



Bringing healthy food from local farms to schools in California.



## FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS CONNECT SCHOOLS WITH LOCAL FARMS

Providing students with farm-fresh and locally grown food choices is the focal point of farm to school programs. Each farm to school program buys and features fresh, healthy and local breakfast, lunch or snack options, such as fruits and vegetables, nuts, and grains. Participating schools assist in teaching students the importance of eating healthy local foods by offering nutrition-based curricula and providing students with hands-on learning opportunities through farm visits, gardening, and composting programs.

Farm to school programs help children understand where their food comes from and the importance of supporting their local community, while encouraging students to make healthy food choices part of their everyday life.

## WHY IS FARM TO SCHOOL IMPORTANT?

There is an urgent need to educate children about food and choices that affect their health. A study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control Prevention in 2003 showed more than 60% of young people eat too much fat, and less than 20% eat the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Studies conducted at California farm to school programs in Compton and Davis have shown that students will increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables if the produce is fresh and grown by local farmers.

Increasing the availability of locally-grown products in school meals and educational activities will also expand the market for small and medium-sized farmers and will mitigate the environmental impacts of transporting food long distances.

## CALIFORNIA IS A LEADER IN FARM TO SCHOOL

California has long been a leader in the farm to school trend, after more than a decade of farm to school there are now programs in more than 1,000 schools. Because of California's year round growing season and rich agricultural heritage, it is the ideal state where farm to school programs can flourish and grow!

Visit the new **California Farm to School Website** for information and resources to help make farm to school a reality in your area. Farm to school leadership in California is facilitated by the California Farm to School Taskforce. The Taskforce includes food service staff, community based organizations, farmers, farm organizations, and the California State Departments of Health, Education, and Food and Agriculture. Visit the website to get involved!

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

# Farm to School is a Growing Movement!

## SCHOOL DISTRICTS IMPLEMENT FARM TO SCHOOL IN SEVERAL WAYS

- ⇒ Salad bars offered as part of the National School Lunch Program.
- ⇒ Local foods featured in lunch, breakfast, or snacks.
- ⇒ Nutrition education activities featuring local foods, such as Harvest of the Month.
- ⇒ Instructional school gardens and garden-based learning activities connected to the curriculum.
- ⇒ Local foods as a healthy school fundraiser or featured at a special event.
- ⇒ Agriculture education opportunities, such as farm tours or farmers' presentations.

## FARMERS SELL TO SCHOOLS IN MANY WAYS

- ⇒ Direct sales relationship with food service staff.
- ⇒ Direct wholesale arrangements at farmers' markets.
- ⇒ Selling through a farm cooperative.
- ⇒ Selling through a wholesale distributor or produce firm.

## BENEFITS OF FARM TO SCHOOL

Farm to school program are known to:

- ⇒ Promote healthy eating habits and reduce the risk of obesity and other health related disorders in children.
- ⇒ Provide children access to local, healthy and nourishing foods.
- ⇒ Facilitate education about nutrition, food and agriculture in and out of the classroom.
- ⇒ Increase school lunch participation rates.
- ⇒ Open up new markets and increase revenues and customer base for farmers.
- ⇒ Develop community support and awareness about local food systems and agriculture.



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## STARTING A FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

### Be inclusive

Most farm to school projects are successful because they include many stakeholders. You may want to contact community or non-profit organizations in your area as well as parents, teachers, school food service staff, elected officials, school administrators, farmers, farmers' market managers, food distributors, universities, and local businesses to identify the champions that will work to make farm to school a reality.

### Start small

If a daily farm to school salad bar is your vision, start small by sourcing just one or two locally grown foods to feature on the menu or the salad bar. Get comfortable with ordering, delivery, invoicing, and food prep before you scale up.

### Think outside the cafeteria

If serving local foods in the cafeteria is too much of a barrier, provide local foods to teachers to use for teaching in the classroom, offer monthly Harvest of the Month taste tests to students at recess or after school, or grow and taste fruits and vegetables in your school garden.

### Take the time to build relationships

Successful farm to school projects are based on relationships of mutual respect and trust among the participants. Taking the time to understand perspectives and abilities will help ensure that you create an effective and sustainable project.

### Don't re-invent the wheel

More than 1,000 schools across the state have already implemented farm to school. Learn from the successes and challenges of these districts before you begin. Visit [www.cafarmtoschool.org](http://www.cafarmtoschool.org) for more information on farm to school.

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