

# PAA Africa's contributions to the National School Feeding Programme in Mozambique

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**The Purchase from Africans for Africa** (PAA Africa) programme implemented pilot initiatives to procure food for school meals locally from smallholders, funded by the Brazilian government and the UK Department for International Development, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme. In Mozambique, the programme sought to contribute to the consolidation of a national strategy of institutional food procurement, combining cross-sectoral dialogue at the national level and piloting at district level, supporting production and commercialisation.

Public procurement with preferential treatment for food produced by family farmers has the potential to increase the overall access of these farmers to formal markets. In addition, when connected to social safety nets using in-kind food transfers (e.g. school meals programmes), such instruments favour the access of vulnerable populations to food produced locally. Some lessons from the experience in Mozambique are summarised here.

The endorsement of the National School Feeding Programme (Projecto de Alimentação Escolar—PRONAE) by the Mozambican Council of Ministers in 2013 represented a key stage in the institutionalisation of school feeding and local purchases in the country's education system. This process was crucial, but insufficient to consolidate the strategy of purchasing from smallholders, since it was not accompanied by its inclusion in the state budget and by adjustments to the regulations of public procurement to guarantee the participation of smallholders.

Despite its limitations, PAA Africa contributed to PRONAE by articulating and stressing the agricultural and value chain components within the PRONAE programme, among others. Some of its results are as follows:

- Institutional changes are necessary to ensure the participation of family farmers in public food purchases. The main agricultural policies of the country are aimed at increasing peasants' access to markets; however, most of the concrete implementation is oriented towards private companies and specialised farming, disregarding the potential of peasants to supply public food procurement programmes.
- Food demand needs to be aligned with supply potential. Support for production, post-harvest handling and marketing was important for the provision of quality products throughout the school year. FAO's involvement of the district agrarian services in training and planning activities also led to the technical and institutional strengthening of government capacities. These services participated in identifying and supporting producer associations, disseminating information on tenders etc. In the provinces where PRONAE did not collaborate with PAA Africa, the amount of food purchased from the local producers was marginal.
- The design of procurement procedures matters. Simplified purchasing procedures, which took local institutional capacities into account, were more effective. In Changara and Cahora Bassa district authorities managed the procurement; some successful aspects observed included: i) simplified qualification requirements and pre-selection of suppliers with productive potential; ii) quarterly tenders based on local prices; and iii) gradual decentralisation of management and procurement. The main challenges in these two districts concerned the management of fresh food storage, the need to consider local prices and the combination of nutritional requirements and the flexibility of the menus, guaranteeing greater autonomy for schools to include seasonal products not considered initially. In Angónia, the World Food Programme managed purchases of maize, and delays and technical requirements resulted in the disruption of the marketing cycle. Operational choices should also include defining an appropriate system of coordination among implementing institutions, which was a major challenge for the initiative.
- Intersectorality is not limited to coordinating operational decisions. It should be sought as an instrument for deepening coherence between national policies and the setting of political agendas. Political-institutional changes, the search for policy coherence, the building of technical and financial capacities and the integration of local purchases into governmental priorities require time and resources. The involvement of stakeholders at all levels (e.g. civil society representatives) and the creation of information and learning spaces have contributed to the strengthening of the local food procurement agenda in Mozambique.
- Social participation and advocacy are also relevant in this process, and technical groups are a means of following up and including other stakeholders. Both depend on a continuous (not ad hoc) process of engagement and dissemination of information, and PAA Africa has not yet reached this point. There are different types of engagement of civil society organisations, ranging from political articulation to direct support for the implementation of activities. This definition should be made according to the expectations and capabilities of the organisations themselves.

In conclusion, short-term initiatives will hardly be enough to produce the desirable effects of policy change and effective implementation. However, despite scale and time constraints, PAA Africa had a considerable demonstrative effect and enlarged the basis for the sharing of knowledge and socio-political interaction.

Reference:  
Milhorange, Carolina. 2017. "PAA Africa's Contributions to the Consolidation of PRONAE in Mozambique." IPC-IG Working Paper No. 170. Brasília: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.