

## **USDA Farm to School Tactical Team Monthly Report October & November 2009**

### **Farm to School (F2S) Tactical Team Purpose Statement:**

The purpose of the Tactical Team is to support local and regional food systems by facilitating linkages between schools and their local food producers. The Team is comprised of both Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) staff, who will work with local and state authorities, school districts, farmers, and community partners to develop mechanisms to 1) assist schools in accessing local markets, 2) enable food producers to effectively service their local schools, and 3) facilitate communication between interested stakeholders. To assist in the growth of Farm to School activities, the team will:

- Identify and recruit nine school districts, representing varied demographics and characteristics, in which the Team will conduct field work;
- Develop a Farm to School website which will contain resources, best practice information, and guidance to schools who have not yet started Farm to School activities or would like to expand their existing program;
- Use the site visit information to analyze and assess which variables are most influential in deterring the success of a farm-to-school program and identifying trends; and
- Facilitate webinars with interested parties to allow for dissemination of Farm to School barriers and successes.

### **F2S Tactical Team Long Term Goals:**

- Provide access to resources and information on beginning and maintaining a Farm to School Program for schools, farmers and local community members;
- Provide technical assistance to assist schools and farmers in the development, progression, and/or sustainability of a Farm to School Program; and
- Identify obstacles faced by schools and farmers in implementing and/or sustaining a Farm to School Program and provide suggested solutions.

### **Accomplishments:**

- Established Farm to School Tactical Team Members (member names listed below).
- Regular meetings have been established for Core and Resource team members.

#### Site Visits:

- Worked with *One Tray* to organize an exploratory site visit with an established F2S program. Visit will be conducted on December 9, 2009 in Bridgeville, DE.
- Established criteria for the Team's school site visits in Spring of 2010.
- Developed a "2009-2010 USDA Farm to School Tactical Team School Site Visit Form" which is to be completed by schools interested in a visit from the Tactical Team to observe their Farm to School activities. The form will be embedded into the website and interested schools will submit data through the FNS F2S website.

#### Policy Development/Technical Assistance:

- November 13, 2009, FNS issued memorandum number SP02-2010, *Geographic Preference for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agriculture Products in Child Nutrition Programs*, which revised previous guidance on the definition of "unprocessed agriculture products" to mean agriculture products that retain their inherent character.

- Developed layout of FNS F2S website. Plans for the website include providing users with information on how to start a Farm to School Program, how to purchase locally, policies related to Farm to School Programs, solutions to overcoming barriers, food safety, progress on the Tactical Team Initiative, and much more. The website is estimated to be launched in mid-December.
- Began content development and editing for the FNS F2S website for December website launch.
- Began researching State F2S Programs and identifying existing infrastructures.
- Began researching and identifying areas of need for farmers/growers with regard to participating in Farm to School Programs.
- Finalizing communication plan to engage stakeholders and other interested parties in regular discussions on Farm to School issues. Among other activities, the plan will include developing a database with contact information, scheduling regular webinars on topics related to Farm to School Programs, presenting and participating in Farm to School stakeholder meetings (such as that described above), and developing printed and web-based resources as needed.
- Answered numerous emails and inquiries regarding involvement in Farm to School Initiative and Tactical Team involvement and/or mission.

Meetings/Conferences/Presentations:

- Providing briefing material to the Deputy Secretary office for a Facebook chat on the topic of Farm to School Programs. The chat was held on Thursday, November 4<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm ET. Briefing material included key highlights of the Tactical Team Initiative and Farm to School success stories, including photographs.
- November 4, 2009, Tactical Team members participated in the Deputy Secretary's Facebook chat regarding Farm to School Programs.
- Members of the Tactical Team met with the National Farm to School Network and School Food FOCUS, Farm to School stakeholders, to discuss future collaborations on Farm to School activities.
- November 9, 2009, a member of the Tactical Team presented in a panel discussion at the USDA Food Commodity Contracting Opportunities for Rural America: Southeast Regional Small Business Conference in Albany, Georgia. The panel discussed purchasing issues related to Farm to School activities.
- November 17-18, 2009, a member of the USDA Farm to School Tactical Team participated in a meeting with members of School Food FOCUS and the St. Paul Public Schools in St. Paul, MN to discuss St. Paul's 18-month Learning Lab, a pilot program led by researchers from Michigan State University to increase Farm to School activities.
- On December 2-3, 2009, members of the Tactical team participated in "Beyond Farm to School 101" at the School Nutrition Association's biennial State Agency Conference in Atlanta, GA. The session discussed best practices and identified effective models for boosting Farm to School efforts.