

Nutritious School Meals

Unleashing the full potential of the next generation.
How public & private support can drive increased impact for an accessible, balanced diet.



Report on "School Meals – Unleashing the full potential of the next generation" held as the Official Side Event of "Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit 2021"

Purpose

COVID-19 is delivering a heavy blow to worldwide efforts toward the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2, "Zero Hunger," threatening the health and well-being of people around the world, especially the young and vulnerable. In 2020, the number of malnourished people increased to 320 million, with children being the hardest affected by the pandemic. School closures during lockdown resulted in a sudden halt in school meal programs, creating greater risk of malnutrition for children. An estimated 24 million schoolchildren are reported to be at risk of dropping out and the situation could worsen.

The Ajinomoto Group and Royal DSM, leading the private-sector nutrition improvement initiative in the world, hosted "School Meals -Unleashing the full potential of the next generation," an official side event of "Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit 2021," with support from the UN World Food Programme. In the event, the role of school meals in improving the nutritional status of children and the importance of nutrition education to ensure the lifelong health of children we discussed. In addition, the panelists deliberated what is needed to keep children healthy and well-nourished, what role the private sector should assume in the area, and the effectiveness and importance of creating partnerships with various stakeholders, including international organizations, governments, and local food systems.

Date

November 30, 2021
6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. JST (10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. CET)

Panelists



Dimitri de Vreeze
Co-CEO,
Royal DSM



Takaaki Nishii
President & CEO,
Ajinomoto Co., Inc



Carmen Burbano
Director, School Feeding Division,
UN World Food Programme



Hanako Jimi
Member of the House of
Councillors, Japan



Paul Newnham
Moderator
SDG2 Advocacy Hub



Maya Masai
MC
Freelance announcer

School Meals – Unleashing the full potential of the next generation

Hosting Companies

Royal DSM



[Corporate Profile]

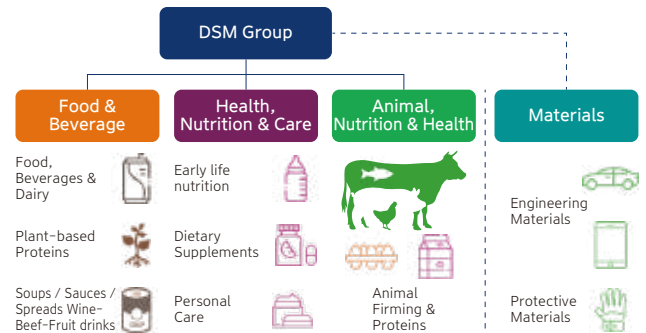
DSM was founded in 1902 by the Dutch government as a public firm to mine coal reserves. It is currently a purpose-led global company active in nutrition, health, and sustainable living.

DSM offers innovative and eco-friendly business solutions in the fields of human and animal nutrition, personal care, aroma, and medical devices.

[Figures on DSM]

Sales	Approx. 8 billion euros (2020)
EBITDA	Approx. 1.5 billion euros (2020)
Number of Employees	Over 22,000
Global Company	Sales outside Europe account for 65%
Innovative Companies	The ratio of innovation sales is 21%

[Business Domains]



DSM in Japan

Number of Employees	About 150
Head Office	Tokyo
Technical Center	Yokohama
Factories	Shizuoka and Tsuruga

The Ajinomoto Group



[Corporate Profile]

Setting Ajinomoto Group Shared Value (ASV) as the backbone of management, the Ajinomoto Group aims to contribute to greater wellness for people, unlocking the power of amino acids, and become a company resolving food and health issues. It operates a wide array of businesses worldwide, concentrating on the six core businesses: sauce and seasonings, quick nourishment, solution and ingredients, frozen foods, healthcare, and electronic materials.

[Figures on the Ajinomoto Group]

Sales	1,071.4 billion yen (2020)
Profits	113.1 billion yen (2020)
Number of Employees	About 34,000
Countries/Regions	135
R&D Workforce	About 1,700

[Six Core Businesses]



School Meals – Unleashing the full potential of the next generation

Key Message 1

Effects of nutritional improvement in mothers and children, and improvement through school meals on efforts to achieve the SDGs

In the UN Food Systems Summit held in September 2021, the “School Meals Coalition” was established with the aim of keeping school feeding programs operational, bringing together the United Nations, 61 countries, nongovernmental organizations, and others. The coalition highlighted the importance of providing nutrition to children in their first 1,000 days of life, from the fetus to 2-years-old, but also in the next 7,000 days leading to adulthood (a total of 8,000 days). Furthermore, it confirmed that the establishment of a sustainable nutrition/food system is essential for achieving the SDGs to help people experience healthy growth.

Three Points Advocated by the Newly-Established “School Meals Coalition”

Point 1

“Maintenance of Health,” – Requisite condition for schoolchildren’s learning

Point 2

“Nutrition Improvement” – It is necessary to provide children with the nutrition needed to support their healthy development, while simultaneously preventing them from becoming obese. Childhood is a period when individuals discover how they should relate to food and what is important for keeping themselves in good shape.

Point 3

“Connection with Agriculture” – Connection with a healthy, sustainable food system

Nutritious Food/School Meals and SDGs

Nutritious meals prepared by homes and schools affect many SDGs (contributing directly to SDG2 and 3, producing ripple effects/investment effects on SDG1, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 17).

The SDGs highlight the importance of human resource development. Educating the next generation of citizens will lead to a more sustainable nutrition/food system, resulting in a better community.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Since, lack of micronutrients affects children’s development, it is important to provide them with nutritionally balanced meals. Adults are responsible for providing sufficient nutrition to children, not just when they are infants, but also when they are students and until they enter adulthood.

-Carmen Burbano

Since Japan’s school meal programs have contributed to tackling and preventing overnutrition and obesity among children, these programs are also expected to play a key role in Asian nations that are faced with two social problems – malnutrition and short life expectancies.

-Hanako Jimi

The Philippines and Thailand have been working on improving nutrition through the introduction of school meals. The key to success will be the establishment of ecosystems that are aimed at solving health-related problems, like those in Vietnam and Japan, and building partnerships with a wide range of sectors.

-Takaaki Nishii

As the direction of an arrow cannot be changed once it has already been shot, children’s nutritional status cannot be changed afterwards. Children need to take sufficient nutrition from early days; in this sense, school meals play a pivotal role.

-Dimitri de Vreeze

School Meals – Unleashing the full potential of the next generation

School Meals Around the World

Campaigns led by international organizations and private-sector companies have helped increase public awareness in many countries over school meals' enormous contribution to improving children's nutritional status. However, more than 700 million children worldwide do not have access to such meals. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened this situation.

Before the Pandemic

Before 2020, many governments invested in related programs, recognizing that school meals serve as a safety net and help improve children's nutritional status.

Consequently, 65 million children in developing countries, or half of the children in the world, gained access to school meals.



During the Pandemic



In 2020, 95% of schools were closed, depriving 370 million children of the opportunity to have school meals, which was often the only food they could have during the day.

Governments took the situation seriously and started discussions on restoring school meals, a vital safety net for children, through the "School Meals Coalition."*

*"School Meals Coalition" is a program formed to step up efforts on school meals as the issue became the primary concern during the UN Food Systems Summit. As a long-term project, the coalition shares best practices, provides technical support, and creates opportunities for mutual learning.

Hope for Post-Pandemic

Amid growing momentum for "Build Back Better," the development of immunity against infectious and other diseases through appropriate nutrient intake has come under the spotlight.

In this regard, we hope that the importance of school meals will be reacknowledged.



Two reasons for changing from the first "1,000 days nutrition" to "8,000 days nutrition"

Reason 1 Malnutrition in childhood cannot be cured later, and children should receive sufficient nutrition from early childhood.

Reason 2 Children should have a proper understanding of nutrition and experience the joy of eating with others.

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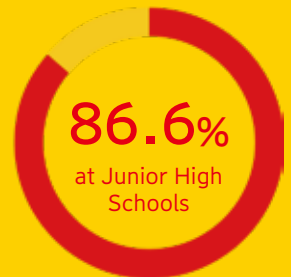
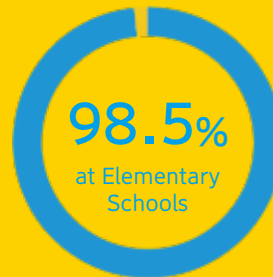
Role Played by School Meals in Japan

Japan's school meal programs started after the end of World War II, backed by the US government, and saved many children from starvation. Moreover, school meals are expected to contribute to the solution of new problems.

Rate of School Meals Introduced at Japanese Schools

Since the School Lunch Act was enacted in 1954, meals have been continuously provided to Japanese schoolchildren.

Currently, 98.5% of elementary schools and 86.6% of junior high schools provide students with lunch.



School Meals - Solving New Problems



The problem of starvation has reduced substantially in Japan, but new food-related problems have arisen.

One of these is overnutrition, which often leads to obesity. School meals are expected to play an important role in tackling and preventing problems. The second factor is relative poverty. Children who fail to receive sufficient meals at home and rely on school lunches to cover their daily nutritional needs, tend to suffer from malnutrition during summer and other long holidays.

Thankful for School Lunches as a Mother of Three Children

As a mother, I often prepared “bento” lunches for my children who needed to bring them to kindergarten or school. Parents, especially working parents, feel pressured and find it time-consuming to prepare lunches in the morning. Thus, we are grateful for school meals, as we can divert the time saved to working, nursing, and other activities.

Japan's school meals give children an opportunity to learn about Japanese dietary culture, in addition to those of other countries. The school my child attends offers meals from various countries, and the students learn about the culture of the specific country whose food is served that week. Food is related to many issues, such as its origin or its disposal loss. Subsequently, I found that school meals play a significant role.



New Development in Japan – Establishment of “Agency for Children and Families”

In Japan, measures to support children and expectant mothers are not appropriately provided because of the ambiguity over which administrative organizations should be responsible. Therefore, the new agency has been assigned to offer ceaseless support to all people in one cycle from pregnancy, through newborns and adults, and to the next generation.

School Meals – Unleashing the full potential of the next generation

Key Message 2

Future Carved Out by Multi-Sector Collaboration

The issue of nutrition improvement is complex and must be addressed in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders with diverse knowledge and functions.

Previous school meal projects indicate that such collaborations need to function effectively. We introduce two of our previous projects.

Ajinomoto Group's "School Meal Project in Vietnam Aimed at Improving Nutrition"

Since its establishment, the Ajinomoto Group has worked to create an enriching and delicious diet for the Japanese people, utilizing "umami." From our experience accumulated in Japan's school meal programs, we learned that school lunches offer three benefits to children.

Benefit 1

Children gain knowledge of various aspects of food, including culture, table manners, and communities' devotion to food.

Benefit 2

Children acquire healthy eating habits which enable them to make the right decision on what they should eat.

Benefit 3

Children become sociable by having the same meals with their schoolmates and sharing the joy of eating together.

Based on our experiences in Japan, we applied a school meal project in Vietnam as part of our efforts to promote such projects internationally. In Vietnam, we are improving the environment surrounding school meals in cooperation with Vietnam's Ministry of Health, its Ministry of Education and Training, and Ajinomoto Vietnam Co.

Specifically, we provided schools with software that creates a list of nutritionally balanced meals, nutrition education textbooks, and sanitary model kitchens.



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Royal DSM's "Africa Improved Foods" Project

The project "Africa Improved Foods" (AIF) addresses the African food crisis as a social problem-solving startup based on an innovative business model.

AIF is a public-private partnership involving DSM, the Rwandan government, the International Finance Corporation (a member of the World Bank Group), and two public financial institutions in Europe – the CDC Group and FMO.



Purpose of Project

The project is designed to establish a resilient regionally oriented food system in Africa by enabling local communities to conduct all operations; from procurement to production and marketing of highly nutritious, but affordable foods (such as fortified porridge).



Since its establishment in 2016, AIF has supplied products to 16 million consumers and has succeeded in securing stable corporate profits. It has directly hired more than 300 local people and enhanced the quality of life among residents by procuring ingredients from over 130,000 smallholder farmers.

Some AIF products were supplied for school meals through the Rwandan government. The AIF is the only Africa-based company designated by the WFP as an official food aid procurement entity.



DSM is set to expand its AIF business to achieve one of the "Nutrition for Growth" (N4G) commitments – "Support the livelihoods of 500,000 smallholder farmers across value chains by 2030."

Future of Multi-Sector Collaboration

Joining hands with a broad range of companies, organizations, and governments to achieve a common goal is expected to produce an augmentable solution to malnutrition. The success of the "School Meals Coalition" depends on how it builds a sustainable and productive public-private sector relationship, and whether it can collaborate with groups that act on appropriate codes of conduct.



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Messages from Hosts



Dimitri de Vreeze
Co-CEO of Royal DSM

Many discussions have been conducted on N4G. What we need to do next is act. The 2050 deadline for carbon neutrality is slightly ahead, and countries/companies may tend to make enthusiastic commitments relatively easily. The 2030 deadline for the SDGs is imminent; however, more specific commitments and actions are urgently needed. I take responsibility for presenting ideas on how to promote school meals by helping each other. I believe that facilitating a public-private partnership requires a high-level code of conduct. When the world lacks clear leadership, we will strengthen the public-private partnership using this summit as a platform.



Takaaki Nishii
President & CEO
of Ajinomoto Co., Inc.

I suppose “Nutrition for Growth” contains two elements of growth.

One is to enhance healthy growth among all children, including those from low-income families, through the improvement of nutrition.

The other is to stimulate growth of the economy and ecosystem, which comprises stakeholders participating in the summit.

“Nutrition for Growth” provides a powerful boost to the development of these two elements.

Moreover, I agree 100% with Mr. Dimitri’s view that our next mission is to act.

