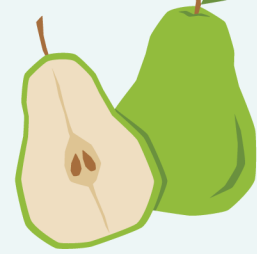


# Q&A



## School Food Programs Around the World Webinar

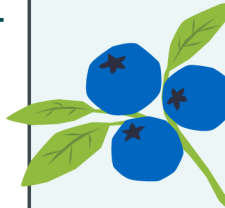
**Webinar Date:** April 15, 2025

**Hosted by:** TMU's Centre for Studies in Food Security

### Question 1:

What are your recommendations for accommodating the needs of students with special athletic or physical activities levels? Do you recommend providing electrolytes and isotonic drinks?

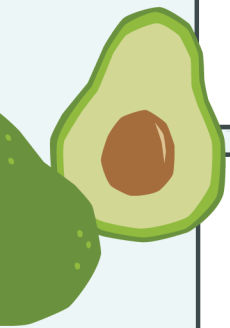
**Answer 1:** School Food Programs in Canada follow Canada's Food Guide, which recommends water with the meal. So a school food program would not recommend special electrolyte or isotonic drinks. **(Debbie)**

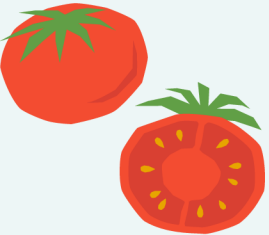


**Q2:** What are your recommendations for promoting nutrition education and food literacy beyond the curriculum and lessons and workshops?

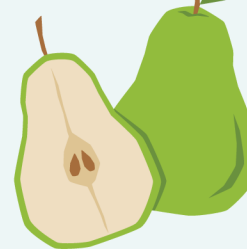
**A2:** From my experiences in Germany, we have a lot of local projects about sustainable food education, such as creating a school garden or a project in which students at primary school care for an orchard throughout the season. All these small projects are important. However, I think it's crucial that sustainable food education becomes part of school curricula, so that all students learn about sustainable food systems. Ideally, this should be combined with activities in the school kitchen, like students participating in menu planning and preparation of the dishes, so that they learn hands-on where our food comes from and how to prepare it. **(Birgit)**

**A2:** I agree with Birgit. Integrating food education into school curricula and involving teachers in this education would go a long way. Here food education should not just teach students nutritional facts and food literacy, but also include broader topics such as food culture, food sovereignty, environmental issues and other important aspects of food security to nurture food agency in students. **(Yukari)**



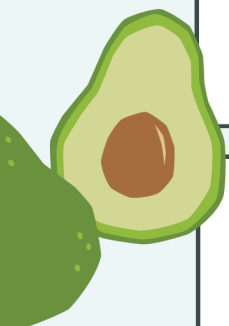


# Q&A



## Q3:

What are your recommendations for operating school canteens when you have different types of canteens and not all canteens have an operating kitchen?



**Q4:** I am Canadian, working in the UK higher education. The UK has one of the highest obesity rates in the region and ultra-processed food is to blame. My question here: any success stories to avoid ultra-processed foods in school food programmes in any of these countries you covered.

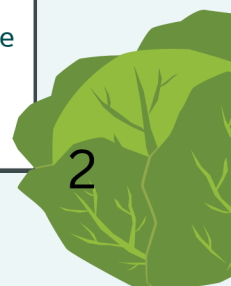


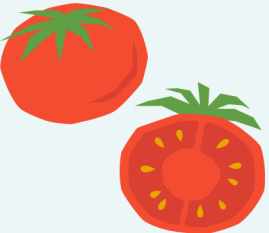
**A3:** Infrastructure and logistics is essential for making school food more sustainable and healthy. Also in Germany, we have a mixture of different procurement models but most follow an externalized model in which municipalities do a public tender to find a private catering company to supply the schools. However, if possible, I would recommend local solutions with central kitchens for one municipality (as in France). In France, 60% of school meals are prepared by municipality-owned catering enterprises, they are under control of the municipality council and fulfill high quality standards (50% of ingredients have to fulfill quality criteria such as organic). With this model (direct public management), municipalities have more control to decide upon the school food system. Also, this model has more flexibility to integrate regional value chains with local farmers.

**(Birgit)**

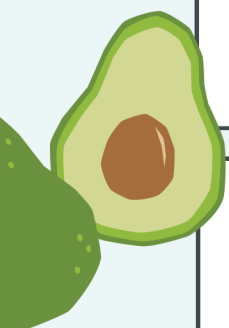
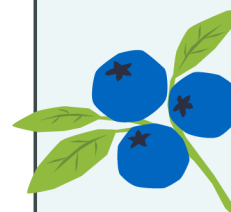
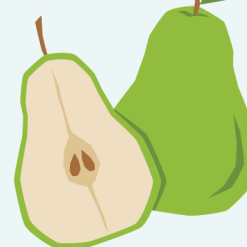
**A4:** We responded to this question during the webinar. Debbie suggested that in countries like Brazil and Japan, preparation of fresh school lunches using locally produced food items itself could address the issue of ultra-processed foods. **(Yukari)**

**A4:** As said in my answer to question 2, I would argue for local solutions, such as on-site kitchens at school or municipality-owned catering enterprises (central kitchens for one municipality/ neighborhood that serves the school of this town/district). This allows the cooks to cook more freshly and to use seasonal ingredients from local farmers. It's also a question of how kitchen processes are organized to avoid convenience food and if the kitchen management has qualified employees that are motivated to prepare dishes more hands-on than using processed stuff (e.g. preparing lentil burgers). Thus, basically the political willingness and motivation of the kitchen management and good working conditions are crucial factors for transforming the kitchen toward more sustainable and healthy food. **(Birgit)**





# Q&A



**Q5:** @Debbie Field, What are your thoughts on language on requirements & definition of a Meal in current programs in Canada? The current language only focuses on the inclusion of the components of a meal such as protein, vegetable and grain but but does not extend beyond that For example in some schools meals (lunch) as yogurt, apple and a bowl of cereal that satisfies the definition of the meal for funding purposes but not the true meaning and requirements. How do you think this should be improved ?

**A5:** I agree with you that we want children and you to have full meals. Unfortunately, because of a lack of funding, programs have had to cut back the food and the amount and variety of food they served. Also during COVID there were many restrictions on fresh food that forced programs to serve more packaged food. I believe it is important to return to serving fresh, whole, unpackaged food and that will mean ensuring adequate funding. **(Debbie)**

**Q6:** For entities that would be interested to join the Coalition for Healthy School Food, is there a way to connect directly with Debbie? And how can we explore the possible that light provided or how can we explore possible collaboration?

**Q6:** It would be great to talk to any non-profit organizations about joining the Coalition. Please reach out to me at [debbie@healthyschoolfood.ca](mailto:debbie@healthyschoolfood.ca). **(Debbie)**

**Q7:** Question for Germany & Brazil - what is the status in these countries for school food infrastructure? A key barrier to enhancing school meals in my area is the lack of food infrastructure in actual school buildings (i.e., kitchen, places to receive and reheat food, even spaces for children to eat) and even outside school buildings (i.e., commissary kitchens). Do schools in Brazil and Germany have that infrastructure already?

**A7:** In Germany, some schools have on-site kitchens and cook freshly. As explained during the webinar, in 89% of the cases, we have an externalized model in which school food service is outsourced to private catering companies. Thus, schools often have only a kind of cafeteria in which students eat the delivered food. In some cases, the food is only served in a classroom. Also, the teachers usually don't eat lunch at school. They bring their own food or go out for lunch. **(Birgit)**

**A7:** In Brazil, all public schools must have a fully equipped kitchen (stove, cooking utensils, fridge, freezer, storage space), an area for receiving foodstuff, and an area for dining. **(Cecilia)**



# Q&A

**Q8:** Question for Birgit regarding the German school food model – Similar question to Laura but focusing on human resource infrastructure. Is there volunteerism involved with schools using the externalized private management model? And more broadly, have there been implementation challenges owing to depending on volunteerism for program implementation (staffing sustainability, inconsistent implementation, etc.)?

**A8:** I differentiate three procurement models: Direct public management, private externalized model and the community managed model based on volunteer work. All three have different path dependencies. In Germany, the externalized model is the most common one with about 89%. This means that municipalities do a public tender to find a private catering company that supplies the schools of that town. In my eyes, this is the most common model because for a long time school food was not a political priority and there was very little investment. So, for municipalities, the easiest way was to just outsource it to a private provider. Now, that inflation and food prices are rising, the lunch prices increase and we have a problem. Municipalities face difficulties to even find catering companies (as this is not a very profitable sector), not even thinking about setting high quality standards.

The community management model goes back to parents' initiatives and a lack of public service for lunch offers at schools. Many of them were initiated in the 1990s and 2000s. So, many of them were created when there was not even an externalized service. That's why the two models have different pathways. So, I would not say that volunteer work is abused in the externalized procurement model because you don't have two models at one school.

The community management model has several pros and cons.

The advantage is that they have their kitchens on-site at schools. Usually, they cook very freshly with seasonal and local ingredients. Prices are low and very accessible due to the volunteer work. Many of them offer pedagogical activities and integrate students in menu planning or meal preparation, e.g. "students-cook-for-students", see some examples here:

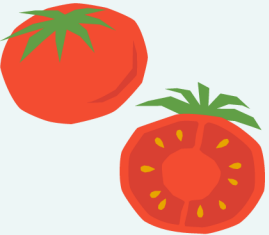
<https://sta.uni-hohenheim.de/en/food-for-future>

However, the disadvantage is that they rely on volunteer work by parents or grandparents. Usually, we see a very gendered participation; far more mothers and grandmothers are volunteering. Also, it works better in middle class neighborhoods. Some schools report that they had a decline of volunteer work when schools were closed during the Covid-19 pandemic and could not re-motivate the people to volunteer.

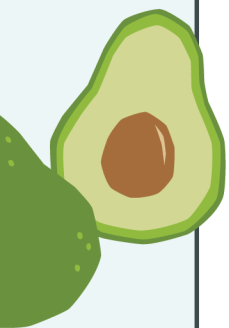
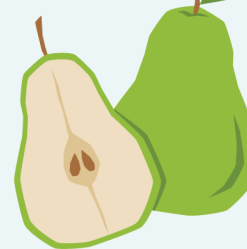
Thus, from my point of view, I think a direct public management model with cooks employed by a municipal enterprise has more potential for sustainable and healthy food, as it doesn't rely on unstable volunteer work. **(Birgit)**

**A8:** In Brazil, the School Food Program is to be implemented completely by public servants, without the need for volunteers. There might be some volunteers on special occasions, such as food education activities, but not in the day-to-day implementation of the program. **(Cecilia)**





# Q&A



**Q9:** Do any of the countries here have a morning class and an noon class? such as INdonesia where the school has limited classroom, but many students. So children goes to school in the morning from 7-11 (1st-3rd grade) and 12-16pm (for 4-6th grade...and Brazil, Germany, also Canada have Shokuiku?

**A9:** Although there are local differences, in most regions in Canada, JK-12 students (aged 4-17) go to school full time, usually starting at 8-9am till 2-3pm (6 hours/day). In many schools, students have an option to go home to eat lunch. Similarly, most Japanese elementary schools run from 9:00am-3:00pm (or 8:30am-2:30pm, 6 hours/day) and most students eat lunch at school. Canada does not have an act equivalent to the Basic Act of Shokuiku (food education) in Japan. **(Yukari)**

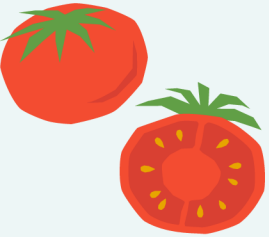
**A9:** Despite a proposed policy, most public schools in Brazil still have morning and afternoon turns, with students in school for only 4 hours/day. Only about 20% of the students in public schools attend them full-time (7 hours/day). **(Cecilia)**

**Q10:** @Debbie & Cecillia , Your thoughts on use of Technology and specifically AI in nutrition analysis of meals and menus in the school programs? It is an scalable, cost effective and valuable solution for many parts of the program including but not limited to governance & Compliance , etc.

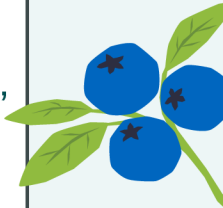
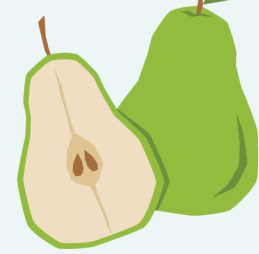
**A10:** I have not looked into that, but I believe that all tools available to improve the planning and implementation of school meals should be used. **(Cecilia)**

**A10:** I would prefer a whole food rather than a focus on nutrition analysis of meals and menus. So I am I not sure we need to be using Technology or AI for nutrition analysis. **(Debbie)**





# Q&A



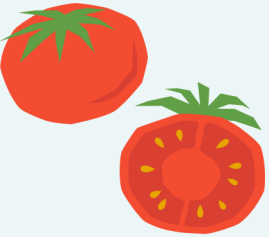
**Q11:** We are working with our counterparts in Ghana to support the implementation of the school feeding program, and a major challenge highlighted was the fact that caterers at schools, preparing meals, are often selected based on their allegiance/relationship with government so it is a bit of a corrupt/biased process. another major challenge is the delay in payments to caterers from the federal government causing meals to not be delivered to schools at all or being prepared without abiding by nutritional guidelines; do the panelists have thoughts on how to deal with these challenges?

**A11:** Problems with corruption can emerge anywhere. What is needed is a set of legislation governing the programs and a good oversight system to prevent such situations. In the case of Brazil, the School Meals Program (PNAE) is monitored and supervised by government agencies (such as the Public Prosecutor Office and the Federal Court of Auditors), and also by the School Food Councils, with the participation of civil society. Further to this, the Ministry of Education prepared a Technical Note to guide the behaviour of those actors involved in the implementation of PNAE. The Technical Note discusses strategies in the identification and prevention of conflicts of interest in the execution of the program. **(Cecilia)**

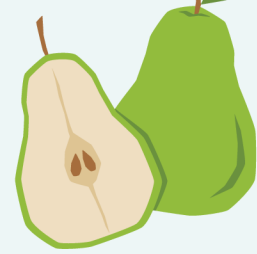
**Q12:** Are all international school food programs presented here, tracked vigorously for health and economic outcomes? Are municipalities analysing the data or reporting to national departments for time series analysis

**A12:** It is very difficult to separate the factors impacting health. I am not aware of any studies, which would indicate the health outcomes due exclusively to the school food program in Brazil. The program, however, follows the recommendations of the Food Guide for the Brazilian Population, restricting the offering of ultra-processed foods. **(Cecilia)**



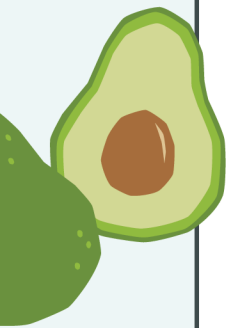


# Q&A



**Q13:** @yukari, I see the emphasis is on carbohydrates, protein and calcium.....why are the micronutrients not part of the standards since we know the importance of MN like Zn, Fe and Vit A?

**A13:** Micronutrients such as Calcium, Magnesium, Iron, and Vitamines are part of the nutrition standards for school lunches determined by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The standards were revised in 2021. [https://www.mext.go.jp/content/20210212-mxt\\_kenshoku-100003357\\_2.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/content/20210212-mxt_kenshoku-100003357_2.pdf) (Japanese) **(Yukari)**

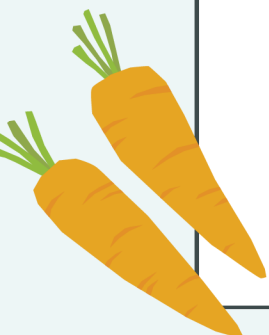
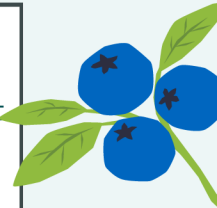


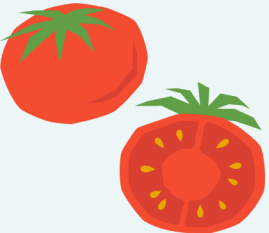
**Q14:** In Germany and Brazil , What is the level of participation, i.e., percentage of the students who sign up for the lunch.

**A14:** This is difficult to answer... I think there are not even statistics on this. The point is that school in Germany starts around 8am and goes until 1pm. So most afternoons the students go home right after the last class. At primary schools, some schools offer full-day child care. Then, students who are subscribed to this offer, also receive lunch at school.

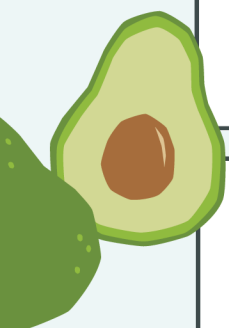
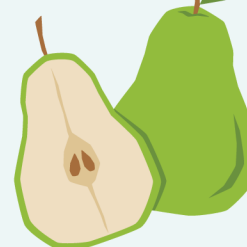
At secondary schools, the picture is more diverse. Usually, they have two or three afternoons with classes. Then, they receive lunch at school in the canteen (we call it "mensa"). We see an increasing tendency that students from 7th grade onwards don't like the lunch at the mensa and go - if possible - in the town center and buy some food at bakeries or supermarkets, often fast food. In my eyes, this is an alarming tendency as they consume a lot of unhealthy and processed food there (see the question about obesity). Also, it is increasingly expensive to buy 'Döner' for lunch. Thus, I think politics should create better conditions that schools can offer attractive and healthy lunches at school. In any case, I have unfortunately no data about the actual participation rates. It depends a lot on the school type, on the Federal state and whether the school is in an urban context (where usually both parents work) or in a rural context with more traditional family role models. **(Birgit)**

**A14:** There is no "signing-up" for the program in Brazil. It is offered to all students enrolled in public schools. But the rejection/waste of food is monitored and attempts to reduce that are always made. **(Cecilia)**





# Q&A



**Q15:** Thank you all for sharing all these great school food programs across the different countries. Am curious about how we can ensure the representation of the diverse food cultures with the different school food programs? I see this as an opportunity for awareness about the diverse food ways for children and our communities.

**A15:** I agree that school food programs can be a great opportunity for representing diverse food cultures reflective of each school's local demographics. I can think of two strategies. The first one would be to involve dietitians/nutritionists who are knowledgeable about local food cultures in designing school meal menus. Those who design menus can represent local foods appreciated by local communities or seasonal cuisines reflective of students' cultural backgrounds. The second strategy could be to involve students and families in menu design. Cecilia mentioned how program councils are an integral part of school food programs in Brazil. This could be a great educational opportunity for students, families, and community members. **(Yukari)**

**Q16:** Do any of the evaluations of these programs include long term health data? ie monitoring the impacts of more whole foods on population health outcomes

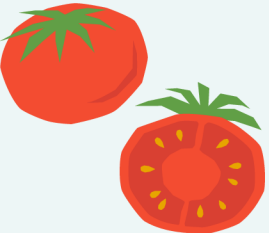
**Q16:** It is very difficult to separate the factors impacting health. I am not aware of any studies, which would indicate the health outcomes due exclusively to the school food program in Brazil. The program, however, follows the recommendations of the Food Guide for the Brazilian Population, restricting the offering of ultra-processed foods. (Same as the answer to 12 above.) **(Cecilia)**

**Q17:** Do all countries except Canada currently have school food program legislation?

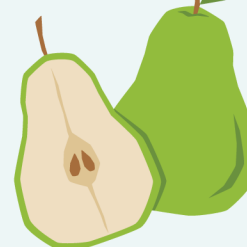
**A17:** Brazil has extensive legislation governing its program. **(Cecilia)**  
**A17:** School food programs in Japan are governed by the School Lunch Program Act and a series of related regulations that establish operational standards including nutritional requirements and food handling practices. **(Yukari)**  
**A17:** We don't have a national school food program legislation. We have a very decentralized system. At the national level, we have non-binding recommendations, as from the German Society for Nutrition. The curriculum is the responsibility of each federal state. School food is decided on a municipal level. So, every municipality decides upon their school food service. **(Birgit)**





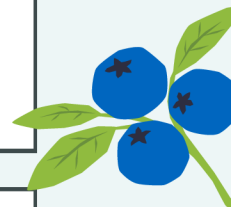


# Q&A



**Q18:** What I'm missing is the system comments. People do not have the agency to produce their own food if they don't have access to land. I know everyone does not want to grow their own food. However, many do. How is planning for rights to food considering access to land?

**A18:** In Brazil, some schools have gardens as part of their food education program.  
**(Cecilia)**



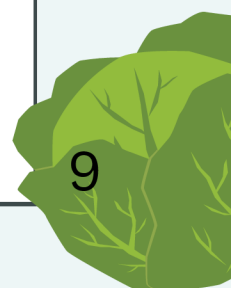
**Q19:** How many of your respective countries are also monitoring food waste as part of these programs?

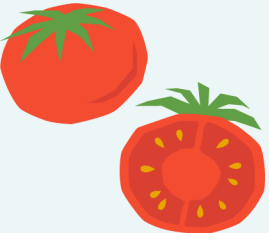
**A19:** In Brazil, food waste is constantly monitored as part of the program. **(Cecilia)**

**A19:** I know that in France, the Egalim law requires every public canteen to measure food waste and to take measures against food waste. In Germany, we have plans to reduce the amount of food waste by 2030. But unfortunately, these are only declarations of intent and not binding requirements. **(Birgit)**

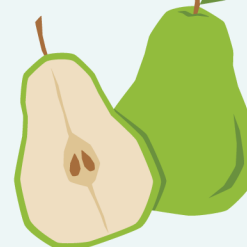
**Q20:** With the limited amount of funding for The National School Food Program, I am wondering what the disperse of funding will go to meals and what will go to food and nutrition literacy education, have plans been discussed to figure this out?

**A20:** At the moment, all of the new National School Food Program funding is going to meals. Hopefully, federal, provincial, and territorial funding grows there will be the possibility of supporting nutrition literacy education. **(Debbie)**



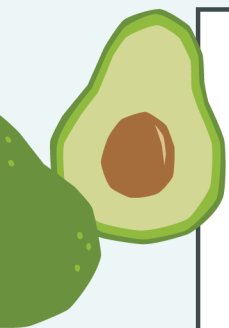


# Q&A



**Q21:** Time and capacity are also major barriers to school meal programs. Teachers and community members are volunteering their time to purchase food, follow guidelines, count usage of food, etc. How can Canada push for more investment on paid staff like nutritionists in other countries (e.g. Germany, Japan)?

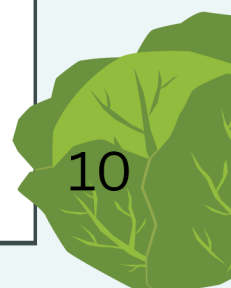
**A21:** The Coalition recommends that funding be available for staff, equipment and food and we were pleased to see that the new National School Food Program funding does not restrict paying for staff. However, since the National School Food Program funds are so limited, there is not yet enough funds in the system for paid staff coordinators. In Canada, some nutritionists work for the local municipality and support school food programs as in-kind contribution from the municipality, but I do not know of any school food nutritionists in Canada who are paid by the school food programs. **(Debbie)**

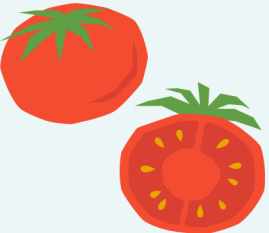


**Q22:** Birgit's research talks about "pay as you can" models for economic sustainability. Are food systems prepared to consider the role of "pay as you can" programs to support local value chains and right to food?

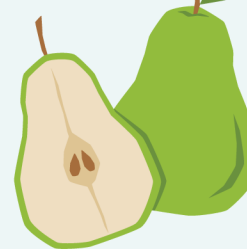
**A22:** I think there was a misunderstanding. In Germany, we don't have a "pay-as-you-can" model. This is more common in France or in Italy. We have fixed prices defined by the catering company that delivers food to a school, some municipalities give additional subsidies to keep prices low. Only families with very low income, unemployed or refugees can apply for social and participation packages ("Bildungs- und Teilhabepaket") from federal funds which provides them financial assistance for free lunches and entrances to swim and sport facilities. So, I don't have a good answer to this question. From what I observe in Italy and France the pay-as-you-can model allows economic sustainability and the right to food in a non-stigmatizing way, as all families contribute according to their income. In Italy, wealthy families pay the full price. In case of families with lower income, the municipalities compensate financially the difference between the full price and parent's contribution.

Italy is also very engaged in integrating local value chains into the school food system. I think this goes back to the work of the Biodistricts (Biodistretti), Città del Bio, the Slow Food movement and the cultural valorization for local and fresh food in Italy. So, I guess this is independent from the pay-as-you-can model. It's more about the efforts and political willingness to create regional networks between farmers, processors and kitchens. **(Birgit)**



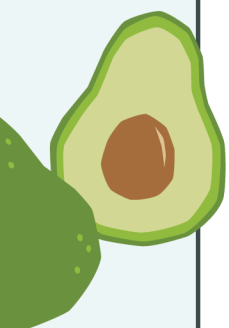


# Q&A



**Q23:** Hello, it looks like the current leader in brazil is the opposite of bolsonaro, does that mean the funding and committees has been re-established by the Workers party?

**A23:** Yes, the government, which came to power in 2023 after Bolsonaro, re-established the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security, as well as the funding for the PNAE. **(Cecilia)**



This is the end of the Q&A that were submitted during the webinar. Please note that the questions weren't corrected for grammatical errors or typos.

Thanks for attending the webinar!

