

NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH

Celebration Toolkit

Tools & Resources For Celebrating National Farm to School Month

ABOUT NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH

October is National Farm to School Month, a time to celebrate the connections happening all over the country between children and local food. From taste tests in the cafeteria and nutrition education activities in the classroom, to farm visits and school garden harvest parties, schools, early care and education sites, farms, communities and organizations in all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and U.S. Territories join in the celebrations.

The National Farm to School Network advocated for the creation of National Farm to School Month by Congress in 2010 and now organizes the annual celebration with hundreds of partner organizations across the country.

National Farm to School Month is a great opportunity to plan a new farm to school activity, organize a special celebration of your current efforts, or initiate a new partnership. Find celebration activities, ideas and resources in this toolkit!

National Farm to School Month By the Numbers

- Designated in 2010
- First celebrated in 2011
- Celebrations in all 50 states, DC and US territories
- 23.6 million kids participating in farm to school activities year-round
- 200+ organizations spread the word about farm to school in October. Sign up to be a National Farm to School Month partner at farmtoschool.org/monthpartner



WHAT IS FARM TO SCHOOL?

Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by enhancing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education sites. Farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following:

- **Procurement:** Local foods are purchased, promoted and served in the cafeteria or as a snack or taste-test;
- **Education:** Students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health or nutrition; and
- **School gardens:** Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening.

CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM to SCHOOL



WHAT IS FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION?

Farm to early care and education (farm to ECE) offers increased access to the same three core elements of local food sourcing, school gardens and food and agriculture education to enhance the quality of the educational experience in all types of ECE settings (e.g., preschools, child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start/Early Head Start, programs in K - 12 school districts). Farm to ECE offers benefits that parallel the goals and priorities of the early care and education community, including emphasis on experiential learning opportunities, parent and community engagement and lifelong health and wellness for children, families and caregivers. Farm to ECE is included in National Farm to School Month celebrations.

WHY FARM TO SCHOOL?

Farm to school is a triple win for kids, farmers and communities.



KIDS WIN Farm to school provides all kids access to nutritious, high-quality, local food so they are ready to learn and grow. Farm to school activities enhance classroom education through hands-on learning related to food, health, agriculture and nutrition.



FARMERS WIN Farm to school can serve as a significant financial opportunity for farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors and food manufacturers by opening doors to an institutional market worth billions of dollars.



COMMUNITIES WIN Farm to school benefits everyone from students, teachers and administrators to parents and farmers, providing opportunities to build family and community engagement. Buying from

local producers and processors creates new jobs and strengthens the local economy.

There are also numerous cross-sectoral benefits of farm to school activities, including positive impacts on economic development, public health, education, environment and community engagement. Explore the research-based benefits of farm to school in our *Benefits of Farm to School* fact sheet: farmtoschool.org/benefits

FARM TO SCHOOL FOR EVERYONE

Farm to school is a strategy that provides opportunities to address racial and social disparities in the existing food system and ensure the health of *all* school children, farms, environment, economy and communities. The three core elements of farm to school offer distinct approaches for advancing racial and social equity:

- (1) **Procurement** of local foods provides access to healthier school meals to more than 24 million students, and advances income generation and access to land ownership for marginalized food producers.
- (2) **School gardens** offer opportunities for students to develop a sense of responsibility and connection to their community, as well as foster engagement and partnership through those connections outside the school setting.
- (3) **Education** about food and farming is a proven approach for elevating the value of local agriculture and lifting up under-represented stakeholders in the food system.

Learn more about the National Farm to School Network's commitment to advancing racial and social equity in farm to school and find resources to dig deeper into this topic at farmtoschool.org/equity.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK

The National Farm to School Network is an information, advocacy and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing, school gardens and food and agriculture education into schools and early care and education settings.

The National Farm to School Network provides vision, leadership and support at the state, regional and national levels to connect and expand the farm to school movement, which has grown from a handful of schools in the late 1990s to approximately 42,000 schools in all 50 states as of 2014. Our network includes Core Partner and Supporting Partner organizations in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. Territories, thousands of farm to school supporters, a national advisory board and staff.

Learn more at farmtoschool.org.



Ways to Celebrate

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE) SITES & STAKEHOLDERS

- Serve a local food for a healthy snack. Make a CACFP reimbursable snack by combining two local food components, like apples from your local farmer and yogurt from your local dairy.
- Visit a farm, orchard or pumpkin patch with your students. If you can't get to the farm, ask the farmer to come to your classroom for a visit.
- Plant seeds and watch them grow!
- Sing the plants part song with your students (to the tune of Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes): "Roots, Stem, Leaves and Flowers, Leaves and Flowers (Repeat)/ Flowers grow to Fruits then drop their Seeds/ Root, Stem, Leaves and Flowers, Leaves and Flowers."
- Cook with your students. Try a simple smoothie, tortilla wrap, or a no-bake granola bar.
- Start a harvest of the month program in your classroom.
- Invite parents to a Farm to School Month feast, highlighting local foods and recipes and farm to school themed artwork created by the children.
- Use a pumpkin to highlight math concepts by measuring its weight, height and circumference and counting the seeds inside.
- Read a new book about apples, like "Apple Farmer Annie" by Monica Wellington, and make applesauce together.
- Ask children and families to share their family food traditions and favorite recipes to create a class cookbook.

FAMILIES

- Read a book about food, farming or cooking together.

- Whether it's a container garden inside, a raised bed in the backyard, or a plot at a community garden, get out and garden as a family.
- Visit a farmers market or locally owned co-op. Many markets and grocery stores have double up food dollar programs for families who purchase local produce using SNAP.
- Visit a farm, orchard, or pumpkin patch. Invite neighbors, cousins, and grandparents to join you.
- Cook and enjoy a family meal together, incorporating local foods.
- Share family recipes. Have your child/grandchild copy down a family recipe or cook a meal that you enjoyed when you were their age.
- Talk with your students' teachers, school administrator, or school food service staff about farm to school programs. Ask how you can be supportive.

FARMERS & PRODUCERS

- Host a tour of your farm for students or visit a classroom to talk about your farming operation.
- Meet a school food service director and start to build a working relationship. Ask questions: what local foods would schools be interested in purchasing?
- Work with your school to create a "farmer trading card." Include your picture and some farm stats (what you grow, how many acres, farm animals, etc.) so students can get to know who grew their food.
- Explore growing foods that are culturally relevant to the school communities you serve or are hoping to serve.
- Share Farm to School Month materials like stickers and bookmarks at your farmers market booth. Free downloads are available at farmtoschool.org/month.

OUT OF SCHOOL & AFTER SCHOOL PROVIDERS

- Introduce new foods and healthy recipes during snack time. Better yet, invite students to help you prepare the snack and learn food prep skills.
- Use arts and crafts such as coloring, painting, cutting and pasting or other creative projects to reinforce excitement for fruits and vegetables.
- Read books together about food, nutrition or agriculture. Check your school or local library to see what's available.
- Get moving with physical activity games. Try a relay race to collect fruits and vegetables and sort them by color.
- Be a role model for students by participating in healthy snack time and physical activity games.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION & OTHER SCHOOL STAFF

- Focus in-service training time on a farm to school topic, such as teaching core curriculum with hand-on lessons in a garden classroom or edible education.
- Propose adding Farm to School and/or local purchasing policies to your District Wellness Policy.
- Educate yourself and others on the positive benefits of hands-on learning in school gardens.
- Eat in the cafeteria with the students.
- Sign-up for the National Farm to School Network e-newsletter to stay in the loop on the latest farm to school news, research, resources and opportunities.
- Role model healthful behavior in your office, classroom, or school building.
- School nurses, librarians, and administrative support staff can all champion farm to school efforts. Librarians can feature food systems literature during October's Farm to School Month, and school nurses can support farm to school as a tool for growing healthier students.

SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE

- Connect with a local farmer and work to build a positive relationship. Reach out to your NFSN State Core Partner if you need help making your first connection.

- Conduct a taste test of a new food or recipe.
- Invite a classroom at your school to take a field trip through the school kitchen.
- Consider new recipes that are culturally appropriate and relevant to the communities you serve.
- Add a salad bar or try a new, local item on the salad bar. Consider a flavor station.
- Consider a seasonally, cycling menu that would allow you to scale up/down local food as it is available.
- Invite a farmer or food producer to eat with students in the lunchroom.

STUDENTS

- Get involved and advocate. Attend a District Wellness Committee Meeting, PTO, or School Board Meeting and let the representatives know why farm to school is important to you.
- Be respectful of everyone in the school cafeteria. If someone is eating a food you do not recognize and have never tried before, politely ask them about that food.
- Celebrate school food service workers by telling them "Thank you!" every day. Politely give feedback to cafeteria workers on local food items.
- Turn your thumbs green. Join a school or community garden club.
- Be brave and try new things. If your cafeteria is hosting a taste test or your classroom is harvesting garden produce, take a brave first bite.
- Learn about local farmers by going to a farmers market. Ask the farmers about where and how they grow food.
- Take time to be mindful in a school or community garden. Read a book to a plant or just take a break by using all five of your senses to enjoy the natural world around you.
- Ask your teacher or food service staff about food waste in your school. What could your school do to decrease food waste? (compost, food waste audit, education and outreach to the school community)
- Talk to your parents, grandparents, siblings, guardians, and friends about why you love farm to school.

TEACHERS & SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

- Teach a math, science, or literacy lesson in an outdoor classroom. Find farm to school curriculum resources at farmtoschool.org/resources.
- Commit to serving on a school garden committee, district wellness committee, or any other group that champions farm to school.
- Create and cook a snack recipe with your students.
- Plan a field trip to a local farm, farmers market or food hub.
- Invite a farmer to visit your classroom.
- Make time for your students to practice their literacy while cultivating gratitude by writing "Thank You" notes to the school food service team and/or local farmers.
- Make a bulletin board celebrating farmers and local food.
- If you have a middle or high school FFA program, consider creating a cross-age teaching program that allows the middle and/or high school students to teach farm to school lessons to the younger grades.
- Farm to school is a tool for growing healthy kids, farmers, and communities. Take some time for self-care. You'll be able to better support farm to school programs if you first support yourself. Go for an evening walk or sit down for a homemade meal with friends and family.

EVERYONE

- Let teachers, paraeducators, food service workers, school groundskeepers, and administration know that you appreciate their dedication to farm to school programs as a way to support healthy kids, communities, and farmers.
- Make a community asset map to assess organizations with relevant resources. Consider connecting organizations to each other or to farm to school programs that are already happening.
- Participate in a school or community garden clean-up or planting day.
- Read your school district's wellness policy and look for specific policies to support farm to school programming.

- Talk to your local and state representatives about how farm to school programs are a win for kids, farmers and families in your communities. Through advocacy and education, you help shape farm to school policy.
- Connect your local librarians to farm to school programming. Many local libraries have community gardens on their property or even just a single raised bed for story time. Urban libraries can consider vertical gardens or tower garden systems.
- Call your county Extension office to connect their resources to farm to school efforts in your community. Master Gardeners may already be supporting school or community gardens in your area.
- Become a member of the National Farm to School Network. Sign up (it's free!) at farmtoschool.org/join

This list is just a start - there are thousands of small actions you can take to get information, get inspired, and get involved with farm to school in your community during National Farm to School Month!

State Celebrations

Many states celebrate National Farm to School Month with special farm to school events, providing more great opportunities to get involved this October. States including Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico and Virginia organize statewide Farm to School Weeks. Iowa, Massachusetts, North Dakota and Washington choose a specific day to celebrate farm to school with a Local Food Day. The Great Lakes region (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin), Montana, North Carolina and other states celebrate farm to school by taking a big bite out of local apples with a synchronized, statewide CRUNCH. Find out how your state celebrates and learn how you can get involved by exploring our National Farm to School Month Events Calendar at farmtoschool.org/month.



Spread the Word

Sharing your farm to school story is an important strategy for growing awareness and building support for the farm to school movement. With lots of activities and celebrations happening during National Farm to School Month, October is a prime time to spread the word about how farm to school is a win for kids, farmers and communities. Be sure to include farm to school messages in a variety of communications - social media, newsletter, website, blog, school meal menus, school mobile apps, etc. - so everyone in your community can learn about farm to school.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Sharing photos, videos, stories and highlights of your Farm to School Month celebrations on social media can be a quick and easy way to generate interest and support in your activities. Use the hashtags **#F2SMonth** and **#farmtoschool** in all of your social media messages so they reach a wider farm to school audience. Consider tagging your local media outlets and/or local politicians so they can learn about your farm to school successes. Learn more about media pitches on the next page. Sample social media messages:

- We're celebrating #F2SMonth by [INSERT ACTIVITY]! How are you celebrating this October? Learn more & find ways to get involved at farmtoschool.org
- Kids + real food from local farms = a healthy nation right on track! Join us in celebrating National #FarmtoSchool Month this October. Learn more at farmtoschool.org
- Growing school gardens exposes children to local food early in life, encouraging healthier diets, hands-on learning, and vibrant communities! Join us in celebrating #farmtoschool this October by visiting farmtoschool.org #F2SMonth

NEWSLETTERS, BLOGS & MORE

Here's a short paragraph about National Farm to School Month that can easily be shared in general communications, including newsletters, blogs, websites, and mobile apps. Customize this language by adding information about how you're celebrating Farm to School Month and how people can learn more and/or join you.

Celebrate National Farm to School Month

October is National Farm to School Month, a time to celebrate connections happening all over the country between schools, food and local farmers! Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by enhancing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education sites. This October, we're celebrating farm to school by [INSERT ACTIVITY]. Learn more about farm to school and find ways to get involved by visiting the National Farm to School Network's website at farmtoschool.org.

CONNECT WITH US

Connect with the National Farm to School Network, and let us help you share your story! Be sure to tag us in your social media posts or send us a note about your farm to school celebrations.

- Visit our website: **farmtoschool.org**
- Follow us on Twitter at **@FarmtoSchool**
- Follow us on Facebook at **National Farm to School Network**
- Follow us on Instagram at **@FarmtoSchool**
- Follow us on LinkedIn at **National Farm to School Network**

Looking for more ways to help spread the word? Sign up to be a National Farm to School Month Partner (farmtoschool.org/monthpartner) to download our full Farm to School Month Sharing Toolkit.

Media Pitches

Press releases are a great way to share your story. However, media professionals receive dozens of press releases every week, so it might take a little extra effort to get the attention of an editor or reporter. Having a great pitch or angle always helps make your story more unique and allows the editor to better visualize the final product. It also helps ensure that the story they tell is the one you want them to tell.

Here are some suggested pitches for Farm to School Month activities:

- **Follow the food:** Invite news crews to follow your local foods from the farm or the producer all the way to the cafeteria.
- **Cooking demo:** If you have a local TV talk program, suggest having your food service director highlight some of the farm to school dishes your kids are eating by preparing them on the show.
- **Schedule a field trip** to a farm, farmers market, fishery or any of the sites that are part of your farm to school program and invite the news media to follow along.
- **Kids' views:** Invite a news outlet – radio /TV / print – to talk to kids about where their food comes from. Kids can be unpredictable, but they could be balanced out by interviews with school nutrition directors, teachers, the principal, etc.
- **Invite an elected official** to school lunch, and invite the media to cover it. Members of Congress are typically on recess in their home states during October. This is a great time to build support for farm to school among key decision-makers and get the media to cover it.
- **Op-ed:** Have a teacher or school nutrition director write about the changes s/he has seen in the classroom/cafeteria since the farm to school program started.
- **Harvest parties** are a great way to celebrate your school garden's fall harvest. Invite media to join as students harvest the produce they've worked to grow all spring and summer.

If you're new to working with media professionals, here are a few helpful starting tips and things to keep in mind:

- Make your pitch easy. Develop a clear story idea, highlight the visual opportunities, offer sources and interview connections.
- Make your pitch news. Explain that October is National Farm to School Month and mention any recent farm to school reports or statistics from your state that demonstrate the local relevancy. A great resource for local statistics is the USDA Farm to School Census website: farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov
- Keep it short. Focusing on one story idea makes it easier for media to say yes. Include just enough detail and context to spark interest - you can tell them more if they're interested.
- If you don't have a media list already, do an online search to find the news media, reporters, or bloggers who have covered local food, schools, the environment, agriculture, food and food-related businesses in your area.
- Email your press release to your media list. Emphasize the local angle and timeliness in your headline.
- Keep in mind that children will need permission slips before being photographed for a story. It might be necessary to set up a small photo-op with students who have the proper forms.



Sample Press Release

For Immediate Release—[MONTH, DAY, YEAR]

[LOGO]

Media contact:

[NAME]

[EMAIL]

[PHONE]

[ACTIVITY] celebrates fresh, healthy foods with kids at [YOUR SCHOOL] on [DAY]

[ACTIVITY] spotlights local success of thriving national farm to school movement

[ACTIVITY] will happen at [YOUR SCHOOL] on [DAY] as part of National Farm to School Month celebrations taking place across the country. In 2010, Congress declared October National Farm to School Month, recognizing the important role farm to school plays in promoting well-being among children and strong local economies.

[“QUOTE ABOUT CONNECTING KIDS WITH PEOPLE WHO GROW THEIR FOOD OR OTHER BENEFITS OF FARM TO SCHOOL,” said FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR / PRINCIPAL / OTHER.]

[PARAGRAPH WITH SUCCINCT DETAILS ABOUT LOCAL PROGRAM: FARMS AND SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING, TYPES OF LOCAL FOOD IN SCHOOLS, DATE/TIME OF CELEBRATORY EVENT, INVOLVED ORGANIZATIONS]

Over the past decade, the farm to school movement has exploded across the United States, reaching millions of students in all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and U.S. Territories. From school gardens and farm field trips to local food on cafeteria trays, farm to school practices help children learn about where food comes from and make healthier choices while also creating new markets for local and regional farmers.

“Farm to school is an important tool in the fight against childhood obesity and food insecurity,” said Helen Dombalis, Executive Director of the National Farm to School Network. “There are important economic benefits, as well. In the most recent USDA Farm to School Census, schools reported purchasing nearly \$800 million in local food from farmers, ranchers, fishermen and food processors in their communities.”

National Farm to School Network has representatives in every state to help connect schools with local farmers and producers. For more information about farm to school in [YOUR STATE], contact [NAME] at [EMAIL] or [PHONE]. Learn more about the farm to school movement at farmtoschool.org.

###

Download an editable text version of this template at farmtoschool.org/month.



The National Farm to School Network has developed resources and activities to promote Farm to School Month in schools, early care and education settings, communities and media outlets. All of these resources and more can be downloaded for FREE at farmtoschool.org/month.

- **[About National Farm to School Month Fact Sheet](#)** - This two-page fact sheet provides a general overview of National Farm to School Month, and is a great resource to send home to families, display in the cafeteria, or have available at Farm to School Month events.
- **[Posters](#)** - Posters are available in two standard print sizes (11 x 8.5 and 11 x 17) and include a blank space to add local event information. Use these posters in your cafeteria, classroom, office, or your farm.
- **[Stickers](#)** - Get kids excited to try new foods with the incentive of a sticker! Several designs are available, including *I Ate A Local Food Today*, *I Tried A New Food* and *National Farm to School Month*.
- **[Bookmarks](#)** - Can be customized by adding information about local Farm to School Month events to the backside.
- **[Coloring Pages](#)** - Encourage creativity and artistic expression during National Farm to School Month with two coloring page templates.
- **["Save the Date" Postcards](#)** - Share these postcards before National Farm to School Month to spread the word about upcoming celebrations. Includes simple activity ideas and a link for finding more resources and materials.
- **[Sample Farm to School Champion Award & Invitation](#)** - Inviting public officials and distinguished guests to your Farm to School Month events will help raise the profile of the event while honoring those who have helped move Farm to School forward in your community. Customize these templates to fit your needs.
- **[Sample Farm to School Month Government Resolutions](#)** - In addition to the national declaration that was passed in 2010, many states have passed resolutions declaring October (or another month) Farm to School Month. Similar language can usually be used in your state House, Senate or for a proclamation by your governor or mayor. Use these examples to encourage your state government to recognize October as Farm to School Month.
- **[Legislator In the Lunchroom / Site Visit Guides](#)** - Inviting Members of Congress, as well as state and local elected officials, to visit school cafeterias, gardens and food-related educational programs help them understand the value and impact of farm to school firsthand. These resources offer step-by-step guidance for organizing legislative visits - during National Farm to School Month, or any other time of year!
- **[Farm to School 101 Webinar](#)** - Watch an archived recording of the National Farm to School Network's *Farm to School 101 Webinar* to learn about the three core elements of farm to school and how the movement is working to connect 23.6 million children to local food in schools all over the country.

Looking for more resources, materials or activity ideas? Our resource database is home to hundreds of farm to school resources and includes searchable tags for Farm to School Month, as well as topics like farm to early care and education, school gardens, and procurement. Explore more at farmtoschool.org/resources.