

Farm to School Talking Points:  
“Support Mandatory funding for Farm to School Projects”

**Thank You** for being willing to talk to your legislators about funding for Farm to School projects! Below are some short points to help you get the message across. **The most important point to include is the policy ask.** Feel free to pick and choose from the other points, using those that you feel most passionate about and/or those you believe the person you are speaking to will care most about.

**What’s most important is to talk from your own experience.** Before you speak about Farm to School, please take a minute to reflect on why you care about Farm to School, and what it would do for your child, school, district, or community.

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**THE POLICY ASK: Provide \$50 million over 5 years in mandatory funding for a Farm to School grant program (Section 122), administered by the USDA.**

**BACKGROUND:**

- A Farm to School grant program (Section 122) was authorized in the 2004 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act.
- The program was authorized without any money attached, and has never received funding.

**FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE GOOD FOR CHILDREN**

- The choice of healthier options in the cafeteria through Farm to School meals results in consumption of more fruits and vegetables with an average increase of one serving per day, including at home.
- Farm fresh products taste better, and it has been shown that children prefer them to non-local products.
- Farm to school programs can help improve children’s health and help alleviate current childhood health problems like obesity and early onset type II diabetes

**FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE GOOD FOR SCHOOLS**

- Schools report a 3 to 16 percent increase in school meal participation when farm-fresh food is served, thus bringing more funds into the schools.
- Less price fluctuation occurs over the course of the year because the products are not sourced from different venues across the country that charge different prices.
- Local produce can actually cost less than highly processed versions currently delivered to schools.
- Farm to school programs are known to facilitate education about nutrition, food and agriculture in and out of the classroom.

Farm to School Collaborative 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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**FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE GOOD FOR LOCAL FARMERS AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

- The transaction from farm to school keeps dollars in the local economy, thus strengthening local economies and creating jobs.
- For every dollar spent on local foods in schools, one to three dollars circulate in the local economy.
- Selling to schools opens up a substantial new market for farmers.
- Selling to schools can be particularly important for beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers as schools provide a consistent and secure customer base.

**FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS NEED FUNDING**

- Most schools require assistance from a community organization or government entity, like a state department of agriculture, to initiate farm to school programs.
- While a few schools (roughly 11% in the U.S.) are currently conducting some local purchasing, many of these are fledgling efforts in need of resources and information in order to be effective.
- These competitive one-time grants were designed to improve access to nutritious, local food and to assist schools in their efforts to develop hands-on nutrition education programs.
- Federal funding would also allow school districts with limited resources to take full advantage of the benefits of farm to school programs, thus spreading the benefits of local purchases to the most at-risk communities.

**WHAT FARM TO SCHOOL GRANTS COULD DO**

- Provide necessary financial and technical assistance for start-up and development costs for farm to school programs nationwide.
- These grants will allow schools or non government organizations to:
  - develop vendor relationships with local farmers,
  - plan seasonal menus and promotional materials,
  - start a school garden,
  - develop hands-on nutrition education to demonstrate the important interrelationship of nutrition and agriculture, and
  - provide solutions to infrastructure problems like storage, transportation, food preparation, and technical training.

And, Again, Don't forget the **THE POLICY ASK:**

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