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SCHOOL MEALS AS A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

Finland's journey from scarcity to a universal public service

Ambassador for Education Ms. Outi Hakanen, Ministry for
Foreign Affairs of Finland

Photo: Riku Isohella



Starting with Little, Investing for the Future

SUOMI
FINLAND



A poor, predominantly rural country

Limited resources and major social inequalities

1940s: a deliberate public choice

Free school meals established for all pupils

Over seven decades of gradual development

Legislation, nutrition, education and local implementation

Today: an integral part of the school day

Supporting learning, wellbeing and equity



More than a meal

Learning

Energy and concentration during the school day

Wellbeing

Nutrition, health and healthy habits

Equity

The same entitlement for every pupil

Education

Food literacy, sustainability and social skills





A system that keeps evolving

**SUOMI
FINLAND**

National level

Legislation, curriculum and recommendations

Municipalities

Organisation, procurement and resources

Schools and meal providers

Daily implementation and food education

Pupils and families

Participation, feedback and everyday choices

Different ways to deliver

- In-house provision
- Municipal service providers
- Contracted catering
- Local procurement models



One meal, many everyday impacts

Child

Energy, wellbeing and inclusion

→ School community

Participation and shared routines

→ Families

A reliable part of everyday life

→ Society

Equity, education and long-term human development



Photo: Riitta Supperi



Thank you!

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