



Nourishing the Nation One Tray at a Time

Farm to School Initiatives in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization



NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK
COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION
SCHOOL FOOD **FOCUS**

“My job is to listen to the president, who is the ultimate vision maker...The vision is, he wants more nutritious food in schools. In a perfect world, everything that was sold, everything that was purchased and consumed, would be local so the economy would receive the benefit of that. One thing we can do is work on strategies to make that happen. It can be grant programs, loan programs, it can be technical assistance.”

*Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack
Washington Post 2.11.09*



Restore the Right of All Children to Access Healthy Food in School

School meals are a vital part of our responsibility to ensure the health and wellbeing of future generations. Improving the quality of school meals, and making them accessible to all children, is essential to our nation's future. More than 30 million children eat school food five days a week, 180 days a year. Over the past 60+ years, school meals have helped our nation make impressive strides toward improving childhood nutrition and reducing childhood hunger. Yet in recent years, school meals are confronting new challenges. School food services are fighting an uphill battle to provide kids with healthy food. Soaring food and energy costs, the lure of fast food outside the school campus, financial pressures caused by tight state budgets and diminished tax revenues all stand in the way of food services being able to provide healthy and delicious meals to schoolchildren.

School meals are an important way to turn around our nation's burgeoning obesity epidemic. Consider the following:

- »» Obesity rates among children have doubled in the last 10 years and tripled for adolescents.
- »» 27 percent of U.S. children are overweight.
- »» 1 in 3 children born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes—make that 1 in 2 if the child is black or Hispanic.
- »» For the first time in 200 years, today's children are likely to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

Like school food services, today's family farmer is facing numerous challenges to make a living off the land. The farmer's share of every food dollar has dropped to 19 cents from 41 cents in 1950. As a result, many farmers have a hard time just breaking even. Three hundred thirty farm operators leave the farm every week, and the average age of farmers nationally is 57 years. The U.S., with only 2.2 million farmers, now has more prisoners than farmers.

There is a solution that can help turn around both of these trends: farm to school. School meals form a potentially lucrative market, estimated at more than \$10 billion per year. Farmers who sell to schools can augment their income and stay on the land. Yet today's family farmer doesn't have very good access to this market.

Farm to school programs ensure that our children eat the highest-quality food available. These programs deliver food that not only nourishes children's bodies immediately, but also knowledge that enhances their educational experience and cultivates long-term healthy eating habits. They are a win-win for kids, farmers, communities, educators, parents, and the environment.

Thanks to the efforts of social entrepreneurs, farm to school programs have blossomed on their own in thousands of schools across the country. Think about what they could do with active support from USDA.



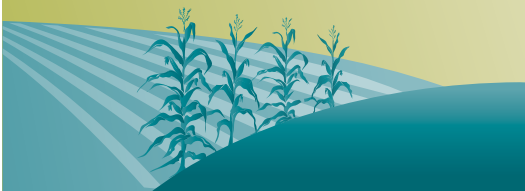
WHAT IS FARM TO SCHOOL?

»» Nourishing kids and community

In 40 states, students in over 2,000 school districts are eating farm-fresh food for school lunch or breakfast. Farm to school enables every child to have access to nutritious food while simultaneously benefiting the community and local farmer by providing a consistent, reliable market. In addition to supplying nourishing, locally grown food in the cafeteria or classrooms, farm to school programs often also offer nutrition and agriculture education through taste tests, school gardens, composting programs, and farm tours. Such experiences help children understand where their food comes from and how their food choices affect their bodies, the environment, and their communities at large.

Both the food itself and the experiential education surrounding it are equally essential to the success of farm to school programs in changing eating habits for the better. When schools tout the advantages of eating produce but don't offer it in meals, their students are being taught one thing but shown another. Schools need to give students a consistent message, reinforced through hands-on experiences such as growing food in a school garden, visiting a farmers' market, tasting new products, and developing cooking skills that will serve them their whole lives. These linkages give students vivid and lasting impressions of the delights of growing and eating fresh-picked produce, and help them understand where food comes from and how it is grown—knowledge that's been shown to drive better dietary choices.

If school food can improve the health of kids, develop new marketing opportunities for farmers, and support the local economy, it's a win-win for everyone.



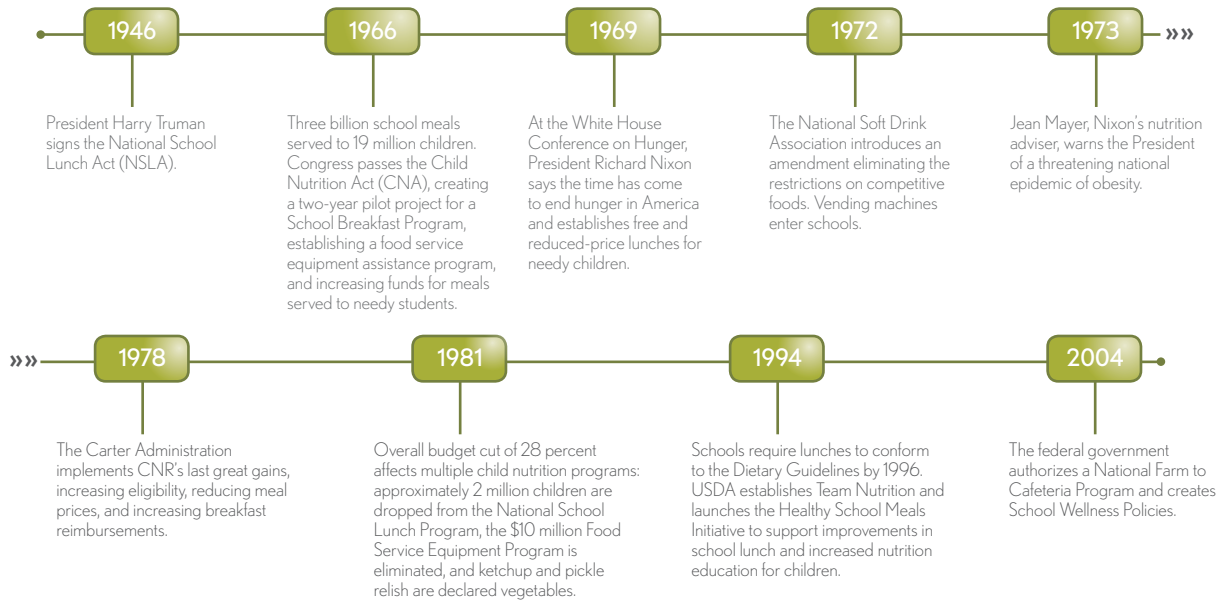
The Child Nutrition Act

Every four or five years, an opportunity arises for all concerned with the health of our nation's children to evaluate, defend, and improve federal Child Nutrition programs. These programs were born in the post-World War II era with the goal of improving national security through improving the nutritional status of future soldiers. They were expanded in the 1960s and 1970s as part of civil rights struggles to reduce hunger and poverty. Now, in 2009, with our nation's health security and the survival of family farming at risk, it's the perfect opportunity to revamp Child Nutrition programs to enable more schools—and more children—to benefit from the healthy meals and educational opportunities that farm to school programs can provide. The current Child Nutrition Act expires in September 2009, and Congress is moving quickly to enact the next version.

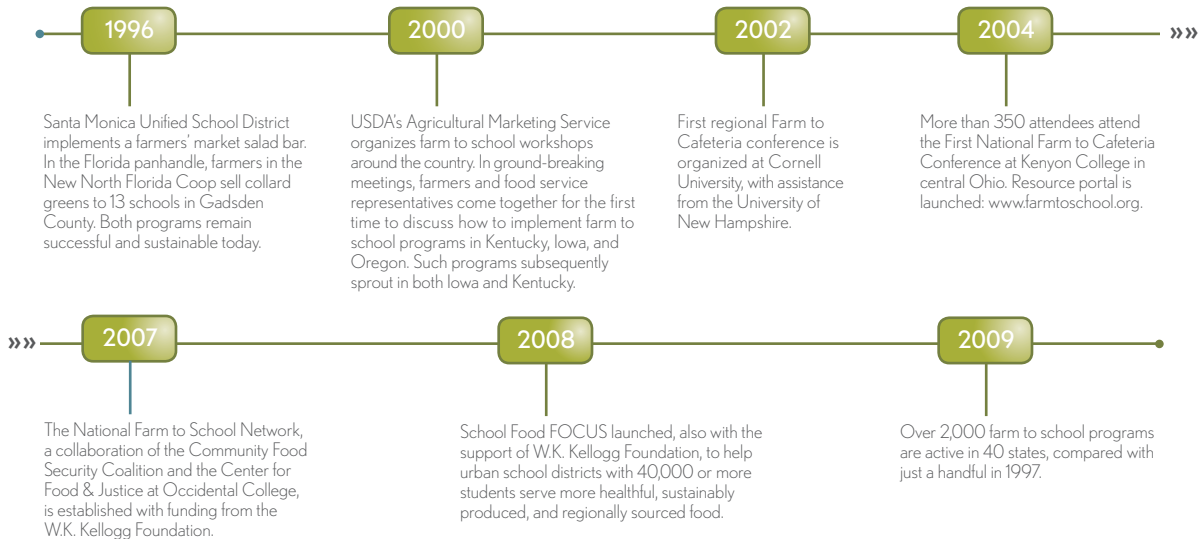
In 2004, the National Farm to School Program was established as part of the Child Nutrition Act reauthorization, creating a seed grant fund for schools to set up farm to school programs. This program received a \$10 million authorization, but never was appropriated funds. Following this legislation and the tremendous subsequent growth and interest in farm to school programs, the time is ripe to implement policies that include locally and regionally grown foods in national meal programs.



HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS



FARM TO SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS | MOVEMENT HISTORY



LEGISLATIVE HISTORY



Benefits of Farm to School

The major aims of the farm to school approach are healthy children, healthy farms, and healthy communities. Farm to school programs are based on the premise that students will choose healthier foods, including more fruits and vegetables, if products are fresh, locally grown, and picked at the peak of their flavor and if those choices are reinforced with educational activities. Farm to school projects provide benefits to the entire community: children, farmers, food service staff, parents, and teachers.

Children

Existing research shows that farm to school programs influence students on many levels, increasing their knowledge and awareness about food sources, nutrition, and eating behaviors and lifestyles. Eating locally sourced products becomes part of the educational framework that turns kids on to healthier food options. A connection with the source of their food also deepens students' appreciation for food and agriculture. The major impacts of farm to school programs on children, collated from various programs, are:

- »» The choice of healthier options in the cafeteria through farm to school meals results in consumption of more fruits and vegetables (+0.99 to +1.3 servings/day) and at home. For example, studies in Portland, OR, and Riverside, CA, have found that students eating a farm-fresh salad bar consume roughly one additional serving of fruits and vegetables per day.
- »» Better knowledge and awareness about gardening, agriculture, healthy eating, local foods and seasonality. In Philadelphia, the percentage of kindergartners who knew where their food came from increased from 33 percent to 88 percent after participation in a farm to school program.
- »» Demonstrated willingness to try out new foods and healthier options. In one school in Ventura, CA, on days in which there was a choice between a farmers' market salad

bar and a hot lunch, students and adults chose the salad bar by a 14 to 1 ratio.

- »» Reduced consumption of unhealthy foods and sodas; reduced television watching time; positive lifestyle modifications such as a daily exercise routine.

"Dear Shcool Board, Well I herd that we only get crunch lunch on 2 days of the week. How do you expect us to stay helthey? How do you expect us to live with the meatlof? Well, I hope you do sumthing."

Letter from a student at Davis Joint Unified School District (CA) to the School Board supporting the Davis Farm to School Salad Bar Program

The greater the exposure to farm-fresh fruits and vegetables, the greater the likelihood that a child will eat them. In this Missouri study 83 percent ate homegrown produce "sometimes or almost always."

April, 2007 issue of the Journal of the American Dietetic Association

Farmers

Historically, local farmers have found it difficult to access school-food markets, given the complexities of the procurement process. Farm to school programs open up that multi-billion-dollar market to family farmers. Data from farm to school programs suggests that when schools dedicate a significant percentage of their purchases to local producers, local farmers gain a significant and steady market.

"We are cultivating more than just food here. This is about community; this is about relationships."

Iowa Farmer: Michel Nash

For example, the New York City school district signed a \$4.2 million contract with farmers in upstate NY to provide apples for NYC schools over a three-year period. The 60 farms providing products to local schools in Massachusetts, meanwhile, are generating more than \$700,000 in additional revenue each year. For most participating farmers, school sales represent 5 to 10 percent of their total sales.

Apart from the health and taste benefits of eating fresh, local food, Mary Ann Lopez, South Windsor's School Nutrition Specialist and Food Service Director, says it's good for her budget: Farmers set a price at the beginning of the season and that's what she pays all season. In contrast, during the winter, when she buys from national distributors, her price fluctuates because their food comes from different vendors across the country.

"For the six or eight weeks I get tomatoes, I get them for the same price, which helps stabilize my budget," Lopez says. "For us, it's a win-win situation. We get to support the farmers in our local area: We're someone they can depend on. In turn our kids are saying, 'We really like this.'"

LOCAL FARMERS HAVE TWO ADVANTAGES

»» **PROCEDURE** We can get fresh, high quality, and safe product to the institutions within 24 hours after harvest, including all post-handling procedures.

»» **RELATIONSHIP** The buyer and the grower have a real, face-to-face knowledge of one another, which promotes transparency and trust.

Some of the benefits reported by participating farmers are:

- »» Diversification of market;
- »» Positive relationships with the school district, students, parents, and community;
- »» Opportunities to explore processing and preservation methods for institutional markets;
- »» Establishment of grower collaboratives or cooperatives to supply institutional markets.

Food Services

With high overhead costs, the financial viability of school food services often depends on their ability to increase the participation of paying students and adults. Farm to school programs typically increase the participation rates in school meal programs, enhancing the overall financial viability of participating school food services.

The Massachusetts Farm to School project noted that Worcester Public Schools have seen a 15 percent increase in school lunch purchases since the district began buying locally. Student lunch participation in one school in Southern California increased by over 50 percent in the first two years the farm to school program was in place. Overall, schools report a 3 to 16 percent increase in participation in school meals when farm-fresh food is served.

Increased participation can cover the additional labor costs associated with food preparation of farm to school programs. Through a detailed cost analysis of 2006-07 purchases, Missoula County Public School District found that buying some local foods in season (apples, cantaloupe, carrot coins and shredded carrot, potatoes, and salad mix) was either less expensive or no more expensive than what it would have cost to purchase comparable foods through mainstream suppliers.

Food service staff participating in farm to school programs show increased:

- »» Knowledge and interest in local food preparation;
- »» Knowledge regarding seasonal recipes;
- »» Interest in interacting with teachers to strengthen classroom-cafeteria connections.

Parents

Incorporation of a parent-education component through a farm to school program can ensure that messages about health and local foods are carried into homes and reinforced there by parents and caregivers. Farm to school education inspires parents to incorporate healthier foods into their children's and their family's diets and better equips them to do so through both shopping and cooking tips. In a project in Vermont, 32 percent of parents with participating children believed that their family diet had improved since their child's participation in the program. In another project in Philadelphia, 78 percent of parents with participating children reported that their children ate more fruits and vegetables.

Many parents have exhibited:

- »» Gains in ability and interest in incorporating healthier foods in family diets;
- »» Greater interest in guiding children to make healthier choices;
- »» Positive changes in shopping patterns to incorporate healthy and local foods.

Teachers

Farm to school programs also affect teachers in positive ways—a very important and often overlooked outcome, as teachers are role models for students in all areas, especially regarding healthy lifestyles and eating. Some effects:

- »» Demonstrated positive attitude and eagerness about integrating farm to school related information in curriculum;
- »» Positive changes in personal diets and lifestyles, including but not limited to purchasing farm to school meals in the school cafeteria.

In the U.S., it takes the typical food item 1,500 to 2,400 miles to travel from farm to plate. A head of California lettuce shipped to Washington, DC, requires 36 times more fuel energy just to transport than the caloric food energy it provides.

Farm to School Case Studies

Here are some examples of how farm to school has worked for three school districts and one farmers' cooperative. These stories also illustrate the challenges that these programs have faced, which can be addressed by federal policy changes.

Chicago Public Schools

Each school day, the 600-plus schools in the Chicago Public School (CPS) district serve about 385,000 lunches and breakfasts, 83 percent of which are free or discounted. A more healthful school meal program means healthier kids both now and in the future. Chicago Public School district is working with farmers and processors located within 150 miles of the city, including in Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana, to serve fresh local fruit and vegetables to more than 300,000 students all year long. By doing this, Chicago has found a cost-effective way to make fresh local produce—including apples from Michigan, as well as corn, peas, carrots, and green beans frozen within 48 hours of harvest—accessible and available to students year-round, not just in the summer.

In 2007, the district took a bigger step to providing fresh and more healthful food for its students. Partnering with its main food service company, Chartwells Thompson Hospitality, it decided to put fresh fruits and vegetables on the menu twice a week. The change in food procurement creates a healthier meal for students, since the nutritional content of fresh food is far greater than canned food and especially more than highly processed or fried food. The switch to local produce also makes economic sense, thanks to rising shipping costs.

However, the district's changed procurement plan has created so much more regional demand for farm-fresh food that it strains the local supply, as many farmers have prior commitments to other large institutions. Another issue facing the district is financial:

the federal reimbursement rate has not kept up with inflation and the rising costs of food and labor. In 2007, CPS ran a \$23 million deficit in its food service program.

For Chicago Public Schools to continue improving the diets of its students, reimbursement rates for school meals need to be raised so that they are in step with current costs. The now outdated procurement model for school meals has not reflected a demand for fresh, more healthful food. This model needs to change, and schools and districts need support as they work to improve procurement systems.

Increased supply of fresh foods from the region surrounding Chicago is one clear example of the need targeted in our call for *increased funding for scaling up food procurement* by addressing gaps in food handling and infrastructure, and for *increased technical support* by USDA in partnership with city and state agencies as well as community based non-profit and farmers organizations.

Riverside, CA Unified School District

In March 2005 the Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) in Riverside, California launched its Farm to School Salad Bar Program in Jefferson Elementary School with support from the California Endowment and in partnership with the Center for Food & Justice. Since the implementation of the Jefferson salad bar, the program has expanded to 22 schools. The success of the Riverside program is due in large part to RUSD's Nutrition Services Director Rodney Taylor. Mr. Taylor was previously the food service director at the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified



School District, where he implemented one of the country's first farm to school programs.

Riverside County is a historic agricultural county in Southern California. Once abundant with citrus groves and apples orchards, the county now has one of the fastest growing populations in the nation, and agricultural land is rapidly being lost to housing developments. For these reasons, Taylor saw farm to school as particularly important for Riverside and sought to make the program as locally-focused as possible. Through local farmers' markets he identified two small family farmers located within 30 miles of the City of Riverside who were willing to make weekly deliveries to the district. When produce isn't available from the two growers' farms, they look to other independent growers in the area to provide the needed items. Taylor spends about \$250,000 per year in food purchases from local farms.

The main component of the Riverside Farm to School program is a daily salad bar offered to students as an alternative to the hot lunch meal. The salad bar is stocked with as much local produce as the district is able to purchase. In the peak growing seasons nearly all of the fruits and vegetables served are from local sources, in slower months the salad remains about 50% local, owing to the year-round growing season in Southern California. Approximately one quarter of students choose the salad bar on any given day. An unexpected result of the program at Jefferson has been a nearly 9% increase in overall school meal participation, including exponential growth in the number of teacher meals served.

Grant funding has allowed Taylor to hire a nutrition specialist/ salad bar coordinator to oversee the program. This person has become key to the program's success and sustainability. The coordinator serves as a liaison between the district and the farmers, placing produce orders with the local farmers each week. This

kind of start up funding has been essential to Riverside and many other schools to implement farm to school programs. Yet, few schools have access to the private foundation dollars that Rodney Taylor, because of his history and connections with community groups, has had. For farm to school programs to become the norm across the country, *federal seed grant funds need to become available* to help schools make the transition to healthier foods.

New York City Public Schools

Because of the sheer size of the New York City school system—it serves 850,000 meals every day of the school year—changes in its school food procurement have a huge opportunity to have a positive impact on children's health.

Successes in several of the school system's farm to school partnerships over the past few years can shine light on new ways to get fresh and more healthful food to kids in public schools. Jerry Dygert of Champlain Valley Specialty has teamed up with the schools to sell Grab Apples. Millions of New York state-grown apples, pre-sliced and -bagged, have been purchased by New York schoolchildren. New York City's food service division estimates that kids are eating four times as many apples as they used to. To make the partnership possible, Champlain Valley Specialty had to invest in infrastructure changes in order to be able to cut and bag the apples—a presentation that was attractive to kids—in the quantities needed by NYC's schools.

The district's struggles to expand to other products point to the kinds of support and resources school districts will need to turn the tide of ill health of American children. Locally grown sliced and bagged carrots have not yet enjoyed the success of apples, even though the district has been working with producers for more than two years to try to get fresh carrots to New York's schoolchildren. As the district serves 285,000 pounds of baby carrots trucked in from faraway states, it seemed like it should

be an easy, not to mention cost-effective switch to use carrots grown close to the city. The district wanted to serve carrots in the same way they serve pre-sliced, pre-bagged apples because it is too labor-intensive to hand-cut as many carrots daily as they would need. But farmers and producers would have to invest in a different infrastructure to cut carrots. This might initially drive costs up and out of the purchasing price range: current federal and local laws require distributors to purchase the least expensive product, meaning schools have not been able to give preferential treatment to local products.

Outdated procurement regulations are among the systems that must change for school meals to offer the more healthful food they were originally intended to include. Growers of other fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as New York dairy and meat producers, have experienced similar frustrations in getting farm products into schools. Well-intentioned schools have also had a hard time navigating the food purchasing bureaucracy. A May 2008 piece of New York State legislation called the Healthy Foods Act sought to improve such regulations by giving farmers greater access to selling to their local schools, making it easier for both groups to serve healthier foods to kids.

Reauthorization of child nutrition programs in 2009 can *help reform and streamline state procurement regulations* following the 2008 Farm Bill, where the geographic preferences have now been allowed for school districts. The need for *more technical and financial support* to accomplish the goals of bringing more healthful local foods to New York City school meals is reflected in the call for evaluating and modeling best practices in more complex and larger scale procurement systems.

New North Florida Cooperative

One of the pioneers of the farm to school approach, the New North Florida Cooperative Association, Inc. (NNFC), has been working with school districts since 1995 to provide fresh produce for school meals. This group of innovative African-American farmers—60 to 100 farmers based in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas—has served more than a million students in 72 school districts.

NNFC began selling to Gadsden County schools during the 1996-1997 school year, and since that time has rapidly expanded, selling to a total of 15 school districts. The association initially received *financial assistance, mainly for the purchase of infrastructure and equipment to expand processing and distribution*, along with a \$40,000 grant from the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service. Although grant monies were used in the initial stage of this program, approximately 90 percent of the funding for the NNFC's marketing efforts now comes from direct marketing sales, which contributes to the sustainability of the farm to school program today.

North Florida, where the program initially began, is an economically depressed area with high unemployment rates. Farm to school was a boon for all sides of the equation: farmers, land use, children, schools, community, and the local economy. Farmers saw that sourcing to schools would create a new market that could bring stability, profitability, and organization to small operations that could not survive on their own. From the food service perspective, integrating fresh local produce into school meals was a nutritionally sound decision that benefited children, the local economy, and community. It's a win-win-win situation.



POLICY SOLUTIONS

WHY AMERICAN CHILDREN NEED US TO CHANGE FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Every child deserves the opportunity to eat food in school that ensures their health and wellbeing. Valuing the nourishment of our children is a principle shared by the collaboration forged by the National Farm to School Network, Community Food Security Coalition, and School Food FOCUS. Each organization represents active citizens, communities, and public institutions across the United States working in innovative ways to improve the food served in schools. The National Farm to School Network works with schools, farmers, food services, children, parents, and communities providing direct technical assistance to get farm to school programs off the ground. The Community Food Security Coalition builds strong local and regional food systems, especially in places where poor access to healthy food is prevalent. School Food FOCUS works with large urban school districts to bring more regionally sourced and sustainably produced food to school meals via changes in procurement policies.

Together, we represent millions of Americans supporting policy solutions that:

- »» restore the right of all children to access good food in school;
- »» educate and inform communities about healthy food and its impact on the wellbeing of children; and
- »» connect farmers, school districts, food service companies, and great ideas to the food system delivering school lunch.

Nineteen states across the country have passed policies to support farm to school initiatives. Some states have set up statewide farm to school programs, with staff in the Departments of Agriculture or Education, or both. They've communicated the state's preference for schools to buy local food through policy statements, changes to bidding practices, or cost preferences for in-state products ranging from 5 to 25 percent. They have also helped to connect farmers and school food services through websites and databases.

The federal government can learn from the example of these states. The 2004 Child Nutrition Act reauthorization included just one provision on farm to school: a seed grant program with \$10 million in discretionary funding that has failed to receive an appropriation. But farm to school projects are growing explosively, and multiple policy strategies are needed to capture this momentum and propel them to the next level.

The policy recommendations in this document are solutions that are fair to American children, schools, farmers, food producers, and communities. The following lists the most effective ways Washington can rebalance the way American children eat in schools. We hope you will join us in our effort to nourish the nation, one tray at a time.



Priorities for Child Nutrition Reauthorization

»» TOP PRIORITIES

Enact \$250 million over 5 years, with \$50 million mandatory, for Section 122: Access to Local Foods and School Gardens for grants to schools. This would fund 100-500 projects per year up to \$100,000 to cover start-up costs for farm to school programs. These competitive, one-time grants will allow schools to develop vendor relationships with nearby farmers, plan seasonal menus and promotional materials, start a school garden, and develop hands-on nutrition education to demonstrate the important interrelationship of nutrition and agriculture.

Establish a farm to institution initiative within the Secretary of Agriculture's Office. This initiative will help provide national leadership to a rapidly growing movement, helping to consolidate and guide the various policies and programs necessary to expand and institutionalize farm to institution across the country.

Increase funding for improving and evaluating school food procurement. The challenges of farm to school in large school districts include bridging the many gaps in supply-chain and food-handling infrastructure. USDA, together with national and state agencies and non-governmental organizations, should collaborate to share and perfect best practices for increasing local and regional procurement of school food, including evaluation of programs across the country.

»» ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

Increase Use of Foods From Regional Food Systems in School Food Programs

Encourage purchasing of local fruits and vegetables through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

The schools selected for this program should be urged to buy from local farms and sources as feasible. Buying locally reduces transportation costs and related environmental impacts, and supports the local economy. Research shows that production methods for food (i.e. organic, less pesticides, etc.) are important to children's health. Production standards should be part of the standards set for food provided to our children similar to nutritional standards.

Increase technical assistance to school food services and coordination among education, health, agriculture, and procurement agencies for product sourcing, bid specifications, and menu planning for all child nutrition programs that purchase local foods.

Food preparation using whole foods rather than highly processed foods is better for children's health. To implement farm to school programs, food service staff may require training in specific areas such as procurement, product handling, and seasonal menu development. Training in these areas will help to build the skills of food service staff and further institutionalize farm to school programs.

Increase Reimbursement Rates and Improve Access for Child Nutrition Programs

Increase school food reimbursement rates by at least 35 cents per meal for school districts that achieve excellence in providing nutritious school meals.

Food services operate under incredible financial constraints, especially as the cost of food has increased in the past year. Improvements in the quality of meals require the commitment of



additional funds. Reimbursement rate increases should be made available to school districts on the condition that they use the funds for foods that help them meet dietary guidelines, such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Eliminate the reduced-price category for school meals and extend free meal eligibility to households with incomes up to 185% of poverty level.

Currently children from families with income between 130-185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced price school lunch. The 40 cents per meal charge can be a barrier for participation by low-income families, resulting in increased childhood hunger during the school day.

Strengthen Operations & Infrastructure of Child Nutrition Programs

Enhance and fund food service training programs to develop a skilled workforce that can prepare whole foods, practice healthful and safe cooking, procure local food, develop seasonal menus, and promote positive diet behaviors among students.

Based at the University of MS, the National Food Service Management Institute provides on-site and remote learning opportunities for state and food service leaders on a variety of topics related to child nutrition programs. To implement farm to school programs, food service directors may require training in specific areas, such as procurement, product handling, and seasonal menu preparation. NFSMI can help to build food service directors' skills and further institutionalize farm to school projects through specific training in these areas.

Strengthen Nutrition Standards for School Meal Programs and Competitive Foods

Require all foods served where Child Nutrition Programs operate to meet or exceed national standards consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans on the entire campus throughout the school day.

Currently USDA has the ability to regulate the nutritional content of those foods served as part of a federally-funded child nutrition program. Yet, schools make available other foods during the day through vending machines, competitive meals, student stores, and sales. It is up to the federal government to set nutritional standards as a floor, and allow states or districts to develop more stringent guidelines as desired.

Support Food and Nutrition Education and Advocacy for Healthy Foods

Provide consistent and mandatory funding for Team Nutrition to use proven, effective and experiential educational programming in child nutrition programs, such as culinary professionals in schools, school gardens, farm to school programming, and cooking with students.

The childhood obesity epidemic, along with increased rates of chronic diseases in children and skyrocketing healthcare costs, demonstrate the need for a more comprehensive nutrition education and promotion program, coordinated within and across child nutrition programs. Under the current competitive grant structure, states continue to have minimal or no funding for nutrition education and promotion. Team Nutrition, USDA's primary method for providing nutrition education in schools, has not received an annual appropriation for the past four years. The Society for Nutrition Education proposes a one cent per school lunch allocation to this program (\$69.8 million/year). This program should be directed to develop curriculum that includes information on gardening, cooking education, and other experiential nutrition education.

Maintain the Integrity of the WIC FMNP

Whereas the Fruit & Vegetable component of the new WIC package allows all types of produce (canned, frozen, and fresh), the FMNP provides access to fresh local produce exclusively. This distinction needs to be maintained.

COME JOIN US!

National Farm to School Network



The National Farm to School Network improves student health by reducing childhood obesity, supports community-based food systems, and strengthens family farms. The Network is a collaborative effort of the Center for Food & Justice, Occidental College, and the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC). With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Network coordinates, promotes, and expands the farm to school movement at the state, regional, and national levels. Eight regional lead agencies and national staff provide free training and technical assistance, information services, networking, and support for policy, media, and marketing activities.

Community Food Security Coalition



The Community Food Security Coalition is a North American organization of 260 member groups that concentrate on social and economic justice, environmental, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, community development, labor, and anti-hunger issues and that together are dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems. CFSC works to ensure that all people have access at all times to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. CFSC encourages communities to become self-reliant in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, and distributing food that is sustainable, just, healthy, and democratic. The coalition offers a blend of comprehensive training, networking, and advocacy strategies to further the efforts of grassroots groups to create effective solutions from the ground up.

School Food FOCUS

School Food FOCUS is a national initiative that helps urban school districts with 40,000 or more students serve more healthful, more sustainably produced and regionally sourced food so that children may perform better in school and be healthier in life. Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and launched in late 2008, FOCUS works with school food service directors and other stakeholders to collect, analyze, and use food system data and peer-tested research to spur change in procurement methods. FOCUS supports a network of experts who are engaging their big-city school districts in systems change and also facilitates the sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

VISIT

Join us in our effort to nourish the nation, one tray at a time. For the latest information on the One Tray campaign and to endorse this policy platform, visit www.onetray.org.

A healthier nation is one click away.

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Nourishing the Nation One Tray at a Time