

Chapter 3

Farm-to-Institution State-by-State Case Studies

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores how several states have approached farm-to-institution programming to include more farms and reach more institutions and consumers. Based on secondary research, the summaries explain initiatives and incentives that 16 states have implemented to bolster farm-to-institution sales and the partners who have participated in farm-to-institution program planning and implementation.

The case studies feature farm-to-institution programs designed to connect farms and multiple types of institutions. The following key denotes the various farm-to-institution initiatives included in the analysis.

Exhibit 3.1.1 – Farm-to-Institution Efforts Explored in State-by-State Case Studies

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Farm to Institution |  |
| Farm to Early Care and Education |  |
| Farm to Hospital |  |
| Farm to School |  |
| Farm to Workplace |  |
| Farm to Correctional Facility |  |
| Farm to Adult Care |  |
| Farm to Food Bank |  |
| Farm to Government Agency |  |
| Farm to University |  |

3.2 ARIZONA



Farm to Hospital

An “*Increasing Local Food in Hospitals and Clinics for Health and Nutrition*” continuing education course is offered by the Western Region Public Health Training Center and the University of Arizona Continuing Nursing Education program. Participants learn how to form local food procurement strategies, work with farms that adhere to food safety practices and connect low-income consumers to farmers markets hosted at hospitals. Those who participate in the self-paced online course may receive continuing education credits (Western Region Public Health Training Center).

With this course and two companion courses, the Western Region Public Health Training Center intended to reach health department officials. Content in the other courses focused on teaching about how to develop community gardens and school gardens and how to work with Native populations on healthy eating and choosing local foods (Govindarajan and Gardner).



Farm to School

Organized by the Arizona Department of Education, the *Farm to Summer Challenge* motivates summer school food service programs to use local foods, educate students about local food or Arizona agriculture and promote farm-to-school activities in the community. The challenge ran for three weeks during June 2021 (Arizona Department of Education 2021 c). The department recognized five schools or school districts as 2021 challenge awardees (Arizona Department of Education 2021). The challenge rules stated for summer meal programs to incorporate at least three local food items into a reimbursable meal, teach about local food or Arizona agriculture during at least two educational activities and inform the community about farm-to-summer activities at least once (Arizona Department of Education 2021 c).

Shortly after it named the 2021 summer challenge awardees in October 2021, the Arizona Department of Education introduced its 2022 Farm Fresh Challenge. Open to all child nutrition programs, the challenge would run from Oct. 1, 2021, to April 29, 2022. Any program that completes the three challenge activities in one week’s time would be named a “challenge champion.” The three challenges ask child nutrition programs to serve at least three local food items in the one-week challenge time period, offer related educational activities at least twice and create and distribute at least one promotional message to share about challenge activities within the community (Arizona Department of Education 2021 a).



Farm to Institution

The *Sun Produce Cooperative* formed in 2017. For its producer-members, the co-op coordinates fruit and vegetable production. Post-harvest, Sun Produce Cooperative aggregates the farms’ produce and distributes it to customers. At first, the co-op sold produce to one school

(VoyagePhoenix 2019). Since then, it has supplied fruits and vegetables to multiple Phoenix-area schools (Sun Produce Cooperative 2020 b). During the pandemic, the co-op and partner organizations pivoted to offer local produce in meals students could access via curbside pickup. In particular, they offered locally produced rainbow carrots in sack lunch meals and reached an estimated 50,000 students (Saria 2020).

The co-op has also introduced *FarmRaiser*, which operates as a weekly produce subscription bag. To offer the program, the co-op partners with schools, businesses and municipalities (VoyagePhoenix 2019). The program may serve as a “corporate wellness” initiative for these organizations, which recruit participants and order bags for those participants. Partner organizations choose the bag size, price and product selection that work best for their clientele. Typically, sessions run for three weeks to eight weeks. Bags cost \$11 to \$25 each. Product selection varies, but items incorporated include vegetables, fruits, herbs, eggs and beans. If partner organizations want to treat the subscription program as a fundraiser, then they can recruit volunteers to pack the bags. Doing so will allow the partner organization to receive 10% of bag sales (Sun Produce Cooperative 2020 b). In some cases, the co-op contributes to produce bags offered to low-income seniors and hospital patients who receive Medicaid benefits. It also has donated produce to the AZ Food Bank Network (Sun Produce Cooperative 2020 b).

To finance its work, the co-op has rented a truck and paid a part-time driver using grant funds from Vitalyst Health Foundation and Maricopa County Cooperative Extension. The Maricopa County Department of Public Health also has supported the co-op by directing half of a food system coordinator’s time to order management and administrative responsibilities. Another volunteer has also contributed time (VoyagePhoenix 2019). An October 2020 job posting indicated the co-op would like to hire a full-time manager (Sun Produce Cooperative 2020 a).

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3.3 CONNECTICUT



Farm to School

Several stakeholders participate in *The CT Farm to School Collaborative*, which since 2016 has functioned as a working group that meets monthly to advance Connecticut’s farm-to-school activities. The collaborative has two main goals. The first reads, “By 2032, 100% of CT ECE Centers and K-12 schools will have access to tangible, sustainable processes that connect education, agriculture and nutrition, where at least 25% of food service is sourced locally.” The second emphasizes giving students food system experiences in the classroom, cafeteria and in outdoor settings. University of Connecticut Extension and FoodCorps CT coordinate the effort. Other participating organizations include the state’s education and agriculture departments. Collaborative stakeholders formed three action teams. Each focuses on a unique priority area: resources and funding, ease of use and education (Connecticut Farm to School).

The collaborative has several initiatives underway to move it toward achieving its goals. It promotes the annual CT Grown for CT Kids Week, which included a HardCORE Apple and Pear Challenge to encourage participants to choose local apples and pears. In 2022, it plans to launch

the CT Farm to School Institute. School participants will take a year to focus on farm-to-school professional development (Connecticut Farm to School).



Farm to School

The CT Farm to School Collaborative advocated for the *CT Grown for CT Kids* grants program, which the state included in its budget bill meant to fund the government through June 30, 2023. According to an analysis of the bill, the state’s agriculture department will coordinate the CT Grown for CT Kids program. Eligible applicants include schools and others that have support from school administrators, school nutrition professionals, educators and the community. Applicants may seek financial support for equipment, resource or material purchases; eligible expenses would include local food and gardening supplies. Grant awards may also support professional development and training or piloting purchasing systems and programs (Connecticut General Assembly 2021). Some reporting indicates the program would receive \$250,000 in annual funding (FoodCorps 2021).



Farm to School

Coordinated by UConn Extension, *Put Local on Your Tray* connects local farms and local schools. The program gives schools the option to commit to the “Local Tray Pledge” and choose farm-to-school goals for their food service programs. The Put Local on Your Tray team provides support to districts, so they can reach their goals. During 2020-21, 92 towns or school districts participated in Put Local on Your Tray (University of Connecticut).

To support schools, Put Local on Your Tray publishes an online farm directory, which as of August 2021 listed 52 local farms interested in selling food to schools. Schools can use this directory to reach out to those farms. Put Local on Your Tray promotes several seasonal campaigns designed to drive use of more local in-season foods. Examples include Rooting for Winter, which focuses on root vegetables such as beets and potatoes; Smoothie Slurp, which is celebrated during National Dairy Month in June; and Dip Into Summer!, which encourages trying summer vegetables with different dips (University of Connecticut).



Farm to Early Care and Education

An effort of the state’s public health department, Put Local on Your Tray and the CT Farm to School Collaborative, the *Farm to Early Care and Education Program* assists programs serving children younger than kindergartners with planning and implementing farm-to-early childhood programming (Connecticut Department of Public Health, UConn Extension and the Farm to School Collaborative). It’s a module of the state’s Go NAPSACC online system, which provides information and tools meant to encourage healthy eating and physical activity among young children (Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention 2018).

Selected applicants participate in a yearlong program to self-assess their farm to early care and education activity, create a plan, monitor progress and then self-assess the experience. Teams receive support from a technical assistance consultant, and they receive some funding — \$250 or \$750, depending on the number of children served — to use toward implementing their plans. Acceptable activities that participants may feature in their plans include buying local food, creating on-site gardens and teaching children about agriculture and nutrition (Connecticut Department of Public Health, UConn Extension and the Farm to School Collaborative).

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3.4 LOUISIANA



Farm to School

The Louisiana Department of Education and Louisiana State University AgCenter partner to deliver the state’s farm-to-school program. Branded as ***Seeds to Success***, the program offers varied resources to farm-to-school stakeholders. For example, stakeholders may request training related to school gardening, farm-to-school classroom education and local food procurement. With respect to procurement, Seeds to Success helps schools to identify suppliers and make purchases. Its website includes a local food sources contact list. Additionally, it has published a

local food purchasing assessment. Schools can complete the assessment to prepare for speaking with farms and other local food suppliers. This process enables schools to identify and communicate their needs and interests (Louisiana Farm to School Program 2021).

To support producers, Seeds to Success has developed a similar tool. Formatted as a checklist, the tool guides produce growers through considerations involved in selling products to schools. The checklist presents questions that producers may answer with “yes” or “no” responses. Questions touch on topics such as production practices, product handling and worker health and hygiene. Producers can use completed checklists to introduce themselves to school food service directors and facilitate discussion about moving food products into schools (Seeds to Success).

Louisiana’s farm to school program has pursued several other forms of outreach. Annually, it hosts a conference. The 2020 event featured programming related to education, school gardens and local procurement (Bogren 2020). Plus, with grant funding received in 2021, the state planned to invest in a Louisiana Farm to School ambassadors’ network, which would offer training opportunities and expand farm-to-school’s footprint across Louisiana (Armand 2021).



Farm to School

Grant funds awarded by USDA’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program enabled the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry to implement a *Louisiana School Gardens* initiative. To improve Louisiana specialty crop awareness, access and consumption among young people, the initiative provided financial support for school gardens. Community group or school applicants could request as much as \$800 to reimburse school garden expenses (Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry 2018). Funds could be used to create or expand school gardens (Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry 2018).

When selecting garden proposals to receive funding, the initiative prioritized projects that would meet at least one of these criteria: locate in a low-income area or food desert; serve and involve low-income audiences; and engage extension professionals, master gardeners, garden club members or other community organizations (Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry).

Thirty schools participated in the program, and directly, those schools reached more than 1,800 students. Each participating school had a coordinator to oversee garden activities (Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry 2018). Although the funding opportunity has ended, the Louisiana School Gardens website outlines key questions schools can ask when selecting a garden site (Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry).



Farm to Workplace

The Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, based in Baton Rouge, started Healthy Lives in 2011. A wellness program, Healthy Lives works with employers to promote employee health (Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System 2021).

Healthy Lives services include health screenings and health coaching. It also offers a **Farm to Work** program, which follows a model similar to community supported agriculture. Employees who work at participating workplaces may enroll in Farm to Work, which offers seasonal, locally grown produce each week during two 10-week seasons: summer and fall. In a given season, employees may choose the 10-box plan, which provides a weekly produce box, or the five-box plan, which offers a produce box in alternating weeks. To participate, a workplace location must have at least 20 boxes per delivery. Also, a point of contact at the workplace must receive box shipments and track who picks up boxes (Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System 2021). Although Farm to Work began as a service offered to employees in the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, it has since expanded to reach workers in other health care settings and industries other than health care (Saucier 2016).

Participating employees pay \$5 to enroll per season plus a \$25-per-box charge. Each box contains 10 to 12 produce items. The farm supplying Farm to Work with food aggregates some produce from other growers to ensure subscribers receive fruit and vegetable variety (Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System 2021). Between 2014 and 2016, the program delivered roughly 16,000 boxes (Saucier 2016). With subscribers, Farm to Work also shares recipes, storage guidelines and other tips (Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System 2021).



Farm to Early Care and Education

The *New Orleans Food Policy Action Council* (FPAC) coordinates a Farm to Early Childcare Education program meant to help early care and Head Start centers as they educate young children about nutrition and sustainable food (New Orleans Food Policy Action Council).

Online, the council posts a toolkit that centers can reference when beginning “farm to ECE” programs. The toolkit recommends a five-step process to get started. Two steps involve conducting self-assessments using Go NAPSACC, a system that groups across the country use to plan children’s health education. In the toolkit, FPAC lists resources that care centers may use to implement farm to ECE programs. Additionally, centers may request technical assistance to help with planning menus, communicating with families and training teachers. The toolkit provides some initial tips related to menu planning. For one, it suggests snacks as an entry point when revising menus, and it provides some healthy snack ideas to consider as examples (New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee).

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3.5 MAINE



Farm to Institution

In 2018, Maine enacted “An Act To Expand the Local Foods Economy by Promoting Local Foods Procurement.” It sets a goal for state institutions to make local food and food products represent 20% of the food and food products they use (128th Maine Legislature 2018). Schools may receive local food procurement support through the **Local Foods Fund**, which took effect in July 2021. An earlier iteration of the fund was titled the Local Produce Fund (Maine Department of Education b).

The Local Foods Fund provides matching dollars to schools when they purchased eligible Maine-grown foods. For every \$3 schools pay for eligible foods, the fund offers a \$1 match. During the 2021-22 fiscal year, school administrative units may receive as much as \$5,000 each.

The maximum increases to \$5,500 if a school food service representative attends a local foods training. Schools may receive the matching funds when they purchase produce, value-added dairy, protein or minimally processed foods. They may buy these foods from farmers; farm co-ops; or local food hubs, processors or food service distributors. In terms of how it pays claims, the fund has an “as first received, first paid” policy (Maine Department of Education b).



Farm to Institution

The state’s education department partnered with the Maine Farm to School Network to introduce the *Harvest of the Month* program in 2019. The effort began as a pilot (National Farm to School Network b). It has since continued to encourage institutions to source food from local farms (Maine Department of Education a).

On its website, the state education department lists a harvest of the month calendar for the year. Featured products include Maine potatoes, protein, wild blueberries, cucumbers, tomatoes and root vegetables. Schools, summer programs and child and adult care food programs can pledge to participate. Producers who complete an online form indicate they’re interested in supplying food to participating institutions (Maine Department of Education a).



Farm to Institution

The Maine Farm to Institution (MEFTI) and Maine Farm to School Network in 2019 offered a *Maine Farm to Institution Innovation Grants for Grassroots Projects* program. Applicants could request small amounts of financial support meant to encourage procuring local food. No request appeared to exceed \$4,500, and most requested much less funding. Allocating the funding to awardees followed a shared gifting process, described as one “where they decided together how much to allocate to each project based on each project’s needs.” Awardees included schools, a community association and a soil and water conservation district (National Farm to School Network a).



Farm to Institution

A story from Bike Maine describes the *Maine Farm and Sea Cooperative* as the country’s “first farm-to-institution food service cooperative” (Maine Cyclist 2016). The co-op formed in 2015 when University of Maine students voiced that they wanted the school to offer more local food options and a group of Mainers proposed that the university source 20% of its food locally. The co-op, which has consumer-, producer- and employee-members, didn’t secure the dining services contract with the university, but the university chose to buy 20% of its food locally. Since then, the co-op has pursued contracts with other institutions, and it offers local food consulting services to institutions (Maine Farm and Sea Cooperative).

The Maine Farm and Sea Cooperative has its own nine-step implementation guide to help buyers navigate how to add local food to their menus (Maine Farm and Sea Cooperative). Its work has

also extended to live events. During the BikeMaine ride, Maine Farm and Sea Cooperative has offered food service management services, which has included sourcing local ingredients and planning, preparing and serving meals (Maine Cyclist 2016).

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3.6 MASSACHUSETTS



Farm to School

Massachusetts Farm to School champions farm-to-school efforts in the state. An August 2019 report explained that state government appropriated \$120,000 annually to the nongovernmental organization since 2014. State government included this farm-to-school funding in the state agriculture department’s budget (Farm to Institution New England et al. 2019).

The organization has coordinated several programs focused on enhancing farm-to-school activity in the state. For example, schools may apply to participate in the yearlong *Massachusetts Farm to School Institute*, which involves attending a fall retreat, creating a “farm to school action plan” with elements such as local procurement and curriculum, pairing school teams with coaches to support plan implementation and networking with peers. When schools complete the institute in good standing, they have an opportunity to request funding to support them in implementing a post-institute farm-to-school plan. The Henry P. Kendall Foundation provides financial support for the grant program (Massachusetts Farm to School b).

Massachusetts Farm to School also coordinates a *Harvest of the Month* program, which is a collaborative effort with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries. Harvest of the Month helps schools incorporate seasonal local food into their menus. It also hosts an online “Where to Find Local Food” directory that schools can use to identify local food options (Massachusetts Farm to School a).



Farm to Hospital

Located in Boston, *Brigham and Women’s Hospital* receives local food through its Brigham Food Services division. The hospital and 10 others have collaborated to locally source ingredients such as salad greens. Brigham and Women’s Hospital in October 2020 described this partnership as a “pilot initiative” that includes hospitals in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Additionally, Brigham Food Services has sought to work with local vendors to procure blueberries, broccoli, zucchini and other foods (Brigham and Women’s Hospital 2020).



Farm to School

The Massachusetts Coalition for Local Food and Farms represents nine “buy local” groups organized regionally throughout the state. At least two of those organizations describe farm-to-school involvement (Massachusetts Coalition for Local Food and Farms). *Sustainable Nantucket* operates a farm-to-school program meant to support schools in serving more local produce, and it has a community committee that provides oversight. The organization has its own Harvest of the Month program, which features an ingredient and farm each month. It also encourages schools’ use of local foods through grants, garden education, farm-to-school camps and a gleaning program (Sustainable Nantucket). In 2012, Sustainable Nantucket described how it operated its gleaning program. Volunteers harvest unsalable produce from participating local farms. Then, they participate in cleaning and preserving the produce for Nantucket Public Schools to use throughout the school year. In 2011, the gleaning effort led to donating more than 1,000 pounds of produce (Minihan 2012).

In Martha’s Vineyard, the *Island Grown Initiative* helps school cafeterias source more local food; teaches students about food, farming and nutrition; operates school gardens; and facilitates field trips to farms. The group describes that its Harvest of the Month program debuted in 2012-13 as the state’s first and has served as a model for other similar efforts (Island Grown Schools).

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3.7 MICHIGAN



Farm to Institution

Created in 2010, the *Michigan Good Food Charter* included 25 priorities to help make accessing food from nearby farms as easy as procuring food from other sources. The charter’s vision includes increasing the extent to which Michigan’s food system creates an economic impact, provides healthy food and opens entrepreneurial opportunities while preserving natural resources. Three groups led the charter’s development: the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at Michigan State University, Food Bank Council of Michigan and Michigan Food Policy Council. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided funding (Colosanti et al. 2010).

One of the charter’s 25 priorities focuses on galvanizing the state’s institutions to use more Michigan-raised and -processed foods. One goal named that 20% of food sourced by Michigan institutions should have been grown, produced or processed in the state by 2020 (Colosanti et al. 2010). Many programs have emerged to work toward this goal; this summary highlights a few of these programs designed to promote institutions’ use of Michigan foods.

To monitor progress toward the food charter, the Michigan Good Food Charter Shared Measurement Project formed. The metrics intend to communicate how food access, food sales and food-related job creation have changed (Michigan State University).



Farm to Institution

“*Cultivate Michigan*” has worked toward supporting stakeholders to meet the Michigan Good Food Charter’s goal for institutions’ local food sourcing. Described as a “statewide local food purchasing campaign” hosted by the Michigan Farm to Institution Network, Cultivate Michigan offers free membership to Michigan institutional food buyers (Cultivate Michigan 2021).

By participating, institutions can connect with professionals who may assist them with farm-to-institution efforts, and they can access resources that teach how to buy, use and market seasonally sourced local foods. Annually, Cultivate Michigan promotes four seasonal foods, which have included beef, kale, blueberries, potatoes, winter squash, garlic and beets. For these foods, promotional materials include posters, recipe ideas and buying guides. Plus, the campaign coordinates tours at farms, processors and distribution facilities (Cultivate Michigan 2021). Member institutions can track how much food they purchase from local sources. To collect this data, institutions participate in quarterly surveys, which direct the results to a data dashboard specific to each institution (Cultivate Michigan 2021).

Michigan State University, MSU Extension, a leadership team and an advisory committee coordinate the campaign, which has received funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Kresge Foundation and Americana Foundation (Cultivate Michigan 2021).



Farm to Institution

“*Michigan Farm to Freezer*” began in 2014 as an effort to freeze produce that schools could serve to students during the off-season when local fresh products wouldn’t be available (Batory 2020). Additionally, the effort has roots in workforce development as it initially collaborated with Goodwill Northern Michigan and used its incubator facility (Produce Processing).

Michigan Farm to Freezer has continued prioritizing workforce development. The business’ two partners — one a farm manager and the other who ran school lunch programs — invested in the business and watched it grow. According to a January 2020 story from *Edible Wow*, the business operates from a 14,000-square-foot warehouse capable of processing and freezing produce, which reaches the facility not long after harvest. Working with several Michigan farms, Michigan Farm to Freezer purchases all of a crop it needs for the year (Batory 2020). It focuses on sourcing product from small to mid-sized farms (Michigan Farm to Freezer 2021). At one time, the warehouse freezer space could house as many as 700 pallets. The flash-freezer has the capacity to process as much as 3,000 pounds in no more than a 90-minute interval (Batory 2020).

Michigan Farm to Freezer offers diverse frozen products, including apples, asparagus, blueberries, peaches and rhubarb. Its product portfolio also features several organic frozen

vegetables, vegetable mixes and a smoothie blend, and the business has expanded to serve grocery stores and offer freezing services. Marketed to home cooks, it has a “Simply Seasoned” line, which includes pie fillings and seasoned vegetables. Freezing services available to client businesses include blast-freezing, flash-freezing and storing frozen products (Michigan Farm to Freezer 2021). More than 100 institutions and 300 grocery stores buy from Michigan Farm to Freezer (Batory 2020). The business has also launched an e-commerce site for shoppers to buy frozen fruit and vegetables available at earthy.com/pages/michigan-farm-to-freezer.



Farm to Institution

Based in Traverse City, Michigan, *Taste the Local Difference* operates as a local food marketing agency. On its website, the agency provides an *Institutional Sales Directory* that lists farms interested in fulfilling institutional sales. Food buyers at institutions can search by keyword or location to find farms and then connect with them. Farm listings include what the farm grows and its location, growing practices and contact information. A *Farm to School Directory* helps schools identify farms that may welcome on-farm field trips, school garden assistance or agricultural presentations. The agency also offers marketing services to help farms and other food businesses promote their products and businesses (Taste the Local Difference).



Farm to Institution

Michigan farmers could apply for zero-interest, five-year loans to build season-extending hoophouses through the *Hoophouses for Health* program, which ran from 2011 to 2018. Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the program required participating farmers to repay their loans in produce, which could be made available to families, schools or early childhood education centers. To reach families, farmers could offer products at farmers markets and accept Health Market Cards as payment. The cards were distributed to families accessing Head Start services or engaging with other community partners. If repaying a loan by sharing food products with schools, then the farmer would document delivery information and submit those records to qualify for repayment (Michigan Farmers Market Association 2021).

More than 66 farmers added hoophouses. Produce directed to schools and early childhood education centers exceeded 41,000 pounds. The Michigan Farmers Market Association, Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems and Michigan State University horticulture department administered the program (Michigan Farmers Market Association 2021).



Farm to Early Care and Education

At Michigan State University, the Center for Regional Food Systems began a *Farm to ECE Procurement Pilot* in 2019 to encourage local foods procurement among early care and education providers. The three participating communities shared experiences with one another during routine meetings. They also received mini-grants to support implementation of their own farm-to-early care and education action plans. During the pilot, one participating group

purchased a CSA membership, which included a monthly produce box, educational materials and access to the farmer who could answer questions. The group indicated interest in continuing the CSA participation into 2021 (Shedd, Bombrisk and Mensch 2021).



Farm to Hospital

Started by Cherry Capital Foods, the *Michigan Grab n' Go* program offers locally sourced food choices for hospitals to incorporate in their menus, reach-in coolers or shelves. Hospitals may purchase “grab-and-go” options from two separate categories. For serving in the cafeteria or providing in coolers, the Grab n' Go Deli options would require some preparation. Items include seasonal fresh fruit, hard cheeses with dried cherries, spelt berry grain bowls and hard-boiled eggs. For stocking in coolers or shelves, the Grab n' Go Retail items would provide a local pre-packaged food choice for the hospital's foodservice customers. Example products include protein bars, dried fruit, flatbread crackers and snack mixes — value-added products — branded by other food companies. Cherry Capital Foods describes itself as “the largest purveyor of Michigan only products,” which means hospitals may access multiple Michigan-sourced products from one order (Cherry Capital Foods).

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3.8 MINNESOTA



Farm to School

Coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota farm-to-school grants offer funding to schools new to buying local food and those with more experience (MN Farm to School). For the 2022 fiscal year, the state would invest as much as \$748,000 total in these grants to encourage school nutrition programs to use more Minnesota-produced foods. Qualifying foods would be those made from at least 80% Minnesota-produced and -processed ingredients. The programs prioritize reimbursing schools for unprocessed or minimally processed food purchases. Examples include fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy but not fluid milk. Eligible public and private schools must participate in the National School Lunch Program and serve K-12 students (Minnesota Department of Agriculture a). For awards made during the 2022 fiscal year, schools

would know whether they received funds by roughly January 2022. Then, they would have until August 2023 to purchase local products (MN Farm to School).

Through the ***First Bite Mini Grant*** program, schools can experiment with buying food from local producers. To be eligible, they must not have received a First Bite Mini Grant or a Full Tray Grant in the previous year. Applicants may request between \$2,500 and \$5,000, and the program requires no match (Minnesota Department of Agriculture a).

Schools with more farm-to-school procurement experience may apply to the ***Full Tray Grant*** program. The requested funding should support schools through expanding their Minnesota-produced food procurement and sourcing from additional local farms. A formula determines the funding a school is eligible to receive. For 10 months of the year, schools can receive \$0.10 per meal served per month. For the 2022 fiscal year, the number of meals — breakfast and lunch — to use in the equation would be the number served in October 2019. At most, a school could receive \$35,000. Recipients would need to provide a dollar-for-dollar cash match (Minnesota Department of Agriculture b).

First Bite and Full Tray awardees may request additional funds to ***purchase equipment*** that would enable them to pursue farm-to-school efforts. Eligible expenses include the equipment itself and related shipping and installation. Applicants may request as much as \$25,000. A one-to-one match is required. The match may cover part of the equipment expenses or additional food costs (Minnesota Department of Agriculture a).



Farm to School

The Minneapolis Public Schools Culinary & Wellness Services team supports several farm-to-school efforts. With respect to school gardening, it packages seeds that schools may request to plant and harvest at school gardens, including the district's education farm in northern Minneapolis. The seeds produce what the district calls the ***Farm to School Fabulous Five***. The five crops — green beans, kohlrabi, butternut squash, radishes and kale — are well-adapted to Minnesota, incorporated in school meals and used to teach students about topics such as nutrition and science. Funds from a USDA Farm to School grant allowed the school to offer the seed packets (Minnesota Public Schools).

With respect to local procurement, the district chooses partner farms, which operate on a small or medium scale. To learn about growers interested in serving the school system, Minneapolis Public Schools invites producers, producer groups and other stakeholders to submit requests for proposals. It initiates this process during the winter, and selected entities would be partners in the next school year. To help navigate the bidding process, the school hosts an informational webinar open to anyone interested. The school selected 15 farms, cooperatives and food hubs as 2021-22 partners (Minneapolis Public Schools).



Farm to Early Care and Education

Announced in November 2020, Minnesota received a \$90,900 competitive grant from the nonprofit *Association of State Public Health Nutritionists* to support farm to early care (ECE) and education efforts. Nine other states had funding awarded in the same cycle. The grants were part of a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Minnesota Ag Connection 2020). Called the Farm To ECE Implementation Grant, the funding award allowed Minnesota to invest in several ECE initiatives. Those include expanding the Farm to ECE network to include providers, creating ECE resources in four languages, piloting a Farm to ECE mini grant program and improving access to online Farm to ECE training (ASPHN).



Farm to School

Monthly, the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team hosts a one-hour “*office hours*” session for anyone to join. During the virtual meeting, the team offers technical assistance related to farm-to-school and early care education programming. It opens the sessions to interested stakeholders, including farmers, schools, early care providers, parents, teachers and public health professionals. The leadership team formed in 2011 as an initiative of University of Minnesota Extension and the Minnesota Department of Health. Since that time, nine other groups have participated. They include government agencies, a health insurance company and a nonprofit think tank (University of Minnesota Extension).



Farm to Early Care and Education

The community food systems team at the *Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy* collaborated with Head Start programs beginning in 2013 to incorporate farm-to-Head Start programming into its services. Such programming includes educating students about food and farming, hosting food-related events for families and purchasing locally produced food for children. A story from August 2019 reported that the institute had reached one-third of the state’s Head Start programs. On its website, the institute highlights seven case studies to describe how various Head Start locations adopted farm-to-Head Start efforts (Costello 2019).

One of those case studies features *Reach-Up Head Start*, located in St. Cloud (Costello 2019). Reach-Up Head Start sources fruits and vegetables from central Minnesota farmers. The center’s monthly menus denote ingredients procured through farm-to-Head Start channels (Reach-Up Head Start). The connection between Reach-Up and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy began in 2016, and Reach-Up prioritized local procurement for meals and snacks. It limited local sourcing from the three counties it served, and to forge connections with growers, the nutrition services coordinator visited farms to pick up product. Later, the program started buying from food hubs and other suppliers that had the capacity to deliver. Reach-Up strategically plans which local foods to include in menus throughout the year to build enthusiasm among the children they serve. To start and end the year, Reach-Up chooses a food the young

people will recognize — to encourage buy-in and end on a high note — and it fills the middle of the school year with less familiar items (Costello, VanSlooten and Kramer 2019).

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3.9 MONTANA



Farm to School

Each month, the *Montana Harvest of the Month* program highlights Montana-raised crops and animal products in schools and communities. In 2020-21, showcase ingredients included cherries, brassicas, grains, beef, leafy greens and dairy. To promote a given month's showcase ingredient, participants must at least serve the food and share Harvest of the Month materials. They may also consider facilitating taste tests and offering educational opportunities. Participating sites may include Montana K-12 schools, afterschool programs, Summer Food Service Programs, early care and education facilities and healthcare institutions. They receive free educational materials and training for participating (Montana State University b).

The program began as a yearlong pilot in 11 schools that featured 10 foods grown locally. During fall 2016, sites throughout the state first had an opportunity to participate (FoodCorps 2016). An online map accessed in July 2021 denoted more than 40 institutions participate in the program (The National Center for Appropriate Technology 2021).

Present-day program partners include the Montana Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, Montana State University Extension, FoodCorps Montana and Montana Department of Agriculture. Several groups and grant programs have provided funding for the program. They include USDA, the Montana Healthcare Foundation, Northern Pulse Growers Association, Montana Grains Foundation and Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (Montana State University b). For schools interested in participating in the Montana Harvest of the Month program, *Gallatin Valley Farm to School* provides technical assistance. Its staff collaborate with school food service personnel to identify ingredient supplies, create recipes that use local ingredients and conduct taste tests (Gallatin Valley Farm to School).

Helena Food Share has implemented the Montana Harvest of the Month. Each month, its emergency food assistance reaches 1,500 families, and its daily food distribution to families averages nearly 6,000 pounds (Helena Food Share). Helena Food Share began its Harvest of the Month programming as a pilot. With support from the city, the organization accessed a Charlie Cart (Matsunami 2019). The cart serves as a "mobile teaching kitchen" where staff can do cooking demonstrations, offer product samples and increase exposure and trial of the Montana-raised ingredients featured through the Harvest of the Month program (Helena Food Share).



Farm to School

A variety of sponsors and partners hosted the *Montana Farm to School Summit* in August 2021. Targeted to farm-to-school stakeholders, the summit enabled these stakeholders to network, and it offered educational workshops, shared Montana farm-to-school successes and included tours. Participants had the option to attend in-person or virtually. They could also earn continuing education credits by attending the in-person program or listening to virtual sessions live. Conference attendance would provide continuing education credits for school nutrition

professionals, participants with early childhood projects or teachers seeking OPI teacher professional development (Montana State University a).



Farm to School

The ***Reimagining School Lunch*** effort began in 2019. Designed as a four-part initiative, the effort has had a clear purpose to determine how to develop school lunches using all Montana-raised ingredients. It has focused on the Bitterroot Valley area but envisions how to involve all Montana schools in sourcing and using local ingredients. Through the four phases, stakeholders could voice perspectives about school lunch systems, connect with one another, prioritize ideas and develop recipes. The team received support from the Montana Department of Agriculture and Ravalli County Economic Development Authority, which the state had selected to operate a Food and Ag Resource Center (Cultivating Connections) — one of eight Montana centers focused on improving farmers’ profitability and extending their reach (Myscofski 2021).

The two-year project sought to create recipes that schools could use to integrate more Montana-grown ingredients into their menus. Recipe development work took place in a test kitchen-like environment. After the project ended in June 2021, the state’s agriculture department would offer the project’s findings and recipes as open-source resources accessible to Montana schools (Myscofski 2021). During the project, the team sought recipe ideas widely. In March 2021, it hosted the Reimagining School Lunch Local Foods Cooking Challenge. At the event, participants could rotate through the test kitchen in shifts and experiment with their own recipes that featured Montana-raised ingredients. Children from a youth home served as taste-testers. Participants were asked to share their recipes (Homestead Organics Farm 2021).



Farm to Early Care and Education

Located in Bozeman, the ***Montana State University Child Development Center*** incorporates several farm to early care and education practices into its programming and food sourcing. For example, the center maintains a garden where children participate in raising their own vegetables, such as kale and carrots, and trying those items after harvest. To add more local foods to meals and snacks, the center also sources produce from Towne’s Harvest Garden — a CSA operated by Montana State University students. Each summer, the center purchases from the CSA. Children and their parents may also visit the Towne’s Harvest Garden to see what farm production in person (Frame 2015).



Farm to Correctional Facility

Nearly 200 inmates at the ***Montana State Prison*** raise cattle, produce milk, process milk into dairy products and make other foods. The prison’s 1,600 beef cattle, which eat feed the prison produces, are sold to out-of-state buyers. At the dairy, the prison maintains 310 cows, which each average 100 pounds of daily milk production. At the processing center, the milk undergoes pasteurization, and some is used to make yogurt, cream and ice cream. Of the dairy’s total milk

production, it sells 70% as a raw product to Darigold. The training inmates receive at the farm give them skills they may apply when their sentences end. For several state organizations, the prison's Food Factory makes items such as baked goods and uses some Montana-raised ingredients in such products (The National Center for Appropriate Technology 2012).

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3.10 NEBRASKA



Farm to School

A project led by the Lyons, Nebraska-based nonprofit Center for Rural Affairs, *Greenhouse to Cafeteria* benefits 10 rural Nebraska schools (Center for Rural Affairs 2021a). The program supports schools with teaching in greenhouses and incorporating greenhouse-raised food into school cafeteria meals (Hortidaily). The center has published a toolkit that schools can use as they begin greenhouse-to-cafeteria programs. With the toolkit, schools can see greenhouse and production plan examples and get ideas about how to create teams to lead their school greenhouse efforts (Center for Rural Affairs 2021a). Published in November 2019, the downloadable online toolkit walks through how to start and manage a farm-to-cafeteria program. It lists USDA, the Nebraska FFA Association and University of Nebraska Extension as sponsors and funders. Access the toolkit at cfra.org/sites/default/files/publications/from-greenhouse-to-cafeteria-a-toolkit-for-creating-and-revamping-greenhouse-programs-in-nebraska-schools.pdf.

To support the effort, a statewide peer network has plans to form. Participating greenhouse instructors can then share information with one another (Center for Rural Affairs 2021a). In 2021, the center unveiled the Greenhouse to Cafeteria Award to recognize schools for greenhouse-based food production activities. Not only would the award program honor high-achieving school greenhouse programs, but it would also help the center understand school greenhouse projects underway throughout the state (Hortidaily).



Farm to Institution

Since 2018, Nebraska schools have participated in *Nebraska Thursdays*. Each month, participants serve and promote local foods on the first Thursday. The Nebraska Department of Education and the Center for Rural Affairs coordinate the program. Any school aligned with the National School Lunch Program may participate. Nebraska Thursdays schools receive materials to promote Nebraska foods, and they can access a recipe portal for meal ideas (Jespersen 2018).

In 2016, Omaha Public Schools first adopted the Nebraska Thursdays model. It has purchased and served local meat, produce and breads (Center for Rural Affairs 2021b). The program operated as a five-school pilot in 2017-18. The USDA Farm to School Grant Program provided financial resources for the pilot stage (Jespersen 2018). Program participants in 2017/18 bought \$2.7 million in local food (Galatas 2019). A fall 2020 story from the Nebraska Dry Bean Growers Association reported more than 60 Nebraska districts participated in Nebraska

Thursdays (The Nebraska Dry Bean Growers Association 2020). The Nebraska Dry Bean Commission has assisted the program by financing school mini-grants, offering matching dollars to schools and providing giveaways. Its commitment has extended to education. It and the Culinary Institute of American trained school food service managers about how to use dry beans during workshops held in 2018 and 2019 (USDA Food and Nutrition Service 2021).

CEDARS, a child service organization, has also adopted Nebraska Thursdays. It follows the Nebraska Thursdays principles each week. Nebraska-grown foods featured on CEDARS menus include beef, watermelon and corn. In August 2019, CEDARS indicated the program benefits from produce donations (CEDARS 2019).



Farm to School

In May 2021, Nebraska’s governor approved the *Nebraska Farm-to-School Program Act*. The act assigned the program’s administrative responsibilities to the state’s agriculture and education departments. The latter would receive \$100,000 annually to fund personnel and other expenses. The program would encourage sourcing locally grown food for school meals and snacks, connect schools with Nebraska farms, create hands-on food production and preparation learning opportunities, support schools with adding local foods to nutrition plans and train stakeholders about how to implement farm-to-school efforts (Nebraska Legislature 2021).



Farm to Institution

The eight-state Mountain Plains region hosts an annual “*Crunch Off*” in October as part of Farm to School Month. The event encourages residents in the eight participating states — Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming — to choose locally grown “crunchable” fruits or vegetables, such as apples, pears, beets and radishes. The state with the most crunches per capita wins. Residents form “crunch teams” with others from their schools, workplaces, early care centers, neighborhoods or other groups to boost participation. Nebraska won the challenge in 2019 (University of Nebraska-Lincoln 2021). It kept its title in 2020 when 4.13% of the state chose to “crunch” into local foods. To support producers and schools with participating, the Nebraska Department of Education offers resources on its website (Nebraska Department of Education).



Farm to School

Since September 2010, the *Ag Sack Lunch Program* has provided a sack lunch to Nebraska fourth-graders who travel annually to the state capitol. Students receive a meal and hear a 15-minute presentation about how agriculture contributes to Nebraska’s economy. Meals include ingredients made from foods Nebraska produces, and students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln give the presentations. Each fourth-grader also takes home an agriculture-focused card game (Nebraska Farmer). Several commodity organizations support the program: the Nebraska Soybean Board, Nebraska Pork Producers, Nebraska Corn Board and Nebraska Beef Council

(Nebraska Soybean Board). More than 46,000 fourth-graders have participated in the program since it began (Lincoln Journal-Star). In 2021-22, the program has resources to reach 5,250 students during in-person events and 1,500 students during virtual programs (The Ag Sack Lunch Program).

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3.11 NEW HAMPSHIRE



Farm to School

Part of the University of New Hampshire’s Sustainability Institute, the *New Hampshire Farm to School* initiative pursues several paths to connect farm-to-school stakeholders — from farmers to school personnel. It works on advancing systems for local food procurement, developing educational materials, incorporating farm-to-school topics in curriculum and policies and sharing farm-to-school stories. It has offered a three-day *NH Farm to School Summer Institute* open to communities interested in seeing more local food used in institutions such as schools and hospitals. After attending the institute, participants benefit from support provided by the NH Farm to School initiative team (University of New Hampshire Sustainability Initiative).

In October, the initiative celebrates farm-to-school month with weekly activities and a photo contest. Its new *NH Farm to School Network* features partners such as government agencies, nonprofits, teachers, food service companies and procurement firms. The network engages partners to consider how to fund projects, identify resources and connect stakeholders (University of New Hampshire Sustainability Initiative).

New Hampshire Farm to School also coordinates a *New Hampshire Harvest of the Month* program open to school classrooms, cafeterias or schools (New Hampshire Harvest of the Month). In 2020, it also released an *Indigenous NH Harvest Calendar curriculum* with partners to teach students about indigenous foods and Native American culture (Food Connects 2020). The two partner groups were NH Indigenous Collaborative Collective and the Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki People (New Hampshire Farm to School).



Farm to Hospital

At **Huggins Hospital** in Wolfeboro, New England farms have provided all ingredients used in the daily hospital menu, according to reporting from 2015 (Roessler 2015). The facility has served local foods such as antibiotic-free meat, produce and seafood. A 2016 story from *Food Service Director* quantified that 85% of the meat purchased by the hospital had the antibiotic-free label, and the hospital had worked for two years to incorporate more local food into its menu items (Berta 2016). The hospital serves patients, staff and visitors. Plus, community residents treat its café as “a destination restaurant” in the area (Food Management 2016).

A Local Food Promotion Program grant supported the hospital’s buy local efforts (Healthcare Facilities Today). The hospital has sourced its antibiotic-free meat from Miles Smith Farm, which raises its own animals and aggregates meat from other local farmers (Food Management 2016). As part of sourcing antibiotic-free meat, the hospital has done some education about antibiotic resistance — particularly among employees (Roessler 2015). The farm and hospital also offer a “buyers club” to enable hospital employees to buy discounted product (Food Management 2015).



Farm to Institution

The **New Hampshire Farm to Restaurant Connection** has a vision to connect farms, food businesses and restaurants in the state. This vision aligns with the group’s mission to support the state’s farms and economy. It also promotes New Hampshire foods to some institutions, such as restaurants, schools and hospitals (New Hampshire Farm to Restaurant Connection 2021).

The group has a map online of farms that may supply food to restaurants and institutions. The map also depicts locations of restaurants linked to the initiative. Restaurants have the option to participate in a certification process that communicates restaurant commitment to local sourcing (New Hampshire Farm to Restaurant Connection 2021).

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3.12 OKLAHOMA



Farm to School and Early Care and Education

Using funds from a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, Oklahoma’s Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry introduced a ***school garden kit program*** for schools and early childhood centers in 2021. The gardens would give young people an opportunity to participate in food production and learn to appreciate healthy eating. The seven selected recipients participated in a two-year program that provided funding and resources to create and maintain their own on-site gardens (Oklahoma State Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry 2021a). Materials available to the recipients included curriculum, equipment, plants and seeds. For a two-year period, an annual \$2,000 per recipient could be used to pay a garden coordinator (Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry 2021b).



Farm to School

Since 2015, the ***Tahlequah Farmers Market*** has operated a farmers market at participating schools. Students — third-graders have been a focus — would receive fruit and vegetable information and recipes, and they could shop from farmers market vendors using “veggie bucks” distributed to them and their own cash. This experience opens market opportunities for farmers, and the students have an opportunity to practice how to make food purchase decisions, support local farm businesses, choose healthy foods and manage money (Tahlequah Farmers Market). In the mini markets’ inaugural year, more than 650 students participated and purchased \$7,500 in produce (Cherokee Nation Health Services Public Health Programs 2016).

During 2021, students visiting a school market would receive 12 veggie bucks, which would buy four items portioned into \$3 increments. Students who didn't use all 12 veggie bucks at the on-site school market could shop with those bucks later at the community farmers market (Crawford 2021). Partners, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant (Tahlequah Farmers Market) and a USDA grant (Crawford 2021) funded the program. The Tahlequah B.E.S.T. Coalition and Cherokee Nation Healthy Nation initiated the program (Tahlequah Farmers Market).



An effort of Oklahoma State University Extension's Community Nutrition Education Programs, the ***Farm to You*** exhibit provides a free nine-station walk-through educational experience to first- to sixth-graders. The 40-foot by 40-foot traveling exhibit educates students about agriculture and nutrition. Stations cover topics such as Oklahoma farmland, the food value chain and the digestion process. Participating schools recruit volunteers to assist with setting up and tearing down the exhibit (Oklahoma State University Extension 2021). From 2008 to December 2020, Farm to You reached nearly 155,000 students (Oklahoma State University 2020).

As an alternative to the traditional traveling Farm to You exhibit, schools may elect to participate in a virtual program, which allows classrooms to experience the Farm to You exhibit stations via a Zoom connection (Oklahoma State University Extension 2021). The virtual option, which provides a 90-minute presentation to students, debuted as a pilot in fall 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Oklahoma State projected that the pilot would reach roughly 1,300 students (Oklahoma State University 2020).



At Oklahoma State University (OSU), the dining services group and the Robert M. Kerr Food and Agricultural Products Center (FAPC) have partnered on a ***Farm to University Dining*** initiative. Select Made in Oklahoma businesses that produce or process foods locally have introduced their products through campus dining and catering services, and they have visited campus to provide free samples and build awareness of their products. FAPC, which supports Oklahoma businesses in entering new markets, has helped to select Made in Oklahoma businesses to participate (Gross 2009).

A program developed by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Made in Oklahoma serves as a statewide branding initiative for Oklahoma entrepreneurs who make food or handcrafted products (Made in Oklahoma 2020). At the university, the dining services group and FAPC have also coordinated an annual Made in Oklahoma Day in partnership with the Made in Oklahoma Coalition. During the on-campus event, participating businesses offer free product samples to students, faculty and staff (Gross 2015).



Farm to Institution

On its website, the Oklahoma Farm to School program offers calculators to inform farm-to-school participation. Formatted in Excel, a **distribution cost calculator** can approximate the cost associated with delivering food using a farmer-owned truck. The fully customizable calculator enables users to tailor input variables, such as delivery size, labor hourly rate, delivery distance and vehicle use information, to their specific operations. Ultimately, the calculator helps users to estimate operating costs per mile or trip, distribution costs per produce unit delivered and a “farm gate” margin (Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry).

Called the **produce calculator**, a second Excel spreadsheet helps farmers and food service professionals to convert a number of servings into farm-level poundage, based on data from USDA’s Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs. The calculator includes conversions for various fruit and vegetable products. Users may also enter a price per pound, and the calculator restates the price on a per-serving basis. Access these calculators at okfarmtoschool.com/growers-tools/tips-tools-and-guidelines-for-food-distribution-and-food-safety (Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry).

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3.13 OREGON



Farm to School

The ***Oregon Harvest for Schools*** campaign focuses on teaching students and families about Oregon foods. As part of the campaign’s Harvest of the Month program, participating schools serve a different local fruit or vegetable every month of the school year. Through the campaign, the Oregon Department of Education provides various resources, such as in-class activity ideas, posters, stickers, coloring pages, newsletter template and recipes, that schools can incorporate into their curriculum and outreach to families. As funding permits, schools may request these resources for free (Oregon Department of Education b).

Additionally, the campaign has developed a video series. Each installment presents a short educational message about a particular Oregon-grown food. Videos cover how the food products are grown, harvested and used (Oregon Department of Education b). To create the videos, the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon State University Extension partnered. In total, the effort would create 50 videos to publish during a multiyear period (Siegel 2019).

In 2021, Oregon Harvest for Schools trained producers who have farm-to-school involvement to create video testimonials about their experience. Hosted by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, the training would provide growers, ranchers, seafood harvesters and food

processors and distributors with skills they could use to create short videos that promote their farm-to-school participation. Schools would play the videos in their cafeterias. The state's agriculture and education departments may also promote participating farms and businesses using the videos. The agriculture department engaged a third-party marketing agency to deliver the training via a webinar (Oregon Department of Agriculture 2021).



Farm to School

The noncompetitive ***Farm to School Procurement Grant*** reimburses schools participating in the National School Lunch Program for buying certain Oregon-produced food products. The reimbursement depends on the number of meals, including lunches, breakfasts and snacks, served to children. In addition to schools, the following entities would be eligible to participate: organizations that sponsor child and adult food care programs or summer food service programs. Types of food eligible for reimbursement include fruits, vegetables, meat and grains raised in Oregon; seafood caught in Oregon; and food processed in Oregon. The state administered the program in 2019-20 and 2020-21, and it committed roughly \$11 million in funding for the procurement program (Oregon Department of Education a).

To support schools in identifying suppliers, the state has maintained an ***Oregon Harvest for Schools Portal***. For nearly 50 foods, the portal lists farms offering these products. Users may customize their searches to identify suppliers who provide fresh or processed options (Oregon Harvest for Schools). The state has also organized counties into regional hubs. Each regional hub has at least one lead contact person, and some of these individuals — particularly those involved in procurement initiatives — may help to connect producers and schools (Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network).



Farm to Institution

Oregon's ***Farm to Child Nutrition Program Education Grant*** enables eligible applicants to compete for funding they can use to implement school educational programs related to food, agriculture or gardening. Eligible entities include schools, early care food program participants, nonprofits, Indian tribes, food producers and summer food service program participants. To apply, at least 40% of a targeted entity's student population must qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Applicants could seek \$10,000 to \$100,000 in funding for regular grants and \$2,000 to \$10,000 in funding for mini grants (Oregon Department of Education a). A bill passed in 2019 provided \$2.5 million for these educational program grants (Plaven 2019).



Farm to School

For the 2020-21 school year, the Oregon Department of Agriculture dispersed \$250,000 in *Farm to School Producer Equipment and Infrastructure Grants*. The six awards ranged from roughly \$14,000 to \$68,000, and they funded purchases such as cold storage facility space; well, pump house and irrigation investments needed to meet school food safety requirements; season-extension tunnels; and mixer equipment (State of Oregon).



Farm to Senior Center

The *Providence Benedictine Nursing Center* works with a farm community supported agriculture program to access fresh local food. The CSA vendor delivers the produce to the nursing center. For food needs that the CSA or other vendors don't offer, the center purchases them from large farms in the area (Providence Foundations of Oregon).

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3.14 RHODE ISLAND



Farm to Institution

The “*Relish Rhody*” *Rhode Island Food Strategy* commits to New England’s regional goal, which states that “50% of the food eaten in New England be produced in the region by 2060.” This long-term plan includes five focus areas. One of those — the “Sustain & Create Markets for Rhode Island Food, Beverage Products” focus — includes a specific priority to form linkages between institutions and Rhode Island food products (Relish Rhody).



Farm to School

The state provides a *farm to school income tax credit* to individuals or entities that provide Rhode Island-grown produce to local education agencies. The tax credit’s value totals 5% of the farm product costs. A local education agency must certify in writing the individual or entity’s role in providing food to its agency (Rhode Island General Laws 2015). A 2013 bill introduced to the Rhode Island legislature sought to expand the tax credit program to include milk or milk products, but it didn’t advance into law (RI State Legislature 2013).



Farm to Hospital

From 2015-16, six Rhode Island hospitals participated in the *RI Health Care Local Food Challenge*. The challenge assessed hospitals on three components: increasing local food procurement, educating staff and communities about local foods and encouraging staff to use more local foods. Each quarter, hospitals self-reported their activities in these three challenge areas. A scorecard dictated how to assign points for certain activities. The winning hospital would receive a \$1,000 prize. Health Care Without Harm, the challenge manager, would offer technical assistance to support hospitals in competing in the three challenge areas and document their efforts. Other partners included Farm Fresh Rhode Island, the Hospital Association of Rhode Island the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (Health Care Without Harm).



Farm to University

Beginning in 2018, the Henry P. Kendall Foundation sponsored the *New England Food Vision Prize*, which invests in projects that may increase use of regionally sourced food on campus menus and grow students' regional food demand (Weinstein 2018). The effort aligns with the region's goal to raise by 2060 at least half of the food it consumes, and it asks that applicants from at least two campuses collaborate on their projects (Roger Williams University 2019).

Five teams received the award in 2018, and another five were selected in 2019. Each award includes \$250,000 in funding. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the foundation didn't award prize recipients in 2020 (Henry P. Kendall Foundation b). Prize funds have supported diverse initiatives. For example, one involved purchasing equipment and securing other infrastructure that would allow Narragansett Creamery to make shredded mozzarella cheese and supply it to institutional buyers, such as Brown University and Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. The milk used to produce the cheese would originate from two dairy co-ops that aggregate milk from three New England states, including Rhode Island (Henry P. Kendall Foundation c).

Another two Rhode Island campuses — the Rhode Island School of Design and Johnson & Wales University — would use their New England Food Prize award to partner with Farm Fresh Rhode Island and convert “seconds” or surplus local produce into packaged processed foods. Branded with the “College Harvest” name, these products would be available to institutions such as colleges and universities (Henry P. Kendall Foundation a).

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3.15 SOUTH CAROLINA



Founded in 2011, *South Carolina Farm to School* began as a two-year program. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided the initial funding. Later, the state expanded its efforts to support other types of institutions and formed a South Carolina Farm to Institution umbrella organization (South Carolina Farm to School).

At one point, preschools and schools could apply to receive mini grants from the state’s farm-to-school program. The \$4,000 grant awards would support activities related to purchasing and using South Carolina-grown fruits and vegetables, building understanding of the Certified SC Grown program, investing in agriculture and nutrition education and establishing and maintaining school gardens. Since 2017, South Carolina has prioritized training instead of making grant funding available (National Farm to School Network 2021).

Related to this shift to training, the South Carolina Farm to School website includes various educational resources. For example, it has published farm-to-school “getting started” guides for farmers, cafeterias and classrooms. The farmer and cafeteria guides recommend several steps to initiate farm-to-institution relationships. For example, the farmer guide helps producers to create a business profile, prepare for conversations with institutional buyers and develop sample contracts (South Carolina Farm to School).



Farm to University

The *University of South Carolina* will have one or two microfarms installed on its campus following an announced partnership between *Babylon Micro-Farms* and Aramark, a food, facilities and uniform services business that has an ongoing relationship with several universities. The microfarms will allow universities to grow food on site (Vertical Farm Daily).

Babylon's hydroponic systems may grow crops such as leafy greens, herbs and edible flowers. Examples include more common spinach and basil and less common wasabi arugula and red beet shoots. Users may choose from about 40 seed varieties that Babylon offers. From one unit, users may produce 8 pounds of product. Users can manage these systems through a phone app. To help institutions use the crops they harvest, a Babylon farm manager collaborates with an institution's nutrition team to plan meals or events tied to the products grown (Crain 2021).

At the universities where Babylon will install the microfarms, students will have an opportunity to participate in tending the microfarms. Plus, they'll receive recipes and learn about what's involved in running a microfarm (Vertical Farm Daily). In addition to the University of South Carolina, three other universities will have the Babylon systems installed: Virginia Commonwealth University, Lander University and Western Carolina University (Crain 2021).



Offered by Clemson Cooperative Extension, ***School Gardening for SC Educators*** equips teachers to succeed with school garden projects. The program has several components. To start, a five-week online course introduces participants to a gardening-oriented science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) curriculum that they can use for kindergarteners to eighth-graders. The course also teaches when to plant and harvest vegetable crops (Clemson Cooperative Extension 2021). Those who enroll can complete the course at their own pace (Dabbs 2021). The extension service encourages collaboration. It asks for schools to form three-person teams. Participating educators who complete the course may receive professional development credits (Clemson Cooperative Extension 2021). Horticulture and 4-H youth development agents lead the course (Dabbs 2021).

Participants have also attended a hands-on workshop after the five-week online course. There, they could apply skills introduced in the online course and included in the student STEM curriculum. For example, they may practice how to set up an irrigation system or start seeds. At the workshop, they could also learn about other available gardening resources, such as those from 4-H and farm bureau's ag in the classroom initiative (Clemson Cooperative Extension 2021). During fall 2021, the workshop took a virtual format. During the virtual event, participants learned where to find other resources and accessed a "lesson in a box kit." The enrollment cost was \$75 per registrant (Dabbs 2021).

School Gardening for SC Educators also administers the state's ***School Garden and Education Instruction Assistance Program***, which awards a school garden kit to each selected school (Spearman 2020). The program has a twofold purpose: create hands-on learning opportunities for students and add local produce to meals schools serve. In 2021, 20 schools participated. In addition to receiving the garden kit, selected schools participated in hands-on and online training and received the garden STEM curriculum and other resources (Bhonsle 2021).

Supporters of these programs have included the Boeing Company, College of Charleston Food Systems and Change Initiative and South Carolina Department of Education (Spearman 2020).



Farm to Early Care and Education

Four Head Start centers participate in *Farm to Belly*, a program that exposes children and their families to local foods and nutrition education. Centers host farmers markets stocked with produce raised in South Carolina, and they open these markets to families (Defendiefer 2021). Families also receive recipe bags, which include recipes and the fruits and vegetables needed to make those dishes. A produce company and the Clemson Student Organic Research Farm have raised ingredients included in these recipe kits (Greenville Health System 2018). At home, families cook the meals together. Farm to Belly supporters include the Greenville Health System; SHARE Head Start; and Feed & Seed, an advocacy organization (Defendiefer 2021).

Farm to Belly has also done work to make healthy food more accessible to families, so they can enjoy those foods more frequently. Using program evaluation data, Farm to Belly determined families' preferred produce and advocated for convenience stores, such as Spinx, to offer those top fruits and vegetables (Defendiefer 2021). Spinx has a "Fresh on the Go" menu that includes salads and fruit cups. It has purchased locally raised apples and watermelons, which it has packaged in fruit cups and sold as whole fruit (Del Conte 2017).



Located in Charleston, the Medical University of South Carolina *Urban Farm* is a half-acre farm. It raises fruits, vegetables, flowers and herbs. On Tuesdays, the Urban Farm opens its produce stand, which makes vegetables, fruit, herbs, cut flowers and seedlings available for free (Medical University of South Carolina).

The farm also focuses on education. It offers workshops, seminars, volunteer days, tours and events. Held seasonally, the farm's programs have had in-person and virtual participation options (Medical University of South Carolina). The farm also contributes to a STAR Children's Day Treatment Program, which engages children and teenagers in horticultural therapy. Young people who participate in the program have behavioral challenges. When working with the farm staff one day a week, they collaborate in small groups on garden activities. Their treatment also includes classroom activities with therapists, nurses and social workers (Bailey 2021).

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3.16 VERMONT



Farm to Institution

In February 2021, the Vermont legislature engaged the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to update a state food system plan. The original plan included 25 goals to achieve between 2011 and 2020. One goal centered on institutional consumption (Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund). Called *Farm to Plate*, the updated plan was finalized in February 2021. It includes 15 goals to address through 2030. One of the 15 goals stressed making local food accessible, and two of its underlying objectives involved institutions. Namely, one objective names that local food will represent one-fifth of food spending for half of the state’s K-12 schools. A second mentions for more state colleges to dedicate at least one-fifth of their food budgets to local purchases (Claro et al.).



Farm to School

Signed into law during 2021, an incentive program provides funding to Vermont schools that purchase local food. Beginning in 2021/22, the *Local Foods Purchasing Incentive for Vermont Schools* scales the incentives paid according to the share of food purchase costs that are local. The program offers tiered payments when schools spend 15%, 20% and 25% of their food budgets on local options. For example, when 15% of food purchase costs are local, the incentive would total \$0.15 per lunch (Vermont Farm to School Network 2021 and Food Connects 2021). Schools report food purchase data at the supervisory union level (Food Connects 2021). Supervisory unions refer to administrative units that “facilitate prekindergarten through grade 12 curriculum planning and coordination” (Vermont General Assembly b).

The program applies the following “local” definitions for 2021/22. Raw products must be Vermont-produced. For processed foods, at least half of the ingredients must originate from Vermont. Plus, they must undergo processing in the state, or the manufacturer must be Vermont-headquartered. A local “unique food” — one that doesn’t have raw materials produced in Vermont — should meet at least two of three criteria: 1) made from at least 50% Vermont-produced raw materials by volume, 2) underwent “substantial transformation” in Vermont and 3) manufactured by a company with Vermont headquarters. Note, fluid milk doesn’t count toward incentive program goals. Food served for catering also doesn’t count (Food Connects 2021).

Schools must satisfy several eligibility criteria to participate. Namely, they must create a local foods procurement plan, choose a local foods coordinator, track their local food purchases and report their performance as required (Food Connects 2021). The first year had a \$500,000 cap on incentive payments (Vermont Farm to School Network 2021).



Farm to Institution

Schools and early care providers may request grant funding from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to support local food procurement and education (State of

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets 2021). In 2006, the Vermont General Assembly passed the bill to fund the grant programs and called it the ***Rozo McLaughlin Farm-to-School Program*** (Vermont General Assembly a). Since the state enacted the program, it has diverted general funding to support farm-to-institution work and created funding opportunities for early care providers (State of Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets 2021).

Vermont has recently offered three grant programs coordinated by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. First available in 2021, ***Community Supported Agriculture Grants*** encourage registered or licensed early childhood centers to purchase food from CSA programs spearheaded by in-state farms or farm collaboratives. Applicants could request funding to pay 80% of a CSA share purchase price. The program offsets CSA purchase costs for 33 early childhood organizations, and the state planned to make a second funding round available in winter 2022 (State of Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets 2021).

Applicants to the ***Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant*** may request financial support and technical assistance. The grant program began funding projects in 2007. Applicants who receive standard awards receive \$10,000 paid in three increments. To receive successive payments, applicants must demonstrate they have completed certain deliverables. If more than one entity participates, then grant awards may total as much as \$15,000. Grantees may use funding to support their own specific goals. Overall, the grant program endeavors to use more local foods, improve agricultural literacy, encourage healthy eating, connect educators and agricultural stakeholders and help more children access child nutrition programs. The program expects teams to participate in roughly 29 hours of technical assistance, which includes customized coaching, procurement training, curriculum development assistance, child nutrition program training and garden workshops. The coaching component helps project teams make their own action plans, budget accordingly and connect with other technical assistance and support. Projects typically take 1.5 years to complete (State of Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets 2021).

Called the ***Farm to School Vision Grant***, the third program supports two-year projects proposed by schools, eligible early care providers and nonprofits or community groups working with these types of institutions. Grantees may use awarded funds — between \$5,000 and \$38,000 per project — to address a farm-to-school challenge, and their projects should include youth. Examples of challenges that may be focus areas include climate change, COVID-19 and racial equity. A 25% match — cash, in-kind or both — is required. Solid proposals will also include multiple stakeholders, show potential for being scaled or replicated and have potential to make a long-term impact (State of Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets 2021).



Farm to Hospital

The ***Health Care Share*** program offers a farm share to qualifying Vermont families. Selected by their health care providers, families receive items such as vegetables, herbs, recipes and nutritional information in their shares (The University of Vermont Health Network a). In total, a week's share includes 12 pounds to 15 pounds of produce. In some cases, shares may also include whole frozen chickens (Vermont Youth Conservation Corps). Depending on a family's underlying health conditions, the shares may be customized. For example, shares may include

items particularly well-suited for individuals who have diabetes or heart disease (Noyes 2018). In 2020, participating families received 14 shares — weekly shares during the main growing season and monthly shares in October and November. The program began in 2012, and through mid-2020, it had served more than 1,000 families (The University of Vermont Medical Center 2021).

The food products that families receive originate from the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps farm (The University of Vermont Health Network a). Participating youth work in teams to grow the food and deliver it (Vermont Youth Conservation Corps). The distribution points are health care facilities, where families pick up their shares (The University of Vermont Health Network a). In addition to the program’s main farm campus, partnering farms work with corps members to grow and glean food. The youth also attend daily education time and meet weekly with leaders to focus on one-on-one personal development (Vermont Youth Conservation Corps).

The University of Vermont Medical Center also houses the *Center for Nutrition and Healthy Food Systems*, which intends to teach health care providers about how to make their food service programs more sustainable. The center’s work has included training hospital and school food service employees about how to use fresh food. Held during the summer, the two-day training helped to improve culinary skills (The University of Vermont Medical Center b).



Farm to Workplace

Skincare company *Twincraft* includes several perks in its employee compensation plans. For one, it subsidizes or provides free community supported agriculture shares in an arrangement with the Intervale Community Farm (Novak 2021). Available year-round, the shares make local foods such as vegetables, fruits, meat and bread accessible to Twincraft employees (Twincraft 2019). A nonprofit, the Intervale Center has a food hub that collaborates with more than 70 farms to create weekly produce baskets. It also has an online shop that allows customers to pick and choose various goods, such as bakery items, dairy products, eggs, pantry goods and proteins, to add to a delivery (Intervale Food Hub 2021).

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3.17 WEST VIRGINIA



Farm to Institution

To support West Virginia farms and encourage institutions to raise their own food, the state passed the *Fresh Food Act* in 2019. The act included a mandate that state-funded institutions serve West Virginia-produced foods. For the produce, meat and poultry that West Virginia businesses could produce or supply, the act required state-funded institutions to source at least 5% from West Virginia producers or their own food production programs. The act would apply to institutions such as schools, state parks and correctional facilities (West Virginia Department of Agriculture 2019). In 2021, West Virginia’s legislature passed a farm bill — the first in its history — that expanded the Fresh Food Act to include additional qualifying West Virginia foods (Donaldson 2021). The bill language states at least 5% of the food that state-funded institutions use must originate from West Virginia producers. It listed the following qualifying purchases: fresh produce; meat; poultry; milk; other dairy products; and other West Virginia-grown, -produced or -processed food (West Virginia Legislature 2021).

When implementing the original Fresh Food Act, West Virginia provided institutions time to meet the mandate (West Virginia Department of Agriculture 2019). The 5% mandate would ease into effect and be required by 2025 (Food Tank). Institutions could request a waiver. Even with a waiver, however, an institution would need to show it had invested effort into sourcing West Virginia-produced food and working toward satisfying the 5% mandate. To do this, institutions would file annual food purchasing reports with the state agriculture department. Those reports would detail food purchases and the dollar share originating from West Virginia sources (West Virginia Department of Agriculture 2019).

Each state-funded institution had a requirement to name a primary liaison to communicate with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, which administers the act’s implementation. Although the state set no noncompliance penalty, it reserved the right to alert the legislature about noncompliance incidences (West Virginia Department of Agriculture 2019).



Farm to Institution

Based in Maxwelton, West Virginia, the *Turnrow Appalachian Farm Collective* aggregates produce, meat, eggs, dairy products, flowers and value-added products from family-owned independent farms to sell to schools, wholesale distributors and other buyers. The collective’s production managers coach the producers through forming production plans, which account for demand from the collective’s buyers. Farmers deliver their food to drop-off locations. From that point, collective staff prepare the food for distribution and transport product to more than 100 customers (Turnrow Appalachian Farm Collective).

By participating in the collective, producers may access technical assistance and lower packaging costs. Additionally, the collective and the Greenville Farm Kitchen partner to offer producers access to an FDA-certified manufacturing facility where they can make value-added

products. To participate in the collective, producers join at one of two levels. With the first, producers annually pay \$50 and sell through the collective after they complete onboarding activities. With the second, producers pay \$175 initially. If their collective sales exceed \$3,000 for the year, then they earn a 2% return on total sales (Turnrow Appalachian Farm Collective).

Historically, the collective's farm-to-school sales focused on salad bar items. After the COVID-19 pandemic began, school salad bars closed, and the collective had limited products available that schools continued to need. During this time, the collective increased its farm-to-school sales, but it only shipped apples. The hope was the farm-to-school relationships initiated during the pandemic would lead to opportunities for schools to source other local products after the pandemic ended (Food Tank 2020).



Farm to School

Using funds from a 2018 farm-to-school implementation grant from USDA, West Virginia initiated a process to plan its farm-to-school program's future. The resulting *five-year strategic plan* named a series of recommendations. The two foundational recommendations centered on formalizing a farm-to-school alliance and hiring a full-time farm-to-school coordinator at the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (Fourth Economy).

The plan also included several strategies. One included creating a two-year pilot program meant to improve farmer coordination. Research conducted while developing the plan identified a common challenge: equipping producers to provide the quantity of food schools need. Coordination would allow farmers to pool production and satisfy large orders schools would place. The recommended two-year pilot program — slated to begin in 2021/22 — would involve two to five counties identifying as many as 10 local producers who can specialize in supplying two to five crops to area schools. The participating farmers would plan their production collectively to meet school needs and articulate expectations for packaging, transportation and payment. Ultimately, the pilot has the potential to allow existing food co-ops, such as the Preston Growers Co-op and Turnrow Appalachian Farm Collective, to grow or stimulate new co-ops to begin (Fourth Economy).



Farm to School

A middle school in Lewis County, West Virginia, held its first *farm-to-school picnic* in August 2019. It sourced nine ingredients — from beef to wheat and tomatoes to pinto beans — from local farms. Using the wheat, the school made homemade hamburger buns, which required a notable time and labor investment. The school's nutrition supervisor indicated interest in planning more farm-to-school picnics at least on a quarterly basis (Young 2019).



Farm to Government Agency

When possible, West Virginia's state park system has used locally made products, including beverages and toiletries. In 2018, the state parks introduced a *farm to table dinner series*. The summer event included dinners at eight West Virginia state parks. Each dinner's menu — starting with a salad and then progressing through a main entrée, sides and dessert — would exclusively feature West Virginia-produced foods and beverages. The parks would also offer wine and craft beer produced locally (Lawrence 2018). Due to the dinners' popularity, the series continued in 2019 (Brooks 2019). 2019's nine-event dinner series began in June and ended in September, and several locations had dedicated themes, such as "Hoedown on the Hill" (Parsons 2019). State parks resumed the dinners during summer 2021 (West Virginia State Parks 2021).

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