WFP EVALUATION

Evaluation of linking Eswatini Smallholder Farmers to the Home-grown School Feeding Market (HGSF) in Eswatini from 2019 to 2021

Decentralized Evaluation Report

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WFP ESWATINI AND THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, GOVERNMENT OF ESWATINI

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SIYINQABA

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Cover photo credits: Evaluation Team, observation of school feeding and meal preparation.

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Disclaimer

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

1. This Evaluation Report (ER) presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation of the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) pilot implemented by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) Nutrition unit, World Food Programme (WFP) Eswatini, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and partners for the period 2019-2021– with financial support from the Government of Japan.

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, MAIN USERS, AND CONTEXT

2. The evaluation findings will provide lessons on the implementation of WFP supported interventions in line with its current Country Strategic Plan (CSP), namely; Strategic outcome 2: Smallholder farmers particularly women, have enhanced capacities to supply structured markets with nutritious foods by 2024; Strategic outcome 3: Vulnerable populations, particularly women, children, adolescent girls and people living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), have access to integrated and shock-responsive social protection systems by 2030 as well as inform design of the new CSP. Further, the findings of this evaluation will provide the Government with evidence on potential expansion of the HGSF model across the country.

3. The primary users of the evaluation include WFP Eswatini country office (CO), the Government of Eswatini (Ministry of Education and Training and Ministry of Agriculture), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project to inform policy decisions as well as decision-making on upscaling the HGSF pilot. The WFP Regional Bureau Johannesburg (RBJ) will use these findings to provide strategic guidance and oversight to Eswatini CO as well as contribute to evidence generation on the scale up of HGSF in Southern Africa.

4. The Kingdom of Eswatini is a landlocked and mostly mountainous country divided into four main geographic regions: the Highveld, Middleveld, Lowveld, and Lubombo Plateau. Despite being classified as a lower-middle income country, the Kingdom of Eswatini is faced with several development challenges. Agricultural productivity in Eswatini is low due to several climate change vulnerabilities such as recurring drought, chronic underinvestment, and the impact of HIV/AIDS. These have led to food insecurity, poor nutrition, reduced productivity, and yields. Hence Eswatini is still highly reliant on food imports. Unsustainable agricultural practices, reliance on rain-fed production, and limited arable land are also key inhibiting factors to agricultural production. Smallholder farmers (SHFs) mainly produce for subsistence consumption and on average cultivate 1 hectare (ha) of land yielding on average 1.2 MT/ha.

SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

5. The subject of the evaluation is the HGSF programme pilot project, which is a WFP activity operation implemented in 50 schools (6 primary schools with grade zero, 22 primary, and 22 secondary schools) in the four regions (Hhohho, Manzini, Lubombo, and Shiselweni) of the country. In line with gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) considerations in each targeted school, all learners benefit from the school meals.

6. The overall pilot project cost for the food commodities, capacity strengthening, monitoring, and evaluation was US$ 1,448,785. The HGSF food basket consists of maize and sugar beans (ideally supposed to be sourced locally), rice, vegetable oil, vegetables, and eggs. The design included specific measures to address gender equality imbalances including (i) recruitment of women farmers' associations; (ii) gender sensitization to increase participation of women in farmers' associations (iii) ensuring at least 30 percent of the farmers accessing the HGSF market were women and (iii) Training of women farmers' groups to ensure more equitable access of inputs and services. However, the design overlooked addressing the needs of farmers living with disabilities.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE METHODOLOGY

7. The evaluation's theoretical orientation builds on the re-constructed Theory of Change (ToC), draws on functional analysis of Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) - differentiating from more general school feeding results frameworks to isolate contributory effects / association. The thorough evaluability assessment conducted by the Evaluation Team provided a strong and coherent theoretical foundation on which the evaluation's complexity-aware data strategy was based.

8. The refined ToC, as depicted in Annex 2, posits: Should smallholder farmers and other actors within the local agricultural value chain successfully link with the HGSF programme—achieved through provision of information, training, and capacity-building—then it will result in an enhancement of the availability of local commodities for the HGSF programme and improvement in smallholder farmer household incomes and food security. This evaluation sought to analyze the three principal assumptions: first, the involvement of essential stakeholders in the production and supply of locally produced goods; second, the supply of complimentary services such as water and sanitation and nutrition education to improve health and nutrition; and third, the reduction in procurement costs to augment the efficacy of the HGSF pilot.

9. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria were applied to Relevance; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Coherence; and Sustainability and Scalability. The evaluation generated a set of lessons for HGSF in Eswatini. The evaluation focused on five (5) main evaluation questions:

- To what extent does the HGSF pilot align with national priorities and needs of targeted communities?
- To what extent did the HGSF intervention achieve its objectives and results?
- Was the HGSF initiative implemented in a timely and cost-effective manner?
- How compatible is the HGSF pilot with other interventions implemented by government and other stakeholders?
- To what extent can the HGSF intervention be sustained and scaled up in Eswatini?

10. The data collection tools were aimed at eliciting both quantitative and qualitative data. Both primary and secondary data was used in the evaluation. Primary data was elicited through both structured questionnaires and semi-structured tools. Severe evaluability constraints were identified, data was missing for several indicators at baseline and mid-term. Even though the ET managed to populate values at end-line of the pilot, the type of analysis was limited due to the lack of data regarding how indicator values have changed over time. Where relevant, the ET used retrospective recall methods to attempt reconstruction of proxy baseline data. Primarily, analysis focused on systems functions rather than impact-level results; this mitigates the severity of constraints imposed by the existing data gaps.

11. The following pages provide a summary of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

FINDINGS

12. **Finding 1**: The HGSF project is well aligned to national priorities related to education, nutrition, agriculture, poverty alleviation, and social protection.

13. **Finding 2:** The HGSF pilot strategies on local procurement, diversifying meal rations, support to school complimentary service and capacity strengthening activities had varied contribution to learners' food and nutrition security and smallholder farmers' agricultural production and incomes. However, project design did not fully consider the location of schools against that of farmers as well as the varying levels of vulnerability among the targeted groups.

14. **Finding 3:** Gender was mainstreamed across various project activities, but not uniformly. There is evidence of women's economic empowerment, but the project did not actively include people living with disabilities.

15. **Finding 4:** The HGSF contributed to a moderate increase in school enrolments, but due to the impact of COVID-19, this did not have a noticeable effect on attendance. There were commendable enhancements in the school meal diversity and portion size, although most children were dissatisfied.

16. **Finding 5**: There was an increase in the number of schools utilizing gardens to support school meals under the HGSF pilot, which is positive. Nonetheless, most schools have not yet embraced this practice, in line with the principles of HGSF.

17. **Finding 6**: There was an initial general positive trend in production across all vegetables and cereals promoted, which indicates strong potential of the HGSF approach, but this was short lived due to impact of COVID-19, civil unrest, climate shocks and shortcomings in both farmer selection and beneficiary targeting.

18. **Finding 7:** There was small but significant increase in the percentage of area utilized for maize by smallholder farmers, a response to the perceived demand from schools, despite occasional farmer concerns about the reliability of the demand/HGSF market. The HGSF initiative led to increased income for participating farmers, although not uniformly beneficial for women, nor for farmers with very small land holdings.

19. **Finding 8:** The HGSF pilot project faced a range of internal and external factors that influenced its achievement or non-achievement of objectives. Assumptions underlying the HGSF pilot were partly valid but faced challenges. Stakeholder engagement varied, the impact on health and learning outcomes was difficult to measure, and local procurement faced complexities that required multi-faceted support.

20. **Finding 9:** The grain procurement model benefited farmers by reducing transaction costs; nevertheless, it's efficiency was impeded by the double-handling process carried out by WFP. The menu under HGSF also incurred a slightly higher cost compared to the conventional NSFP.

21. **Finding 10:** The HGSF pilot created coordination structures that successfully mobilized the most relevant stakeholders and created awareness on the HGSF approach, but the effectiveness of coordinating implementation was uneven and influenced by limited commitment and clarity in roles and responsibilities.

22. **Finding 11:** The HGSF program has demonstrated added value across various dimensions, including improved nutrition, enhanced food security, promotion of economic empowerment, stimulation of the local economy, support for education, provision of social protection, fostering collaboration, and contribution to sustainable development.

23. **Finding 12:** The HGSF has several elements that boost its sustainability. The design of the HGSF was focussed on smallholder farmers with limited focus on the private sector. Logistical arrangements, farmer selection criteria, and production capacity need to be addressed to ensure long-term sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS

24. **Conclusion 1:** The HGSF project, while it is aligned with several national priorities, there is no comprehensive and unified policy framework, crucial for underpinning a shared vision and enabling a multi-sectoral execution of HGSF strategies (geographic and beneficiary targeting, local procurement, and social inclusion and human rights issues).

25. **Conclusion 2:** The project tested the HGSF pilot model in various geographical and agroecological locations with schools and farmers that have different characteristics in terms of demand, production, and vulnerability profiles (including gender); results indicate a need to tailor the model to ensure contextual relevance and effectiveness.

26. **Conclusion 3:** The HGSF pilot promoted a well-balanced, nutritious food basket, but there were challenges around consistent supply of vegetables, menu diversity, and quality of meal preparation.

27. **Conclusion 4:** Production levels for commodities procured under the HGSF pilot fluctuated significantly, except for maize.

28. **Conclusion 5:** Overall, while the HGSF pilot project had clear structures in place, there were significant challenges in coordination, communication, and implementation. Stakeholder sentiments suggest that a more comprehensive approach with clear role definitions, communication strategies, and stakeholder engagement is required for scale up.

29. **Conclusion 6:** While gender mainstreaming has been incorporated into project activities, there is room for improvement and opportunities for targeted support to specific livelihood areas where women are either particularly vulnerable and/or well-positioned (e.g., women egg producer groups face this dual reality).

30. **Conclusion 7:** The HGSF program is highly regarded by all stakeholders, particularly farmers. To ensure its sustainability, modifications are needed in its design, specifically regarding clarity on public and private partnerships.

LESSONS

31. **HGSF Pilot Project design**: While a diverse group of stakeholders was involved during the program's implementation, their engagement was insufficient during the design phase.

32. **Flexibility of local procurement arrangements**: The project was successful in facilitating access to markets for local smallholder farmers by bringing the market closer to the farmers.

33. **Pricing structure**: The pricing structure for the provision of flexible goods should be made more flexible going forward.

34. **Role of private sector in school feeding**: Private sector companies can play a critical in partnering with project implementers to supplement the provision of food by SHF (especially where they fail to deliver), as well as to support infrastructure development, and foster the achievement of wider national economic development.

35. **Gender and human rights and marginalized groups**: Through the provision of food to both boys and girls, the project appealed to the rights to education, gender equality, and right to food for all children. However, due to the lack of access to land for most marginalized groups such as the youth, women and people living with disabilities, their engagement in the project was limited. Similar projects should make deliberate efforts to facilitate the engagement of marginalized groups in such projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

36. **Recommendation 1**: Develop a robust policy framework that mandates the inclusion of HGSF in the NSFP in Eswatini by: (I) Update the National Framework for Food Security in Schools (NFFSS) to make NSFP/HGSF more explicit; consider developing a school feeding policy, (ii) Advocate for the integration at both the national and regional levels, emphasizing the multi-dimensional benefits, (iii) Develop a shared vision of HGSF and conduct a stakeholder mapping based on this vision, establish/formalize HGSF coordination structures and Develop synergies with other southern African and Africa wide HGSF initiatives (e.g. CESA HGSF Cluster).

37. **Recommendation 2:** Adjust the design of HGSF to set realistic targets for scaling with the purpose of establishing a pathway for the progressive adoption of a model for HGSF schools that will include all necessary components – including complimentary services. Conduct a thorough assessment of the geographical locations of schools and farmers considering accessibility, market proximity, and local agricultural practice. The HGSF should be flexible and be integrated within the different agro ecological zones of the country (it is not a one size fits all). Conduct a detailed market assessment to inform local procurement strategy for Eswatini to guide the NSFP and HGSF. Strengthen the capacity of farmers to produce nutrition sensitive commodities including the indigenous leafy green vegetables that are available in each region and climate smart crops such as groundnuts.

38. **Recommendation 3:** Strengthen mainstreaming of gender, disadvantaged groups (people living with disabilities) and human rights in the design and implementation of HGSF. Expand the program's focus on addressing the food and nutrition needs of various demographic groups by more systematically considering vulnerability and inclusivity. Address the economic empowerment of women and the vulnerabilities faced by girls in schools.

39. **Recommendation 4:** Strengthen capacities of all stakeholders at the school and farmer levels through training and capacity-building focusing on gaps identified in the evaluation and particularly gender equality, disability inclusion, and the empowerment of all project participants.

40. **Recommendation 5:** Enhance the quality of meals served at schools. Provide training to cooks to ensure the necessary skills and knowledge for quality food preparation. Develop a well-rounded menu that includes a variety of nutritious and culturally appropriate meals. Seek guidance from nutrition experts or dieticians to ensure the meals meet the nutritional requirements.

41. **Recommendation 6**: Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that includes gender and disability-disaggregated data collection.

42. **Recommendation 7**: Enhance the cost efficiency of the HGSF model. Sustain support for facilitation of profitable market access, particularly for women SHFs and farmers with very small holdings (non-profitability of engagement with the HGSF pilot correlated strongly with the size of landholding). Strengthen supply chain and logistics to address delays in key activities such as timely collection of commodities from farmers and transferal of payments to farmers. Develop a more nuanced/balanced approach to cost analysis that reflects the specific objectives, outcomes, and benefits of the HGSF model.

1. Introduction

1.1. EVALUATION FEATURES

1. This Evaluation Report (ER) presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation of the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) pilot implemented by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) Nutrition unit, World Food Programme (WFP) Eswatini, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and partners – with financial support from the Government of Eswatini and the Government of Japan.

2. The HGSF approach was implemented in 50 schools and aims at enhancing diversity and access to nutritious and safe food by procuring the food commodities from local smallholder farmers (SHF). The scope of the evaluation complies with the requirements of the terms of reference (ToR) (Annex 1). The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the quantity and quality of locally procured nutritious food commodities for the HGSF programme, overall lessons learnt, best practices and challenges of the pilot. The evaluation covers slightly over two years – from September 2019 to December 2021 – and was commissioned by the WFP Eswatini Country Office (CO) and the MoET, Nutrition unit. Impact is not being considered because it is too soon to be able to assess impact after only two years of implementation – particularly given the challenges and delays faced in implementation.

3. There are multiple rationales for initiating this evaluation: The evaluation findings will provide lessons on the implementation of WFP supported interventions in line with its current Country Strategic Plan (CSP), namely; Strategic outcome 2 (SO2): Smallholder farmers particularly women, have enhanced capacities to supply structured markets with nutritious foods by 2024; Strategic outcome 3 (SO3): Vulnerable populations, particularly women, children, adolescent girls and people living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), have access to integrated and shock-responsive social protection systems by 2030 as well as inform design of the new CSP. Further, the findings of this evaluation will provide the Government with evidence on potential expansion of the HGSF model across the country.

4. The reconstructed Theory and Change (ToC) presented in Annex 2 at inception defines the scope of the evaluation. The evaluation of the HGSF focuses on the functionally oriented modelling that has been developed by WFP to facilitate global learning around the critical HGSF elements of production, trade, procurement, preparation, distribution, and consumption.

5. The evaluation team (ET) was mobilized in December 2022 and building on the ToR, the team developed their methodology and approach during an inception phase that concluded with a final inception report in March 2023. The subsequent data collection phase (April - May) led to preparation of this evaluation report, which was due for finalization in September 2023. The detailed timeline for the evaluation is in Annex 3.

6. This evaluation's findings provide lessons on the implementation of WFP supported interventions in line with its current Country Strategic Plan (CSP). Further, the evaluation findings provide the Government with evidence on potential expansion of the HGSF model across the country. It has dual and mutually reinforcing objectives of accountability and learning, with greater emphasis given to learning as follows:

- Accountability - to assess and report on the performance and the results of linking Eswatini smallholder farmers (SHF) to the school feeding market.
- Learning - to determine the successes and shortcomings of the HGSF pilot, what worked, what did not work, and what needs to be adjusted including integration of gender and human rights. The evaluation will provide the evidence base for future operational and strategic decisions.

7. The primary users of the evaluation include WFP Eswatini country office, MoET, Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), FAO, the Government of Eswatini, and its partners involved in the implementation of the project to inform policy decisions as well as decision-making on upscaling the HGSF pilot. The WFP Regional Bureau Johannesburg (RBJ) will use these findings to provide strategic guidance and oversight to Eswatini country office as well as contribute to evidence generation on the scale up of HGSF in Southern Africa.

8. WFP Headquarters (HQ) may use the results to revise HGSF guidance in the future and to enhance organisational learning in general. WFP's Office of Evaluation may use the evaluation findings, as

appropriate, to feed into evaluation syntheses as well as for annual reporting to the Executive Board on evaluation coverage. The evaluation report is also of direct interest to USAID, EU, and GF as the donors for this pilot project – to meet its accountability needs as appropriate. Targeted beneficiaries may use the evaluation findings to advocate for the allocation of resources to areas or interventions that have proven to be effective.

9. The evaluation was undertaken by SALASAN Consulting Inc. (SALASAN led by Sithabiso Gandure, a senior expert who has extensive evaluation experience in the fields of food and nutrition security, rural livelihoods, and resilience. Other team members included Thabo Sacolo (quantitative methodologies especially cost-efficiency analysis of HGSF supply chain); Tengetile Hlophe (emerging national evaluator) experienced in conducting qualitative data research and mainstreaming of gender. The team was supported by Nathan Horst (Senior international expert) in the provision of internal quality assurance, additional data analysis, and data-presentation expertise.

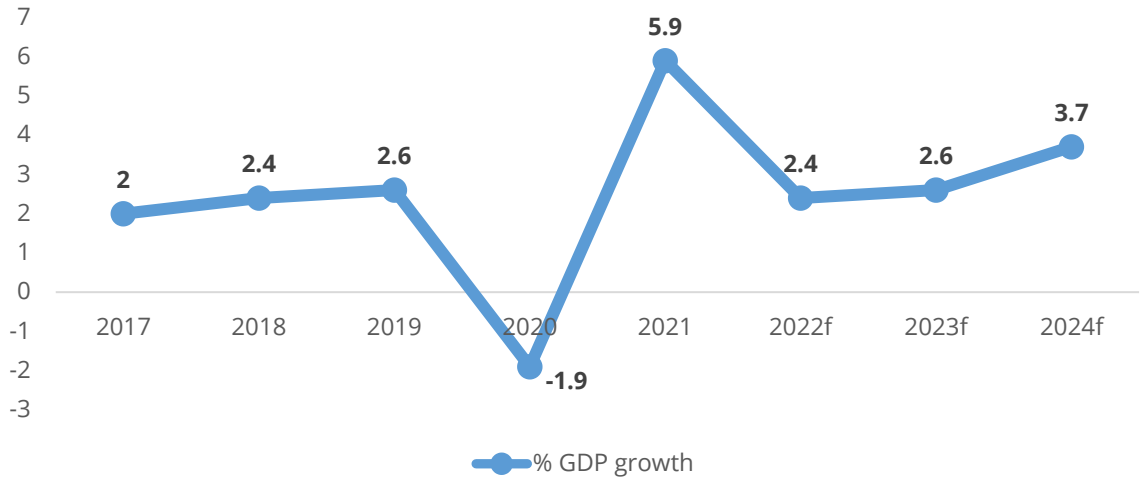
1.2. CONTEXT

10. **General overview**. The kingdom of Eswatini is a landlocked and mostly mountainous country divided into four main geographic regions: the Highveld, Middleveld, Lowveld, and Lubombo Plateau. It has a population of 1,093,238 people with predominantly young people (42 percent are below the age of 24 years).[1] The country is located in the Eastern Southern part of Africa between Mozambique on the East and South Africa on the North and South. Despite being classified as a lower-middle income country, the Kingdom of Eswatini is faced with several development challenges. Eswatini's Human Development Index (HDI) value was recorded at 0.597 in 2021 (ranking 144 out of 191 countries) and was characterised by high levels of poverty, high inequality, and a deteriorating social sector.[2]

11. Although in the 1980s and early 1990s Eswatini attained impressive gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates of no less than 6.5 percent, this declined to an average of 2 percent in the last 20 years.[3] Figure 1 demonstrates GDP projections for the years 2017–2024. Economic expansion has only had a moderate impact on poverty reduction. About 58.9 percent of the population remains poor and 20.1 percent of the population are living in extreme poverty.[4] Poverty is prevalent in the Shiselweni and Lubombo regions with extreme poverty at 21.1 percent and 33.6 percent, respectively.[5] Progress towards achieving sustainable development goal (SDG) 2 of zero hunger, shows that Eswatini lags behind in a number of indicators such as food security, stunting, and weak food systems characterised by low agricultural productivity, and low smallholder incomes.[6] The country ranks 73 out of 121 countries on the Global Hunger Index in 2022, with a moderate level of hunger at a score of 16.3. However, the country has seen a steady decline in hunger levels from 22.9 in 2007 to 18.4 in 2014 and 16.3 in 2022.[7]

[1] Central Statistics Office (CSO). 2019. *The 2017 Population and Housing Census: Volume 3*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane.
[2] UNDP. 2022. *Human Development Report 2021/2022 overview: Uncertain times, unsettled lives, shaping our future in a transforming world*. UNDP
[3] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2022. *Eswatini National Development Plan 2022/23 – 2027/2028*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane
[4] Central Statistics Office. 2016. *Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ESHIES) 2016/2017*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane
[5] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2022. *Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report 2022: Eswatini*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane.
[6] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2018. Eswatini Zero Hunger Strategic Review. Government of Eswatini
[7] Global Hunger Index 2022: Eswatini. https://www.globalhungerindex.org/eswatini.html

Figure 1: Eswatini Real GDP Growth 2017 – 2024 (percent)



Source: MEPD, 2022[8]

12. Eswatini is a net importer of goods and services, trading 69 percent of exports and 74 percent of imports with the Republic of South Africa.[9] Most of the goods traded by the Kingdom are coca cola concentrates, sugar, textile, forestry, and processed food products which account for 91 percent of total exports.[10] The Eswatini economy has over the years been heavily reliant on Southern African Customs Union (SACU) receipts, but these have been on the decline. Increasing volatility of SACU revenue is met with increasing expenditure, low private sector investment, high public debt, fiscal consolidation and rising inflationary pressures.[11] This is exacerbated by the effects of the COVID–19 pandemic, political unrest, climate related disasters, and global economic and financial crisis which have stifled economic recovery and led to the deterioration of public services and social indicators. The lack of economic diversification and low value addition are major deterrents to industrial growth and economic development in the country.

13. **Education**. Education is a priority development sector for the Kingdom of Eswatini, however, total public spending declined in real terms from 7 percent in 2016/2017 to 5.5 percent in 2020/2021.[12] Primary school net enrolment is high at 91.37 percent compared to 51.25 percent net enrolment in secondary school.[13] However, there are slightly more girls (2,638) than boys (2,597) in primary school.[14] The major challenges in the education system are the quality, relevance, and adequacy of the education system; low investments in Early Childhood Care, Development, and Education (ECCDE); and inadequate support for vocational education and training.[15]

14. The government has made commendable strides in providing free education to all the Swazi population, creating equal access opportunities for all learners. However, there are disparities in the quality of public and private education and rural and urban schools. Of the number of households covered by social protection floors/systems only 19 percent of households receive the orphaned and vulnerable

[8] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development.2022. Economic and review Outlook FY 2021/22: A year of rebound during a pandemic. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[9] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2022. *Eswatini National Development Plan 2022/2023 – 2027/2028*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[10] International Trade Centre. 2022. *Eswatini Alliances for Action: Support for Job Creation and the Investment Climate Eswatini*. Inception Report. International Trade Centre

[11] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2022. *Eswatini National Development Plan 2022/2023 – 2027/2028*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[12] Ibid.

[13] Central Statistics Office. 2016. *Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ESHIES) 2016/2017*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[14] Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS). 2018. *Annual Education Census. 2018*. Ministry of Education and Training. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[15] World Bank. 2021. Eswatini Education Sector Analysis 2021. © World Bank

children (OVC) grant, yet 60 percent of all children are vulnerable, and 71 percent are OVCs with 2.34 percent of children aged 17 and below being double orphans – demonstrating substantial unmet social needs.[16]

15. Through the national school feeding programme in Eswatini, the government has been able to serve 845 public schools (588 primary schools and 257 secondary/high schools) and an estimated 353,458 students. This means that up to 84 percent of the 422,889 children enrolled in schools are covered reaching approximately 32 percent of the total population.[17] To achieve inclusive and equitable access to learning and education, the MoET also caters for learners living with disabilities and those with special needs, and this has resulted in a gradual increase in the number of inclusive schools in the country and the development of standardised guidelines to encourage inclusion[18].

16. **Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS).** Even though the increase in OVCs was driven by a high prevalence of the HIV/AIDs pandemic in the past, Eswatini stands on the brink of reaching epidemic control. This is demonstrated by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) declaration of Eswatini as one of only two countries that has achieved the ambitious 95-95-95 fast track targets.[19,20] These are the 2030 targets set towards the achievement of sustainable development goal 3.3 which calls for ending the HIV epidemic.

17. Although Eswatini has a large population between the age 15-35 years at 72.9 percent[21] both HIV prevalence and unemployment (58.2 percent) remain high among young people.[22] Despite Eswatini's considerable achievements in HIV treatment (antiretroviral therapy (ART) coverage of 85 percent and a significant reduction in mother-to-child transmission), the country still has the highest HIV prevalence in the world, with 24.8 percent in 2021 of the adult population (15 years and older) infected.[23]

18. **Agriculture.** Agricultural contribution to GDP was 8.1percent in 2021, a 2.1 percent decline from 10.2 percent in 2012.[24] Only 45 percent of active agricultural land is under title deed land (TDL) and accounts for 80 percent of the national agricultural production while over 70 percent of Swazi people live in rural areas and rely on subsistence farming.[25]

19. Agricultural productivity in Eswatini is low due to several climate change vulnerabilities such as recurring drought, chronic underinvestment, and the impact of HIV/AIDS.[26] These have led to food insecurity, poor nutrition, reduced productivity, and yields. Hence Eswatini is still highly reliant on food imports. Unsustainable agricultural practices, reliance on rain-fed production, and limited arable land are also key inhibiting factors to agricultural production. SHFs mainly produce for subsistence consumption and on average cultivate 1 hectare (ha) of land yielding on average 1.2 MT/ha.[27]

20. Post-production food losses in Eswatini average 30 percent of which 50 percent is lost during the post-harvest phase, 25 percent during processing and packaging, 20 percent during distribution and retail,

[16] UNICEF. 2019. Social Assistance Budget Brief 2018/2019. Mbabane

[17] WFP. 2019. *Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System (DEQAS): Evaluation of National School Feeding Programme in Eswatini (2010 to 2018).* Terms of Reference.

[18] Ministry of Education and Training.2019. Standards for Inclusive Education. Government of Eswatini

[19] 95 percent of HIV-positive people knowing their status; 95 percent of people who know their HIV-positive status on treatment; and 95 percent of those on treatment.

[20] PEPFAR. 2022. *Eswatini Country Operational Plan (COP) 2022: Strategic Direction Summary April 29, 2022*. PEPFAR.

[21] Central Statistics Office. 2019. *The 2017 Population and Housing Census: Volume 3*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane.

[22] Ministry of Labour and Social Security. 2021. *Integrated Labour Force Survey 2021*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[23] Ministry of Health. 2022. Eswatini Population based HIV impact assessment III (SHIMS III 2021) https://phia.icap.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/53059_14_SHIMS3_Summary-sheet-Web.pdf

[24] Central Statistics Office. 2021. *Annual GDP Report 2021.* Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[25] Ministry of Agriculture. 2022. *Agriculture Pre-Harvest Assessment Report: March 2022*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[26] Phungwayo, T., Kushitor, S., and Koornhof, L. 2021.Governance of food and nutrition security in Eswatini: an analysis of government policies and reports. *Agriculture and Food Security*. 10 (45): 1 - 10.

[27] Ministry of Agriculture. 2022. *Agriculture Pre-Harvest Assessment Report: March 2022*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

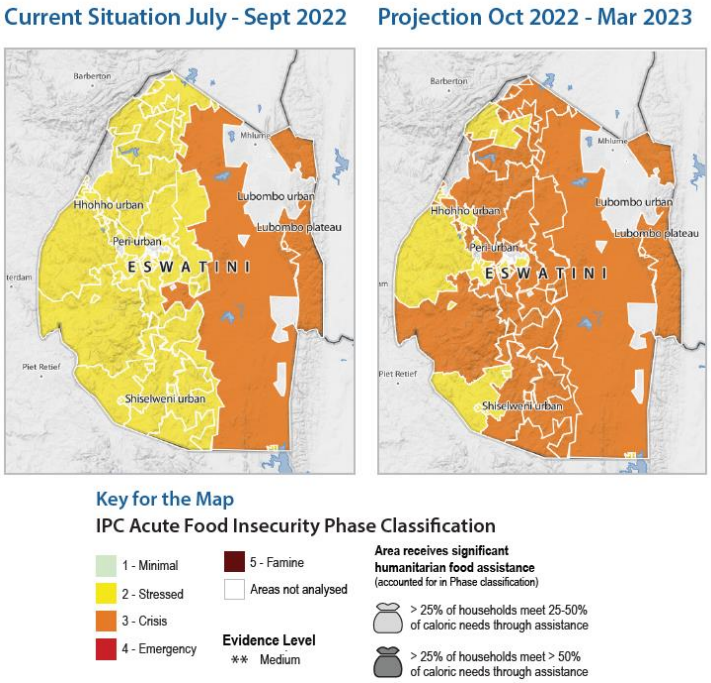
and 5 percent at consumer level.[28] The main causes of these losses are poor storage facilities, inadequate transport infrastructure, and a lack of access to markets.[29] Another study, conducted by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in 2016, found that SHFs in Eswatini often lack the resources and knowledge to properly store and transport their crops, which leads to significant post-harvest losses.[30]

21. According to a WFP study, food losses in schools can be as high as 50 percent for certain food items, such as fruits and vegetables.[31] This not only leads to wasted resources, but also reduces the availability of nutritious foods for students, which can have a negative impact on their health and academic performance. Food losses in schools in Eswatini are primarily caused by a lack of proper storage facilities and inadequate transportation infrastructure.[32]

22. **Food security and nutrition.** The 2022 Second Voluntary National Review Report of Eswatini confirms that the country is still food insecure and unable to meet its national dietary requirements for grain and protein sources. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Report estimates that at least 1,822,000 (16 percent) of the population in Eswatini faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2022, and this was projected to increase by 6 percent in March 2023.

23. Food insecurity is disproportionately high in the Lubombo region – as reflected in Figure 2.[33] This is expected, as Lubombo and Shiselweni also reported the highest poverty rate, depth, and severity at 71.5 percent and 67.3 percent, respectively, in 2017.[34]

Figure 2: Food Security Situation in Eswatini, July – September 2022 and October 2022 – March 2023



Source: Eswatini: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis June 2022 – March 2023

[28] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2018. *Eswatini Zero Hunger Strategic Review 2018*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[29] Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC). 2022. *Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Report 2022*. Deputy Prime Minister's Office. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[30] International Fund for Agricultural Development. 2016. *Enhancing the resilience of smallholder farmers in Eswatini through improved post-harvest management.* International Fund for Agricultural Development

[31] World Food Programme. 2018. *Food Losses in Schools: Challenges and Opportunities in Eswatini*. World Food Programme

[32] Ibid.

[33] IPC. 2022. *IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis June 2022 – March 2023: Eswatini*. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

[34] Central Statistics Office. 2016. *Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ESHIES) 2016/2017*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

24. Eswatini is faced with chronic child malnutrition. Undernourishment stands at 5.8 percent nationwide; it disproportionately affects more boys (7.8 percent) compared to their women counterparts (4.3 percent).[35] At a national level, 31 percent of children under the age of five are stunted, while 1.3 percent are wasted, and 4.1 percent are underweight.[36] Lubombo and Manzini have higher stunting prevalence at 30.9 percent and 32.9 percent respectively.[37]

25. Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) tend to be more affected by malnutrition with 27 percent of OVCs under five stunted compared to 24 percent for children who are not orphaned or vulnerable.[38] Stunting is 27 percent in rural areas and 19 percent in urban areas.[39] This may result from several factors, but the Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Report 2022 indicates that 35 percent of households in the rural areas have poor and worse consumption patterns – showing that some households have difficulty accessing adequate food for their consumption.[40]

26. WFP has made significant contributions to supporting the implementation of food and nutrition policies and programmes in Eswatini. The organization has reached over 142,480 beneficiaries in 2022 with 51% being women.[41] WFP programmes in collaboration with the government of Eswatini, other UN agencies, and non-governmental organisations have supported capacity building (of government agencies and institutions - and SHFs), provided nutritious meals for OVCs in pre-primary Neighbourhood Care Points (NCPs), and meals for children in primary and secondary schools. In line with SDG 17, WFP has partnered with the Centre for Financial Inclusion, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and various government departments and ministries to implement its progammes.

27. **Water and sanitation**. In Eswatini, access to clean water and adequate sanitation facilities is a significant challenge, particularly in rural areas and schools.[42] The Annual Education Census 2017 reports that 79 percent of primary schools have access to safe drinking water while 90 percent of secondary schools have access to clean water. Most of the sources of water are classified as other sources of water which may be from water tankers or boreholes.[43] To address these issues, the Eswatini government and various NGOs have implemented various initiatives to improve water and sanitation access in schools. These include the construction of boreholes and latrines, as well as the installation of hand washing stations and the promotion of good hygiene practices.[44]

28. **Climate change.** Agricultural production in Eswatini is susceptible to climate-related shocks – such as heat waves, flooding, prolonged dry spells, increased incidences of pests and disease, high cost of inputs, and poor adoption of smart agricultural practices. The 2021/2022 cropping season - for example - was characterised by natural hazards such as hail, waterlogging, thunderstorms, heat waves, and prolonged dry spells (experienced in Lubombo and Shiselweni region).[45] Local SHFs lack access to good agricultural practices, investment opportunities, and have poor resilience to climate change effects.

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[35] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2022. *Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report 2022: Eswatini*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane.

[36] Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC). 2022. *Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Report 2022*. Deputy Prime Minister's Office. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[37] Ibid.

[38] Central Statistical Office and UNICEF. 2016. *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014: Final Report*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[39] Ibid.

[40] Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC). 2022. *Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Report 2022*. Deputy Prime Minister's Office. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[41] WFP. Eswatini Annual Country Report 2022: Country Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024

[42] UNICEF. 2016. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools in Eswatini. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/eswatini/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-schools-eswatini

[43] Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS). 2017. *Annual Education Census. 2017*. Ministry of Education and Training. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[44] United Nations. 2021. *Eswatini Annual Results Report 2021*. United Nations.

[45] Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC). 2022. *Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Report 2022*. Deputy Prime Minister's Office. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

29. In 2022 good rains led to a good harvest, which improved national maize yields by 27 percent compared to the 2020/2021 season.[46] Production stood at 127,315 MT with increased production in sweet potatoes, sorghum, legumes/pulses/beans, groundnuts, and cowpeas.[47]

30. Given that there is a correlation between the extent of food insecurity and agricultural production, the country's investments in HGSF to increase production of smallholder farmers, increase their access to markets and modernise agricultural production, and transform subsistence agricultural farmers to commercial capacity is commendable. This will contribute to poverty alleviation, reduced poverty levels and improved food/nutrition security.

31. **Gender equality and Women's empowerment.** Whilst women have been integrated into all aspects of social, cultural, political, and economic life, their full and equitable participation in economic activities and gainful employment is yet to be achieved. Women are still underrepresented in positions of power and influence, with only a few women in political leadership positions. The Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS) shows that there were fewer women managers (3.4 percent) than men (4.9 percent) in 2021.[48] As such, income per capita is higher for men compared to women, at 54 percent and 46 percent respectively.[49]

32. The 2022 Voluntary National Review (VNR) report shows that in all the occupation categories males are paid higher than their women counterparts. This shows that even though women are economically active, income inequalities are still very high in the country, the activities are of low value, largely informal, of low income, and low contribution to overall wellbeing.

33. The Gender Development Index 2016 shows that Eswatini has made positive progress towards addressing gender related inequalities in the country, attaining a gender status index of 75.5 percent[50] towards the attainment of gender parity in all sectors but more is still required. Further, the country has made progress towards the achievement of some of the indicators for women's empowerment, such as the adoption of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018.

34. Concerted efforts and programmes designed to empower women in the country, have led to improvements in the socioeconomic position of women compared to men, moving from 67 percent of women living under the poverty line in 2016 to 59 percent in 2019.[51] Poverty rates are higher among men (67 percent) than women (59 percent) with an overall Gini coefficient of 49.[52] The gender gap in food access is higher for women compared to men, with 65 percent of women experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity compared to 60 percent of men.[53]

35. Women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS in the country, accounting for 30.4 percent of all women living with HIV compared to 18.7 percent of men 15 years and older.[54] Over 25 percent of women 25 years and older and 50 percent of women 15–24 are unemployed with more men (30.4 percent)

[46] Ministry of Agriculture. 2022. *Agriculture Pre-Harvest Assessment Report: March 2022*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ministry of Labour and Social Security. 2021. *Integrated Labour Force Survey 2021*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane
[49] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2022. *Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report 2022: Eswatini*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane.
[50] Deputy Prime Minister's Office and United Nations Development Programme. 2016. *Eswatini Gender and Development Index 2016*. Deputy Prime Minister's Office and United Nations Development Programme. Government of Eswatini
[51] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2022. *Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report 2022: Eswatini*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane
[52] Central Statistics Office. 2016. *Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ESHIES) 2016/2017*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane
[53] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2022. *Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report 2022: Eswatini*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane.
[54] Ministry of Health. 2022. Eswatini Population based HIV impact assessment III (SHIMS III 2021) https://phia.icap.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/53059_14_SHIMS3_Summary-sheet-Web.pdf

employed in the formal sector compared to women (22 percent).[55] About 60.3 percent of women are employed in the informal sector and more than 60 percent rely on subsistence farming for a living.[56]

36. **COVID-19 situation**. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated existing widespread vulnerability. COVID-19 restrictions were implemented for most of 2021, which affected the day-to-day operations of local businesses and service providers. There were severe impacts on the social and economic sectors, including a prolonged closure of schools, and a deepening and widening of food insecurity.[57] The pandemic pushed more people into poverty, by increasing food insecurity, increasing unemployment due to retrenchments, reducing disposable income thus affecting supply and demand of goods and services, and the food value chain system.[58] The Government lifted all COVID-19 restrictions at the end of 2022.

37. **Relevant national and sectoral policies**. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2023/2024 – 2027/2028 endorses national investment in preventive health care, nutrition, early childhood development, sanitation and hygiene, and basic education as the foundation for the country's future development. This is supported by bold statements in the National Development Strategy (NDS) to equitable access to health and education and complemented by budgetary commitments to ensure that health and education receive the largest share of the national budget.

38. The country seeks to achieve the aspirations of the continental development Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) which seek to end poverty and hunger. By increasing access to quality education, improving nutrition, increasing food security, and promoting sustainable agriculture, the schools feeding programme helps Eswatini to achieve the targets of SDGs 1 – no poverty, 2 – zero hunger, 3 – good health and wellbeing, 4 – quality education, and 17 - partnerships. Hence, the NDS and Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Programme (PRSAP) advocate for the design and introduction of effective school feeding schemes to improve the nutrition of school going children and ultimately contribute to ending hunger and improving human capital development.

39. Implementation of the school feeding programme in Eswatini is guided by the National Framework for Food Security in Schools (NFFSS) of 2013, which was designed to enhance food security and improve education outcomes by reducing short term hunger while using schools as centres of care and support, while the Neighbourhood Care Points (NCPs) Programme is implemented to provide food for vulnerable children at community level.

40. The Government's commitment to school feeding is enshrined in the PRSAP, NDS, and Education and Training Sector Policy (2018). Supporting initiatives and policies have also been adopted to advance the implementation of equitable and sustainable development in Eswatini, such as the commitment to "leave no one behind", the commitments to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperative Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 and the National Strategic Roadmap which aim to build human capital in the country.

41. Policies to advance the agricultural sector, support food security, and nutrition have also been adopted to support the school feeding programme, thus different support mechanisms and projects are implemented to support small-holder farmers, such as the Smallholder Market-led Project (SMLP), Financial Inclusion and Cluster Development Project (FINCLUDE), Lower Usuthu Smallholder Irrigation Project (LUSIP II) and others. Different sectoral policies support the development of the agricultural sector, social security policies and food and nutrition policies, such as the National Agricultural Investment Plan.

42. The government implements several social protection initiatives such as the OVC grants for the education of orphaned and vulnerable children, Free Primary Education programme, and the extended National Multisectoral Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Framework (eNSF) which supports the implementation of health and nutrition programmes for children and parents with HIV and Aids.

43. **Humanitarian issues.** Several external events have driven the current humanitarian and development situation in Eswatini. For example, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine increased fuel

[55] Ministry of Labour and Social Security. 2021. *Integrated Labour Force Survey 2021*. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane
[56] Ibid.
[57] World Food Programme. 2021. *Eswatini Annual Country Report 2021*. World Food Programme.
[58] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2021. *Eswatini Economic Bulletin: 2021 Quarter 1(Jan – March). Volume 37*. Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

prices, reduced access to fertiliser, and adversely affected food supply chains, pushing more people into poverty and contributing to food insecurity.[59] This exacerbated the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic causing a rise in unemployment due to the slow economic activity. Eswatini was also severely affected by cyclone Elios in 2021 – which affected over 1,000 people.[60] The cyclone affected homes, crops, and infrastructure in Mozambique, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Despite recurrent drought conditions, Eswatini has also recently faced increasing erratic weather and hailstorms which have increased vulnerability and household-level socioeconomic distress.

44. Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society (BERCS) and the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) responded with humanitarian assistance in November 2022 to the impact of hailstorms and strong winds which affected communities in the Shiselweni region.[61] At least 1,058 people were affected - including the elderly, households headed by children, children under 5, vulnerable households, and subsistence farmers. Tarpaulins and food parcels were disbursed and the Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) Technical Mission in the Kingdom of Eswatini has aided the agricultural sector through technical support to local pig farmers (of whom more than 70 percent are women).[62]

45. The Government of Eswatini through the NDMA - with support from government partners and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) - extended relief to vulnerable households through Cash-based Transfer (CBT) initiatives and food assistance within the period January to March 2022. These donations amounted to E 26,397,316 million[63] and benefited 127,558 beneficiaries and 26,000 households; some of the in-kind food commodities distributed were cereal, pulses, and vegetable oil.[64]

46. In addition to this humanitarian response, the government signed an agreement with the European Union worth SZL 90 million (approx. Euro 5 Million) for humanitarian assistance of vulnerable citizens in Eswatini. The funding will be channelled through BERCS to aid the most fragile communities in Eswatini (especially Lubombo and Shiselweni) by focusing on disaster risk management, crisis preparedness, and addressing food security and health protection needs.[65]

47. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has also played a significant role in supporting humanitarian response in Eswatini, in 2018 UNICEF Eswatini utilised US$ 744,502.40 in emergency preparedness and resilience activities and most of the funds supported Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) and Nutrition interventions.[66]

48. International assistance has played a significant role in supporting schools in Eswatini, particularly in the areas of nutrition, food security, gardens, and education. Organizations such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have provided funding and technical support to improve the quality of education in Eswatini – particularly in the areas of teacher training, curriculum development, and classroom infrastructure.[67] While other NGOs have supported the development of school gardens, which not only provide a source of food for students but also serve as a tool for education on sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation. UNICEF has also supported WASH projects, improved education, and learning programmes.[68]

[59] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2022. *Eswatini Economic Bulletin Q3 2022*. Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. Government of Eswatini

[60] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2021. *Southern Africa Flash Update No.11 – tropical Cyclone Eloise, January 2021.* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

[61] OCHA. 2022. *Eswatini, Kingdom of 2022 - Shiselweni Hailstorms, DREF Application (MDRSZ003).* OCHA.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Eswatini Swazi Lilangeni currency reflected in this document as 'E' or 'SZL'.

[64] Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC). 2022. *Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Report 2022*. Deputy Prime Minister's Office. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

[65] European Union. 2023. *Team Europe Provides up to SZL 90 million for Eswatini humanitarian assistance.* European Union.

[66] UNICEF. 2019. *UNICEF Eswatini Consolidated Emergency Report 2019*. UNICEF Eswatini.

[67] GPE. 2021. *Eswatini - Partnering for Education.* Retrieved from https://www.globalpartnership.org/country/eswatini

[68] UNICEF. 2019. *UNICEF Eswatini Consolidated Emergency Report 2019*. UNICEF Eswatini.

1.3. SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

49. The subject of the evaluation is the HGSF programme pilot project, which is a WFP activity implemented in 50 schools (6 primary schools with grade zero, 22 primary, and 22 secondary schools) in the four regions (Hhohho, Manzini, Lubombo, and Shiselweni) of the country (see Table 1 and map of the HGSF schools in Annex 4). The pilot covered 24,392 learners (11,806 girls and 12,686 boys).[69] In line with gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) considerations in each targeted school, all learners benefit from the school meals.

Table 1. HGSF pilot schools by level and region

	Hhohho	Manzini	Lubombo	Shiselweni
Primary school	Kuhlahla, Mabhibha, Mbuluzi SAGM, Nhlanguyavuka, Nyonyane, Peak Central, Phophonyane	Dingizwe, Ekukhanyeni, Ekuphakameni, Ekuphileni, Eqinisweni, Kholwane, Vusewni	Bekezela, Dvumane, Gilgal, Letindze, Lubombo Central, Njonjane, Siphoso	Ekuphakameni, Elulakeni, Magubheleni, Ngwane Practising, Nkwene, OSLO, Velebantfu
High School	Herefords, Madzanga, Mbabane Central, Siphocosini, Timphisini	Gundvwini, Lozitha, Mandvulo, Moyeni, Ngcoseni Central	Dvokodvweni, Lubuli, Mphundle, Mpompotha, Shewula, Sigcaweni	Masiphula, Mahamba, Mpakeni, Ngololweni, Ntjanini, Siyendle

Source: HGSF Progress Report, 2019.

50. A series of WFP supported discussions, learning tours/engagements led to the design of the HGSF programme in Eswatini. Following the 2014 handover of the school meals programme to the Ministry of Education, WFP facilitated learning trips for senior education officials to the Global Child Nutrition Foundation Forum. In 2017, WFP supported the MoET, MoA and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office to address nutrition and dietary diversity among school-going children through a specific project targeted at Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) at NCPs and Schools.[70] The trip to the Brazilian Centre of Excellence by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office in 2018 gave the government impetus to pursue the HGSF as means to improving nutrition diversity and schools, but unfortunately the trip did not have full participation of the MoA and hence the challenges with the design discussed later. The 2019 evaluation of the Eswatini National School Feeding Programme[71] also reaffirmed the need to piloting a HGSF in the country.

51. Planning for the HGSF pilot started in 2018[72] but the actual start date of the pilot was September of 2019 with an expected end date of December 2021. The late start was due to delays in finalising relevant agreements with the Government.[73] Pilot schools were supplied with food commodities from Sep 2019 to close abruptly in June 2021, due to COVID-19 restrictions and civil unrest – significantly disrupting food distributions and school meals.[74] This also affected the provision of vegetables, which were also supplied in the third term of 2021 – by which time the Government had established its SHF procurement process.

52. WFP's key counterpart ministry for the HGSF is the MoET, which was tasked with overseeing the overall implementation of the pilot. The MoA was responsible for the overall coordination, oversight and support on production, pricing, and market linkage activities – including identification, training, and mentoring of smallholder farmers and training on quality standards, food safety, and food preparation. Besides funding support, FAO provided technical support including capacity strengthening of smallholder

[69] WFP Eswatini Country Strategic Plan (2020-2025) Budget Revision 3.
[70] WFP DEV 200422-Assistance to Orphaned and Vulnerable Children at NCPs and Schools, Standard Project Report 2017
[71] Decentralized Evaluation of National School Feeding Programme in Eswatini 2010-2018 Final Evaluation Report September 2019 Jointly Commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and World Food Programme (WFP) Eswatini Country Office Evaluation
[72] WFP Eswatini Annual Country Report (ACR), 2018
[73] WFP Eswatini Annual Country Report (ACR), 2019
[74] WFP Eswatini Annual Country Report (ACR), 2021

farmers. WFP managed the budget to cover the costs for local and regional procurement of grains, capacity strengthening, and monitoring and evaluation activities. The HGSF pilot aims to improve food security in schools and enhance food production and supply for smallholder farmers. The main objectives are to:

- Enhance access to basic education and more specifically ensure that school children are well nourished, healthy, and able to learn.
- Provide market opportunities for smallholder farmers.
- Increase production and productivity of, locally produced diverse and nutritious food to improve food security and household income.
- Increase production of high-quality food by smallholder farmers to help achieve national food and nutrition security.
- Promote diet diversification through the introduction of vegetables and eggs in the school food basket.
- Strengthen collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education and Training, and other stakeholders - support the participation of smallholder farmers in the HGSF project.

53. The overall pilot project cost for the food commodities, capacity strengthening, monitoring, and evaluation was US$ 1,448,785.[75] The Government of Eswatini allocated an estimated budget of E 1, 648, 837 (US$ 98,145) to the HGSF project for 2021/2022 while WFP allocated US$ 1,641,497.[76] The HGSF pilot received additional funding of US$ 1,641,497 which led to the extension for another year, with the expected end date of December 2023. Details on the HGSF activities and modalities are found in Table 2 below.

Table 2. HGSF Pilot overview of intervention areas, activities, and budget

Responsible Institution	Modalities	Activities to be Implemented	Total Cost (Szl)	Total Cost (US$)
WFP	Market access	Procurement of maize, beans, vegetable oil and rice.	17 068 721.71	1 015 995.34
	Capacity strengthening	Storage facility management skills training /equipment at schools.	504 000.00	30 000.00
		Training of school inspectors and school feeding focal points Training, equipment, and electronic management information system (EMIS) Trainings on post-harvest loss and rehabilitation of storage facilities.	336 000.00	20 000.00
	Monitoring & Evaluation	Baseline and end-line surveys as well as continuous monitoring and final evaluation and complains mechanism	840 000.00	50 000.00
Sub-total			**18 748 721.71**	**1 115 995.34**
	Agricultural Production	Training on Climate smart agriculture; GAPs training and garden management for smallholder farmers; Agribusiness, Contracts for head teachers and farmer representatives	285 600.00	17 000.00
	Market access	Training on quality, pricing, procurement processes and post-harvest handling, quality specification and market information	277 200.00	16 500.00

[75] Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education and Training and the World Food Programme, Eswatini Country Office, 2020.

[76] Memorandum of Understanding signed by and between the National Emergency Response council on HIV and AIDs (NERCHA) and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), supplement to the May 2014 memorandum of understanding on the management of the school feeding programme and procurement of supplies, NERCHA April 2021.

Responsible Institution	Modalities	Activities to be Implemented	Total Cost (Szl)	Total Cost (US$)
		systems. Training on Market oriented production; Post-harvest loss management		
	Agricultural trade equipment and post-harvest handling support	Procurement of Blue Box, moisture meters, PVC tarpaulins, pallets, weighing scales, bagging sewing machines Non-expendable (Jab planters, knap sack sprayers, gardening tools (hand hoes, rakes, forks, slashers), fencing materials (fence, poles), irrigation equipment (PVC pipes), crates, packaging bags, cold room facilities, maize crib construction materials) Expendable (Seeds, fertilizers, seedlings, pesticides, insecticides)	1 260 000.00	75 000.00
	Monitoring and evaluation	Baseline, end-line surveys, on-going monitoring though Letters of Agreement with ESWAFCU/ESNAU	470 400.00	28 000.00
Sub-total			**2 293 200.00**	**136 500.00**
MoET	Market access	Procurement of food items (vegetables and eggs)	3 297 672.52	196 290.32
Sub-total			**3 297 672.52**	**196 290.32**
GRAND TOTAL			**24 339 599.09**	**1 448 785.66**

Source: Memorandum of Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Training and the World Food Programme, Eswatini Country Office, 2020.

54. The HGSF food basket consists of maize and sugar beans (ideally supposed to be sourced locally), rice, vegetable oil, vegetables, and eggs. Learners receive one cooked lunch meal per day constituting rice and bean stew or pap and bean stew or pap and vegetable stew. With regards the recipe, the meal consisted of 150g of cereal (from rice or maize meal), 40g pulses, 7.5g vegetable oil. Some of these ingredients (such as tomato and onion) were reduced from the initially planned quantities. For instance, the initial quantity for cabbage was 200g per learner per meal and both tomato and onion were planned at 5g each. Using the SZL 150 (US$ 8)[77] per learner per year given to school by the government, the schools buy condiments and other consumables. An additional E 150 per child per year is allocated for wages of support staff (night watchman, cook, secretary, etc). Moreover, E 60 per child per year is allocated for services/utilities (water electricity, and telephone). Other allocations from the FPE Grant include maintenance (E 80) and bank charges (E 15), both of which are allocated per child per year.

55. The number of smallholder farmers supported, and number of children covered are reflected in Table 3. According to data extracted from the WFP Annual Country Reports, there was an upward trend in the number of smallholder farmers reached in 2020 and 2021, albeit still falling below the targeted figures for both years. A significant decline of 50 percent was observed in 2022. This reduction can be attributed to a shift in the approach of reaching smallholder farmers, transitioning from the HGSF to several diversified WFP supported projects. Throughout all the years, the number of women reached consistently surpassed that of males, underscoring the pilot project's significant contribution to promoting gender equality and enhancing women's economic empowerment. The number of children reached across the years remained unchanged.

[77] Swaziland Government Gazette extraordinary VOL. XLVIII, Mbabane, Wednesday February 24th 2010, No 17.

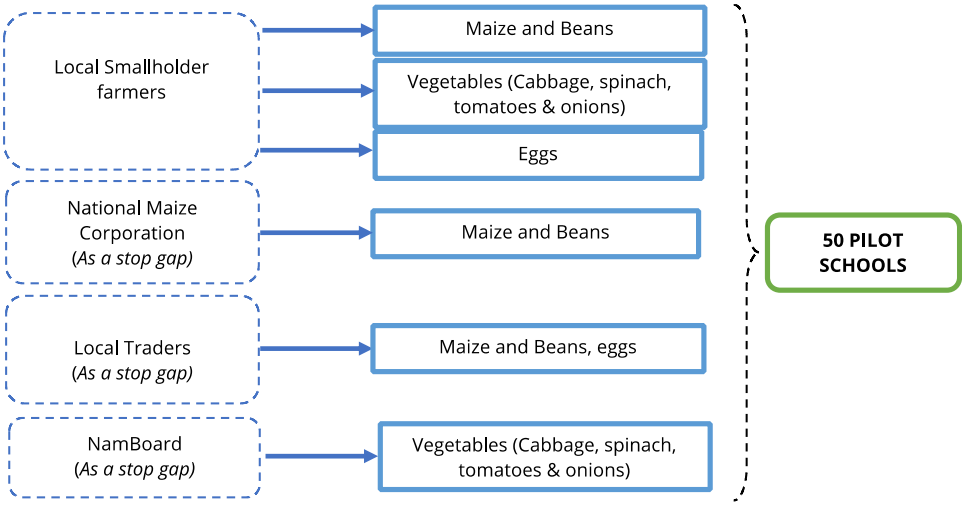
Table 3: Number of smallholder farmers supported/trained by WFP

	2019		2020		2021		2022	
Number of smallholder farmers supported/trained by WFP	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
	n.d.	331	800	663	800	672	673	336
Number of children covered by HGSF	24 392	24 392	24 392	24 392	24 392	24 392	24 392	24 392

Source: WFP ACRs for 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

56. In terms of distribution modalities (see Figure 3), WFP was responsible for the procurement of maize and beans directly from smallholder farmers or from traders to be delivered to schools. The MoET was responsible for the procurement of fresh vegetables and eggs directly from smallholder farmers on agreed upon days during the school calendar and the National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA) was responsible for making payments to farmers using funds that were provided to the institution by the MoET. The pilot schools were responsible for milling maize into the preferred final product (maize meal, samp, or mealie rice). Where local production was deemed inadequate, the National Maize Corporation (NMC) and Local Traders would complement by delivering vegetables and eggs to schools both at agreed prices respectively. NMC provided additional maize meal to complement quantities provided by local smallholder farmers to ensure the consistent supply and delivery of these two commodities to participating schools.

Figure 3: HGSF pilot distribution modalities



Source: MoA between MoET and WFP, 2019.

57. The design[78] included specific measures to address gender equality imbalances including (i) recruitment of women farmers' associations; (ii) gender sensitization to increase participation of women in farmers' associations (iii) ensuring at least 30 percent of the farmers accessing the HGSF market were women and (iii) Training of women farmers' groups to ensure more equitable access of inputs and services. However, the design overlooked addressing the needs of farmers living with disabilities. Gender equality and social inclusion receive substantial emphasis in schools through the Inqaba Implementation Manual.

1.4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Evaluability assessment

[78] Memorandum of Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Training and the World Food Programme, Eswatini Country Office, 2020.

58. Through the evaluability assessment (conducted during the evaluation's inception phase), the ET identified several challenges and opportunities. This section presents a summary of the key issues identified by the various elements of the evaluability assessment. The review of existence and quality of documentation made available to the ET after contract signature revealed substantial evidence gaps. A systematic assessment of data availability for each of the indicators included in the programme's logical framework matrix revealed that critical data was missing or non-existent for many indicators. This gap is also pin-pointed by the Task Force Report, which explains that "The project objectives were not clearly outlined, as a result, indicators and means of verification were not appropriate enough to measure effectiveness – and there was poor monitoring of indicators during the operationalization of the project."[79]

59. The ET explored options for expanding the evaluation's primary data collection scope - to capture at least an end-line snapshot of indicator status. Moreover, the use of secondary data sources, retrospective recall method and leveraging expert knowledge of Key informant enables the ET to elicit all necessary data to answer all the evaluation questions. The stakeholder mapping confirmed groups relevant to the evaluation, their relationships to each other, and helped to identify populations with specific vulnerabilities that need to be considered by the evaluation - specifically, women SHFs appeared to be a particularly marginalized group targeted by the programme. While they were repeatedly mentioned as a target group for the intervention, it was unclear how the pilot specifically made provisions for the successful participation of women smallholder subsistence farmers – this is an area that was further explored in the data collection phase. No specific stakeholder groups were found to have reason to impede, mis-inform, or threaten the independence of the evaluation; risks such as political instability are discussed in section 3.6 below.

60. Review of the evaluation questions (EQs) and sub-questions identified opportunities to consolidate questions, sharpen lines of inquiry, and refine the scope of the evaluation – in terms of the key themes of interest and priorities reflected in the re-constructed/simplified ToC/logic model developed by the ET (Annex 2).

61. The revised set of EQs were discussed and agreed with the evaluation Co-Managers and WFP's evaluation team at the RBJ; they are included in the Evaluation Matrix – which also specifies indicators, means of data collection, and methods of triangulation that were used to answer each question (Annex 5). The revision was aimed at creating a more focused set of evaluation questions that were informed by analysis that disambiguates HGSF and School Feeding theories of change and functional systems models.

62. The ET understood the scope of the evaluation in terms of the technical guidance that was issued by WFP with regards to distinguishing between school feeding and home-grown school feeding theoretical and operational modelling. The ToC diagram presented in Annex 7 of the ToR was found to be a reproduction of WFP's corporate ToC for School Feeding (not HGSF). The differentiating factor is how each of these paradigms frames results – whether in terms of activities, objectives, outputs, and outcomes (as is done in the school feeding ToC and in the HGSF logical framework matrix) vs. the functionally-oriented modelling that has been developed by WFP to facilitate global learning around the critical HGSF elements of production, trade, procurement, preparation, distribution, and consumption.

63. Although WFP has developed corporate guidance to aid visualization of theoretical and functional models of HGSF and school feeding, the HGSF in Eswatini uses the WFP corporate school feeding ToC diagram (rather than a country specific HGSF ToC/visual model developed specifically for HGSF actors in Eswatini). The evaluability assessment informed the delimitation of the evaluation scope – and our choice of methods for data collection and analysis – by helping to identify functional relationships of different HGSF actors and theoretical nodes of association. This ultimately informed our analysis of HGSF sustainability in Eswatini and identification of critical factors in the agrifood system.

64. Inherently, quality of survey data depends on the respondent's willingness and ability to provide accurate responses to survey questions. To mitigate this limitation, the ET structured the survey tools such that sensitive questions, such as those pertaining to income were asked towards the end of the survey. Moreover, since this was an endline evaluation, most activities had been concluded, which means that the ET could not use observations as a form of collection of additional data for the evaluation. The ET used

[79] HGSF Evaluation, Task Force, 2023.

secondary sources, such as pictures from stakeholders that were involved in the project when all its components were still active.

Methodological approach

65. The evaluation's theoretical orientation builds on the re-constructed ToC, draws on functional analysis of HGSF, and serves to zero-in on the critical elements of HGSF - differentiating from more general school feeding results frameworks to isolate contributory effects / association.

66. This process also included developing a revised set of EQs and sub-questions - which are listed in the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 5) along with the indicators, sources of data, and methods of triangulation planned for each. The thorough evaluability assessment conducted by the ET provided a strong and coherent theoretical foundation on which the evaluation's complexity-aware data strategy was based.

67. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria were applied in the Evaluation Matrix: EQ1 relates to Relevance/Appropriateness; EQ2 addresses Effectiveness; EQ3 covers Efficiency; EQ4 focuses on Coherence; and EQ5 targets Sustainability and Scalability. Since this was a pilot, it is best practice to assess both sustainability and scalability.

68. The operational definition of each criterion was contextually developed through each of the evaluation sub-questions and corresponding indicators. The sub-questions were revised from the original versions in the ToR as part of the inception process and development of the re-constructed ToC; the revisions served to consolidate and focus questions on HGSF. The evaluation focussed on five (5) main evaluation questions:

- To what extent does the HGSF pilot align with national priorities and needs of targeted communities?
- To what extent did the HGSF intervention achieve its objectives and results?
- Was the HGSF initiative implemented in a timely and cost-effective manner?
- How compatible is the HGSF pilot with other interventions implemented by government and other stakeholders?
- To what extent can the HGSF intervention be sustained and scaled up in Eswatini?

Sampling

69. The evaluation covered all schools that participated in the HGSF pilot. Stratified random sampling was used to select farmers and Farmer Organisations. Stratification was done on the bases of administrative regions of Eswatini (Hhohho, Manzini, Shiselweni, and Lubombo), gender, and type of commodity produced (grains and vegetables). The evaluation's sampling frame for primary data collection was weighted to emphasise the participation of women smallholder farmers - a reflection of the overall programme design used for the HGSF pilot. Stratification according to gender, location, type of commodity produce, was used to ensure that the sample is representative of the different subgroups of the target population. For the farmers, stratification and selection was made from a list of farmers participating in the HGSF Programme.

70. With regards to possible sampling errors, there was no sampling error for the survey of schools since the entire sampling universe was included in sampling the population of the schools involved in the pilot. Lastly, for the FDGs with learners, stratified random sampling was used, which ensured that all classes, age groups, and gender categories were represented in the sample. With regards to the sampling of individual farmers or farming households, the evaluation employed Survey Monkey Sample calculator at 95 percent confidence level and 5 percent margin of error.

Data collection methods

71. The data collection tools (see Annex 6) were aimed at eliciting both quantitative and qualitative data. Both primary and secondary data was used in the evaluation. Primary data was elicited through both structured questionnaires (that were administered by enumerators to farmers and schools) and semi-structured tools (to elicit data from Key Informants and focused group discussions) that were administered

by the ET. Secondary data was sourced from reports including baseline reports, WFP's project reports (accessed through the Eswatini Country Office), documents made available by the MoET and other key institutions such as the FAO and NERCHA as well as the ET's own collection. The list of stakeholders consulted are in Annex 7.

72. The mixed methods approach used in this evaluation helped in identifying mechanisms through which the programme could increase its positive impacts. Mixed methods also facilitated the identification and explanation of why unintended spill-over effects occurred among population groups targeted by the intervention. Methods of data collection include, surveys (for farmers and school), Key Informant Interviews, focussed Group Discussions, and document review. The ET engaged local enumerators and implemented data collection activities as per the field work agenda indicated in Annex 8.

Survey Implementation

73. Two survey instruments were implemented by trained enumerators: a Smallholder Farmer (SHF) survey and a school-level survey (10 enumerators for the SHF survey and 7 enumerators for the school survey). The smallholder farmer survey included 18 groups of farmers that were registered and linked to the school feeding market representing vegetable, bean and maize farmers.

74. The SHF survey collected information related to farm production: production level, consumption of produce by household, farm income, markets used to sell produce, among other variables. The SHF survey was implemented through telephone interviews and covered a sample of 319 famers. The school survey was implemented in 50 schools (6 primary schools with Grade zero, 22 primary, and 22 secondary/high schools).

75. Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) was used to improve data quality and improve the efficiency of data capturing. The research team conducted a two-day training with Enumerators to familiarise themselves with the survey tools and equipment.

76. A pilot test was conducted to establish and verify the amount of time it takes to complete survey questionnaires and the ease of completing and asking the questions through face-to-face and telephone interviews. This also provided insights into questions that needed rephrasing or re-translation.

Key informant interviews (KIIs)

77. Data from Key informants fed mainly to the relevance/appropriateness, effectiveness, and coherence aspect of the assessment. To understand the amount and quality of locally procured nutritious food items for the HGSF program and their contribution to the overall goal of improving educational results, and access to markets, especially for women smallholder farmers, KIIs were utilised.

78. Key stakeholders were identified and engaged in in-depth interviews to assess the different aspects of the HGSF pilot. The key informant interviews solicited expert views and perceptions on how to improve different parameters of the HGSF Programme.

79. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Key Informants. The selection was guided by the ET's expert knowledge, literature, as well as recommendations from Project Officers at WFP Country office. Key stakeholders that will be interviewed include selected schools, WFP, MoET, MoA, and selected retail outlets. Information from the interviews was used to determine the collaboration efforts with the MoA and other stakeholders to support the participation of smallholder farmers in the HGSF program.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

80. Focus group discussions with farmer groups was conducted as part of the evaluation. From the 18 farmer groups, seven (7) we selected for the FGDs/KIIs. While from the 50 schools eight (8) were selected for FDGs with learners. An FGD guide was created with questions and discussion points aimed at eliciting data for the relevant objectives of the evaluation (Annex 6. Data collection Tools)

Data Capturing and Quality Management

81. Both SHF survey and school level questionnaires were linked to an online database that compiled responses into an excel sheet. Each questionnaire response was appropriately coded and exported to STATA or SPSS for analysis. Qualitative data was coded or categorised into common themes.

82. The ET conducted data validity and reliability checks and data quality during data collection. Quality assurance was checked through the internal validity of the results as they are being collected on the internal database, range checks, checks against reference data, skip checks, consistency checks, and typographic checks. Data collection was explicitly monitored for duplicate records, undefined values for categorical variables, values outside the logical range for numeric variables. The ET also imposed some restriction on CAPI to ensure the entry of accurate data (for instance a question that had a numerical response could not accept text as an input).

Data analysis

83. The HGSF evaluation entailed quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. Quantitative data was analysed through appropriate means (e.g., descriptive statistics). Descriptive statistics involved summarising, tabulating, organising and graphing data to describe the results. Data was analysed using mean, median, mode, range, count, variance, standard deviation, etc. to assess the distribution, central tendency, and dispersion of variables of interest (as applicable).

84. In terms of qualitative analysis, the evaluation employed thematic coding and content analysis to help unpack specific findings from the quantitative evaluation. This further explained and deepened understanding and elucidate the implications of findings (e.g., how institutional arrangements, design, and implementation of operational processes led to effects on household production and consumption). Specifically, the evaluation employed inductive logic since specific individual responses will be categorised into themes to capture the general view of the participants.

Gender and wider inclusion issues

85. Gender, equity, and wider inclusion issues are at the core of the evaluation's methodology. Collection of GEWE data was a key strategic issue that was given particular attention in this evaluation due to the explicit targeting of women smallholder farmers in the HGSF pilot programme. Not only was the sampling weighted to reflect the overall design of the HGSF pilot, but special attention was given to the role of women at different locations along the value chain and within the market ecosystem.

86. Data collection tools were designed to capture gender disaggregated indicators where relevant - the evaluation sub-questions were developed with a view to elicit insights regarding any idiosyncratic intersectional vulnerabilities that may have affected subsets of the target population but not otherwise captured by GEWE indicators or other lines of inquiry and/or cross-cutting thematic analysis. It is the overarching complexity-aware approach of the evaluation that enabled the team to adapt as necessary in response to new discoveries and insights that tested theoretical assumptions and/or exemplify 'outliers' (e.g., positive, or negative deviance in the data that suggests a need to capture more fully systems dynamics).

Limitations

87. Severe evaluability constraints have been identified; as alluded to above, data was missing for several indicators at baseline and mid-term of the HGSF programme. Even though the ET managed to populate values at end-line of the pilot, the type of analysis was limited due to the lack of data regarding how indicator values have changed over time. Where relevant, the ET used retrospective recall methods to attempt reconstruction of proxy baseline data (see details in Annex 9).

88. Primarily, analysis focused on systems functions rather than impact-level results; this mitigates the severity of constraints imposed by the existing data gaps (since 'quantitative impact' is less relevant than process analysis for most of the EQs).

Ethical considerations

89. WFP decentralized evaluations must conform to WFP and 2020 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical standards and norms. SALASAN Consulting is responsible for safeguarding and ensuring ethics at all stages of the evaluation cycle. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring informed consent, protecting privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of participants, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups) and ensuring that the evaluation results in no harm to participants or their communities.

During the inception phase the following ethical issues, related risks, safeguards, and measures have been considered as reflected in Table 4.

Table 4: Ethical considerations, risks, and safeguards

Phases	Ethical issues	Risks	Safeguards
Data collection	Confidentiality, data fabrication, interview bias or human error in data capturing	Medium	Trained Enumerators were employed for data collection. Enumerators were assigned field supervisors whose main responsibility would be to ensure data integrity. Computer Assisted Personal Interview was used for data collection and suitable restrictions will be imposed for each question to minimise chances of inputting irrelevant data (i.e., questions that require a number will not allow the enumerator to input text as an answer). For survey data, personal or institutional identifiers was replaced with codes and definition of those codes will only be known by ET. Upon finalising data collection, the ET reviewed, verified, and validated the data.
Data Analysis	Data fabrication and Falsification	Low	Data analysis was conducted by ET, experts who are cognisant of the Scientific Rule and Ethical Consideration. The ET consists of a specialist in quality assurance, who oversees ethical compliance.
Reporting	Objectivity	Low	Data analysis was conducted by ET, experts who are cognisant of the Scientific Rule and Ethical Consideration. The ET includes a QA specialist who ensured that all ethical issues were adhered to.

Source: Evaluation Team

Quality assurance

90. WFP developed a Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System (DEQAS) based on the UNEG norms and standards and good practice of the international evaluation community (the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) and the Development Assistance Commission (DAC). It sets out process maps with in-built steps for quality assurance and templates for evaluation products. It also includes checklists for feedback on quality of each evaluation product. DEQAS was systematically applied during this evaluation and relevant documents were provided to the evaluation team.

91. Several mechanisms ensured the evaluation's utility, credibility, impartiality, and independence. These include DEQAS (mentioned above) and SALASAN procedures that facilitate high quality results. The ET comprises evaluators who are very familiar with the context and upheld the principles of impartiality, rigour, and participation throughout the evaluation process. These principles allowed the team to foster open discussions with all stakeholders and to substantiate key findings as they arise and permitted the team to build robust evidence around lines of inquiry as the evaluation unfolded. Thus, several activities were built into the methodology to ensure data quality, reliability, consistency, and accuracy.

92. The enumerators underwent in-depth training given by the ET to ensure they had a clear understanding of the objectives of evaluation, and the intention behind each question in the farmer survey and qualitative interview guides. The tools were piloted during training and each enumerator had opportunity to conduct at least one live interview. This also gave SALASAN, MoET and WFP an opportunity before fielding to review the data and make any necessary changes to the tools. Through this process, SALASAN also provided detailed personalized feedback to each enumerator, an approach that we feel is beneficial both for building the capacity of our team and delivering quality data to our clients. Some examples of feedback include highlighting for enumerators the areas where they could or should have probed more, noting questions that seem to not be fully understood by either the enumerator or the respondent, and clarifying which techniques could be used in different scenarios.

93. During implementation, the enumerators are expected to record all interviews (of participants who consent) on an electronic device. It was SALASAN's preference that the data be uploaded to cloud storage and the necessary project resources were available. As part of our quality assurance procedures, the SALASAN ET checked incoming interview notes to ascertain quality of data on an ongoing basis and provide timely feedback to each enumerator that can be incorporated into the subsequent interviews. The uploading of qualitative data to the cloud allowed SALASAN to conduct quality assurance on the data in near real-time while fieldwork is ongoing. The ET relied on SALASAN's support and expertise of Nathan Horst, adding a final layer of quality control. SALASAN as a company holds ultimate responsibility for promoting and delivering quality assurance in all its work.

2. Evaluation findings

EQ1: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE HGSF PILOT ALIGN WITH NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND NEEDS OF TARGETED COMMUNITIES?

Finding 1: The HGSF project is well aligned to national priorities related to education, nutrition, agriculture, poverty alleviation, and social protection.

1.1. To what extent are HGSF activities aligned to national priorities?

94. The HGSF project is aligned to the National Development Strategy[80] which seeks to improve the overall wellbeing of all Swazi people and foster the design and implementation of school feeding schemes in all public schools. The objectives of the project to enhance access to basic education and improve the nutrition of learners is aligned to the goals of the national Education And Training Policy[81] to increase enrolment, provide nutritional support to all public schools in Eswatini, and to increase access to equitable education for all learners.

95. By providing meals to students, the HGSF addresses hunger as a barrier to education, ensuring that children have the necessary nutrition to focus and learn effectively. The promotion of diet diversity is related to the aspirations of the National Food Security Policy[82] and National Food and Nutrition Plan[83] which seek to contribute to the development of a healthy and well-nourished population. The policy strives to ensure access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

96. The Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Programme (PRSAP) [84]calls for the implementation of the school feeding and garden programmes in all schools to ensure food security and proper nutrition in the country. It also advocates for the empowerment of both girls and boys with basic education and social support to improve their educational outcomes. The PRSAP further encourages improved efforts to increase agricultural productivity on Swazi nation land.

97. Implementation of initiatives to increase market opportunities for smallholder farmers and increase production and productivity of high-quality food are further emphasised in the National Comprehensive Agriculture Policy, and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) [85]which aim to stimulate an agriculture-led development that eliminates hunger and reduces poverty and food insecurity.

98. The National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP)[86] advocates for the collaborative and collection effort of stakeholder to facilitate access to resources and funding for the effective implementation of agricultural development projects. This is supported by the Micro Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Policy[87] which focuses on increasing access to markets for small and micro businesses, facilitating access to credit and encouraging value addition on agricultural products.

Finding 2: The HGSF pilot strategies on local procurement, diversifying meal rations, support to school complimentary service and capacity strengthening activities had varied contribution to learners' food and nutrition security and smallholder farmers' agricultural

[80] A Development Strategy for Swaziland: Promoting Sustainable Development and Inclusive Prosperity. 2014. Government of Eswatini.
[81] Ministry of Education and Training. National Education and Training Sector Policy. 2018. Government of Eswatini.
[82] Ministry of Agriculture. 2005. National Food Security Policy. Government of Eswatini.
[83] Ministry of Health. Swaziland National Food and Nutrition Strategic Plan. Government of Eswatini.
[84] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 2007. Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Programme (PRSAP). Government of Eswatini.
[85] The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Compact. 2010. Government of Eswatini.
[86] Ministry of Agriculture. 2022. National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP). Government of Eswatini.
[87] Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade. 2018. Micro Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Policy. Government of Eswatini.

production and incomes. However, project design did not fully consider the geographical location of schools against that of farmers as well as the varying levels of vulnerability among the targeted groups.

1.2. To what extent are the strategies used to build food security [of] targeted group[s] relevant in the current context?

99. **Local procurement from smallholder farmers**. In line with the aspirations of the Agriculture Sector Policy to increase access to markets for local farmers,[88] the strategies employed in local procurement sought to provide market opportunities for smallholder farmers, increase the production of locally produced diverse and nutritious foods and ensured the availability of meals in schools. The smallholder farmers consulted through focus group discussions unanimously agreed that their linkages with the schools created better alignment with their small businesses, reduced transportation costs and provided a potentially secure market.

100. WFP supported smallholder farmers said they received better revenues from the sale of maize and beans at favorable market prices, compared to current market prices offered by the National Maize Corporation (NMC) and other markets. In addition to a lucrative revenue, farmer support provided in the form of training and supplies (storage material, weighing scales and quality control) by FAO had contributed to the quality of commodities produced for the schools. However, since homesteads in rural areas are sparsely located, all vegetable farmers consulted concurred that the distance to deliver to schools was not favorable for some farmers, hampering their sustained engagement in the project.

101. Even though supported through trainings and supplies to ensure product quality, productivity and production was characterised by several challenges, hampering the capacity of farmers to supply consistently and produce steadily. Smallholder farmers consulted identified challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental and climate conditions, project logistics changes and fuel price hikes. Some farmers reported that the project became unfavourable for most producers which led to a decline in the number of active farmers in farmer groups (see Box 1).

Box 1: SHF perspective on challenges faced in the HGSF project.

"We faced several challenges as farmers in implementing this project. At first the prices offered for commodities was low, but this was exacerbated by fuel hikes, reduction of supply quantities required by the school and changes in the payment of 10km for transport. The project only paid for one trip; hence it was not viable for farmers that travelled longer distances to supply the school. The return trip was not catered for. In addition, the schools we supplied were not the schools that were promised; hence it was a bit far from most of our members."

Focus Group Discussion with Smallholder Farmers, Lubombo, Vegetable Farmer Group.

102. **Improving nutritional status through diversifying meals**. Meals provided through the HGSF pilot were designed to meet the nutritional needs of all school going children, from grade zero to form five. With technical support from the Ministry of Health, careful attention to the nutritional needs of learners was considered in the selection of the menu.

103. The objective to increase dietary diversity of school meals was considered relevant and was met with great excitement by both focal teachers and learners consulted. Meal diversity resulted in increased uptake of meals, with teachers reporting an above 90 percent uptake of the food. However, delivery of eggs and vegetables in some schools was delayed, while others did not receive these commodities until the end of the pilot, which affected the meal diversity. Data from the school level survey showed that at least 20 percent of the schools reported not serving eggs in the project period. Some of the delays in delivery were caused by the inability to obtain suppliers within the vicinity of the schools and varying production capacities of SHFs.

104. Based on mere observation, most teachers reported an improvement in the quality of nutrition of learners associated with changes in stamina, energy, and outward appearance. All 50 schools interviewed

[88] Ministry of Agriculture. Eswatini Comprehensive Agriculture Sector Policy. 2005. Government of Eswatini.

reported having served meals on all schooling days, with small variations in the availability of a balanced meal per week.

105. Notwithstanding, the HGSF contributed to the provision of nutritious meals in 50 schools, directly affecting the nutritional status of over 24,000 learners as detailed under evaluation question 2 on effectiveness.[89] Head teachers and focal teachers were appreciative of the HGSF pilot in its endeavour to improve quality of meals through provision of fresh vegetables even though their frequency varied per school due to limited capacity of some farmers to supply.

106. **Enhancing school feeding complimentary service**s. Schools' readiness and ability to provide adequate infrastructure is a fundamental component of enhancing food security by addressing issues of quality, hygiene, and sanitation in the school's food system.[90] In all the schools visited, the strategy for strengthening complimentary services is relevant, although the level of preparedness to implement various interventions and especially food hygiene varied per school. For example, the scarcity of running water for washing dishes and the presence of a well-built kitchen facility remained a challenge for some schools. Storage facilities were an issue with likelihood of contamination. In 2021, 54 percent of the HGSFP schools had sanitary latrines, while 83 percent had sanitary handwashing areas, 98 percent had water for cooking, 92 percent had a cooking area, while 52 percent did not have an eating area available. Similar observations were made in 2023, where all most schools were found to have a sanitary cooking area.

107. **Capacity strengthening.** The focus of the project to deliver training and technical support to smallholder farmers and schools as well as technical partners was commended by all stakeholders consulted. The project supported smallholder farmers to improve post-harvest practices and maximize yield quality and quantity through capacity- building activities, enhanced access to innovative technologies and equipment, and market linkage support.[91] Capacity development in the project was aligned to the needs of stakeholders (e.g Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education and Training, SHFs) at different levels of project implementation to effectively participate in project implementation. For example, steering committee members were trained on relevant capacities related to their role in the committee. School inspectors, head teachers, and focal teachers were trained on nutrition, food quality, safety, storage and handling, and the incorporation of gender into school feeding activities.[92]

108. Capacity building initiatives were also provided to women on leadership and gender for effective cooperative development and management, to promote the uptake of leadership positions by women, and linkages to structured markets.[93] Farmer groups appreciated the trainings provided on quality control, utilisation of storage material, financial literacy, productivity, and the provision of small-scale infrastructure and seeds. However, four out of the seven farmer groups interviewed in the analysis did not receive consistent support and advisory services or technical assistance from agricultural extension officers (see Box 2). This negatively affected the production of some commodities, productivity, and yields generated per hectare.

Box 2: Perspectives of smallholder farmers on the need for sustained agricultural extension support.

"Even though we have received the trainings, we need handholding throughout the production cycle. Extension officers need to assist us from planting until harvesting to ensure that we produce the required volumes and quantities requested by the project, at least until we can learn to do it on our own".

FGD with SHFs. Hhohho, Egg Farmer Group.

109. The capacity development initiatives implemented by the project were relevant to the needs of farmers to improve production and product quality. However, sufficient support after the trainings could have yielded more positive results. FGDs with farmers revealed that there was insufficient support after trainings. There was no monitoring of implementation and provision of consistent advice throughout the

[89] WFP Eswatini Annual Country Report 2022: Country Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024.
[90] Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Training of the Kingdom of Eswatini and the World Food Programme (WFP). 2020. Government of Eswatini.
[91] WFP Eswatini Annual Country Report 2020: Country Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024.
[92] ibid
[93] ibid

production process. Deliberate efforts had to be employed to ensure collaboration, full engagement, and ownership of the project by the MoA to support smallholder farmers in agricultural activities. Capacity development, although relevant at the school levels also encountered challenges. Most schools reported that the cooks were not adequately trained on food preparation. As reiterated by some partners, the project generally lacked a capacity strengthening plan to guide a coordinated response to capacity gaps at the school and famer levels.

1.3. To what extent is the HGSF programme in line with the needs of women, men, boys, and girls from marginalised groups in targeted communities?

110. The HGSF was relevant to addressing malnutrition, especially among vulnerable populations in the schools. Marginalized children, including those from low-income backgrounds, children with disabilities, orphaned and vulnerable children and those living with HIV may incur several challenges that affect their social and economic wellbeing.[94] Children in rural Eswatini are more susceptible to malnutrition and health problems due to limited access to nutritious food and household economic constraints. These children may also incur barriers that affect their participation in schooling activities such as insufficient learning resources, walking long distances to schools and poor hygiene practices, which may affect their overall performance.[95] The provision of accessible and equitable access to education, was relevant in contributing to improved-overall wellbeing of learners in schools. Focal teachers consulted spoke highly on how the provision of vegetables and eggs were helping learners from impoverished families to obtain a nutritious diet that otherwise was not available in their homes (See box 3). In this regard the project remains important in addressing issues of food insecurity in the communities.

Box 3: Perspective of focal teacher on the relevance of the HGSF

"Some of our learners used to faint during assembly in the mornings because they walked long distances to the school without a single meal. The rich diet provided through the HGSF has reduced the number of learners fainting in the school because of hunger and increased the number of learners going to the kitchen for meals. Even when students are absent from the school, they will come during lunch time just for the kitchen meals".

Focus Group Discussions with focal teachers. Lubombo, Focal Teacher from Primary School.

111. Even though the project tried to ensure equal access to education and food for both boys and girls, there were no deliberate efforts made to foster participation of people living with disabilities. This is evidenced by the lack of a structured engagement framework, documentation of learners and farmers with disabilities and the deployment of deliberate strategies to foster their effective participation. Even though this may largely result from the absence of adequate data from school registers, farmer group lists, more targeted approaches could be employed to ensure that people living with disabilities are not left behind, both at school level and farmer group level.

112. When it comes to the alignment of the project with the needs of women and men, most smallholder farmers in Southern Africa, as well as Eswatini face challenges. These are associated with low productivity, lack of access to technology, high post-harvest losses, and lack of access to formal markets, lack of access to land for women farmers, lack of access to credit and agricultural inputs.[96] To address some of these challenges the project supported farmers through the provision of trainings, facilitated access to schools as the main formal market for farm produce, provided technical support and material, and provided infrastructure support. Some of the trainings provided to farmers were on vegetable and legume production, climate smart agriculture and climate change, post-harvest handling and management, agribusiness management and financial literacy.[97] As a result, women farmer groups were supported by the

[94] Mezzanotte, C. 2022. The social and economic rationale of inclusive education: An overview of the outcomes in education for diverse groups of students. OECD Education Working Paper No. 263.

[95] Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS). 2017. Annual Education Census. 2017. Ministry of Education and Training. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane.

[96] Economic Commission for Africa. 2022. Agricultural Value chains and transformation in southern Africa: Opportunities Stemming from the African Continental Free Trade Area. Economic Commission for Africa.

[97] WFP. Eswatini annual Country Report 2022: Country Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024.

project in egg production, supplying a total of 56,000 eggs to the HGSF and local grocery shops or individual customers.[98]

113. The HGSFP also recorded an increase in enrolment of both men and women farmers into the project. Of the total of 330 farmers engaged by WFP in the project in 2019, 44 percent were women,[99] and in 2022, of the 700 farmers supported, 67 percent were women. This shows that more women joined the HGSF compared to male farmers. The HGSFP project steering committee is composed of eight women compared to nine men[100] and is chaired by a woman which is a notable achievement.

Finding 3: Gender was mainstreamed across various project activities, but not uniformly. There is evidence of women's economic empowerment, but the project did not actively include people living with disabilities.

1.4. To what extent was the design and implementation of the intervention premised upon a thorough gender analysis?

114. While the project had made efforts to incorporate gender issues into the design and involve many women, these actions were not initially part of project planning at inception stage, as evidenced by the absence of a comprehensive gender analysis. However, during various phases of project implementation, endeavors were undertaken to ensure the participation of both men and women within different farmer groups, which may have been aligned with the broader WFP strategy for women's empowerment. Both men and women were given equal opportunities to engage in all project activities, although certain trainings were specifically tailored for women to bolster their leadership skills.

115. It is noteworthy that a significant proportion of farmer cooperatives were already under the leadership of women, displaying a greater representation of women compared to men. Nonetheless, data derived from the SHF survey indicates that groups led by women generated comparatively less income than those led by men (refer to details in paragraph 147), highlighting the necessity for an in-depth gender analysis to tackle underlying structural barriers.

116. A major gap highlighted by most stakeholders and project partners is the capacity limitations of including disability into the HGSF. Consequently, the project did not actively select individuals with disabilities, reflecting a lack of emphasis on integrating disability considerations.

EQ2: TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE HGSF INTERVENTION ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS?

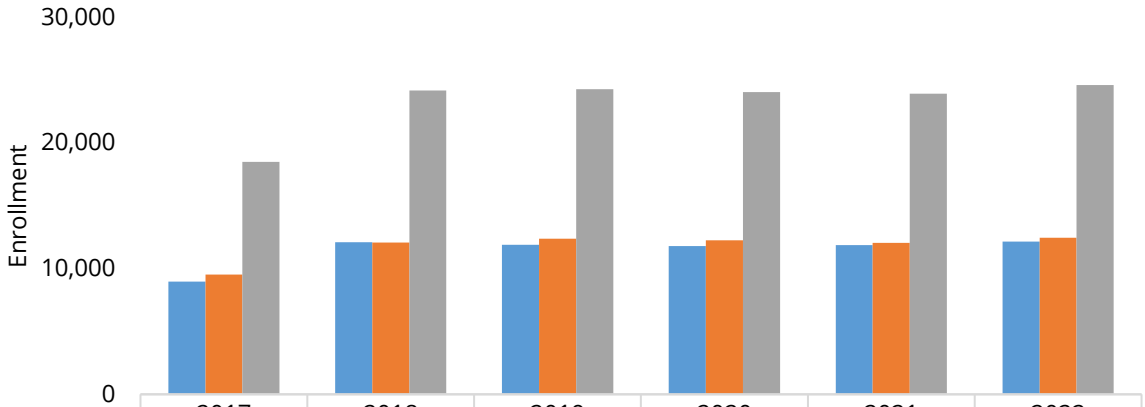
2.1. To what extent has the HGSF expected outputs, outcomes, and strategic results have been achieved among the women, men, boys, and girls - including the different targeted groups?

Finding 4: The HGSF contributed to a moderate increase in school enrolments, but due to the impact of COVID-19, this did not have a noticeable effect on attendance. There were commendable enhancements in the school meal diversity and portion size, although most children were dissatisfied with the quality of food preparation and inconsistent variety of meals offered.

117. **Enrolment.** Data collected at school level shows that total enrolment in the targeted primary and high schools increased significantly from 2017 (18,511 learners) to 24,290 learners in 2019 when the HGSF pilot started (See Figure 4). There was a slight deep in total enrolment recorded in 2020 and 2021 caused by the impact of COVID-19 and civil arrests and picked marginally to 24,618 learners in 2022. There are generally more boys enrolled than girls. Primary enrolment has been consistently higher than in secondary school levels (Annex 10).

[98] WFP. Eswatini annual Country Report 2022: Country Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024
[99] WFP. Eswatini annual Country Report 2019: Country Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024
[100] HGSFP Project steering committee minutes. 2019

Figure 4. Primary and High School enrolment in HGSF pilot schools (2017-2022)

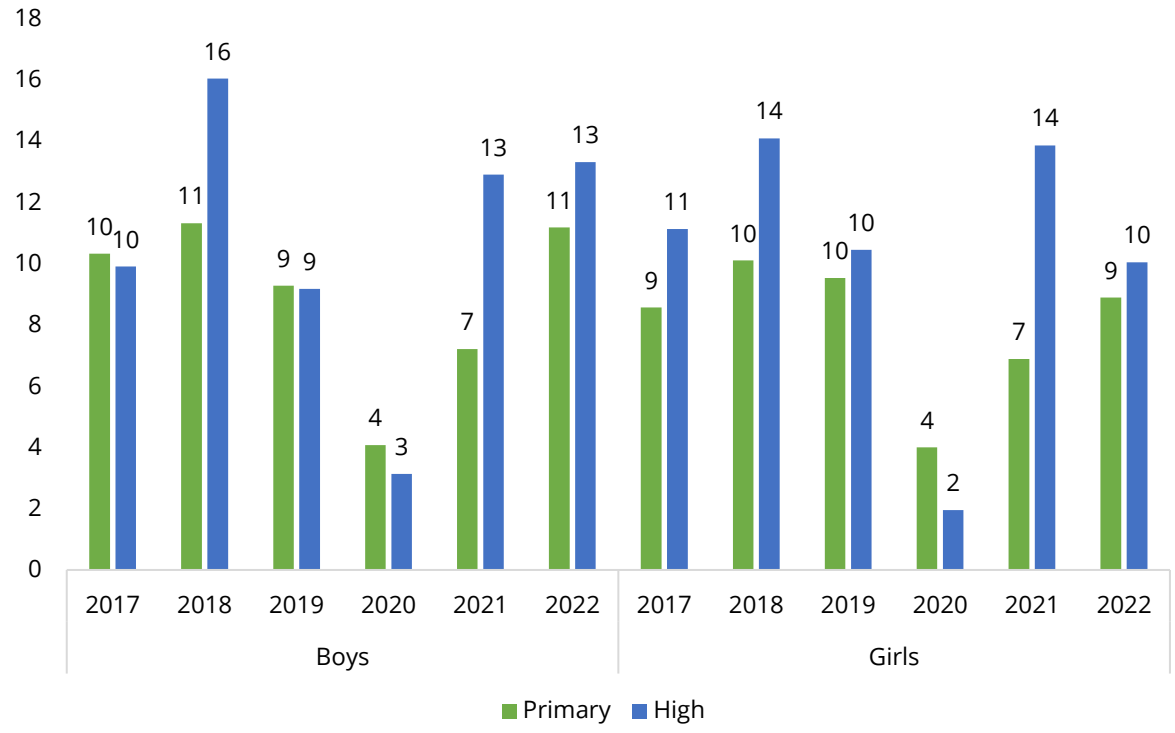


	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Girls	8,970	12,103	11,914	11,792	11,872	12,148
Boys	9,541	12,076	12,376	12,264	12,064	12,470
Total	18,511	24,179	24,290	24,056	23,936	24,618

Source: Data from school level survey conducted by ET.

118. Increased attendance by enrolled students was measured by percentage of children absent for 3+ days a month. Figure 5 below presents the proportion of boys and girls in primary and high schools, who were absent 3+ days per month in between 2017 and 2022. The focal teachers explained that low enrolment in 2020 resulted from school closures because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A larger proportion of boys in both primary and high schools were likely to be absent for 3+ days in primary schools than girls between 2017 and 2022.

Figure 5. Number of children absent for 3+ days a month in Primary and High schools (2017-2022)



Source: Data from school level survey conducted by ET; values rounded to nearest whole number.

119. While the increase in the number of learners enrolled in schools is a positive outcome, it is important to recognize that enrolment alone does not guarantee regular attendance. Some focal teachers consulted

spoke of various factors influencing attendance, such as distance to school, socio-economic challenges, health issues (particularly menstruation in girls). On the later, in another study, World Vision found that amongst other reasons, the girl child drops out of school because of menstruation.[101] Some learners cannot afford sanitary pads; some even decide to stay at home because the school environment did not offer proper sanitation. These factors may not have been directly influenced by the HGSF project but will need to be addressed in a multisectoral approach to ensure sustainable HGSF results.

120. Each meal provided under the school feeding programme aims to provide at least 30 percent of the daily requirements of macronutrients (energy, fat, and protein) and 70 percent (in any case, not less than 50 percent) of essential nutrients and vitamins (micronutrients) based on the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for specific age groups.[102] Meal preparation guidelines explain how a healthy meal is prepared and served (preparation of the cooks, requirements for kitchens and safe water, taking food out of the store, preparing meals, preparation of pupils, serving meals, eating meals, and cleaning up).

121. The HGSF pilot promoted a well-balanced, nutritious food basket in line with the Inqaba manual that guides the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP).[103] The Inqaba manual is comprehensive and provides guidelines on food safety and quality measures, food and nutrition education, and attention to sanitation and hygiene measures which are critical for realising food and nutrition security in schools under HGSF model. Although comprehensive, the Inqaba manual is outdated and lacks clarity on specific nutrition guidelines for daily food preparation and promotion of smallholder farmers' nutrition-sensitive agriculture under HGSF.

122. To ensure dietary diversity and following international standards,[104] the HGSF designed menus that combined different foods from *at least four food groups* consisting of maize grain (processed into mealie meal at the school level) or rice (150 g/child/day), pulses (beans at 40 g/child/day), vegetable (sunflower) oil (7.5 g), and vegetables with varying rations as shown in Table 5. The ration is like that of the NSFP in terms of amount served per child but offers more diverse meals.

Table 5: HGSF ration compared to the NSFP ration

Commodity	HGSF Pilot ration (2020)	HGSF Adjusted ration (2022)	NSFP Ration/child/day
Maize meal or rice	150 g	150 g	150 g
Beans	40 g	40 g	40 g
Vegetable oil	7.5 g	7.5 g	7.5 g
Iodized salt	2 g	2 g	
Spinach	200 g	Removed	
Cabbage	200 g	100 g	
Tomato	5 g	Quantity reduced	
Onion	5 g	Quantity reduced	
Eggs	1 egg/person/week	1 egg/person/week	

Source: Eswatini HGSF project documents.

123. The Ministry of Health as part of the HGSF Steering Committee played a critical role in the development of the HGSF pilot ration. It is however unclear why the specific vegetables were selected and how the ration size was calculated. The pilot did not develop specific guidance on menu plans and meal options based on, for example, seasonal regional food availability and preferences to inform food preparation in a way that does not compromise availability and affordability of food commodities throughout the year.

[101] https://www.wvi.org/stories/eswatini/poor-menstrual-hygiene-does-cause-girl-child-drop-out-shiselweni-menstrual-hygiene

[102] Adapted from WFP. 2000 and Bhatia, 2013, Operational Guidance on Menu Planning) PCD, Imperial College London Quoted, quoted from WFP/FAO, 2018: Home-Grown School Feeding Resource Framework

[103] Ministry of Education and Training. 2011. Inqaba Implementation Manual- A Practical Guide for Head teachers

[104] FAO & WFP. 2018. Home-Grown School Feeding. Resource Framework. Technical Document. Rome

124. The lack of clear instructions on vegetable preparation and serving led to varying interpretations among stakeholders and cooks. Some schools served vegetables as salads or side dishes, while others considered them as relishes served with a starch. As reiterated by some stakeholders and cooks, there was varying interpretations on how vegetables were prepared and served. Transparent guidelines and explanations for the selection of vegetables, ration size and menu options would help stakeholders understand the reasoning behind these decisions and ensure their appropriateness.

125. The Eswatini HGSF task force review report[105] shows high achievement in terms of schools that received vegetables (90 percent) and eggs (80 percent) as planned in 2021/2022 financial year, although the quantities received varied per school. A total of five schools[106] and 10 schools[107] did not receive vegetables and eggs respectively which has an influence in the way learners indicated their satisfaction with the meals.

126. Most of the children consulted were satisfied with food provided at school in terms of portion size (68 percent) and the level of satisfaction varied by gender and school. Girls were more satisfied (71 percent) with portion size than boys (64 percent). Most children satisfied with quality appreciated the diversity in meals served particularly the introduction of vegetables (cabbage, spinach, tomatoes, onions). In addition, the corn soya blend that some schools received was appreciated by learners as it provided another cushion for those learners who came to school hungry. These results show that the level of satisfaction amongst learners over quantities served has reduced from the baseline findings (79 percent of learners were satisfied with the quantity of food served).[108] This finding point to the likelihood of unequal allocation of portion sizes amongst learners and limited supervision of learners.

127. With regards to meal preparation, 64 percent of boys were satisfied with the way meals are prepared compared to 59 percent amongst girls, giving an overall satisfaction of 62 percent compared to 60 percent at baseline, which is a slight increase. For example, all children (boys and girls) in one Primary School in Lubombo were satisfied with the way meals were prepared, while all learners in one primary school in Hhohho region were not satisfied with the preparation of meals. The reasons for low or no satisfaction with meals prepared and served in school kitchens are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Reasons for low and lack of satisfaction with meal preparation cited by learners

- Eating the same food every day (pap and beans)
- Large pap sizes than relish
- The pap served was too soft and less filling
- Lack of vegetables and eggs in the diet
- Poorly chopped cabbage (“cuts are too big and there is too much soup and water in the cabbage”)
- Overcooked and watery rice
- No salt in the food
- The portion sizes were considered small.

Source: Data generated from FGDs with school children.

128. Focal teachers were also asked to give the same impression on food preparation. Contrary to the impression obtained from learners, none of the focal teachers disagreed with the statement that “the food served to learners is prepared well”.[109] About 98 percent of focal teachers strongly agreed and agreed (Table 7) and this is divergent to the views of learners at baseline and during this evaluation, which is

[105] HGSF Task Force Report, 2023. Process Evaluation Report For The Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Pilot Programme (2019-2022)

[106] Madzanga High school, Empakeni High school, Lulakeni Primary school, Velebantfu Primary school, Dvokodvweni High school

[107] Nhlanguyavuka Primary school, Velebantfu Primary school, Magubheleni Primary school, Nkwene Primary school, Ngololweni High school, Mahamba High school, Shewula High school, Letindze Primary school, Ekuphakameni Primary school and Ngcoseni High school

[108] WFP. HGSF Baseline Report.

[109] School survey data collected by the ET.

concerning. This may likely point to limited supervision of meal preparation and something that needs to be investigated further.

Table 7: Perception of focal teachers on satisfaction with quality of food preparation

The food served to learners is cooked well	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	29	58
Agree	20	40
Neutral	1	2
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

Source: School level survey data gathered by the ET.

129. The challenges mentioned by learners regarding low satisfaction with meals in the HGSF pilot is similar to most stakeholder perspectives consulted and relate to the underlying causes of inconsistent vegetable supply and school levels, limited diversity in meals, and poor food preparation.

- **Inconsistent supply of vegetables:** The HGSF program faced challenges in maintaining a consistent supply of vegetables. Farmers' limited production capacity, particularly in delivering the required quantities, contributed to this issue. Additionally, the seasonality of vegetables, such as tomatoes, impacted their availability. [110]
- **Limited diversity in meals:** The limited diversity in the meals served in some schools provided few food options. Limited availability of diverse vegetables and other food items contributed to a narrower range of meal options and reduced dietary diversity for the children. This was particularly true for schools that never received vegetables throughout the project duration.
- **Poor food preparation:** As already mentioned earlier, the quality of food preparation is another aspect that contributed to low satisfaction. Inadequate cooking techniques or lack of proper training among the cooks involved in meal preparation could have contributed to the poor taste, texture, and overall quality of the meals.

130. As highlighted by task force members and partners, the scarcity of tomatoes was because of several factors such as:

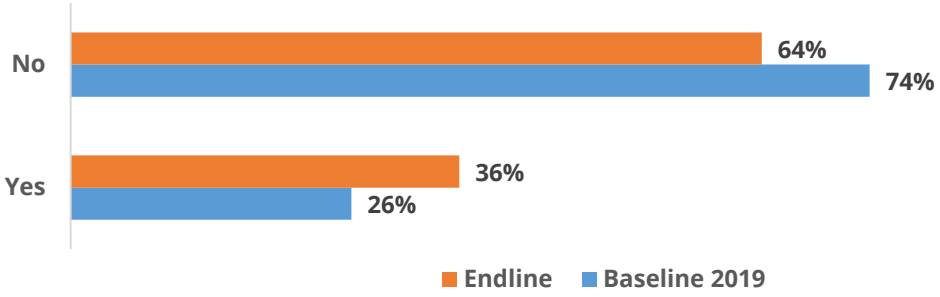
- **Selection criteria of smallholder farmers:** The initial selection criteria, such as relying on farmer groups instead of individual farmers, may have contributed to limited tomato production capacity. **This could have resulted in a reduced supply of tomatoes for the HGSF pilot.**
- **Lack of infrastructure*:*** Insufficient infrastructure, such as irrigation systems and tunnels, to support off-season production hindered the cultivation and availability of tomatoes throughout the year.
- **Insufficient extension support:** In some communities, farmers may have faced challenges due to inadequate extension support. Access to timely guidance and assistance from agriculture extension officers was highlighted by most stakeholders as the HGSF pilot's greatest constraint.
- **Unforeseen events:** Unprecedented catastrophes, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, and recurring hailstorms, significantly disrupted agricultural activities. These events influenced the availability and production of tomatoes and other vegetables, leading to scarcity and challenges in meeting the demand of the HGSF program.

[110] In one school, supply of spinach and cabbage dropped from 100 kg to 64 kg per week because the supplier could not meet the demand.

Finding 5. There was an increase in the number of schools utilizing gardens to support school meals under the HGSF pilot, which is positive. Nonetheless, most schools have not yet embraced this practice, in line with the principles of HGSF.

131. A total of 36 percent of schools indicated that they use school gardens for supplementing school feeding compared to 26 percent at baseline (Figure 6). In contrast, school level survey data shows that most schools (64 percent) were not using gardens to support school meals, which is a risk to sustainability of the HGSF pilot. Focal teachers and farmers interviewed reported that school gardens were failing due to poor soils, shortage of water and lack of fencing materials for protecting the produce from livestock, a finding that points to need for HGSF to promote good agriculture practices in schools . One focal teacher mentioned that they stopped focusing on the school gardens when farmers started supplying vegetables to the school. This may imply a misunderstanding on the role of school gardens in supporting an integrated approach to HGSF that is inclusive of nutrition education, promotion of healthy diets, and WASH components.

Figure 6: Percentage of schools using school gardens to support school meals under HGSF



Source: Baseline and endline school survey data.

132. All 50 schools served meals every day, albeit with some constraints as some schools reported to have struggled serving food, especially in the first few weeks of a school term, before the delivery of commodities. The frequency of serving a healthy and balanced diet varied across the schools. A healthy and balanced diet is defined as one that should provide diverse food in the right amounts and combinations and that is safe and free from pathogenic germs and harmful substances.

133. A total of 33 schools (66 percent of the schools) were able to serve a balanced diet each day and 1 School was unable to serve a balanced diet, which is concerning (see Table 8) The HGSF pilot did not set recommended nutrient targets or ranges to be fulfilled by the school meals; nor were patterns or combinations of food groups taking into consideration food composition issues to achieve these targets as a basis for defining the menus.

Table 8: Average number of days per week when a balanced diet was served in each HGSF school

Average number of days per week	Number of schools	Percentage
Zero (None)	1	2
Once a week	3	6
Twice a week	3	6
Three times a week	7	14
Four times a week	3	6
Five times a week	33	66

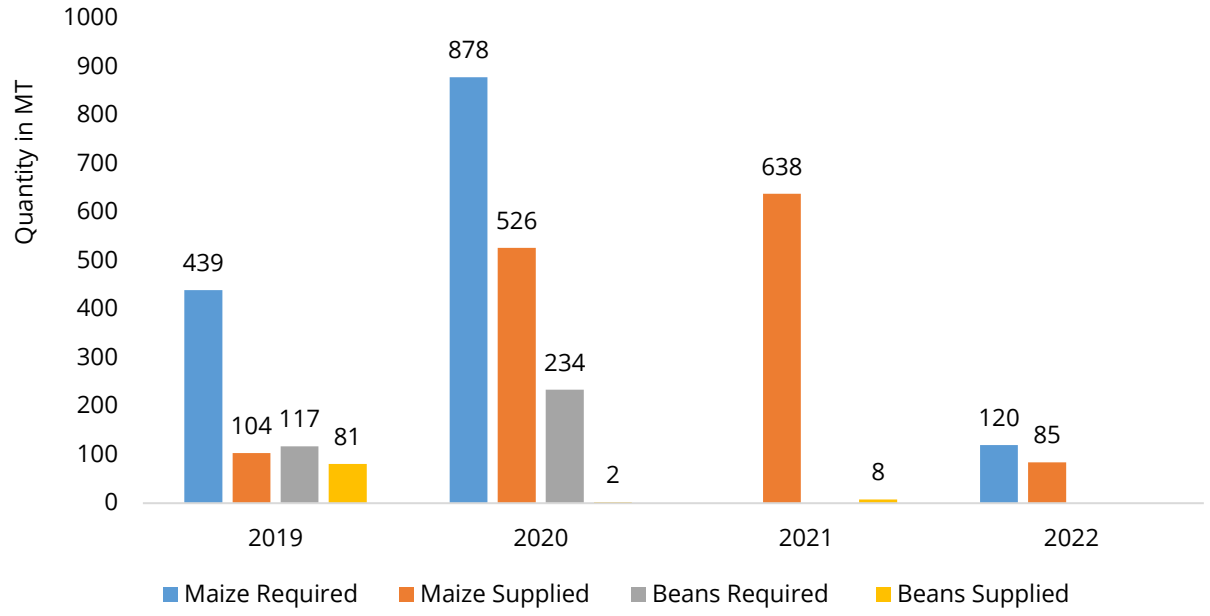
Source: School survey conducted by the ET.

134. Most boys (91 percent) and girls (87 percent) who wanted to eat reported to have been able to get the food. Discussions with learners revealed that some learners are served more than the prescribed ration, leaving others without food. On the other hand, some learners often chose not to eat, because they had packed lunch and could afford buying snacks at school – although this was not very common.

135. In terms of assessing the functionality of the HGSF, the evaluation assessed the availability of food in schools in combination with the presence of other complimentary services.[111]

136. In terms of availability, since the start of HGSF, 1,248.85 MT of maize and beans has been distributed to the 50 HGSF pilot schools. All maize was sourced from local smallholder farmers, but due to scarcity of beans, schools were supplied with beans sourced through other procurement modalities. The total volume of maize and beans supplied under the project was less than the required volume for all the years (Figure 7). The situation was worse especially for the beans. The shortfalls experienced in the supply of maize were mainly due to delays in procurement caused by slow approval processes and procedures and farmers not honouring their obligations under the contracts with WFP and selling to other markets. Shortfall in beans is due low production. There are schools where the supply of commodities was smooth but for those located in remote areas, the situation was different.

Figure 7: Quantities distributed to HGSF pilot schools



Source: Data sourced from HGSF Report, 2020 and Task Force Report, 2023.

137. Table 9 reflects the planned and achieved quantities of vegetables and eggs that were delivered to the schools in the four regions. Significant shortfalls in supply were recorded for tomatoes (74 percent), followed by cabbages (71 percent) and the least being onion at 41 percent. The planned quantities for spinach and eggs are missing. As already noted, there are schools that did not receive vegetables and eggs because farmers were unable to supply.

138. The HGSF partners identified several reasons for the reduction of commodities procured. The project ended in 2022, which meant that the supply of vegetables and eggs was halted. In addition, farmers stopped supplying spinach in 2022 citing high cost of production and transportation. HGSF partners are satisfied with the supply of eggs to the schools, despite the late introduction of the activities in 2021.

Table 9: Planned vs. achieved quantities of vegetables and eggs delivered to HGSF schools

Region	Cabbage (kg)		Spinach(kg)		Onion (kg)		Tomatoes (kg)		Eggs	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
Hhohho	40 880	14 236	n.d.	874	2 555	1 552	5 110	1 878	n.d.	59 142
Lubombo	52 096	9 354	n.d.	2 408	3 256	1 097	6 512	801	n.d.	66 517

[111] Functionality of the school meals programme is defined as having enough food supplied to schools, dedicated cooks, appropriate standards of cooking area/kitchen, availability of clean water and energy.

Region	Cabbage (kg)		Spinach(kg)		Onion (kg)		Tomatoes (kg)		Eggs	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
Manzini	49 008	22 701	n.d.	6 097	3 063	2 929	6 126	2 466	n.d.	108 331
Shiselweni	52 600	9 741	n.d	2 568	3 288	1 187	6 575	1 189	n.d	77 438
Totals	**194 584**	**56 032**	**n.d**	**11 947**	**12 162**	**6 765**	**24 323**	**6 334**	**n.d**	**311 428**

Source: FAO HGSF reports.

Finding 6: There was an initial general positive trend in production across all vegetables and cereals promoted, which indicates strong potential of the HGSF approach, but this was short lived due to impact of COVID-19, civil unrest, climate shocks and shortcomings in both farmer selection and beneficiary targeting.

139. There was a sharp increase in quantities of most commodities produced at the start of the HGSF in 2019 (see Figure 8). However, this increase was short lived since quantities decreased sharply in 2020. The sharp decrease in spinach production in 2020 may be associated with removal of spinach from the HGSF menu. It seems that farmers had to find alternative markets. However, the effect of COVID-19 cannot be overlooked. These production fluctuations are in line with perspectives of the project team as well as project reports in terms of how the issues unfolded.[112]

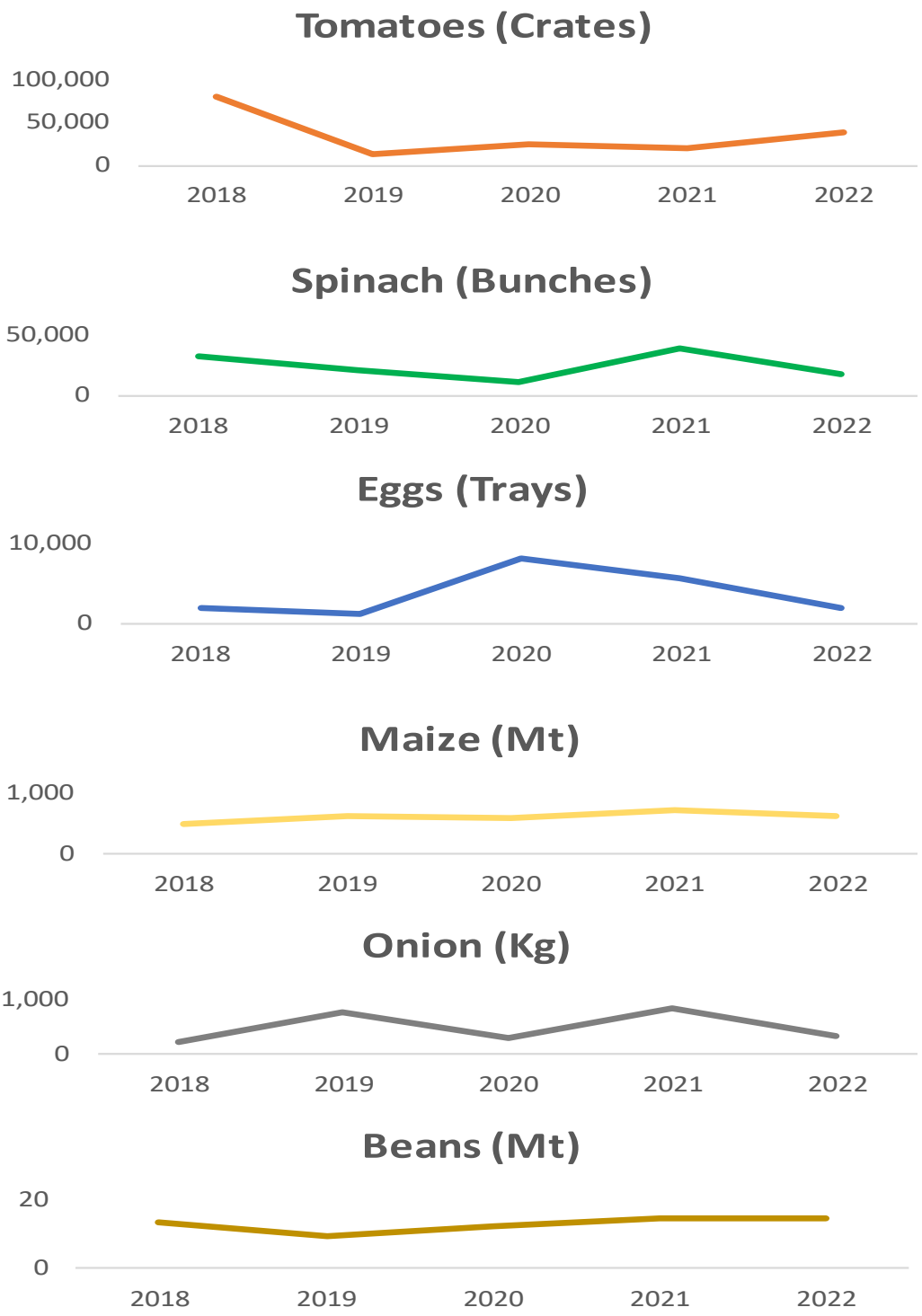
140. Overall, although farmer groups were able to produce the required vegetables for example, they failed to supply consistently during the project duration mainly because of the impact of COVID-19 and civil unrest.[113] Some farmers withdrew from the project; this meant that the SHF identification and selection process had to be redone to some extent. Both COVID-19 and political unrest resulted in long and unpredictable school closure, which left some farmers unable to sell their produce. "Although the ministry of agriculture and partners made an effort to assist farmers with finding alternative markets, the efforts fell short of assisting all farmers" as shared by a key informant from the ministry of agriculture.

141. Members of farmers groups consulted expressed that some farmers were discouraged to increase production by long distances to the schools in the face of being reimbursed for only 10 km. A case of embezzlement by a member (after receiving payment of vegetables supplied to a particular school) of a farmers' group was cited as reason for stopping production of vegetables, which points to challenges around group dynamics and rules of farmer groups and cooperatives.

142. Climatic factors also affected agriculture production. Supplying some schools with vegetables was challenging in very dry areas where there were no farmer groups (due to water scarcity).[114] In addition, some farmers reported that their produce was destroyed by hailstorm or frost, leaving them unable to meet their contractual obligation. This points to the need for shock-responsive contingencies to smooth demand in anticipation of school closures, leaving SHFs highly exposed to financial risk as well as climate risks caused by climate extremes.[115] Unreliable demand, linked to the unpredictable school closure schedule, was compounded by a highly prevalent perception among the SHFs that payments were unduly delayed by WFP - creating a somewhat precarious business arrangement for the SHFs supplying the HGSF programme.

[112] FAO, 2022. Improving food and nutrition security through strengthening the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme in Eswatini. Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) Terminal Report. March 2022, Eswatini.
[113] ibid
[114] Ibid.
[115] SHF survey data indicates most SHFs experienced delayed payment and fluctuating demand from the HGSF programme.

Figure 8: Trends in commodity production reported by SHFs sampled in the evaluation's HH survey



Source: SHF Household Survey; Evaluation Team.

143. The selection of farmers to participate in the pilot was informed by a capacity assessment, among other factors. For instance, the Farmers Organization Readiness Assessment Tool was used to assess the functionality and capacity of grain farmer organizations. However, the ET did not obtain any evidence that seasonality of some produce in some ecological location was considered during the process of adapting the HGSF concept. Moreover, the production capabilities vary across the different ecological regions.

144. The evaluation did not find evidence of deliberate effort for synchronizing the piloting schools (by MoET) and the selection of farmers (done by the MoA for vegetable farmers and WFP for bean and maize

farmers. This resulted in differences in the location of schools (remote versus those that were easily accessible) and type of farmers that were targeted by the HGSF and differences in the application of the definition of 'smallholder farmers 'as provided at the design phase. At design, the following definitions were provided:

- **Smallholder farmers** are small scale operators who possess the potential to achieve household food security from agricultural production on their farms but, due to limitations of land and resource endowment, are unlikely to produce a surplus for the market. This shall be measured by agricultural land of 2 ha – 10 ha for field crop farmers and > 0.5 ha for vegetable farmers.
- **Smallholder farmers-market surplus** are SHFs who have attained household food security and have surpluses that can be traded on the market or through producer groups/organizations.

145. On average, the selected farmers did meet the farm size aspect provided at the design phase. Data generated from the survey shows that in 2019, 117 farmers had 2.05 ha under maize production, while 107 farmers (44.2 percent) did not meet the minimum threshold. However, the same data shows that some farmers had as little as 0.3 ha under maize production. With regards to vegetable farmers, in 2019 about 38 out of the 41 (92.7 percent) farmers selected to supply cabbage had at least 0.5 ha of land under cabbage production (see detailed presentation of results in (Annex 10).

146. There was some mismatch in terms of the capacity of farmers and what they were required to supply at the school level. Better coordination and synchronization of selection criteria between FAO/MoA supported vegetable farmers and those supported by WFP could have enhanced the production potential and dealing with external shocks. Consequently, five (5) schools never received vegetables while ten (10) schools never received eggs, according to data shared by the ministry of education.

147. Most SHFs were in the Hhohho and Manzini regions, accounting for 78 percent of the sampled farmers (Table 10). This uneven concentration of farmers seems to be associated with the likelihood of some schools not receiving some commodities (vegetables and eggs in particular). Out of the six (6) schools that did not receive vegetable, for the duration of the pilot, five (5) are in the Shiselweni and Lubombo regions (three in Shiselweni and two in Lubombo). Similarly, of the 10 schools that did not receive eggs for the duration of the pilot, seven (7) were in the Shiselweni and Lubombo regions (five (5) in Shiselweni and two (2) in Lubombo).

148. The dispersion of farmers in the Lubombo and Shiselweni regions indicates that finding farmers within the stipulated radius in these areas would be difficult. These regional differences pose a challenge for the HGSF model, especially considering the selection criterion of "farmers within a 10 km radius of the school." [116] Considering the potential challenges in finding farmers within the radius, the criterion can be revised to allow for greater flexibility with regards to enrolling farmers to the project while maintaining the goal of promoting local procurement". The evaluation established that farmers beyond the 10 km radius were compensated for only 10, a phenomenon that eroded the profit margins.

Table 10: Geographical location of smallholder farmers participating in the HGSF.

Region	Number of farmers	%	Cumulative %
Hhohho	162	51	51
Manzini	86	27	78
Shiselweni	34	11	88
Lubombo	37	12	100

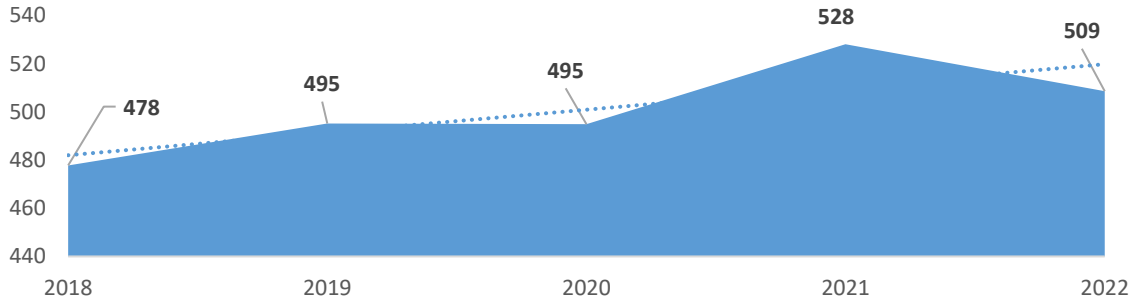
Source: Evaluation Team sampling data from smallholder farmer survey.

[116] This was the selection criteria specified in project documents and assumes that enough SHFs could be located in proximity to each school; an assumption that proved not to hold, leading to challenges for securing adequate supply, but also in transportation issues encountered by SHFs.

Finding 7: There was small but significant increase in the percentage of area utilized for maize by smallholder farmers, a response to the perceived demand from schools, despite occasional farmer concerns about the reliability of the demand/HGSF market. The HGSF initiative led to increased income for participating farmers, although not uniformly beneficial for women, nor for farmers with very small land holdings.

149. There has been a reduction of fallow land since the introduction of the HGSF Programme, as reiterated by farmers interviewed and as shown by the survey data. The farmer survey data shows an upwards trend between year 2018 and 2022. Area dedicated to staple crop (maize) as a share of total cultivated area increased from 74 percent in 2018 to 75 percent in 2022 (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Area under maize production (ha)



Source: Data generated from smallholder farmer survey

150. These findings suggest that the HGSF pilot had some effect on smallholder farmers' agricultural practices, particularly in terms of land utilization and crop selection. The reduced fallow land and increased share of maize cultivation indicate a response to the perceived demand for staple crops to meet the needs of the HGSF. However, discussions with smallholder farmers and stakeholders revealed that the demand side of the HGSF market was not reliable. It was subject to change based on school closures and in the case of vegetable farmers, funding constraints which affected the quantity they could supply to the schools. These factors were cited as factors in smallholder farmers' decision-making with regards to expanding area under cultivation and/or adjusting the mix of commodities they produce.

151. Data from the smallholder farmer survey Table 11 show that the average annual farm income increased from E 8,751.00 in 2019 to E 12,109.00 in 2022, representing an annual average increase of 12 percent (for period 2018 to 2022). The results also show that average income before the project was lower (annual average of E 7,704.57 in year 2018) than farm income during the project (for instance E 8,751.55 in 2019). Project reports similarly show that grain farmers did not only report increase in farm income but also associated such increase with their participation in the HGSF.[117]

Table 11: Average annual income generated from different farm activities by smallholder farmers

Year	Number of enterprises	Mean income	Standard deviation	Min	Max
2018	409	7 704	14 769	0	11 0000
2019	404	8 751	18 205	0	12 5000
2020	399	9 272	19 639	0	16 8784
2021	411	11 413	25 550	0	23 3276
2022	426	12 109	29 639	0	28 8640

Source: SHF household survey conducted by the ET.

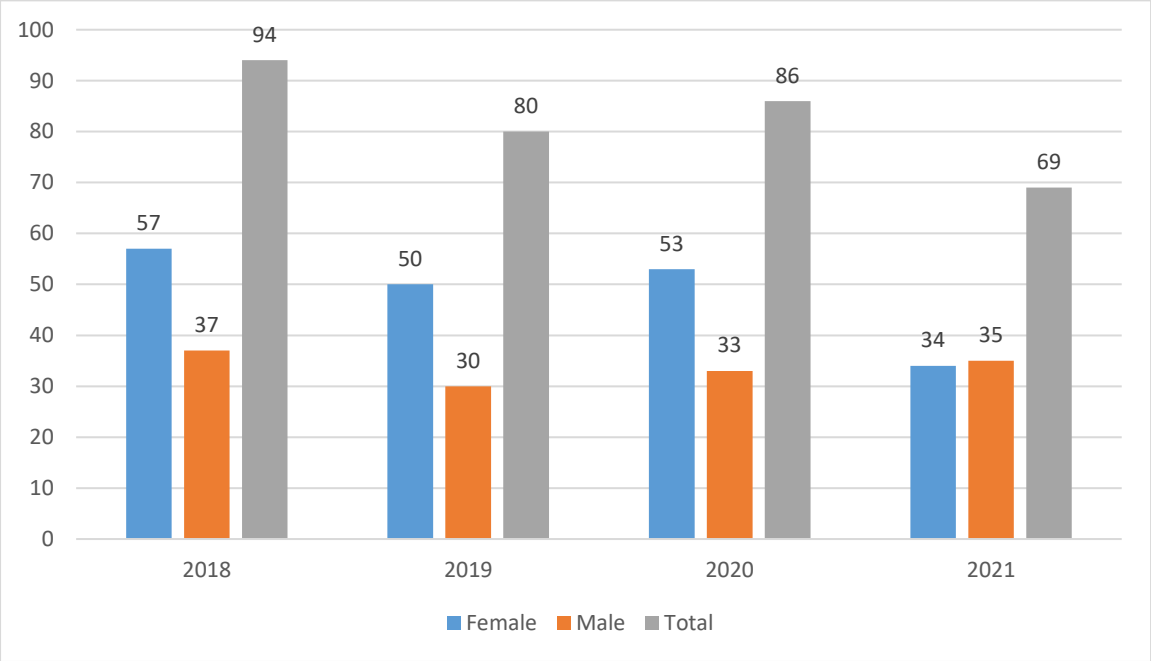
152. Grain farmers, during FGDs, explained that the attractive prices offered under HGSF in the face of lower transaction cost (since WFP collect the grain at aggregation points) has resulted in farmers earning more income from their farming venture. Noteworthy is that although some farmers reported to have

[117] FAO, 2022. Improving food and nutrition security through strengthening the Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme in Eswatini. Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) Terminal Report. March 2022, Eswatini.

earned significant income from the farm, over the pilot period there has been a significant number of farmers who reported zero farm income. This finding points to the need for increased attention to equity issues and improved agricultural extension support for SHF.

153. Of interest in the analysis was the number of farmers who reported zero farm in income for all the enterprises on the farm. Over a four-year period (2018 to 2021) the number of famers who reported zero farm income decreased from 94 farmers in 2018 to 69 farmers in 2021. As results show (Figure 10), in 2018 through to 2020 the number of women famers who reported zero farm income was significantly higher than the number of men who reported same.

Figure 10: Farmers reporting zero farm income over a four-year period (2018-2022) by gender



Source: SHF HH survey conducted by the ET.

2.2. What are the major factors (internal and external) influencing the achievement / non-achievement of the objectives of the HGSF pilot?

Finding 8: The HGSF pilot project faced a range of internal and external factors that influenced its achievement or non-achievement of objectives. Assumptions underlying the HGSF pilot were partly valid but faced challenges. Stakeholder engagement varied, the impact on health and learning outcomes was difficult to measure, and local procurement faced complexities that required multi-faceted support.

Internal factors

154. **Internal coordination and collaboration** among various stakeholders, including government departments, schools, local communities, farmers, and implementing agencies, was vital to support project implementation. A well rounded and representative steering committee was established to coordinate project implementation at its highest level, but the level of engagement during implementation differed with every stakeholder.

155. Stakeholder engagement and participation was inconsistent throughout project implementation, with the private sector participation having declined during implementation. As reiterated by all HGSF partners, the complementarity of roles between the MoA and MoET was not explicit, and this affected communication between the two entities and led to ineffective extension support. As a result, some farmers ended up dealing directly with NERCHA or the MoET in some activities. This was corroborated by FGDs with farmers who pointed out that it was difficult to receive assistance through extension services.

"We ended up playing all the roles – providing farmer support, extension services, facilitating procurement and logistics planning, and mediating between schools and farmers." KII with MoET.

156. Inadequate communication channels were also detected in the interactions between the schools and farmers and between WFP and farmers. Farmers reported that there was no communication about project closure, the reduction of quantities, and product collection schedules - they only received information after cultivating their farms. In some cases, farmers had agreed to supply larger quantities to a greater number of schools, but this never materialized. This affected production as sometimes WFP did not fetch produce or smaller vegetable quantities were sold to the schools, which led to losses. Effective communication, cooperation, and coordination were among the most critical factors that affected the achievement of the project, developing appropriate systems for coordination and communication could have helped to streamline processes, minimize inefficiencies, and ensure smooth implementation.

157. **Internal processes and procedures of the partners.** Delayed decision making and internal processes and procedures of key implementing partners was a major barrier to project success. Project reports depict that the signing of agreements to facilitate project implementation were all delayed. Even though steering committee meetings began in 2019, the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between MoET and WFP was completed in 2020. The agreement between NERCHA and MoET was done in 2021, leading to the implementation of vegetable supply in March 2021, while cereals, pulses and vegetable oil resumed in September 2019.[118]

158. This delayed commitment to the HGSF also led to delayed implementation. The approval of the WFP procurement plan also took longer than anticipated, thereby affecting farmers instantly. Six out of the seven farmer groups interviewed stated that they experienced payment delays, which affected their farming cycle, preventing others from continuing with farming activities. Contracting processes were also delayed, especially for maize and bean farmers.

159. The element of integrated planning was missing during project implementation – this was demonstrated by the delay in implementation of the egg supply, it was only effectively piloted in the final year of the pilot. This was also affected by a delay in preparation of the Egg Production Manual within the MoA which led to egg supply being implemented January of 2022.[119]

160. **Policy enabling environment**. There was little policy and strategic guidance on the HGSF to effectively support its implementation at policy or operational levels level. HGSF is operating but not explicitly supported by a legal framework, hence it is not effectively linked to the NSFP nor is it well coordinated with stakeholders. According to the HGSFP Resource Framework a clear legal foundation would establish legitimacy of the programme and define its purpose within national policies and relevant sectors[120]. However, in Eswatini, the HGSFP remained an activity of the MoET, governed by the National Framework for Food Security in Schools which only speaks to the roles of the MoET in implementing the school feeding programme. As a result, the broader policy environment was not improved to enable the implementation of the HGSFP model. The overall policy and regulatory environment, including food safety standards, procurement policies, nutritional guidelines, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, can influence the HGSF pilot's objectives and outcomes.

161. **Logistics and transport.** WFP logistical arrangements led to delayed upliftment of produce from farmers and delayed delivery of food to schools. Farmers reported that they have the capacity to produce in required quantities but delayed upliftment of product results in the sale of smaller volumes due to post harvest losses or withdrawal of produce from the aggregation points by farmers. Delayed upliftment of product was reported by all maize farmers interviewed. Logistics were also frustrated by the mechanism of farmer selection which led to inflated transportation costs. The MoA reported that even though the project plan targeted farmers in the 10km radius of the school, the reality on the ground was different, and this was further demonstrated by the inability to secure egg producers and vegetable farmers (in drier areas)

[118] Steering committee minutes, MOA between WFP and MoET, MOU between NERCHA and MOET

[119] FAO, 2022. Improving food and nutrition security through strengthening the Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme in Eswatini. Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) Terminal Report. March 2022, Eswatini.

[120] FAO & WFP. 2018. Home-Grown School Feeding. Resource Framework. Technical Document. Rome

within the vicinity of the school. The WFP logistics strategy in itself also necessitates double handling of commodities within the same region which potentially contributes to cost increases and quality risk.

> *"Even though farmers were selected within the 10km radius and grouped around the schools for logistical and payment purposes. This was not effective as often time, commodities are produced far from the school, around 50+ km".* Steering committee member.

162. In some instances, delays in collecting the produce (maize) compelled some farmers to withdraw their maize from the aggregation point to sell to alternative but less attractive markets (or more attractive markets, as was sometimes the case for beans; market attractiveness was not only driven by price, but also by volumetric parameters and timeliness/reliability of transactional logistics).[121]

163. Transport prices offered by the project contract were also not favourable to farmers. For example, farmers were paid E 2 per egg including transport fees compared to a market value of E 2.50 per egg when they sold to the local market. The project did not provide adequate complementary support to SHFs to address transport and logistics constraints to sufficiently reinforce the demand and supply elements of the project to support SHFs. In addition, the farmers indicated that the changes in logistical arrangements and the hike in fuel prices increased production costs and affected the supply.

Photo credit: Evaluation Team, direct observation of beans produced by SHFs in Eswatini.

164. For instance, during the periods when schools were closed, egg farmers were compelled to explore alternative markets. Even though they had been informed at the commencement of the business, accessing alternative markets still posed significant challenges for them. This issue was exacerbated by the upward pressure on egg farmers to increase quantities to satisfy the (estimated) HGSF demand. The comments explaining a 'partial' result on the activity of linking farmers to markets in the FAO Terminal Report on the HGSF project states that, "The egg producers, who have on average about 100 layers, could benefit from a stable market, as most of them sell their eggs only within the surrounding communities due to the ascendency of bulk egg producers in the country. Preliminary assessments indicated that they are willing to expand in the event they are contracted under the HGSF programme."[122]

External factors

165. **Impact of COVID-19**. Project documents[123] all state that the COVID-19 pandemic had the most unprecedented effect on the implementation of the HGSF programme. The implementation of COVID-19 restrictions on movement, led to school closure, disrupted supply chains, and affected the livelihoods of many farmers, as agricultural and food systems were severely affected, while transport and logistics were also not spared. Food distribution was stopped, while farmers incurred extremely high losses on food that had already been produced but could not be delivered. Interviews with schools also revealed that there was spoilage and waste of grain already procured while vegetable supply was not implemented to completion. This increased vulnerabilities for a lot of farmers and learners who relied on the SFP for meals. It exacerbated poverty and increased unemployment, recording a GDP decline from 2.6 percent to -1.9

[121] SHF survey data.

[122] FAO, 2022. Improving food and nutrition security through strengthening the Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme in Eswatini. Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) Terminal Report. March 2022, Eswatini.

[123] According to the FAO Technical Report and the WFP Annual Country Reports 2020, 2021 and 2022,

percent.[124] The pandemic also delayed the administrative implementation of the project including the development of guiding policies, guidelines, and frameworks.[125]

166. **Civil unrest**. In June 2021 Eswatini experienced major civil unrest that claimed numerous lives, caused the destruction of several businesses and other property, and the loss of thousands of jobs - mostly in the retail and agriculture sectors. All the envisaged project activities under this project could not be fully implemented during the political unrests which also disrupted the opening of schools and led to logistics destruction. Hence the piloting of the HGSF could not be fully appreciated as the field activities, including the supply of produce, training and workshops, steering committee meeting, etc., were disrupted.

167. **Climate risks**. Adverse weather conditions, climate changes, and the scarcity of water in some areas affected the consistency of supply for some vegetables, such as tomatoes. Nonetheless, the project still contributed to enhanced food security by strengthening the local food supply chain around the schools, fostering collaboration between farmers, and identifying opportunities for improved food supply between schools and local farmers. For example, weather conditions[126] (frost and too many rains towards the harvest season) affected the production of beans in 2020.[127]

Figure 11. Women and youth SHFs were given preference in the selection of HGSF egg producers.

Source/credit: © FAO/Lindiwe Siyaya. A woman SHF egg producer who participated in the HGSF pilot.[128]

168. **Economic factors**. Increases in the prices of food (3.9 percent) and transport (6.3 percent), owing to general increases in the food basket and the hike in the fuel levy by 85 cents resulted in a 25 percent increase in transport fare.[129] Petrol prices were on the rise from March 2022 to July 2022, cumulatively increasing by E6.70, and retailing at a historically record high figure of E 23.85 per liter.[130] The hike in fuel prices increased production costs and affected the supply of produce to the schools. During these hikes, the transport allocation was not increased for farmers supplying the project meaning that the burden was solely carried by the farmers.

169. Therefore, unfavorable market conditions for most farmers incited side selling of commodities to other markets for more lucrative prices. Slow economic development and high rates of unemployment also continue to increase the vulnerability and food insecurity of children from low-income households.

[124] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development.2022. Economic and Review Outlook FY 2021/22: A year of rebound during a pandemic. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane
[125] WFP. 2020. Annual Country Report: Country Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024
[126] For example, the Annual Country Report 2021
[127] WFP. 2020. Annual Country Report: Country Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024
[128] Ibid.
[129] MEPD, 2022 report.
[130] Ministry of Economic Planning and Development.2023. Economic and Review Outlook FY 2022/23. Government of Eswatini. Mbabane

170. **Land ownership**. Issues of land ownership remain a challenge for some farmers and farmer groups to increase production capacity. Farmers in the Hhohho region expressed that they are unable to produce both maize and beans because of limited access to land, hence they only produce maize. Farmers reported that they each own an average of 1-2 ha of land.

2.3. To what extent do the assumptions that underpin the HGSF pilot hold true?

Assumption 1: The HGSF stakeholders (MoET, MoA, WFP, FAO) will engage communities (farmers, women, and youth) on the production and supply of locally produced and processed food for the school meals.

171. The HGSF was able to engage all stakeholders although not uniformly. Production data from the farmers' survey revealed that for some commodities, farmers, collectively, have the capacity to supply the schools. At an individual farmer level, there are observed capacity gaps in the supply of vegetables. The seasonality (at least in the highveld region), implies that farmers in the highveld have no capacity to supply tomatoes in winter, unless they produce under protective structures such as tunnels. The evaluation also revealed sufficient capacity for the supply of eggs. Given the various events affecting pilot implementation, it is ultimately difficult to assess the ability of SHFs to meet the demands of HGSF.

172. The HGSF model will need to address the unpredictability of the demand side of the market as this appears to expose some SHFs to increased financial risks. The demand side challenges, induced by both COVID-19 and political unrest, unveiled the vulnerabilities to shocks within the HGSF model. This revelation underscores the imperative need for reinforcing efforts to enhance the model's resilience. Establishing connections with alternative markets can bolster the requisite resilience for the model, ensuring its robustness and adaptability to unforeseen challenges and fluctuations.

173. Some aspects of the pilot proved difficult to monitor - such as the extent to which the HGSF market opportunity incentivizes families to keep their children in school and to sustain local food supply. Since the pilot was run in schools that had already been benefiting from the NSFP, the value of HGSF in terms of motivating increased attendance appears to be negligible and quite difficult to measure.

174. The project introduced innovative elements to monitor prices, maximize opportunities for commercialization, create links with markets, and to give SHFs access to productive assets. For example, FAO reports that the use of an AMIS application was introduced; this is just one example of the possibilities that seem to exist for leveraging technology to dramatically improve the market position of SHFs - and the ability of women SHFs to better access and engage with the agrifood system value chains in which they act.

Assumption 2: Providing school meals and complementary nutrition information, WASH activities will improve health and nutrition of children which will enhance learning and cognitive capacity and school performance.

175. Data from the school-level survey shows that a significant share of the respondents answered in the affirmative to the statement that "HGSF has increased attention and retention". However, the evaluation did not find a significant association between the HGSF pilot learning, cognitive capacity and school performance.

Assumption 3: By buying locally the procurement costs will reduce thereby enhancing cost efficiency in the HGSF Programme.

176. The evaluation found sufficient evidence that all stakeholders (including WFP, other development Partners, ministry of education including the schools, ministry of agriculture, Eswatini Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (ESPPRA)) significantly supported local procurement. It is evident that procuring commodities systematically from SHFs requires multi-faceted support and facilitation that need to extend beyond the scope of the HGSF project if the model is to demonstrate sustainability and cost-effectiveness (as compared to SF).

177. The positioning of WFP as facilitator of the transfer of commodities between SHFs and schools does not appear optimal in terms of reducing value chain costs and developing sustainable/viable markets for SHFs. WFP's work on Small Agriculture Market Support (SAMS) and Local and Regional Food Procurement (LRFP) can complement/inform future iterations of HGSF in Eswatini that will need to smooth both supply of and demand for commodities and incorporate mechanisms to enhance shock-responsiveness that can minimize the market risk exposure of SHFs (cost-efficiencies realized through economies-of-scale - e.g., increasing the size of SHF egg producer enterprises - also expose SHFs to risk if demand is volatile).

178. The evaluation did not find significant evidence that collaboration increased efficiency and viability. In fact, even from the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the ministry of education and WFP, institutions such as NMC and NAMBoard were positioned as "stop gap" institutions rather than integrating or linking them with the target farmers. In this stop-gap function, collaboration with traders and parastatals was critical in smoothing the supply-side; they were not leveraged to support smoothing on the demand side (e.g., by stepping in as purchasers of commodities supplied to HGSF but not required for SF due to unexpected school closures). There appear to be opportunities for improved efficiency in the future, as more work is done to develop the HGSF pilot model into an approach that is more sustainable and optimized for realizing efficiencies through leveraging national and private sector actors. The design of the pilot assigning institutions such as NMC and NAMBoard a "stop gap" role" implies that their participation was expected to be passive in nature, yet their mandate is to develop the very sector from which the MoET expected to get commodities.

EQ3: WAS THE HGSF INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTED IN A TIMELY AND COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER?

3.1. Was HGSF implementation cost-efficient?

Finding 9: The grain procurement model benefited farmers by reducing transaction costs; nevertheless, it's efficiency was impeded by the double-handling process carried out by WFP. The menu under HGSF also incurred a slightly higher cost compared to the conventional NSFP.

179. To gain a full grasp on the cost-effectiveness of the HGSF pilot, the evaluation team analyzed different components of the pilot. Firstly, costs in logistics were analyzed as they relate to procurement of the different commodities. In addition to the logistics, the evaluation looks at the commodities themselves, in terms of cost per child per meal then computed cost per meal. The weekly cost was deemed necessary for capturing the varying menu. The eggs were a major cost driver of the HGSF model, and this aspect of the pilot was an adaptation which came to an end before realizing the full benefits (to also calculate the efficiencies).

180. With regards to operational efficiency, WFP collected grains from aggregation points then they transported them to their warehouse, then from their warehouse to schools, resulting in double handling. Double handling translates to increased implementation cost, which implies that cost savings can be achieved through improving logistical efficiency. Comparing the HGSF with the traditional school feeding model, the part of collecting from aggregation point does not exist under traditional school feeding, which means that distribution logistics only entails distributing commodities from the warehouse to schools. This necessitates the development of a procurement and distribution model that will improve efficiency while keeping supply risk at a minimal level.

181. The pilot aimed at selecting vegetable farmers within a 10km radius of the school, however, difficulties in finding farmers who met the distance criterion necessitated the selection of farmers who were outside the stipulated radius. This, however, was not matched with adjustment of the distance for which the farmers were to be compensated, resulting in the cost of transport being unduly covered by the farmers. During FGD, vegetable farmers shared that the project did not fully cover the cost of transport, as they we paid for only 10km. Data generated through SHF survey shows that a significant number of farmers were outside the prescribed radius, which resulted associated high transaction costs. The Task Force noted that the non-viability of farms in the vicinity of school rendered it necessary to select farmers that were far from the school.[131]

182. With regards to cost of meals, the comparison of the cost per child per meal cannot be interpreted in terms of efficiency since the menu under the NSFP differs from that offered under the HGSF. Furthermore, the cost analysis was aimed at capturing the absolute difference in direct, variable cost of meals. Costs of salaries for cooks, utensils, energy, etc. were assumed to be similar for the two models.

[131] HGSF Task Force Report, 2023. Process Evaluation Report For The Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Pilot Programme (2019-2022)

183. In computing cost per meal, average weekly cost is deemed necessary to capture the varying menu. Different scenarios were used to capture variation in implementation modalities, for instance, some schools were found to take only rice while others were taking both rice and maize. Table 12 presents scenario 1 (rice and pap as starch) and Table 13 reflects the scenario 2 (rice only as starch) that were used for the estimation of costs for the NSFP and HGSF. Some schools reported to have used the vegetable (spinach and cabbage in particular) as a salad instead of a relish.

Table 12: Scenario 1: rice and pap as starch, two days a week

Week day	Traditional School Feeding Model		Menu	HGSF Model
	Menu	Cost/meal/learner		Cost/meal/learner
Mon	Rice and beans	2.50	Rice and beans	2.50
Tue	Pap and beans	1.94	Rice and beans	1.94
Wed	Pap and beans	1.94	Rice and beans	1.94
Thu	Rice and beans	2.50	Rice and Vegetables	2.41
Fri	Rice and beans	2.50	Rice, vegetables and egg	4.41
Average cost/day/learner		**2.27**		**2.64**

Source: Survey data, ET calculations.

184. The recipe for the menu under traditional school feeding is white maize meal (150g), beans (40g), vegetable oil (7.5g), iodised salt (2g). On the other hand, the recipe under HGSF is white maize meal (150g), beans (40g), vegetable oil (7.5g), iodized salt (2g) spinach (200g), tomato (5g), and onion (5g). The table below presents the cost per meal per learner for the different menu options and the last row presents the average cost per week.

185. For ease of comparison, in each of the two models under scenario 1, Maize meal (as starch) is served twice a week and rice is served three times a week. Table 13 shows that the cost per meal per learner under traditional SF is E 2.50 (rice and beans) or E 1.94 (pap and beans), with an average cost of E 2.27. On the other hand, under HGSF, a meal is estimated to cost E 2.41 (rice and vegetables) or E4.41 (rice, vegetables, and an egg) with an average cost of E 2.64.

186. The average cost per day under HGSF is E 0.37 more than under traditional school feeding, noting that the two meals under comparison have different nutritional content, which renders this comparison a purely financial or accounting comparison, with no connotation to efficiency.

187. The second scenario that the evaluation explored is the using only rice as a source of starch. Table 13 below shows that the cost under traditional school feeding goes up to E 3.84 while under HGSF on average, a meal costs E 4.00.

Table 13: Scenario 2: rice only as a starch

Week Day	Traditional School Feeding Model		Menu	HGSF Model
	Menu	Cost/meal/learner		Cost/meal/learner
Mon	Rice and beans	2.50	Rice and beans	2.50
Tue	Rice and beans	2.50	Rice and beans	2.50
Wed	Rice and beans	2.50	Rice and beans	2.50
Thu	Rice and beans	2.50	Rice and Vegetables	2.41

Week Day	Traditional School Feeding Model		Menu	HGSF Model
	Menu	Cost/meal/learner		Cost/meal/learner
Fri	Rice and beans	2.50	Rice, vegetables, and egg	4.41
Average cost/day/learner		**2.50**		**2.86**

Source: Survey data, ET calculations

188. Using the average of the two scenario (rice only and a combination of rice and maize (pap)) the cost of the HGSF for 2022 can be extrapolated. This extrapolation is useful for the estimation of cost of scaling up as well as forecasting cost in the short to medium term. Data from the school survey provided an estimated enrolment of 12,320 learners across the 28 primary schools and 12,298 leaners across the 22 high school with an estimated enrolment of 24,618 learners across all 50 schools involved in the pilot.

189. Using average cost of the two scenarios (averaging E2.64 and E2.86) under HGSF, the cost of food for all 28 primary school is estimated at E6,540,837.32 and E E6,529,157.25 for high school with a total of E13,069,994.57 for all the 50 school in 2022. The difference in the estimated total cost of meals per year does not only demonstrate the cumulative effect of small differences in cost per meal but also amplifies the need for careful selection of the menu under HGSF. The cost of meals per year for the HGSF is reflected in Table 14.

Table 14: Evaluation Team's extrapolated cost of meals per year for the HGSF and equivalent number of learners under National School Feeding

Model	School level	2022 Enrolment	Average cost per meal	Estimated total cost
HGSF	Primary school	12 320	E 2.75	E 6 540 837.32
	High school	12 298		E 6 529 157.25
	Total	**24 618**		E 13 069 994.57
Traditional School Feeding		24 618	E 2.38	E 11 327 987.47
			Difference	**E 1 742 007.10**

Source: Survey data, schools survey

190. During the implementation of the pilot, there was a realization that available financial resources were not enough to cover the cost of the initial set of vegetables, as such the menu was adjusted, which however did not work well for farmers. Finally, the political unrest also disrupted school calendar, disrupting demand for commodities, which resulted in farmers spending more resources in looking for alternative markets.

EQ4: HOW COMPATIBLE IS THE HGSF PILOT WITH OTHER INTERVENTIONS IMPLEMENTED BY GOVERNMENT AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS?

4.1: How effective was coordination under the HGSF pilot project?

Finding 10: The HGSF pilot created coordination structures that successfully mobilized the most relevant stakeholders and created awareness on the HGSF approach, but the effectiveness of coordinating implementation was uneven and influenced by limited commitment and clarity in roles and responsibilities.

191. The MoET, Nutrition Unit was the overall coordinator and lead agency of the HGSF pilot project. The same coordination structures used for the NSFP were used at the school level consisting of focal teachers, cooks, and school governing bodies. There were two main coordination structures created to guide design

and implementation of the pilot namely, the Steering Committee. The HGSF steering committee focused on engaging cross- ministerial and multi-sectoral[132] coordination and oversight. The Steering Committee reports to the Deputy Prime Minister's Office (DPMO) and is chaired by the Senior Inspector Nutrition in the MoET with WFP Home Grown School Feeding Coordinator providing a secretariat role. The Steering Committee provided oversight on project outputs by ensuring major strategic operational, policy goals and objectives of the project were kept on check.[133]

192. Evidence from the meeting minutes indicate that the steering committee discussed and made important decisions that fed into the implementation including influencing the adaptation of the pilot project. The decisions on the food ration and the frequency of serving vegetables (three times a week) and beans (twice a week) was a result of the committee's guidance. Further, the total removal of spinach in the ration, reduction in ration size of cabbage (from 200g to 150g per child per meal) and reduction in quantities of onions for schools with enrolments of 600 learners or more were all decisions made by the Steering committee after careful consideration of operating costs. These decisions, however, seem to not have been communicated clearly and on time to the schools and the farmers. Based on the feedback from schools on incorrect rice preparation, which had caused many learners to stop eating, the Steering committee organized training for cooks which had positive results. However, based on the concerns on food quality identified through focus group discussion with learners (results already presented earlier), there is still needed to capacitate cooks in food preparation in general.

193. There were mixed sentiments regarding the decision to entrust Regional School inspectors with selection of participating schools under the pilot. Some stakeholders felt that because the pilot was initiated quickly, it was the best that could be done under the circumstances. While other stakeholders were unhappy that schools were selected without any clear criteria and did not consider the availability and capacity of smallholder farmers to supply vegetables and eggs within a 10km radius. There was also limited coordination between the selection of farmers involved in the HGSF which resulted in different coordination and procurement mechanisms between smallholder farmers working with MoA/FAO and those coordinated by WFP. Another gap stated by most stakeholders, is the apparent limited knowledge on the HGSF concept and members of the steering committee did their best to operationalize it. WFP which was meant to provide overall leadership on the HGSF was faced with staff turnover at the country office and the Regional Bureau did not extend sufficient strategic and technical leadership in operationalizing the concept. As a result, many stakeholders felt that the steering committee should have provided guidance on the policy, legal and institutional framework that should have enhanced the legalization and operationalization of the HGSF in the country.

194. An inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholder technical committee was created with the following objectives: (i) Define the broad and long-term changes that the stakeholders, and in particular the government, want to achieve with HGSF, (ii) understand the different existing environments on education, agriculture, nutrition, social protection and school feeding in the country and how they can support the vision (iii) Establish a joint implementation framework that translates the HGSF vision into a plan with a concrete set of actions aligned with national objectives and the programme's goals; (iv) Define an institutional home for the coordination of HGSF programmes and the and stakeholders involved in HGSF (v) and facilitate reliable and timely monitoring and reporting to ensure the accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the programme.

195. Several meeting minutes since 2019 to 2022 show that the steering committee supported the technical components of the HGSF in many areas. Coordination among some government actors and development partners was not easy with other members of the committee pulling out before the end of the pilot. Despite efforts from the committee to ensure full participation, not all members were receptive or able to continue. The steering committee fell short of achieving some of its major objectives. While the committee was able to develop a framework for HGSF with indicators to monitor it, it did not clearly define the overall objective and vision for HGSF as well as communicate this clearly to various stakeholders. Launching and campaigning on HGSF was one of the standing agenda items in the committee meetings, but

[132] MoET, WFP, Deputy Prime minister's office, MoA, Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade, SWAFCU, ESNAU, ESWADE, ADRA, FAO and ESPPRA

[133] HGSF Steering Committee Terms of Reference

this was not adequately performed. Some stakeholders interviewed, felt the HGSF pilot was implemented too quickly without adequate sensitization and advocacy activities on the objectives of HGSF at all levels.

196. The committee was unable to fully contextualize HGSF within a broader implementation framework across different sectors and levels of government in Eswatini. Apart from the main partners of the pilot project, many informants felt, discussions rarely went beyond the agriculture and education, nutrition sectors. In addition, the roles for stakeholders providing complementary inputs/activities such as infrastructure, WASH, nutrition and health education, school gardens, support to farmers, etc were not explicitly defined. Many stakeholders consulted unanimously agreed that the overall coordination of HGSF should have been under the MoA rather than MoET. The MoET worked tirelessly to coordinate the HGSF activities but also faced significant challenges. As chair of the steering committee, the MoET ensured regular meeting to attend to project activities. The biggest challenges were ensuring support, commitment, and participation agriculture extension workers.

197. As a result, to ensure supply of vegetables at the school level, the regional inspectors had to deal with farmers directly, which was not ideal and beyond their mandate. Consultations with other government partners pointed to the gaps regarding the way the HGSF concept was introduced in the country, which did not adequately define roles between the MoA and MoET at the policy levels. Besides inadequate buy-in at that level, the MoA extension officers were unable to deliver their supportive role in the project because of limited incentives such as low renumeration and necessary resources such as transport to visit and support the farmers as well as gadgets for collecting production statistics from farmers.

198. The first Steering committee meeting in 2019 emphasized the need for reliable and timely monitoring and reporting under the HGSF pilot. However, as noted at inception phase and confirmed by all stakeholders during data collection, the project's monitoring and evaluation had several gaps. Data is missing for many indicators at baseline and mid-term points of the HGSF programme which limited analysis on how indicator values have changed over time. However, efforts made towards the end of the project such as provision of 50 tablets, development of a data collection tool and training of focal teachers is a step in the right direction.

4.2. What are the complementarities / synergies with other related interventions in Eswatini?

199. Both the NSFP and HGSF are aligned with the broader national policies concerning food security, nutrition, education, and agricultural development. Notably, the HGSF pilot adopted the same coordination and implementation frameworks as the NSFP, thereby creating a more robust enabling environment for piloting. Leveraging the existing school infrastructure, including essential kitchen facilities required for meal preparation and storage, was an added advantage for the HGSF pilot.

200. The Lower Usuthu Smallholder Irrigation Project (LUSIP II) was identified by government partners as the main complimentary intervention to the HGSF programme. The overall goal of LUSIP II is improved standard of living of the population of about 13,460 in the Lower Usuthu Basin area of Eswatini through an environmentally and culturally sustainable process. As part, of the project, LUSIP II aims for 400ha of maize, beans in rotation which is a good strategy in addressing the country's bean shortage and boosting local supply to the HGSF market. Under the LUSIP II, Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (ESWADE) is taking interest in supporting bean producing farmers through provision of planters and harvesters for beans.

201. In collaboration with the ministry of Agriculture, ESNAU is assisting maize, bean, and poultry farmers to address food insecurity through the Farmer Input Program (EFIP). The assistance is through a revolving fund where farmers can borrow inputs to produce and pay after harvesting. To ensure that yields are improved, and farmers can repay loans, the Ministry of Agriculture and ESNAU work together to address all the gaps such as ensuring reliable tractor service, technical expertise, farmer mentorships, trainings, and linkages with markets.[134] Farmers are supported with appropriate seed and equipment to enable them increase productivity and there are opportunities for working closely with the HGSF. As established during consultations with ESNAU, they still need resources in terms of transport, funding, and human resources (they only have one inspector per region) to fully support the farmers.

[134] https://www.esnau.co.sz/projects/

4.3. What value does HGSF add in the context of other interventions supported by the Government and other actors?

Finding 11: The HGSF program has demonstrated added value across various dimensions, including improved nutrition, enhanced food security, promotion of economic empowerment, stimulation of the local economy, support for education, provision of social protection, fostering collaboration, and contribution to sustainable development.

202. All stakeholders consulted see significant value in the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) pilot approach, especially in the context of other interventions supported by the government and other actors. Some of areas include:

203. ***Improved nutrition***: HGSF aims to provide nutritious meals to schoolchildren, addressing malnutrition and improving their overall health and well-being. By integrating locally sourced food, including vegetables and staples, the program contributes to dietary diversity and ensures access to essential nutrients. It supports the implementation of the NCPs by linking SHFs to pre-primacy NCPs, reaching over 53,000 children in 2022.[135]

204. The HGSFP is also feeding into the efforts by UNICEF and the Nutrition Council to support government projects in nutrition by supplementing the provision of therapeutic food and supplementary feeding (Corn Soya meal plus family ration consisting of cereal, beans, and vegetable oil) for the treatment of acute malnutrition. The HGSFP will also help to achieve the World Bank Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Eswatini 2024–2028 which seeks to improve quality and retention in basic education, improving healthcare quality and coverage.

205. **Enhanced food security**: HGSF promotes food security by supporting smallholder farmers in local communities. Through the procurement of produce from these farmers, the program strengthens local agricultural production and provides a reliable market for their products. This, in turn, enhances the food security of both farmers and the broader community. The Eswatini National Agricultural Investment Plan seeks to increase the contribution of agriculture to improving food security and farmer incomes in the country.

206. The FAO in partnership with ESWADE, NAMBoard and others have also implemented projects to build the capacity of farmers on climate resilience to increase production through the adoption of climate smart technologies and agricultural practices.[136] The HGSFP will also contribute to the achievements of the project titled, *Addressing Water, Health, and Poverty Nexus through WASH Initiatives for COVID-19 and Climate Change Responses in Eswatini,* which aims to respond to the challenges brought by the interlinkages between health, water, environment, disaster risk and climate change.[137]

207. **Economic empowerment:** HGSF empowers smallholder farmers, particularly women, by creating market opportunities and increasing their income. The program encourages farmers to expand their production and improve agricultural practices to meet the demand for school meals. It has provided farmers participating in the FINCLUDE project and the SMLP project with access to markets. These IFAD funded projects sought to improve food and nutrition security and increase the incomes of rural households and smallholder farming enterprises in Eswatini by linking them to markets and enhancing agricultural production. FINCLUDE has a kin interest on women and youth owned enterprises.

208. **Local economy stimulation**: By sourcing food locally, the HGSF program stimulates the local economy. It supports local farmers and food producers, generating income within the community and promoting economic growth. The program's demand for local produce also encourages investment in agricultural infrastructure and value-chain development. As such, the FAO implemented project to increase

[135] WFP. 2022. Annual Country Report: Country Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024

[136] Chevallier, R., Neely, C., Chesterman, S., Gosling, A., Osena, J.J. & Muwaya, S. 2022. Strengthening the enabling environment for sustainable and climate-smart land management in Africa: Country initiatives of the Resilient Food Systems programme. Rome, FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc2187en

[137] UNDP. 2022. Water project to improve sanitation and food security. https://www.undp.org/eswatini/news/water-project-improve-sanitation-and-food-security-eswatini

local value chain linkages of local producers to markets, processing initiatives and consumers' demands[138]. The international trade centre (ITC) has also supported initiatives geared towards contributing to economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction through value chain development and improvement of smallholder farmer capacities for value addition, market led and export driven production.

209. **Social protection**: HGSF serves as a social protection mechanism for vulnerable populations, including children from low-income households. By ensuring access to nutritious meals, the program helps alleviate poverty-related challenges and reduces the financial burden on families to provide adequate food for their children. The government of Eswatini currently implements social protection through various programmes, including the distribution of food to destitute families through the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) and Eswatini Baphalali Red Cross Society. The government also provides funding through the DPMO to OVCs and people living disability.

EQ5: TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THE HGSF INTERVENTION BE SUSTAINED AND SCALED UP IN ESWATINI?

5.1: How do we create sustainable relationships between the private sector and HGSF farmers?

Finding 12: The HGSF has several elements that boost its sustainability. The design of the HGSF was focussed on smallholder farmers with limited focus on the private sector. Logistical arrangements, farmer selection criteria, and production capacity need to be addressed to ensure long-term sustainability.

210. The HGSF was designed to empower Smallholder Farmers (SHFs) but to ensure continuous supply, other entities like the private sector and parastatals were incorporated. However, their limited role, especially from the private sector which was involved mainly for food safety (WFP used Intertek for quality assessment), may affect the long-term viability. For true sustainability, the role of parastatals should be clarified to ensure SHFs have the capacity to consistently supply schools. The present ad-hoc role of parastatals might lead to competition and inadequate capacity-building for SHFs.

211. During HGSF's implementation, Farmer Associations indicated that they played a pivotal role in HGSF by providing or facilitating technical support to SHFs through trainings and providing agriculture inputs. Their deep-rooted association with SHFs and ability to liaise with other supply chain entities boosts the sustainability prospects. Working with Ministry of Agriculture, Farmer Associations support famers to produce and supply the required quantities.

212. As already noted, HGSF pilot project demonstrated potential for increasing incomes of SHFs, triggering broader economic activities. This can result in a positive feedback loop between SHFs and other stakeholders, enhancing the program's sustainability. The relatively constant demand from HGSF may also encourage greater investments in agriculture and attract financial institutions to support SHFs.

213. Certain issues, like delays in produce collection and extended payment periods, might hinder sustainability. The clash between SHFs' preference for quick payments (within 3 days) and usual corporate payment norms signals a gap in the supply chain, suggesting the necessity for a mediator that caters to both SHFs and corporate requirements.

214. The evaluation revealed that there is an uneven density of SHFs across the country and that some commodities such as tomatoes are seasonal in some locations. Therefore, for the project to be scalable, there is a need to explore a systemic approach to procurement that anticipates the need to 'shift' commodities from one location to another – smoothing supply throughout the year and the private sector (or parastatals) is better placed to place to perform this role. Furthermore, SHFs' production capacity is small, therefore it is important to increase the number of formal relationships with private sector, in the form of strategic partnership or mentorship.

215. Overall, stakeholders at all levels, reported that they see value in the HGSF, and this perceived value is viewed as a good basis for sustainability. For example, farmers reported willingness to participate in the

[138] FAO.2022. Support To Local Nutrition Needs Led Climate Smart Production And Marketing In The Hhohho, Lubombo And Shiselweni Regions. https://www.fao.org/3/cc2874en/cc2874en.pdf

project and this willingness coupled with technical adjustment on the design and implementation of the project could ensure both sustainability and scalability.

5.2. Is the current enabling environment in Eswatini conducive to the current HGSF programme design?

216. Women and youth SHFs face a particularly stifling set of multi-dimensional chronic vulnerabilities. Those relating to the effects of climate change appear to be rapidly increasing in severity. SHFs report that unreliable rainy seasons and devastating hailstorms are the main reasons for the dramatic drop in production of tomatoes. Successive crop failures due to these factors simple rendered the enterprise of tomato production non-viable.[139]

217. The role of parastatal institutions appears to be underutilized in the pilot model; at the same time, parastatals and private sector actors appear to present viable solutions to some of the critical challenges frequently identified by project stakeholders – such as the reliability of demand and supply, logistics of transportation, timeliness of off-taking, storage capacity constraints, and delayed payments.

[139] SHF survey, FGDs with SHFs, KIIs with project staff.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: The HGSF project, while it is aligned with several national priorities, there is no comprehensive and unified policy framework, crucial for underpinning a shared vision and enabling a multi-sectoral execution of HGSF strategies (geographic and beneficiary targeting, local procurement, and social inclusion and human rights issues).

218. The HGSF programme is in alignment with a wide range of national policies and strategies, from the National Development Strategy to the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Programme (PRSAP) and the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP). This level of alignment ensures the project is not operating in isolation and contributes to broader national objectives. By focusing on food and nutrition insecurity as an impediment to education, the HGSF addresses one of the primary barriers to accessing quality education for all Swazi children.

219. The programme actively integrates economic objectives, with an emphasis on benefiting smallholder farmers in Eswatini. By providing a consistent and reliable market for local smallholder farmers, the programme assists in strengthening the local agricultural economy. The program has shown a commitment to involving both men and women, with a notable surge in the participation of women farmers over the years. While this signifies progress in gender inclusion, there's an evident gap in the inclusion of people living with disabilities.

220. Relevance of the HGSF could be enhanced by a clearly defined vision and well-articulated policy framework that supports its implementation and scale up. Such a framework is needed to clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders particularly, key government ministries, private sector, civil society and UN actors so as to achieve the HGSF objectives.

Conclusion 2: The project tested the HGSF pilot model in various geographical and agroecological locations with schools and farmers that have different characteristics in terms of demand, production, and vulnerability profiles (including gender); results indicate a need to tailor the model to ensure contextual relevance and effectiveness.

221. Further, the HGSF model was not fully tailored to the Eswatini to enhance relevance across a range of agroecological contexts (considering not only variations in types of commodity production, but also density of smallholder farmers in school catchment areas, idiosyncratic transportation logistics, and gender issues related to specific producer groups).

222. The HGSF model successfully established contracts connecting smallholder farmers to the HGSF market. Doing so, exposed these farmers to the risks of a volatile market that proved to be quite unstable over the pilot period, undermining the HGSF relevance pertaining to the appropriateness of contracting modalities with smallholder farmers.

223. The HGSF project did not fully consider the agriculture potential and capacity of different geographic regions and smallholder farmers. Addressing these gaps can lead to better outcomes and optimize the utilization of resources. The inconsistency of demand from the HGSF market during the pilot contributed to production fluctuation, as many SHFs were left struggling to either scale-up rapidly or suddenly find alternative markets for their commodities when HGSF procurement schedules were changed. The aim of the pilot to check the production capacity of SHFs must be qualified by this erratic demand and the appropriateness of the design/targeting in some locations. Overall, the capability of SHFs to be viable suppliers for HGSF in Eswatini appears to exist, though it will require relevant support to develop sustainably.

Conclusion 3: The HGSF pilot promoted a well-balanced, nutritious food basket, but there were challenges around consistent supply of vegetables, menu diversity, and quality of meal preparation.

224. The HGSF pilot follows the Inqaba manual's guidelines which promote a nutritious food basket, hygiene, and food safety. However, the manual is outdated and lacks specific guidance for daily food preparation and support for local farmers. Although, under the HGSF pilot, diverse menus were designed from a minimum of four food groups, still there is some ambiguity regarding the selection of certain vegetables and their portion sizes. There's also a lack of guidance on planning menus based on regional food availability. Unclear instructions on vegetable preparation and serving led to varied interpretations among stakeholders and cooks, causing inconsistencies in food presentation. Quality of meals suffered due to potential improper cooking techniques or inadequate training of cooks.

225. Most children felt content with the food's portion size, with girls being more satisfied than boys. The variety in meals, especially vegetables, was appreciated. However, there was a noted decrease in satisfaction levels from baseline findings. Overall satisfaction with meal preparation saw a slight increase, with differences based on gender and regional schools.

226. The pilot faced difficulties in consistently supplying vegetables due to limited production by farmers, seasonality of vegetables, and abrupt termination of contracts with smallholder farmers. Findings show that the method of selecting farmer groups over individual farmers likely reduced tomato production capacity, for example. Lack of necessary infrastructure, especially for off-season cultivation also limited tomato production. Many farmers lacked adequate extension support, a crucial aspect for effective cultivation. Incidents like the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, and recurring natural disasters disrupted tomato and other vegetable productions.

227. Although there was an increase in schools using gardens to support school meals, challenges remain, including limited understanding of the role of gardens within the HGSF model. As with the development of SHFs as viable suppliers to the HGSF market, the same level of intentionality is needed at the level of school gardens – realistic planning should set expectations for school garden production that are modest and are supported by adequate resources and implementation strategies. There was not a clear strategy for developing the role for school gardens as demonstration plots that can support education on agriculture and nutrition.

Conclusion 4: Production levels for commodities procured under the HGSF pilot fluctuated significantly, except for maize.

228. The data suggests that farmers are making more use of their land for cultivation, especially for maize. Smallholder farmers have witnessed an increase in their average annual farm income between 2018 to 2022. This increase can be associated with their participation in the HGSF programme. The HGSF Programme, through collaborations like those with WFP, offers attractive prices for crops and reduced transaction costs (since grains are collected directly from aggregation points). This has made farming more profitable for some farmers.

229. Despite some farmers benefiting from increased income, a significant number of farmers reported zero farm income over the pilot period. This indicates a disparity in benefits and raises equity concerns, pointing to the need for more inclusive approaches and improved agricultural support. Despite the HGSF initiative, there were concerns from farmers about the reliability of the HGSF market. Issues like school closures and funding constraints for vegetable farmers affected the consistency of demand.

Conclusion 5: Overall, while the HGSF pilot project had clear structures in place, there were significant challenges in coordination, communication, and implementation. Stakeholder sentiments suggest that a more comprehensive approach with clear role definitions, communication strategies, and stakeholder engagement is required for scale up.

230. The MoET, Nutrition Unit led the HGSF pilot project, using the same coordination structures as the NSFP. Two primary bodies, the Steering Committee was established for oversight and implementation. A major concern was the lack of clear criteria for selection, not considering the proximity and capacity of smallholder farmers.

231. The Steering committee helped define the HGSF's objectives and operationalize them, but fell short in several areas, such as properly communicating the overall vision and failing to include broader sectors in the discussion. Although the MoET was diligent in its role, there were challenges in ensuring full participation and support from agriculture extension workers. Gaps in how the HGSF concept was introduced led to confusion and inadequacies in roles and responsibilities, particularly between the MoA and MoET. The steering committee provided strategic oversight, and key decisions were made, including adjusting food rations. However, communication of these decisions to schools and farmers seemed to be lacking. The project's monitoring and evaluation systems had notable deficiencies, with missing data for many indicators. However, the introduction of tools like tablets for data collection towards the project's end indicates attempts at improvement.

Conclusion 6: While gender mainstreaming has been incorporated into project activities, there is room for improvement and opportunities for targeted support to specific livelihood areas where women are either particularly vulnerable and/or well-positioned (e.g., women egg producer groups face this dual reality).

232. Economic empowerment of women through increased participation of smallholder farmers is evident, but disability mainstreaming has been lacking. Understanding and addressing structural barriers and social norms facing all genders and persons with disabilities is crucial. The absence of detailed gender analysis at the start of the project made it difficult to demonstrate a gender transformative approach.

233. There are evident gender disparities in the program's benefits. Between 2018 and 2020, a higher number of women farmers reported zero farm income compared to their male counterparts. This suggests that women might be facing greater challenges or barriers in leveraging the opportunities provided by the HGSF Programme.

Conclusion 7: The HGSF program is highly regarded by all stakeholders, particularly farmers. To ensure its sustainability, modifications are needed in its design, specifically regarding clarity on public and private partnerships.

234. The HGSF was designed to empower Smallholder farmers and there was no clarity on the role of the private sector and parastatals including farmer associations as avenues for creating sustainability of interventions. The scattered distribution of SHFs and seasonality of some crops highlight the need for a strategic procurement approach. A system that shifts commodities between regions and a stronger relationship with the private sector can aid in ensuring a steady supply. The overall positive sentiment towards HGSF among stakeholders lays a strong foundation for its sustainability. The farmers' willingness to participate, paired with necessary adjustments in the program's design and execution, can ensure long-term viability and potential expansion.

3.2. LESSONS LEARNED

The following section presents lessons for the Home-Grown School Feeding Pilot in Eswatini.

HGSF Pilot Project design

235. While a diverse group of stakeholders was involved during the program's implementation, their engagement was insufficient during the design phase. Even though a widely representative and multisectoral task force was established, challenges with clear communication lines, member attrition and clear roles and responsibilities were a hindrance to project success. Therefore, building on and integrating into existing national institutional arrangements could have facilitated early success through the smooth integration of the project into ongoing national development planning and the effective use of resources.

236. The program's menu expanded to incorporate more vegetables, with the collaboration of the MoH to ensure a balanced diet. However, these menus did not accurately represent the dietary habits of different geographical communities and were not synchronized with seasonality of vegetables, affecting supply consistency.

237. Training and capacity-building were crucial for smallholder farmers and school-level participants to foster sustainable farming, efficient supply chain management, safe storage, and upholding food safety standards. Nevertheless, improved coordination through a common training plan could have been

designed by the main key stakeholders (WFP, FAO, MoA, and MoET) to prevent overlap and optimize resource utilization.

238. The initiative lacked a comprehensive M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation) system, which could have provided a unified approach to tracking food distribution and consumption, assessing nutritional results, and overseeing the agricultural output and food security of smallholder farmers instead of separate data collection methods.

239. The program didn't prioritize hygiene and infrastructure enough, which would ensure schools had safe cooking facilities, access to potable water, and sanitary conditions for food storage and preparation. Moreover, there was an absence of contingency planning to address external challenges, such as droughts or floods, which could significantly influence food availability.

Flexibility of local procurement arrangements

240. The project was successful in facilitating access to markets for local smallholder farmers by bringing the market closer to the farmers. However, evaluation findings suggest that individual farmers performed better than farmer groups, during project implementation. Despite the project's emphasis on the development and support of farmer groups, these groups faced challenges. Group dynamics impacted decision-making and overall output. For future initiatives, it may be beneficial to strike a balance between supporting farmer groups and individual farmers.

Pricing structure

241. The pricing structure for the provision of flexible goods should be made more flexible going forward. The evaluation found that vegetable farmers were heavily affected by the standard contracting price which was not adjusted for seasonal changes, input hikes, and transport costs. The lesson for future projects is to enable the development of more flexible contracts with vegetable producers and conduct price reviews as per the changing context of project implementation.

Role of private sector in school feeding

242. Private sector companies can play a critical in partnering with project implementers to supplement the provision of food by SHF (especially where they fail to deliver), as well as to support infrastructure development, and foster the achievement of wider national economic development. If well cultivated the HGSFP may benefit from the development of public-private partnerships to encourage investment at different levels of the HGSFP (to identify alternative funding sources) and develop a robust coordination mechanism for project implementation.

Gender and human rights and marginalized groups

243. Through the provision of food to both boys and girls, the project appealed to the rights to education, gender equality, and right to food for all children. However, due to the lack of access to land for most marginalized groups such as the youth, women and people living with disabilities, their engagement in the project was limited. Similar projects should make deliberate efforts to facilitate the engagement of marginalized groups in such projects.

3.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Develop a robust policy framework that mandates the inclusion of HGSF in the NSFP in Eswatini.

244. The Government of Eswatini through the Deputy Prime Minister's Office should lead a multi-ministerial task force to develop long term long-term vision and political commitment for HGSF in Eswatini. This process should include defining the broad and long-term changes that stakeholders, particularly the government, aim to achieve with HGSF; and conduct a precise context analysis and assessments – exploring the needs that can be addressed by HGSF in the country, and developing an understanding of the different existing environments and opportunities that can support the vision. The vision of the HGSF should be located within NSFP policy framework. The following specific actions are recommended:

- Update the National Framework for Food Security in Schools (NFFSS) of 2013, making NSFP and HGSF more explicit. The MoET should consider developing a school feeding policy which should guide implementation of the NSFP and provide policy and legitimacy to the HGSF.
- Develop and implement a policy advocacy plan focusing on the Permanent Secretary Levels of the key institutions (MoA and MoET). The plan should be accompanied by advocacy, awareness raising and policy dialogues involving multi-sectoral stakeholders across the government, private sector, farmer organizations and civil society.
- Following development of a shared vision of HGSF led by the Government of Eswatini and supported by WFP and FAO, map stakeholders and clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Develop synergies with the African Union's (AU) Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) HGSF Cluster to access technical support, financial resources, participation in the HGSF knowledge ecosystem, and contribution to its strategic priorities and operational plan.[140]

Recommendation 2: Adjust the design of the HGSF to set realistic targets for scaling with the purpose of establishing a pathway for progressive adoption of a model for HGSF schools that will include all necessary components – including complimentary services.

245. **Geographical considerations**: Conduct a thorough assessment of the geographical locations of schools and farmers involved in the project. Consider the availability and capacity of smallholder farmers within a reasonable radius to enhance efficiency and inclusivity. Consider factors such as accessibility, proximity to markets, availability of resources, and local agricultural practices. This analysis can help identify specific challenges and opportunities related to the project implementation in different areas and guide the design of context-specific interventions. The HGSF should be flexible and be integrated within the different agro-ecological zones of the country (it is not a one size fits all). This is particularly important since some commodities (such as tomatoes) are seasonal in the highveld region (they can only grow during the frost-free seasons).

246. **Stakeholder engagement:** Engage with local communities, schools, farmers, private sector, NGOs and relevant stakeholders to establish their roles, gather insights and involve them in the project planning and decision-making processes. Their input and perspectives can help identify location-specific challenges and inform the design of appropriate interventions that meet the needs of different groups.

247. Further attention should be given to the HGSF strategies implemented in the pilot program, such as **local procurement**, **diversifying meal rations**, and strengthening school complimentary services particularly school gardens. Identify and address the factors contributing to variations in success to achieve more consistent positive outcomes.

248. The partners (WFP, FAO and MoET) should support government in conducting a detailed market assessment/study that will inform a local procurement strategy for Eswatini that will be endorsed at policy levels and guide implementation of the NSFP as well as the HGSF and beyond. This should include contingency plans to buffer SHFs from shocks that can result from sudden school closures in the event of unexpected emergencies (e.g., perhaps reverting to distribution of take-home rations that would still provide an outlet for commodities produced by SHFs for the purpose of HGSF).[141]

249. Through a detailed context analysis, and working with communities, develop HGSF guidelines that will cover all the processes including development of model menus based on local preferences and availability of commodities.

[140] The five strategic priorities are: 1) Policy and Legal Framework; 2) Coordination; 3) Knowledge Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL); 4) Strengthening and building capacity; and 5) Advocacy for Political Commitment and Resource Mobilization.
African Union, 2019. CESA Home Grown School Feeding Cluster, Terms of reference, Strategy, Workplan and Indicators 2019 – 2021.

[141] WFP's synthesis of school feeding in emergencies (SF-E) found that, "SF-E was appropriate for meeting nutritional, food-related and educational, and needs of children in crisis settings. https://www.wfp.org/publications/school-feeding-emergencies-synthesis-evaluation

250. Strengthen water and sanitation, fuel efficient kitchens and climate sensitive/smart school feeding gardens by working with various expert organizations.

251. Strengthen the capacity of farmers to produce nutrition sensitive commodities including the indigenous leafy green vegetables that are available in each region.

252. Identify the preliminary risks associated with the scale-up and/or optimization of an HGSF programme, and the other complementary activities needed to meet the objectives.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen mainstreaming of gender, disadvantaged groups (people living with disabilities) and human rights in the design and implementation of HGSF.

253. Expand the program's focus on addressing the food and nutrition needs of various demographic groups by considering vulnerability differences among targeted groups. Ensure that the program is designed and implemented with a specific focus on inclusivity and addressing the specific needs of marginalized populations including people living with disabilities.

254. While gender mainstreaming has been incorporated into project activities, there is a need for addressing the economic empowerment of women and the vulnerabilities faced by girls in schools through the following:

- Conduct a thorough gender analysis to understand and address the structural barriers and social norms facing all genders.
- Design targeted interventions for women farmers that address access to resources and strengthen their economic empowerment.
- Consider establishing girls' rooms with appropriate water and sanitation facilities in all HGSF model schools that will ensure attendance of girls during their menstrual periods.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen capacities of all stakeholders at the school and farmer levels:

255. Provide training and capacity-building initiatives that focus on key gaps identified in the evaluation and including gender equality, disability inclusion, and the empowerment of all project participants. This can include sensitization workshops, awareness campaigns, and skill development programs that challenge stereotypes and promote inclusive practices. All capacity strengthening activities should be guided by a common capacity strengthening strategy to ensure harmonization and maximization of resources.

Recommendation 5: Enhance the quality of meals served at schools through:

256. Training and supervision: Provide training to the cooks involved in the program to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge for quality food preparation. Regular supervision and monitoring can help maintain consistency in the quality of meals.

257. Menu planning: Develop a well-rounded menu that includes a variety of nutritious and culturally appropriate meals. This can help address the issue of inconsistent and repetitive meals. Consider incorporating feedback from the children and their families to ensure the meals are appealing to the target audience.

258. Collaboration with nutrition experts: Seek guidance from nutrition experts or dieticians to ensure the meals meet the nutritional requirements of the children. They can provide valuable insights on food choices, portion sizes, and preparation methods.

Recommendation 6: Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that includes gender and disability-disaggregated data collection. Regularly assess the progress, impact, and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion efforts within the project.

Recommendation 7: Enhance the cost efficiency and equity of the HGSF through the following:

259. Addressing Income disparities between farmers. Participating farmers in the HGSF program generally experienced increased income. However, there was a significant difference between the lowest

and highest reported income, indicating inequality between smallholder farmers (SHFs). The trendline of standard deviation increased over the project period, suggesting a widening income gap among SHFs. This underscores the need for sustained support and efforts to facilitate profitable market access, particularly for women SHFs and farmers with very small holdings.

260. Strengthening logistics strategy: Measures should be implemented to address delays in key activities, such as timely collection of commodities from farmers (to reduce the incidence of side-selling). Improving coordination, communication, and infrastructure can help to reduce disruptions and support farmers in meeting delivery schedules. Major challenges were observed in vendor selection, contracting, and sourcing.

261. Contextualized/balanced cost analysis: Given the differences in ration sizes and compositions between the HGSF and traditional SF models, it is important to consider a more nuanced cost analysis that reflects the specific objectives, outcomes, and benefits of each approach. This can provide a clearer understanding of the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the HGSF program.

Table 15. Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Grouping	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	By when
1	**Recommendation 1: Develop a robust policy framework that mandates the inclusion of HGSF in the NSFP in Eswatini.**	Short-to-medium term	WFP	MoET, MoA, FAO	High	Before the end of 2024
	1.1: Update Inqaba manual to make NSFP/HGSF more explicit; consider developing a school feeding policy.					
	1.2: Advocate for the integration at both the national and regional levels, emphasizing the multi-dimensional benefits					
	1.3: Develop a shared vision of HGSF and conduct a stakeholder mapping based on this vision, establish/formalize HGSF coordination structures					
	1.4: Develop synergies with other southern African and Africa wide HGSF initiatives (e.g., CESA HGSF Cluster).					
2	**Recommendation 2: Adjust the design of HGSF to set realistic targets for scaling with the purpose of establishing a pathway for the progressive adoption of a model for HGSF schools that will include all necessary components – including complimentary services.**	Short term	WFP	MoET, MoA	High	As soon as possible
	2.1: Conduct a thorough assessment of the geographical locations of schools and farmers considering accessibility, market proximity, and local agricultural practices.					
	2.2: Engage with local communities, schools, farmers, and relevant stakeholders to gather in sights and involve them in the planning and design of appropriate interventions that meet location-specific challenges.					
	2.3: Further develop HGSF strategies around local procurement, meal diversification, and strengthening complimentary services.					
	2.4: Conduct a detailed market assessment to inform local procurement strategy for Eswatini to guide the NSFP and HGSF.					
	2.5: Conduct a detailed context analysis with communities to develop HGSF guidelines that cover all the processes including development of model menus based on local preferences and availability of commodities.					
	2.6: Strengthen complimentary services under the HGSF – water and sanitation, fuel efficient kitchens, and climate smart school gardens supported by organizations/agencies that deliver agricultural capacity building support.					
	2.7: Strengthen the capacity of farmers to produce nutrition sensitive commodities including the indigenous leafy green vegetables that are available in each region and climate smart crops such as groundnuts.					
3	**Recommendation 3: Strengthen mainstreaming of gender, disadvantaged groups (people living with disabilities) and human rights in the design and implementation of HGSF.**		WFP		High	

#	Recommendation	Grouping	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	By when
	3.1: Expand the program's focus on addressing the food and nutrition needs of various demographic groups by more systematically considering vulnerability and inclusivity.	Short term		MoET, MoA, DPMO		As soon as possible
	3.2: Address the economic empowerment of women and the vulnerabilities faced by girls in schools.					
4	**Recommendation 4: Strengthen capacities of all stakeholders at the school and farmer levels through training and capacity-building focusing on gaps identified in the evaluation and particularly gender equality, disability inclusion, and the empowerment of all project participants.**	Medium term	WFP	MoET, MoA	Med	By the end of 2024
5	**Recommendation 5: Enhance the quality of meals served at schools.**	Medium term	WFP	MoET, MoA, FAO	Med	By the end of 2024
	5.1: Provide training to cooks to ensure the necessary skills and knowledge for quality food preparation.					
	5.2: Develop a well-rounded menu that includes a variety of nutritious and culturally appropriate meals.					
	5.3: Seek guidance from nutrition experts or dieticians to ensure the meals meet the nutritional requirements.					
6	**Recommendation 6: Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that includes gender and disability-disaggregated data collection.**	Medium term	WFP	MoET, MoA	Med	By the end of 2024
8	**Recommendation 7: Enhance the cost efficiency of the HGSF model**	Short term	WFP	MoET, MoA	Med	As soon as possible
	7.1: Sustain support for facilitation of profitable market access, particularly for women SHFs and farmers with *very small* holdings (non-profitability of engagement with the HGSF pilot correlated strongly with the size of landholding).					
	7.2: Strengthen supply chain and logistics to address delays in key activities such as timely collection of commodities from farmers and transferal of payments to farmers.					
	7.3: Develop a more nuanced/balanced approach to cost analysis that reflects the specific objectives, outcomes, and benefits of the HGSF model.					

Annexes

Annex 1. Summary Terms of Reference

Evaluation of linking smallholder farmers to the home-grown school feeding market in Eswatini from 2019 to 2021

Summary Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

1. These summarised terms of reference (ToR)[142] pertain to the joint decentralized evaluation titled 'Evaluation of ***linking smallholder farmers to the Home-grown school feeding market in Eswatini from 2019 to 2021'***. This final evaluation was jointly commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and the Eswatini Country Office (CO) of the World Food Programme (WFP) within the framework of the ongoing Country Strategic Plan (CSP) 2020-2025 and will cover the period September 2019 to December 2021. These ToR serve to furnish stakeholders with key information, offer guidance to the evaluation team, and outline expectations throughout the various phases of the evaluation process.

2. Subject and focus of the Evaluation

2. The evaluation will cover the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) pilot project implemented by the Ministry of Education (MoET) and WFP in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The pilot was in all four regions ((Hhohho, Manzini, Lubombo and Shiselweni) of the country in fifty primary and high schools. The schools supplied one meal a day during the school terms and reached 24,900 boys and girls across the 50 schools. One of the main objectives of the programme was to link the smallholder farmers to markets, resulting in an increase in the number of smallholder farmer participants, with a specific focus on women.

3. The HGSF programme is aligned to two Sustainable Development Goals namely SDG4 (Quality education) and SDG2 (Zero hunger). Additionally, there is a linkage between the HGSF programme and SDGs 1 (No poverty), 3 (Good health and wellbeing), 5 (Gender equality) and 17 (Partnerships for the goals).

4. The CSP strategic outcomes and activities covered by the evaluation include: -

Strategic outcome 2: Smallholder farmers, particularly women, have enhanced capacities to supply structured markets with nutritious foods by 2024. *Activity 2: Strengthen the capacities of smallholder farmers, particularly women, to sustainably produce and supply nutritious foods to structured markets, including schools.*

Strategic outcome 3: By 2030 equitable, integrated and shock-responsive social protection systems are accessible to vulnerable populations, particularly women, children, adolescent girls, and people living with HIV. *Activity 3: Provide evidence and strengthen national systems and capacities to design and implement nutrition-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection programmes incl, school feeding.*

[142] Full ToR is available at https://www.wfp.org/publications

5. The design, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting for the components in each of the above SOs are to be covered in this evaluation. The scope of evaluation will, therefore, cover all fifty schools in all four regions) of the country.

3. Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

6. The **objectives** of the evaluation are: -

- **Accountability** – The evaluation will assess and report on the performance and results of the *Linking Eswatini Smallholder Farmers to the Homegrown School Feeding Market* thus meeting internal and external accountability requirements.
- **Learning** – The evaluation will also use the findings of the evaluation for lessons learnt, best practices and challenges that were experienced. The findings will be widely disseminated, and the lessons will be integrated into applicable lesson-sharing platforms

7. The **scope** of the evaluation will cover all activities of the HGSF programme and FAO committed to provide funding for the pilot programme which includes. This is complemented by MoET funding for further diversification of the meals, these include vegetables which were procured from the 1st term of 2020 and eggs in 2022.

8. The main activities include: (i) Assessment and registration of smallholder farmers; (ii) Procurement of food commodities; (iii) Support for agricultural trade equipment; (iv) Support refurbishment of storage facilities; (v) Capacity development and strengthening of smallholder farmers, government counterparts and cooks, and (vi) Gender equality and women empowerment.

4. Evaluation Stakeholders

9. The evaluation aims to engage a diverse array of internal and external stakeholders associated with the HGSF pilot, ensuring its relevance and utility. Various stakeholders will be invited to contribute to the evaluation process based on their anticipated interest and level of influence over the outcomes of the program under review.

10. Primary users of the evaluation findings will include the Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Agriculture, WFP Eswatini Country Office, and the Food and Agriculture Organization and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project to inform policy decisions as well as decision-making on upscaling the HGSF pilot. WFP will the findings to inform strategic guidance and oversight to Eswatini CO as well as contribute to evidence generation on the scale up of HGSF in Southern Africa.

11. Crucially, the beneficiaries, encompassing women, men, girls, and boys, are integral stakeholders in this evaluation.

5. Evaluation Questions

12. The evaluation will address the key questions presented below according to the evaluation criteria. The evaluation questions will be further developed and tailored by the evaluation team in a detailed evaluation matrix during the inception phase.

5.1 Relevance/ Appropriateness

EQ1: To what extent does the HGSF initiative align with national priorities and needs of women, men, girls and boys in the targeted communities?

13. **Question 1.1**: To what extent are the strategies used to build food security for targeted groups relevant in the current context of economic and policy instability?

14. **Question 1.2:** To what extent are the different components of the HGSF programme in line with the needs of women, men, boys and girls from different marginalized groups in the targeted communities?

15. **Question 1.3:** To what extent are HGSF activities aligned to national priorities? What are the key entry points for advocacy and policy influencing to promote the integrated approach?

16. **Question 1.4:** To what extent is the HGSF intervention aligned to the priorities of the Government of Eswatini?

17. **Question 1.5:** To what extent was the design and implementation of the intervention premised upon a thorough gender analysis?

5.2 Effectiveness

EQ2: To what extent did the HGSF intervention achieve its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across different groups?

18. **Question 2.1:** To what extent have the HGSF expected outputs, outcomes, and strategic

results been achieved among the women, men, boys and girls including the different targeted groups

19. **Question 2.2:** What are the major factors (internal and external) influencing the achievement and non-achievement of the objectives of the HGSF pilot, and what challenges were faced in the programme?

20. **Question 2.3:** How can the HGSF initiative and as well the humanitarian-development nexus components be effectively sequenced and layered for better programming and better resilience outcomes?

21. **Question 2.4:** How have gender equality and human rights issues been mainstreamed and addressed in the design and implementation of the HGSF initiative?

22. **Question 2.5:** To what extent do the assumptions that underpin the HGSF pilot hold true and what factors affected the implementation of this initiative?

5.3 Efficiency

EQ3: Was the HGSF initiative implemented in a timely and cost-efficient manner?

23. **Question 3.1:** Were the HGSF activities implemented in a timely manner and cost-efficient manner? If not, what were the challenges for the delays?

24. **Question 3.2:** What factors affected the efficiency of the programme?

25. **Question 3.3:** How cost-effective is the HGSF model and can the Government dedicate further national resources in the model for possible expansion?

5.4 Coherence

EQ4: How compatible is the HGSF initiative with other interventions implemented by the Government and other stakeholders?

26. **Question 4.1:** How effective were the HGSF pilot coordination mechanisms amongst the key stakeholders working with the Ministry of Education (the programme lead), Ministry of Agriculture, WFP and FAO?

27. **Question 4.2:** What are the complementarities and synergies between the HGSF pilot and interventions carried out by Government, WFP and other actors in Eswatini?

28. **Question 14.3:** What value addition does the HGSF intervention provide in the context of other similar interventions supported by the Government and other actors?

5.5 Sustainability/Scalability

EQ5: To what extent can the HGSF intervention be sustained and scaled up in Eswatini?

29. **Question 5.1:** How do we create sustainable relationships between the private sector and HGSF farmers? Do private sector companies consider the targeted smallholder farmers as a profitable group and are they willing to continue engaging them? If not, what can be done about it?

30. **Question 5.2:** Is the current enabling environment in Eswatini conducive to the current HGSF programme design? Are there changes that need to be made to make the approach more effective?

31. **Question 5.3:** What key insights, lessons and recommendations are offered with a view on the possible scaling of the HGSF programme? What should be done differently if the programme were to be scaled up?

32. **Question 5.4:** To what extent has the HGSF pilot contributed to the regular feeding of schoolchildren in targeted school in comparison with other schools? And to what extent would the HGSF pilot contribute to the sustainability of the national school feeding programme in Eswatini?

6. Methodology

33. This evaluation will use a mixed methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative approaches are employed, and the results are triangulated to ensure rigour. The methodology will be developed with, and enhanced, by the evaluation team during the inception phase. The methodology should: -

a. Employ the relevant evaluation criteria of relevance/appropriateness, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

b. To what extent has the HGSF pilot contributed to the regular feeding of schoolchildren in targeted school in comparison with other schools? And to what extent would the HGSF pilot contribute to the sustainability of the national school feeding programme in Eswatini?

c. Using mixed methods (quantitative, qualitative, participatory, etc.) to ensure triangulation of information through a variety of means.

d. Apply an evaluation matrix geared towards addressing the key evaluation questions considering the data availability challenges, the budget and timing constraints

e. Ensure using mixed methods that women, girls, men and boys from different stakeholder groups participate and that their different voices are heard and used

34. In addition, the methodology chosen should: -

a. Demonstrate attention to impartiality and reduction of bias by relying on mixed methods (quantitative, qualitative, participatory etc.) to ensure triangulation of information from different primary and secondary data sources.

b. Systematically triangulate across evaluators, and across methods, including documents from different sources, a range of stakeholder groups, including beneficiaries, and direct observations in different locations, etc.

c. Consider any challenges to data availability, validity, or reliability, as well as any budget and timing constraints.

d. Ensure that the primary data collected is disaggregated by sex and age. An explanation should be provided if this is not possible.

e. Be sensitive in terms of gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE), equity, and inclusion, by ensuring that voices of diverse groups (men and women, boys, girls, the elderly, people living with disabilities and other marginalized groups) are included in the evaluation.

35. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations must reflect gender and equity analysis. The findings should include a discussion on the intended and unintended effects of the intervention on gender equality and equity dimensions. The report should provide lessons/ challenges/ recommendations for conducting gender and equity-responsive evaluations in the future.

36. The evaluation must conform to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines for evaluation which include but are not limited to; ensuring informed consent, protecting privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondents, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of respondents, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups) and ensuring that the evaluation results do no harm to respondents or their communities.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

37. **Evaluation Team:** The evaluation team will consist of three members comprising one international and two national evaluators with expertise in national school feeding programmes and cost- efficiency and cost-effectiveness analysis. The evaluation team will be required to have good knowledge of gender, equity and wider inclusion issues and will ensure data quality (validity, consistency, and accuracy) throughout the analytical and reporting phases.

38. **Evaluation Co-Managers:** The evaluation process will be managed by Thobile Gamedze form Ministry of Education and Training and Bindza Ginindza from WFP Eswatini country office.

39. **Evaluation Committee:** The evaluation committee is co-chaired by the Ministry of Education and Training Director, Dr Ntombenhle Dlamini and WFP Eswatini country office, Head of Office, Deepak Shah. This committee will oversee the evaluation process, make key decisions, and review evaluation products submitted to the chair for approval. The overall purpose of the committee is to ensure a credible, transparent, impartial, and quality evaluation process in accordance with the WFP Evaluation Policy (2022-2030).

40. **Evaluation Reference Group:** The evaluation reference group (ERG), co-chaired by the Ministry of Education and Training Director, Dr Ntombenhle Dlamini and WFP Eswatini country office, Head of Office, Deepak Shah acts as the advisory body. The ERG will contribute to the credibility, utility, and impartiality of the evaluation. They will be guided by the following principles: transparency, ownership and use and accuracy. Their main role will be to review and comment on the draft evaluation products, participate in learning workshops to validate findings, and discuss recommendations and suggest communication products. The ERG members include internal stakeholders (CO and Regional Bureau) and government stakeholders from the Ministry of Education and Training and Ministry of Agriculture , FAO and farmers apex organizations such as ESNAU & ESWAFCU.

8. Communications

41. To ensure a smooth and efficient process and enhance the learning from this evaluation, the evaluation team should place emphasis on transparent and open communication with key stakeholders. These include:

a) Working with the evaluation co-managers to ensure a detailed evaluation schedule is communicated to stakeholders before field work starts, and it is annexed to the inception report.

b) Sharing a brief PowerPoint presentation prior to the internal and external debriefings to enable stakeholders joining the briefings remotely to follow the discussions.

c) Including in the final report the list of people interviewed, as appropriate (bearing in mind confidentiality and protection issues highlighted in section 4.4 of the full evaluation Terms of Reference.

d) Systematically considering all stakeholder feedback when finalising the evaluation report, and transparently provide rationale for feedback that was not used.

42. The final evaluation report will be made available to the public on the WFP internal and external websites. The evaluation findings will be proactively and widely disseminated as outlined in the communication and knowledge management plan.

9. Timeliness and Key Milestones

43. **Preparation Phase:** Approved ToR; evaluation team recruitment; and draft communication and knowledge management plan: May 2022.

44. **Inception Phase**: Inception report with methodology, evaluation matrix, data collection tools, field schedule; stakeholders comments matrix: July 2022.

45. **Data collection**: Raw and cleaned data sets; PowerPoint exit debrief/ presentation of preliminary findings: August 2022.

46. **Data Analysis and Reporting**: Approved evaluation report; stakeholder comments matrix: mid-September – October 2022.

47. **Management Response and Dissemination**: Presentation of evaluation results by the evaluation team; management response plan published; and other dissemination products as required: November 2022.

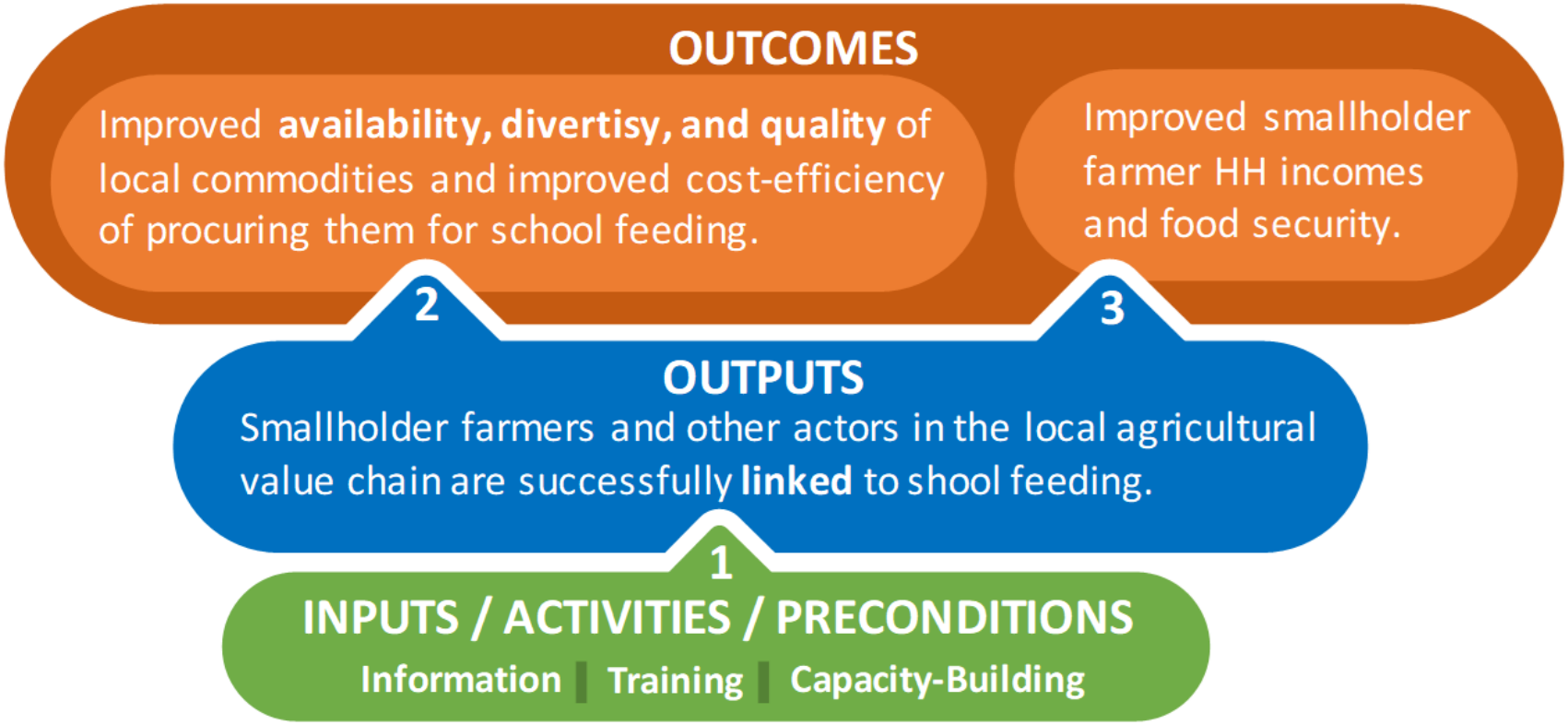
10. List of Acronyms

CO	Country office
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
ESNAU	Eswatini National Agricultural Union
ESWAFCU	Eswatini Farmers' Cooperative Union
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ET	Evaluation Team
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
HGSF	Home Grown School Feeding
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RBJ	WFP Regional Bureau for Southern Africa
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SO	Strategic Outcome
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
WFP	World Food Programme

Annex 2. Reconstructed Theory of Change

48. The evaluation's theory-based approach is rooted in the ToC developed by the Evaluation Team during the Inception phase. The main ToC diagram is presented below. The narrative statement of the reconstructed and consolidated ToC is: **IF smallholder farmers and other actors in the local agricultural value chain are successfully linked to the HGSFP through provision of information, training, and capacity-building, THEN availability of local commodities for the HGSFP will improve and smallholder farmer household incomes and food security will increase.** The logic behind this formulation is discussed further below.

Figure 12. Consolidated and reconstructed Theory of Change for the evaluation of WFP's HGSF pilot programme in Eswatini



Source: Figure developed by the Evaluation Team

Annex 3. Detailed Timeline

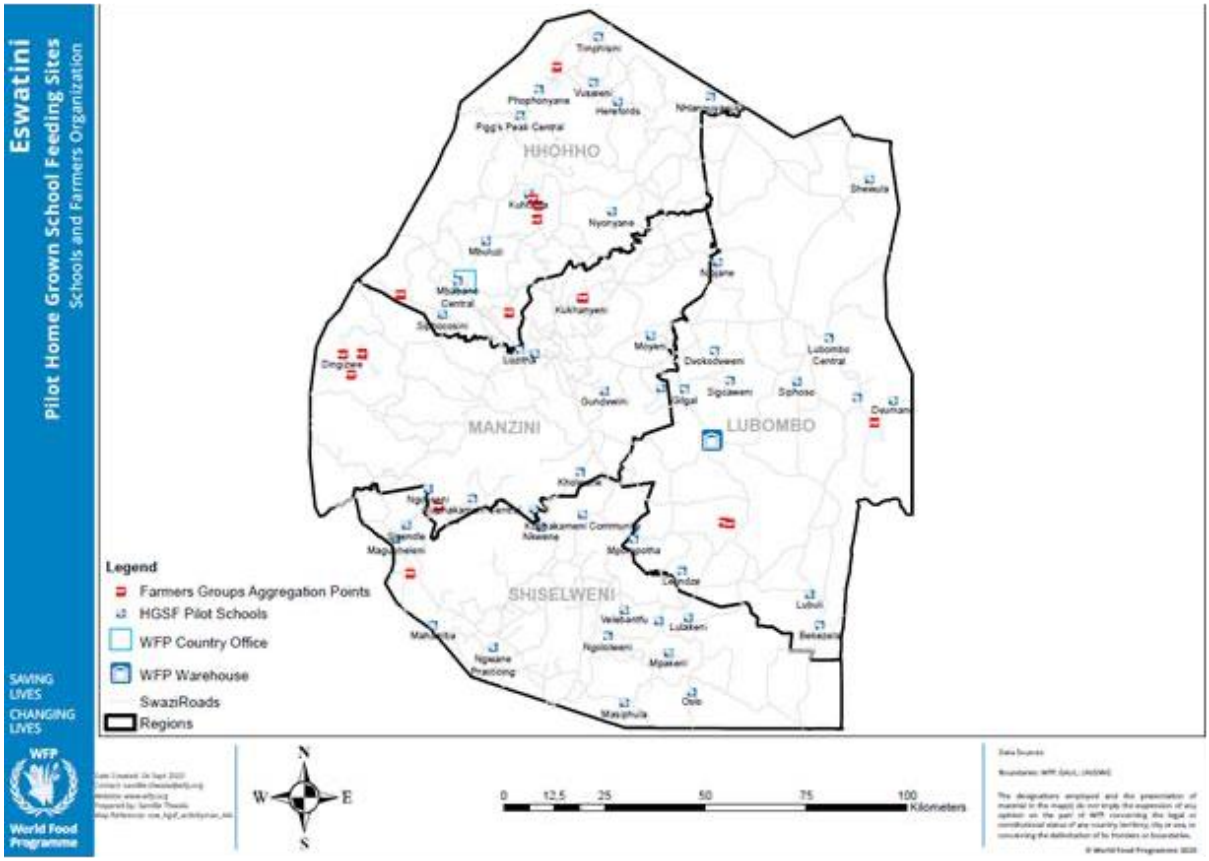
Table 16. Detailed Evaluation Timeline

	Phases, deliverables, and timeline		Key dates
Phase 1 - Preparation			**Up to 9 weeks**
1	Desk review, draft ToR, and quality assurance by EM and REO using ToR QC	EM	Nov 2021-17 Mar 2022
2	Share draft ToR with DEQS and organize follow-up call with DEQS	EM	18 Mar 2022
3	Review draft ToR based on DEQS and REO feedback and share with ERG	EM	22 - 24 Mar 2022
4	Start identification of evaluation team	EM	30 Mar 2022
5	Review and comment on draft ToR	ERG	7-20 Mar 2022
6	Review draft ToR based on comments; submit final ToR to EC Chair	EM	4-10 Apr 2022
7	**Approve the final ToR and share with ERG and key stakeholders**	EC Chair	11-17 Apr 2022
8	Assess evaluation proposals and recommends team selection	EM	18 Apr -21 Apr 2022
9	Evaluation team recruitment/contracting	EM	12 Aug – 26 Aug 2022
10	**Assessment and Approve evaluation team selection**	EC Chair	26 Aug- 21 Sep 2022
	Recruitment of evaluation team		21 Sep- 5 Oct 2022
Phase 2 - Inception			**Up to 7 weeks**
11	Brief core team	EM/TL	05 Oct 2022
12	Desk review of key documents	ET	12-16 Dec 2022
13	**Remote Inception interviews**	ET	19-23 Dec 2022
14	Draft inception report	ET	4 Jan 2023
15	Quality assurance of draft IR by EM and REO using QC, share draft IR with quality support service (DEQS) and organize follow-up call with DEQS	EM	6- 16 Jan 2023
16	Review draft IR based on feedback received by DEQS, EM and REO	ET	6 - 21 Feb 2023
17	Share revised IR with ERG	EM	22 Feb 2023
18	Review and comment on draft IR	ERG	23 Feb - 1 Mar 2023
19	Consolidate comments	EM	2 - 3 Mar 2023
20	Review draft IR based on feedback received and submit final revised IR	ET	6 - 10 Mar 2023
21	Review final IR and submit to the evaluation committee for approval	EM	13 March 2023
22	**Approve final IR / share with ERG for information**	EC Chair	15 - 16 Mar 2023
Phase 3 – Data collection			
23	Brief the evaluation team at CO	EC Chair / EM	20 Mar 2023
24	**Training of enumerators**	ET	27-30 Mar 2023

	Phases, deliverables, and timeline		Key dates
25	**Data collection**	ET	3 Apr - 21 Apr 2023
26	**In-country debriefing (s)**	ET	24 Apr 2023
Phase 4 - Reporting			Up to 11 weeks
26	Draft evaluation report	ET	17 July 2023
27	Quality assurance of draft ER by EM and REO using the QC, share draft ER with quality support service (DEQS) and organize follow-up call with DEQS	EM	18 July -21 August 2023
28	Review and submit draft ER based on feedback received by DEQS, EM and REO	ET	25 August 2023 – 31 August 2023
29	Circulate draft ER for review and comments to ERG, RB and other stakeholders	EM	1-8 September 2023
30	Review and comment on draft ER	ERG	11-14 September 2023
31	Consolidate comments received	EM	13-15 September 2023
32	Review draft ER based on feedback received and submit final revised ER	ET	18-22 September 2023
33	Review final revised ER and submit to the evaluation committee	EM	25-29 September 2023
34	**Approve final evaluation report and share with key stakeholders for information**	EC Chair	**2 October 2023**

Annex 4. Map of HGSF Schools

Figure 13. Map of HGSF Schools



Source: Evaluation ToR.

Annex 5. Evaluation Matrix

49. The Evaluation Matrix presented below is the primary tool that was used by the ET to structure the evaluation's analysis. The evaluation questions and evaluation sub-questions were substantially revised, consolidated, deleted, and in some cases - added; this was done through a **participatory process** involving the Joint Evaluation Managers and technical advisors from both WFP and the Government of Eswatini. Thus, the questions presented in the matrix below **do not match with the original set of questions contained in the evaluation's ToR**. Key indicators from the HGSFP's logframe have been included under EQ2.

Table 17. Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Question				**Criteria**	**Evidence, Availability, Reliability**
Sub-Questions	**Indicators**	**Data collection methods**	**Sources of data/information**	**Data analysis methods/ triangulation**	**Strong (Good)** **Medium (satisfactory)** **Poor (Weak)**
1. To what extent does the HGSF pilot align with national priorities and needs of targeted communities?				**Relevance / Appropriateness**	

1.1. To what extent are the strategies used to build food security [of] targeted group[s] relevant in the current context?	Improvement in food security status of targeted groups	KIIs, FGDs, Survey, Document Review	• Key informants
			  ○ WFP Country Office
			  ○ Ministry of Education
			  ○ World Vision Eswatini
			  ○ Ministry of Agriculture
			  ○ DPMO
			• Samples farmers (participating in HGSF)
			• Aggregators
			• Sample of learners (HGSF pilot schools)
			• Literature and reports, (incl. National Plans,
				Thematic analysis, descriptive analysis.	

1.2. To what extent is the HGSF programme in line with the needs of women, men, boys, and girls from marginalised groups in targeted communities?	Alignment with needs of marginalised groups in targeted communities			Gap analysis additionality analysis.	
1.3. To what extent are HGSF activities aligned to national priorities?	Alignment with National Strategies, plans, and Policies.			Comparative analysis and descriptive analysis.	
1.4. To what extent was the design and implementation of the intervention premised upon a thorough gender analysis?	Extent of participation by different gender categories.			Thematic analysis, descriptive analysis.	

Evaluation Question				Criteria	Evidence, Availability, Reliability
Sub-Questions	**Indicators**	**Data collection methods**	**Sources of data/information**	**Data analysis methods/ triangulation**	**Strong (Good)** **Medium (satisfactory)** **Poor (Weak)**
			strategies, and policies)		
2. To what extent did the HGSF intervention achieve its objectives and results?				**Effectiveness**	
2.1 To what extent has the HGSF expected outputs, outcomes, and strategic results have been achieved among the women, men, boys, and girls - including the different targeted groups.	Enrolment rates percent learners absent for 3+ days / month percent of undernourished children (MUAC) percent high school learners w/normal BMI percent learners satisfied with food provided at school Number of days per week when a balanced diet is served percent schools w/functional food & nutrition gardens percent schools serving school meals on all school days Number and percent learners receiving food, by sex percent learners who wanted to eat & received food percent of schools with a functional SMP percent change in production by participating farmers percent of farm area utilised for staple food crops percent of farmers using appropriate PHFH practices percent of FOs with a food quality approval rate of 90 percent percent of farmers with improved storage facilities percent change in income of participating farmers	• Document Review • Schools' Survey • Observation • Farmers' Survey • KIIs • FGD	• Key informants • School Feeding Focal Teacher • Sample of learners (HGSF pilot schools) • MOET SF Monitoring Report and EMIS report • HGSF baseline, mid-term, and end of project evaluation • Participatory monitoring systems • Crop records of farmers' associations total crop production of producer farmers by Ministry of Agriculture • Procurement statistics and SFP plans WFP/FAO	Descriptive analysis Thematic analysis Comparative analysis	
2.2 What are the major factors (internal and external) influencing the achievement / non-achievement of the objectives of the HGSF pilot?					

Evaluation Question				Criteria	Evidence, Availability, Reliability
Sub-Questions	**Indicators**	**Data collection methods**	**Sources of data/information**	**Data analysis methods/ triangulation**	**Strong (Good)** **Medium (satisfactory)** **Poor (Weak)**
	percent of functional farmer organisations percent of FOs that implement marketing skills percent of HGSF farmers/suppliers that are female percent of HGSF farmers/suppliers that are under 35 Commodities supplied by women/ youth farmers Food consumption score for farmers' households Coping strategy Index for farmers' households Kgs/bags maize procured from small farmers Kgs/bags of beans procured from small farmers Kgs/bags of vegetables procured from local small-scale farmers Trays of eggs procured from small-scale farmers		• Sampled farmers (participating in HGSF)		
2.3 To what extent do the assumptions that underpin the HGSF pilot hold true?	Proportion of assumptions that underpin the HGSF pilot that proved to be true.				
3. Was the JHGSF initiative implemented in a timely and cost-effective manner?				**Efficiency**	
3.1. Was HGSF implementation cost-efficient?	Timeliness and cost effectiveness of activities.	KIIs, FGDs, Document Review	WFP CO, FAO, MoA, WV, ESWASA, DPMO, Farmers, FOs, Aggregators, HGSF Evaluations	Gap analysis	
3.2. What factors affected efficiency?	Association of changes in efficiency levels with both endogenous and exogenous factors			Thematic analysis	
4. How compatible is the HGSF pilot with other interventions implemented by government and other stakeholders?				**Coherence**	
4.1. How effective was coordination?	Effectiveness of coordination mechanism in achieving HGSF pilot objectives	KIIs, FGDs, Document Review	• WFP Country Office • MoA, MoH, MoC, SPPRA • FAO	Thematic analysis	
4.2. What are the complementarities / synergies with other related interventions in Eswatini?					

Evaluation Question				Criteria	Evidence, Availability, Reliability
Sub-Questions	**Indicators**	**Data collection methods**	**Sources of data/information**	**Data analysis methods/ triangulation**	**Strong (Good)** **Medium (satisfactory)** **Poor (Weak)**
4.3. What value does HGSF add in the context of other interventions supported by the Government and other actors?	Value-add of HGSF Programme		• DPMO, ADRA, ESWADE • World Vision Eswatini • Farmers, FOs, Aggregators • Pilot Schools • HGSF Evaluations	Contribution analysis	
5. To What extent can the HGSF intervention be sustained and scaled up in Eswatini?				**Sustainability/Scalability**	
5.1. How do we create sustainable relationships between the private sector and HGSF farmers?	Increase in the number of formal relationships between private sector and HGSF farmers	KIIs, FGDs, Document Review	MoA, MoC, ESWASA, FAO, DPMO, World Vision Eswatini, Farmers, FOs, Aggregators, HGSF Evaluations	Thematic analysis	
5.2. Is the current enabling environment in Eswatini conducive to the current HGSF programme design?	Qualitative observations of stakeholders and analysis of the ET.				
5.4. How different was the HGSF pilot compared to the National School feeding programme and to what extent does it contribute to the sustainability of the school feeding programme?					

Source: Evaluation Team

Annex 6. Data collection Tools

A. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

I. To what extent does the HGSF pilot align with national priorities and needs of targeted communities? Relevance / Appropriateness.

1. Please give a brief account of any strategy or strategies aimed at building food security in Eswatini?
2. May you give your opinion on the relevance of these strategies, including the HGSF, in the current context.
3. May you give your opinion on the alignment of the HGSF Programme with the needs of marginalised groups in targeted communities.
4. In your opinion, are the HGSF activities aligned to national priorities? Please explain.
5. Based on your observation and judgement, is the design and implementation of the interventions premised upon a thorough gender analysis?
6. How equitably have different socio-economic groups benefited from project interventions (Poor, Women, Youth)

II. To what extent did the HGSF intervention achieve its objectives and results? Effectiveness

7. In your view, has output or income for farmers or farmer groups participating in the HGSF Programme been different from those outputs or income they realised before taking part in the programme? (**Output or income may have increased, decreased, became more/less stable**).
8. In your view, what are the major factors influencing the achievement/non-achievement of the objectives of the HGSF pilot?
9. The HGSF Programme was grounded on a few assumptions (e.g., assumption about capacity of different actors/stakeholder to play their part to realise expected results). Based on the available evidence so far, what would you say is the proportion of assumptions that proved to hold true?
10. How has the level of food production changed in the target areas?
11. What is the size of farm area utilised for major food crops (maize/beans)?
12. What factors have influenced change in production capacity?
13. What post-harvest and storage initiatives have been established?
14. What changes have occurred in the handling and storage of food commodities?
15. In what successful ways have food handling and storage capacity been developed?
16. What is the type and capacity of storage facility?
17. How have the levels of agriculture incomes for small and medium scale farmers changed?
18. Does aggregating farmers in FO offer better incomes? (vs. individual sales)
19. What marketing initiatives have been established and what has been the economic effect?
20. In what ways has the marketing skills and capacity of farmers changed?

III. Was the HGSF initiative implemented in a timely and cost-efficient manner? Efficiency

21. From your experience, taking part in the HGSF Programme, were the HGSF activities implemented in a cost-effective manner?
22. What factors influenced the efficiency of the programme?
23. Is there a digital platform (integrated all supply/value chain actors) used to manage the logistics around the HGSF programme demand and supply mechanism? If yes, please explain how it operates. If No, please explain/identify factors that prevents such a platform from being established.

IV. How compatible is the HGSF pilot with other interventions implemented by the Government and other stakeholders? Coherence

24. How effective were the HGSF pilot coordination mechanisms?
25. What are the complementarities/synergies, if any, with other interventions in Eswatini of the Government/WFP/other?
26. What value does HGSF add in the context of other interventions supported by the Government and other actors?

V. To what extent can the HGSF intervention be sustained and scaled up in Eswatini? Sustainability & Scalability

27. How can we create sustainable relationships between the private sector and HGSF farmers?

28. Is the current enabling environment in Eswatini conducive to the current HGSF programme design?

B. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW – FARMERS/FARMER GROUPS

I. To what extent does the HGSF pilot align with national priorities and needs of targeted communities? Relevance / Appropriateness.

1. Please give a brief account of any strategy or strategies aimed at building food security in Eswatini?
2. May you give your opinion on the relevance of these strategies, including the HGSF, in the current context.
3. May you give your opinion on the alignment of the HGSF Programme with the needs of marginalised groups in targeted communities.
4. In your opinion, are the HGSF activities aligned to national priorities? Please explain.
5. Based on your observation and judgement, is the design and implementation of the interventions premised upon a thorough gender analysis?

II. To what extent did the HGSF intervention achieve its objectives and results? Effectiveness

6. Have the annual volume produced and income earned from farm activities changed (increased or decreased) after joining the HGSF Programme?
7. Please provide data on quantities supplied and revenue earned in the past two years (2021 and 2022).
8. Has the quality of produce from your farm improved after joining the HGSF Programme?
9. Was your farm/farmer group able to supply the quantities required? Please explain what factors contributed to the ability or inability to supply the required quantities.

III. Was the HGSF initiative implemented in a cost-efficient manner? Efficiency

10. Has your participation in the HGSF Programme resulted in a change in the amount of output per unit area or change in revenue per unit cost?
11. What factors influenced the changes in either output per unit area revenue per unit cost?

IV. How compatible is the HGSF pilot with other interventions implemented by the Government and other stakeholders? Coherence

12. How effective were the HGSF pilot coordination mechanisms?
13. What are the complementarities/synergies, if any, with other interventions in Eswatini of the Government/WFP/other?
14. What value does HGSF add in the context of other interventions supported by the Government and other actors?

V. To what extent can the HGSF intervention be sustained and scaled up in Eswatini? Sustainability & Scalability

15. How can we create sustainable relationships between the private sector and HGSF farmers?
16. Is the current enabling environment in Eswatini conducive to the current HGSF programme design?

C. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS - WFP AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

I. To what extent does the HGSF pilot align with national priorities and needs of targeted communities? Relevance / Appropriateness.

1. Please give a brief account of any strategy or strategies aimed at building food security in Eswatini?
2. May you give your opinion on the relevance of these strategies, including the HGSF, in the current context.
3. May you give your opinion on the alignment of the HGSF Programme with the needs of marginalised groups in targeted communities.
4. In your opinion, are the HGSF activities aligned to national priorities? Please explain.
5. Based on your observation and judgement, is the design and implementation of the interventions premised upon a thorough gender analysis?

II. To what extent did the HGSF intervention achieve its objectives and results? Effectiveness

6. In your view, have the HGSF outputs, outcomes, and strategic results been achieved among target groups? In a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being least achievement and 10 being utmost achievement) how would you rank such achievement?
7. In your view, what are the major factors influencing the achievement/non-achievement of the objectives of the HGSF pilot?
8. The HGSF Programme was grounded on a few assumptions (e.g., assumption about capacity of different actors/stakeholder to play their part to realise expected results). Based on the available evidence so far, what would you say is the proportion of assumptions that proved to hold true?

III. Was the HGSF initiative implemented in a timely and cost-efficient manner? Efficiency

9. From your experience, taking part in the HGSF Programme, were the HGSF activities implemented in a cost-effective manner?
10. What factors influenced the efficiency of the programme?
11. Is there a digital platform (integrated all supply/value chain actors) used to manage the logistics around the HGSF programme demand and supply mechanism? If yes, please explain how it operates. If No, please explain/identify factors that prevents such a platform from being established.

IV. How compatible is the HGSF pilot with other interventions implemented by the Government and other stakeholders? Coherence

12. How effective were the HGSF pilot coordination mechanisms?
13. What are the complementarities/synergies, if any, with other interventions in Eswatini of the Government/WFP/other?
14. What value does HGSF add in the context of other interventions supported by the Government and other actors?

V. To what extent can the HGSF intervention be sustained and scaled up in Eswatini? Sustainability & Scalability

15. How can we create sustainable relationships between the private sector and HGSF farmers?
16. Is the current enabling environment in Eswatini conducive to the HGSF programme design?
17. From your experience in working with the School Feeding Programme, how different was the HGSF pilot compared to the National School feeding programme and to what extent would it contribute to the sustainability of the school feeding programme.

D. SCHOOLS FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. Region
   - Hhohho [ ]
   - Manzini [ ]
   - Lubombo [ ]
   - Shiselweni [ ]
2. Constituency (Inkhundla) _____
3. Name of School _____
4. Level (primary or secondary/high school)
   - Primary school [ ]
   - Secondary/high school [ ]
5. Do you always get food from the school feeding kitchen during lunch time?

	Males	**Females**
Yes	[ ]	[ ]
No	[ ]	[ ]

6. *Are you satisfied with the food provided at school in the school kitchen?*

	Level of satisfaction					
Parameter	**well satisfies**		**Somewhat satisfied**		**not satisfies**	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Portion size						
Food quality						
Food diversity						

E. SCHOOLS' SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name of School _____

2. Please collect school coordinates.

3. Region (tick one)
   Hhohho [ ]
   Manzini [ ]
   Lubombo [ ]
   Shiselweni [ ]

4. Constituency (Inkhundla) _____

5. Level (primary or secondary/high school)
   Pre- primary and Primary school [ ]
   Primary School Only [ ]
   High School [ ]

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree), how would you rate the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. HGSF has increased attendance and retention	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7. HGSF has increased nourishment and health of learners	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
8. HGSF has increased learners' ability to learn	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
9. Under the HGSF programme, the quality of food commodities received by my school has improved	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

10. HGSF has increased the diversity of meal provided to leaners	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
11. The food served to learners is cooked well (nutritional value of food is not lost)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
12. The food served to learners is adequate (in portion size)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

13. Please provide a list of farmers, companies, or farmer groups that supply the school with food commodities for 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022.

Name of farm/farmer group	Type commodity purchased	Quantities received in year 2022	Units (Kg, heads, crates, etc)	Does supplier have a contract with the school (yes/no)

14. Were the commodities delivered at the agreed time, of the expected quantity and quality? (**Tick if answer is "Yes"**)

Name of farm/farmer group	Commodity was delivered at the agreed time	Commodity was delivered in the agreed quantity	Commodity was delivered of the agreed quality

15. Does the school have a dedicated storage facility for the school feeding commodities?

    Yes [ ] No [ ]

16. If yes, what is the condition of the school's food storage facility?

	Yes/No
Facility is secure from hazardous weather and theft	
Facility has adequate drainage	

Facility is well ventilated	
Facility is of adequate size	
Facility is kept clean	
Facility is infestation and pest free	
Non-food items are separated from food items	
Bags are closed properly	
Food is stacked properly	

17. On average, what was the number of days per week when a balanced meal was served? _____days

a. Select the most common type of food group consumed by learners in a week (number of times per week).

Food Group	**Number of times per week**
I. Cereals and grains	
II. Roots and tubers	
III. Fruits	
IV. Vegetables	
V. Meat, poultry, offal	
VI. Eggs	
VII. Fish and seafood	
VIII. Pulses, legumes, nuts	
IX. Milk and milk products (dairy)	
X. Oil/fats	
XI. Sugar/honey	
XII. Miscellaneous/Other. Specify	

18. Does the school serve meals on all school days?
    Yes [ ] No [ ]

19. If "No" in 18, please provide an explanation.
    _____

20. Does the school have a **functional** food & nutrition garden?
    i. Yes, the school has a garden solely for school feeding [ ]
    ii. Yes, the garden serves as an agricultural garden and a school feeding garden [ ]
    iii. No, the school only has an agricultural [ ]
    iv. No, the school does not have a functional school garden at all [ ]

    If "No" in 20, please provide an explanation.

    ---

21. Please provide data on **enrollment**, **attendance, learners absent for 3+ days / month**, **average number of learners receiving meals**, and **drop-out, learners living with disability, number of learners that passed grade, number of learners that failed grade** for 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022 academic years. **(NB: Data should be disaggregated by gender category)**

22. What is your general comment about the performance of the HGSFP?

F. SURVEY – FARMERS/FARMER ORGANISATIONS

1. Region
    a) Hhohho [ ]
    b) Manzini [ ]
    c) Lubombo [ ]
    d) Shiselweni [ ]

2. Constituency (Inkhundla) _____
3. Name of Farm/farmer Organisation_____
4. In what year was the farm/farmer organisation established? _____
5. Gender of respondent/farmer
    a) Male [ ]
    b) Female [ ]
6. In what year were you born?_____
7. Are you the head of your household?
    a) Yes [ ]
    b) No [ ]
8. What is the total number of your dependents? _____
9. What is the ownership structure of farm?
    a) Individual/household farm [ ]
    b) Farmer Organisation/cooperative [ ]

Note: If ownership structure = "Farmer organisation", go to question 8, otherwise go to question 14

10. What is the total number of members/shareholders in the farmer organisation or cooperative?
    a. Males _____
    b. Females _____
11. How often does your farmer organisation meet?
    a. Twice a month [ ]
    b. Once a month [ ]
    c. Once a quarter [ ]
    d. Twice a year [ ]
    e. Once a year [ ]

12. Does your farmer organisation have a constitution?
    a. Yes [ ]
    b. No [ ]

13. Does your farm/farmer organisation keep financial records?
    a. Yes [ ]
    b. No [ ]

14. How do you market your produce?
    a. Individually [ ]
    b. Collectively [ ]
15. What platforms if any do you use to market your produce?
    a. _____
    b. _____
    c. _____
    d. _____
    e. _____
16. State the number of schools that you supply?

17. Which schools under the HGSFP do you supply? (select multiple response question with schools already inputted in data collection tool)
18. What commodities does your farm/farmers organisation produce?

    Note: Here we elicit all the commodities produced at the farm and estimates of quantities produced, area under cultivation, and income earned in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021.

Year: 2018	Commodity produced	Quantity produced	Quantity consumed by family/members	Units (Kg, heads, crates, trays, etc.)	Area under cultivation (ha)	Income earned (SZL)

Note to programmer: There should be one table for each of the four years.

Year: 2019

Commodity produced	Quantity produced	Quantity consumed by family/members	Units (Kg, heads, crates, trays, etc.)	Area under cultivation (ha)	Income earned (SZL)

Year: 2020

Commodity produced	Quantity produced	Quantity consumed by family/members	Units (Kg, heads, crates, trays, etc.)	Area under cultivation (ha)	Income earned (SZL)

Year: 2021

Commodity produced	Quantity produced	Quantity consumed by family/members	Units (Kg, heads, crates, trays, etc.)	Area under cultivation (ha)	Income earned (SZL)

Year: 2022

Commodity produced	Quantity produced	Quantity consumed by family/members	Units (Kg, heads, crates, trays, etc)	Area under cultivation (ha)	Income earned (SZL)

19. Which of the commodities listed in question 15 were sold to the HGSF Programme?

Year	Commodity supplied	Quantity supplied	Units (Kg, heads, crates, trays, etc)	Income earned (SZL)

20. What amount (in kgs) of commodities did not meet the quality standards, of total assessed disaggregated by food commodity?

Type commodity	Quantities that did not meet quality standard	Reasons for not meeting quality standards	Units (Kg, heads, crates, trays, etc)

21. Are there other markets, other than the HGSF Programme where you currently sell your produce?

If Yes, answer question 20, otherwise go to question 21

a) Yes [ ]

b) No [ ]

22. *Please list the markets to which you sell your commodities.*

a) _____
b) _____
c) _____
d) _____
e) _____

Type of storage facility	Capacity of storage facility	Units (litres, cubic meters, square meters, etc)	Year built/acquired

23. *What is the type and capacity of storage facility/facilities and in what year did you start using such facility?*
    Note: Here we elicit all forms of storage facilities
24. What has been your overall farm income for the following years 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021.
    Total farm income: year 2018_____ Emalangeni
    Total farm income: year 2019 _____ Emalangeni
    Total farm income: year 2020_____ Emalangeni
    Total farm income: year 2021 _____ Emalangeni

25. Between 2019 and 2021 which shocks was your businesses exposed to that affected operations?
    a. COVID – 19
    b. Hailstorms/thunderstorms
    c. Severe heat
    d. Disease outbreaks
    e. Other. Specify

26. What is the primary source of income in your household?

a) Farm [ ]
b) Wage [ ]
c) Other non-farm activities [ ]

27. In the past 7 days preceding the assessment, were there times when the household did not have enough food or money to buy food?
    a) Yes [ ]
    b) No [ ]
28. If yes in question 21, what coping mechanisms were employed?
    a) _____
    b) _____
    c) _____
    d) _____
    e) _____

29. If any, what other activities implemented under the Home Grown School Feeding Programme have you undertaken between 2019 and 2021?
    a. Trainings
    b. Product development
    c. Business management
    d. Financial literacy
    e. None
    f. Other. Specify

30. What challenges if any, have you encountered while working with the schools that you supply?

Annex 7. Key Informants Overview

Table 18. Key informants overview

POSITION	INSTITUTION	Gender
HGSFP coordinator	WFP Eswatini Country Office	F
Procurement manager	WFP Eswatini Country Office	F
Finance Manager	WFP Eswatini Country Office	M
Programme Manager	ADRA	M
Senior Agriculture Extension Officer	Ministry of Agriculture	M
Programme Manager	NERCHA	M
Supply Chain Unit	WFP	M
Executive Director	ESNAU	M
HGSFP Facilitator	ESNAU	F
Monitoring and Evaluation Manager	WFP	F
Head of Programme	WFP	M
Senior programme Officer	FAO	M
Former Procurement Manager	ESPPRA	F
Nutritionist	Ministry of Health	F
Senior Education Inspector	Ministry of Education and Training, Mbabane	F
Regional Education Inspector	Manzini Region	F
Regional Education Inspector	Shiselweni Region	F
Regional Education Inspector	Hhoho Region	F
Regional Education Inspector	Lubombo	F
2 Farmer group aggregation point managers	Ntfonjeni Siyatfutfuka, Hhohho maize farmer group	2 M
Chairperson	Injabulo multipurpose, Hhohho maize farmer group	F
Chairperson, secretary and farmer group members	Golden star multipurpose, Hhohho maize farmer group	14 F
Chairperson representative and group member	Elutsandvweni Lwetfu Cooperative, Hhohho maize farmer group	2 M
Chairperson, finance and secretary	Intsaba yekubonelela, Hhohho egg farmer group	3 F
Chairperson and group members	Kwasa kukhanyeni, Lubombo, vegetable farmer group	5 M, 2 F
Chairperson, secretary, and finance officer	Umsoco multipurpose cooperative, Hhohho maize farmer group	1 M, 2 F
FGDs with learners	Herefords High School	5 M, 5 F
FGDs with learners	Njojane Primary School	10 M, 10 F
FGDs with learners	Ekukhanyeni Primary School	8 M, 8 F
FGDs with learners	Gilgal Primary School	12 M, 12 F
FGDs with learners	Nkwene Primary School	7 M, 7 F
FGDs with learners	Ngwane Practising Primary School	8 M, 9 F
FGDs with learners	Mahamba High School	7 M, 7 F
FGDs with learners	Mbuluzi SAGM Primary School	10 M, 10 F
FGDs with learners	Lozitha High School	15 M, 15 F

Source: Evaluation team.

Annex 8. Fieldwork Agenda

Sithabiso Gandure (SG) – Lead Evaluator
Thabo Sacolo (TS) – National Senior Evaluator
Tengetile Hlophe (TH) – Emerging Evaluator

Day / date	**Agenda Item**
Thu 30 Mar	Training of 10 enumerators for Farmers' Survey
Fri Mar 31	Piloting Farmers' Survey
Sun 02 Apr	Lead Evaluator arrives in Mbabane
Mon 03 Apr	Meeting with the WFP country office – Country Office Director, Senior Programmes Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager (SG, TS, TH)
Mon 03 Apr – Fri 14 Apr	Team of ten (10) enumerator implement farmers' survey
Apr 3- 14 April	**Morning (separate meetings, 1 hour each):** WFP HGSFP Coordinator (SG, TS)
	WFP Procurement Manager (SG, TS)
	ADRA Official (SG, TS)
	Senior Agriculture Extension Officer Ministry Of Agriculture (SG, TS)
	NERCHA Programmes Manager (SG, TS)
	WFP Supply Chain Unit (SG, TS)
	Ministry of Education HGSFP coordinator
	2 ESNAU Officials (SG, TS)
	WFP Monitoring and Evaluation Manager (SG, TS)
	WFP head of Programmes (SG, TS)
	FAO Official (SG, TS)
Fri 14 Apr	ESPPRA former Procurement Manager (TS, TH)
Mon 17 Apr	Ministry of Health – School Health Programme Nutritionist (TS, TH)
Wed 03 May	4 Regional Education Inspectors (TS, TH)
Thu 04 May	Training of seven (7) enumerators for Schools' Survey
Fri 05 May	Piloting of Schools' Survey

Wed 10 May – Thu 25 May	Team of seven (7) enumerators implement Schools' Survey Divided into two Teams, One Team under the leadership of Tengeile Hlophe (TH) and the other led by Thabo Sacolo (TS)	
Wed 10 May	FDG with Learners at Herefords High (TS)	**Morning** FGD at Nkwene Primary (TH) **Afternoon** FDG with learners at Ngwane Practicing (TH)
Thu 11 May	FDG with learners at Njojane Primary (TS)	FDG with learners at Gilgal High school (TH)
Fri 12 May		FDG with learners at Mahamba High school (TH)
Thu 18 May	KII with Ntfonjeni aggregation point farmer group, maize producers in the Lubombo region (TS, TH) Meeting with the aggregation point manager and treasury	
Fri 19 May	Meeting with Umsoco Cooperative maize famers in the Hhohho region Meeting held with chairperson, treasury and secretary (TS, TH)	
Mon 22 May	FDG with Kwasa Kukhanyeni vegetable farmer group in the Lubombo region (TS, TH) Meeting held with chairperson and 7 group members	
Tue 23 May	**Morning** FDG with Elutsandvweni Lwetfu Cooperative (TS, TH) Meeting with 14 members of the farmers groups **Afternoon** KII with Golden Star Cooperative, maize farmers (TS, TH)	
Wed 24 May	KII with Intsaba Yekubonelela, Egg Farmer Group in the Hhohho Region. Meeting with farmer group chairperson, finance, and secretary (TS, TH)	
Thur 25 May	KII with the chairperson of Injabulo Multipurpose, maize farmers (TS, TH)	
Fri 26 May	End of fieldwork debrief	
Wed 31 May	Mbuluzi SAGM Primary School (TS, TH) Focus group discussion with 20 learners	
Thur 01 Jun	Lozitha High School (TS, TH) Focus group discussion with 30 learners (TS, TH)	

Annex 9. Methodology Guidance

50. **Reconstructing baseline data using retrospective recall methods -** Retrospective recall methods are commonly used in project evaluation to attempt to reconstruct baseline data. Recall is utilized in poverty analysis, demography, and income expenditure surveys to collect information on behaviour (e.g., contraceptive usage or fertility) or economic status (household income or expenditure) at a particular point in the past or over a specific period. In addition, recall is employed to investigate life cycle theories of consumption and labour supply in economics; life span theories of psychological development and adaptation to the environment; and sociological theories of age stratification. Multiple studies have found that recall can be a valuable estimating tool with predictable and, to some extent, controllable errors, and a potentially useful way to estimate conditions before the start of a project and to reconstruct baseline data.

51. These methods involve asking participants to recall information from a past event or experience. This type of recall is typically used when it is not possible to collect data during the event or when data collection was not considered at the time of the event. Furthermore, retrospective recall methods are often used to collect data about the initial state of the project or about past events that may have influenced the project. This data can then be used to compare against current or future data to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

52. One common retrospective recall method is the retrospective pre-test. In this method, participants are asked to rate their current knowledge, skills, or attitudes related to a specific topic, and then asked to recall and rate their knowledge, skills, or attitudes at an earlier point in time, such as before the project began. This information can then be used to determine if there was any change in knowledge, skills, or attitudes because of the project. Another retrospective recall method is the critical incident technique. This method involves asking participants to recall specific events or incidents related to the project, such as challenges or successes. This information can then be used to identify areas of strength or weakness in the project and to inform future project planning.

53. While retrospective recall methods can be useful in project evaluation, they are subject to limitations such as recall bias and memory decay. To minimize the limitations of retrospective recall methods, this evaluation used multiple methods of data collection to triangulate results, using standardized questions that enabled us to clarify responses. Our approach involved continuous validation of responses with other sources of data and asking participants to provide additional information to support their responses.

Table 19. Retrospective recall methods incorporated in the evaluation's survey approach

Retrospective Recall Method	Evaluation Questions	Measurement	Data Sources
Retrospective Pre-test	How much did you know before the project? How much do you know now?	Self-reported knowledge, skills, or attitudes	Participant responses
Critical Incident Technique	What were the key successes and challenges of the project?	Recalled events or incidents	Participant responses or project documents

***Source**:* ET's illustration

54. **Application to the evaluation of the HGSF -** To reconstruct baseline data, the retrospective recall method was adopted, as it is a cost-effective way of obtaining information from participants about past events, behaviours, or experiences. However, the evaluation was not limited to this method alone. To improve the validity and robustness of the results, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory assessment were also employed, which allowed for the triangulation of data from multiple sources. The use of multiple data sources provided a more comprehensive understanding of the program's impact, strengths, and weaknesses, and facilitated the generation of recommendations. By adopting a comprehensive and rigorous evaluation approach that incorporates both retrospective recall and other data collection methods, the Home-Grown School Feeding Program's end-line evaluation provides a detailed and nuanced understanding of the program's impact on key objectives. This information is

essential for decision-making regarding potential future investments and expansions of the program, as well as for improving the program to better achieve its objectives.

55. Inherently, quality of survey data depends on the respondent's willingness and ability to provide accurate responses to survey questions. To mitigate this limitation, the ET structured the survey tools such that sensitive questions, such as those pertaining to income were asked towards the end of the survey. Placing the sensitive question towards the end of the survey helps in one of two ways. Firstly, it gives the enumerators the opportunity to build a repour with the respondent before they can ask for supposedly sensitive data. Secondly, in the unlikely event that the respondent decides to opt out of the interview upon being asked to provide sensitive data, at least at that point the enumerator would have elicited a substantial portion of the required data rendering the "observation" usable, at least in part, during analysis. Getting information about refusals or those that opt out of a survey is important in understanding the characteristics of those respondents, which is then used in shaping future survey tool. Moreover, since this was an endline evaluation, most activities had been concluded, which means that the ET could not use observations as a form of collection of additional data for the evaluation. The ET used secondary sources, such as pictures from stakeholders that were involved in the project when all its components were still active.

Annex 10. Selected detailed findings

Table 20. Enrolment rates for HGSF schools

Year	Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
2017	Primary school Male	24	207	122	50	499
	Primary school Female	24	191	120	44	522
	High school Male	17	269	171	102	656
	High school Female	17	258	175	87	692
2018	Primary school Male	28	232	135	57	490
	Primary school Female	28	220	134	56	536
	High school Male	20	279	154	86	630
	High school Female	21	283	209	87	1019
2019	Primary school Male	28	232	137	54	534
	Primary school Female	28	217	133	51	594
	High school Male	20	294	192	70	872
	High school Female	21	278	181	73	816
2020	Primary school Male	28	233	145	57	564
	Primary school Female	28	219	134	48	558
	High school Male	20	287	177	61	836
	High school Female	20	283	205	41	979
2021	Primary school Male	28	228	140	62	577
	Primary school Female	28	217	137	52	595
	High school Male	20	284	197	16	884
	High school Female	21	276	205	11	931
2022	Primary school Male	28	223	144	63	632
	Primary school Female	28	217	139	56	642
	High school Male	22	283	197	66	965
	High school Female	22	276	199	67	917

Source: School Survey

Farm sizes and area under cultivation for 2018-2022

56. On aver, the selected farmers did meet the farm size aspect of the selection criteria, as provided in the definition of Smallholder Farmer, contained in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the ministry of education and WFP. In 2019, on average maise farmers had 2.05 ha under maize production. However, the data reveals that there were some farmers who reported to have as little as 0.3 ha under maize production. Specifically, the results show that 117 farmers reported to have less than 2 ha under maize production. This implies that these 107 (44.2 percent) farmers did not meet the minimum threshold, as outlined by the selection criterion that relates to area under cultivation – the MoA explains that are under cultivation should range from 2 ha to 10 ha for field crops (grans) and not less than 0.5ha for vegetables. With regards to vegetable farmers, in 2019 about 38 out of the 41 (92.7 percent) farmers selected to supply cabbage had at least .05ha of land under cabbage production.

Table 21. Area under cultivation for 2018 to 2022

Commodity	Year	# of farmers	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	# of farmers with < 2ha (grains) or <0.5ha (vegetables)
Maize	2018	229	2.09	1.37	0.20	12.00	97
Beans		25	1.16	0.66	0.30	3.00	19
Cabbage		35	1.69	1.61	0.13	9.00	4
Onion		3	1.42	1.13	0.25	2.50	1
Spinach		17	1.53	1.16	0.13	3.50	3
Tomato		21	1.20	1.87	0.13	9.00	3
Maize	2019	242	2.05	1.30	0.30	12.00	107
Beans		17	1.04	0.70	0.25	3.00	14
Cabbage		41	1.67	1.49	0.13	9.00	3
Onion		3	0.29	0.19	0.13	0.50	2
Spinach		15	1.21	0.96	0.13	3.00	3
Tomato		13	1.74	2.30	0.25	9.00	2
Maize	2020	248	2.00	1.30	0.25	12.00	115
Beans		10	0.65	0.39	0.25	1.50	11
Cabbage		28	1.64	1.70	0.10	9.00	4
Onion		5	0.80	0.74	0.25	2.00	2
Spinach		9	1.67	1.29	0.25	3.50	2
Tomato		14	1.90	2.22	0.50	9.00	0
Maize	2021	251	2.10	1.46	0.25	12.00	112
Beans		18	1.18	0.82	0.10	3.00	12
Cabbage		37	1.62	1.56	0.13	9.00	3
Onion		4	1.25	1.54	0.25	3.50	2
Spinach		13	1.41	1.14	0.25	3.50	3
Tomato		16	1.90	2.10	0.25	9.00	2
Maize	2022	244	2.08	1.48	0.25	12.00	106
Beans		19	1.53	1.25	0.10	5.60	11
Cabbage		50	1.28	0.85	0.10	3.40	7
Onion		13	0.96	0.91	0.13	3.40	4
Spinach		19	0.95	0.94	0.13	3.50	6
Tomato		18	1.19	0.89	0.50	3.40	0

Source: Farmers' Survey

Annex 11. Findings Conclusions Recommendations Mapping

Table 22. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations Mapping

Recommendation	Conclusions	Findings
Recommendation 1: Develop a robust policy framework that mandates the inclusion of HGSF in the NSFP in Eswatini. 1.1: Update Inqaba manual to make NSFP/HGSF more explicit; consider developing a school feeding policy. 1.2: Advocate for the integration at both the national and regional levels, emphasizing the multi-dimensional benefits 1.3: Develop a shared vision of HGSF and conduct a stakeholder mapping based on this vision, establish/formalize HGSF coordination structures 1.4: Develop synergies with other southern African and Africa wide HGSF initiatives (e.g. CESA HGSF Cluster).	Conclusion 1 Conclusion 5	Finding 1 Finding 2 Finding 3 Finding 10
Recommendation 2: Adjust the design of HGSF to set realistic targets for scaling with the purpose of establishing a pathway for the progressive adoption of a model for HGSF schools that will include all necessary components – including complimentary services. 2.1: Conduct a thorough assessment of the geographical locations of schools and farmers considering accessibility, market proximity, and local agricultural practices. 2.2: Engage with local communities, schools, farmers, private sector and relevant stakeholders to gather in sights and involve them in the planning and design of appropriate interventions that meet location-specific challenges. 2.3: Further develop HGSF strategies around local procurement, meal diversification, and strengthening complimentary services. 2.4: Conduct a detailed market assessment to inform local procurement strategy for Eswatini to guide the NSFP and HGSF. 2.5: Conduct a detailed context analysis with communities to develop HGSF guidelines that cover all the processes including development of model menus based on local preferences and availability of commodities. 2.6: Strengthen complimentary services under the HGSF – water and sanitation, fuel efficient kitchens, and climate smart school gardens supported by organizations/agencies that deliver agricultural capacity building support. 2.7: Strengthen the capacity of farmers to produce nutrition sensitive commodities including the indigenous leafy green vegetables that are available in each region and climate smart crops such as groundnuts.	Conclusion 2: Conclusion 4 Conclusion 7	Finding 2 Finding 3 Finding 7 Finding 12

Recommendation	Conclusions	Findings
Recommendation 3: Strengthen mainstreaming of gender, disadvantaged groups (people living with disabilities) and human rights in the design and implementation of HGSF. 3.1: Expand the program's focus on addressing the food and nutrition needs of various demographic groups by more systematically considering vulnerability and inclusivity. 3.2: Address the economic empowerment of women and the vulnerabilities faced by girls in schools.	Conclusion 6	Finding 3 Finding 7
Recommendation 4: Strengthen capacities of all stakeholders at the school and farmer levels through training and capacity-building focusing on gaps identified in the evaluation and particularly gender equality, disability inclusion, and the empowerment of all project participants.	Conclusion 2	Finding 3 Finding 4
Recommendation 5: Enhance the quality of meals served at schools. 5.1: Provide training to cooks to ensure the necessary skills and knowledge for quality food preparation. 5.2: Develop a well-rounded menu that includes a variety of nutritious and culturally appropriate meals. 5.3: Seek guidance from nutrition experts or dieticians to ensure the meals meet the nutritional requirements.	Conclusion 3	Findings 4
Recommendation 6: Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that includes gender and disability-disaggregated data collection.	Conclusion 1	Finding 8
Recommendation 7: Enhance the cost efficiency of the HGSF model. 7.1: Sustain support for facilitation of profitable market access, particularly for women SHFs and farmers with very small holdings (non-profitability of engagement with the HGSF pilot correlated strongly with the size of landholding). 7.2: Strengthen supply chain and logistics to address delays in key activities such as timely collection of commodities from farmers and transferal of payments to farmers. 7.3: Develop a more nuanced/balanced approach to cost analysis that reflects the specific objectives, outcomes, and benefits of the HGSF model.	Conclusion 7	Finding 3 Finding 7 Finding 9 Finding 11

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Acronyms

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AMIS	Agricultural Market Information System
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
BERCS	Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CBT	Cash-Based Transfer
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CO	Country Office
COVID	Corona Virus
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DPMO	Deputy Prime Minister's Office
ECCDE	Early Childhood Care, Development, and Education
EFIP	Farmer Input Program
E	Abbreviation for the Eswatini currency 'Lilangeni'
EQ	Evaluation Question
ER	Evaluation Report
ESNAU	Eswatini National Agricultural Union
ESPPRA	Eswatini Public Procurement Regulatory Authority
ESWADE	Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise
ESWAFCU	Eswatini Farmers Cooperative Union
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FINCLUDE	Financial Inclusion and Cluster Development
g	grams
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GF	Global Fund
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ha	Hectare
HDI	Human Development Index
HGSF	Home Grown School Feeding
HGSFP	Home Grown School Feeding Programme
HH	Household
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HQ	Headquarters
ICDF	International Cooperation and Development Fund
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILFS	Integrated Labour Force Survey
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

kg	Kilograms
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LRFP	Local and Regional Food Procurement
LUSIP	Lower Usuthu Smallholder Irrigation Project
MEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MSME	Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
MT	Metric ton
NAIP	National Agriculture Investment Plan
NAMBOARD	National Agricultural Marketing Board
NCP	Neighbourhood Care Point
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NDP	National Development Plan
NDS	National Development Strategy
NERCHA	National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS
NFFSS	National Framework for Food Security In Schools
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NMC	National Maize Corporation
NSF	National Multisectoral Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Framework
NSFP	National School Feeding Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OEV	Office of Evaluation
OVC	Orphaned and Vulnerable Children
PRSAP	Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Programme
RBJ	Regional Bureau Johannesburg
RDA	Recommended Dietary Allowance
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SAMS	Small Agriculture Market Support
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHF	Smallholder Farmers
SMLP	Smallholder Market-Led Project
SZL	Swaziland Lilangeni
TDL	Tittle Deed Land
TOR	Terms Of Reference
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme On HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, And Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperative Framework
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency For International Development
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WFP	World Food Programme

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