

# **LR 42**

## **Examine Farm to School Programs**

### **Staff Report to the Agriculture Committee Incorporating Draft Report and Recommendations of the LR 42 Task Force**

Report prepared by Rick Leonard, Agriculture Committee Research Analyst and Jessica Kingsley, Legislative Aide to Senator Annette Dubas;

#### **LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 42** Introduced by Dubas

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this interim study is to identify methods and systems necessary to assist Nebraska farms in providing local schools with fresh and minimally processed Nebraska-grown farm commodities for school meals and snacks. This interim study is intended to facilitate coordination and planning between multiple stakeholders so that a strategic plan may be developed. The study should include an examination of which Nebraska-grown farm commodities could feasibly be used for school meals and snacks. The study should also include an examination of regulations of the Department of Agriculture, State Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, and any other authorities which might impact the supplying of Nebraska-grown farm commodities to local schools.

The study will seek to involve various interested parties and organizations, including, but not limited to: (1) Producers of agricultural products marketed at Nebraska food markets, including producers of fruits and vegetables, protein agricultural products, and grain; (2) suppliers of agricultural products, including grocers and school suppliers; (3) meat processors; (4) food distributors; (5) the Action for Healthy Kids organization; (6) Resource Conservation and Development organizations in Nebraska; (7) a representative of food services from a rural and an urban Nebraska public school system; (8) the Rural Development Commission; (9) a dietitian; (10) the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Nebraska; (11) the GFL (Good, Fresh, Local) University of Nebraska-Lincoln Sustainable Food Project; and (12) any other interested parties or organizations.



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# Introduction

Farm to school is a relatively recent concept for enhancing the dietary quality of school meals and instilling positive nutritional behaviors among students while expanding access to new markets for local farms. The goal of providing school meals that meet optimal nutritional guidelines is not a new one. However, the simple idea of directly linking farms to schools for food procurement and to integrate farm and nutritional learning experiences for students is one that has gained momentum and has shown success in achieving that goal.

During the 2009 legislative session, LB 130 was introduced to appoint a task force to examine the farm to school concept and to develop a strategic plan to stimulate the growth of farm to school programs among Nebraska schools. In lieu of a formal administrative task force, interim study resolution LR 42 introduced by the bill's sponsor was assigned to the Agriculture Committee. To carry out the purposes of the resolution, Vice Chairman Dubas was asked to lead an informal task force to study the topic and report its findings to the Agriculture Committee. This report fulfills that purpose.

The report provides an overview and history of the farm to school movement and is intended to provide a reference to resources that may be available to Nebraska schools that wish to incorporate locally sourced food products into meal offerings and to integrate ag and nutritional experiential opportunities into the school curriculum. The report concludes with the task force's recommendations. A draft report and its recommendations were formally presented to the Committee in a public hearing on December 3, 2009. Additional refinements to the report were made subsequent to the public hearing to incorporate public input and suggestions of Ag Committee members.



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# The Farm to School Movement

For more than sixty years meals provided to school children have been an important component of the nation's strategy to improve childhood nutrition and reduce childhood hunger. More than thirty million children and young adults eat one or more meals a day, five days a week, one-hundred and eighty days a year at school. For children of many households, meals served at school may be the primary source of daily calorie and nutritional intake during the school year. Even among middle class and affluent households, school meals are an important source of overall nutritional well-being.

School meals have long been an integral element of our educational system. Well fed children are more attentive and prepared for learning, display fewer behavioral problems and lose fewer instructional days to illness. Thus, the child nutrition initiatives undertaken at the federal, state and local levels are, in part, a means to enhance academic performance. Yet, since their inception, school nutritional programs have been endowed with a role beyond merely providing hungry students something to eat so they can perform better at their studies. School cafeterias serve an independent function in preparing young people for adulthood -- helping to instill positive nutritional information and behaviors that children carry with them into their adult lives.

Schools are increasingly called upon to counter societal eating behaviors that contribute to diet-related health problems. The last quarter century has witnessed an increase in the prevalence of obesity, diabetes and other diseases associated with poor nutrition, especially those affecting children. In response, there have been numerous initiatives undertaken to combat the growing rates of childhood obesity targeted at changes at the school, community and individual levels. Farm to school is one such initiative.

## Farm to School: Origins and Growth

In 1991, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service sponsored the first School Nutrition Dietary Assessment (SNDA) to provide information and evaluation on school meals programs. The SNDA evaluates aspects of the school environment (such as school schedules, other foods available, and nutrition education offered) that affect the meal programs, the nutrient content of school meals, and the contributions of school meals to children's diets. The first SNDA found that school meals generally provided target levels of vitamins and minerals, but with higher levels of fats and saturated fats than recommended. The study also found that while meal offerings were nutritionally complete, actual nutritional intake may be limited by students' food selections and competing foods found in the school environment. SNDA-1 helped prompt new policies including to require that school lunches conform to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* by 1996. USDA also launched the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children (SMI) in 1994 to support improvements in school lunch and increased nutrition education in children.

Coinciding with such efforts to improve the nutritional value of school meals and to increase nutritional literacy among the student population and its community came a new emphasis on incorporating fresh produce into school meal offerings. The farm to school movement arises from growing evidence that schools can improve meal quality and positively influence children's food choices and eating habits through offerings of wholesome foodstuffs procured

locally combined with experiential learning opportunities such as farm visits, gardening projects, cooking demonstrations, and recycling programs.

Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program and other child nutrition programs have always been free to procure foodstuffs directly from farmers in their region. Nonetheless, farmers have historically found it difficult to access school food markets given the complexity of the procurement process and the volumes and specifications of school purchasing. While a handful of school districts began farm to school programs on their own initiative, a comprehensive approach to encourage and assist schools with local food procurement began in 1997. That year, USDA launched the Small Farms/School Meals Initiative whereby USDA sponsored a series of workshops to bring together school food service representatives with state and federal agencies and growers to address obstacles to local food procurement. As a result of what was learned at these meetings, in 2000, the USDA Food Nutrition Service published a step-by-step guide on how to bring small farms and local schools together. Since that time, USDA has continued to add to the number of publications and variety of technical assistance provided to encourage local food procurement by schools. USDA under the Obama Administration has continued and expanded this tradition through its “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” initiative described later in this report.

In 1994, the Food and Nutrition Service of USDA began a partnership with the Department of Defense to capitalize on DoD’s experience, infrastructure, and large scale purchasing power in procuring fresh fruits and vegetables for federal and military installations. The partnership began with a pilot project to buy and distribute fresh fruits and vegetables to schools in eight states. The DoD’s Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, known as DoD Fresh, now operates in 45 states. At present, \$50 million of commodity entitlement funds are allocated to states annually to procure fresh produce through DoD Fresh. DoD negotiates the actual purchase on behalf of participating schools, including the price and terms of delivery. DoD works with its network of growers and grower cooperatives to assure required certifications and quality standards are met.

During this decade, Congress has passed a series of enactments to further encourage and assist schools in local procurements of foodstuffs. These include:

- Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program -- The Farm Security and Reinvestment Act (2002 Farm Bill) authorized a Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Project in 4 states and 1 tribal organization to provide specific allocations of funds to participating school for providing fruits and vegetable alternatives for snacks to students. The pilot program and its funding was expanded by Congress in 2004 and 2006. The 2008 Farm Bill amended the National School Lunch Act by adding section 19 creating the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program as a permanent program and expanding the program nationwide. The Act provided \$65 million initial funding which increases to \$150 million for school year 2011/12, after which funding will be indexed to inflation.
- National Farm to school Program – In the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, the U.S. Congress established a new requirement that all school districts with a federally-funded school meals program develop and implement wellness policies that address nutrition and physical activity by the start of the 2006–2007 school year. The legislation also established the National Farm to School program as a part of the Child Nutrition Act reauthorization in 2004. The legislation created a seed grant fund for schools to explore feasibility and initiate farm to school programs. Although the program received

\$10 million authority, Congress has failed to appropriate funding and efforts to date have been privately funded.

- Geographic preferences in school food procurements – The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) amended the National School Lunch Act to allow institutions receiving funding through the Child Nutrition Programs to apply geographic preferences when purchasing unprocessed locally grown agricultural products. The allowance also applies to purchases for these programs by the Department of Defense. The term “unprocessed” excludes food products that have a significant value-added component but does not prevent local preference for foods that have undergone minimal preparation to present the product in a useable form, i.e. washing and bagging produce. Initial interpretations of this provision by USDA were that products that had undergone processing such as cutting or slicing and packaging in individual servings were value added components and precluded from the local preference procurement allowance. On October 9, 2009, USDA issued a reinterpretation that the unprocessed restriction does not preclude local preference for foods that have undergone such processing in order to deliver in a useable form.

Federal funding has also helped stimulate programs and efforts of private organizations in promoting and assisting farm to school programs. The most comprehensive of these is the National Farm to school Network. (see description later in this report) According to the National Farm to school Network, from a handful of pilot projects in the mid 1990’s, there were over over 2000 schools in 40 states with farm/school linkages in place for the 2009-10 school year. A chronology of the farm to school movement compiled by the Network can be found at [<http://www.farmtoschool.org/files/F2SChronology3.09.pdf>] and is included as an appendix to this report.

## Goals & Benefits

The primary objective of the farm to school approach to supplying school meals is healthier children who become more dietary savvy consumers throughout their life. But the objectives of farm to school reach beyond the cafeteria to include strengthening the viability of smaller family farms and stimulating a more diverse and secure food system.

- Helping meet nutritional guidelines

USDA’s *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* are the cornerstone of Federal nutrition policy and nutrition education initiatives. They are based on what experts have determined to be the best scientific knowledge about diet and other issues related to what we should eat, and are designed to help Americans choose diets that will meet nutrient requirements, promote health, support active lives, and reduce risks of chronic illnesses. Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program and other federal child nutrition programs are required to provide meals that meet the dietary guidelines for children. For example, the Food Pyramid recommends weekly consumption of 14 cups of a variety of vegetables for girls 9 – 13 years old 17 ½ cups for boys aged 9-13, and 1 ½ cups of fruit servings daily for this age group. While schools determine food procurement and plan meal offerings to meet these guidelines, research suggests actual selection and consumption by students may be

stimulated by offerings of fresh produce picked at the peak of flavor and appearance. Knowledge that the items are procured from nearby farms may further encourage student interest and acceptance.

- Improving nutritional literacy and behaviors

Research suggests that farm to school programs help engage children in understanding their nutritional needs and how these are affected by their food selections. Having the choice of locally sourced products may greatly stimulate interest in healthier food options. Farm to school programs that bring fresh produce into the schools and provide opportunities for students to meaningfully interact with food production and meal preparation to reinforce nutritional messages helps instill skills that will serve students their entire lives.

- Increasing understanding of the food system and appreciation for farming

Students participating in farm to school programs have been shown to have a greater understanding of where food comes from and how it is grown. These factors influence dietary choices and may also stimulate interest in pursuing careers in fields related to agriculture and nutrition. Students may gain a greater understanding of various food production methods and the transportation and processing infrastructure.

- Supporting local producers and grower cooperatives

Schools are a significant and stable market for food products. Increasing opportunities for local suppliers to serve this market may provide opportunities particularly suited to family farms. School food purchasing can be a contributing stimulus for organizing local grower cooperatives and the investments in storage, processing and transport assets that help local producers compete in other markets as well. Direct marketing is a niche where smaller producers often have a competitive advantage with the ability to supply products directly after harvest, and they have the ability to develop personal relationships with consumers.

Proponents of farm to school suggest additional indirect benefits as well. School meal program procurement from local growers provides a market that may support models of farming that are perceived as sustainable. Recently, more attention has been paid to the environmental and energy tradeoffs that accompany the modern food system where foods may travel great distances and considerable energy is expended in storage and processing. The farm to school movement is an outgrowth of a growing local foods movement whereby consumers make conscious food buying decisions to minimize these impacts. Potentially, locally procured foods may also have price advantages due to such energy savings and seasonal abundance. However, even where such price advantages exist, schools need to balance this against additional costs of labor and perhaps storage and food preparation equipment necessary to utilize locally produced raw products. Finally, the role schools may play in encouraging diversity and proliferation of local food suppliers is perceived as contributing to a region's food self sufficiency and hence food security.

### Farm to school Impact Evaluations

To many, the benefits of farm to school linkages may be apparent or accepted intuitively. But to better inform public policy and to justify public and private investments in the farm to school model, a number of such programs have included an evaluation component to actually measure impacts on student behaviors, school meal nutritional outcomes, and contributions to the local farm economy. For example:

> The Compton (California) School District began offering salad bars as an alternative to the standard hot lunch offerings in some of the districts 23 elementary schools. At those schools offering salad bars, consumption of fruits and vegetables by students choosing the salad bar averaged 182% of daily requirements compared to 71% for students choosing the hot meal.

> Students participating in the “Edible Schoolyard” project in Berkeley California, a program where students assisted with a garden on the school grounds, demonstrated greater gains in understanding of garden cycles than did student in a control group. Students also demonstrated an increase in knowledge about definitions of ecosystems and agriculture.

> The authors of a review of 15 studies assessing the impact of nutrition education to increase fruit and vegetable consumption reported an increase of .3 to .99 daily servings selected by students participating in such programs.

> Numerous evaluations have shown an increase in school meal participation rates where farm to school programs are in place or on days when locally procured produce are offered.

> Between June 2005 and May 2006, producer farmers selling to schools in the Massachusetts Farm to School program grossed more than \$55,000 in K-12 sales.

A comprehensive guide to farm to school evaluation is available from the National Farm to School Program website. The publication: *Bearing Fruit: Farm to School Program Evaluation Resources and Recommendations* include a synthesis and analysis of findings from several program evaluations.

### Farm to school Procurement Models

There are a variety of distribution models that schools utilize to procure locally and regionally grown food products for school meal offerings. There is perhaps no one-size-fits-all method as individual needs and circumstances of school districts differ greatly. In addition to familiar direct market outlets, schools as institutional buyers may incorporate local foods specifications into established supply relationships with wholesale and retail food suppliers. Although the list may not be exhaustive, the most prominent local food procurement methods include the following:

- Direct supply relationship with individual farmers

Some school districts have entered into direct relationships with one or more individual farmers. This enables schools to build a close, informal collaboration with a local producer. Particularly if the school purchases represent a significant portion of the producer’s income, he or she may be willing to tailor farming operations to the needs of the district and to invest personal time and resources into the relationship, including hosting related on-farm experience opportunities for students and classroom visits. However, to obtain supplies in necessary volume, school districts may need to establish direct relationships with several farms. Managing purchases from multiple farms can entail increased paperwork and labor required of school food purchasers,

and coordinating deliveries can be difficult. Individual producers may not have the facilities and capability of delivering products in useable form and thus schools may have the additional burden of providing labor as well as storage and processing equipment to be able to use product available.

- School food service works with a farmer cooperative

Schools may work with an existing growers cooperative, or stimulate the formation of a cooperative of producers to pool resources and develop a group distribution strategy. Buying from a cooperative reduces the administrative burden on school districts as the district only has to deal with a representative of the cooperative to access products from several farms. A cooperative is more likely to have capability to internally handle product and delivery details to meet the schools needs. The cooperative also may be able to pool production that a single farm may not be able to supply to achieve volumes that schools may require, and helps spread the risk of production loss. Some cooperatives may be able to invest in cold storage, transportation and processing facilities so that food items can be delivered in more readily usable forms.

- Purchase at Farmers Markets

School food purchasers may also procure products directly at stands of vendors at a farmers market, and potentially develop more formal relationships with one or more vendors to coordinate deliveries of food purchases with the vendor's visit to the market. A regular farmers market with a large number of vendors may have the advantage of enabling a school to make purchases for farm to school purposes without the commitment of a more formal direct supply relationship with a producer. The school may be able to take advantage of price competition. On the other hand, the farmers markets may not overlap very long with the school year, and buying from farmers markets can be time consuming and labor intensive for the district.

- Purchasing with local food specifications through traditional wholesalers

School districts typically procure food products through one or more wholesalers that often deal with school districts through brokers and sales representatives. Established wholesalers can provide a wide variety of products schools need. Since they purchase for several customers, they can take advantage of their purchasing power to obtain products affordably. Increasingly, schools have worked with wholesale suppliers to meet local sourcing specifications for seasonably available products. Wholesalers and suppliers they purchase from often have established relationships with growers. Purchasing through a wholesale broker introduces the need for certifications and records to verify that foods are procured locally.

- Purchasing through the DoD Fresh Program

Schools may work directly with the Department of Defense to handle local food procurement. The Department of Defense has established an extensive network of producers and distributors in order to supply military installations in this country and overseas. Essentially, school place orders through DoD Fresh which handles aspects of contacting growers, making arrangements for delivery and overseeing compliance with any required certifications and specifications of the districts.

## Obstacles to Local Food Procurement

While buying directly from nearby growers has always been an option for school food authorities to procure food items served in schools, there are a number of practical barriers to sourcing food requirements in this manner. As a result, schools typically purchase foods primarily through intermediaries such as regional and even national food distributors that specialize in supplying institutional buyers. Such suppliers have evolved to serve the unique needs of school districts and other institutional buyers that purchase in large volumes, that prepare and serve hundreds of meals daily within defined budgets and average meal costs, and that are subject to certain regulatory standards regarding food sourcing and meal qualities.

It is therefore understandable that schools rely on suppliers that have established extensive supplier networks with food processors, and in some cases, directly with growers, that can pool purchases to command most favorable prices, and that have warehousing, storage, transportation and perhaps processing capabilities to service accounts reliably. It is also attractive to schools and other institutional customers that such suppliers can often deliver foodstuffs in readily usable forms that minimize preparation and cooking times required by food service staff. Nevertheless, the growing popularity of the farm to school concept has led to greater efforts to overcome barriers to sourcing foods in direct markets. A review of literature as well as direct input by school food service representatives on the task force suggest that such barriers include:

- Establishing farm to school programs may require a substantial initial investment in storage and serving facilities, and sometimes equipment necessary for additional preparation of raw farm products.
- Locally sourced food products may represent marginal cost over alternative elements of hot lunch meals and therefore cost per meal may be incrementally higher. Financial viability of providing a farm to school component to school meal offerings is important since school food service operations receive a defined meal cost reimbursement through federal programs and typically are required to be financially self sufficient. Additionally, schools serve low income populations while competing with food alternatives available to the student population. Keeping meal costs affordable is therefore an important objective.
- Incorporating locally sourced fresh produce into school meals may require additional labor to receive and prepare such items. School meal programs may not have sufficient budget to hire additional food preparation staff to meet this labor requirement.
- Sourcing quantities schools require from a single farm may be difficult, and working with multiple farms may entail burdensome investment of time by school food service personnel. Managing relationships with local suppliers, including the negotiation of prices, overseeing production specifications, coordinating deliveries, and complying with procurement requirements may entail substantial investment of administrative oversight.

- Products procured from local growers may vary in qualities such as size and imperfections making it more difficult to provide uniform meal quality.

### **Incorporating Local Foods into School Meals—Two Perspectives**

*Lincoln Public Schools feeds over 23,000 students each school day for lunch. The District believes that all schools should be served alike. This means if we are going to use local foods, we need enough to be able to serve all the students that eat school lunch that day. In addition to quantity, we need portion control. If, for example, we were to use apples, they would all need to be the same size. Students all want to receive the same size serving and USDA regulation require we provide a certain portion size to each student. Local produce would be required to be processed. We need lettuce that has been washed and cut. We no longer have the equipment to cut carrot sticks. We need this work to be done for us. Local produce also has the concern of food security. How will it be insured the spinach does not contain e-coli? Another important factor is price of local foods. As a school lunch program, we spend \$1.07 per meal on food. Fifty cents goes to the cost of the entrée. Eighteen cents goes to the cost of the carton of milk, and thirty-nine cents for a hot vegetable, fruit and raw vegetable.*

Edith Zumwalt  
Director, Nutritional Services -- Lincoln Public Schools

*When I became Food Service Manager at the Central City Public School six years ago, I wanted to introduce fresh, local fruits and vegetables to our school menu. First, I checked with the Nebraska Department of Education for guidelines to serve and purchase the produce. I chose Helgoth's [area producer that operates roadside stands and engages in other forms of direct marketing] after obtaining two bids as they had a better variety and quantity of produce to choose from. I order once a week and pick up the produce the next day. Students eat vegetables and fruit that are less than 24 hours old.*

*The benefits of buying local produce are: 1) freshness and safety, 2) knowing where and how it is produced, 3) knowing how the produce is handled and stored, 4) they have children in our school system, so their land taxes support our school system and 5) money is spent locally, so retailers and stores benefit.*

*Some of the obstacles include: 1) distance to buy the produce, 2) transportation, 3) handling and storing, 4) short growing season.*

*The quality of the produce is fantastic, the cost is minimal even after factoring in the time, labor and gas. We save over 50% on the cost of the produce using an average of all the produce served. I have documented all of the benefits as I have applied for awards. I would definitely still buy fresh, local produce if it was comparable or a little more than from stores and distributors as the freshness, quality and safety of the produce is better. We also like to support our local producers.*

*Students were so disappointed this year when I told them there would be no fresh fruit and vegetables due to the early freeze. They never tire of the fresh produce. I kept track for twelve weeks and students ate 199% more fruit and vegetables when they were fresh.*

Joyce Rice  
Food Service Coordinator, Central City Middle School

- Although Congress lessened barriers to local preferences in school food procurements, schools participating in federal child nutrition programs still must comply with competitive bidding requirements of state and federal law. Meeting competitive bid requirements in local food procurement may entail extensive research to identify local suppliers and require that schools advertise in different forums.
- Schools are particularly sensitive to food safety. Sourcing products from reliable sources that minimize food safety risk is important as a matter of policy, but is also a regulatory requirement and a potential liability concern. At least initially, buying from non-traditional suppliers may present new uncertainties for schools in that regard.
- School calendars only partially coincide with growing and harvesting seasons. Fresh local produce that are the most easily utilized in school settings may only be seasonably available in most regions of the nation, and thus opportunities are limited.
- What foods are considered “local” is ambiguous. For some districts, multiple food growers may operate within the district boundaries, but for some, particularly in urban areas, districts may need to expand the search area to find supplies in suitable quality and quantity.

# Programs & Resources

Any discussion of farm to school necessarily begins with a familiarity with the national school lunch program and other associated federal child nutrition assistance programs. This section provides an overview of the federal child nutrition programs and assistance formulas before discussing other potential resources to assist schools in Nebraska in incorporating farm to school concepts.

## Child Nutrition Programs.

School meal programs today almost exclusively operate within the context of the National School Lunch Act which establishes the basic federal aid programs to encourage and assist school districts in providing lunches to students and children in residential child care institutions. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) includes associated supplemental programs authorized under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 and expanded in subsequent legislation. The Food and Nutrition Service of USDA administers these programs at the Federal level. At the state level, the program is usually administered by state education agencies which operate the program through agreements with the school food authorities of individual districts.

### National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in more than 101,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions nationwide. School districts that choose to take part receive cash subsidies and donated commodities from USDA for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve meals that meet federal nutritional requirements and must offer free or reduced price lunches to eligible children.

Any child in a participating school may purchase a meal. However, children of families with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible for free meals, and those of families up to 180% of poverty are eligible for reduced price lunches (schools can charge no more than 40 cents for a reduced-price lunch). There is no limit on what schools may charge for full-price meals but the price charged is still subsidized to some extent. School meal programs must be operated on a non-profit basis.

Most of the support schools receive is in the form of cash reimbursement for each meal served. The current basic reimbursement rate is shown in the following table. Higher reimbursement rates are provided if more than 60% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunches.

Free Lunches	Reduced Price	Paid
\$2.68	\$2.28	\$0.25

In addition to cash assistance, schools are entitled to receive USDA “entitlement” foods in an amount equal to 19.5 cents per meal served. Schools may also receive bonus disbursements of foods available from surplus stocks. USDA has placed greater efforts

toward increasing the amount of fresh produce given to schools and is now offering unprecedented amounts and varieties of fresh fruit and vegetables.

According to the Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Nutritional Services, for the 2006-2007 school year, 333,001 Nebraska children in 1047 schools and childcare facilities had access to meals through the NSLP. On any given day, about 68% of the school children to whom the lunch program is available participate. For the 2006-2007 school year, the average charge for lunches in elementary schools is \$1.74 and \$1.93 in secondary schools.

School Breakfast Program

The School Breakfast Program is structurally similar to the National School Lunch Program and is also available to children in participating public or nonprofit private schools of high school grade or under and public or nonprofit private residential child care institutions. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the breakfast program receive cash subsidies from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve breakfasts that meet Federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price breakfasts to eligible children. Schools may charge no more than 30 cents for reduced price meals. While there is no limit on what schools may charge for paid breakfasts, school breakfasts also must be provided on a non-profit basis.

As with the school lunch program, the primary support schools receive is in the form of cash reimbursement for each breakfast served. The current basic reimbursement rate is shown in the following table.

Free Breakfast	Reduced Price	Paid
\$1.46	\$1.16	\$0.26

Schools may qualify for higher "severe need" reimbursements if 40% of their lunches are served free or at a reduced price. Severe need payments are up to 28 cents higher than the normal reimbursements for free and reduced-price breakfasts. About 74 percent of the breakfasts served in the School Breakfast Program receive severe need payments.

After School Snacks

The National School Lunch Program offers cash reimbursement to help schools serve snacks to children in after school activities aimed at promoting the health and well being of children and youth in our communities. A school must provide children with regularly scheduled activities in an organized, structured and supervised environment; include educational or enrichment activities. In order to be reimbursed, the snacks must contain at least two different components of the following four: a serving of fluid milk; a serving of meat or meat alternate; a serving of vegetable(s) or fruit(s) or full strength vegetable or fruit juice; a serving of whole grain or enriched bread or cereal.

Snacks served in after school care programs that are "area eligible" (a district where at least 50% of children are eligible for free or reduced lunch) will be reimbursed at the free rate, regardless of an individual student's eligibility for free or reduced price lunches. Snacks served in after school care programs that are not area eligible will be reimbursed

at the free, reduced price and paid rate depending on each individual's eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

#### Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

The 2008 Farm Bill amended the National School Lunch Act by adding section 19 creating the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) extending previous pilot programs operated in selected districts in a handful of states nationwide. Under the FFVP, selected elementary schools receive reimbursement of the cost of making free fresh fruits and vegetables available to students throughout the school day. These fresh fruits and vegetables must be provided separately from the lunch or breakfast meal, in one or more areas of the school during the official school day.

The Farm Bill allocated \$65 million beginning July 1, 2009 and increases the funding authority to \$101 million for school year 2011/12 and \$150 million for school year 1012/13. The funding authority will be indexed to inflation for subsequent years. Per statutory formula, funds are distributed as follows: (1) all 50 States and the District of Columbia will receive an annual grant equal to 1 percent of the funds made available; and (2) the remaining funds are allocated to each State that is operating a school lunch program under section 4 based on the proportion of the state population to the U.S. population.

From the funds made available, states select applicant school districts. Priority is to be given to schools that have higher percentages of students eligible for free or reduced price lunches. Total enrollment of all schools selected must result in a per student allocation of \$50 -75 per student annually. Under existing funding allocations available for distribution in Nebraska, there are currently 59 schools or school systems that are participating in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program during the 2009/2010 School Year.

#### Special Milk Program

The Special Milk Program provides milk to children in schools, child care institutions and eligible camps that do not participate in other Federal child nutrition meal service programs. The program reimburses schools and institutions for the milk they serve. When local school officials offer free milk under the program to low-income children, any child from a family that meets income guidelines for free meals is eligible. Each child's family must apply annually for free milk eligibility. The Federal reimbursement for each half-pint of milk sold to children in School Year 2009-2010 is 16.0 cents. For students who receive their milk free, the USDA reimburses schools the net purchase price of the milk. There are currently 57 institutions including schools in the state of Nebraska that participate in this program.

#### Child & Adult Care Food Program

The USDA also administers the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) established in 1968 as a response to the need to provide adequate nutrition to children in daycare and expanded to include eligible adults in 1988. The Child and Adult Care Food Program serves nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults who are enrolled for care at participating child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. CACFP also provides meals to children residing in emergency shelters, and snacks to youths participating in after school care programs.

FNS provides cash assistance to each State agency for meals served to eligible children and adults in day care centers based upon the participant's eligibility under the Income Eligibility Guidelines for free, reduced price, or paid meals. National average payments for meals served in centers are adjusted annually on July 1 to reflect changes in the *Food Away From Home* series of the Consumer Price Index. Meals served in emergency shelters and after school care snacks are reimbursed at the rates for free meals and snacks.

### **Federal Requirements for Competitive Procurement**

School food authorities (SFA) are not precluded from purchasing from local farmers for meals and snacks that are eligible for federal reimbursement through the child nutrition programs. However, schools must adhere to all federal and state procurement requirements designed to provide open and free competition. School Food Authorities may use their own procurement procedures which reflect applicable state and local laws and regulations as long as those procedures meet the requirements of 7 CFR Parts 3016 and 3019. The underlying foundation of these regulations is to assure that school food purchases eligible for federal reimbursement are conducted in a manner that provides maximum open and free competition, and that all suppliers have the same opportunity to compete.

Recently, new initiatives have been introduced to encourage schools to purchase from local farmers. Section 4302 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, P.L. 110-246 (Farm Bill), amended section 9(j) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA), 42 USC 1758(j), directing the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage institutions operating the Child Nutrition Programs to purchase unprocessed locally grown and locally raised agricultural products. In addition, the Farm Bill allows SFAs and other institutions receiving funds through the Child Nutrition Programs to apply a geographic preference when procuring unprocessed agricultural products. The term "unprocessed" excludes food products that have a significant value-added component but do not prevent local preference for foods that have undergone minimal preparation to present the product in a useable form, i.e. washing and bagging produce. Initial interpretations of this provision by USDA were that products that had undergone even minimal processing such as cutting or slicing and packaging in individual servings contained value added components and precluded from the local preference procurement allowance. On October 9, 2009, USDA issued a reinterpretation that the unprocessed restriction does not preclude local preference for foods that have undergone such processing in order to deliver in a useable form

Although schools are now free to apply locally-grown specifications in school food procurements, schools are still required to follow competitive bidding procedures when doing so. Schools may not disqualify or shut out responsible contractors capable of performing successfully under the terms and conditions of a proposed local procurement.

## **State and National Initiatives**

The Federal Child Nutrition Programs described above serve as the primary framework within which school meal budgets are formulated and meal planning and procurement occurs. Apart from funding elements alone, and perhaps just as importantly, the National School Lunch Program provides a forum for nutritional goals, policy and awareness, and is

the instrument through which nutrition initiatives are implemented. Farm to school is both complementary to, and an extension of, the mechanisms of the federal child nutrition programs to promote and deliver desired nutritional, and nutritional education, outcomes.

There are examples of districts around the nation that have successfully internalized any marginal costs of farm to school meal offerings. However, analysis of farm to school programs suggests that school districts may be challenged to incorporate its concepts without initial, and sometimes sustained, outside technical and financial support. Financial viability and administrative feasibility of the farm to school component is important since food service operations seldom receive district general funds and must be self sufficient financially.

With the growing popularity of the farm to school movement and in recognition of the opportunities associated with it, a number of initiatives have been started to provide financial and technical resources to help schools overcome financial and practical barriers to incorporating farm to school concepts.

### USDA

The United States Department of Agriculture has increasingly recognized the growing interest among school districts and communities to incorporate regionally and locally produced farm foods into the school nutrition programs. USDA is supporting farm to school efforts through a number of activities, including the Team Nutrition program and the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative, and continues to look for ways to help facilitate connections between schools and area growers. Various USDA divisions, including the Food and Nutrition Service, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Office of Rural Development implement grant programs and other forms of financial assistance for which projects to improve local foods capacity, marketing and utilization would be eligible.

### Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food

In September, the USDA announced the “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative.” According to the website, in the months to come, cross-cutting efforts at USDA will seek to use existing USDA programs to break down structural barriers that have inhibited local food systems from thriving. As the initiative evolves, USDA will continue to build on the momentum and ideas from the 2008 Farm Bill and target its existing programs and develop new ones to pursue sustainable agriculture and support for local and regional food systems. USDA announced a small initial group of moves that seek to connect local production and consumption and promote local-scale sustainable operations:

- **USDA's Risk Management Agency** announced \$3.4 million in funding for collaborative outreach and assistance programs to socially disadvantaged and underserved farmers. These programs will support 'Know Your Farmer' goals by helping producers adopt new and direct marketing practices. For example, nearly \$10,000 in funding for the University of Minnesota will bring together experts on food safety and regulations for a discussion of marketing to institutions like K-12 schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and other health care facilities.
- **USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service** proposed regulations to implement

a new voluntary cooperative program under which select state-inspected establishments will be eligible to ship meat and poultry products in interstate commerce. The new program was created in the 2008 Farm Bill and will provide new economic opportunities for small meat and poultry establishments whose markets are currently limited.

- **USDA's Rural Development** announced \$4.4 million in grants to help 23 local business cooperatives in 19 states. The member-driven and member-owned cooperative business model has been successful for rural enterprises, and brings rural communities closer to the process of moving from production to consumption as they work to improve their products and expand their appeal in the marketplace.
- **USDA's Rural Development** will also announce a Rural Business Opportunity Grant in the amount of \$150,000 to the Northwest Food Processors Association. The grant will strengthen the relationship between local food processors and customers in parts of Idaho, Oregon and Washington, and will also help the group reduce energy consumption, a major cost for food processors.
- **USDA Farm to School Tactical Team** is comprised of both Food and Nutrition Service and Agricultural Marketing Service staff members. It was created to support local and regional food systems by facilitating alliances between schools and their local food producers. Working with local and state authorities, school districts, farmers, and community partners, the Tactical Team provides guidance and develops mechanisms for assisting schools in accessing local markets, enabling food producers to effectively service their local schools and facilitating communication between interested stakeholders.

During 2010, the team will conduct nine site visits to schools representing varied demographics and characteristics. The goal of the visits is to analyze successful farm to school programs to gain insights into the underlying factors in their success to further guide policy and program initiatives.

### **Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Nebraska Visit**

USDA team member Jenny Montoya Tansey, visited Nebraska in the summer of 2009 as she worked to gather input on local foods prior to the announcement of the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative. Ms. Montoya attended the Local Foods Conference sponsored by the Farm, Fresh, Local initiative of the University of Nebraska and during her time in the state, visited several local farms including the Shadowbrook farm .

#### Team Nutrition

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service describes Team Nutrition as “an integrated behavior based comprehensive plan for promoting the nutritional health of the nation’s school children.” It seeks to support the Child Nutrition Programs through training and technical assistance for foodservice, nutrition education for children and their caregivers, and school and community support for healthy eating and physical activity.

The Team Nutrition approach is closely tied to the principles of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the food pyramid. Although Team Nutrition is not, per se, directed at establishing farm to school programs, its focus on linking school meals to other lifestyle and nutritional education and activities has been a catalyst for incorporating farm to school concepts. The program has placed an emphasis on assisting schools with sound business practices to assure the continued availability and financial viability of healthy school meals.

### State Initiatives

25 states have enacted some type of farm to school legislation, with seven states enacting legislation during 2009. There are multiple strategies to foster strong farm to school connections. Nationally the most generally used policy initiatives include:

- Provide grants and seed money for farm to school programs
- Provide funding for kitchen staff training or kitchen facilities
- Website linking schools to local producers
- Relaxing procurement requirements for the purchase of in-state food
- Developing curricula to integrate local food with in-class learning
- Experiential hands-on learning, such as working in a school garden or visiting a local farm.

The appendix to this report contains two items of information regarding state activities in this area. Both are authored by and reprinted with permission of National Conference of State Legislatures staff member, Douglas Shinkle. The first document is an NCSL “Legisbrief” publication (Vol. 16, No. 31) entitled “State Farm to School Policies” The second document is a compilation of descriptions of state legislative enactments in the past two years.

### National Farm to School Network

The National Farm to School Network is a leading non-governmental resource for research and publications, including practical guides, on the topic of incorporating farm to school concepts into school meal programs and curricula. It is a collaborative effort of the Center for Food & Justice, Occidental College and the Community Food Security Coalition. The Network implements the National Farm to School Program which provides various assistance to school districts and community organizations to conceive, initiate and sustain farm to school efforts. It has successfully assisted local organizations in fundraising, and providing informational resources, education and training for stakeholders.

### Nebraska Rural Development Commission

The Rural Development Commission advocates for policies for development appropriate to rural settings, particularly those that leverage the state’s agricultural base. The Commission works to assist projects in obtaining technical and financial assistance. In addition, the Commission directly administers the Agricultural Innovation and Value Added Agriculture grant program created under the Agricultural Opportunities and Value Added Partnerships Act authorized by LB 90 in 2005. The

2005 reauthorization expanded eligibility to educational institutions. Projects to assist feasibility of school – local grower connections, to enhance the ability of schools to utilize direct delivered farm products can be eligible for this program.

## Nebraska Local Foods Systems

Nebraska schools may be increasingly able to tap into a growing network of local food providers and public and private resources devoted to increasing local food production capacity and facilitating marketing opportunities and linkages between growers and consumers. The task force wanted to particularly note the following:

### Nebraska Food Cooperative

The Nebraska Food Cooperative consists of membership of both consumers and producers cooperatively organized and governed to provide a marketing and distribution system to improve market access to farmers and gardeners and reciprocal local food access for consumers. The cooperative maintains a website allowing producers to advertise products and consumers to order products, and coordinates pickup and delivery times and locations in a number of Nebraska communities.

### **The Growth of Direct Market Utilization by Farms**

The concept of directly linking schools and other institutional food consumers with local farms coincides with the rapid expansion of direct marketing of farm products that has occurred in the past fifteen years. The feasibility of procuring foods within a school's service region may benefit from the general expansion of farms and resources entering direct marketing niches.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) began systematically tracking farmers markets in 1994 when approximately 1750 farmers markets were operating. The number of farmers markets have grown steadily since that time, and the pace of establishment of new markets has increased in this decade. USDA/AMS recently announced that 5274 farmers markets operated nationwide during 2009, up 13% in just one year over the 4685 farmers markets in 2008.

Data collected every five years for the Census of Agriculture also suggests rapid growth in all forms of direct marketings by growers. The 2007 Census estimates the value of direct sales by U.S. farms -- sales by farms directly to household and institutional consumers - of \$1.2 billion annually. This is an increase of 49% from the \$812 million of direct sales estimated in the 2002 Census, and more than double the value of direct sales estimated in 1997. The number of growers reporting engaging in some form of direct marketing for at least a portion of their production has increased as well, to over 136,000 farms in 2007 compared to just under 117,000 in 2002, and 110,600 in 1997.

While its popularity among consumers and small farm owners is growing rapidly, direct sales still account for only about .4% of all farm income. When eliminating sales of non food farm products from total farm sales, direct marketing of foodstuffs represents about 1% of farm sales. Still, direct-to-consumer marketing has exceeded the growth of total agricultural sales. From 1997 – 2007, direct marketings grew by 104.7% in the U.S. while total agricultural sales increased by only 47.6%.

### Nebraska Local Foods Network

The Nebraska Local Foods Network (NFLN) describes itself as a collaboration of Nebraskans working together to encourage and facilitate the increased production and consumption of local foods. The NFLN is coordinated by the University of Nebraska Rural Initiative and the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center in collaboration with other governmental and academic institutions and private associations interested in increasing local food diversity and self sufficiency and developing higher value marketing opportunities for Nebraska producers. To advance these goals, the NFLN has divided into three subcommittees:

Production: This group focuses on recruitment of and technical assistance to producers to increase the number of farms and ranches producing high quality value added products.

Nutrition / Education: The nutrition and education group seeks to increase demand and consumption of local food products through nutritional education and promotion of local food choices.

Marketing / Distribution: This group seeks to identify and offer solutions to marketing and distribution barriers to small and medium sized farmers.

#### Buy Fresh - Buy Local Nebraska Program

Buy Fresh, Buy Local Nebraska was established in 2006 as part of FoodRoutes Network, a national, nonprofit organization providing support to 74 chapters in 35 states. The founding partners, University of Nebraska –Lincoln, Nebraska Cooperative Development Center, Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, and the Nebraska Great Plains Resource Conservation & Development Council, joined together with a common desire to support, promote and create a local food system to simplify the purchasing of food produced on small to mid-scale family farms and ranches. The program has focused on recruitment of small-to-medium sized farmers

The program operates as an outreach and marketing initiative of a cooperative of producer and business members. Its Buy Fresh, Buy Local marketing logo operates as a certification to identify producers and agricultural products grown for consumption in Nebraska, and offerings by restaurants, farmers markets and retail outlets that feature products traceable to Nebraska farms.

#### Nebraska Our Best to You

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture has developed the “Nebraska, Our Best to You” logo program to identify qualifying Nebraska producers and their products. The logo is utilized as a certification mark on labels and advertising of associate members -- commodity groups, educational institutions, government agencies and wholesalers and retailers -- who enter into a licensing agreement with the Department. The logo may be used by registered producers and food or agribusiness companies provided products to which the logo are associated are grown or raised in Nebraska. The Department also publishes and annually updates the Guide to Nebraska Fresh Produce, containing a current listing and location of farmers markets in the state and growers who specialize in direct marketing of fresh produce and other food products they produce on their farms.

## Recommended Publications

The LR 42 Task Force examined various literature providing technical guidance for incorporating farm to school programs into the school curriculum. There are a number of excellent items available that provide practical guidance on incorporating farm to school concepts and which feature examples of farm to school activities from school districts around the nation. The task force would refer readers to the following publications and the web locations where these documents and additional information on the topic may be accessed:

*Eat Smart-Farm Fresh! A Guide to Buying and Serving Locally-Grown Produce in School Meals*; USDA/Food and Nutrition Service, December 2005.  
[<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/default.htm>]

*Small Farms/School Meals Initiative: A Step-by-Step Guide on How to Bring Small Farms and Local Schools Together*; USDA/Food and Nutrition Service  
[<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/Downloadable/small.pdf>]

*Nourishing the Nation One Tray at a Time: Farm to School Initiatives in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization*; National Farm to School Network

*Going Local: Paths to Success for Farm to School Programs*; National Farm to School Network [ <http://www.farmtoschool.org/publications.php?pt=case> ]

*A Growing Movement: A Decade of Farm to School In California*; National Farm to School Network [ <http://www.farmtoschool.org/publications.php?pt=eval> ]

# Task Force Findings and Recommendations

## (1) Fund a statewide position responsible for coordinating and assisting any public school that applies with developing and implementing a farm to school program.

The LR 42 Local Foods Working Group recommends that a full time position as the Farm to school Statewide Coordinator be created and funded. The primary purpose of this position would be to facilitate the development of farm to school programs throughout the State.

## (2) Education

The working group finds that a multi-pronged educational approach will be the most inclusive way to foster communication between educational and farm communities. Within the local foods informal and formal networks, there are a variety of individuals and entities that could benefit from different types of education on the local foods movement and specifically the availability of buying and selling fresh fruits, vegetables, beef and dairy products. Among those groups identified for potential information were:

- **Farmers (suppliers)** could benefit from having more information on packaging, labeling and working with school systems. Suppliers could also benefit from information about the limited budget that the schools are allowed to spend on each student meal, required controlled portion sizes, procurement, and food safety practices in handling foods.
- **School systems** could benefit from having more information about how to identify a local farmer that could source the necessary quantity of food, and how to work within the formal and informal networks to better utilize the local resources available. Within the school system, administrators and school lunch staff could benefit from receiving similar information.
- **The public** could benefit from education that will inform on the availability and safety of local foods and local foods markets and the necessary level of training and professionalism required to be a part of a local foods market.
- **Parochial, private schools** and other types of schools that are not aware of and currently do not benefit from state of federal local foods initiatives or programs could be made aware about the availability of local foods. The Nebraska School Nutrition Association would be helpful in disseminating this information within the educational community. In addition, conferences or other continuing education units may be useful.

## **Intermediate Goals**

### **(1) Review current Rules and Regulations**

- A structured review of the current rules and regulations related to local foods that are currently in place is recommended by this group. Procurement processes could be reviewed in comprehensive manner. In addition, rules about what can be bought and what is not for purchase with regard to the public school system.
- Labeling requirements now include listing ingredients and nutritional information. Labeling requirements may be difficult to achieve for suppliers.
- Review of the food safety practices that are required by schools to ensure these are understood and implemented by the farmers and producers.

### **(2) Statewide Needs Assessment of Processing and Distribution Centers**

The group finds that there is little statewide information available regarding the produce processing and distribution centers. A needs assessment of the available produce processing and distribution centers would be useful to educational systems, consumers, grocers, and any potential vendor of local food commodities. It would be helpful for distributors and producers already in place to network and make connections, thus enhancing economic development opportunities. In addition, the needs assessment could have a component dedicated to evaluating the types of processing already occurring in schools and grocery stores that market local foods.

### **(3) Build on Current Coop model**

The group supports a model that would continue to bring producers together with consumers. In addition, the group discussed the community supported agriculture model in which a consumer buys into a local farmer's garden and then receives a certain amount of product. These two models may be helpful in connecting farmers to school systems.

## **Long Range Goals**

### **(1) Regional cold storage facilities**

The group finds that a cost benefits analysis on whether a regional cold storage facility would be cost effective could be beneficial to the development of the local foods distribution network. This recommendation is based on the perceived lack of cold storage facilities throughout the state, and the belief that a cold storage facility is paramount to building a strong, consistent local foods distributing network.

## **(2) Create a voucher program for schools**

The working group recommends that a voucher program for schools be created. This program would be based off of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture's (NDA) Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. This program is currently funded through a grant provided by the United States Department of Agriculture. This program allows seniors to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers markets at no cost.

## **(3) Create some type of volunteer commodity program for local foods at the state level.**

The working group recommends that a farm to school commodity program be adopted and administered by the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. The purpose of this voluntary program is to improve child nutrition in schools and strengthen local and regional farm economies. This program would encourage the relationship between Nebraska farms and Nebraska schools to purchase locally and regionally produced or processed foods to provide Nebraska's children with fresh minimally processed food for inclusion in school lunches.

The above language is based off of Iowa's bill that creates a statewide farm to school program SF 551 (2007). \$80,000 was appropriated for farm to school in FY08 and FY09 to go toward salaries, support, maintenance, and other miscellaneous needs.

## **(4) Continue to bring stakeholders to the table in the future to discuss Farm to School (or is it to discuss Local Foods in Public Institutions)**

The group finds that a continued dialogue is necessary to further engage stakeholders to continue the conversation related to the issues presented in this report. The group finds that the dialogue generated by the LR 42 group was helpful for communication amongst participants, collaboration amongst various groups, and for fostering thought provoking ideas that could create the next step in the local foods movement. Bringing together the members of the educational nutrition system, along with government and members of the formal and informal local foods network proved to be beneficial to those who participated. This group recommends that a Local Foods Working Coalition be established by the Legislature to further discuss topics related to local foods including but not limited to marketing, processing, distribution, food safety and education. The Local Foods Working Coalition would be charged with continuing to explore ways in which local foods can be brought into schools and other public institutions.

# **Appendix**



# FARM TO SCHOOL CHRONOLOGY

**1996-1997** Birth of farm to school through pilot projects in California (Santa Monica-Malibu USD and The Edible Schoolyard, Berkeley) and Florida (New North Florida Marketing Cooperative).

**2000** USDA IFAFS supports the establishment of the National Farm to School Program enabling program development, research, and policy.

**2001** USDA AMS began organizing farm to school workshops around the country as part of the Small Farms/School Meals Initiative. Ground-breaking meetings brought farmers and food service together for the first time to discuss how to implement farm to school programs in Kentucky, Iowa and Oregon.

Estimated 6 pilot programs operational\*

**2002** 1st regional Farm to Cafeteria conference organized at Cornell University (with support from University of New Hampshire).

1st Farm to Cafeteria Conference in October in Seattle, Washington with approximately 200 attendees.

**2004** National Farm to School Program authorized in statute in the 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization. (While the program has been established, it has not yet received any federal funding.)

National survey of farm to school projects with an estimated 400 programs in 22 states.\*

Launch of [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org).

Informal discussions about a National Farm to School Network begin.

**2005** Planning grant received for National Farm to School Network from Kellogg.

2nd Farm to Cafeteria Conference in June in Gambier, Ohio with over 350 attendees.

**2005-2006** Regional meetings held across the country to gather feedback on need for a national network and setting priorities; national survey estimates 1000+ programs.\*

**2007** 3rd Farm to Cafeteria Conference in March in Baltimore, Maryland with over 400 attendees.

Kellogg grant approved in May creating the National Farm to School Network: Regional Lead Agencies in eight regions established; national staff hired; Network plans over three years developed in September.

**2008** Partners of the National Network, Program Strategy Advisory Committee and Regional Steering Committees established to guide national efforts.

Farm Bill legislation successfully passed allowing food service directors to preference local products.

National Network represented at all regional USDA briefings on the Child Nutrition Reauthorization. Developed priorities for the CNR.

**2009** Congressional briefings held on farm to school in February in DC with over 100 attendees.

4th Farm to Cafeteria Conference in March in Portland, Oregon with over 550 attendees.

Estimated over 2000 programs in 40 states.\*

\*Estimated by the National Farm to School Network



Bringing healthy food from local farms to schools nationwide.



[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)



## **State Farm-to-School Policies**

### **By Douglas Shinkle**

Evidence links good nutrition to student achievement – well nourished students do better in school. Concern about school nutrition, childhood obesity and local farm economies have led legislators to develop statewide farm-to-school programs. The programs combine two popular ideas: Providing students with fresh, healthy food while increasing their knowledge of nutrition and agriculture; and bolstering local agricultural economies with new markets.

Partners in developing farm-to-school programs include farmers who need new markets, school health advocates who are concerned about children's nutritional needs, and environmental groups that are concerned about the effects of large-scale agriculture and food transportation. The opportunity for farm-to-school initiatives to strengthen communities economies is also compelling. Farm-to-school programs create stronger local food systems and support not only producers and the many industries they rely upon, such as equipment, maintenance and seed businesses and transportation and processing networks.

#### **State Action**

In March 2008, Washington passed an ambitious farm-to-school bill with nearly unanimous support. The legislation links farmers and schools, identifies curricula, establishes a fresh fruit and vegetable grant program, requires revision of food procurement laws to ease purchasing of local food, and aids other sectors of the local food economy, such as food processors.

The first steps in building a farm-to-school program include connecting growers and schools, matching schools' needs with local produce availability, and addressing logistical issues such as purchasing, transporting and processing. State websites are valuable tools to connect farms and schools. For example, New York's database of producers and products allows school food service directors to search for specific products and the local farmers who supply them.

#### **Benefits of Farm-to-School Policies**

Studies show that children are more likely to eat fresh fruits and vegetables when they learn about them in the classroom and when they have a connection to the farmer. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) case studies of farm-to-school programs show that using local fresh foods increases school meal participation and consumption of salads and other vegetables. Higher meal participation can significantly increase federal reimbursement to states for school meals. Farm-to-school programs also can foster a connection to fresh food and its source through farm visits and school gardens that can help stimulate student interest in proper nutrition, agriculture and environmental stewardship.

Federal law requires local school districts that participate in federal school meals programs (about 99 percent of U.S. schools) to adopt local wellness policies for food served in schools and set nutrition guidelines. Local produce may help schools meet goals for healthy foods and nutrition education.

#### **Strategies to address potential barriers**

Farm-to-school programs can face numerous structural impediments. Barriers for producers include a lack of processing facilities and distribution networks. School kitchens lack space, manpower, training

and equipment to prepare fresh food. Five states have created statewide farm-to-school coordinators to help producers develop solutions to these issues.

Producers and schools can also be baffled by complex procurement requirements. State legislators can help simplify the process and increase competitiveness for local bidders with certain strategies. One is to raise the minimum amount that schools can bid for food. Higher bid thresholds can give food service directors more latitude to choose local food based on factors other than price. The Michigan Legislature currently is considering a bill to simplify school purchases of local food under \$100,000. Another strategy is to create price preferences and practices that favor local food purchases.

Seasonal challenges occur because the prime growing season in most states' coincides with school summer vacations. Creative processing and freezing can remedy some of these problems. State economic development support may be needed, however, to bolster the availability of food processing facilities for smaller farmers.

### **Federal Action**

Federal programs also support school purchase of fresh produce. Most states participate in the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program through the USDA, using commodity entitlement funds to purchase a variety of produce. The 2008 Farm Bill significantly increases funding for the program and clarifies language to allow states and school districts to use geographical preferences to encourage local food purchases. The legislation also expands the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which will be funded at \$1 billion to provide fruit and vegetable snacks to low-income elementary students in all 50 states.

### **Resources**

NCSL Healthy Food, Physical Activity and Food Systems to Support Healthy Communities Web Page  
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/KelloggHealthOverview.htm>

NCSL Access to Healthy Food Web Page  
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/publichealth/foodaccess/index.htm>

NCSL Healthy Community Design and Access to Healthy Food database  
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/enviro/healthyCommunity/healthycommunitydb.htm>

New York state Website linking producers and schools  
[http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/PrideofNY/product\\_search.asp](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/PrideofNY/product_search.asp)



To: Jessica Kingsley  
 From: Douglas Shinkle  
 Date: September 28, 2009  
 Subject: 2008-2009 Enacted Farm-to-School Legislation

Note that some of this legislation is quite ambitious in nature, while others are seeking to convene a conversation about farm-to-school issues and the best way forward. A few of these bills deal more largely with local food, but all touch on farm-to-school in some manner. Generally, the main strategies to foster strong farm-to-school connections are to:

- provide grants and seed money for farm-to-school programs;
  - funding for kitchen facilities and kitchen staff training; See this [brief on using ARRA funds for retrofitting school kitchens](#) (page 7) and Hawaii [HB 992](#)
  - websites linking schools and local producers;
  - relaxing procurement requirements for the purchase of in-state food;
  - developing curricula to integrate local food with in-class learning;
  - experiential hands-on learning, such as working in a school garden or visiting a local farm.
- Expand on and perhaps add links!

To view links, please press control and click on the link simultaneously.

## **2009 legislation**

### **Illinois**

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**[HB 3990](#)** (2009 Ill. Laws, P.A. #96-0579)

**Sponsor:** Hamos

**Date Introduced:** 3/19/2009 **Date of Last Action:** 8/18/2009 **Status:** Adopted/Law

**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | [Farm-to-School](#) | Farmers' Market |

**Summary:** This bill creates the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act. Among its provisions, it sets a goal that 20% of all food and food products purchased by State agencies and State-owned facilities be local farm or food products by 2020. The state shall also support and

encourage that 10% of food and food products purchased by entities funded in part or in whole by State dollars be local food. Local farm or food products may be given a 10% price preference by state agencies in the procurement process. All State agencies and State-owned facilities that purchase food and food products shall develop a system for identifying the percentage of local farm or food products purchased for fiscal year 2011 as the baseline; and tracking and reporting local farm or food products purchases on an annual basis. The bill also creates the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council, which shall assist State agencies and State-owned facilities, with the purchase and tracking of local farm or food products. The council also will; assist local farm and food entrepreneurs to identify and secure necessary resources and equipment to expand projects for the development of local farm or food products; facilitate the building of infrastructure; facilitate the use of public lands for growing local food products; and set annual goals for all purchases of local food products by Illinois residents and to monitor the development and expansion of a local farm and food economy through data collection. The council also will develop, a label and certification program different than the "Illinois Product" label program, whereby a label with a specific name and unique design or logo may be placed on local farm and food products.

*(Last Update: 8/26/2009)*

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**HB 78** (2009 IL.. Laws,  
P.A. #96-0153)

**Sponsor:** Cole

**Date Introduced:** 1/14/2009 **Date of Last Action:** 6/11/2009 **Status:** Adopted/Law

**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | **Farm-to-School** | Nutrition | Obesity - Childhood |

**Summary:** This bill would create the Farm Fresh Schools Program in the Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Health. The intent of the program is to reduce obesity and improve nutrition and public health, as well as strengthen local agricultural economies by increasing access to and promoting the consumption of locally grown fruits and vegetables in schools. The Department of Agriculture and the State Board of Education shall award grants on a competitive basis to 6 different counties, including 3 urban counties and 3 rural counties. *(Last Update: 8/26/2009)*

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## Kentucky

**SB 84** (2009 KY. Acts,  
Chap. #

**Sponsor:** Givens

**Date Introduced:** 2/9/2009 **Date of Last Action:** 2/11/2009 **Status:** Adopted/Law

**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | **Farm-to-School** |

**Summary:** This bill would require state agencies and governing boards that purchase agricultural products or Kentucky-grown agricultural products to annually report the types, quantities, and costs of the products. See HB669 of 2006 for more details. *(Last Update: 5/27/2009)*

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## Maine

**LD 1140** (2009 Maine Laws, Chap. #106)**Sponsor:** McCabe**Date Introduced:** 3/25/2009 **Date of Last Action:** 6/9/2009 **Status:** Adopted/Law**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | [Farm-to-School](#) |**Summary:** This bill would direct the Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources to convene a work group to study farm-to-school initiatives and programs in the State and develop recommendations for strengthening farm-to-school efforts in the State. The work group shall: A. Assess the status of regional and statewide farm-to-school efforts throughout the State, including policies, practices and curricula; B. Review the existing capacities of and barriers to facilitating the purchase and use of local products; C. Review the status of networking channels that connect farm-to-school efforts throughout the State; D. Review best practices and evaluate methods from other farm-to-school programs outside the State; and E. Prepare recommendations for strengthening farm-to-school initiatives and programs within the state. (*Last Update: 8/7/2009*)

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**New Hampshire**

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**HB 48** (2009 NH Laws, Chap. # 115)**Sponsor:** Haefner**Date Introduced:** 1/29/2009 **Date of Last Action:** 5/20/2009 **Status:** Adopted/Law**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | [Farm-to-School](#) |**Summary:** This bill would establish a committee on agriculture in the classroom. The committee shall, among other things, determine the objectives and programs of agriculture in the classroom and develop details and directions of the agriculture in the classroom programs. (*Last Update: 7/7/2009*)

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**North Carolina**

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**SB 1067** (2009 NC Laws, Chap. #530)**Sponsor:** Albertson**Date Introduced:** 3/26/2009 **Date of Last Action:** 8/28/2009 **Status:** Adopted/Law**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Coalition/Council | Direct Marketing | [Farm-to-School](#) | Farmers' Market | Nutrition |**Summary:** This bill creates a Sustainable Local Food Policy Council, whose purpose is to contribute to building a local food economy. The council must report to the legislature every year and may consider these issues, among others; assessing currently served school foods, including the possibility of increasing the amount of sustainable local food used in these programs; an analysis of making sustainable local food available under public assistance programs, including using food stamps at farmers' markets; considering the possibility of promoting urban gardens and backyard gardens; analyzing the potential impacts that the production of sustainable local food would have on economic development in North Carolina; an examination of barriers to a sustainable local food economy; and issues regarding strengthening local infrastructure and entrepreneurial efforts related to a sustainable local food economy. The council is meant to promote local and regional efforts by providing an information and engagement hub that assists entrepreneurs and farmers

in working around barriers and pursuing opportunities. *(Last Update: 9/1/2009)*

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## Texas

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### [SB 1027](#)

**Sponsor:** Watson

**Date Introduced:** 3/13/2009 **Date of Last Action:** 6/19/2009 **Status:** Adopted/Law

**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | [Farm-to-School](#) |

**Summary:** This bill would create an interagency farm-to-school coordination task force. The task force shall carry out numerous farm-to-school provisions, including: design education resources on nutrition and food education to be used by schools and school districts; develop a database of available locally grown food products for use by school food service agencies that includes contact and purchasing information for the products; design and implement training programs to enable local farmers and ranchers to market their products to schools; and offer advanced skills development training to school food service employees regarding the proper methods of handling, preparing, and serving locally grown foods. This bill, as amended, would offer assistance, rather than creating a stand-alone grant program, in identifying funding sources and grants that allow schools and school districts to recover the costs associated with purchasing locally grown food products. Companion is HB 1840. *(Last Update: 7/7/2009)*

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## Vermont

[HB 313](#) (Act #54 of 2009)

**See section 35, page 65!!**

**Sponsor:** House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

**Date Introduced:** 3/17/2009 **Date of Last Action:** 5/9/2009 **Status:** Adopted/Law

**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | [Farm-to-School](#) | Farmers' Market |

**Summary:** This bill would create a farm-to-plate investment program to create jobs in the food and farm economy, improve access to healthy local foods, and increase economic development in Vermont's food and farm sector. The program shall create a strategic plan for agricultural economic development, including: taking inventory of Vermont's food system infrastructure; information on the types of food produced; information on food processors; markets for Vermont foods, and barriers to increasing a local food economy. The Vermont farm-to-plate investment program shall seek grant funding to support farm-to-table direct marketing, including farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture operations and to support regional community food hubs. The program shall support the work of existing farm-to-school programs to increase the purchase of local foods by Vermont schools. The bill appropriates \$100,000 from federal economic stimulus for these purposes. *(Last Update: 6/8/2009)*

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## Washington

**HB 1244 (2009 Wash. Laws, Chap. # 564)** This bill funded SB6483 of 2008, which is referenced in the document you have.

**Sponsor:** Linville

**Date Introduced:** 1/15/2009 **Date of Last Action:** 5/19/2009 **Status:** Adopted/Law

**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | [Farm-to-School](#) | Farmers' Market |

**Summary:** This bill would appropriate \$600,000 each for 2010 and 2011 to fund the local farms and healthy kids grant program. See SB6483 of 2008 for more details. (*Last Update:* 5/29/2009)

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## 2008 legislation

### Michigan

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#### [HB 6365](#) (Michigan Public Act 343 of 2008)

**Sponsor:** Gonzales

**Date Introduced:** 8/13/2008 **Date of Last Action:** 12/23/2008 **Status:** Adopted/Law

**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | [Farm-to-School](#) |

**Summary:** This bill would allow a school district or public school academy to make food purchases without using competitive bids unless the amount is in a single transaction over \$100,000. The current ceiling is \$19,650. One of the intentions of this bill is to make it easier for schools to purchase local food in a single transaction costing \$100,000.00 or more. (*Last Update:* )

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#### [HB 6366](#) (Michigan Public Act 344 of 2008)

**Sponsor:** Hansen

**Date Introduced:** 8/13/2008 **Date of Last Action:** 12/23/2008 **Status:** Adopted/Law

**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | [Farm-to-School](#) |

**Summary:** This bill would allow an intermediate school district to make food purchases without using competitive bids unless the amount is in a single transaction over \$100,000. The current ceiling is \$19,650. One of the intentions of this bill is to make it easier for schools to purchase local food in a single transaction costing \$100,000.00 or more. (*Last Update:* )

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#### [HB 6368](#) (Michigan Public Act 315 of 2008)

**Sponsor:** Mayes

**Date Introduced:** 12/8/2008 **Date of Last Action:** 12/17/2008 **Status:** Adopted/Law

**Topics:** | Agriculture/Local Foods | Direct Marketing | [Farm-to-School](#) |

**Summary:** This bill would create the "farm-to-school procurement act." The Act would require the Michigan department of agriculture and the Michigan department of education to investigate the potential of various procurement procedures and tools for school food authorities to purchase local farm products. This includes: educating food service directors on the small purchase threshold and other procurement procedures that promote the use of local food, implementing food preparation training for food service staff to accommodate sourcing fresh and local foods, encouraging school food service directors to

include local farmers, processors, and suppliers when taking bids for farm products that fall under the small purchase threshold, and encouraging all new school construction projects to consider kitchen facilities capable of producing fresh school meals and opportunities for hands-on learning. The department of agriculture must house a point-person to coordinate efforts and disseminate information on the school food procurement process to help farmers, processors, and suppliers learn more about the process. As well, the point-person would link school food service directors and farmers, possibly through a web-based directory of farmers searchable by location. *(Last Update: 12/30/2008)*