



Farm to School: A Ripe Idea!

Research shows Farm to School provides a multitude of benefits.

- *Prepares children to learn:* Diet quality and nutritional status are associated with a child's ability to focus and learn. By providing fresh, nutritious and delicious schools meals, a student's academic performance may be enhanced.
- *Improves health and well-being:* Establishing healthy diets in childhood – those rich in a diversity of fruits and vegetables – is important for life-long well-being. Farm to School, with its focus on a well-balanced diet including fresh, minimally processed fruits and vegetables, offers schools an exciting way to positively impact children's health and well-being throughout their lives.
- *Strengthens the local economy:* By supporting local farmers and distributors, schools help keep and re-circulate dollars in the local economy. Also, any purchase of New York State product contributes to the NYS tax base, which in turn, funds NYS public schools.
- *Building healthy communities:* By connecting health concerns, education and local farmers and processors, NYS Farm to School can help to:
 - ✓ Address diet-related problems among our youth
 - ✓ Develop an appreciation for the importance of agriculture
 - ✓ Preserve open-space and the natural environment
 - ✓ Promote strong community food security networks

What is Farm to School?

Farm to School initiatives are popping up throughout New York and all over the country – in day care centers, in public and private schools, and in colleges and universities. These programs focus on featuring locally grown, healthy foods in school meals. They often also include other components such as classroom lessons on food and nutrition; visits to farms and farmers' markets; creation of school gardens, and the support of school-based community supported agriculture (CSA) programs.







Photo courtesy of USDA

Resources

- New York Farm to School Toolkit from Cornell Farm to School Research and Extension
www.farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu
- New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets: Farm to School
www.prideofny.com/farm_to_school.html
- New York State Department of Health Division of Nutrition
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/nutrition>
- New York State Education Department
www.nysed.gov/
- NY Farm to School Listserv
[www.farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu/content/view/full/ny-Farm to School-listserv.html](http://www.farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu/content/view/full/ny-Farm%20to%20School-listserv.html)
- NY Farms!
www.nyfarms.info/farmtoschool.html
- National Farm to School Program
www.farmtoschool.org
- Food Routes: Farm to School
www.foodroutes.org/farmtoschool.jsp



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New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets Farm to School Program



Photo courtesy of USDA

Farm to School Mission

Our goal is to increase the consumption of nutritious New York-grown and produced foods in schools in order to strengthen local agriculture, improve student health, and promote regional food systems awareness. Through a variety of tools and hands-on resources, we provide assistance to schools, farms, food distributors, parents and community organizations who want to provide students with nutritious, delicious, seasonally varied meals from foods produced by local farms and food processors.

Who is leading Farm to School in New York?

The New York Farm to School Coordinating Committee represents many organizations with a wide range of interests. Together, they are collaborating to advance sound policies, programs and resources to expand the capacity for successful Farm to School efforts throughout the State. Coordinating Committee members include:

- Agriculture in the Classroom
- Cornell University
- Food Service Directors
- Farmers
- Food Processors and Food Distributors
- NY Farm Bureau
- NY Farms!
- NY School Nutrition Association
- NYC Department of Education, School Food
- NY Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm, and Nutrition
- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
- NYS Department of Health
- NYS Education Department
- NYS Office of General Services

The Department's Farm to School Efforts

The Department of Agriculture & Markets is committed to working with other State agencies and partners to connect local farmers and food processors with schools in their communities. We facilitate these connections by:

- Maintaining a list of farmers and food processors who are interested in selling their products to schools
- Increasing access to New York-grown and produced foods by identifying purchasing opportunities and building the State's distribution capacity
- Conducting an annual survey of school districts to ascertain their interest in Farm to School and the demand for specific New York agricultural products
- Providing technical assistance and support for the development and marketing of healthy products targeted for children (such as Carrot Crunchers)
- Making policy recommendations to support local purchasing preference in New York schools
- Developing school gardening programs and policy recommendations to encourage school gardening and school connections with nearby gardens and farms
- Through the Department's Pride of New York Program, offering a variety of educational and promotional resources for schools to demonstrate their commitment to Farm to School and to highlight their accomplishments to the community



Photo courtesy of USDA

Farm to You Fest! New York Harvest for New York Kids Week

Farm to You Fest! (NYHNYK) is a weeklong celebration of local food and agriculture where a diverse variety of activities occur throughout the State. Resources are available to help schools and communities learn about New York agriculture, enjoy locally grown foods, and inspire healthy food choices. During this celebration, school cafeterias feature New York farm products; classes do food tastings; schools visit farms and farmers' markets; students harvest their school gardens, and much more!

What can you do to support Farm to School in New York?

We can all be role models for desired dietary and exercise behaviors. Here are some tips on how you can support Farm to School efforts in your community:

- Food Service Directors** Let your food distributor and local farmers know that you are interested in purchasing fresh, local, nutritious food for students and in supporting your local economy! Contact the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets or your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office for assistance locating a farmer interested in participating.
- Farmers and Processors** Contact the school food service director at your nearby school and ask about what the school needs and when they need it. Contact the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets or your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office for a list of schools who have expressed an interest in purchasing local products.
- School Teachers** Students see teachers as role models; embrace the vital role you can play in your student's health. Many curricula exist that allow teachers to integrate food and food system concepts into classroom learning. Talk to other teachers and school administrators about what your school or district could do to support Farm to School.
- Parents and Community Members** Approach the school administration and school boards to communicate your support of Farm to School in your community. Offer positive suggestions for healthy school meals. Volunteer in the classroom or cafeteria.

See Resources section for where you can go for more information and additional contacts.