



Farm to Summer How States Can Promote Local Foods and Agriculture-Based Activities

With harvests at their peak in many regions, summer is a perfect time to highlight local products and get kids involved in food, agriculture, and nutrition-based activities. Incorporating local foods into Summer Meal Programs adds variety to keep meals tasting great, connects the community with local agricultural producers, and provides hands-on enrichment activities that keep children and teens nourished and engaged while school is out. There are many ways State agencies can help sponsors to “bring the farm” to their Summer Meal sites.

Go to [Resources](#).

Incorporate Farm to Summer Principles in Sponsor Trainings

State agencies can provide support to sponsors and promote the use of local foods to improve the quality and appeal of Summer Meals.

- Encourage sponsors to find out what’s seasonal and available locally.
- Highlight the many sources for local foods: direct from the farm, through a distributor, through a food service management company, or from a food hub, farmers market, or school or community garden.
- Utilize USDA’s *Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs* and other helpful procurement resources:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods>

Sponsor trainings are also a great time to spread the word about agriculture-based activities that help attract and engage children and teens in summer programming. Brainstorm with sponsors about how they can:

- Grow or visit edible gardens, and engage community volunteers to run gardening lessons or activities.
- Organize a farm field trip or host a producer visit.



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- Feature local foods as a way to promote a kick-off or other special event.
- Conduct taste tests or cooking demonstrations with local foods.
- Align Summer Meal sites with local food access points like farmers markets and school or community gardens.

Promote Model Programs

Highlighting model programs that are already engage in farm to summer activities is a great way for State agencies to inspire sponsors to get started.

- Invite experienced sponsors to present at annual sponsor trainings.
- Document best practices through on-site reviews.
- Encourage sponsors to submit anecdotes and photos of their work directly or through social media.
- Recognize sponsors for incorporating local foods or related activities through certificates or awards.

Connect with Partners

The following partners can provide assistance to State agencies and sponsors in promoting local foods and related activities in Summer Meal Programs.

- **USDA Regional Farm to School and Farm to Summer Staff**

There is a farm to school lead and a farm to summer point of contact in every Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office who are prepared to help State agencies and sponsors incorporate farm to summer principles in Summer Meal Programs.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/usda-farm-school-staff>

USDA's E-letter, *The Dirt*, provides updates on farm to school, farm to summer, and farm to preschool from the Office of Community Food Systems. Sign up here:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/subscriber/new?preferences=true>





- **State Farm to School Coordinators**

A number of States have farm to school coordinators in their Departments of Agriculture or Education. Find out who is engaged in supporting farm to school, farm to summer, and farm to preschool efforts in your State.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/state-contacts>

- **National Farm to School Network State (NFSN) Leads**

NFSN identifies champions in each State who can help you learn more about accessing local foods in your communities, connecting with schools and producers; and identifying Summer Meal Programs that may already be incorporating local foods and related activities.

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-network>

- **Community Organization Leaders**

Organizations that work on child nutrition and youth development can support sponsors in their efforts to increase local foods and related enrichment activities in Summer Meal Programs. Reach out to the organizations in your State to see if they can help out.

Tap into Existing Resources

State agencies can circulate the following resources by posting them on their website, exhibiting them at sponsor trainings, or including them within regular sponsor communications.

- **USDA Farm to Summer Website**

This site features our farm to summer fact sheet and policy memo, along with links to other helpful FNS and partner resources.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-summer>.

- ***Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs***

This guide will help sponsors discover a variety of strategies that they can use to communicate a preference for local foods in their procurement activities.

http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S_Procuring_Local_Foods_Child_Nutrition_Prog_Guide.pdf





- **Farm to School Census**

The Census identifies school districts that are already integrating farm to school activities into their meal programs.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/>

- **USDA Farm to School Grant Programs**

State agencies can apply to support farm to school, farm to summer, and farm to preschool efforts in their State. Stay tuned for the next Request for Applications.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-grant-program>.

For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and compatible with your Program. For additional questions, sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for help. State agencies should contact their FNS Regional Office.

List of FNS Regional Offices: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

List of State Agencies: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

USDA and its recipient institutions share responsibility for compliance and oversight to ensure good stewardship of Federal funds.

