

CASE STUDY

Kentucky

How it Started

Official introduction occurred in May 2000 through cooperative efforts of the USDA, the Kentucky Department of Ag., University of Kentucky Extension and the Kentucky Department of Education. Some school districts in Kentucky had noted the North Carolina model and had been purchasing produce through the DOD fresh program and from local cooperatives. In the first year the program was piloted in regions 4 and 8. Schools were encouraged to request product grown in Kentucky, if prices were comparable. The program went statewide this year. Farm-to-School in Kentucky now has a full time coordinator who handles communications with farmers and schools funded by the State Department of Agriculture.

Farm to School Project and Components

Clark County is Kentucky's model program for integrating Farm to School with nutrition and health education. There they are developing and piloting the Clover CAT (Cooking, Activity, and Time to be well) curriculum. This curriculum includes nutrition, time management, exercise and self-esteem. The curriculum is being piloted in the 5th, 7th, and 9th grades with introductory, intermediate and advanced levels. In some areas the YMCA offers a three-month scholarship to obese children who attend these classes. If the children work out at the YMCA 30 times in three months they are offered another three-month free membership. Intergenerational gardens are being piloted but not always in conjunction with the farm to school program.

Farm-to-school coordinator plans to develop additional components (ag education, nutrition education) in the future.

Funding

The farm to school program is incorporated into the jobs of nearly all those involved. The program is broadly supported by the State of Kentucky. No additional funding has been required.

Farmers/Crops

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture facilitates communication between farmers and schools. They promote products grown in Kentucky such as seedless watermelons, sweet potatoes, broccoli and seasonal decorative products. Local and Kentucky grown cannot always provide quantities needed by school districts. In these cases commodities and out-of-state foods are used. Farm cooperatives comprise the majority of farms involved in the program. Few independent farms participate. There is some question as to how beneficial this program is to new, small-scale, or non-traditional farms.

School food service commented that farmers have not approached schools independently. If they did, they might be well received. Additional product is needed for summer feeding program and school food service might be willing to purchase direct if farmers made the effort.

DOD provides purchasing expertise some contact with growers. DOD helps set prices, work with growers and seek out small-scale growers

Delivery

School Districts place their orders in May each year. Contracted produce distributors ship their produce to larger distribution sites 5 located in Kentucky, one in Ohio and one in Tennessee. Product is shipped from these sites to schools. Department of Ag. inspects and approves distributors prior to their involvement with farm-to-school

In districts served by a central kitchen food service directors at individual schools can order from their local distributor to supplement what is provided by the central kitchen. The central kitchen places a request once a month for bid. Bids are published and individual schools may order from that list. Schools are encouraged to choose lowest bid first, Kentucky grown second. Produce is delivered once a week.

Price

Farm-gate price is negotiated by Kentucky Dept. of Ag and DOD. A 5.6% surcharge is added to farm gate price and this price is offered to schools. Price for Kentucky grown has not been an issue with product purchased through State farm-to-school program but price for locally grown can be an issue when purchasing from local distributors. Commodities and low prices take precedence over locally grown.

School Food Service Support

School food service was supportive from the beginning. At the May 2000 conference they shared the barriers they had confronted and overcome as well as barriers that persist. For the last year and a half Jefferson County has prepared food in the central kitchen and delivered to schools in refrigerated trucks owned and operated by Food Service. Menus are developed for periods of 6-months. Seasonality impacts price but is not necessarily a consideration in menu development.

USDA rep provides regular training to food service in handling fresh product and some nutrition education.

Kitchen Facilities

Jefferson County has a model central kitchen which can process huge quantities of food with little additional staffing. Food for school lunches is prepared at this site and shipped to individual schools. Other schools have some processing capability but prefer pre-cut, prepackaged product. No additional labor has been necessary.

Sustainability

This project has a great deal of State support. Nearly all aspects of the program are incorporated into the jobs of those involved. Elementary and middle schools do not allow students to leave campus during school hours. Ala carte items, which are part of school menu, are sold during lunch but no competitive foods are sold on campus. Although high schools have soft drink contracts, the machines cannot be turned on until ½ hour after last lunch period. Under these conditions the program is sustainable.

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