive training in procurement planning, negotiation and delivery terms. This allows schools to negotiate directly with farmers to most cost-effectively purchase nutritious food. They are also provided with a recipe book to guide their choice of foods, as well as guidance on how to ensure that students’ nutritional needs are met.

Moving forward with lessons learned
Emerging lessons learned suggest that HGSF efforts can be most effectively linked with P4P-supported farmers in those districts with the greatest productive potential. Many farmers’ organizations also require continued support to aggregate and market quality commodities. Linking smallholder farmers with school feeding in Kenya proved challenging due to the different implementation areas of the two programmes. To address this, additional farmers’ organizations near HGSF implementation areas are now being targeted for capacity development from P4P and partners. Though further support is required to increase their capacity, three farmer’s organizations have now supplied food to nine schools. Infrastructure and equipment, such as processing and storage facilities have also proven vital to success. In order to assist smallholders to sell to HGSF programmes in Ghana, P4P is working to link farmers’ organizations with processors.

Though progress has been made, many challenges remain. For example, in Liberia, limited funding and high local prices in comparison to the import parity price (IPP) makes purchasing rice from smallholders challenging. To assist smallholder farmers to be more competitive in the local market, the production of cowpeas and their incorporation in school feeding programmes is now emphasized. Regional initiatives such as the West Africa Rice Organization are investing in cost-effective production, which helps to further reduce costs for farmers. Purchasing local commodities from smallholder farmers at a cost slightly above market prices is sometimes necessary as a transition measure.

Read more:
- Report: Home-grown school feeding
- Ethiopia feeding itself with school meals programmes
- Championing home grown school feeding in Malawi
- Brazilian pro-smallholder procurement model inspires African governments
- PAA Africa website
P4P has assisted smallholder farmers in Burkina Faso to improve post-harvest handling, increase yields and improve crop quality. This has enabled farmers’ organizations to market their surplus to private sector and institutional markets. Continue reading to learn five facts about progress made in Burkina Faso.

1. The government has started a P4P-like procurement programme.

SONAGESS, the national food reserve of Burkina Faso, has now committed to procuring 30 percent of its food needs from smallholder farmers. Government representatives have also visited Rwanda to learn about Common P4P, the Government of Rwanda’s smallholder-friendly market development programme.

2. P4P-supported smallholders sold US$ 5.7 million worth of commodities to WFP and other markets.

Crop failures and limited resources have constrained WFP’s ability to buy commodities from P4P-supported smallholders in Burkina Faso. Despite these challenges, small-scale farmers’ organizations have sold some US$ 1.6 million worth of commodities to WFP, and US$ 4.1 million worth of commodities to other private sector and institutional markets.

3. New strategies are being used to reduce food losses.

WFP’s action research evaluation trial on “Reducing food losses in sub-Saharan Africa” allowed P4P-supported smallholders in Burkina Faso to significantly reduce food losses during farm-level storage through the use of simple, improved technologies, such as small metal or plastic silos, or hermetic storage bags.

4. Farmers’ organizations are playing a major part in decision-making.

To improve coordination and collaboration with technical partners, a Stakeholders and Partners Consultation Group was established, in which farmers’ organizations have been active participants. The group is co-chaired by WFP and the government’s Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

5. Women make up 50 percent of P4P-supported farmers.

Although women in Burkina Faso require further assistance to market their crops profitably, many have been enabled to participate in P4P. WFP is now emphasizing the procurement of crops traditionally controlled by women, such as cowpeas, to increase women’s participation.

To learn more about P4P in Burkina Faso read the two-page fact sheet here.
How radio programmes can support agriculture and market development

In Ghana, P4P collaborates with Farm Radio International (FRI) to provide small-scale farmers with the information they need to improve their agricultural production. Through participatory radio programmes, FRI provides farmers with voice and education, which helps them market quality crops to WFP and other formal markets. In this blog, Ben Fiafor, FRI Regional Field Manager, West Africa, explains why radio communication efforts are essential to market development programmes like P4P.

While many rural farmers have limited access to communications technologies, radio reaches at least 70 percent of rural households. Because small-scale farmers are often located in widespread, hard-to-reach rural areas, we believe that radio is a key tool to reach them most cost-effectively.

Farm Radio International (FRI) is a non-profit organization which champions the use of radio, combined with other information and communication technologies (ICT), to fight poverty and food insecurity. We work in partnership with approximately 500 radio broadcasters in 38 African countries to increase the reach of agricultural information, enhance farmers' participation and give farming families a voice. FRI engages with a variety of national and international research and development partners, enabling them to use radio and other ICT in their communication and knowledge-sharing efforts.

An incentive for investment

Purchase for Progress (P4P), a pilot project of the World Food Programme (WFP), works to link small-scale farmers to formal markets, including, but not limited to WFP. However, meeting the quantity and quality requirements of formal markets like WFP often proves challenging for smallholders, who may not have access to the necessary knowledge and skills to improve production. In Ghana, we work with P4P to ensure that relevant and timely information about best agricultural practices is delivered to rural populations in the Ejura-Sekyeredumase district. This includes 16 farmers’ organizations supported by P4P. The market opportunity presented by WFP provides a significant incentive for farmers to utilize this information to improve agronomic practices, while the information provided through our radio programmes assists them to produce greater yields and higher quality crops. With further support from P4P and other partners, these farmers are able to improve their production of crops such as maize and cowpea, both...
for home consumption and sale to formal markets. In Ghana we collaborate with commercial radio stations Obouba and Akyeaa FM to improve the knowledge and skills of small-scale farmers in the sustainable production and post-harvest handling of high quality staple foods. We have also designed a comprehensive programme to produce and broadcast participatory Farm Radio programmes, in collaboration with partners such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Ghana’s Ministry of Food and Agriculture. This programme reaches a total audience of one million farmers, including those directly supported by P4P. We also provide selected farmers’ organizations with a mobile phone and technical support to encourage the two-way flow of communication. This is crucial, as it allows us to foster interactivity between the radio station and rural, often isolated, farmers. With these phones, farmers’ organizations also receive weather forecasts and market information on a weekly basis.

**Results**

As a result of our educational efforts, farmers now understand the importance and are willing to invest in the accurate application of fertilizers. They also know how to plant in rows with the right spacing, and the best ways to manage their farms. We can also see that post-harvest handling practices have also improved, with many farmers testifying that they no longer store grain on the floor, but on raised platforms.

In Ghana, I have seen the results of our collaboration with P4P first-hand. Thanks to the skills learned through FRI radio programmes, many farmers within the Ejura-Sekyeredumase area have been able to increase yields through intensification and good agronomical practices, enabling them to sell to formal markets. One such farmer, Iddrisu Ameen from the Nkosuo Farmers’ Association in Ejura, told me how much her production has improved since she began tuning in to FRI’s broadcasts. While she previously farmed 10 acres of maize without substantial yields, after reducing her farm size by half she got better results. Access to formal markets where farmers can be paid a fair price for their surplus quality crops is essential when a farmer like Iddrisu makes the decision to invest in her production.

Blog post by Ben Fiafor, Regional Field Manager - West Africa, Farm Radio International

(Note: These views are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect those of WFP.)
KEY P4P CONTACTS IN ROME

P4P COORDINATION UNIT
• Ken Davies, P4P Global Coordinator: Ken.Davies@wfp.org
• Patricia Kennedy, Senior Adviser, Partnerships and Advocacy: Patricia.Kennedy@wfp.org
• Edouard Nizeyimana, Senior Programme Adviser for Eastern and Southern Africa: Edouard.Nizeyimana@wfp.org
• Romain Sirosi, Senior Programme Adviser for Latin America and Afghanistan: Romain.Sirosi@wfp.org
• Clare Mbizule, Programme Adviser, M&E: Learning and Sharing: Clare.Mbizule@wfp.org
• Bhai Thapa, Finance Officer: Bhai.Thapa@wfp.org
• Darana Souza, PAA Africa Coordinator: Darana.Souza@wfp.org
• Barbara Pfister, Reports Officer: Barbara.Pfister@wfp.org
• Ahnna Gudmunds, Communications and Advocacy Officer: Ahnna.Gudmunds@wfp.org

PROCUREMENT DIVISION
• Mahadevan “Mack” Ramachandran, Head of Strategy, Performance & Risk: Mahadevan.Ramachandran@wfp.org
• Shane Prigge, Food Technologist: Shane.Prigge@wfp.org
• Stephane Meaux, Food Technologist: Stephane.Meaux@wfp.org

LOGISTICS DIVISION
• Adrian van der Knaap, Senior Logistics Officer: Adrian.Vanderknaap@wfp.org
• Simon Costa, Coordinator, Post-Harvest On-farm Grain Storage Trials; Uganda and Burkina Faso: Simon.Costa@wfp.org

P4P COUNTRY COORDINATORS AND FOCAL POINTS

ASIA
• Afghanistan: Djordje Vdovic Djordje.Vdovic@wfp.org

EASTERN & CENTRAL AFRICA
• Ethiopia: Mauricio Burtet Mauricio.Burtet@wfp.org
• Kenya: Zippy Mbati Zippy.Mbati@wfp.org
• Rwanda: Francisco Mendes Francisco.Mendes@wfp.org
• South Sudan: Emmanuela Mashayo Emmanuela.Mashayo@wfp.org
• Uganda: Germain Akoubia Germain.Akoubia@wfp.org
• Regional Bureau Focal Point: Simon Denhere Simon.Denhere@wfp.org

SOUTHERN AFRICA
• Democratic Republic of Congo: Agbessi Amewoa Agbessi.Amewoa@wfp.org
• Malawi: Valeria Morua Valeria.Morua@wfp.org
• Mozambique: Olivier Nkakudulu Olivier.Nkakudulu@wfp.org
• Tanzania: Marina Negroponte Marina.Negroponte@wfp.org
• Zambia: Aurore Rusiga Aurore.Rusiga@wfp.org
• Regional Bureau Focal Point: Sarah Longford Sarah.Longford@wfp.org

WEST AFRICA
• Burkina Faso: Yves Aklamavo Yves.Aklamavo@wfp.org
• Ghana: Alessia DeCaterina Alessia.DeCaterina@wfp.org
• Liberia: James Legg James.Legg@wfp.org
• Mali: Ali Abdoul Salami Ali.AbdoulSalami@wfp.org
• Sierra Leone: Marta Ortiz Marta.Ortiz@wfp.org
• Regional Bureau Focal Point: Isabelle Mbaila Isabelle.Mbaila@wfp.org

LATIN AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN
• El Salvador: Jaime Hernandez Jaime.Hernandez@wfp.org
• Guatemala: Felipe Lehnhoff Felipe.Lehnhoff@wfp.org
• Honduras: Lenin Gradiz Lenin.Gradiz@wfp.org
• Nicaragua: Francisco Alvarado Francisco.Alvarado@wfp.org
• Regional Bureau Focal Point: Hebert Lopez Hebert.Lopez@wfp.org

P4P in the News

P4P featured in book on women and poverty
"Teach a Woman to Fish: Overcoming Poverty Around the Globe," by Ritu Sharma, was recently released, featuring a chapter on P4P. The chapter includes an overview of the pilot project and interviews with P4P-supported women farmers in Honduras and Nicaragua. [Preview book]

P4P Ethiopia on challenges facing women farmers
P4P Ethiopia country coordinator Mauricio Burtet discusses the difficulty of empowering women in agriculture, due in part to their lack of land rights. [Read full article]