

International School Meals Day 2026: Healthy Food as a Driver for Systemic Change

On the occasion of International School Meals Day 2026, SchoolFood4Change showcases how school meals are becoming a powerful tool for a healthy and sustainable future. Sixteen cities and regions as part of the European SchoolFood4Change (SF4C) network, are implementing the Whole School Food Approach (WSFA)—a holistic methodology officially evaluated in a [new impact report released today](#).

In total, over one million children have and will be impacted by SchoolFood4Change! The network has already reached nearly 4,000 schools across 22 countries with its actions. This may sound just like a statistic, but behind that number are more than one million children, students and teachers: children enjoying healthy, sustainable and nutritious meals, teachers with more engaged students, and school communities with hope for a healthier future. Together, these thousands of schools tell a powerful story of changing the school food culture towards better health and nutrition, improved food education, and sustainable development. Around 400 schools have received bronze, silver or gold certification from SchoolFood4Change for their efforts in implementing a Whole School Approach to Food.



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Impact through School Meals

Significant efforts have been made to transform school meals from a purely logistical task into an educational and sustainable cornerstone of the school day

Key results include:

- **Over 100 million healthier, fresher, more nutritious and sustainable school meals are served every year.**
- **More than 5,000 participants**, including cooks and school kitchen teams, were **trained** to rethink their school food recipes and revamp menu plans in order to reduce food waste and prepare nutritious school meals that appeal to children's taste buds.
- **More than 150 schools have formed partnerships with nearby farms** and, together with the farmers, organised educational visits to the farms.
- **More than 100 Canteen Day Parties** have been organised across Europe.

From Local Action to European Policy

The results are not isolated cases. The report published today, [*From Pilots to Policy: Evidence from Three Years of Implementing the Whole School Food Approach in Europe*](#), shows that the **implementation** of the WSFA methodology across Europe leads to lasting **behavioural change** towards healthier and more sustainable eating habits among students and a more resilient food system.

The report highlights that true change occurs when schools, farmers, and local authorities work closely together. This **multilevel** approach ensures that healthy food becomes accessible to every child, regardless of their background.



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About the new Report on implementing a Whole School Food Approach:

The report provides a roadmap for cities to transition toward a resilient food system. It aligns with the latest European ambitions for agriculture and food security, focusing on education and rewarding sustainable choices. [Find the report here.](#)

About SchoolFood4Change:

The EU-funded project SchoolFood4Change was launched in January 2022.

SchoolFood4Change engages local governments, schools and children as catalysts for the transformation towards a sustainable food system. The 43 organisations from 12 European countries, coordinated by the ICLEI Europe, bring all relevant school food actors to one table: students, parents, caregivers, teachers, farmers, chefs and canteen staff, sustainable food procurement experts, dietitians, and local enterprises. The heart of SchoolFood4Change is its Triple Impact Approach that includes the combined implementation of sustainable food procurement, moving towards planetary health diets and training kitchen teams, and the holistic Whole School Food Approach. SchoolFood4Change is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme and comes to an end in June 2026. Guidance and resources (handbooks, good practice experiences, policy briefs, scientific publications, etc) remain applicable and are transferable within and beyond Europe beyond the project's lifetime. Discover the practical findings and knowledge tools developed by SchoolFood4Change by [visiting our website](#).



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Further information

Website: <https://schoolfood4change.eu/>

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no 101036763.

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