



UNIVERSITY OF
HOHENHEIM



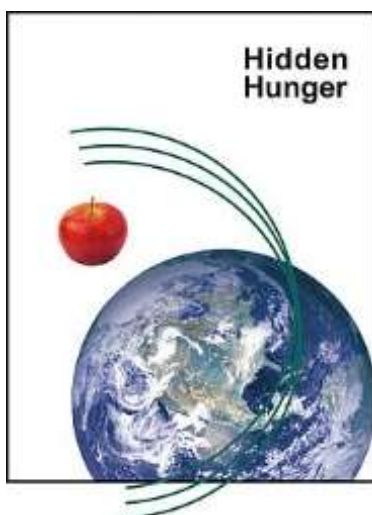
SOCIETY OF NUTRITION
AND FOOD SCIENCE



Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Ernährung e.V.

In cooperation with

SUMMARY REPORT



Hidden
Hunger

5th International Congress

Hidden Hunger

**Improving food and nutrition security
through school feeding**

September 4-6, 2023 | Stuttgart, Germany

www.hidden-hunger.de

Date: September 29, 2023

Written by: Jana Tinz, Ulrike Arens-Azevedo, Ernestine Tecklenburg

The 5th International Congress Hidden Hunger with the title "Improving Food and Nutrition Security through School Feeding," took place from September 4 to 6, 2023, at the University of Hohenheim in Stuttgart, Germany. The scientific event was organized by the Institute of Nutritional Sciences (Department of Biofunctionality of Food) at the University of Hohenheim and the Society of Nutrition and Food Science e.V. (SNFS) in cooperation with the German Nutrition Society e.V. (DGE). The congress received sponsorship from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and the Foundation fiat panis.

The program included introduction, welcome and opening speeches by the congress chairs, the President of the University of Hohenheim, and the President of the Federal Office of Agriculture and Food (BLE). The congress featured 28 keynote speeches delivered by distinguished experts from various parts of the world, as well as 13 free presentations given by young scientists.

Additionally, there were four parallel sessions organized by the German Society for International Cooperation GmbH (GIZ), the Sight and Life Foundation, the Hohenheim Research Center for Global Food Security and Ecosystems (GFE), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP). In total the program included three panel discussions. A poster exhibition showcased 24 scientific posters, accompanied by poster presentations. SNFS awarded the three best posters during the Best Poster Award session. Moreover, 15 scholarships were granted to young scientists in recognition of their outstanding contributions.

A total of 173 participants from 23 countries around the world attended the congress. The program was rich and diverse, covering a wide range of topics related to school feeding and its impact on food and nutrition security. The congress featured the following key topics:

- **School Feeding Programs in Different Countries:** This topic explored the diversity of school feeding initiatives across various nations, highlighting best practices, challenges, and innovative approaches. While the focus in some presentations were partially on the recognition of hidden hunger and the potential of each learner through school health and nutrition, others have shown how successful they were even during the covid—19 pandemic and in which way school feeding programmes were improved in order to provide healthy and sustainable food.
- **National School Meal Programs, Policy and Legal Framework:** Discussions centered on the development, implementation, and assessment of national-level school meal programs, aiming to provide valuable insights into their effectiveness. Experts delved into the policy and legal aspects of school feeding programs, emphasizing their role in shaping and supporting sustainable food security initiatives. School meals as opportunity for effective impacts and the quantification of the return on investment gave an impressive idea of what can be achieved with school meals.
- **Impact of Sustainable and Health-Promoting Daycare and School Catering (Perspective: Health):** This topic focused on the health dimension of school feeding programs, examining how sustainable and health-conscious catering practices can positively influence the well-being of school children and adolescents. Against the background of the current status of school feeding worldwide, impacts on growth and development of adolescents as well as the effects of free school meals in different countries were shown.
- **School Meals and the School Food Environments:** Presentations addressed the broader environment in which school meals operate, considering factors such as food accessibility, affordability, and community engagement with insight views of several countries.
- **Food-to-Food Fortification of School Meals:** This topic explored innovative strategies for enhancing the nutritional quality of school meals through fortification with nutrient-rich foods.
- **Nutrition Education and Related Actions:** Discussions revolved around the importance of nutrition education within school feeding programs and its role in promoting healthy eating habits among school children and adolescents. The focus was on low- and middle-income countries and on nutrition education interventions for different age groups.
- **Public Food Procurement and Home-Grown School Feeding:** Experts examined the benefits and challenges of sourcing food locally for school feeding programs, emphasizing the potential for community empowerment and economic development.
- **The Contribution of Research in Schools and All-Day Care Centers and the Sustainable Transformation in Nutrition:** Presentations highlighted the vital role of research in evaluating the effectiveness and impact of school feeding programs, providing evidence-based insights for future initiatives. This topic also delved into the broader context of sustainable nutrition practices, considering the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of food security. Also was

emphasized the role of the School Meal Coalition and the opportunities of networked research as a part of the Research Consortium of School Health and Nutrition.

The scientific opening of the congress was realized by a comprehensive keynote presentation on “Complex crises, food insecurity and children globally: challenges and opportunities” focusing on the following five demands: 1. strengthening of preparedness and resilience for tackling complex crises, 2. protecting the poor (debt relief, safety nets and targeting climate), 3. building evidence-informed and equitable nutrition and social support systems which require global support, 4. addressing climate change, sustainable agriculture / food systems at grass root level, and 5. actively promoting peace building, conflict resolution to address global health and nutrition challenges. The subsequent presentation on "Abundance, pandemics and poverty: the fight against obesity and food insecurity", highlighted the challenges of capturing and responding to food insecurity. Poverty and social inequality were also considered as major causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in almost all countries.

The congress provided an invaluable platform for in-depth discussions, knowledge exchange, and collaborative efforts among experts, researchers, and professionals dedicated to advancing school feeding programs and addressing hidden hunger on a global scale.

Additionally, it featured parallel sessions organized by various institutions, each focusing on specific aspects of school feeding:

1. Parallel Session organized by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH:

- *Title:* School Meals as a Lever for Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems
- *Description:* This session focused on the pivotal role of school meal programs in driving positive transformations within agricultural and food systems. Discussions centered on sustainable sourcing practices, agricultural diversification, and the potential for economic empowerment within local communities. Different approaches on how school meals programmes can best drive the transformation of agricultural and food systems were introduced and discussed. Including different perspectives and experiences from past and current projects of GIZ and its partners emphasized the importance of a holistic school meals approach.

2. Parallel Session organized by the Sight and Life Foundation:

- *Title:* Realizing the Potential of the School Environment to Close the Micronutrient Gap and Address Iron Deficiency Anemia in Adolescents in Low-and-Middle-Income Countries
- *Description:* This session aimed to address the critical issue of micronutrient deficiencies, particularly iron deficiency anemia, among adolescents in low-and-middle-income countries. It presented an inclusive business model that has successfully filled a nutrition gap in East African school-going adolescents by providing probiotic yogurt while supporting local producers. School feeding programs are instrumental in improving the nutrition of school-aged children. By recognizing current micronutrient gaps in school meals, opportunities can be identified to address these gaps through the inclusion of fermented or fortified foods, supplementation, and dietary diversity.

3. Parallel Session organized by the Hohenheim Research Center for Global Food Security and Ecosystems (GFE):

- *Title:* LEAP-AGRI Project EATSANE / “The Happy Family Board Game” – Workshop
- *Description:* This interactive workshop introduced participants to the LEAP-AGRI Project EATSANE, which aims to implement sustainable farming practices and improve diets of households in Kenya and Uganda by diversifying the food system with a participatory action

learning approach. Additionally, the session featured a hands-on activity with "The Happy Family Board Game," providing a practical approach to nutrition education. The goal of this board game is to show the interconnectedness of decisions in agriculture, nutrition and value chains in a playful way. The game can be used as an awareness creation, education as well as a M&E tool and is applicable at school, community, institutional and university levels.

4. Parallel Session organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP):

- *Title:* Developing Nutrition Guidelines and Standards for School Meals: A Holistic Approach with a Food Systems and Right to Food Lens
- *Description:* This session delved into the development of comprehensive nutrition guidelines and standards for school meals, considering a holistic approach that incorporates food systems perspectives and acknowledges the right to food. Presentations and discussions aimed to introduce participants to the FAO-WFP's global methodology for designing holistic nutrition guidelines and standards for school meals, to highlight key interventions along the school food system that support the implementation and effectiveness of school meal nutrition standards, to showcase a global platform that participants can use to exchange good practices and lessons learned on school nutrition interventions, as well as to get insights from participants on the potential applications or expected challenges of applying the NGS methodology.

These parallel sessions provided attendees with the opportunity to engage in focused discussions and an interactive workshop, covering a diverse range of topics critical to the advancement of school feeding programs and global nutrition initiatives.

As a result of the 5th International Congress Hidden Hunger, a Hohenheim Declaration was published. The authorship is composed of the Congress Chairs, the Congress Organizing Committee and the members of the Scientific Advisory Board. The Hohenheim Declaration was signed by 49 people from around the world who attended the congress on the last day. It summarizes the goals of the congress and the associated demands with regard to the topic of nutrition in schools and all-day-care centers, which are that quality services are expanded and made accessible and affordable to all children and adolescents as well as that food security is ensured and successful strategies for implementing school food programs are promoted. The Hohenheim Declaration is addressed to government representatives and will be presented at the Global Ministerial Meeting hosted by President Macron on October 19, 2023, in Paris.