

Overview

About this toolkit

Welcome to the *Wisconsin Farm to School: Toolkit for School Nutrition Directors*. Farm to school encourages healthy lifestyles in children and helps support local economies. Whether you are just starting off or looking to expand your program, this toolkit will provide you with resources to aid in your success.

This toolkit is an interactive resource. You can access all of the tools by clicking on them, and you may then print them if desired. The body of the toolkit may also be printed as one document (minus tools) if a hard copy is a useful reference. You may use the entire toolkit or select certain sections or tools, in an à la carte fashion.

Please note there is a separate *Wisconsin Farm to School: Toolkit for Producers* at www.cias.wisc.edu/toolkits.

Wisconsin producers have different capacities and needs for both production and sales. Understanding their needs and being able to clearly communicate your own are keys to a successful program.

What is Wisconsin Farm to School?

Wisconsin Farm to School promotes the health of children, farms and communities by connecting schools to local farms that supply fresh, healthy and minimally processed food.

Wisconsin Farm to School goals:

- Promote children's health by providing fresh, minimally processed foods in schools and supporting the development of healthy eating habits
- Strengthen children's and communities' knowledge about and attitudes toward agriculture, food, nutrition and the environment
- Strengthen local economies by expanding markets for Wisconsin's agricultural producers and food entrepreneurs

"Farm to school is an opportunity handed to us on a silver platter. Wisconsin is a fertile and productive state, and farm to school is a win-win. We are feeding our kids better, helping the Wisconsin economy and building better communities."

—Kymm Mutch, Nutrition Director, Milwaukee Public Schools

*Joshi, A and Azuma, AM, 2009. "Bearing Fruit: Farm to School Program Evaluation Resources and Recommendations." Center for Food and Justice, Urban and Environmental Policy Institute, Occidental College.



Lining up for baby greens at a Waupaca school

*On average, farm to school programs—during implementation—have been shown to **increase school lunch participation** by nine percent. For some school nutrition directors, farm to school has become the backbone of their programs' popularity and an ongoing financial success.**

Children Win

- Fresh fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods help fight childhood obesity.
- Pairing healthy eating with agriculture and nutrition education encourages kids to develop healthy habits.
- Good nutrition fosters healthy growth and development.

Farmers and Communities Win

- Schools provide local farmers with new or expanded markets.
- Money stays in the local economy.
- The variety of local crops produced can increase, creating opportunities for community economic development.

Schools Win

- Overall, schools report a 3 to 16% increase in meal participation when farm-fresh food is served, thus bringing in more funds.
- Local farm prices tend to fluctuate less than prices from distant markets.
- Local produce can cost less than highly processed produce currently delivered to schools.

Wisconsin Farm to School values:

- An individual's lifelong well-being depends on healthy eating habits
- All children should have access to fresh, minimally processed food as part of a nutritionally balanced school meal program
- Wisconsin farms that serve local markets make essential contributions to a diverse food system
- Schools and nutrition professionals are important partners in supporting community well-being, local economies and environmental stewardship through their food and nutrition education programs and purchasing practices

Schools are typically motivated to buy food from local farmers so they can:

- Support local farms and economies
- Access a wider variety of foods
- Encourage students' healthy eating habits through agriculture and nutrition education
- Receive fresh, high-quality product
- Increase meal participation by offering food "with a farmer's face on it"
- Take advantage of opportunities to partner with producers for promotional and educational activities
- Increase students' knowledge of how their food is produced by learning about the farms that provide it