



Kids eating school lunch in the Savannakhet district in Laos. *Photographer: Phoonsab Thevongsa for CRS.*

# Procuring Eggs Locally to Enrich School Meals: A USDA Laos LEAPS III Project

## A CRS PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

QUICKFACTS	
PROJECT TYPE	McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (McGovern-Dole)
AWARD NUMBER	FFE-439-2021/007-00
PROJECT LOCATION	Laos
# OF STUDENTS SERVED	28,402 (direct)
TIMEFRAME	2021 - 2026
PARTNERS	Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES)

The Laos procurement team faced many challenges procuring eggs locally in Laos, largely due to a limited number of suppliers and the increased cost of eggs. Suppliers were unfamiliar with CRS’ procurement process, and global market impacts affected not only price and demand of eggs but also contributed to increased costs of chicken feed and transportation. To find solutions to ultimately be able to supply eggs as part of school meals, CRS’ procurement and logistics staff conducted egg-specific market assessments and visited multiple egg suppliers. With the analysis conducted and information collected, the team was prepared to sign a contract with an egg supplier in Vientiane.

### INTRODUCTION

LEAPS III, a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-funded McGovern-Dole Food for Education (MGD) program implemented by CRS, is supporting the Local Regional Procurement (LRP) of chicken eggs to provide a **daily school meal for 30,809 students in the Savannakhet Province of Laos**. Procuring eggs locally contributes to the goal of handing over school meals to the Inclusive Education and Planning Center, which is part of the Ministry of Education in the Government of Lao PDR in a way that supports communities to boost agricultural productivity, strengthen local food systems, and improve nutrition.

On March 10, 2023, **58,656 eggs were successfully delivered to 103 schools across two school districts in Savannakhet, serving 9,776 students**, marking a significant milestone in improving the nutritional quality and variety of the school meals. While the eggs are easily a delicious addition to the lunch time meal, procuring and delivering them was not as straightforward.

103  
SCHOOLS

9,776  
STUDENTS  
SERVED

187+ MT  
METRIC TONS  
OF EGGS



## OVERCOMING PROJECT CHALLENGES

### Challenge #1: Local Procurement of Eggs

To provide eggs for school meals, CRS had to first find and procure a local supplier. While eggs are one of the most common Animal Source Foods (ASF) in Laos, few companies produce eggs at scale in Savannakhet, the province where the targeted schools are located, and across the country. Additionally, LEAPS III was the CRS procurement team's first time undertaking LRP, a new approach made available by USDA that meets the priority of local government to procure foods locally and regionally to provide a more sustainable example for schools and communities. The demand of 6.1 million eggs to supply all schools over the life of the project, paired with limited suppliers, led to delays in project implementation to ensure a local company could produce eggs at scale. By successfully dispatching the eggs, **CRS has demonstrated that local products can successfully be part of the Laos national school meals strategy.**

### Challenge #2: Transporting & Storing Eggs

After selecting a supplier that could fulfill the capacity needed for school meals, CRS had to determine how the eggs would be transported from the supplier to the schools. How are the eggs to be safely stored?

Due to the perishable nature of eggs and susceptibility to damage, eggs needed to be transported directly to schools with specialized transportation vehicles. The CRS Laos' procurement team analyzed egg transportation delivery, including the distance and time requirements when selecting a

company to supply the eggs locally. Since eggs can be stored under normal temperatures for up to one month, the procurement team needed to set a schedule with the supplier for the distribution of eggs every two weeks. CRS also partnered with the schools to ensure adequate storage space for monthly deliveries.

In addition to storage logistics, CRS also evaluated packaging materials of the eggs. As part of CRS' initiatives to reduce waste, LEAPS III uses eco-friendly packaging and recycling to decrease plastic and non-degradable waste in project locations. Eggs were packaged into 30-unit crates, made of recycled materials. Packaging of eggs had to be labeled with farm name, production date, package date, average egg size, number, and a safe handling statement.

### Challenge #3: Impacts on Markets

The inclusion of LRP in USDA MGD programming has allowed locally and regionally produced agricultural and ASF commodities to fill in nutritional and food aid gaps, while supporting livelihoods and local markets. This market-based assistance means quicker response times, is less costly, and reaches more people in need with less funding. As part of CRS' commitment to the 'do no harm' principle, market assessments are essential to ensure that procuring and/or importing commodities do not disrupt markets in the countries where we work.

Since eggs are the most commonly consumed ASFs in Laos and needed to be procured in large quantities, the LEAPS III project conducted egg-specific market assessments, in addition to the standard market assessments for all imported and procured commodities. The results of the market assessments proved that procuring eggs would be more difficult – and expensive – than anticipated during the proposal design phase. Other key challenges were that large suppliers were few in Laos, unable to provide the quantities required by the project, and not familiar with CRS' procurement process. Additionally, the Laos economy is tightly linked to the economies of neighboring countries: global market impacts had local implications on not only prices and demand for eggs in Laos, but also the cost of chicken feed and transport from Thailand.

Despite these obstacles, LEAPS III procurement and logistics staff persevered and visited multiple egg suppliers to discuss market demand, supply, pricing, and forecasting. They also analyzed transportation routes, warehousing, and market prices across all actors in the supply chain. With the information collected in the market assessments and field visits, the team was prepared to target their on-the-ground research, establish priorities for market monitoring, and ultimately sign a contract with an egg supplier in Vientiane.



## PROGRAMMING OUTCOMES

### Nutritional Benefits

Children enrolled in preschool and primary school receive nutritional benefits from the CRS implemented McGovern-Dole program. CRS' program serves children in marginalized communities where micronutrient deficiencies such as iron deficiency anemia are prevalent and ASFs are seldomly consumed in the quantity and frequency necessary to support optimal nutrition. Child nutrition in rural Laos is further jeopardized by increasing food insecurity, inflation, and economic stagnation and many families report reducing the quality and quantity of food consumed at home as coping mechanisms.

Introducing eggs to school meals provides children a highly nutritious meal during critical stages of growth and development, heightens school attendance, and boosts active participation and learning in and out of the classroom. Eggs are rich in many macronutrients and micronutrients that children need and often lack. Eggs are also easy to prepare and do not require as many precautions to ensure food safety as other ASFs such as meat and milk. Just one egg a day can meet the entire daily protein requirements of a child under 10 years of age. Eggs are also rich in micronutrients that support immune function, physical growth, and brain development including iron, calcium, folate, magnesium, selenium, vitamin A and B, and zinc.



### Sustainability of Local Egg Procurement

CRS seeks to involve local communities and governments in project implementation to foster local capacity building and self-sufficiency. The LEAPS program is intended to be fully transitioned over to the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) in 2026. Under the National School Meals program, the MOES funding mechanism allocates block grants of 800 KIP (10 US cents) per child per day to schools across the country. As part of CRS' government handover plan, the project will provide trainings on cash-based transfer management and food procurement for teachers and cooks. Decisions can be made locally for what is served in the school meals, and by successfully dispatching the eggs, CRS has demonstrated that local products can be part of the national school meals strategy.



## PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### CRS PARTNERS

This project would not have been possible without the partnership and dedication of the teams and individuals listed below and in the right sidebar, who are recognized for their efforts in the successful pilot of procuring eggs locally to Laos national schools:

- Laos Procurement Team
- Laos Logistics Team
- GSCM Global Procurement
- Schools in Phalanxay and Astaphone Districts in Savannakhet Province
- Honduras MGD\*
- Guatemala MGD\*

*\*The Honduras and Guatemala MGD program shared materials and guidance that they developed including fresh eggs in school meals- cross-region sharing and learning.*

### USDA FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE\*

- Bobbi Kraham, International Program Specialist, McGovern-Dole Branch
- Paul Alberghine, International Program Specialist, McGovern-Dole Branch

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### CRS LAOS PROJECT TEAM

- Anoutta Vongladsamee, Communications Officer
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- Phouthaluck Phonsaona, Deputy Chief of Party I
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### CRS GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

- Caitlin Welte, Local and Regional Procurement Advisor
- Corinne Shutack, Procurement Technical Advisor
- Martin Hartney, Advisor II, Food & NFIs Team
- Megan McGlinchy, Markets Team Manager

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