

Eight Caribbean countries take part in mission to know public school feeding policy in the Dominican Republic



The international delegation stayed in the country for a week and concluded a course on school feeding

24 March, 2023 - Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - Representatives from 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries took part in an international technical mission in the Dominican Republic from March 13 to 17, organized by the trilateral south-south cooperation project Consolidation of School Feeding Programmes in LAC, carried out by the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation.

The objective of the mission was to promote the exchange of experiences and good practices to strengthen the public policy on school feeding in the region, as well as conclude the second stage of a course on school feeding for participants from the Caribbean countries. Due to that, theoretical contents were presented and field activities were developed during the five days.

The mission was made up of managers and technicians from school feeding programmes from the Ministries of Education, Agriculture and Health of Belize, Brazil, Bahamas, Chile, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

The school feeding project is part of the actions of the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation Programme. It is developed jointly by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ABC/MRE), the National Fund for Educational Development of the Ministry of Education (FNDE/MEC), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The mission also concluded the second stage of the training School Feeding Programmes and Food and Nutrition Education - carried out by the Brazil-FAO Cooperation - with participants from Belize, Bahamas, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. The first phase occurred in 2020 and could not be finished until now due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The activity generated a space for theoretical and experiential learning, promoting a meeting among the Caribbean countries that are working on improving the quality of their school feeding programmes. A strong focus on food and nutrition education was highlighted in this activity. “Being able to share good experiences and think about joint solutions was enriching for all the participants and created beneficial professional relationships to continue this work,” said Gabriela Ayon Chang, course facilitator.

School and field experiences

During the five-day mission, participants visited schools and a family farmers' cooperative, which allowed them to talk with school feeding authorities and technicians, fathers and mothers, teachers, students, as well as producers involved in the provision of local food, among other actors.

During the visits, it was clear the involvement of the community around the school, the use of school gardens as pedagogical tools, the importance of the school's infrastructure, a healthy menu and the public purchases from family farming.

Participants were also introduced to the implementation of Dominican's School Feeding Programme, developed by the National Institute for Student Welfare (INABIE). With the Brazilian participants of the FNDE, they also could learn about progress, challenges, concepts, guidelines, legal frameworks, objectives, and implementation of the school feeding policy at different levels of government (federal, state, and municipal).

Opinions

“I saw here a glimpse of the future into what is possible mainly in terms of having people from the community having ownership and being a part of the process within the schools. So I see that as something that we can bring back locally

and try to implement”, said Latoya Smith, coordinator of school feeding from the FAO office in Trinidad and Tobago.

“We were able to see the impact of school feeding in the field, in dialogue with students and family farmers,” said Mahendra Phaghwah, breakfast programme’s coordinator of Guyana’s Ministry of Education. “School feeding does not discriminate and it is not a vulnerability programme, school feeding is for all”.

For Bertland Bates, from the Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture, the experience of involving family farming in school feeding and the infrastructure of schools to offer food were the topics that most caught his attention.

The coordinator of the school feeding project of the Brazil-FAO International Cooperation, Najla Veloso, assessed that the mission promoted a space for dialogue and exchange among the Caribbean countries. “It was an occasion to call on sister countries to think together about how we can build a better continent and a better world, where all students eat, learn and improve their health conditions, moving the regional food chain with family farming. It was possible to understand that it is possible to do this policy better and better, how we do it in Brazil and how the Dominican Republic is doing”.

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