



# Farm to School Act of 2017

Supporting Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids & Healthy Communities

## BACKGROUND

In 2010, Congress provided mandatory funding of \$5 million annually for a farm to school competitive grant and technical assistance program. The **USDA Farm to School Grant Program** increases the use of and improves access to local foods in schools – thus boosting farm income and economic opportunities – while also fostering experiential food education for our nation’s children.

## PROGRAM IMPACTS

The USDA Farm to School Grant Program has helped **12,300+ schools** improve nutritious meal options made with local ingredients for 6.9 million students, while expanding market opportunities for family farmers and ranchers. ([USDA Summary of Grant Awards FY 2013-15](#))

Schools purchased nearly **\$790 million** in local food from farmers, ranchers, fishermen and food processors in SY 2013-2014 - a 105% increase over SY 2011-2012. Every dollar spent on local food generates up to an additional \$2.16 in economic activity, indicating school districts’ local food purchases can lead to over \$1 billion in local economic activity. ([USDA Farm to School Census 2015](#))

**23.6 million students** are eating healthier because they’re engaged in food and agriculture education; student choice means healthier kids. ([USDA Farm to School Census 2015](#))

## WHAT IS NEEDED IN 2017?

*While communities have already benefited greatly from the USDA Farm to School Grant Program, demand significantly outweighs current available funding. **Since 2013, USDA has received more than 1,600 applications requesting over \$120 million**, and was able to make only 365 awards from \$25 million. Congress needs to build on the success of farm to school by strengthening the program’s scope and by providing an additional \$10 million per year in mandatory funding.*



Adoption of the Farm to School Act will accomplish the following goals:

- Increase annual mandatory funding for the USDA Farm to School Grant Program from \$5 to \$15 million to better meet the high demand and need for this funding.
- Improve program participation from beginning, veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
- Fully include early care and education sites, summer food service program sites, and after school programs in the program.
- Increase access among Native and tribal schools to farm-fresh and traditional foods, especially from tribal producers.

# MORE DETAILS: FARM TO SCHOOL ACT OF 2017

Increase annual mandatory funding from \$5 million to \$15 million.

An increase in funding is essential to build on the USDA Farm to School Grant Program's success. Demand for the program is nearly five times higher than current available funding. In the first five years of the program, USDA received more than 1,600 applications requesting over \$120 million, and was able to make only 365 awards from the \$25 million available. Funding the program at \$15 million annually will better support the high demand of this important program.

Improve program participation from beginning, veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

By providing technical assistance and research to a broad range of potential applicants, the grant program will encourage increased awareness of and participation in farm to school activities among all agricultural producers.

Fully include early care and education sites, summer food service program sites, and after school programs in the program.

The scope of the grant program must include early care and education settings. The first years of life are formative for developing healthy eating habits, and farm to school starts kids on the right path. The program's scope must also include summer food service program sites and afterschool programs. These provide meals to millions of children in low-income areas, ensuring access to nutritious meals after school lets out.

Increase access among tribal schools to farm-fresh and traditional foods, especially from tribal producers.

Native American communities face disproportionately high rates of overweight, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Encouraging farm to school partnerships between tribal schools and tribal producers will increase consumption of nutritious traditional foods while also supporting Native farmers and ranchers.

## WHAT IS FARM TO SCHOOL?

Farm to school is a common sense approach to child nutrition that empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. Farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following:

### CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM to SCHOOL



**Procurement:** Local foods are purchased, promoted, and served in the cafeteria or classroom as a snack or taste-test.

**Education:** Students participate in educational activities related to agriculture, food, health or nutrition.

**School Gardens:** Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening.



## BENEFITS: A WIN FOR EVERYONE

Farm to school activities provide a variety of benefits to students, parents, schools, communities, and food producers, including:

- Increases market opportunities for farmers, fishers, ranchers, and local food system entrepreneurs
- Increases children's consumption of fruits and vegetables
- Supports community and economic development
- Strengthens knowledge and attitudes toward agriculture, food, nutrition, and the environment

