

# Decolonial Food Aid Practices in Burkina Faso

## An Analysis of Catholic Relief Services' Interventions through the Endogenous School Feeding program (2011–2024)

**Tiéwendé Jean Balima**

PhD Candidate in the History of International Relations  
Joseph Ki-Zerbo University  
[balimatiewende@gmail.com](mailto:balimatiewende@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This article analyzes the dynamics of decolonizing food aid in Burkina Faso, focusing on endogenous school feeding practices between 2011 and 2024, within the framework of cooperation with the United States. By examining the interactions between the national school feeding policy and the one proposed by the NGO Catholic Relief Services, a stakeholder in U.S. foreign policy, the study shows how food aid, initially characterized by dependence on U.S. imports, gradually evolved to promote more inclusive models rooted in local knowledge. Drawing on a microhistorical approach, the study highlights the NGO's practices aimed at supporting food self-sufficiency through the mobilization of local resources, community participation, as well as beneficiaries' participation, namely students, who are the main beneficiaries. The article analyzes the impacts of this transition from assisted school feeding to endogenous school feeding and proposes avenues for consolidating this approach. This reflection is part of a broader framework seeking to rethink North–South relations in international cooperation initiatives.

### Keywords

Food aid, Burkina Faso, endogenous school feeding, cooperation, decolonization

## Introduction

As a Sahelian country, Burkina Faso continues to face the persistent challenge of ensuring sustainable food and nutritional self-sufficiency for its population. Agriculture employs more than 80% of the population. An analysis of the agricultural sector over the 2000–2010 decade reveals relatively satisfactory performance, with a growth rate of 3% (Burkina Faso, 2013). However, strong demographic growth (3.1% per year), climatic hazards, and the insecurity affecting certain production areas since 2015 have considerably reduced the gains achieved, forcing Burkina Faso to rely on external food supplies to meet its consumption needs (INSD, 2021).

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In its socio-economic development policy, Burkina Faso has been committed to endogenous development since the early 1980s. In close cooperation with its technical and financial partners, interventions have focused on strengthening the country's capacity to withstand shocks and to meet its own needs. To this end, communities are encouraged to get involved in the promotion of endogenous school feeding in order to ensure food self-sufficiency in schools, promote local dishes, and provide students with varied and balanced meals. This approach helps instill agricultural values in students while strengthening equality of opportunity and improving the quality of education, ensuring a more effective, efficient, and resilient education system (MEBAPLN, 2025). It is within this context that U.S. cooperation, through its operational arm for food aid, the NGO Catholic Relief Services (CRS), launched the *Beoog Biiga*<sup>1</sup> project in 2011, initially in the Centre-Nord region, before extending it in 2018 to the Plateau-Central.

This contribution aligns with the NGO's interventions both as a development partner of the Burkinabè state and as a non-state actor in U.S. foreign policy. Aimed at reinforcing the supply of local food to school canteens by promoting school farms and gardens, and by enhancing technical, infrastructural, and human capacities, the *Beoog Biiga* project illustrates a paradigm shift in U.S. humanitarian assistance to Burkina Faso. It reveals forms of decolonization of food aid that deserve to be highlighted, as they constitute possible pathways toward a socio-economic development of beneficiary communities. The state of knowledge on food aid in Burkina Faso and on the intervention mechanisms of development partners is based on a historiography consisting mainly of scientific articles, project-specific documents, and a few general works.

In general, food aid can serve as a lever for development (Ingram, 1983). The World Food Programme's (WFP) "Food for work" program, supported by U.S. cooperation, was a pioneer of this form of decolonization of food aid in the 1970s and 1980s. From this perspective, constraints and opportunities can be analyzed within the framework of cooperation (FAO, 2006), highlighting its role in agricultural development and food security strategy. Garrido and Sanchez (2015) address the issue of food security in Burkina Faso through school feeding programs. In terms of nutrition, the impacts of school feeding reveal a plausible effectiveness in improving learners' nutrition. Reflecting on endogenous school feeding and school retention in the basic education district of Kongoussi 1, Niya (2022) emphasizes that the endogenous school feeding constitutes, for many children from low-income families, a significant source of food during the school year. It is also a source of motivation for school attendance, leading to increased enrollment rates and improved academic performance (Niya, 2022, p. 194). However, a number of dysfunctions persist, hence the paradigm shift introduced by the *Beoog Biiga* project. In this study, we will seek to highlight the project's field practices that are transforming the food aid/development nexus and are aligned with the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (Burkina Faso, 2013; MAAH, 2017).

According to the FAO, food aid is defined as "all food received for development purposes, including funds allocated for their purchase" (Burkina Faso–UNDP, 2016). Related expenses (transport, storage, distribution, etc.) are also included in this category, as well as related items provided by donors and agricultural inputs for food crops when these contributions form part of a food aid program (MEF, 2010). U.S. food aid to Burkina Faso dates back to the country's accession to international sovereignty in 1960. On a regular basis, it became intermittent from 2008 onward following increased government engagement in the sector. The practice of decolonizing aid can be understood against the backdrop of the so-called "Marxist" analysis of international relations, which depicts a world divided between those who make history and those who endure it, a fundamentally unequal world. It also aligns with the substance of "decoloniality," as theorized by Mignolo (2011), who advocates a disengagement from the colonial matrix of Western power in order to build a world in which human beings are no longer exploited in the relentless pursuit of wealth accumulation. This approach, therefore, privileges phenomena of domination and dependence, social classes, relations of production, and revolutionary struggles (Balima, 2022). Indeed, more than 60 years after independence, Burkina Faso still struggles to find its footing in terms of development. As Joseph Ki-Zerbo pointed out, "the recipe for development is still unsettled." (Yonli, 2016, p. 365). Yet the country's underdevelopment is not due to a lack of strategies but, on the contrary, to their overabundance. As a matter of fact,

1 The expression *Beoog Biiga* means "Tomorrow's child" in the national language, Mooré.

political leaders have, in turn, implemented several development plans (Ouattara, 2023). From this perspective, it should be recalled that Burkina Faso remains fragile in its development process. With the exception of the experience of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (1983–1987), all implemented development models have been patterned on the liberal model, thereby emphasizing “economism, productivism, and technicism at the expense of genuine human and social needs and the aspirations of the population” (Yonli, 2016, p. 368). However, true development must involve a return of the Burkinabè people to their precolonial heritage and a redefinition of their worldview themselves, in accordance with their sensibilities and potentialities (Kyélem de Tambèla, 2012). It is upon this challenge that Joseph Ki-Zerbo’s thinking rests: endogenous development, which forms the very essence of the endogenous school feeding program.

Consequently, based on the food assistance mechanisms, practices aimed at achieving self-sufficiency are perceptible to the population. However, these practices raise the issue associated with aid in international relations. Indeed, since cooperation is a form of social exchange, aid theory makes it possible to understand CRS’s intervention through the prism of the ambiguity of the strategic interest inherent in aid, an ambiguity that makes it difficult to distinguish between calculation and outcome, action and norms (Alter, 2002, p. 270). Aid constitutes a tool of influence (*soft power*) and of influence diplomacy in international relations. The central question of this study is to determine whether CRS’s intervention is driven by a logic of geopolitical interests or by a strategy of sustainable investment aimed at strengthening food self-sufficiency in the regions concerned. In other words, to what extent does U.S. food assistance constitute an aid that ultimately enables beneficiaries to become self-reliant, as President Thomas Sankara once advocated? If this is not the case, what challenges does it face? Echoing the Shona proverb, might it be “charity that can also kill,” serving only as a means to maintain and perpetuate dependence?

The objective of this contribution is to analyze U.S. food aid practices between 2011 and 2024 that enable beneficiary populations to gradually free themselves from this type of aid by meeting the needs of the endogenous school feeding program. In other words, the study examines the means offered by CRS to beneficiaries in order to promote food self-sufficiency. It seeks to elucidate the meaning of endogenous development, to describe the mechanisms that add value to beneficiaries’ capacity for decolonization, and to assess the challenges associated with the development of school feeding and the education system. To achieve this, the methodology adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative elements drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted with project managers, primary school teachers, and students’ parents, alongside data from other sources, including archives, the literature, online press, and direct observation. This approach allows us to understand how beneficiary populations perceive humanitarian aid through practices that foster their capacity for self-determination.

The study is structured around three main axes. The first seeks to clarify the endogenous vision for development and to present the *Beoog Biiga* project; the second examines decolonization practices in food aid; and the third analyzes the challenges of intervention to emancipate the endogenous school feeding program from external contributions.

## Understanding the Endogenous Vision for Development in Burkina Faso and CRS’s Intervention

This section seeks to elucidate the concept of endogeneity in relation to cooperation policy. From its theoretical foundations, this concept is applied in Burkina Faso’s aid and development policies.

## *Endogeneity of Development in Cooperation Policy in Burkina Faso*

Endogenous development, according to Kyélem de Tambèla (2016), refers to:

The process of economic, social, cultural, scientific, and political transformation based on the mobilization of internal resources and social forces, and on the use of the knowledge and experience accumulated by a country's people. It enables populations to be active agents in the transformation of their society rather than remaining spectators of policies inspired by imported models. (p. 398)

Also referred to as *self-reliance* or self-centered development, it aims to “redefine economic priorities in order to produce goods that are useful to the entire population rather than relying on international trade to import consumer goods that benefit only a minority” (Kyélem de Tambèla, 2016, p. 398). It involves taking collective identity into account in development policies and projects, hence the maxim: “We do not develop; we develop ourselves.” (Ki-Zerbo, 2007, p. 107). This implies a form of development based on “turnkey solutions designed from within, not turnkey solutions imported from outside.” In other words, we are the architects of our own development, and all spare parts are not imported but available locally (Yonli, 2016, p. 375). Nevertheless, “endogenous development is not an autarkic form of development without openness to the outside world” (Ki-Zerbo, 2012, p. 52).

Drawing on the revolutionary experience, President Sankara (1983–1987) embraced the endogenous model of development. Without rejecting external contributions, Sankara advocated for “aid that helps people do without aid” (CNA-BIB1409, 1984, p. 5). Indeed, it would be inaccurate to claim that external aid has no developmental impact on beneficiary countries. Any contribution used rationally and efficiently can be advantageous. This was precisely why the “Programme Populaire de Développement” (PPD) was “81% financed by foreign funds; however, this was only a medium-term solution, as the ambition was to gradually reduce this share to 15% by 1990” (Balima, 2022, p. 260), ultimately leading to national autonomy in development financing. This policy of decolonizing aid for development financing was based on principles of rigorous management and transparency, as well as on the necessity of relying on one's own forces by transforming and consuming local products (Kyélem de Tambèla, 2012, p. 197). Thus, aid resources were incorporated into development plans in a way that grounded cooperation in a partnership oriented toward mutual interest and an alignment of contributions with national efforts (Ogandaga, 2015, p. 4). For Sankara, true development is endogenous and inclusive. It must be based on the participation of the masses in policies designed to change their living conditions and on the use of the state as an instrument of economic and social transformation (Dembélé, 2013). It is in this sense that we approach CRS's philosophy regarding the endogenous school feeding program.

## *Beoog Biiga: From Assisted to Endogenous School Feeding Program*

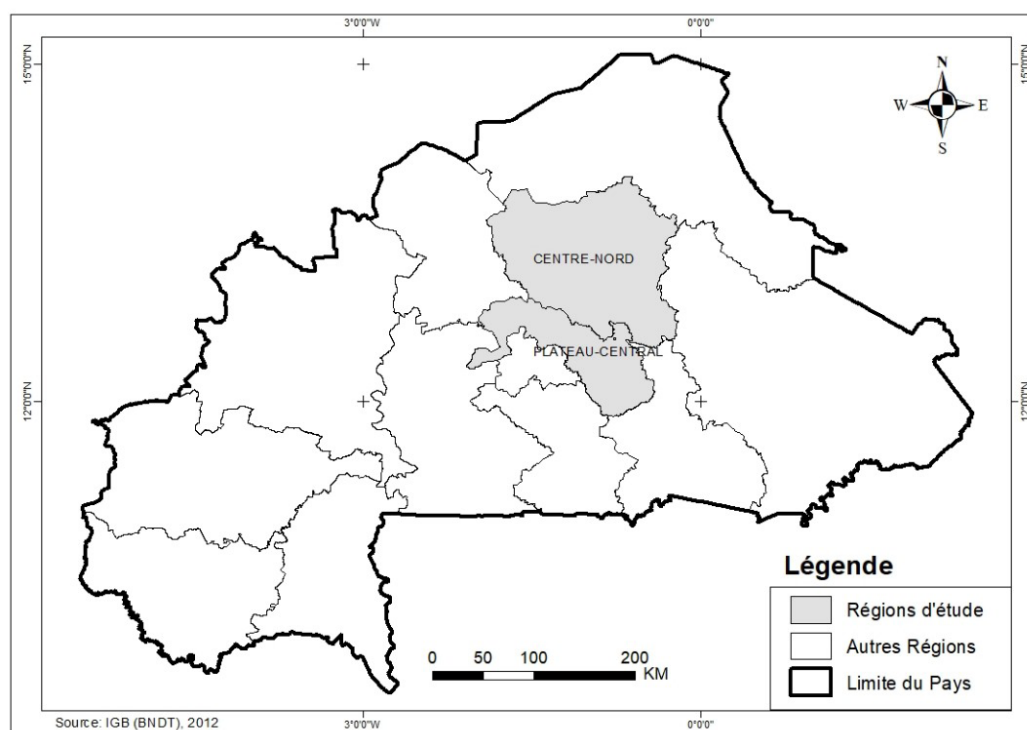
CRS has been operating in Burkina Faso since 1962. In 1988, for financial and strategic reasons, it began restructuring its intervention by transferring schools no longer covered by its assisted school feeding program to the Ministry of Education. This transfer led to the creation of the School Feeding Service to manage allocations from various donors (Niya, 2022). In 2014, and by decree,<sup>2</sup> the management of school canteens in areas not covered by CRS was placed under the responsibility of local authorities (Niya, 2022, p. 189). Now endogenous, the school feeding program operates on the basis of food collection or production by the community without external contributions. To ensure the success of this policy, the state has mobilized, since 2017, approximately 19 billion CFA francs per year for the benefit of local authorities. As part of this initiative, the state also provides farmers with agricultural inputs to increase production and then buys back the surplus for the school feeding program. However, several dysfunctions, particularly delays in supply, are leaving students hungry (Yé, 2024). Aware of this reality, the Burkinabè government launched, in June 2021, the presidential initiative “Ensuring every school-age child at least one balanced meal per day” (Lankoandé, 2021, p. 11). This development highlights the importance of school feeding in the process of enrolling and keeping children in school.

2 Decree No. 2014-931/PRES/PM/MATD/MENA/MJFPE/MESS/MEF/MFPTSS on the procedures for transferring State powers and resources to municipalities in the areas of education, vocational training, and literacy.

From 2007 onward, as part of its ongoing restructuring process, CRS began a gradual withdrawal of its coverage, intervening only in rural areas where school enrollment rates were very low and where food insecurity was a reality (Kaboré, 2019). Its interventions were therefore concentrated in the Centre-Nord and East regions. In 2012, these two regions had high rates of food insecurity (53% in the Centre-Nord and 60% in the East), low literacy rates (16.6% and 15.9% respectively), and low primary school enrollment rates (67.6% and 52.1%), with a significant gender gap between boys and girls (Garrido & Sanchez, 2015, p. 23).

To support the endogenization of school feeding, the NGO undertook a gradual transition from assisted school feeding to a fully endogenous model. It was within this framework that the *Food for Education* program, or “*Beoog Biiga*”, funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), was initiated. Launched in 2011 in the Centre-Nord region, the project was expanded in 2018<sup>3</sup> to the Plateau-Central region (see Map No. 1), in light of the security situation affecting the stability of its intervention in the Centre-Nord<sup>4</sup>.

Map 1: The regions of interventions of the Beoog Biiga project



In both regions of intervention, in addition to its traditional partner, the Ministry of Education, CRS collaborates with the Ministry of Health, the Catholic Organization for Development and Solidarity (OCADES/Kaya), municipalities, and community-based organizations (Garrido & Sanchez, 2015). Beyond education, the project seeks to improve the financial situation of families and to support communities through health and mentoring programs (CRS, 2025; Sawadogo, 2021).

For CRS, this development philosophy aligns with the concept of the endogenous school feeding program, as it embodies a sustainable approach to improving learning conditions in schools<sup>5</sup>. This program, which implements school farms, is a concrete example of the commitment of local communities to supporting their children's education (AGIR, 2019). The endogenous school feeding program is distinguished by its integrated approach, linking education, agriculture, and nutrition

<sup>3</sup> Belem Daouda, School Feeding Project Coordinator/MEBAPLN/Cathwel, interviewed on January 14, 2025, Ouagadougou.

<sup>4</sup> The program is in its fourth phase: phase I from 2011 to 2014, phase II from 2014 to 2018, phase III from 2018 to 2022, and phase IV from 2021 to 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Lankoandé Danhogo, Head of Analysis and Forecasting for the School Feeding/MEBAPLN/Cathwel, interviewed on January 14, 2025, Ouagadougou.



(Niya, 2022). School farms and gardens, cultivated by students, teachers, and community members, provide the food needed for school meals. By closely involving local communities in the management and operation of school canteens, this program enables partners to take into account community needs, local knowledge, and societal values within intervention mechanisms, amounting to a form of disconnection from the colonial matrix in which individualism predominates (Mignolo, 2011). Indeed, the success of this initiative rests on solidarity, commitment, and community innovation, values that are essential for sustainable and inclusive development.

## Decolonial Food Aid Practices implemented by CRS Burkina Faso

These practices essentially focus on two components: procuring locally sourced food and creating school farms and gardens. However, complementary activities are also implemented to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention.

### *Allocation through Local Food Purchasing*

Overall, from 2017 to 2021, municipalities mobilized 177,914.5 tons of food for school canteens, of which 11,116.6 tons, i.e. 6.24%, came from partners, including the CRS, World Food Programme (WFP), the NGO EDUCO, and Children's Fund (CFSI et al., 2023, p. 11). Farmers' organizations participate in the procurement of food for school canteens. CRS's experience with local food procurement has been carried out through several projects. According to a coalition of NGOs (CFSI et al., 2023), this practice began in 2010 under the Local Education Assistance and Procurement (LEAP) project, which provided school canteens in Gnagna and Namentenga with "628 tons of millet, 157 tons of beans, and 72 tons of oil for the benefit of 364 schools with 58,180 students" (CFSI et al., 2023, p. 16). These purchases were made from local producers, those from the Boucle du Mouhoun region, as well as from the CITEC Bobo factory.

As part of efforts to strengthen the endogenous school feeding program, CRS launched the *Faso Riibo* sub-project in 2019 under the Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement (LRP) program. The LRP is based on the idea that providing grants to purchase food locally is a more effective approach, in terms of both time and cost for food assistance (CRS, 2011, p. 21). Initially, it aimed to support approximately 200 schools in the Centre-Nord region. The reallocation of a certain quantity of food to the Plateau-Central region, therefore, sought to prevent a decline in coverage rates. This reallocation concerns at least 400 schools<sup>6</sup> spread across six rural municipalities. Table 1 presents an overview of the quantities of locally sourced food allocated to school canteens under the *Beoog Biiga* and *Faso Riibo* projects:

Table 1: Quantity (in tons) of food purchased by CRS Burkina from 2019 to 2024

Projects	Millet	Beans	Parboiled rice	Oil	Soumbala and Baobab powder	Total
<i>Beoog Biiga</i>	380	350	880	160	90	1 860
<i>Faso Riibo</i>	955	440	725	150	-	2 270
Total	1 335	790	1 605	310	90	4 130

Source: CFSI et al. (2023). *Promotion of Family Farming in West Africa Program*. Summary report of the reflection workshop on modalities for sustaining and scaling up achievements in supplying school canteens through short supply chains with farmers' organizations in Burkina Faso, p. 16.

6 Belem Daouda, Coordinator of the School Feeding project/MEBAPLN/Cathwel, interviewed on January 14, 2025, Ouagadougou.

Overall, CRS has provided support amounting to 4,130 tons of local food supplies since 2019. Specifically, for the *Faso Riibo* project, the cost is estimated at 4.8 million USD, equivalent to 2.8 billion CFA francs (Bonkougou, 2024). Added to this is the 2024 contribution of the School Feeding Support Project (PAAS), which involved 2,198 tons of purchased local food, valued at more than 2 billion CFA francs (Zongo, 2024). In 2020, among the food purchased, local products accounted for the following proportions: 88.75% of cereals, 100% of legumes, and 98.16% of oil across the national territory (CFSI et al., 2023, p. 11). School farms and gardens are also part of CRS Burkina's intervention mechanisms.

### *The Establishment of School Farms and School Gardens*

One of the unintended negative effects of food aid is the transformation of eating habits through the consumption of foods that people are unable to produce themselves (Tenkodogo & Zida, 1987, p. 55). These are foods that are not part of students' eating habits (bulgur, soy, lentils, etc.).

To minimize food culture shock resulting from the nature of the foods served, the endogenous school feeding program relies on food contributions from parents to meet needs during the first trimester. In order to compensate for delays in the supply to school canteens by municipalities, parents determine the quantities and modalities of food that each household must provide at the start of the school year (AGIR, 2019). This decision is taken during general assemblies of Parents' Associations (APE). However, this procedure could disrupt household food reserves, which led to the creation of school farms. After a pilot phase in Kourwéogo and Oubritenga, 1,596 schools out of the 7,579 schools in the country had adopted this new approach in 2018 (Kaboré, 2019).

Within its region of intervention, CRS supports this parental commitment by providing various resources for the establishment of school farms, community orchards, and school gardens. The cereals, vegetables, and fruits produced are thus used directly in school canteens (Kaboré, 2019). In Phase 4 of the project, in order to support the presidential initiative "Ensuring every school-age child at least one balanced meal per day," CRS provides schools with improved seeds and inputs produced locally by researchers and other actors, agricultural equipment, including mixed-manufacture motorized tillers, meaning assembled with both local and imported parts, and technical support. The following photo series illustrates this support:

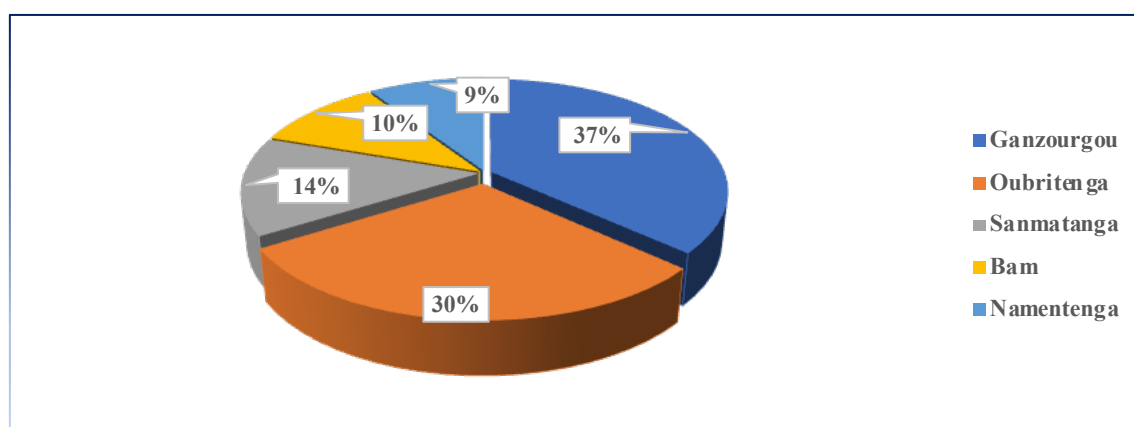


Sources: DCRP/MENAPLN, 2023; CRS, 2025; Nikiema, 2025.

Note: Ceremony to hand over improved seeds produced by the Institute of Environment and Agricultural Research (INERA) at a school in the commune of Korsimoro (Photo 1). A group of students and their parents admiring the newly provided motorized tiller (Photo 2), which made it possible to plow the school field of the village of Napamboumbou-Sambin (Photo 3), whose bean harvest is presented by the chair of the Management Committee (Photo 4).

Overall, Phase 4 of the *Beoog Biiga* project enabled the establishment of 355 fields and 110 gardens for the 2024 rainy agricultural season. The following chart illustrates the distribution of school farms across the provinces of intervention:

Figure 1: Distribution of school farms by province (number and percentage) under the Beoog Biiga 4 project



Source: Nikiema, N. J. (2025).

Note: The two provinces of the Plateau-Central region (Ganzourgou and Oubritenga) account for the majority of the fields, i.e. 67%, representing 235 school farms, while the Centre-Nord region has 120 fields, i.e. 33%. This situation is mainly explained by the rather difficult security issues in that region.

In Oubritenga, during our interviews, some stakeholders mentioned the lack of space for school farms due to increasing urbanization. This is the case in the commune of Dapélogo, whose land is particularly affected by land speculation because of its proximity to Ouagadougou<sup>7</sup>. In the Centre-Nord, it should be emphasized that household food security is affected by both structural and cyclical factors, the management of which requires more intensive interventions. These include, among others, weak storage infrastructure, limited water<sup>8</sup> control, the ongoing degradation of natural resources, and the difficult return to stability. CRS also carries out other activities to improve the quality of the endogenous school feeding program.

### *Related activities to improve the quality of the endogenous school feeding program*

To consolidate its contribution and ensure the sustainability of school canteens, CRS has developed a package of activities to support local producers and the supply chain. These include, among others: training more than 800 management committees in composting techniques; rehabilitating 171 food storage facilities in schools; training transporters in good handling practices; training 1,227

<sup>7</sup> Ky Angèle, Certified School Teacher, Nioniogo B schools, interviewed on November 9, 2025, Dapélogo.

<sup>8</sup> During our interviews, it became clear that there are shortcomings in terms of water accessibility and management. At some sites, drilling has been unsuccessful. There are difficulties in maintenance in the event of breakdowns and also a need to install a solar pumping system to facilitate garden irrigation instead of human power (Zidnaba Issa, director of Tiidin primary school, interviewed on October 20, 2024, in Boulsa, and Gnessien Napi, teacher and member of the Saint Antoine de Rouko primary school council [Bam], interview on November 11, 2025, in Rouko).



canteen managers in food storage; strengthening the capacity building for women (particularly internally displaced women) in rice parboiling techniques; and strengthening the capacity building for producer groups in harvest management, quality standards, and processing (Ouédraogo, 2020).

The program built 694 stoves for the preparation of school meals, trained more than 3,000 teachers in health, nutrition, and hygiene, established nutrition clubs in schools, and trained thousands of community members in best practices for food preparation and handwashing (CRS, 2025). What are the challenges of this intervention in the decolonization of food aid in Burkina Faso?

## Impacts and Decolonial Requirements of CRS Burkina's interventions on the Endogenous School Feeding Program

The aim here is, on the one hand, to highlight the effects of CRS's intervention on the endogenous school feeding program and, on the other hand, to examine the decolonial requirements necessary to free school canteens from external contributions.

### *Outcomes of CRS's Intervention on the Endogenous School Feeding Program*

The school canteen is a major factor in ensuring good school attendance. Numerous studies have shown the positive impact of school meals on increased school enrollment and regular attendance, especially in rural areas (Kaboré, 2023). For children from poor households, the guarantee of a meal at school remains a strong motivation for being present in class. In general, in such families, only the evening meal is guaranteed. Parents also derive satisfaction from knowing that their children are guaranteed a midday meal. Thus, it is pointless to think of schools in rural areas as learning places if students do not eat at lunchtime. Given this reality, the endogenous school feeding program not only guarantees healthy and balanced meals for students, but also strengthens their agricultural knowledge, an essential skill in rural context. Moreover, local food production reduces costs and dependencies associated with external supply chains, while promoting sustainable agriculture for farmers. It helps strengthen social cohesion and ensures a better future for younger generations. The success of this initiative is based on solidarity, commitment, and community innovation, values that are indispensable for sustainable and inclusive development. Consequently, it contributes to improved governance through collaboration between multiple sectors involving national and local authorities, local farmers, cooperatives, and communities (Bonkounou, 2024).

In terms of school feeding, it should be noted, for example, that Phase II (2014–2018) of the project enabled the distribution of 37,850,000 meals to 265,414 students (Sawadogo, 2021). Thanks to the project, the number of students enrolled in schools in the Centre-Nord region increased from 150,000 to 212,000 students, representing a growth of 14%, and the financial contribution of members of women's groups to their children's education rose from 48% to 83% over the same period (Sawadogo, 2021). From 2019 to 2024, *Faso Riibo* reached more than 86,000 students in the Centre-Nord and Plateau-Central regions (Bonkounou, 2024). Communes and School Management Committees (COGES) have seen their food supply chain and distribution management capacities strengthened. At the same time, activities such as opening libraries, providing educational tablets and textbooks, and training teachers in reading and writing techniques have been carried out to improve the quality of education.

Through its intervention, CRS contributed an average of 7% to the school feeding program nationwide. More specifically, according to the NGO's data (2025), with an average contribution of 3,000 tons of food per year, an estimated that 42,000 tons of food were mobilized between 2011 and 2024. The NGO thus ranks as the leading contributor to the endogenous school feeding program. For example, from 2017 to 2021, it mobilized 7,185 tons of food, representing 64.63% of the food mobilized by partners. This approach consolidates the results achieved under the National Food and

Nutrition Security Policy (PNSAN). Indeed, Axes 1 and 3 of this policy respectively aim to sustainably increase food availability and improve the nutritional status of populations (MAAH, 2017). What are the requirements for a school feeding program independent of external contributions?

### *Requirements for a School Feeding Program independent of external contributions*

Considering the neocolonial objectives of humanitarianism, such as relief policy, geopolitical influence, and the maintenance of economic dependence, it is clear that CRS's support by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is intended to promote the success of U.S. foreign policy. As a result, the aid provided by CRS becomes a geopolitical system serving the United States, based on a structure of domination. The process of endogenization of the school feeding program thus becomes a power issue in which Burkina Faso must position itself so as to extract maximum benefit for its food self-sufficiency. U.S. food aid programs are not only aimed at meeting humanitarian needs; they function more as tools for project financing than as tools for food security assistance and contribute to job creation and the success of U.S. agricultural policy (Poussart-Vanier, 2005)<sup>9</sup>. According to Alter, "if one gives, it is because one gains an advantage that could not be obtained without that decision" (2002, p. 273). The security crisis in the Sahel in general, and in Burkina Faso in particular, constitutes a factor limiting the success of the endogenous school feeding program, while at the same time increasing food dependence on the United States. This situation helps clarify the link between the U.S.'s desire to maintain its humanitarian engagement and its historical responsibility in NATO's military intervention in Libya in 2011, as this intervention had security repercussions for Sahelian countries. Indeed, Bley (2023) points out that it was after the death of Muammar Gaddafi that armed Tuareg groups dispersed across West African countries (p. 481), thereby fueling terrorism with their need for emergency aid. Given that the United States possesses the technological and logistical capacities to respond to these humanitarian needs, aid here becomes an instrument of *soft power*, leading to unequal relationships at the expense of a win-win partnership.

Drawing on the notion of restoration developed by Boateng (2021), namely the rehabilitation or repair of African humanitarian structures eroded by foreign intervention, as well as on Mignolo's (2011) concept of decoloniality, the construction of self-determination in the context of the endogenous school feeding program must be driven more strongly by local leadership. Consequently, beyond the nutritional and attractive role that school feeding plays for children, it should no longer be considered an optional auxiliary service, but rather a mandatory institution (Kaboré, 2023). This self-determination begins with the deconstruction of cultural hierarchy and the transfer of power, insofar as, in CRS's practices, the NGO is highly visible on the ground. A less visible presence, by leaving operations to national NGOs, and modifying advertising on food packaging and achievements, could reduce the dependency effect on the beneficiaries of assisted<sup>10</sup> feeding. In the *Moaga* culture, a proverb states: "*maan neere pa be ni ru moone yé*," meaning that when it comes to aid, the donor must respect the dignity of the receiver by not proclaiming their good deed.

In transitioning from assisted school feeding to endogenous school feeding, it is clear that, as an independent country, Burkina Faso should strive to take full responsibility for itself in order to achieve complete food decoloniality. The State must therefore provide the necessary means to ensure the success of this policy, as the ideal would be for locally initiated systems to be simultaneously self-financed and autonomous from external resources (Boateng, 2021). Although efforts in this direction have been made, they remain largely insufficient given the needs of school feeding program. For example, in 2024, the endogenous feeding accounted for only 5% of school feeding programs, covering on average one month of food needs. More than 586 schools (i.e. 5%) had school farms, and 1,634 (12%) had established gardens, representing a decline compared to 2018 figures. In terms of financing, the contribution of the Ministry of Education to strengthening school gardens and farms appears negligible relative to needs. In 2024, it amounted to 140 million CFA francs, i.e. 14% of projected needs estimated at 1 billion CFA francs.

9 The CRS Food Assistance Commodity Management Manual (2011) describes the implications of food aid in terms of geopolitical and economic interests and job creation generated by logistics planning, supply chains, and the purchase of local food.

10 Sankara Issouf, secondary education inspector and parent, interviewed on November 14, 2025, Kaya.

Since the implementation of the endogenous school feeding, several dysfunctions have been identified, including delays in supply and the delivery of spoiled food (Yé, 2024), which highlight governance challenges in ensuring the sustainability of the initiative. From the perspective of sustaining school farms and gardens, the government must integrate this aspect into the agropastoral and fisheries<sup>11</sup> offensive for food self-sufficiency, so that schools can benefit from the substantial resources allocated to it. In practice, this integration must address the following challenges: availability of drinking water, land availability, especially for displaced<sup>12</sup> families, and training of local actors, such as COGES, in equipment<sup>13</sup> maintenance. This integration aims to ensure the sustainability of school farms and vegetable farming, while incorporating livestock and fish farming. Within a holistic strategy, the prerequisites for the success of this policy are, first, the refoundation of the education system by orienting schools toward training citizens who embrace the development prospects of their communities (Ouattara, 2023, pp. 62–64). Second, the mobilization of own resources for socio-economic investments through the implementation of funding mechanisms for self-financing investments in the education sector. These mechanisms may operate through popular shareholding and the promotion of internal savings, following the model of Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC). This reform would lead to a moderation of aid, or even its gradual withdrawal from development policies. Finally, the success of this policy may be achieved through strengthened collaboration between the private sector and the State, via the establishment of special funds and support mechanisms for SMEs, access to credit (especially for young graduates from major professional schools), training and information for rural cooperatives, the reduction of administrative burdens and tax pressures, and a transition of the national economy toward the manufacturing sector.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to analyze U.S. food aid practices that enable beneficiary populations to free themselves from this type of aid and to meet their own needs over the period 2011–2024. Indeed, the pursuit of food self-sufficiency and food security has always ranked among the top priorities of successive governments since Burkina Faso's independence. This policy has been implemented in accordance with the provisions of the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, with contributions from international partners in both multilateral and bilateral frameworks. Consequently, partnerships with U.S. organizations, including CRS, have consistently served as a springboard for its success. One of the most illustrative aspects of this cooperation is food assistance, whose paradigms have undergone significant shifts since 2011. Beyond addressing crisis, food assistance provides capacity-building support able to strengthen the resilience of beneficiary populations and fostering autonomy across production and supply chains.

Advocating endogenous development means calling for a form of development that emerges from a synthesis of internal resources and, of course, external ones, in line with the thinking of Joseph Ki-Zerbo. However, what comes from outside is incorporated into the inside, not in its pure form, but through transformation or appropriation. In other words, what comes from outside must not prevail; it must be integrated into what is internal, which alone should henceforth predominate, by producing a kind of “externalized inside” rather than an “internalized outside” (Yonli, 2016). Development is described as endogenous when the mechanism regulating internal and external factors is controlled from inside, as exemplified by the development policy pursued by President Sankara. Conversely, when these factors are controlled from outside, development is considered exogenous.

11 The 2023–2025 agro-pastoral and fisheries offensive focuses on eight priority sectors, including rice, corn, potatoes, wheat, fish, and meat.

12 This situation was revealed during our interviews in the Centre-Nord region. In fact, this region ranks second after the Sahel (24.33%) in terms of hosting internally displaced people, accounting for 23.94% according to UNHCR figures from March 2023 (source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/104725>). This situation puts pressure on natural resources and limits access to arable land for internally displaced people.

13 Moyenga Martin, certified school teacher, Tiidin school, interviewed on October 20, 2024, Boulsa.

Overall, while food aid can sometimes have alienating effects, U.S. food aid practices in Burkina Faso have evolved in ways that position beneficiaries as key actors and support them in sustainably meeting their own food needs. The *Beoog Biiga* school feeding project, through its activities, demonstrates the crucial role of local procurement in strengthening the sustainability and resilience of food systems. It benefits both agricultural producers and students, and shows that achieving food self-sufficiency is possible when collective intelligence is mobilized within a framework of endogenous development. This shift in CRS's practices aligns squarely with the perspective of decolonizing food aid in Burkina Faso. It creates a system in which Burkinabè are not "secondary actors in their own lives, but rather the providers of the intellectual, organizational, and operational foundations for humanitarian response within their own territory" (Boateng, 2021). With this objective in mind, the NGO CRS must be prepared to assume secondary roles, just as local actors must lead the process in terms of policy, coordination, and financing, in order to ensure the success of the de-Westernization initiated by Burkina Faso.

However, it must be emphasized that household food security is affected by both structural and cyclical factors, the management of which requires more intensive interventions. These include, among others, weak storage infrastructure, limited water control, the ongoing degradation of natural resources, difficult access to land for displaced people, and the challenging return to stability. These constitute real constraints on the success of one aspect of endogenous development, namely, the promotion of "consuming locally."

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