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# Climate-Smart Learning Centers

## A catalyst for transformation in Kenya's Pastoralist food system

### Project Brief 2 of 3

#### Context

In Kenya, the school meals program (SMP) was envisioned as a national sustainable initiative that would boost key educational indicators among school going children from food insecure regions and communities. However, in rural regions, school children continue to face hunger and malnutrition due to inadequate access to healthy and nutritious foods.

The Food Systems Transformation through School Feeding project under the CCHeFS initiative addresses this challenge by promoting interventions that integrate nutrient-rich, locally grown crops into SMPs. Through the establishment of climate-smart learning centers on school farms in pastoral Kenya, the project seeks to leverage local agriculture to support SMPs. This project spotlight details the status of the intervention in Kenya.



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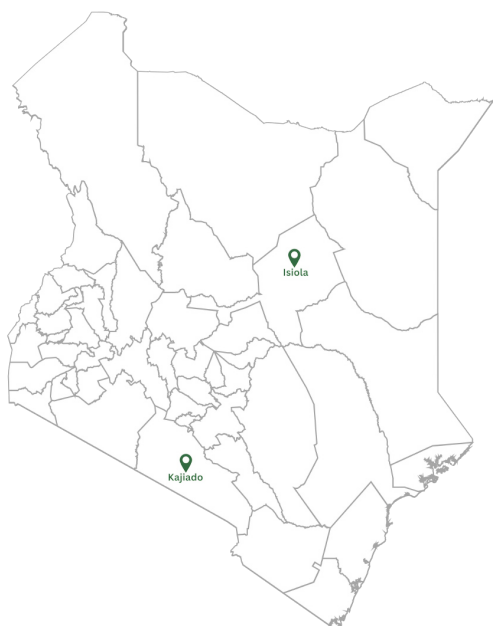
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## Intervention and Impact

In Kenya, the arid and semi arid lands (ASALs) occupy about 84% of Kenya's land mass. Kenya's ASALs are divided into two regions—the Southern rangelands and the northern rangelands. In the ASALs, there is a reliance on livestock keeping as the main economic activity—accounting for 65% of livestock population.

However, the regions face severe external challenges such as climate change that causes extreme drought and floods, land degradation, inadequate infrastructure, conflicts over water and pasture, biodiversity loss, and hidden hunger. Farmers in this region are not adequately trained or equipped to combat these threats.



Map of pastoralist regions in Kenya where school learning centers were established. Credit: Sourced from Canva, edited by Savannah Dysard

The aim of this project is to generate evidence for food systems transformation driven by school meals through the establishment of climate-smart learning centers on school farms in two pastoral regions of Kenya. Climate-smart practices include the use of climate-resilient crop species and improved water management.

The learning centers have three main objectives:

- Contribute to dietary diversity;
- Enhance knowledge sharing; and
- Influence policymaking.

To achieve these objectives, project teams worked with communities to establish 4K clubs at schools in each region. The 4K clubs serve as the climate-smart learning centers where training for school children and teachers on how to manage school farms is provided.

To encourage access to and uptake of high-nutrient foods in the region, learning centers focused on training school students and teachers on how to grow high iron and zinc-rich nyota beans, vegetables, fruits and livestock products. Once ready for harvest, the crops will be used to supplement school meals.



Students learning by doing at the school learning centers. Credit: Dr. Simon Omondi, KALRO

Community members were also invited to join the school learning centers to participate in farmer trainings on climate-smart farming practices and the utilization of new farming technologies. Their participation offers an opportunity to learn resilient farming practices that can be applied on the school farms and at home. This is particularly important for local women.

## POLICY ENGAGEMENT

At the start of the project, a scoping review of the current SMP in Kenya revealed major gaps between policy guidelines and practices and community participation and ownership. To overcome these barriers, a Community of Practice (CoP) was established. The CoP is made up of national and local government officials, school leaders, community members, and representatives of farmer groups.

The establishment of the CoP has helped to build community engagement and a common vision, which will enable the successful adoption and sustainability of the project. The CoPs will facilitate training for local farmer groups at the school farms so they can replicate the selected climate-smart practices in their own farms.

## Next Steps

To date, four learning centers have been established in the two regions and students and communities have begun populating school farms with nyota beans, vegetables, and melons. Additional climate-smart practices will soon be applied in different plots on school farms and monitored using commonly developed indicators on productivity, soil health, water retention, and nutrient restoration.

Findings on the performance of the climate-smart practices and recommendations for scaling the project and practices across the country will be released in early 2026.

## About this project brief

This project brief is part of a series aiming to convey the results and progress of the Food Systems Transformation Through School Feeding Project, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Rockefeller Foundation under the Catalyzing Change for Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems (CCHeFS) initiative. The full series can be found at [www.regenerativefoodsystemsalliance.org](http://www.regenerativefoodsystemsalliance.org).

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