



Connecting Farms and Schools

Motivations, Benefits Challenges, and Policy

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Presentation Overview

- Why Farm to School?
 - Who Benefits?
 - What are Key Challenges and Solutions?
 - What is the Role of Policy?
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What is Farm to School?

- Locally produced foods are featured on the cafeteria menus in K-12 schools, colleges
 - Under a larger umbrella of Farm to Cafeteria: hospitals, businesses, prisons
 - Other elements:
 - Agriculture and nutrition education
 - School gardens
 - Lunch-line education
 - Experiential education: farm visits
 - Taste-testing
 - Harvest events
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Why Farm to School?



Motivations

“...the school meal is at the forefront of the debate about the health of our young people ... a prism through which we can examine some of the larger questions that face us today.”

~ Kevin Morgan, Cardiff University, Wales



Food System Change

- FTS provides a focus for food system change
 - Offers an alternative to the dominant food system by addressing critical obstacles to health and sustainability
 - Concentration, consolidation
 - Invisibility of the food system
 - Policies that favor large-scale agriculture and processing
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Food System Trends and Opportunities

- Small, mid-size family farms are vulnerable to development
- The number of farms and land in farming has decreased dramatically
- School represent a potentially strong market for family farmers
- Value-adding business are potential economic benefit to communities
- "Food Miles" becoming more expensive



Child and Adolescent Health

- Obesity over the past 30 years:
 - Children 2-5 years (5 to 14%)
 - Youth 12-19 years (5 to 17%)
 - Children ages 6-11 years (4 to 19%)
- Additional 16% are at risk



Child Health: Role of Schools

- Schools have significant influence
- Lifelong habits and preferences are forming
- Feeding programs are in place
- Provide link to parents and community
- Increasing evidence that both nutrition and activity linked to achievement
- Children consume wider variety of foods through school meals ^a



^a Wolfe. *Child Nutritional Health and the Elementary School Environment*

Quality of Children's diets

- Only 2% of children eat a healthy diet ^a
- < 15% of elementary school-age children eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day ^b
- 3 out of 4 high school students do not eat 5+ servings of fruits and veggies ^c



^a CDC/USDHHS Fact Sheet: *Youth Risk Behavior Trends, 1991-99*
^b NCHS/USDHHS. *National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey III, 1994*

Food Service Interest

- 73% of FSDs expressed interest in purchasing food directly from a farmer
- >10% expressed willingness to pay more
- Motivations:
 - Support for local economy/community (77%)
 - Access to fresher food (70%)
 - Access to higher quality food (59%)
 - Good public relations (58%)
 - Ability to purchase small quantities (55%)



Izumi BT, Rostant OS, Moss MJ, and Hamm MW, *J School Health*, 76(5): 169-174.

Who Benefits?



Who Benefits? Food Service, Dining Directors

- Increased student participation rates
- College students support dining halls
- Fruitful relationships with local farmers and new partnerships with suppliers
- Access to high quality, wholesome, fresh and delicious local foods
- Recognition from school administration, media
- Public support and validation



Who Benefits? Children and Youth

- Increased access to fresh, stored local foods
- Life long healthy eating habits, decrease risk of diet-related diseases
 - Average f/v intake increased by 1 serving a day when FM Salad Bar was created in the school cafeteria (LAUSD)
 - Fresh produce consumption increased 200% (Winters, CA)
- Greater awareness of where food comes from, local growing seasons, and the importance of local agriculture.
- "The more a child is involved with food - either through gardening, farming, cooking or other "real life" food experiences -- the more likely it is that he or she will adopt healthy eating behaviors as a lifelong practice. Purchasing local food affords schools a tremendous opportunity to generate and reinforce these kinds of learning experiences."



Who Benefits? Farmers

- Increased sales opportunities
- Access to a steady, predictable market, and a new connection to their community
- Better controls on planting, harvesting and marketing
- New partnership with suppliers
- Ability to plan ahead based on clear assessment of market need
- Incentives for value-added processing and regional distribution and marketing



Who Benefits? Parents

- Satisfaction from knowing kids are getting wholesome, locally-produced food products in school meals
- Opportunity to participate in school wellness policy development
- Greater awareness of local agriculture, seasonal availability of fruits and vegetables, and the farmers



Who Benefits? Communities

- Procuring products from local farms helps keep community dollars in the local economy.
- Selling locally helps create positive economic and social impacts for communities
- Healthy farms provide jobs, pay taxes, and keep working agricultural land open.
- Undeveloped farm land can also benefit the region by maintaining open space and diversified wildlife habitat.



Food Service Realities



Realities of School Food Service

- Food service usually financially independent
- General fund not used for school meals program
- More free and reduced meals served means more revenue
- From 10-20% of food costs subsidized by use of Commodity Foods



Eligibility Criteria for Free and Reduced Price Meals

- **Free meals:** Children from families with incomes at or below 130% of poverty level
 - Annual HH Income for Family of 4 = \$26,000*
- **Reduced-price meals:** Children from families with incomes between 130 and 185% of poverty
 - Charged no more than 40 cents
 - Annual HH Income for Family of 4: 185% of poverty = \$37,000*

*Effective July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007



National School Lunch Program Reimbursement

COST	FEDERAL SUPPORT (2006-2007)	NYS SUPPORT (2006-2007)
Free	\$2.40	\$0.065
Reduced	\$2.00	\$0.215
Paid	\$0.23	\$0.065

- Average daily student participation (NYS): 1,785,048
- Free and Reduced price: 1,134,820
- Paid: 650,228
- Number of schools participating: 5,948
- Total Federal reimbursement for school lunch: \$430,762,252/yr.

(Federal reimbursement for snacks: free .60, reduced .30, paid .05. Note: programs operating in areas where at least 50% of kids are eligible for F or RP meals, can serve all snacks free and be reimbursed.)



Dollars and Cents: What is the cost of school lunch?

- **Full-price lunch:** \$1.60 Elementary, \$1.75 High School (\$1.90-\$2.05 with reimbursements)
- **Costs:** School receives <\$2.00 - \$2.46
 - 50%: labor and benefits
 - 50¢: "center of the plate" (protein)
 - 15¢: milk
 - 50¢: for bread, fruit, and vegetable
 - But also need to cover: repairs, cleaning supplies, utilities, utensils, straws, etc.



Trends and Practices

- Increased reliance on ala carte sales
- Decreased resources for labor
- Use of direct diversion for commodity foods
- Prevalence processed foods



Challenges and Solutions



Food Service

- Food costs versus revenue
- Kitchen facilities
- Labor requirements and skills
- Procurement regulations
- Local food availability
- Growing season
- Limited palates of students



Farmers

- School delivery requirements
- Payment schedules
- Pack sizes
- Growing season



Distributors

- Understanding of food service director needs and goals
- Understanding of local and regional Food systems
- Costs
- Demand



Other Key Stakeholders

- School/College administrators
- Students
- Teachers
- Wellness committee members
- Parents
- Processors



Policy



School Wellness Policies

- New provision in the 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization
- Requires every school district that participates in the federal school meals programs to enact a wellness policy by the first day of the 2006-07 school year
- To address obesity and promote healthy eating and physical activity through changes in school environments



School Wellness Policies

- goals for nutrition education and physical activity
- nutrition guidelines for all school food
- goals for other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness
- assurances that school meals guidelines are not less restrictive than federal requirements
- plans for evaluating implementation of policy



Sample Language

- “Food service shall procure locally grown fruits and vegetables when practicable.”
- “School lunch menus shall reflect seasonal availability of local produce.”
- “Local fruits and vegetables are encouraged for after school snacks and fund raising events.”



Procurement Policies

- Contract with suppliers – a powerful tool
- Cornell University produce vendor contract:
 - *Campus Life Department's goal is to use at least 20% New York State grown produce.* Vendor will provide a list of all NYS produce suppliers who currently supply the Vendor. Vendor agrees to commit to purchase produce items when available from this vendor list. Include detail on how other local produce suppliers can be added to the list, and the process and requirements to do business with the vendor.
- Seasonal Menu Cycles
- Recipes as policy documents



2002: NY Farm-to-School Bill

- Signed by Gov. Pataki: Feb 13, 2002
- Title: “An act to amend the agriculture and markets law and the education law, in relation to purchases of New York grown and produced farm products by schools.”
- Established “NY Harvest For New York Kids Week” to promote local products
- Information gathering, coordination, cooperation



2004: Legislation to streamline local purchases

- Signed by Gov. Pataki: September, 2004
- S06024 - An act “to amend the general municipal law, in relation to the purchase of farm products by school districts”
- Removes certain restrictions regarding the purchase of food items from farms by school districts.



Proposed NYS Policies

- NYS State Assembly Bills (May 2006)
 - A10461: Establishes the New York State Council on Food Policy
 - S07498: Establishes the FTS Enhancement fund
 - A10866: Directs SED to establish a fresh fruit and vegetable program
 - State reimbursements linked to local: the “5 cent bill”



Federal Legislative Support for Farm to School Programs

- **2002 Farm Bill:**
 - Language: USDA should *encourage* schools to incorporate local purchases if practicable.
 - DoD Fresh received \$50 million additional funding to be distributed to states based on participation rates
- **Child Nutrition Reauthorization (2004):**
 - "Farm to Cafeteria Projects" Act introduced to create a \$10 million seed grant fund to help schools start FTS programs (passed, not appropriated)
 - \$9 million to continue, expand and make permanent the Free Fruit and Vegetable Program



2007 Farm Bill

- Strengthen existing policy
 - **USDA Community Food Projects:** provides funds for innovative solutions to community food and nutrition problems.
 - **USDA Value-added Producer Grants:** Provides funds for innovative producer marketing consortia.
 - **Expand Fruit and Vegetable Program to all 50 states:** cost \$100 million annual mandatory funding



2007 Farm Bill

- **Create New Policy**
 - Include provisions allowing states to determine procurement systems that support farms
 - Allow greater flexibility for procurement of local foods by institutional food service
 - Include farm to school and school garden provisions
 - Institute food policy councils for local/regional food system development
- Renew and initiate federal support for the various forms of community-based urban agriculture



Related Supporting Policies

- Restrictions on FMNV and competitive foods
- Organic programs
- Soda bans
- Commercialism policies



Web Resources

- National Farm to School Program: www.farmtoschool.org
- Links to State programs
- Community Food Security Coalition Farm to School Program: www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_school.html
- Linking Farms with Schools: A Guide to Understanding Farm-to-School Programs for Schools, Farmers, and Organizers, available at www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html
- Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids: Evaluating the Barriers and Opportunities for Farm-to-School, available at www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html
- Rethinking School Lunch available at www.ecoliteracy.org/rethinking/rsi.html
- Feeding Young Minds: Hands-on Farm to School Education Programs, www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html
- National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity Model School Wellness Policy: www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org
- Technical Assistance: Marion Kalb, CFSC Farm to School Program Director (505-982-3646 or Marion@foodsecurity.org)

