

The transition of school feeding from the [World Food Programme](#) to the Kenyan Government has brought excellent benefits for smallholder farmers.

Smallholders, who have in the past been exploited by middlemen and production forces and marketing that demand large economies of scales, can today happily trade with the government, get paid promptly and improve their earning potential.

History of HGSF in Kenya

In 2009, the government began to take charge of school feeding in arid and semi-arid areas and initiated the Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme, where it allocated a part of its budget to see cash transferred to schools to buy food from local smallholder farmers.

Each year, the delivery of school meals to 50,000 pupils is transferred from the WFP to the government. And with the HGSF programme, farmers can be paid a premium and schools can receive fresh food that is locally produced.

Challenges Faced

However, it was not easy for the farmers to access this market. Government procurement is structured and operates under the Public Procurement and Oversight Act. This meant that farmers, as individuals, could hardly access this market. They did not even know such a market existed.

That called for a catalyst. In 2011, Dutch development organisation

[SNV](#)

in Kenya, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, began to implement the Procurement Governance for its HGSF Project and today, 12,000 farmers are participating in the pilot phase.

The farmers are organised into associations so they can have the legal persona to do business with the government. The associations give farmers the impetus and voice in the market. So far, SNV have created 100 farmer-based organisations in Laikipia, Kilifi, Lamu, Narok, Kitui/Makueni, Elegeyo-Marakwet and Baringo.

Some of the challenges experienced include the farmers' incapacity to bid for tenders; reliability, quality and consistency of supplies, as well as lengthy and exclusive tendering processes. The

opaque and almost exclusive system was not open to public scrutiny and participation.

Overcoming Challenges

SNV is working as a catalyst and playing a facilitative role of bringing together diverse stakeholders in the school meals value chain. For this enterprise to take root, they have strengthened the capacity of schools and smallholder farmers. Schools can now get the right food within the law while farmers can now access the available market.

The HGSF programme has increased local food production and enable many farmers to earn extra incomes, lifting them out of poverty.

- This article was originally featured in [All Africa](#) .
- Read more about [Kenya's HGSF programme](#) .

Working in Partnership Earlier this year, SNV also worked in collaboration with Imperial College London's the Partnership for Child Development to organise a [matchmaking event](#) in Kilifi and Lamu between farmer and cooperative groups, traders, schools and local government officials. During the event business connections between farmers, traders and schools were established to allow more farmer produce to be supplied to the HGSF programme.

[Read more about the matchmaking event](#)