



# Farm to School Act of 2015

*Supporting Healthy Kids, Healthy Farms, & Healthy Communities*

## The Issues

- Over 30 percent of all children in the US are overweight or obese, resulting in more missed school days and poorer academic achievement;
- Obese youth are at greater risk for heart disease, diabetes, and psychological problems; obese children also incur \$19,000 more in lifetime medical costs than children of a normal weight, totaling roughly \$14 billion in additional medical costs for the country;
- Farmers and ranchers receive only 16 cents out of every dollar spent on food, down significantly from the 31 cents they received in 1980; rural poverty and jobless rates are consistently higher than urban poverty rates.

## Congress Responds

In the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Congress responded to these issues in a variety of ways, including providing first-time 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.

## What is Needed in 2015?

*As part of the upcoming Child Nutrition Act reauthorization, Congress needs to build on the success of farm to school by strengthening and expanding the program's scope and by providing an additional \$100 million in mandatory funding over the coming decade.*



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

- Fully include preschools, summer food service program sites, and after school programs in the USDA Farm to School Grant program.
- 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.
- Increase access among tribal schools to farm-fresh and traditional foods, especially from tribal producers.
- Improve program participation from beginning, veteran, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.



**NATIONAL  
FARM to SCHOOL  
NETWORK**



*The National Farm to School Network and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition are partnering on farm to school priorities in the 2015 reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act.*

## More Details on the Farm to School Act of 2015

- **Fully include preschools, summer food service program sites, and after school programs in the USDA Farm to School Grant program.**

The scope of the grant program must be expanded to include early childcare and education settings. The first years of life are formative for developing healthy eating habits, and farm to preschool starts kids on the right path. The program's scope must also be expanded to 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. Additionally, such programs often include educational and recreational activities that strengthen and reinforce healthy eating practices for children.

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

To build on the USDA Farm to School Grant Program's success, the next Child Nutrition Reauthorization must increase its funding. Demand for the program is over five times higher than available funding. In the first three years of the program, Fiscal Years 2013-15, USDA received over 1,000 applications requesting over \$78 million and was able to make only 221 awards from the \$15 million in available funding. Funding the program at \$15 million annually will better support the high demand and expanded scope of this important program.

- **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.

- **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.

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## 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:

- **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.

## How is Farm to School a Win for All?

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

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

### *With Farm to School...*

#### *... Kids Win*



#### *... Farmers Win*



#### *... Communities Win!*



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