



# The School Feeding Landscape Report Across Africa

Across seven African countries — Kenya, Rwanda, Zambia, DRC, Tanzania, Malawi, and Uganda — millions of school-children receive daily meals that fall short of their nutritional needs. HarvestPlus Solutions conducted a rapid landscape assessment in late 2025 to understand the systems, gaps, and opportunities for embedding biofortified crops into school feeding programmes at scale.

## OUR FOOTPRINT IN SCHOOL FEEDING



## THE CHALLENGE WE SET OUT TO UNDERSTAND

### Hidden Hunger in Plain Sight

School meals across all seven countries share a common pattern: starchy staples dominate while iron, Vitamin A, calcium, and protein are chronically deficient. In Kenya, a KIPPRA study found a nutritious school meal costs KES 35–49 per child — yet government allocation has remained KES 10/day since inception.

The gap is filled silently by parents contributing unpaid labour, firewood, kitchen maintenance, and food — an invisible community subsidy worth an estimated KES 39 per meal.

### A System Under Pressure

Financing is fragile across the region. Zambia depends on donors for 74% of its school feeding budget. DRC and Malawi face severe external dependency. Food price inflation has eroded the purchasing power of every fixed per-child allocation.

Despite these pressures, global school meal investment doubled from USD 43 billion in 2020 to over USD 85 billion by 2024 — signalling growing political will that HPS can harness.

## FIVE KEY FINDINGS FROM THE QUICK SCAN

### 01 Policy exists — but procurement rules are missing

Six of seven countries have some form of biofortification endorsement in national policy. Tanzania and Rwanda lead with the strongest frameworks. Yet no country mandates biofortified crops in school meal procurement specifications — the critical missing link between policy intent and plate-level impact.

## 02 Home-grown feeding is the backbone — aggregation is the gap

HGSF models operate in 6 of 7 countries and parent/community contributions are universal. Yet centralised aggregation — linking smallholder farmers reliably to schools — is present in only 1 country. Iron beans and Vitamin A maize are natural, cost-neutral substitutes in existing meal recipes.

## 03 Biofortified crops are cost-neutral substitutes

Iron beans (Nyota variety) trade at parity with conventional beans, delivering up to 80% of a child's daily iron requirement at zero additional cost. Vitamin A maize and cassava fit naturally into existing school meal recipes. The business case for substitution is immediate and proven.

## 04 Public funding for school meals : Rwanda leads; DRC is at an inflection point

Rwanda scores highest across all six system readiness dimensions — strongest being policy, 60% government funding share, explicit procurement of High Iron Beans. DRC finalised its first national biofortification standards in April 2025, creating a commercial foundation for rapid scaling.

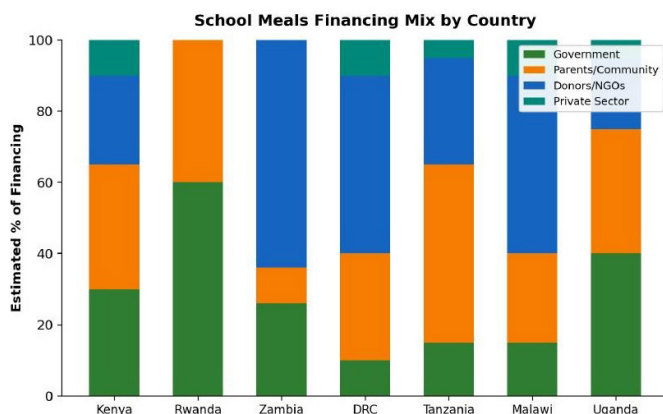
## 05 No single country excels across all dimensions

Every country has distinct strengths and gaps. Tanzania and Zambia lead on biofortification in policy. Kenya has strong seed systems but zero policy mandate for biofortified school foods. Government funding is the weakest dimension across 5 of 7 countries. Partnerships must be tailored — not templated.

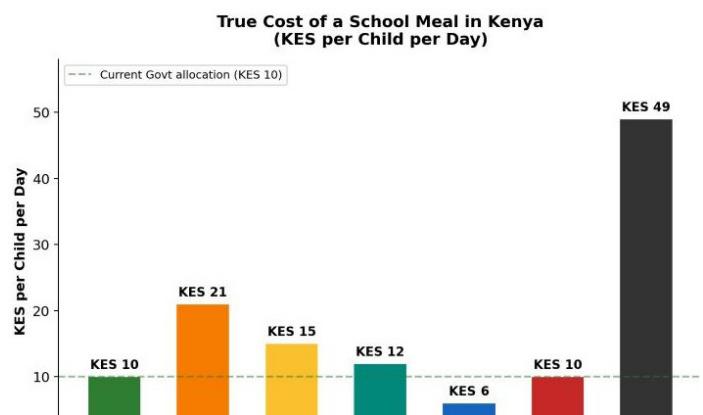
# A Blueprint for Scaling Nutritious School Meals

A quick scan points to a clear opportunity: the infrastructure for school feeding already exists across all seven countries. What is missing is the connective tissue — aggregation corridors, procurement standards, and financing models — that would make biofortified crops the default, not the exception.

### FINANCING MIX BY COUNTRY



### TRUE COST OF A SCHOOL MEAL — KENYA



- Rwanda: 60% govt funded — budget surged from RWF 40M to RWF 73B+
- Zambia: 74% donor dependent — most fragile financing base in the region
- Kenya: KES 10/child/day — unchanged since programme inception despite inflation
- Globally: school meal funding doubled from USD 43B (2020) to USD 85B+ (2024)

### The KES 39 Hidden Gap

Govt allocates KES 10/day. True nutritious meal cost: KES 49. The KES 39 gap is an invisible community subsidy — unpaid labour, firewood, food contributions.

### Biofortification Dividend

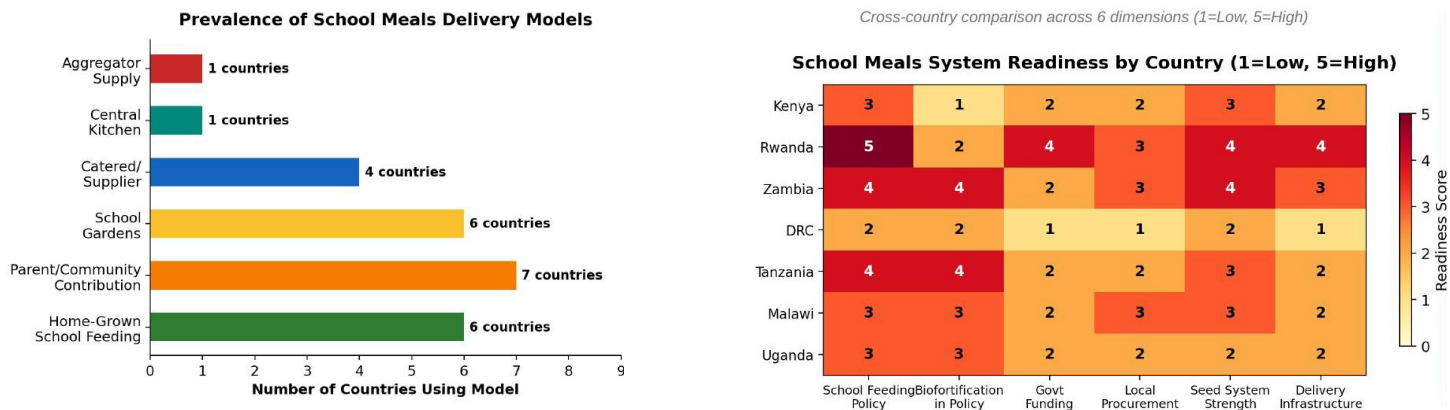
Nyota iron beans trade at parity — delivering up to 80% of daily iron needs at zero additional cost.

# THE HPS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MARKETS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Nutrition at the Core</p> <p>Competitive biofortified varieties · Seed systems strengthening · Farmer engagement · Procurement policies &amp; nutritional standards</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MEALS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sustainable Delivery</p> <p>True cost of meals · Food preparation &amp; handling · WASH infrastructure · Renewable energy · Supply chain &amp; aggregation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MINDSETS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Demand &amp; Behaviour Change</p> <p>Behaviour change comms · Nutrition education · Community awareness · Policy advocacy · Multi-stakeholder partnerships</p>
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## SIX PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Build Seed-to-School Supply Corridors**  
Map priority districts across all seven countries. Establish dedicated aggregation corridors linking certified seed suppliers, trained farmer groups, and school procurement systems into a single, reliable supply chain.
- 2 Embrace School Meals Diversity Through Evidence**  
Pilot the True Cost Calculator across all seven countries. Support context-appropriate models — school gardens, centralized kitchens, and Home-Grown School Feeding — rather than imposing a single template.
- 3 Embed Biofortified Staples in National Procurement Policy**  
Advocate for minimum percentage procurement specifications for biofortified crops in each country’s school feeding guidelines. Leverage African Union endorsements and target ministry-level procurement circulars.
- 4 Improve Financing and Payment Modalities**  
Standardise payment timelines at school and district levels. Pilot district-level revolving funds during peak procurement seasons to bridge the cash-flow gap that locks smallholder farmers out of school supply contracts.
- 5 Address the Full Meal Preparation Ecosystem**  
School kitchens, WASH infrastructure, clean cooking energy, and food safety protocols are prerequisites for safe, nutritious meals. Integrate infrastructure upgrades into every school meal programme design.
- 6 Catalyze Private–Public Partnerships**  
The private sector needs a clear entry point into school meals. HPS is uniquely positioned as the catalyst — building commercial models that make the cost-neutral transition to biofortified staples viable and scalable at national level.



**The biofortification dividend is ready to be claimed.** Iron beans and Vitamin A maize already exist, trade at parity, and fit inside school kitchens across Africa. What is needed now is the will to connect the dots — from seed to school, from policy to plate.

HarvestPlus Solutions (HPS) is a purpose-driven global networked organization headquartered in Washington, DC. Our primary objective is to accelerate the scaling and commercialization of groundbreaking innovations from HarvestPlus and CGIAR.

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