



United States Department of Agriculture

Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement Program Report

Fiscal Year 2020

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I. Overview

The U.S. Congress established the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement Program (LRP) (7 U.S.C. 1726c) through the Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill), after the program had been operated as a pilot authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill). The authorizing legislation for the LRP is section 3206 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. Through the 2014 Farm Bill, Congress provided USDA the authority to administer the program and authorized annual appropriations of \$80 million through fiscal year (FY) 2018. Through the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill), Congress reauthorized the LRP and authorized annual appropriations of \$80 million for FYs 2019 through 2023.

Under the LRP, the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to make grants to, or enter into cooperative agreements with, eligible organizations to implement field-based projects that consist of local or regional procurements of eligible agricultural commodities in developing countries to provide development assistance and respond to food crises and disasters.

The LRP strengthens the ability of local and regional farmers, cooperatives, processors, and agribusinesses to provide high-quality commodities to governments and organizations in support of school feeding programs. In addition, the LRP addresses nutritional gaps in the diets of school-age children participating in school meals projects supported by the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (McGovern-Dole). The LRP ensures that fresh fruits and vegetables are procured to complement the school meal ration, with the potential to also include animal protein. By creating market linkages for smallholder farmers and connecting the farmers to schools, the LRP aims to build sustainable market linkages between the farms and the schools that will remain after the projects end.

During FY 2020, USDA had nine continuing LRP agreements with award recipients implementing activities in nine countries, including three agreements that concluded all project activities. The total number of beneficiaries reached by all nine active LRP projects in FY 2020 was 147,400. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several projects had to pause all or some activities as schools closed around the world.

In FY 2020, three final evaluations of LRP projects were completed. The evaluation methodology and results are summarized below in the Monitoring and Evaluation section.

Funding

The LRP has not received appropriated funds during the two most recent fiscal years. Neither the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, nor the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, appropriated funds for the LRP. This report reflects ongoing projects undertaken with funds provided to the LRP in previous fiscal years. Prior to the passage of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Congress provided funds for the LRP through the annual appropriation for McGovern-Dole. McGovern-Dole funds provided to the LRP by Congress in previous fiscal years appropriations are as follows: \$5 million (FY 2016), \$5 million (FY 2017), \$10 million (FY 2018), and \$15 million (FY 2019).

Annual Report

The 2018 Farm Bill extended the reporting requirement for the LRP in section 3206(e)(3) of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, which reads as follows:

(3) REPORTING.—Each year, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that describes the use of funds under this section, including— (A) the impact of procurements and projects on— (i) local and regional agricultural producers; and (ii) markets and consumers, including low-income consumers; and (B) implementation time frames and costs.

This report reflects the activities of the LRP during FY 2020.

LRP Under McGovern-Dole

Separate from the LRP, there is also a local and regional procurement component within McGovern-Dole. This was added through amendments in the 2018 Farm Bill to the statute authorizing McGovern-Dole. The amended statute provides that not more than 10 percent of the funds made available to carry out McGovern-Dole shall be used for the procurement of locally and regionally produced agricultural commodities. The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, directed that of the \$220,000,000 made available for McGovern-Dole, no more than 10 percent and no less than \$20,000,000, shall remain available until expended for the local and regional procurement of agricultural commodities under McGovern-Dole. The FY 2020 local and regional procurement of agricultural commodities component under McGovern-Dole will be reported in the FY 2020 Report to Congress on the Global Effort to Reduce Child Hunger and Increase School Attendance.

Objectives

Congress' objective for the LRP, as expressed in report language accompanying the 2014 Farm Bill, is “to complement existing food aid programs, especially the McGovern-Dole program, and to fill in nutritional gaps for targeted populations or food availability gaps generated by unexpected emergencies.”

The LRP is intended to build the capacity of farmers, producers, and cooperatives, and to assist in meeting quality standards and product specifications to ensure food safety and nutritional content within each project and for its beneficiaries. LRP projects typically operate in under-served and remote parts of the recipient countries where nutritional gaps and a lack of diet diversity are common. In accordance with the LRP authorizing legislation, preference is given to countries where there are active McGovern-Dole projects. To address market sensitivities around local and regional purchases, the LRP works with award recipients to improve access to market information in areas where the program is implemented. The LRP minimizes potential adverse impacts, such as price volatility or commodity shortages, by creating new markets, and maximizes the benefits of new markets for farmers, producers, and cooperatives.

II. Ongoing Project Work in FY 2020

In FY 2020, USDA had nine active LRP projects. Three of the nine active LRP projects, in Benin, Kenya, and Tanzania, concluded their activities by the end of FY 2020. The total number of beneficiaries reached by all nine active LRP projects in FY 2020 was 147,400. All the projects and the work accomplished during FY 2020 is detailed below.

Benin

In FY 2017, USDA awarded Catholic Relief Services-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (CRS) \$1.96 million to implement a two-year LRP project in Benin. Throughout the life of the project, the project supported 80 schools by procuring nearly 399 metric tons (MT) of locally produced maize, rice, beans, and cooking oil. Due to weather-related implementation delays during FY 2019, the project was extended until June 30, 2020. This additional time allowed the project to finalize the rehabilitation or construction of 67 kitchens with firewood saving stoves and storage rooms to safely house and prepare commodities. This project directly benefited 15,359 beneficiaries during the life of the project.



School feeding at Pane Primary School in the commune of Pèrèrè, Benin. Photo taken by CRS.

The LRP project provided training on best practices for production techniques, soil preparation, risk mitigation against disease, and pest management. To ensure the sustainability of activities beyond the project's end date, the project trained producer associations on Benin's public procurement policies, best practices in contract farming, and how to register their associations in Benin. These trainings led to 10 producer associations becoming registered through the Regional Administration of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery. A final evaluation of this project was conducted by a third-party evaluator during FY 2019 and was highlighted in the FY 2019 LRP Report to Congress.

Burkina Faso

In FY 2019, USDA awarded \$4.8 million to CRS to implement a four-year LRP project in Burkina Faso. The project targets communities in the Centre-Nord Region and complements existing McGovern-Dole activities by procuring locally produced vitamin A-fortified cottonseed oil, millet, rice, and cowpeas to be used for daily school meals. The LRP project anticipates reaching nearly 38,000 children in approximately 190 primary schools and more than 900 community members, including school cooks and transportation workers.

Due to COVID-19, the start of project activities was delayed. In October 2020, schools reopened, and CRS started capacity-building activities. Activities included the training of mayors and school



LRP project launch in Burkina Faso. Photo taken by CRS.

management committees in procurement planning and standard operating procedures. CRS started the food procurement process in November 2020 and expects to complete the process in February 2021 for food to be consumed in schools starting in March 2021.

Cambodia

In FY 2019, USDA awarded \$4.7 million to the World Food Program (WFP) to implement a four-year LRP project in Cambodia. Due to COVID-19, WFP paused implementation of activities. In FY 2020, WFP focused on ensuring a strong baseline evaluation is successfully conducted which will be completed in early FY 2021. WFP also conducted a limited study on the impact of school closures on producers and suppliers normally contracted through the Royal Government of Cambodia's Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) program.

Preparation for local procurement processes will commence in January 2021. This will include the development of online tools (video) to instruct school and community stakeholders on the local procurement and bidding process as an alternative to face-to-face training.

The LRP project will reach an estimated 47,000 school children in more than 150 schools in five districts across three provinces. The project will provide cash-based transfers for each school to procure animal protein, fresh vegetables, and iodized salt to supplement the FY 2019 McGovern-Dole project that includes U.S. donated fortified rice and vegetable oil. In addition, the project will work with school feeding stakeholders in Cambodia to strengthen their capacity on procurement mechanisms, provide technical assistance to producers and suppliers to strengthen their market engagement, and work at the national level to institutionalize these capacities and systems for local procurement in school feeding.



Neb Is, 64, proudly picks her long beans to sell to the school feeding program's supplier in Siem Reap province, Cambodia. Photo taken by WFP.

Guatemala

In FY 2018, USDA awarded Project Concern International (PCI), working collaboratively with CRS and Save the Children, \$4 million to implement a three-year LRP project in Guatemala. Due to COVID-19, schools closed in Guatemala in March 2020 and have not reopened as of December 2020. During FY 2020, the project delivered 152.18 MT of fresh food (fruits, vegetables, and eggs) to 52 schools that are also supported by McGovern-Dole, feeding 12,475 students. This effort included the distribution of 3,824 take-home rations to the families of students after schools closed due to COVID-19. PCI's project worked to provide pricing information obtained from the price monitoring that is regularly conducted in local markets, so that all parties will have reference data on which to base their negotiations. In addition, the project also worked to increase the capacity of government institutions.



Parents receiving some of the 3,824 take-home rations provided in Guatemala. Photo taken by PCI.

Currently, the Guatemalan Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security, and Ministry of Health participate in trainings and meetings on school feeding. Through the LRP project, parent associations have received training on quantifying food received, providing records of

acceptance or rejection of the food deliveries, carrying out quality controls by using technical specifications, participating in meetings for school menu selection, and selecting fresh food suppliers. The project has implemented good farming practices that help ensure the quality and safety of the foods offered by the producers. The project has also created technical food guides that illustrate the qualitative criteria for their products' acceptance to avoid putting students' health at risk.

Honduras

In FY 2018, USDA awarded CRS \$2.4 million to implement a two-year LRP project in the province of Intibucá, Honduras. Due to COVID-19, the project has been extended to March 31, 2021. This LRP project complements the ration of U.S. donated commodities provided by the McGovern-Dole project at schools by procuring local fruits, vegetables, and animal-based protein.

Due to COVID-19, schools have been closed since March 2020 and continue to be closed for an indefinite period. From March through December 2020, as COVID-19 spread in Honduras, CRS was approved to distribute a total of 1,038 MT of fresh eggs and vegetables as take-home rations to benefit 13,913 students who would otherwise be receiving meals as part of the LRP project. Parent-teacher associations help with the transfer of food products from the receiving centers to the schools and coordinate the storage and management of food.



Parents receiving food in a school network. Municipality of Santa Lucia in the Province of Intibucá, Honduras. August 2020. Photo taken by CRS.

In coordination with the active McGovern-Dole project in Honduras, a Diploma in Nutrition and School Feeding was developed and certified by the Francisco Morazán Pedagogical University, with the participation of 22 monitoring mothers, one per educational network and 4 technicians. Training was provided in topics of food and its nutrients, feeding in the life cycle, hygiene and food handling, food preparation and preservation, menu planning, quality standards and preparation of recipes for school meals. Mothers are committed to replicating the content of the diploma with the mother guides of each school and parents (of the 30 school networks). The process of strengthening the capacities of the participants involved in the supply chain in the processes of delivery, distribution and preparation of school meals continued, with the participation of the municipalities of Intibucá.

Kenya

In FY 2017, USDA awarded \$1 million to WFP to implement a two-year LRP project in Kenya. The project was extended until March 31, 2020 because at the end of direct commodity distributions under the corresponding McGovern-Dole project, there was an increased need to ensure proper and adequate local and national capacity building around school feeding.

The LRP project supported the Government of Kenya's effort to expand its national Home-Grown School Meals Program (HGSM) into arid areas. In FY 2020, the project contracted local smallholder farmers to produce drought-resistant crop varieties of sorghum and cowpeas for use in school meals. The project procured a total of 270.6 MT of sorghum and 79 MT of cowpeas from smallholder farmers, benefiting 56,702 direct beneficiaries.



Schools in Turkana, Kenya receive locally grown foods for lunch menus to increase diversity and nutrition while promoting agriculture and local trade. Photo taken by WFP.

This LRP project helped the Government of Kenya to assess the local agricultural sectors in three counties by identifying and mapping locally produced sorghum and cowpeas. The project also provided training to local farmers on food production, post-harvest handling techniques, and marketing and sales. To help sustain the benefits of the McGovern-Dole project in improving nutrition in school-age children, the LRP project integrated health and nutrition education in the national school curriculum and developed menus that use culturally acceptable nutrient-rich food. The curriculum included a set of HGSMP dietary guidelines for government officials, school administrators, and school meals procurement committees.

Nicaragua

In FY 2019, USDA awarded \$5.5 million to PCI to implement a two-year LRP project to benefit 10,000 school-age children, 382 parents, and 185 teachers in 60 schools, as well as 81 local farmers in Nicaragua. The LRP project is increasing the capacity of schools and their communities to manage and administer local food procurement for school feeding, including strengthening market linkages among schools, communities, and local food suppliers to ensure an ongoing supply of agricultural commodities for school meals. Concurrently, the project is improving agricultural cooperatives' and smallholder farmers' technical expertise to supply target schools with safe and nutritious fresh food.

During FY 2020, the project procured 264.87 MT of nutritious fresh food (eggs, milk, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, and tomatoes) from local farmers and food suppliers. Due to COVID-19 and the subsequent closure of schools, these fresh foods were provided as take-home rations to more than 10,000 school-age children. Also, the project provided training to 568 parents and teachers on different topics related to food management and the preparation and delivery of take-home rations. In FY 2020, the project began providing technical assistance related to food production and financial management to three local food suppliers, including a consortium of vegetable supplier cooperatives, an egg producer, and a dairy company.



Ministry of Education delegate and Ninga Segura school director distribute take-home rations to a Mother in Santa María de Pantasma, Jinotega, Nicaragua. Photo taken by PCI.

Senegal

In FY 2018, USDA awarded Counterpart International (CPI) \$3.6 million to implement a three-year LRP project in Senegal. The LRP project targets 270 schools and 30,000 school-age children that are supported by McGovern-Dole. It promotes local cowpea, millet, orange flesh sweet potato, and mung bean production. Mung bean and orange flesh sweet potatoes (OFSPs) were introduced as pilot efforts under the LRP project in Northern Senegal to diversify school meals for students and food crop markets for communities. Since the crops' introduction, both have become widely cultivated by local farmers and intently savored by local schoolchildren.

In FY 2020, the project procured more than 295 MT of millet and 88.8 MT of cowpeas. Additionally, in FY 2020, 486.98 kilograms of mung beans were produced by seven school communities and 7.22 MT of OFSPs were produced by 10 school communities. The project also organized an online training of trainers' activity on OFSP production. In FY 2020, 53 trainers received instruction using both online and in-person formats, and in turn, will train 442 families on orange flesh sweet potato production.



Local Senegalese mother volunteers to cook meals at her child's school. Photo taken by USDA staff.

Tanzania

In FY 2017, USDA awarded PCI \$2 million to implement a three-year LRP project named Chakula Chetu, which means “Our Food” in Swahili. The project was designed to complement efforts under PCI’s active McGovern-Dole project to support the gradual transition from U.S. donated commodities to locally led procurement to sustain school feeding activities.

In FY 2020, the project provided daily school meals to 14,294 students in 16 primary schools in the Butiama District of the Mara Region, Tanzania. The school meals were prepared with commodities purchased from local food suppliers through the LRP project, and from voluntary contributions from the community, including farmer groups. Total food commodities purchased from local suppliers using LRP project funds amounted to 399 MT and total voluntary community contributions to school meals tallied more than 60.6 MT in FY 2020.

At the request of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), the project helped design and develop Tanzania’s first National School Feeding Guidelines (NSFG). This will be part of the National Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan—a collaborative effort between Tanzania’s Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children and the MoEST. Additionally, at the request of the Mara Regional Commissioner, the project helped develop the Mara Regional School Feeding Strategy – the first regional strategy in Tanzania – which aligns with the NSFG and presents tools and guidance to operationalize school feeding programs in all schools within the Mara Region.



Local LRP supported farmer group in Butiama, Tanzania processing maize at a Community Harvest Day event. Photo taken by PCI.

III. Monitoring and Evaluation

Award recipients carry out LRP projects in accordance with the International Food Assistance Division's monitoring and evaluation policy and standard indicators handbook. The policy and handbook reflect that USDA's work is grounded in Results Oriented Management (ROM). The LRP results framework links every project activity to the achievement of a result. Results for each project are reported to USDA in the form of performance reports that include custom and standard indicators, and via third party-conducted evaluations that are required of each project. Evaluation reports, including those submitted to USDA by award recipients, help USDA meet its monitoring and evaluation objectives to manage public resources thoughtfully, to ensure accountability and transparency, and to drive evidence-based program improvements.

Final evaluations for three LRP projects were completed during FY 2020, and summaries of each evaluation report are offered below.

FY 2016-Funded World Food Program Project in Rwanda

In FY 2020, a final evaluation was approved by USDA for an LRP project in Rwanda implemented by WFP. In FY 2016, WFP Rwanda was awarded a total of \$2 million to implement the project, which took place from April 2017 to September 2019.

The project's objective was to improve the effectiveness of food assistance and the expected outcomes included increased value of sales by project beneficiaries. The project design assumed that food procured by WFP from farmer cooperatives, or through pro-smallholder aggregators, would be distributed to WFP schools after fortification as part of the school feeding program in two districts in the south of Rwanda (Nyamagabe and Nyaruguru). The primary beneficiaries of project activities (capacity building and support) were small-holder farmers (SHFs) targeted through 16 cooperatives. These cooperatives were selected by WFP in four districts (Nyamagabe, Nyaruguru, Huye, and Gisagara). A total of 5,617 farmers (approximately 10 percent of farmers in the targeted areas) benefitted from the project. The SHFs had the opportunity to sell part of their production to formal Farm to Market Alliance (FTMA) buyers through cooperatives.

The final evaluation design used a mixed method, before-and-after approach to examine the effects of the project activities. At baseline, quantitative and qualitative data was collected using a combination of documentation/secondary data review, a survey, in-depth key informants' interviews, and observations. During the final evaluation, the same information was collected for comparison at end line. The data was collected on the same variables as the baseline, and a comparison done to determine changes in the indicators. A survey was applied to the 16 targeted cooperatives and covered 828 SHFs. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 cooperatives and with members of six cooperatives. The WFP implementation team, value chain actors (producers, middlemen, buyers, agro-dealers), support actors (local Non-Governmental Organizations, extension agents), as well as national and local authorities and decentralized units from the relevant ministries were interviewed. The before-and-after design was combined with a contribution analysis approach at end line, which examined WFP's work in relation to the work by other partners.

⁴ Implementers reported beneficiaries reached in FY 2019 against established standard indicators.

The key limitations of this evaluation included the limited availability of cooperative executives and members, the limited specificity of reporting (as LRP reporting is integrated with the reporting of the FTMA reports), and the lack of documentation existing at the cooperative level. In addition, it was not possible to cross-check information on quantity and price from interviews with documentary sources.

Despite the challenges, the evaluation found the project performance, relevance, and effectiveness to have been positive. Amongst the targets set for 16 monitoring indicators for the project, 10 targets had been achieved at end line (or were very close to being achieved), four were partially achieved, and two had not been achieved. While cooperatives remained fragile and overly project-dependent at end line, the capacity of cooperatives had increased. The evaluation found the project demonstrated that with appropriate support, cooperatives can have access to better market opportunities. The LRP has had a limited effect at the farmer level, but the evaluation found that it contributed to an increased interest in and profitability of maize production for males and females, with specific benefits for women. Finally, while farmers' knowledge had increased as a result of the intervention and changes in the practices were evident, the evaluation found that some changes were incomplete and still fragile.

FY 2017-Funded World Vision Project in Mozambique

In 2017, World Vision received a two-year, \$2 million award to implement an LRP project in Mozambique. The goal was to improve student nutrition and the efficacy and sustainability of USDA's ongoing McGovern-Dole school feeding project by providing students at 43 schools with locally grown and procured food commodities from 46 local farmer associations. While the project ended in FY 2019, the final evaluation of the project was finalized in FY 2020.

The final evaluation used a mixed methods performance evaluation design. Quantitative data were generated from project monitoring documents and surveys of students and teachers at selected schools (20 interventions and 30 control). The intended sample size for the survey was 15 students and three teachers at each school. Qualitative data were collected from interviews with government officials, transporters, wholesalers, and commodity suppliers, along with focus group discussions composed of farmer group members, school management committees, school procurement committees, and school cooks. The evaluator intended to include three cooks and three school management officials from each school to participate in the focus groups. The evaluators selected 10 farmers from a sample of 24 farmer groups to also participate in focus group discussion. The farmer groups were the same that were surveyed for the baseline evaluation.

There were several major limitations to this final evaluation. Due to poor record keeping, the evaluators discovered that some of the schools in the control groups had been receiving project interventions. This invalidated statistical comparisons between the control and intervention schools. Further, the evaluators were not able to meet their planned sample sizes for the interviews and focus group discussions. It is therefore unclear whether the qualitative results are statistically significant or representative of the broader populations.

Despite these limitations, the report was generally positive about this LRP project. The evaluation reported that the project was implemented "efficiently, with teachers, students, farmers and the government officials giving high ratings for the level of technical and financial support they received." The report specifically highlighted that one crop introduced by the program, orange fleshed sweet potatoes (OFSP), was taken up rapidly by farmers. By the end of the project, 87.5 percent of farmers groups reported growing OFSP and 71 percent of all farmers associations were providing OFSP to schools. This helped increase the diversity of foods that students received at schools, with an approximate 33 percent increase in the number of students reporting that they consume fruits and vegetables (53.8 percent at baseline to 87.2 percent at end line).

However, the final evaluation noted that the training received by LRP beneficiaries was largely duplicative of the training that they received through the affiliated McGovern-Dole project. For instance, roughly 70 percent of farmers at baseline had already received training in agricultural productivity. While the LRP project was able to bring that to roughly 91 percent by the end of the project, relatively few farmers (between 13 percent and 38 per-

cent) indicated that they had “good” knowledge of any specific technique by the end of the project. These ratios were largely unchanged from the baseline values. The only exception was OFSP conservation techniques, which 42 percent of farmers reported having “good” knowledge by the project’s end.

FY 2016-Funded World Food Program Project in Laos

The FY 2016 \$1 million LRP project in Laos, implemented by WFP, completed a final evaluation in FY 2020. This LRP project sought to increase community ownership of school lunch and student intake of fresh food, especially vegetables, through agricultural extension activities and cash support to schools, targeting 3,500 students and 500 farmers in the Nale District of Laos. While project activities finished in FY 2019, the final evaluation was completed in FY 2020.

The evaluation followed a quasi-experimental design, with schools as part of the LRP project making up the intervention group, and the control group consisting of villages and schools not supported by the LRP project. The final evaluation included 15 intervention villages and five control villages selected from the baseline study. However, two of the intervention villages had to be replaced with villages not covered during baseline study as the required number of respondents were not available. With the quasi-experimental design, a mixed-methods approach was used to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data through in-depth informant interviews of government officials, schoolchildren, cooks, and teachers. The evaluation also included focus group discussions with parents, farmers, and Village Education and Development Committee members. A total of 156 farmers, 201 parents, and 380 children across intervention and control villages were selected. In addition, case studies of seven farmers from villages that were part of the intervention were identified and documented, using the Most Significant Change approach, which generates and analyzes personal accounts of change to determine which of these changes is the most significant and why.

The final evaluation encountered limitations. The sample size of students and farmers was limited, as some schools had fewer pupils than the minimum sample required, and some farmers could not be contacted for focus group discussions due to their work locations. Children in some schools also had difficulty in comprehending and responding to the questions. In addition, the comparisons from the quasi-experimental design did not consider other interventions carried out in evaluation villages, thus, the evaluation could only comment on contributions made, without attributing changes or differences to the project. While an impact evaluation was planned initially, it was decided that there was not enough time between the project ending and the evaluation to gauge long-term effects, therefore the exercise pivoted to measuring short-term changes in a mixed-method performance evaluation.

Despite the limitations, the final evaluation found positive results and reported the project to be in line with the host country’s strategy for school feeding, as well as multiple national strategies related to nutrition, education, and agriculture. This project reached 4,973 beneficiaries from a target of 5,000, and 48 percent were female. Out of the sampled 15 intervention schools, lunch meals were provided to all children regularly in 14 schools. Final evaluation data highlights that children in classes 3 through 5 recalled (84 percent) and reported consuming (72 percent) at least five vegetables as part of school meals in the week before the survey. By the end of the second year of the project, 80 percent of farmer groups from the 10 focus villages applied best practices from their farmer training. Between the end of the second semester until the final evaluation, the average variety of crops cultivated by these farmer groups increased from 14 to 20. Of the larger intervention group, 19 formal partnerships between schools and farmers were made. A positive unintended outcome of the project was the transfer of technical knowledge from the beneficiary farmers to non-beneficiary ones, which resulted in the cultivation of similar vegetables by most farmers.

Challenges were also highlighted by the evaluation. The study found that access to water remains an obstacle for the 37 intervention villages not chosen as “focus villages.” Access to the market, especially for the most rural of farmers, remains a hindrance in the area. Lessons learned through this project include the need for more in-depth needs assessments before project design and direct communication with farmer participants regarding the goals of the project and potential commercial opportunities.

The findings from all three evaluations provide relevant information for ongoing and future school feeding work in each country. With USDA now conducting a local and regional procurement component within McGovern-Dole, lessons learned from the USDA LRP Program such as those highlighted here are being applied to ongoing work within many McGovern-Dole projects with the aim of improving the program's outcomes overall.