



RAES

Red de Alimentación Escolar Sostenible
Rede de Alimentação Escolar Sustentável
Sustainable School Feeding Network

**PROGRAMAS DE ALIMENTACIÓN ESCOLAR
IMPLEMENTADOS EN LA AMAZONIA
DESAFÍOS Y OPORTUNIDADES**

**SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES
IMPLEMENTED IN AMAZONIA
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

**PROGRAMAS DE ALIMENTAÇÃO ESCOLAR
IMPLEMENTADOS NA AMAZÔNIA
DESAFIOS E OPORTUNIDADES**

**18 A 21 DE AGOSTO DE 2025
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Technical mission Report

September, 2025

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Brazil–FAO International Cooperation Programme

Project: Regional Agenda for Sustainable School Feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean

Sustainable School Feeding Network (RAES)

Technical Mission: “School feeding programmes implemented in the Amazon: challenges and opportunities”



Date: August 18–21, 2025

Participating countries: Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Uruguay

Organizers: Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), National Fund for Educational Development of (FNDE), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Support: Municipal Department of Education of Manaus City Hall (SEMED), State Department of Education and School Sports of the Government of Amazonas (SEDUC), and the School Feeding and Nutrition Collaborating Center (CECANE) of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM)

Objectives:

- Plan, together with the participating focal points, future RAES actions; learn about the reality of the municipality of Manaus-AM and the challenges of implementing school feeding at the municipal and state levels.
- Identify the specificities, weaknesses, and strengths in the development of these programmes within the social, geographic, and economic context of Amazonas.
- Promote dialogue among government teams on the implementation of school feeding programmes, considering management, financing, and implementation mechanisms in hard-to-reach areas, serving indigenous communities, with emphasis on the Amazonian reality.
- Share, exchange, and build knowledge based on the experiences observed.

A brief summary of the activities carried out each day of the mission follows.

Day 1 – Institutional Opening and Technical Sessions on School Feeding



The opening of the mission “*School feeding programmes implemented in the Amazon: challenges and opportunities*” was held at the traditional Amazonian Peoples Cultural Center, a historic venue in the city of Manaus.

At the opening, the organizing institutions — ABC, FNDE, and FAO — along with the supporting bodies — SEDUC, SEMED, and UFAM — emphasized the importance of fostering networked dialogue with the 15 participating countries on school feeding, while considering the unique geographic, social, economic, and environmental characteristics of the Amazon.

Authorities present from the organizing and supporting institutions included:

- Fernanda Pacobahyba, President of the National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE).
- Cecilia Malaguti, Head of Trilateral South-South Cooperation with International Organizations at the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC).
- Arlete Mendonça, Secretary of Education of the State of Amazonas (SEDUC).
- Junior Mar, Municipal Secretary of Education of Manaus (SEMED).
- Tanara Lauschner, Rector of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM).
- Máximo Torero, Chief Economist of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Acting Representative in LAC (via video message).
- Israel Rios, Nutrition Officer of FAO.

It was highlighted that this was the first mission organized specifically to present the reality of the Amazon and that the city of Manaus was chosen for representing a setting completely different from other regions of Brazil, in addition to its strong performance in school feeding, basic education indicators, and the implementation of various innovations in school feeding.

Representatives of SEDUC, SEMED, and UFAM stressed the importance of hosting an international mission in Manaus and the state of Amazonas. They pointed out the particular challenges of implementing school feeding in this region, such as vast distances, the regionalization of menus, and the difficulties these factors generate.

Amazonas has 62 municipalities, many accessible only by riverboats or airplanes, and a territorial size larger than many entire countries. If it were a country, it would rank among the 20 largest in the world. Its population is 4.2 million people, of which 2 million live in Manaus — the most populous city in northern Brazil.

Good practices: public procurement

One of the highlights of the day was the public procurement experience of traditional communities, presented in the lecture by Prosecutor Fernando Merloto, representative of the Traditional Peoples’ Foods Commission in Amazonas (Catrapoa), an initiative created and coordinated by the Federal Prosecution Service (MPF). In his address, he detailed the process of acquiring products from small-scale farmers, including Indigenous peoples, to supply public schools.

The initiative was showcased as a successful example of how public procurement policies, supported by a legal framework, can promote the economic sustainability of communities and improve the nutritional quality of school meals. This work reaches more than 100 communities across over 30 municipalities in the state of Amazonas. It was also emphasized that this is a way to guarantee dignity to these populations while offering income alternatives that reduce practices such as deforestation and illegal mining.

It was underlined that this work stands as a good practice, as it brings together legal, institutional, and community mechanisms to promote the inclusion of vulnerable producers, while simultaneously strengthening food security and respecting local cultural and food diversity.



Hunger in the world and the role of school feeding

There were also presentations addressing global hunger data, which affects more than 678 million people, as well as the different forms of malnutrition. In this global context, school feeding was highlighted as a policy with great potential to strengthen the food security of millions of students.



The Brazilian PNAE, its innovations, and governance

Presentations were given on the National School Feeding Programme of Brazil (PNAE) from a broader perspective, addressing both its legal framework and the principles that underpin it. This programme serves 40 million students every school day in more than 5,500 cities across Brazil.

A key highlight was the legislation requiring that at least 30% of public procurement resources be allocated to products from family farming, a strategic mechanism to strengthen local production, generate income in rural communities, and ensure healthier and culturally appropriate school meals.

The governance of the programme was also emphasized, which involves the coordinated participation of different levels of government — municipal, state, and federal — each with specific and shared responsibilities. This inter-institutional articulation was presented as a key element to guarantee the effectiveness of PNAE’s implementation, as it fosters co-responsibility and enables more integrated management of school feeding.

RAES: a network working for school feeding

The history of the Brazil–FAO International Cooperation on school feeding was also highlighted, a process that began in 2009 and culminated in 2018 with the creation of the Sustainable School Feeding Network (RAES). Today, this network has 18 member countries, with high-level political commitment to strengthening school feeding in the region. These countries are: Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Uruguay.

It was reinforced during the day’s sessions that school feeding goes beyond serving a plate of food. It is a structural and structuring policy that links food security, nutrition, education, rural development, and the strengthening of family farming within a framework of cooperation among multiple stakeholders.

The school feeding council and school feeding at the local level

Also on the first day of the mission, representatives of the School Feeding Council (CAE) of the city of Presidente Figueiredo (located 125 km from Manaus) presented their experience of sourcing 100% of products from family farming, which ensures better food quality and strengthens the income of local families.

A [video about this experience was shown](#). One of the key points they highlighted was the importance of the support from public procurement policies such as the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) and the Food Acquisition Programme (PAA), managed by the Ministry of Social Development (MDS).



The School Feeding and Nutrition Collaborating Center – CECANE

The role of the School Feeding and Nutrition Collaborating Center (CECANE) of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) was also highlighted as a strategic actor in providing technical assistance and producing applied knowledge to strengthen the school feeding programme at the local level.

Its work ranges from supporting managers and schools in the implementation of the policy to generating evidence and studies. This effort makes it possible to evaluate, support, and improve school feeding processes such as food procurement, the quality of menus, the linkage with family farming, and other demands from FNDE and the programme.

CECANE was presented as a successful example of cooperation between the university system and public policies, combining research, outreach, and technical support for the direct benefit of educational and food management.

Municipal Department of Education of Manaus (SEMED) and the Cultural Closing of the Day

To conclude the day, the Municipal Department of Education of Manaus (SEMED) addressed the particularities of logistics in the city, such as the need to carry out part of the food deliveries through river transport, given the Amazonian geography, and the reliance on waterways to reach some school communities. This requires solutions adapted to the local conditions and the socio-environmental diversity of the region.

SEMED reported that it manages a municipal network of 250,000 students and operates 516 schools in Manaus, making it one of the largest in Brazil. The day concluded with a cultural performance featuring the traditional bulls *Caprichoso* and *Garantido*, symbols of the Amazon region with great local and national significance.



Day 2 – Food Distribution Center, Daycare, and Bilingual School

Distribution Center

The second day of the technical mission began with a visit to the Food Distribution Center of the Municipal Department of Education of Manaus City Hall (SEMED). The delegation was welcomed by the Municipal Secretary of Education of Manaus, Junior Mar, who, together with his team, presented the center’s operations. He explained that SEMED serves 516 schools in the city of Manaus, reaching approximately 250,000 students, with an annual investment of R\$ 126 million (about USD 22 million).

During the visit, participants were able to see the infrastructure dedicated to receiving fresh food and dry products, both perishable and those requiring refrigeration. On that day, the inventory included powdered milk, rice, beans, bananas, squash, peppers, oranges, watermelons, pineapples, papayas, and potatoes.

The center has the capacity to store 4,500 tons of products and covers an area of more than 5,000 square meters. It was reported that Manaus ranks fifth nationwide in Brazil’s Basic Education Index and has one of the largest educational networks in terms of student enrollment. The magnitude and complexity of the logistics made a strong impression on participants, given the high volume of products, the intense flow of trucks, and the unique logistical management required to serve more than 510 schools.



Libânea Theodora Rodrigues Ferreira Daycare

After visiting the distribution center, the delegation went to the Libânea Theodora Rodrigues Ferreira Daycare, which serves around 200 children aged 1 to 3 years. The visitors were welcomed by the Mayor of Manaus, David Almeida, who reaffirmed the city’s commitment to school feeding and highlighted recent progress, such as improvements in basic education indicators and the strengthening of public procurement from family farming.

During the activity, participants engaged in dialogue with managers from the Municipal Department of Education of Manaus (SEMED) and with daycare staff, including the director. They also observed mealtime and visited the facilities.

Key aspects highlighted included the organization and quality of the infrastructure. Presentations were given on child care processes, menu variations, and nutritional considerations by age group. It was mentioned that there is always a nutritionist responsible for the menu, which is adapted for students with dietary restrictions when necessary. In Manaus, schools also count on the support of nurses, considered an innovative feature.

Among the challenges discussed was the inclusion of fruits and vegetables, due to the region’s soil and climate limitations. Other topics addressed included reception, quality, hygiene, food safety, and the training of cooks, which is essential to improving the quality of school feeding. Participants asked many questions, had direct contact with the meals served to students, and even tasted the food themselves, which they evaluated positively.



Professor Djalma Batista Bilingual School

After lunch, the delegation visited the Professor Djalma Batista Bilingual School, managed by the State Department of Education of Amazonas (SEDUC). This school is Portuguese–Japanese bilingual, reflecting the strong influence of the Japanese migrant community in the region.

Students welcomed the delegation presenting the local foods they eat in their school meals. The visit also included a cultural performance by students who sang traditional songs in Japanese. The Secretary of Education of Amazonas, Arlete Mendonça, was present throughout the visit and expressed her satisfaction at being able to showcase this experience to 15 countries.

Following the reception, visitors learned about programmes and projects that strengthen school feeding in the state of Amazonas. The topic of public calls for the procurement of food from Indigenous family farmers sparked great interest, as it promotes the supply of foods produced in rural communities for Indigenous students and those from traditional communities within the state public network.

Pamela dos Santos, an Indigenous farmer from a rural community in the municipality of Tonantins (around 850 km from Manaus), shared her testimony on the benefits of public procurement for her and her family. Pamela highlighted the positive impact on income generation, the strengthening of local food security, and the peace of mind of producing with the assurance of a guaranteed sale. Before, she depended on fairs, where she could not always sell her products. She also stressed that public procurement policies strengthen the role of Indigenous communities in the school feeding supply chain.

The delegation also visited the school garden, which is used to help students learn about the production of foods that will be used in their meals. They visited the school kitchen, dining hall, storage area, and the maker space, a lab for dynamic and interactive projects and classes.

The school's principal, Márcia Moraes, pointed out the challenges of ensuring comprehensive school feeding for students who receive up to three meals a day. She explained that this is only possible thanks to a detailed planning process carried out by the team of nutritionists and SEDUC professionals. She emphasized the importance of the articulation between technical planning, management work, institutional commitment, and the dedication of all the professionals involved in the process.



Lesson learned: logistics is a challenge, but not a barrier

On this day, participants gained a deeper understanding of the logistical challenges involved in implementing school feeding in Manaus and across the entire state of Amazonas — a territory where distance and accessibility demand special planning. The capital has limited connections with many municipalities, requiring the state to ensure that meals reach all communities, including Indigenous and riverside populations.

In some cases, food can take several days to arrive, making it essential to encourage local production of quality foods, thus reducing dependence on complex logistics chains. Factors such as climate and soil conditions also affect this process by limiting production capacity.

For this reason, local public procurement has proven to be fundamental both in Manaus and in other municipalities. The schools visited were well structured and provided food universally — not only to vulnerable students but to all enrolled children. This outcome reflects the shared commitment and responsibilities of the various institutions involved in implementing school feeding.

Day 3 – Mixed Cooperative of Rural Producers of the Tarumã-Mirim Settlement Project (Copasa)

The third day included a visit to the Mixed Cooperative of Rural Producers of the Tarumã-Mirim Settlement Project (COPASA), which supplies regional foods for school feeding in Manaus and is considered an example of effective linkage between family farming and public policies.

Currently, the cooperative has around 115 members, and its main source of income comes from institutional sales at the federal, state, and municipal levels. In 2024, it reached an annual turnover of R\$ 4.688 million (approximately USD 852,000). International representatives had the opportunity to taste typical fruits produced by the cooperative, such as dragon fruit, cashew fruit, passion fruit, pijuayo, among other varieties that are part of the local diet.

The cooperative's work was presented, highlighting the importance of public calls for procurement promoted by government authorities (municipal, state, and federal). Training sessions, particularly those provided by the Institute for Sustainable Agricultural and Forestry Development of Amazonas (IDAM), were regarded as fundamental to advancing public procurement.

This process includes support in the preparation of documentation, awareness-raising on the importance of farmers participating in public calls, the incorporation of more producers, and the necessary guidance for registration and other requirements that enable family farmers to sell their products to the State.



The presentations highlighted the care required at every stage, from production to the final delivery of school meals: the work of technical assistance providers, nutritionists, school managers, secretariat staff, producers, and the cooperative itself within the framework of public procurement processes.

During the meeting, several cooperative members shared their testimonies, emphasizing how association and cooperative work have strengthened the local economy. They explained that working collectively allows them to access stable institutional markets and expand income opportunities for their families.

Another key aspect was the participation of women, who represent nearly half of the cooperative members, including Indigenous women. Their leadership and empowerment were highlighted, along with the growth and progress achieved through their contributions to crop diversification and the development of local agro-industries, such as the production of soaps, sweets, and other higher value-added products.

Marcondes Costa, Director of the Department of Supply and Logistics of the Municipal Department of Education of Manaus (SEMED), who accompanied the mission throughout, expressed pride in hosting the delegation. He stressed that they were able to present the entire process of school feeding— from production to the distribution center to delivery in schools. He also noted that this experience would serve as a reference for other countries, while SEMED also seeks to learn from others to continue improving the quality of school feeding in Manaus.



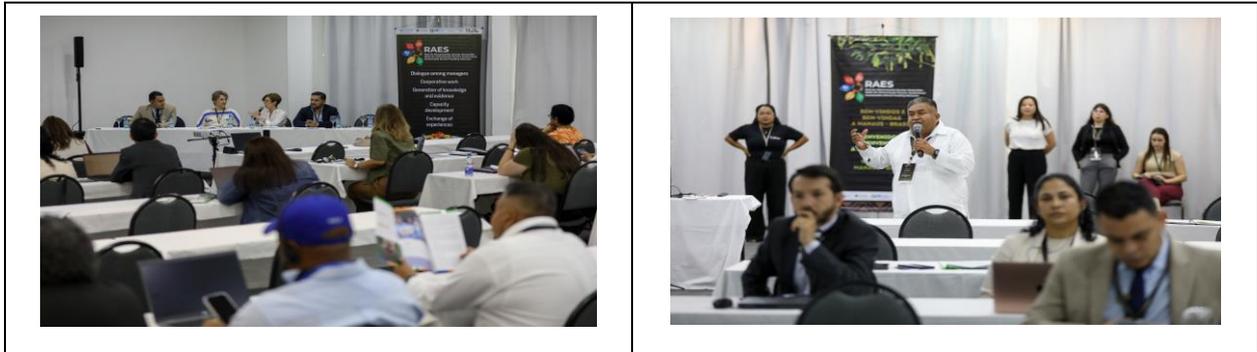
Day 4 – RAES In-Person Meeting and Key Outcomes of the Day

After the institutional opening, field visits, and school visits, the fourth day of the mission was dedicated to the in-person RAES meeting, where representatives of the member countries came together to advance the development of a joint regional agenda on school feeding, which is the core objective of this project. The main comments and agreements from this day are highlighted below

Panel on the sustainability of RAES Network actions

At the panel, national governments, FAO, and ABC were represented. Each speaker was asked to highlight four key points to advance the institutionalization and consolidation of the RAES Network. The following comments stood out:

- a) The need to work at the country level together with ministries, secretariats, and other local institutions dedicated to school feeding.
- b) The importance of creating mechanisms so that the Network's actions and results are communicated openly, ensuring wide dissemination of activities and generating commitment and accountability among all. Establishing open and effective communication channels among participants was emphasized as important as well.
- c) The need to foster a culture of collaboration, promoting an environment where member countries work together toward common goals, sharing ideas and resources efficiently.
- d) The importance of maintaining spaces for dialogue with governments to share information, such as those related to RAES events like this mission in Manaus.
- e) Regarding the future of the Network, it is necessary to discuss how to ensure its sustainability beyond the support of the Government of Brazil, which reinforces the relevance of establishing alliances with other institutions.
- f) The need to standardize and define more clearly the roles of focal points, both within the Network and at the national level.
- g) It was underlined that there are different initiatives linked to school feeding with different focal points, making it even more important to promote dialogue to clarify country priorities.
- h) In this regard, it was considered essential to identify what these national priorities are (in a standardized way) and how RAES can support their fulfillment.
- i) Another goal mentioned was the construction of a regional agenda to guide joint actions and facilitate coordination among member countries.



2 – On partnerships with other stakeholders

When discussing partnerships, several actors that could potentially engage with the RAES Network were considered. In this sense, the meeting highlighted the following points:

a) Subnational entities

- The possibility of including subnational entities (municipalities, provinces, city halls) in the RAES Network was discussed.
- Countries jointly agreed that, for the moment, subnational entities should not be members of the Network. It was emphasized that all dialogue with countries must go through national entities.
- It was decided that RAES members are the 18 current member countries and any other nations that formally adhere in the future.

b) Universities

- The importance of involving universities was stressed, especially for generating evidence to support the management of school feeding programmes (e.g., the impacts of school feeding on learning outcomes).
- It was agreed to carry out a mapping in each country to better understand the academic structure and the level of autonomy of universities in each member state.

c) Foundations and NGOs (non-governmental entities)

- Member countries agreed that foundations, NGOs, and similar entities can support RAES and each country in their actions.
- They decided that new partnerships will fall under a different status (observer, partner, ally) and not as members.
- It was proposed to adapt the RAES declaration of adhesion to create a new version suitable for these cases.

d) Conflicts of interest and sovereignty

- The meeting reaffirmed that RAES must always remain in line with the principle of national sovereignty.
- Countries agreed on the commitment that new partners must not present any type of conflict of interest.

e) Role of RAES focal points

- In recent years, new alliances have emerged, such as the School Meals Coalition and the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, the latter promoted by the Government of Brazil.

- These initiatives often involve different focal points, so it will be important to identify the focal point in each instance, to standardize information, discussions, and priorities related to school feeding.
- The role of RAES focal points must be clearly defined and standardized so that it goes beyond attending events, participating, and learning from experiences.
- It is important not only to represent internationally but also to standardize nationally everything that is discussed. Each focal point represents their country, and the information must be transmitted back to national authorities.
- It is necessary to secure a space within governments to share such information.
- The importance of working jointly on school feeding with other ministries and secretariats was reaffirmed.
- It was also emphasized that FAO country offices are valuable resources to support various school feeding–related issues.

f) Country dialogues with RAES support

- Several countries expressed interest in learning more about their strengths and areas for improvement and requested that RAES continue to support thematic trilateral dialogues (for instance: family farming, food and nutrition education, school gardens, infrastructure, etc.).
- On this point, it was clarified that countries simply need to formally request such exchanges by writing to redraes@redraes.org, as many have already done. RAES will then work to organize the requested dialogue.

3) Presentation of the AMPAE study – a tool to generate evidence and support school feeding

It was emphasized that the main objectives of the study include:

- Presenting evidence on topics and actions on school feeding programmes in LAC that require greater attention from national managers and from regional and global actors.
- Designing and applying a diagnostic tool with indicators to analyze the results and progress of each participating country.
- Establishing recommendations to guide RAES technical support activities.
- Providing inputs for the joint construction, with member countries, of the regional school feeding agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Proposing new actions at both national and regional levels.

In 2024, the first edition of the study included six countries: Brazil, Belize, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, and the Dominican Republic. It was reiterated that the call for participation remains open for a new edition of the study in 2025, inviting other interested countries to join.



4) Presentation of the Sustainable Schools methodology

The presentation highlighted the following points:

- The Sustainable Schools methodology is implemented in more than 23,000 schools across 14 countries in the region, having already benefited over 1.6 million students.
- It was created on the premise that schools are privileged spaces of community convergence, and that the social and economic development of a city is linked to educational inclusion.
- The methodology serves as a reference for sustainable school feeding, based on six components, developed in schools and municipalities selected by governments, always respecting the realities and specificities of each country.
- The six components are:
 1. Inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination
 2. Social and community participation
 3. Adequate infrastructure
 4. Food and nutrition education with the implementation of school gardens
 5. Menu tailored to nutritional needs and cultural relevance
 6. Public procurement of food from family farming

The panel emphasized how the methodology can serve as an opportunity to strengthen different aspects of national school feeding programmes, advancing in multiple areas with the potential to impact national policy through its scaling-up.

5) Our main challenge: building the regional agenda for sustainable school feeding

Reflections on the Brazil–FAO International Cooperation Programme in School Feeding:

a) This cooperation, initiated in 2009, has gone through three phases:

- Phase 1 – Strengthening of School Feeding Programmes (2009–2018): Sustainable Schools Methodology.
- Phase 2 – Consolidation of School Feeding Programmes (2018–2023): Creation of RAES.
- Phase 3 – Regional Agenda for Sustainable School Feeding (2024–2027): Strengthening RAES as an institution and developing the Regional Agenda.

What is the purpose of the Brazil–FAO Trilateral South-South Cooperation Project? We are currently in Phase 3 – Regional Agenda for Sustainable School Feeding (2024–2027).

- To build a regional school feeding agenda that highlights themes, concepts, relevant strategies, methodologies, and initiatives in line with the realities of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the specific demands of each participating country.
- This agenda will enable countries to engage in dialogue and share solutions and innovations for school feeding programmes.

b) What is a Regional Agenda?

- A plan or set of priorities and actions established for a given region, aimed at sustainable development and improving the quality of life of its people.
- *“The agenda is a set of issues that, at a given moment, are considered crucial by policymakers or by people close to them”* (Kingdon, 2003).
- Key elements: development, themes, integration, time horizon, and review.
- Examples:
 - Regional Gender Agenda (ARG, Havana 1977)
 - New Strategic Agenda for Amazon Cooperation (AECA, Brasília 2020–2030)

c) What are our starting points?

- The starting point for building the RAES Agenda is the definition of its thematic axes.
- Focal points will approve a timeline for drafting the RAES Agenda, including its adoption and implementation plan.
- The proposal will be drafted and shared by the RAES Secretariat.
- The RAES Secretariat will lead the consultation process with RAES focal points for the construction of the Agenda.
- The Agenda must be approved by the focal points of the RAES member countries.

d) Next steps after the Manaus event

- The RAES Executive Secretariat will convene a meeting with the Directive Committee of RAES to address the agenda and review the discussions held in Manaus.
- A virtual meeting will be organized with member countries to debate and define the priority axes of the agenda.
- Some of these axes have already been identified in the AMPAE study, which was jointly developed with countries using a scientific methodology.
- The RAES Executive Secretariat will prepare a draft of the regional agenda.
- Timeline: achieve a basic alignment and a draft proposal by December 2025.

6) Challenges and solutions presented by the countries

Throughout the mission's agenda, member countries had the opportunity to present **one achievement** and **one challenge** of their school feeding programmes. Link for the presentations:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/8/folders/1O-PS04Zli4SGGi0y9fi3U8hC8DbHAqX>

Country	Challenges	Solutions
Belize	<p>Challenge: Decentralized Procurement + Limited Monitoring Staff</p> <p>Schools across the country individually manage funds and purchase from local suppliers.</p> <p>The Ministry has limited staff to supervise spending and compliance in the 78 participating schools.</p> <p>This results in inconsistent reporting and a reduction in transparency.</p>	<p>Clear and accessible financial reporting forms were developed for the schools.</p> <p>School principals and staff were trained in accurate recordkeeping and financial reporting for school feeding.</p> <p>Each school was assigned a unique web link for monthly report submission.</p> <p>The school feeding coordinators of the Ministry of Education can access and review all submissions at any time, which improves accountability and facilitates the identification and resolution of problems.</p>
Costa Rica	<p>In 2018, the first standardized menu of the School Feeding Programme was implemented at the national level, without considering the cultural diversity, the identity of the communities, their traditions, or the social particularities of Indigenous territories.</p> <p>During its implementation, the need became evident to contextualize student menus in accordance with the cosmogony and worldview of these territories, in order to strengthen their cultural relevance and promote respect for their ancestral food practices.</p>	<p>Work was carried out locally with the Local Councils of Indigenous Education (CLEI), the Coordination Unit of the Indigenous Education Subsystem and the Indigenous Development Associations (ADI) and the School of Nutrition of the University of Costa Rica (UCR).</p> <p>A contextualized and culturally relevant menu manual was developed for the student canteens of the Indigenous peoples, promoting equity without losing the technical and nutritional focus of the programme.</p>

<p>Cuba</p>	<p>To demonstrate adequate eating habits and practices among children, adolescents, and young people, an aspect that was identified as one of the main causes of health problems in the Cuban population, determined in the process of constructing the Sovereignty Plan.</p> <p>To provide a varied, balanced, nutritious, safe, and healthy diet, adapted to the recommendations and nutritional needs of students and increasingly linked to local agriculture.</p>	<p>Implementation of the Ministry of Education’s School Feeding Plan (Plan Mined – AE) with five components that interrelate and cover the main strategic areas: Food and Nutrition Education; Infrastructure; School Feeding Programme; Intersectoral Partnerships; and the Legal Framework for School Feeding.</p>
<p>El Salvador</p>	<p>Teacher mediation to achieve the mainstreaming of the Food and Nutrition Education component in the National Curriculum.</p> <p>Expand the Sustainable School strategy, with greater participation and contribution from local agriculture, complementing the school meals with fresh foods such as vegetables, fruits, and eggs.</p> <p>Improve and/or strengthen the knowledge of the Educational Community on nutrition and food and nutrition education.</p> <p>Improve the physical infrastructure of school kitchens and places where students eat.</p>	<p>Joint work with the Curriculum Directorate for the mainstreaming of the Food and Nutrition Education component and teacher training.</p> <p>Work on the gradual expansion of the Sustainable School methodology, with the aim of nutritionally improving the school snack.</p> <p>“Intervention in the infrastructure of two Educational Centers per day,” in a comprehensive manner, including spaces for the preparation and consumption of food.</p> <p>Provision of appliances and utensils to 1,100 Educational Centers.</p>
<p>Honduras</p>	<p>Financial sustainability: Consolidate diversified financing mechanisms to respond to increased enrollment, move toward universal coverage (from preschool to university), and implement the fresh ration.</p> <p>School infrastructure: Gradually strengthen adequate spaces for preparing, storing, and consuming food, especially in rural areas.</p> <p>Local capacities: Expand training and technical assistance for local actors to ensure equitable and effective implementation.</p>	<p>The National School Feeding Programme operates with sustained state financing. With technical support from FAO and WFP, pilots have been developed to explore modalities such as the fresh ration, optimizing resources and scalable models. Improvements in kitchens, storage areas, and dining halls have been led by the Honduran Social Investment Fund (FHIS).</p> <p>School gardens are promoted by FAO and PRONADERS through the “Casas Mallas” initiative. Community participation contributes to basic adaptations.</p> <p>Technical support from WFP, FAO, and CRS: WFP, FAO, and CRS strengthen PNAE capacities through technical assistance, staff training, logistical support, and monitoring.</p> <p>FAO promotes school gardens, local procurement, and the training of managers through cooperation with Brazil and the RAES Network.</p>

<p>Guatemala</p>	<p>School kitchens with infrastructure in poor condition or damaged after the pandemic. Nutritional quality: limited adherence to school menus by the educational community. Food costs at the local level. Preference for the modality of food rations (educational community).</p>	<p>Increase in the Ministry of Education budget for the renovation of educational centers, with an emphasis on improving kitchens. Inter-institutional coordination to increase investment and improve the conditions of the centers. Budget allocation designated for kitchen equipment. Menu design: involvement of the community by providing proposals. In 2025, students cast votes to select menus from their departments. An annual update of local food prices is carried out.</p> <p>Coordination between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food to establish mechanisms for the regulation of food prices from family farming.</p> <p>Creation of tools aimed at school feeding committees, facilitating menu planning.</p> <p>Awareness-raising process on the benefits that the implementation of the served meal modality has for students.</p>
<p>Dominican Republic</p>	<p>Insert fresh fruits into the school menu and remove nectars</p>	<p>Coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture to identify fruit availability and production planning. Assessment and support for suppliers to adapt their kitchens. Training for pilot suppliers; ensuring safe handling of fruits during storage processes. Preparation of documents for suppliers.</p>
<p>St. Kitts and Nevis</p>	<p>Limited financing and rising food costs. Dependence on imported food supplies. Inconsistent supply of local products. Infrastructure gaps (kitchen equipment, storage, transportation). Nutrition awareness among students and parents.</p>	<p>Strengthening partnerships with local farmers (farm to school). Training kitchen staff in nutrition and food safety. Diversification of menus with local and seasonal foods. Mobilization of community and donor support. Alignment of policies with child nutrition and health strategies.</p>
<p>Suriname</p>	<p>Policy and coordination: Lack of a national framework, fragmentation, dependence on partners. Financing and sustainability: Limited budget, dependence on donors, few investments. Logistics and accessibility: Long distances, high costs, limited infrastructure, and food safety in transport. Production and supply: Insufficient integration of local farmers, limited capacity, dependence on imports.</p>	<p>The solutions lie in a structural national policy, sustainable financing, strong links with local production, and decentralization toward communities and schools.</p> <p>This allows school feeding in Suriname to be organized sustainably and to contribute to education, health, and food security.</p>

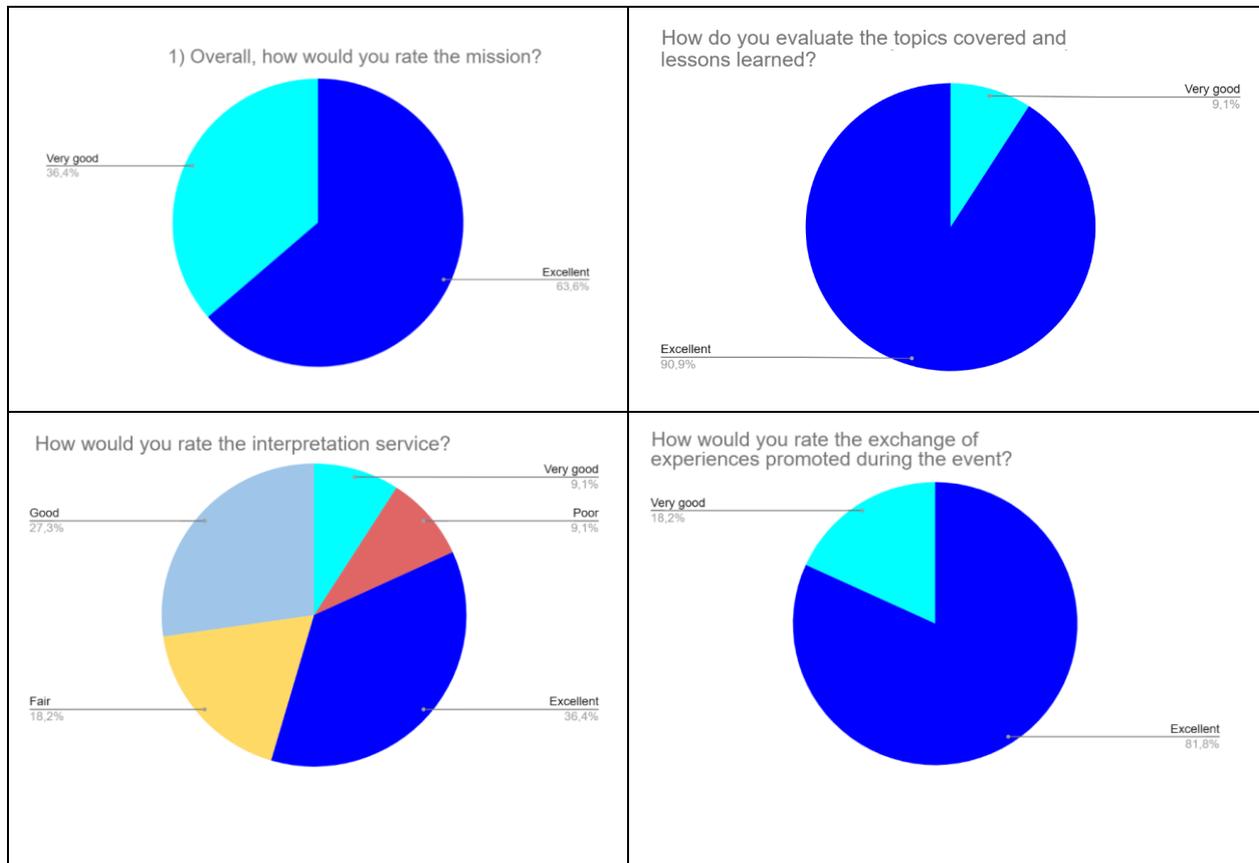
	<p>Food safety and quality: Lack of kitchens, staff, hygiene, and variety in the menu.</p> <p>Capacity development: Additional burden on schools, little training, limited monitoring.</p> <p>Sociocultural and educational: Differences in eating habits, occasional resistance, little food education.</p>	
Uruguay	<p>Increment the consumption of fruits and vegetables in all school canteens.</p>	<p>Promote work with school gardens to encourage the consumption of fruits and vegetables.</p> <p>When students learn where the food in the school canteen comes from and take part in planting, caring for, harvesting, and preparing it, they develop greater appreciation for eating fresh and natural foods.</p>

7) Evaluation form for participants

Below is a brief synthesis of the comments provided in the form, which reinforced the earlier observations. Graphs with the other collected data follow:

- A key issue highlighted by several participants was the relevance of state commitment at all levels of government — national, state, and municipal — as well as articulation with family farming. In this sense, the theme of shared responsibility is essential to ensure that school feeding programs effectively reach communities, including the most remote ones. Therefore, it is important to have clear strategic plans and strong, structured coordination mechanisms among the institutions involved. In Manaus, the topic of shared responsibility among different institutions was especially highlighted, particularly in view of the logistical challenges that characterize this context.
- The importance of promoting legal frameworks that establish school feeding as a State policy, rather than a government policy, was emphasized. The objective is to guarantee continuity of programs beyond changes in government or political contexts, strengthening long-term sustainability. In the comments, it was stressed that school feeding must be considered a strategic priority within national and international agendas, with emphasis on intersectoral and coordinated work. It was also reinforced that school feeding is a key instrument for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this sense, participants noted that high-level government backing and support are fundamental.
- Mission participants commented that the visits to schools, cooperatives, and communities facilitated the exchange of experiences and made it possible to observe in practice the implementation of school feeding and its components. They also highlighted as a fundamental aspect the integration among family farmers, cooperatives, managers, and local authorities, recognizing that this connection ensures that local products reach schools, strengthens community economies, guarantees fresh and culturally appropriate food for students, and promotes short marketing circuits.
- This ongoing dialogue contributes to better planning of public procurement, coordination of distribution logistics, diversification of school menus, and fair prices for farmers. In this way, school feeding becomes not only an educational and health policy but also a rural development and social cohesion strategy.

- Regarding RAES work, the importance of understanding the main challenges faced by each country, as well as the innovative solutions that have been implemented, was underlined. This work will help identify gaps, areas for improvement, and recognize capacities that can serve as references for other countries.
- It was emphasized that spaces for dialogue and exchange, such as those promoted by the RAES Network, combined with practical field experiences, have the potential to generate changes in the formulation and implementation of school feeding policies in the countries. It was also added that RAES is a strong advocate and driver of school feeding programs at the regional level by providing these experiences and technical support.



8) Synthesis of the main lessons learned during the Manaus mission, according to participants:

On the fourth and final day of the mission, a group activity was organized around the following question: *What knowledge or approaches could help you better address the challenges of school feeding in your national context?* Below are the main comments:

- There is a network that drives the Brazilian school feeding program, articulated with many and diverse actors, and this is what enables the provision of healthy, adequate, and regionally appropriate meals to more than 40 million Brazilian students.
- National governments must reflect on the importance of prioritizing school feeding at all levels of government (articulation with other institutions, secretariats, ministries).
- It is essential to promote equitable participation, oversight, monitoring, follow-up, and evaluation as tools for the continuous improvement of the program.

- It is very important to design nutritious and culturally relevant menus that meet the needs of each student to achieve a high-quality school feeding program.
- The School Feeding Law (where it exists) must be respected and enforced, ensuring its effective implementation to strengthen stakeholders in their actions.
- The importance of advancing school feeding as a public policy with legal status was underscored, in order to ensure continuity beyond changes in government.
- Strategic partnerships must be fostered to secure sustainable financing and facilitate the exchange of experiences.
- It is fundamental to involve family farming and promote the local economy, strengthening ties between schools and their territories, as well as to institutionalize coordination mechanisms among sectors and key actors.
- The basic premise is to invest in the training and capacity-building of all professionals involved, as well as in joint planning.
- It is important to prioritize dialogue on modernizing kitchens, cafeterias, and logistical systems, ensuring efficiency and quality.
- Missions such as this one, with practical visits to schools and cooperatives, facilitate the exchange of experiences and the building of partnerships.
- Spaces for experience-sharing and hands-on exchanges are those most likely to generate significant change in countries.
- RAES and other regional and global actors are very important for providing, sharing, and scaling solutions to the challenges faced by countries.

Final press release: <https://redraes.org/en/countries-of-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-exchange-experiences-on-school-feeding-programs-in-the-amazon>

Pictures: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/92702310@N07/albums/72177720328685132/with/54752390041>

Presentations used during the event:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/8/folders/1VnxcYJRYzGh-6r8iJNei-1kjbTH4HOfk>