

The Farm to School Collaborative

SUPPORTING THE COMMON GOALS OF HEALTHY KIDS, HEALTHY FARMS AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

WHO WE ARE: A DIVERSE GROUP ADVOCATING FOR FARM TO SCHOOL

The Farm to School Collaborative is a cross-sector alliance of school, nutrition, rural, and sustainable agriculture groups and farmers that support Congressional enactment of ***\$50 million in mandatory funding*** for Farm to School programs in the 2009 Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

THE PROBLEM: CHILDHOOD OBESITY, CHRONIC DISEASES, & NUTRITIONALLY INADEQUATE FOOD

- Childhood obesity is a critical public health problem in the United States. One-third of U.S. children are obese or overweight.
- Over the past three decades, obesity rates have quadrupled in 6-11 year olds and tripled in 12-19 year olds.
- Obese children are more likely to develop Type 2 Diabetes, high blood pressure and high blood lipids. It is now predicted that 1 out of 3 children will develop diabetes in their lifetime.
- Minority children suffer more from obesity and concurrent diseases like diabetes. Among American Indian youth, 86% of the diagnosed diabetes is now Type 2.
- Only 2% of children meet the Food Guide Pyramid serving recommendations.
- Regular access to healthy food has been proven to be one of the strongest predictors of improved school performance.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES: AUTHORIZED BUT NOT FUNDED — SECTION 122

- In 2004, as part of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act (Public Law No: 108-265) Congress authorized a grant program (Section 122) for schools to receive funds up to \$100,000 to cover start-up costs for what were then called *farm to cafeteria* projects.
- These competitive, one-time grants were designed to improve student access to nutritious, locally grown fresh food and to assist schools in their efforts to develop hands-on nutrition education programs.

THE SOLUTION: A COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO SCHOOL NUTRITION — FARM TO SCHOOL

- All kids deserve healthy, high quality food. By sourcing locally, students can receive food that is fresher and often more tasty than food that has traveled a far distance. This exposure contributes toward developing a life-long taste for healthy and fresh foods.
- Farmers are able to increase their markets by sourcing to schools—strengthening local economies and creating jobs.
- Farm to School programs create opportunities for developing meaningful community relationships between schools, parents, and local farmers. They can also provide an important opportunity for experiential learning in nutrition, the environment, food preparation, and agriculture.
- Farm to school programs help strengthen schools' food service programs through training on product sourcing, food preparation, and menu planning.

CONGRESS MUST MAKE \$50 MILLION MANDATORY FOR FARM TO SCHOOL IN CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

Convened by:

National Farm to School Network | School Food FOCUS | Community Food Security Coalition
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition | Wallace Center at Winrock International

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HEALTH: KIDS WIN

The choice of healthier options in the cafeteria through farm to school meals results in consumption of more fruits and vegetables at school 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 to one and a half additional serving of fruits and vegetables per day. Farm to school programs have increased the willingness of students 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.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: COMMUNITIES WIN

An Oregon pilot "Farms to Schools" program in Portland and Gervais school districts that provided an additional seven cents per meal for schools to purchase local agricultural products demonstrated potential for not only providing healthier food to students but also for stimulating Oregon's economy. A preliminary analysis by Ecotrust, indicated that the \$66,000 provided to schools resulted in \$225,000 in local purchases and that for every dollar the schools spent, an additional 87 cents was spent in Oregon.

Chicago Public Schools are working with farmers and processors located within 150 miles of the city to serve fresh local fruit and vegetables to more than 300,000 students throughout the year. Chicago has found a cost-effective way to make fresh local produce including apples, corn, peas, carrots, and green beans, frozen within 48 hours of harvest, accessible and available to students year round.

AGRICULTURE: LOCAL FARMS WIN

In March 2005 the Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) in Riverside, California launched its Farm to School Salad Bar Program which now operates in 22 schools. 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. Rodney Taylor, the Child Nutrition Director, spends about \$250,000 per year in food purchases from local farms.

Worcester Public Schools have seen a fifteen percent increase in school lunch purchases since the district began buying locally through the Massachusetts Farm to School Program. But these benefits are not limited to the schools. The sixty farms providing products to local schools in Massachusetts are generating more than \$700,000 in additional revenue each year.

One of the pioneers of the farm to school approach, the New North Florida Cooperative Association, Inc. 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 a variety of vegetables to more than a million students in 72 school districts. This program has also doubled the income of farmers who fall below the poverty line.

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