Overview

Mayor Acceso a Alimentos Saludables (meaning More Access to Healthy Food, or MAS) is a USDA-funded Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement (LRP) project in Nicaragua, which complements Project Concern International (PCI), a Global Communities Partner’s McGovern-Dole project, MESA II. MAS strengthens market linkages between local food suppliers and schools to supplement and enhance school meal nutrition by providing complementary beans, fresh vegetables, and animal-based proteins and providing a valuable source of income for local producers. Over the life of the project, MAS will use USDA-provided funds to procure 1,626 metric tons (MT) of locally grown and purchased nutritious food commodities to enrich daily school meals for 10,900 students from 62 schools within the municipalities of Jinotega and Pantasma in the department of Jinotega.

“By providing locally grown fresh food to schools, MAS has allowed our cooperative to hire 11 people, 10 of them women in our vegetable processing plant. The children of two of the women who work here attend the schools where we are supplying food.”

–Enrique Pineda, CEO COOSMPROJIN Cooperative

Objectives and Key Activities

- Improved capacity of schools to procure local nutritious food for school meals by conducting open and competitive bidding processes with local farmers as suppliers to ensure transparency and a consistent supply of quality products; accompanying schools’ Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) in assessing product quality and ensuring safe food handling and storage; providing technical assistance to local suppliers in proper food management practices and logistics to deliver high-quality products to schools; conducting routine price monitoring; and equipping schools with safe food storage equipment and training.
- Strengthened market linkages between schools and local food suppliers for school meals by developing Public-Private-Partnerships for Development (PPPDs); establishing contracts between local agribusiness enterprises, farmer cooperatives, Women Empowered village savings and loan groups, and PTAs to supply schools with fresh products to enhance nutrition of school meals; training agricultural cooperatives in management and marketing practices to better access markets; and facilitating learning exchanges between suppliers, schools, and community leaders to identify best practices in local procurement.
- Enhanced technical expertise of agricultural cooperatives and smallholder farmers by strengthening the application of quality standards in food production and commodity logistics management; conducting supportive monitoring visits to vegetable processing plants; providing administrative and financial training to agribusinesses and agricultural cooperatives; and training farmers on best practices and technologies to improve sustainable production and supply to schools and local markets (i.e., planting calendars, techniques for climate change resiliency).

BY THE NUMBERS*

- **62** Targeted schools
- **10,900** Students receiving daily meals
- **11,743** Direct beneficiaries
- **1,626** MT of locally procured food commodities (dried beans, fresh vegetables, animal-based proteins)
- **680** Local producers strengthened

*Life of project targets from project agreement