

THE FREE NUTRITIOUS MEAL PROGRAM (MBG) AS A NUTRITION POLICY AND MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE: A PUBLIC VALUE- BASED GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR SCHOOL FOOD SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

The Free Nutritious Meal Program, locally known as *Makan Bergizi Gratis* (MBG), is one of Indonesia's national priority policies aimed at improving child nutrition, strengthening human capital, reducing family burdens, and stimulating local economic activity through food supply chains. However, the implementation of this large-scale program should not be understood merely as the provision of nutritious meals, but also as a public service management challenge. This article aims to formulate a public value-based governance model for school food services in the MBG program by emphasizing the integration of nutrition, food preparation, and management. This study employs a conceptual qualitative approach through a narrative literature review, policy document analysis, credible news synthesis, and public service management model analysis. The findings indicate that MBG has strategic value as a human capital investment, a driver of local economic activity, an instrument for absorbing local food products from farmers, livestock producers, fishers, cooperatives, and MSMEs, and a form of state presence in providing healthy food for school children. Nevertheless, food poisoning cases, kitchen capacity limitations, distribution delays, limited hygiene certification, and financial accountability challenges show that the success of MBG depends heavily on governance quality. This article proposes an integrative model based on seven pillars: nutrition–food preparation–management integration, collaborative service management, food safety and risk governance, financial accountability, sustainable local supply chains, local food absorption, and nutrition education supported by digital monitoring. The contribution of this article lies in interpreting MBG not merely as a nutrition program, but as a public service system that requires management capacity to ensure safe, standardized, timely, accountable, locally sourced, and socially impactful school meals.

Keywords: financial accountability, food safety, Free Nutritious Meal Program, public service management, public value

1. INTRODUCTION

The Free Nutritious Meal Program, locally known as *Makan Bergizi Gratis* (MBG), is one of Indonesia's national priority programs that has attracted broad public attention. The program is designed to provide nutritious meals for school children, toddlers, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers as part of national efforts to strengthen human capital. The government positions MBG as a future-oriented investment because the program is directly related to child health, learning quality, nutrition improvement, and the development of a productive generation. Globally, school meal programs have become important policy instruments. The World Food Programme reported that at least 466 million children benefit from school meal programs worldwide, indicating that school feeding is increasingly recognized as an instrument of social protection, education, food security, and human development (World Food Programme, 2024).

Socially, MBG can be understood as a form of state presence in responding to the needs of modern families. In daily life, not all parents have sufficient time and capacity to prepare healthy meals for their children every morning. Many families eventually provide pocket money as a practical solution. However, pocket money does not always guarantee that children consume healthy food. Children may buy foods that are too oily, too sweet, high in flavor enhancers, contain artificial coloring, or are served with unsafe water quality. Therefore, the main issue of MBG is not merely the amount of money allocated per meal, but the certainty that children receive food that is healthy, nutritious, safe, and standardized.

In this context, MBG has strong public value. The program can reduce children's dependence on uncontrolled snacks, support healthy eating habits, and ease the burden of families, especially those with busy morning routines. The National Nutrition Agency reported that, as of August 2025, 5,235 Nutrition Fulfillment Service Units (*Satuan Pelayanan Pemenuhan Gizi* or SPPG) had operated across 38 provinces, 502 districts/cities, and 4,770 subdistricts, reaching 15 million beneficiaries and targeting 82.9 million beneficiaries by the end of 2025 (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025). The Ministry of Finance also stated that the MBG target was directed toward 82.9 million beneficiaries supported by 32,000 SPPG across Indonesia (Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2025).

In addition to its social and nutritional value, MBG also has significant economic value. The National Nutrition Agency stated that one SPPG may require substantial daily food supplies, including rice, eggs, chicken, vegetables, fruit, and milk, with supplies directed from local MSMEs and food actors (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025). This means that MBG is not only a school feeding program, but also a potential instrument for absorbing local food products. In the agricultural, livestock, and fisheries sectors, the program may create routine demand for rice, vegetables, fruit, eggs, chicken, fish, milk, tofu, tempeh, and other food commodities. Thus, MBG can also be understood as a local food demand management instrument that may help reduce the risk of unsold harvests, price declines during harvest seasons, and market uncertainty for farmers, livestock producers, fishers, cooperatives, and food-based MSMEs.

However, the implementation of MBG cannot be viewed only from its good intentions and large-scale beneficiary targets. The program faces serious field challenges, especially related to

kitchen capacity, food safety standards, distribution, supervision, hygiene certification, and risk governance. Reuters reported that Indonesia's food and drug agency confirmed 9,089 food poisoning cases across 103 incidents between January and September 2025 linked to the school meal program, with problems related to improper food storage, distribution delays, and inadequate food safety knowledge. AP News also reported public pressure to suspend the program after more than 5,000 school children fell ill, with several cases occurring in West Java, including Bandung and Sukabumi.

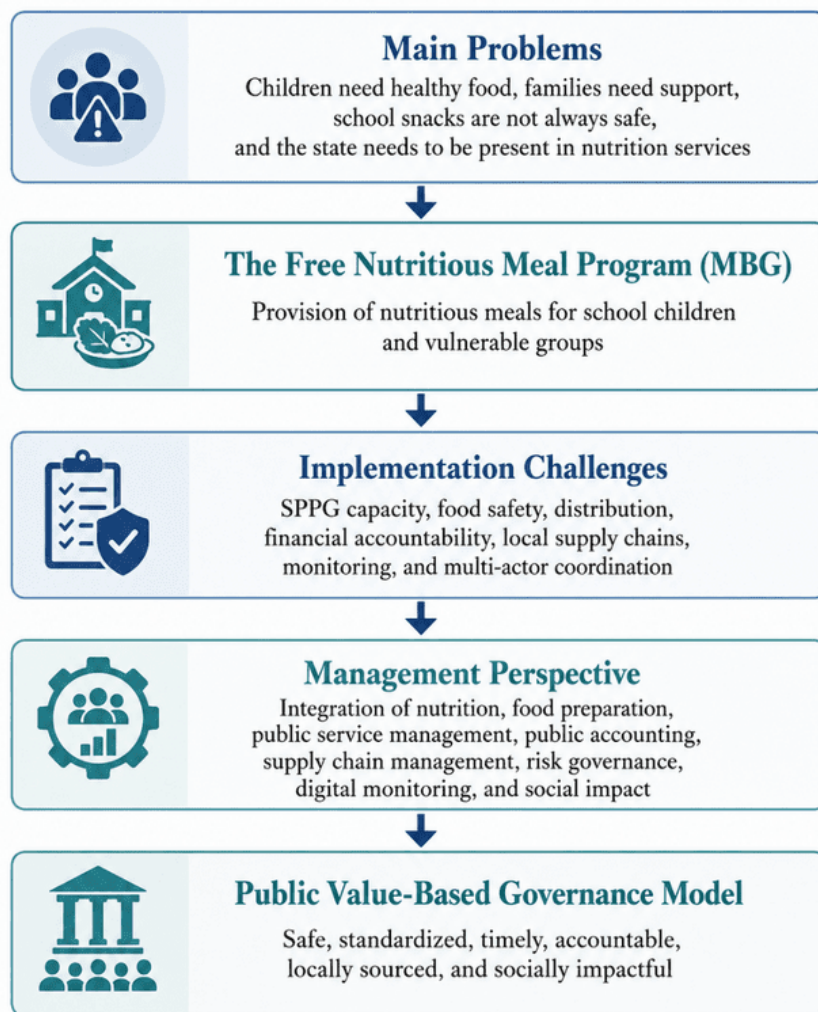
This is the central issue addressed in this article. Food spoilage or poisoning cases do not automatically indicate that the idea of MBG is wrong. Rather, they show that a good nutrition program can fail when it is not supported by a strong management system. Nutrition experts are needed to ensure nutrient adequacy; food preparation specialists are needed to ensure hygienic and acceptable meal processing; but management is needed to ensure that the entire service system is planned, organized, implemented, controlled, and accountable. In other words, MBG is a nutrition program, but its success is a management issue.

The novelty of this article lies in interpreting MBG as a public value-based school food service system that requires the integration of nutrition, food preparation, and management. Unlike studies that only discuss MBG from the perspective of nutrition, social policy, food poisoning cases, or budgetary issues, this article proposes a governance model that integrates collaborative service management, food safety, financial accountability, local supply chains, nutrition education, digital monitoring, and social impact.

The research question of this article is: How can the Free Nutritious Meal Program be formulated as a public value-based governance model for school food services that are safe, standardized, accountable, locally sourced, and socially impactful?

The objective of this article is to formulate a conceptual governance model for MBG from a management perspective so that the program is not only understood as meal provision, but also as a public service system requiring standard operating procedures, quality control, risk management, budget accountability, supply chain management, digital monitoring, and social impact evaluation.

Figure 1. Research Framework



Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 School Feeding Programs as Human Capital Investment

School feeding programs are globally recognized as public policies related to health, education, social protection, and human development. The World Food Programme emphasizes that school meals have become mainstream policy instruments used by many governments to support education access, food security, and child welfare. At the global level, at least 466 million children benefit from school meal programs (World Food Programme, 2024). In the Indonesian context, MBG can be positioned within the framework of human capital investment because it targets school children and vulnerable groups directly related to the quality of future generations.

Recent academic studies also show that school feeding programs can influence children's health, well-being, and education, although their impact depends on program design, food quality, targeting, and implementation context (Locke et al., 2025). Therefore, school feeding programs should not be evaluated only by the number of meals distributed, but also by

governance quality, food safety, student acceptance, and their contribution to healthy eating behavior.

2.2 Public Value in School Food Services

The concept of public value emphasizes that policy success should not be measured only by administrative outputs, but also by the real benefits experienced by society. In the MBG program, public value may emerge through improved access to nutritious meals, reduced family burdens, healthier eating habits, stronger public trust, and local economic development through food supply chains.

However, public value may turn into public risk if services are unsafe, non-transparent, or poorly managed. Food that is intended to improve nutrition may become a health threat if production, storage, and distribution processes are not properly controlled. Therefore, the public value of MBG must be protected through strong governance, not merely through beneficiary targets.

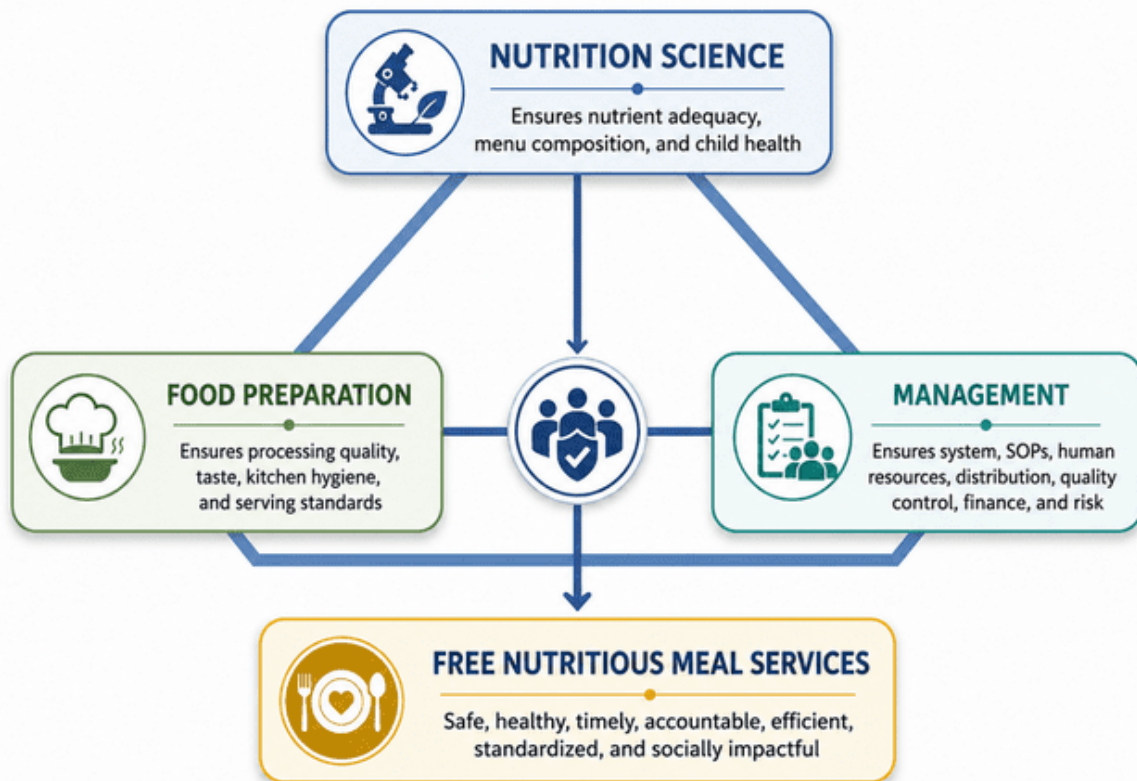
From a public management perspective, large-scale school food services require a balance between social value and managerial control. Social value refers to the benefits received by children, families, schools, and local economies. Managerial control refers to how services are designed, implemented, supervised, reported, and evaluated. Without managerial control, the social value of MBG may weaken due to food safety risks, budget inefficiency, or declining public trust.

2.3 Integration of Nutrition, Food Preparation, and Management

The success of MBG requires the integration of three main competencies. First, nutrition science is needed to ensure that menus meet children's nutritional needs according to age, activity, and health conditions. Second, food preparation competence is needed to ensure that food is processed hygienically, tastes acceptable, is safe to consume, and meets serving standards. Third, management is needed to ensure that the entire service process operates systematically, from menu planning and procurement to human resource organization, food production, distribution, quality control, cost recording, reporting, and evaluation.

Thus, SPPG should not be understood merely as a production kitchen. It should be positioned as a public service unit requiring operations management, human resource management, financial management, supply chain management, risk management, and quality management. Without strong governance, a program with good intentions may still fail at the implementation level.

Figure 2. Competency Triangle of the MBG Program



Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

2.4 Food Safety and Risk Governance

Food safety is a critical point in large-scale school feeding programs. A program that distributes millions of meals requires strict control from raw material receipt, storage, processing, packaging, and distribution to meal consumption. In the MBG case, food safety has emerged as one of the most serious public concerns. Reuters reported that some food poisoning problems were associated with improper food storage, distribution delays, and inadequate food safety knowledge (Reuters, 2025).

From a management perspective, food poisoning cases should not be viewed merely as isolated incidents. They should be understood as signals of system weaknesses, such as weak kitchen SOPs, insufficient staff training, poor food temperature management, distribution delays, inadequate raw material documentation, weak hygiene audits, or ineffective emergency response mechanisms. Since MBG beneficiaries include children and vulnerable groups, risk tolerance must be very low.

2.5 Financial Accountability and Local Supply Chains

MBG is a program with significant fiscal consequences. The Ministry of Finance explains that MBG is part of the government's priority agenda to address stunting, improve youth health, support national food security, and improve children's nutrition through school meals (Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2025). The scale of this program requires strong

financial accountability, including transparency in meal cost, procurement, kitchen operations, partner payments, and audits.

MBG also has strong potential to stimulate local economies. The National Nutrition Agency indicates that each SPPG requires substantial daily supplies such as rice, eggs, chicken, vegetables, fruit, and milk, with local MSMEs and food suppliers expected to be involved (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025). If supply chains are properly designed, MBG can involve farmers, livestock producers, fishers, cooperatives, food MSMEs, local vendors, and logistics actors. However, this potential will only be realized if procurement is transparent, fair, and quality-based. Without proper governance, supply chains may create vendor dominance, unequal access, conflicts of interest, and declining food quality.

2.6 Collaborative Service Management

MBG cannot be managed by a single actor. The program involves the central government, the National Nutrition Agency, local governments, schools, SPPG, food suppliers, nutrition personnel, food preparation personnel, logistics workers, parents, and communities. In this context, collaborative governance should not be understood merely as administrative cooperation. Collaboration must include role distribution, service standards, coordination mechanisms, reporting systems, and risk response procedures.

The central government needs to formulate standards and supervision mechanisms; local governments need to ensure field readiness; schools need to act as receiving and initial monitoring points; SPPG are responsible for production and distribution; and the community plays a role in providing feedback and monitoring service quality. Thus, collaborative service management is essential to ensure that MBG becomes a reliable public service system.

2.7 Research Gap and Novelty Position

Studies on MBG have begun to develop from various perspectives, including nutrition policy, food safety, financing, and implementation criticism. However, studies that integratively position MBG as a public value-based school food service system still need to be strengthened. Many discussions tend to address nutrition, food poisoning risks, or budget burdens separately. This article offers a different position by formulating MBG as a public service management model that integrates nutrition, food preparation, management, financial accountability, local supply chains, food safety, digital monitoring, and social impact.

Therefore, the novelty of this article does not lie in claiming that MBG has never been discussed. Instead, the novelty lies in its multidisciplinary integration that positions MBG as a public service management challenge. This article argues that a national-scale nutrition program can generate public value only when it is managed through a strong, measurable, transparent, and adaptive governance system.

Table 1. Literature Mapping and Article Position

Research Area	Common Focus in Literature	Research Gap	Position of This Article
School feeding programs	Nutrition, education, social protection	Not always connected to service management	Positions MBG as a school food service system

Research Area	Common Focus in Literature	Research Gap	Position of This Article
Food safety	Hygiene, poisoning risk, food quality	Often treated as a technical issue	Positions food safety as public service risk governance
Financial accountability	Budget, cost, efficiency	Not always linked to service quality	Connects cost with service outputs and outcomes
Local supply chains	Food supply, MSMEs, farmers	Risks of vendor dominance and unequal supplier access	Positions MBG as a local food absorption instrument
Service management	SOPs, coordination, supervision	Limited integrative models of nutrition–food preparation–management	Offers a public value-based governance model
Digital monitoring	Data, dashboard, reporting	Not yet optimized as a risk detection tool	Positions digital monitoring as a service control instrument

Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

3. METHODS

This study employs a conceptual qualitative approach using a narrative literature review, policy document analysis, credible news synthesis, and public service management model analysis. This approach was selected because the purpose of the article is not to test statistical relationships among variables, but to formulate a governance model for the MBG program as a public value-based school food service system.

The data sources in this study consist of three categories. First, official government and international sources, including the National Nutrition Agency, the Ministry of Finance, and the World Food Programme. Second, credible news sources reporting field developments, including Reuters, AP News, and The Guardian. Third, academic literature and scientific reports discussing school feeding programs, food safety, risk management, collaborative governance, and public service governance.

The analysis was conducted through four stages. First, the study identified the strategic value of MBG from government and societal perspectives. Second, it mapped implementation problems, public criticism, and field risks. Third, the issues were categorized into management dimensions: service, nutrition, food preparation, finance, supply chain, food safety, digital monitoring, education, and social impact. Fourth, the study synthesized a public value-based governance model for school food services.

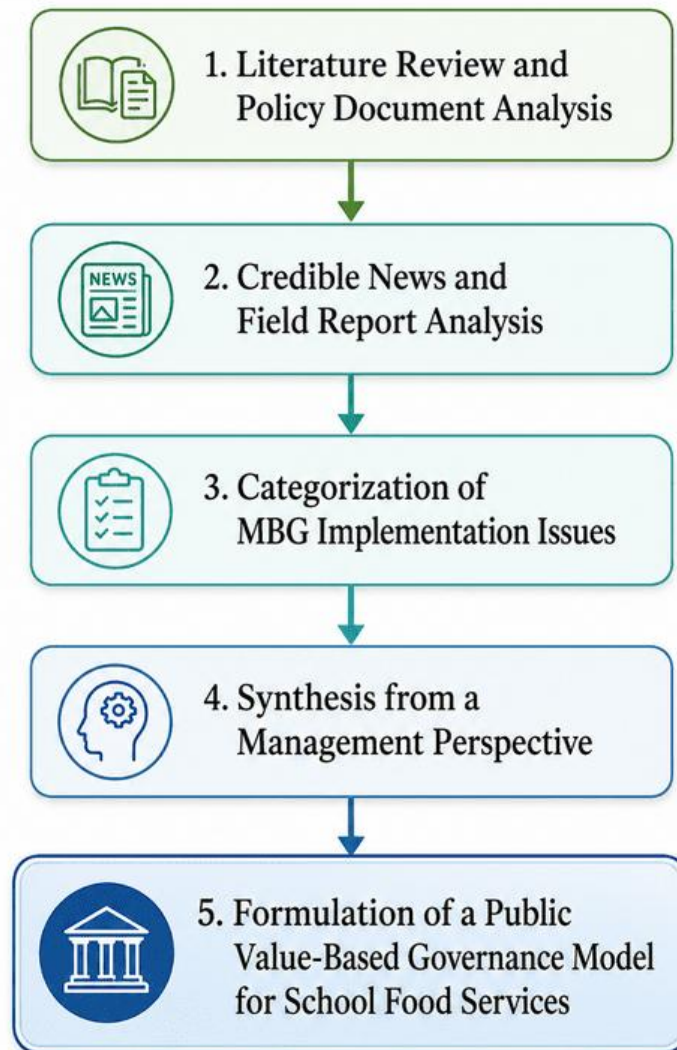
Table 2. Research Analysis Stages

Stage	Analytical Activity	Expected Output
Issue identification	Reviewing the strategic value of MBG and implementation problems	Program urgency map
Literature and document review	Reviewing official sources, global reports, credible news, and academic articles	Conceptual and empirical foundation
Issue categorization	Grouping issues into nutrition, food preparation, management, finance, food safety, technology, and social dimensions	Multidisciplinary analytical framework

Stage	Analytical Activity	Expected Output
Model synthesis	Formulating a public value-based governance model for school food services	Conceptual MBG model

Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

Figure 3. Conceptual Research Method Flow



Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 MBG as a Nutrition Program with Public Value

MBG has public value because it responds to real problems faced by families and school children. For many families, especially parents with busy morning activities, preparing healthy meals every day is not easy. Providing pocket money often becomes a practical solution, but it does not guarantee healthy food consumption because school snacks are not always controlled.

In this context, MBG can become a state instrument to provide healthier and more reliable food access. The program does not merely replace pocket money, but also provides a food service standard that is expected to be safer, more nutritious, and better directed. Therefore, the success of MBG should not be measured only by the number of meals distributed, but also by food quality, food safety, delivery timeliness, student acceptance, and parental trust.

4.2 Positive Value of MBG: Nutrition, Family Support, and Local Economy

From a public policy perspective, MBG has several positive values. First, the program can improve children's access to nutritious meals. Second, it can reduce the burden on families that struggle to prepare healthy meals every morning. Third, it can stimulate local economic activity through food demand. Fourth, it can create employment opportunities within SPPG units and supporting supply chains.

The National Nutrition Agency reported that MBG had reached 15 million beneficiaries as of August 2025 and targeted 82.9 million beneficiaries by the end of 2025 (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025). This indicates that, from a policy perspective, MBG is oriented toward human development, social protection, and local economic strengthening.

4.3 MBG as an Instrument for Local Food Absorption

In addition to its nutritional and social benefits, MBG has important economic value because it can serve as an instrument for absorbing local food products. At the operational level, each SPPG requires large and recurring food supplies, such as rice, eggs, chicken, fish, meat, tofu, tempeh, vegetables, fruit, and milk. This consistent daily demand creates a relatively stable market for farmers, livestock producers, fishers, cooperatives, food MSMEs, and local suppliers.

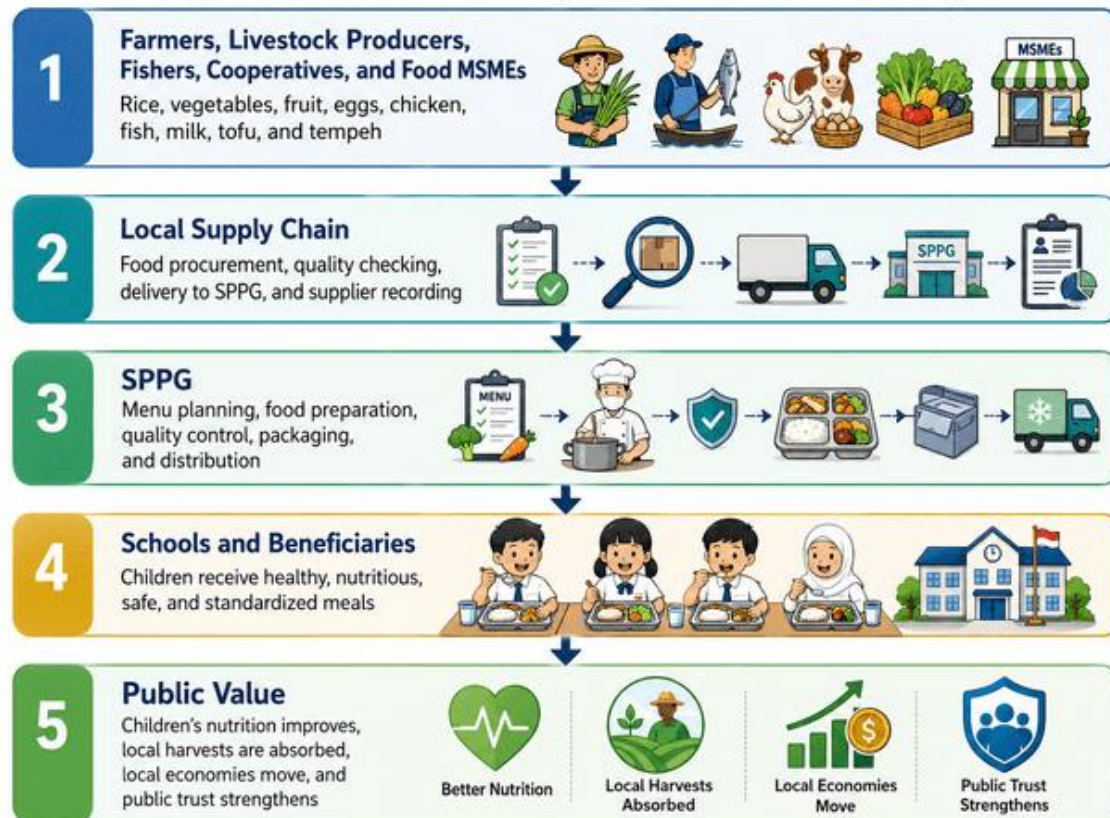
The National Nutrition Agency reported that one SPPG may require around 200 kilograms of rice, 3,000 eggs, 350 chickens, 300 kilograms of vegetables, 350 kilograms of fruit, and 450 liters of milk per day, with supply directed from local MSMEs (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025). This indicates that MBG should not only be understood as a food consumption program for children, but also as a local food demand management instrument.

In agriculture, one classical problem faced by farmers is market uncertainty. During harvest seasons, prices of commodities such as vegetables and fruit may decline because supply is abundant while market absorption is limited. MBG has the potential to function as a balancing mechanism because it creates routine demand for fresh food commodities. Thus, MBG may help reduce the risk of unsold harvests and strengthen local food market stability.

This strategic value becomes more important because MBG requires menu variation, including carbohydrates, animal protein, plant-based protein, vegetables, fruit, and other nutritional sources. This means that the program can open absorption space for various food sectors, including rice farmers, vegetable farmers, fruit farmers, poultry farmers, fishers, aquaculture actors, tofu-tempeh producers, food cooperatives, and food-processing MSMEs. If properly managed, MBG can strengthen the linkage between schools, SPPG kitchens, and local food economies.

However, this economic potential will not occur automatically. To truly support farmers and local food actors, MBG requires transparent, scheduled, and fair supply chain governance. The government and SPPG managers need to ensure that food procurement is not dominated by large vendors, but also provides fair access to local suppliers that meet quality, food safety, supply capacity, and reasonable pricing standards.

Figure 4. Local Food Absorption Flow in the MBG Program



Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

4.4 Criticism of MBG: Not Rejecting the Program, but Demanding Stronger Management

Criticism of MBG does not always mean rejecting the program. Some criticism emerges because the public considers the objective of the program good, but its implementation must be safer and more orderly. The most serious issue is food safety. Reuters reported that more than 9,000 children suffered food poisoning linked to the school meal program in 2025, with problems including improper storage, distribution delays, and inadequate food safety knowledge (Reuters, 2025). AP News also reported that the government faced calls to evaluate or temporarily suspend the program after more than 5,000 students fell ill, particularly in West Java (AP News, 2025).

Managerially, these facts show that the issue of MBG is not merely a menu problem, but a system problem. Food may be nutritious on paper, but unsafe in practice if raw materials, temperature, production time, distribution time, sanitation, human resources, and supervision are not properly managed.

4.5 Kitchen Capacity, Distribution, and Expansion Speed

MBG implementation also faces kitchen capacity challenges. Reuters reported that Indonesia's free meal scheme faced delays due to a lack of kitchens, with approximately 11,000 kitchens serving 35.4 million beneficiaries in October 2025, while the end-year target was projected to be adjusted from around 83 million to about 70 million beneficiaries (Reuters, 2025). This indicates that the success of MBG is not only about budget allocation, but also about service infrastructure readiness.

From an operations management perspective, each SPPG must have production capacity limits, distribution radius limits, cooking time standards, delivery time standards, quality control systems, and emergency procedures. If one kitchen is forced to serve too many beneficiaries without adequate systems, the risks of delays, quality decline, and contamination increase.

4.6 SPPG as a Public Service Management Unit

SPPG should not be understood merely as a kitchen. It is a public service unit that manages complex processes, including menu planning, food purchasing, raw material inspection, food processing, packaging, distribution, reporting, complaints, and evaluation. Therefore, SPPG requires a clear organizational structure and cross-disciplinary competencies.

Nutrition experts determine menu composition and nutritional adequacy. Food preparation personnel ensure that food is safe, hygienic, and acceptable to children. Management ensures that all processes run as a system. In simple terms, nutrition determines what children should eat, food preparation determines how meals should be processed, and management determines how the service operates safely, on time, efficiently, and accountably.

4.7 Financial Accountability and Cost Transparency

The large budget scale of MBG makes financial accountability essential. MBG accountability must answer several basic questions: how much is the food cost per portion, how much is the kitchen operational cost, how much is the distribution cost, how are partners paid, how is auditing conducted, and how can the public know that the budget truly produces safe and nutritious meals?

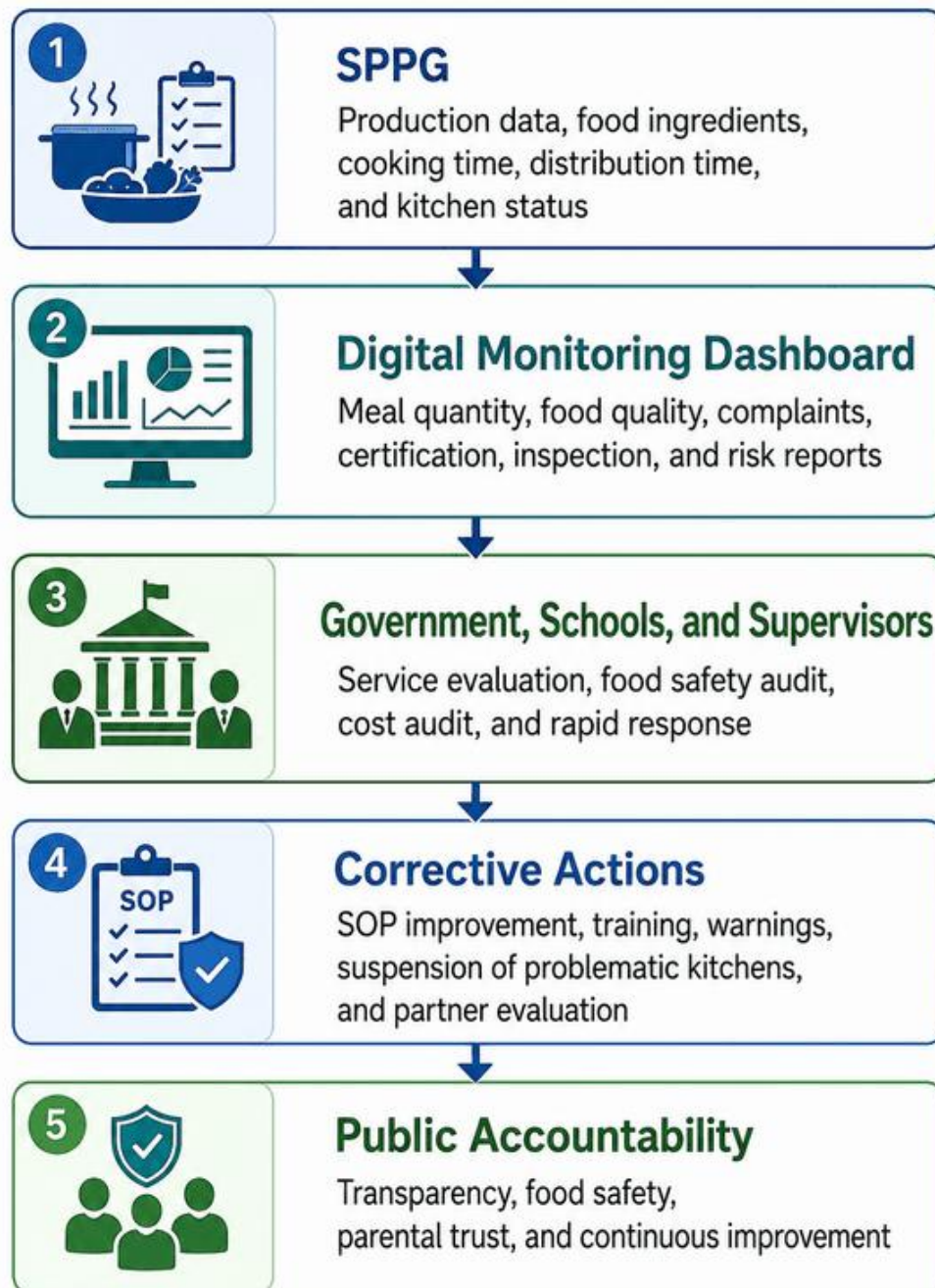
In public financial management, accountability should not only take the form of budget realization reports. It must also explain the relationship between cost, service quality, food safety, and social impact. Therefore, MBG evaluation should connect budget input with service output and social outcomes.

4.8 Digital Monitoring as a Service Control Instrument

MBG requires a digital monitoring system because the program scale is large and involves many actors. Manual monitoring is insufficient because the service process includes procurement, food production, packaging, distribution, school reception, parental complaints, and cost reporting. A digital dashboard can be used to record meal quantities, production time, distribution time, kitchen status, inspection results, school complaints, and food safety incidents.

From a management perspective, technology is not merely an administrative tool, but also a control instrument. Digital systems can strengthen transparency, accelerate response, and help the government identify high-risk SPPG. For example, SPPG that frequently delay delivery, receive repeated complaints, or lack hygiene certification can be classified as high-risk units. Thus, digital monitoring becomes part of risk governance and service accountability.

Figure 5. Digital Monitoring Flow of MBG



Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

4.9 Objective Mapping: Positive Values and Critical Issues

Table 3. Objective Mapping of Positive Values and Critical Issues in MBG

Aspect	Positive Value	Critical Issue
Program objective	Improves child nutrition and strengthens human capital	Good objectives are not enough if implementation is unsafe
Family support	Helps parents who struggle to prepare healthy meals every morning	Meals must be truly safe to maintain parental trust
School children	Reduces dependence on unhealthy snacks	Children may experience trauma if food poisoning occurs
Local economy	Absorbs vegetables, fruit, rice, eggs, fish, chicken, milk, tofu, tempeh, and local food products; helps farmers, livestock producers, fishers, cooperatives, MSMEs, and logistics actors obtain more stable markets	Risk of vendor dominance, non-transparent procurement, unequal supplier access, and declining food quality if not supervised
Finance	Large budget as social investment	Requires audit of meal cost, procurement, and realization
SPPG	Creates jobs and new service units	Requires SOPs, certification, supervision, and professional management
Government	Demonstrates state presence in basic services	Public trust may decline if incidents recur
Management	Program can succeed if the system is strong	Program may fail if it only pursues quantity

Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

This mapping shows that the MBG debate should not be simplified into pro- or anti-program positions. A more objective position is that MBG is important, but it must be managed with much stronger service governance standards.

4.10 Evaluation Indicators for MBG Governance

To evaluate MBG more measurably, indicators should not focus only on the number of beneficiaries. They must also include service quality, food safety, financial accountability, local food absorption, and social impact. These indicators are important so that program success is assessed not only by how many meals are delivered, but also by how safe, high-quality, and beneficial the service is for beneficiaries.

Table 4. Evaluation Indicators for MBG Governance

Dimension	Evaluation Indicator	Purpose
Nutrition	Menu suitability with children's needs	Ensures nutritional quality
Food preparation	Processing hygiene and meal feasibility	Ensures meals are safe to consume
Operational management	Production timeliness, distribution accuracy, and SPPG capacity	Ensures timely service
Financial accountability	Meal cost transparency and procurement audit	Ensures efficient fund use

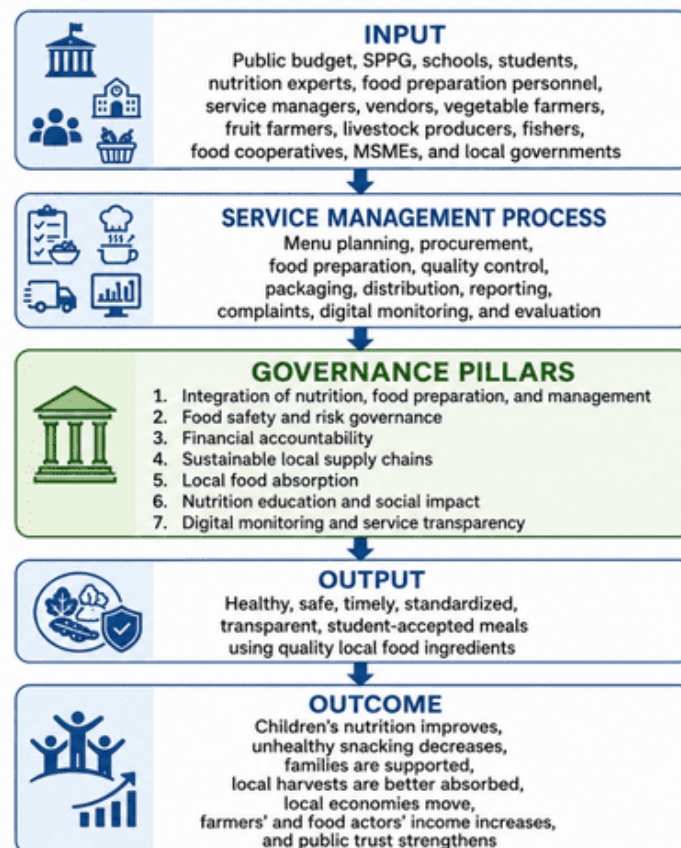
Dimension	Evaluation Indicator	Purpose
Supply chain	Ingredient quality, local suppliers, and supply stability	Stimulates local economy
Local food absorption	Proportion of ingredients from local farmers, livestock producers, fishers, cooperatives, and MSMEs	Reduces the risk of unsold harvests and strengthens regional economies
Risk governance	Certification, food audits, and incident response	Prevents food poisoning cases
Digital monitoring	Dashboard, complaints, and real-time reporting	Strengthens supervision and transparency
Social impact	Parental satisfaction, student acceptance, and public trust	Measures program public value

Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

4.11 Public Value-Based Governance Model for School Food Services

Based on the analysis above, this article proposes a public value-based governance model for school food services. The model positions MBG as a system that should generate nutritional value, service value, economic value, educational value, and public trust.

Figure 6. Public Value-Based Governance Model for School Food Services



Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

Table 5. Pillars of the MBG Governance Model

Pillar	Focus	Success Indicator
Integration of nutrition, food preparation, and management	Synergy of nutrition, processing, and service systems	Nutritious menu, feasible meals, functioning SOPs
Food safety	Hygiene, temperature, storage, and distribution	Kitchen certification, food audits, zero food poisoning
Financial accountability	Meal cost, procurement, reporting	Open cost reports, audits, efficiency
Local supply chains	Farmers, MSMEs, cooperatives, and local vendors	Local ingredients absorbed and quality remains stable
Local food absorption	Vegetables, fruit, rice, eggs, chicken, fish, milk, tofu, tempeh, and other local commodities	Harvest absorption increases and price decline risk decreases
Education and social impact	Nutrition literacy, healthy eating behavior, and trust	Children develop healthy eating habits and parents trust the program
Digital monitoring	Service dashboards, reporting, complaints, and risk data	Fast response, transparency, and early problem detection

Source: Author's elaboration, 2026.

5. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

The Free Nutritious Meal Program is a nutrition policy with strong public value because it can help children access healthy meals, reduce dependence on uncontrolled snacks, ease family burdens, absorb local food products, stimulate regional economies, and strengthen state presence in basic services. MBG does not only feed children; it can also provide a routine market for farmers, livestock producers, fishers, cooperatives, and local food MSMEs. However, the success of MBG is not determined only by good intentions or budget size, but also by the quality of service management, including menu planning, procurement, food preparation, hygiene, distribution, supervision, reporting, digital monitoring, and social impact evaluation. This article emphasizes that MBG requires the integration of nutrition, food preparation, and management. Nutrition experts ensure nutrient adequacy, food preparation personnel ensure meal processing quality, and management ensures that the system operates safely, timely, efficiently, accountably, and sustainably. The limitation of this article lies in its conceptual nature because it has not yet empirically tested the proposed governance model through field data. Future research should conduct surveys with parents, students, schools, SPPG managers, suppliers, and local governments; evaluate kitchen readiness and food safety compliance; measure local food absorption; analyze meal cost transparency; and test the effectiveness of digital monitoring systems. Further research may also develop quantitative indicators to assess whether MBG truly generates nutritional, economic, social, and public trust outcomes.

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