

School Meals Can Improve Children's Health

[summary]

- School meals can help promote healthy lifestyles among children
- Ajinomoto Vietnam Co., Ltd ("Ajinomoto Vietnam")
deploys school meal project by means such as the software
- Next milestone in the school meal projects in Asian countries

It is now widely known that school meals can promote health among school-age children. In Western countries, people are fully aware of the importance of healthy food options for school children. In France, for example, where lunch is the biggest meal of the day, we can find schools take quality déjeuner (lunch) very seriously.

In Asia too, many schools provide lunches to their pupils. School meals are highly appreciated because they liberate guardians at home from the daily task of preparing lunches. In Vietnam, school meals are very popular because most parents work. However, school meals in Vietnam were considered not well-balanced when it came to nutrition. Also schools don't have nutritionists who set menus properly.

With this in mind, Ajinomoto Vietnam started a project to supply menus for schools where children were suffering from malnutrition brought about by a lack of personnel in nutrition field and knowledge of nutritional science.

[Ajinomoto Co., Inc.](#) ("[Ajinomoto Co.](#)") in Japan is the parent company of Ajinomoto Vietnam, with a long history in the food business. Ajinomoto Co. also has a good relationship with dietitians; while at the same time boasts vast experience in providing menu to hospitals and food services.

"A major change in school meals in Vietnam was required," says Hiroharu Motohashi, the current Deputy General Manager, Food Products Division at Ajinomoto Co. "Their school meals had shortcomings when it came to nutritional balance. There weren't enough micronutrients, while we found a considerable amount of carbohydrates. Lipids, carbohydrates and proteins in food must be balanced and properly proportioned, especially for children."

■ Children are enjoying the nutritious balanced lunch



Ajinomoto Co. invited the people in charge from Vietnam to Japan and introduced the Japanese school meal system, which dates back to the 1940s. That system is credited with improving the overall health of Japanese children after the war. One of the most educational aspects for the visiting Vietnamese was the management system for balanced nutrition.

Vietnamese authorities and Ajinomoto Vietnam initiated the school meal project in 2012. It was first rolled out in Ho Chi Minh City, the economic center of Vietnam. It is where some 213 elementary schools participated in this project. Ajinomoto Vietnam made a master plan for school meals with non-repeatable set menus for 40 days and gave suggestions to kitchen staff on how to minimize cooking time. In 2015, the project was successfully scaled up. Since its inception in 2012, other cities have joined the project, including: Da Nang (2013), Hai Phong (2014) and Hanoi (2015).

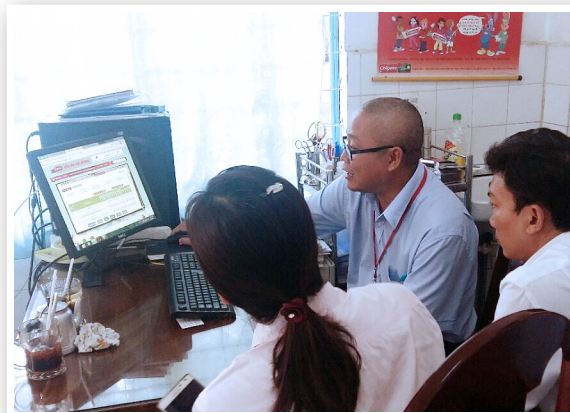
■ Children are learning about food nutrition at school



"It is now time to open a new chapter," says Motohashi. Motohashi is the former General Director of Ajinomoto Vietnam, and had played an important role.

"We made the software which school teachers could use to develop daily menus from their computers at schools. The kitchen staff can cook dishes accordingly."

■ School teachers choose daily menus through the software



There are 120 available set menus with over 360 non-repeatable dishes, all of which are diverse, delicious and nutritionally well balanced. Schools can develop their menus by choosing the set menus or by combining available dishes to create new set menus. It works as a calculator with which you can check the ratio of protein, lipid, carbohydrates along with calories and salt. It tells you appropriate amount of ingredients according to the number of students.

No fewer than 2,900 schools throughout Vietnam joined in the program. "I met some of the people in charge who wanted to use the software for their own home cooking. That was when we opened the door to a new era."

This episode may provide Ajinomoto Vietnam many opportunities, such as to establish a website for home cooking in which users can check every day menus. Furthermore, "You can calculate nutritional balance and create specific recipes for your family," claims Motohashi, who goes on to say that in the near future users will be able to order products through the website with just one click.

"I think this concept could be one of the good practices when Asian countries tackle the improvement of the nutritional status of school meals. Ajinomoto Co., (Thailand) Ltd. has started school meal improvements with governments using different schemes, and other Asian affiliates are beginning to consider for school meal improvement, too. It may be possible to expand the program still further, to places such as the U.S. and Europe," Motohashi concluded.

More official photos of the school meal project can be downloaded from the URL below;
URL: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/jm0i97jfqrf7xon/AAC70dJGXPb5U2Ef0ZLID3jea?dl=0>

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Eat Well, Live Well.



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