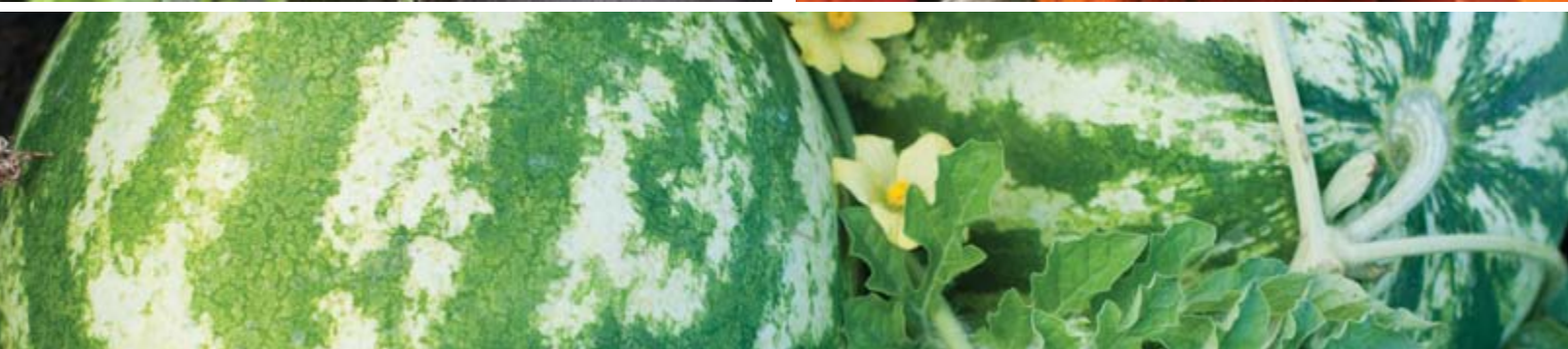
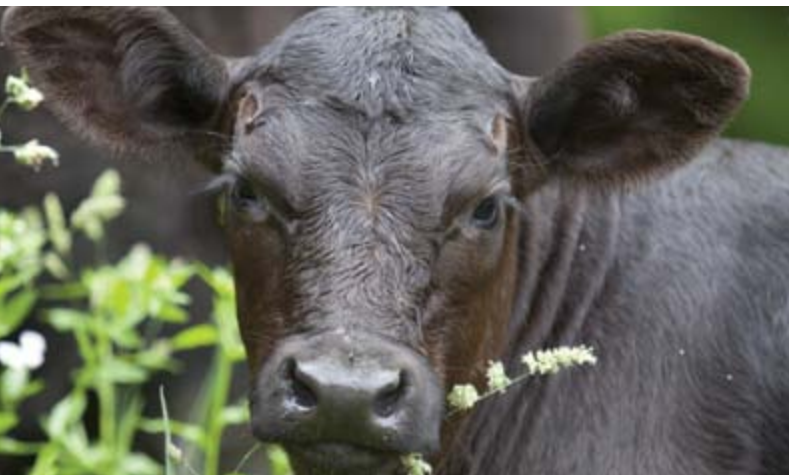




The logo for Oklahoma Farm to School. It features a circular emblem with a red barn and a white tractor in the center, set against a yellow sunburst background. The word "OKLAHOMA" is written in green, uppercase letters along the top arc of the circle. Below the circle is a green banner with the words "FARM to SCHOOL" in white, uppercase letters. Below the banner, the word "Oklahoma" is written in a red, cursive font, and "HANDBOOK" is written in green, uppercase letters below that.





NATIONAL
FARM to SCHOOL
NETWORK

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry

Farm to School

Coordinator Cheri Long • 405-249-9234 • cheri.long@ag.ok.gov

Coordinator Melody Afill • 405-795-0121 • melody.afill@ag.ok.gov

Coordinator Audrey Harmon • 405-740-0160 • audrey.harmon@ag.ok.gov

www.agclassroom.org/ok

Table of Contents

- 4** Growing Farm to School at the Local School Level
- 12** The 3 C's of Comprehensive Farm to School Programs
- 13** Practical Advice for Food Service Directors
- 15** Farm to School Year Round
- 16** Oklahoma Produce Availability
- 18** Sample Specification Worksheet for Apples
- 19** Sample Specification Worksheet for Romaine Lettuce
- 20** Specification Worksheets
- 22** Farm to School Action Plan
- 24** Farm to School Tips and Tools for Food Service Directors
- 26** Channels for Purchasing Locally Grown Food
- 27** How to Get Kids to Eat Their Fruits and Vegetables
- 28** What to Share with Farmers About the School Nutrition Program
- 29** What Farmers Need to Know
- 30** FAQ
- 31** Agriculture Nutrition Education
- 32** Oklahoma AITC
- 33** Oklahoma Farm to School
- 34** Oklahoma Farm to School Profile
- 36** USDA Grants and Loans
- 37** School Garden Ideas



Growing Farm to School at the Local School Level

A Guide for Child Nutrition Directors and Managers

What is farm to school?

Farm to school allows schools to feature and expose students to a variety of locally produced foods in the school nutrition program. The program looks slightly different in every school site, but always includes one or more of three core components.

- Procurement, or purchasing, of local foods that are promoted and served in the school meal, in taste-tests with students or as a snack in the classroom. More information on defining local foods is available at Geographic Preference: What It Is and How to Use It, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/GeoPreference.pdf>.
- Educational activities related to agriculture, food, health and nutrition. Resources related to educational activities are available at Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom (www.ag-classroom.org/ok) and Farm to You (<https://humansciences.okstate.edu/fcs/cnep/farm-toyou/>).
- School gardens that provide students with hands-on, experiential learning experiences.

This fact sheet focuses on procurement of local foods, including school gardens, for use in school nutrition programs.

Why should my school participate in farm to school?

Farm to school emphasizes the use of local foods. When local foods are featured in school nutrition programs, everyone benefits!

- Students have increased access to high-quality, fresh foods and tend to choose these foods more often. Students who have healthier diets tend to do better in school.
- Schools tend to see an increase in students' participation in the school meal program.



Because students prefer fresh foods, there is less food waste.

- Farmers and local producers gain a significant revenue source by opening doors to food service markets. This has potential to create new jobs and strengthen the local economy.

To learn more about the benefits of Farm to school, go to Research Shows Farm to School Works, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/ResearchShows.pdf>.

How does my school purchase local foods for the school nutrition program?

While sourcing local foods can seem like a confusing and time-consuming process, there are five basic ways to incorporate fresh and local produce into schools. Schools can use one or a combination of all five approaches to meet the needs of the school. The five ways to incorporate fresh produce into schools include the following:

1. USDA DoD Fresh
2. Direct purchase through farmers
3. Cooperative purchasing
4. School gardens
5. Local distributors that sell locally

Any of the above methods can be used, as long as a description is included in the school districts' procurement plan. Descriptions of each method and the corresponding procurement plan clause are provided below.

1. USDA DoD Fresh

USDA DoD Fresh is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Defense. Schools that participate in federally funded Child Nutrition Programs can purchase a variety of fresh, high-quality produce using part of their USDA Foods entitlement dollars. This method allows schools to manage and utilize money effectively.

How do I use DoD Fresh?

1. The USDA Regional DoD Fresh office coordinates with local farmers to offer fresh produce as part of the USDA Foods Program.
2. In March of every year, schools complete the USDA Foods Survey to allocate entitlement dollars for the next school year. A line item on the survey is designated for DoD Fresh. Enter the dollar amount you would like to spend on fresh produce. It is recommended to designate at least 10 percent of the school's total allocation. For smaller schools with less options to purchase fresh

fruits and vegetables, it is recommended to allocate more than 10 percent. Allocate fewer dollars to canned fruits and vegetables. Submit the survey as usual.

3. USDA DoD Fresh contracts with a local distributor to coordinate the school's weekly ordering and receipt of the produce. This is called the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Order/Receipt System (FFAVORS). Each week, the distributor provides the school with a list of fruits and vegetables available. Items locally grown or produced are marked with an asterisk. Order the amount and variety of fruits and vegetables needed to prepare the menu. Schools can also contact their USDA DoD Fresh produce vendor to learn what local products they plan to carry.
4. The fresh produce is delivered to the school on a weekly basis. Most schools report receiving quality produce at a good price.

Learn more about using DoD Fresh at Using DoD Fresh to Purchase Local Produce: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/DoDFresh.pdf>.

Example Procurement Plan Language

The District may purchase local produce through the DoD program using the allotted dollars set aside from the Planned Assistance Level (PAL) funds allocated for commodities on the USDA Foods Survey. The SFA may utilize the DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program vendor without conducting a procurement process, only for items that utilize the Planned Assistance Level funds. Anything purchased over the DoD PAL funds will be procured according to federal procurement regulations.

2. Direct Purchase from Farmers

Schools using this method purchase foods directly from local farmers, ranchers and farmer's markets. It provides flexibility to meet the mutual needs of both the school and local producer.



How do I make direct purchases from farmers?

1. School nutrition personnel responsible for purchasing need to know the local producers and what foods are offered. To help identify local producers, use webpages such as the Oklahoma Farm to School at <https://okfarmtoschool.com/schools/participating-schools/> or Oklahoma Grown webpage at <http://www.okgrown.com/markets>.
2. Decide how much money will be used to purchase from a local farmer – this will determine the procurement methods to use. The USDA “Decision Tree: How Will You Bring Local Foods into the Cafeteria with Your Next Food Purchase?” provides useful information (<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/DecisionTree.pdf>).
3. Clearly communicate the school’s expectations by having product specifications. The specifications may include requirements for safe growing, harvesting and storage practices. Tips for writing specifications for locally sourced foods are provided below.
4. Schools solicit quotes for produce on a month-to-month basis, depending on what is affordable and available.
5. Delivery details can often be worked out with the farmers. For example, it may be possible for the farmer to deliver straight to the schools or a central warehouse, or schools may choose to pick up the produce from the farm or farmer’s market.

Example Procurement Plan Language

The District may purchase produce from local farmers or farmer’s markets, from cooperative local farm procurement/bids, from school gardens and from local distributors selling local products. Pricing for farm to school produce should be obtained in manner consistent with the District procurement plan, using the correct method of procurement- informal methods include:

- Micropurchasing for purchases less than \$10,000 distributed equitably among qualified suppliers.
- Small purchase procedures for purchases more than \$10,001 but less than \$250,000. Verbal phone quotes are allowed and all qualified suppliers are given the same information.
- Formal methods using competitive sealed bids or competitive proposals for purchases equal to or more than \$250,000 using the RFP/IFB option.

The SFA is permitted under USDA regulations to purchase locally grown or locally raised agricultural products and apply a geographic preference when awarding and purchasing locally grown or raised products. Under federal law, school districts will apply a “local” geographic preference to minimally processed foods and determine what is “local” for purpose of the USDA programs such as National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. The school district(s) defines “locally grown products” eligible for this geographic preference at two levels:

1. foods grown within the state of Oklahoma as first preference, and
2. within 400 miles of of your school district as the second preference.

If the SFA’s annual procurement of a particular product will be less than the school district’s sealed bid threshold, the SFA may use a simplified process in sourcing local produce, provided that the sourcing method meets the school district bid-



ding threshold requirements not to exceed \$150,000.

The SFA will follow the OSDE Compliance guidelines when sourcing locally grown and raised agricultural products.

3. Cooperative Purchasing

Cooperative purchasing occurs when school districts come together to purchase local products. Sometimes, these arrangements are informal, while others are more formal and governed through bylaws. The benefits of joining together to procure local foods are: reduced food costs, administrative burdens and accessing markets or producers they may not be able to access alone. A benefit for the local producers is larger purchases establish a significant market.

How do I purchase through a local foods cooperative group?

1. First, determine if a purchasing cooperative already exists and if it meets the school district's needs. Collect basic information, such as how they operate, the types of products they offer and their reputation. The Oklahoma School Nutrition Association, neighboring school districts or the state agency may know of existing cooperatives your school can join.
2. If there is not an existing cooperative in the school's area, identify schools that would like to form a local foods cooperative.

- a. Convene a meeting of interested schools and come to consensus on how the cooperative will be governed (i.e., informally or formally) and on the types and quantity of foods to purchase.
 - b. Designate an individual from the cooperative to coordinate activities and communicate with the local producers. This will take some time, so someone from a larger district with a staff is best.
 - c. Identify farmers and local producers who are interested in producing for the cooperative. Learn what they produce and in what quantity. Use product specifications to communicate the cooperative's expectations.
 - d. The individual designated coordinator for the coop will develop and solicit a bid for local produce based on the needs of the cooperative, with specifications, amounts needed for each item, methods of distribution, food safety requirements, packaging and insurance requirements.
3. For more information on purchasing cooperatives, the Institute for Child Nutrition (ICN) has prepared detailed guidelines in Procurement in the 21st Century. (<http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20151009032855.pdf>).

Example Procurement Plan Language

The School Food Authority may utilize other school districts' local foods contracts or enter into an informal cooperative (a group of school districts/schools agreeing to cooperatively procure together to take advantage of volume pricing for products or services procured in one contract) as permitted by the contract, solicitation agreement and as agreed to by the supplier. Cooperatives, at a minimum, must follow Federal procurement regulations when procuring goods and services for its members.

4. School Gardens

School gardens come in many varieties, including acres of produce, greenhouses, tower gardens and indoor containers. School

gardens are a great way to creatively teach students about nutrition, healthy eating habits, agriculture, STEM and can serve as experiential education opportunities for all disciplines. The USDA does not prohibit schools from using produce grown in school gardens, so produce from school gardens can be used in a variety of ways. While school gardens rarely produce enough food to make up a large portion of the school meals, using the produce can increase school meal acceptance, enhance learning, supplement meals and serve as a nutrition education tool.

How do I use foods grown in a school garden?

1. Schools can use funds from their non-profit food service account to purchase garden needs such as seeds, fertilizer, rakes and watering cans, as long as the garden is used within the context of the program. For example, the produce may be used as a taste test for students or as part of a school meal. Produce from the school garden can be donated back to the school, purchased through an intergovernmental agreement or purchased through micro-purchase methods (purchases less than \$3,500).
2. Food safety is often a concern when considering school gardens. If safe growing, harvesting and storage practices are followed, produce from school gardens carries no greater food safety risk than produce from other sources. Produce from school gardens travels the shortest distance from harvest to plate, so safety can be easily



managed with more direct oversight than produce travelling longer distances.

3. School gardens are often in full bloom and production in the summer months, which can make staffing the gardens a challenge. Options for meeting staffing needs, both in the summer and supplemental garden staff during the school year, utilize volunteers, community groups, teachers, students and parents. Funding sources are available that may cover the cost of staff, in addition to the construction and maintenance of the gardens. Options for school gardens not needing summer maintenance include hydroponic systems and tower gardens. More information on funding school gardens can be found on the USDA Farm to School resource page: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources>

Example Procurement Plan Language

The District may purchase produce grown in a school garden by utilizing the micro-purchasing method of procurement (less than \$10,000).

5. Local Distributors That Sell Local

Schools can competitively solicit bids from the local distributors that provide other products and services to the school for its regular food service operations.

How do I know my distributor is providing locally grown foods?

1. Communicate with the food distributors to let them know you are interested in purchasing locally grown produce. Schools often are surprised to learn their distributors are already working with, or in the process of, establishing relationships with local producers. If not, they may be more inclined to seek out opportunities with local farmers if they are aware schools are interested in buying local produce.
2. Use language in your bids that assign more points for local products.

Evaluation Criteria	Total Points
Pricing & responsiveness: i.e., farm to school; fixed case pricing, fixed fee per case pricing, other pricing criteria, duration of firm pricing; escalation calculation methods	51
Suppliers qualifications: i.e. size, capacity, service capabilities, plant/facility, personnel, insurance, other related factors	17
Farm to school-local products & farms: i.e., breadth of products, farms, & supply capabilities*	15
Supplier's references & past performance	7
Supplier's safety, health and sanitation programs, practices, awards, performance, and evaluation site visits	10
Total	100

* Points for Preference of Local Produce (15 total out of 100 points) will be determined by the number of Oklahoma grown products that can be provided by the bidder (there are 36 different fruits/vegetables grown in Oklahoma. See Oklahoma Harvest Calendar), the number of farmers who will provide these local products, the Harvest of the Month program submitted by the bidder, and whether the local product is level one from the state, or level 2 within the region of 400 miles from the school district's area.

- Local farms shall be able to deliver product to the District's contracted produce supplier within 72 hours of harvest.
- Local farms shall not pre-treat, wash or clean raw or lightly processed foods with toxic detergents or cleansing agents such as bleach, ammonium or others not listed here.
- Local farms must be willing and capable of working with or delivering directly to the District's contracted produce vendor. They must be willing to meet basic variety, grading and packing standards of the contracted produce vendor.
- Local farms shall be able to provide experiential educational opportunities for District students such as farm tours and Farm to Student events.

Example Procurement Plan Language

The District may purchase locally grown produce through the produce distributor bid, using a competitive proposal. The award of the produce bid will contain evaluation factor points assigned to locally grown produce, as listed below.

Provided a Bidder's proposal is responsive, evaluation and award will be based on the following evaluation criteria. Award of this proposal will be made to the Bidder(s) whose proposal(s) is most advantageous considering price and the other factors, including but not limited to the following factors.

Local Farm Requirements

- Local farms shall grow food with no detectable pesticide residues on/in final food products. Organic is preferred.

Keeping it Legal

Regardless of the approach, a school choosing to purchase local foods must follow all local, state and federal procurement regulations. The amount of funds the school district will spend is a primary factor in determining which procurement method, or methods are used. This is often referred to as the spending threshold. To help make these decisions, the USDA has provided a "Decision Tree: How Will You Bring Local Foods into the Cafeteria with Your Next Food Purchase?" available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/DecisionTree.pdf>. Once the procurement method has been identified, it should be included in the school district's Child Nutrition procurement plan. Example language is provided above under each approach.

Tips for Writing Specifications

Product specifications are a general description of the local foods a school district is looking to purchase. Using specifications when purchasing locally is as important as when purchases are made from a large distributor because they clearly communicate the school's

expectations. Example items to include in the specification for local foods include:

- Freshness (e.g. “delivered with 48 hours of harvest”);
- Harvest techniques;
- Production practices;
- State of origin labelling; and/or
- Ability to provide farm visits or visit classrooms.

Bringing it Together: What does local purchasing look like in practice?

A school district has decided that Farm to School and local foods would benefit the school nutrition program. Language was added to the Child Nutrition procurement plan, allowing for the use of federal funds. The district defined locally grown as within the state or adjacent states.

The school district, or local purchasing cooperative, was aware that several producers grow tomatoes and the following specification was written.

- Available at least 10 months out of the year
- Greenhouse-grown, hydroponically grown or grown outside
- Grade No. 1 quality
- Fully ripe
- Red color stage
- Ten-day shelf life
- Pesticide free and organic
- GAP and Good Handling Practices certified, preferred



- Transported to a school warehouse or to 18 individual schools
- Must be delivered two days before service
- Must be able to provide an estimated quantity of 36 cases per week

Based on the amount of tomatoes used in previous school years, the director determined the spending threshold for purchasing locally grown tomatoes falls below the small-purchase procurement threshold (less than \$150,000). Using a list of tomato growers in the area, the director contacted producers to determine interest, and the written specifications were emailed to at least three producers for quotes. Once the quotes were received, the school district made, then documented a decision on the producer who best met the school district's needs. The delivery details were worked out and a contract was signed for purchasing tomatoes throughout the school year at a set price. Throughout the school year, the director monitored and evaluated the quality of product and service.

For other products, such as lettuce greens, the school district decided to use DoD Fresh. In March, when completing the DoD Fresh Survey, the director allocated 10 percent of the entitlement food dollars to DoD Fresh for the following school year. Once the school year began, the director placed weekly orders for the needed amount of greens from the DoD Fresh vendor using the FFAVORS order system. This approach did not require the director to write specifications or solicit quotes.

The director marketed the availability of Farm to School local produce to students and parents by featuring them on the school menu. Classroom activities were coordinated by having the tomato farmer visit the cafeteria and engage with students near the salad bar.

Conclusion

While implementing Farm to school initiatives may seem overwhelming, there are benefits to students, the school and the commu-



nity. Schools may use a variety of approaches in purchasing local foods that can be combined to best meet the needs of the school and producer. In making decisions, there are many resources available to help. To get started, check out websites listed throughout this fact sheet and below.

- Community Food Systems: Resources <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources>
- Community Food Systems: Fact Sheets <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/fact-sheets>
- Oklahoma Farm to School <http://okfarmtoschool.com/>

Sources

USDA-Decision Tree: How Will You Bring Local Foods into the Cafeteria with Your Next Food Purchase? (August 2017) Accessed April 8, 2009. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/DecisionTree.pdf>.

USDA – Geographic Preference: What it is and How to Use It. (August 2017). Accessed April 8, 2018. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/GeoPreference.pdf>

USDA—Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs (August 2015). Accessed March 23, 2018.

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/ProcureLocalFoodsCNPGuide.pdf>
 USDA—Using DOD Fresh to Purchase Local Produce (December 20, 2017). Accessed March 23, 2018.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/using-dod-fresh-buy-local>

USDA—School Gardens: Using Gardens to Grow Healthy Habits in Cafeterias, Classrooms, and Communities (December 20, 2017). Accessed March 23, 2018. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/school-gardens>

Authors

Stacy Tomas, PhD. Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University.

Deana Hildebrand, PhD, RD, SNS. Associate Professor and Extension Specialist. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University.

Lisa Griffin, MS, RD. Child Nutrition Director, Union Public Schools

Jennifer Weber, MS. Director of Operations. Oklahoma Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs.

Patricia Beutler, MS. Director of Training. Oklahoma Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs.

Cheri Long, Farm to School State Coordinator. Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.



L-467

The 3 C's of Comprehensive Farm to School Programs

Farm to School programs include activities in three areas: Community, Cafeteria and Classroom. By working in these three areas Farm to School programs are more effective as they “connect the dots” for children regarding what they eat, what they learn and what they observe in their communities. This consistency in what children experience leads to a meaningful and integrated understanding of health, food and the community. Below are suggestions for Farm to School activities in each area.

Community

- Organize a community dinner, inviting families to eat locally raised food with the farmers as the guest speakers.
- Recruit community members to help with school gardens and teach about local agriculture.
- Set up a Farmer’s Market on a school campus or other convenient location.
- Invite community leaders and parents to school for lunches that feature local food.

Cafeteria

- Serve locally grown food in the cafeteria. Cafeterias can become an integral, real life example of health and social science topics taught in the classroom.
- Display signage that identifies locally grown food and what farm it comes from.
- Create and promote special recipes using local foods.
- Invite farmers to the cafeteria to meet students, staff and faculty.
- Hold special Farm to School events: Healthy Harvest in September or Farm Fresh Friday.
- Assist educators in relating Farm to School to Oklahoma Academic Standards.
- Serve locally grown food in the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program.
- Offer taste tests in the cafeteria to encourage students to try local items.
- Compost food scraps.

Classroom

- Encourage classroom teachers to implement Ag in the Classroom lessons, activities, and resources.
- Engage students in projects that teach about the food system.
- Go on a field trip to a farm.
- Invite a farmer that grows food for the school to the classroom.
- Start a compost bin for the school.
- Start a school garden and use the harvested produce in the cafeteria.
- Do taste tests in the classroom to encourage students to try local items.
- Organize cooking projects using locally grown foods.



Adapted with permission from the Kentucky Farm to School Handbook.

Practical Advice for Food Service Directors: Creating a Successful Farm to School Program

Start Small. A simple way to begin is add one or two easy changes to the school menu. Serving sweet potatoes, lettuce, local eggs or local meat for one meal at one school is the way some school districts start. Small steps count! They help establish relationships with farmers and let both sides put “a toe in the water” to see how delivery, paperwork and packing work.

Start talking. It’s important for farmers and food service directors to meet, get to know each other and understand each other’s needs and constraints. Inviting local farmers for a meeting at the school cafeteria is a good way to start. Meeting before the

planting season gives both groups time to plan. Work through existing distributors. In addition to working with local farmers you can ask current distributors if they offer any local products. More and more food distributors are offering locally grown foods; you may just have to ask for them. The more the large distributors hear requests for locally sourced food, the more likely they are to get on board.

Farm to School: it’s not just for lunch. It’s great for breakfast too. Locally produced fruits, such as apples, berries or melons, can be served with hot and cold cereal or as a topping on pancakes and waffles. Local

grains (flour, meals and grits) are also good additions to breakfast.

Tell everyone. Tell everyone about what you’re doing. That includes school board members, the superintendent, teachers, parents, students, the mayor and the media. Invite community leaders to lunch. Engage students in promotion. Invite art and photography classes to make posters. Ask music classes to write songs and raps. Encourage English classes to write poems, articles, and stories. Theater departments can do skits. Use the announcement system to advertise.

Borrow what’s already been done.



Adapted with permission from the Kentucky Farm to School Handbook.

Get Involved!

October is National Farm-to-School Month

- Coordinate your efforts to make the most of the resources available during this month
- Integrate **farm to school** language in your district or school wellness policy
- Apply for a grant to help start a program at your school or receive support to maintain existing initiatives. There is a list of USDA grants and loans on page 36.

Engage Volunteers

Engaging volunteers has a wide range of benefits. Volunteers can offer new perspectives and make a lasting impact and contribution through their knowledge base and support. Volunteers can provide an extra helping hand or a needed, valuable skill set. Who in your network has skills or interests that complement your needs? Brainstorm ways to engage individuals, organizations or businesses as volunteers to help. Ways to engage volunteers could include:

- Invite a local farmer to teach students about locally sourced foods
- Ask parent volunteers to chop fruits and vegetables for a classroom taste test
- Volunteers can be a great resource to assist with school gardens - building planter beds, helping with maintenance or helping to harvest



Farm to School Year Round



This is a common concern when people begin to consider participating in Farm to School in Oklahoma. Oklahoma School Food Service Directors are learning they can still serve locally grown food year round using the ideas below.

Know What's in Season.

Check out the Oklahoma Grown Produce Availability Chart on page 16. You may be surprised to learn how much produce is available during the school year.

Know What's a Keeper.

If kept in cold storage they stay crisp and tasty for months. Potatoes and winter squash keep a long time if kept cool and dry.

Go Hydroponic.

Buy from farmers who raise hydroponically grown vegetables grown in greenhouses year round. Excellent quality lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers are available from these growers.

Extend the season by

processing ahead. Another option is to preserve produce for later use.

Use local produce in Summer

Feeding Program. This is a great time of year to take advantage of the bountiful Oklahoma Grown produce.

Not just produce.

Also consider serving locally raised meat, milk, eggs, flour and cornmeal that don't have a limited growing season.

Adapted with permission from the Kentucky Farm to School Handbook.

Oklahoma Produce Availability

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Apple						Red	Red	Red	Red			
Asparagus			Green	Green	Green	Green						
Beets					Red	Red	Red	Red				
Blackberries							Blue	Blue				
Blackeye Peas							Light	Light	Light	Light		
Blueberries						Blue	Blue					
Broccoli					Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		
Cabbage					Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		
Cantaloupe							Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange		
Carrots							Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange		
Cauliflower					Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light		
Cucumbers						Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		
Cut Flowers				Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red		
Eggplant							Green	Green	Green	Green		
Eggs				Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light		
Garlic								Light	Light	Light		
Green Beans						Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		
Greens				Green	Green							
Herbs				Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		
Honey				Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light		
Lettuce				Green	Green	Green						
Okra							Green	Green	Green	Green		
Onions				Light	Light	Light	Light					
Peaches						Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange			
Pears								Orange	Orange			
Peas: English, Snap & Snow				Green	Green							
Peppers							Green	Green	Green	Green		
Plants: Bedding & Potted				Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red		
Potatoes						Light	Light	Light	Light			
Pumpkins							Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange		
Radishes				Red	Red							
Raspberries							Red	Red				
Rhubarb			Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue						
Spinach				Green	Green							
Squash: Summer & Winter					Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange		
Strawberries					Red	Red						
Sweet Corn						Orange	Orange					
Sweet Potatoes								Orange	Orange	Orange		
Tomatoes: Green & Red					Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red		
Tomatillo						Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		
Turnips					Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red		
Watermelon							Red	Red	Red	Red		



Sample Specification Worksheet for Apples

Item Name:	<i>Apples</i>
Description (variety):	<i>Gala, apples to be firm, fresh-picked, no bruising, no worm or insect damage, packed in a clean, unused box.</i>
Size:	<i>2 7/8 to 2 3/4 diameter</i>
Grade/Standard:	<i>US utility</i>
Pack Size/Weight:	<i>125-138 count</i>
Price Quote: (by lb., dozen, case)	<i>Standard 40lb box</i>
Ripeness: (Maximum/Minimal level of ripeness acceptable)	<i>Fully tree ripened</i>
Delivery/Frequency:	<i>Every three weeks and to be delivered to all six sites</i>
Growing Preference:	<i>Grown within 75 mile radius</i>
Other:	<i>Un-waxed (not washed, washing would remove the natural wax causing you to apply a wax type product enabling longer storage)</i>

Sample Specification Worksheet for Romaine Lettuce

Item Name:	<i>Lettuce</i>
Description (variety):	<i>Romaine, Lettuce should be free from damage by broken midribs, bruising, dirt or foreign material, discoloration, mildew, insect, and worms</i>
Size:	<i>12 count</i>
Grade/Standard:	<i>US No 1</i>
Pack Size/Weight:	<i>12 heads per case packed in bulk, clean unused boxes</i>
Price Quote: (by lb., dozen, case)	<i>By the case</i>
Ripeness: (Maximum/Minimal level of ripeness acceptable)	<i>Lettuce should reach maturity in greenhouse and picked within one day of delivery</i>
Delivery/Frequency:	<i>Every two weeks and delivered to all six sites</i>
Growing Preference:	<i>Grown within 75 mile radius</i>
Other:	<i>Hydroponically grown and available all year round</i>

Specification Worksheet

Item Name:	
Description (variety):	
Size:	
Grade/Standard:	
Pack Size/Weight:	
Price Quote: (by lb., dozen, case)	
Ripeness: (Maximum/Minimal level of ripeness acceptable)	
Delivery/Frequency:	
Growing Preference:	
Other:	

Specification Worksheet

Item Name:	
Description (variety):	
Size:	
Grade/Standard:	
Pack Size/Weight:	
Price Quote: (by lb., dozen, case)	
Ripeness: (Maximum/Minimal level of ripeness acceptable)	
Delivery/Frequency:	
Growing Preference:	
Other:	

Farm to School Action Plan

Activity	Category: Community, Classroom or Cafeteria	Who will coordinate	Date it will be completed	Evaluation: How will you measure?	Comments

Farm to School Action Plan

Activity	Category: Community, Classroom or Cafeteria	Who will coordinate	Date it will be completed	Evaluation: How will you measure?	Comments

Farm to School Tips and Tools for Food Service Directors

These are great resources that will make your job much easier and more successful. Take the time to explore them. It will save you time in the long run.

How to Find a Farmer

County Extension Agent

County Extension agents can link you to local farmers and their products. To connect with the agent in your county go to the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension website and simply click on the county directory to access the local website. Each county has a personnel directory on their site that includes contact information. For more information, visit <http://www.oces.okstate.edu>

Farmers Market Directory

The Farmers Market Directory provides a list of all the Farmers Markets in Oklahoma. For more information, visit www.okgrown.com/markets

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Farm to School Coordinator

This position has a wealth of knowledge and the ability to connect farms to schools easily. Cheri Long currently holds the position. Getting to know her can help streamline the process greatly. For more information, email cheri.long@ag.ok.gov

Funders for Farm to School

Farm to School is a hot topic and many organizations fund initiatives to help school and communities make Farm to School successful. Writing a grant can be time consuming but the pay off can be huge. Consider engaging partners from universities, state and local government and farm organizations. For more information, visit http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/f2s-recurring_funding.htm



Tips and Tools for Food Service Directors (cont)

How to Handle and Prepare Produce

- Fruits & Vegetables Galore: Helping Kids Eat More

This is a tool for school foodservice professionals packed with tips on planning, purchasing, protecting, preparing, presenting and promoting fruits and vegetables. For more information, visit

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/fruits-vegetables-galore-helping-kids-eat-more>

- Best Practices: Handling Produce in Schools

Fresh produce must be handled safely to reduce the risks of foodborne illness. Best practices for handling all types of produce are described in this fact sheet, along with practices specific to leafy greens, tomatoes, melons, and sprouts. For more information, visit <https://theicn.org/resources/652/produce-safety-best-practices-fact-sheets/107981/handling-fresh-produce-in-classrooms.pdf>

- Serving School Garden Grown Produce in the Cafeteria

Provides facts sheets and videos on safety and handling. For more information, visit

<http://www.healthyschoolenvironment.org/training-resources/school-garden-produce>

USDA Resources

- Farm To School/FNS Policy - USDA

To assist you in making sound purchasing decisions, this link provides a list of important references related to USDA's procurement regulations and policies for the Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/usda-procurement-regulations>

- Information about USDA School Meal Regulations

Everything you want to know about school meal program regulations can be found by visiting

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/program-legislation-regulations>

- Food Buying Guide

The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs has all of the current information in one manual. The manual includes information on Meat/Meat Alternates, Vegetables/Fruits, Grains/Breads, Milk and Other Foods. For more information, visit

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

- Farm to School Email List

Joining the national Farm to School email list is a great way to stay up to date on the latest happenings in the world of Farm to School. For more information, visit

<https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/subscriber/new>

Other Resources

- National Farm to School website: www.farmentoschool.org

Adapted with permission from the Kentucky Farm to School Handbook.



Channels for Purchasing Locally Grown Food

Direct from Farmer

- Shortens supply chain by cutting out middle man
- Can reduce product cost
- Can reduce fuel costs
- Build relationships to talk directly to farmer about growing specifications

Farmer Cooperatives (Co-ops)

- Farmer cooperatives may develop a group distribution strategy
- Farmers working cooperatively may be able to supply more product
- Can be more reliable—if one farmer has a crop failure, others may be able to fill in
- Purchasing from a farmer co-op may help food service directors reduce time spent on administrative tasks

Farmers' Markets

www.okgrown.com

- Informal procurement process
- Farmers are contacted and one is determined to have lowest price
- Farmer brings the schools' order to the farmers' market
- Food service staff have opportunity to inspect product quality and see other available products for future menu planning

Distributor

- Potentially less work for Food Service Director
- Support sales and marketing of local farm products
- Provide standard pack sizes and specifications
- Transportation already arranged
- Price may be lower

Local Produce Auctions

- Can see a variety of products at one time
- A good way to make contact with local agricultural community
- Get two bids from other vendors meeting all specifications prior to going to auction, if auction quality and price are preferable, produce can be purchased at auction

USDA DoD Fresh

- Flexibility
- Consistency
- High quality
- Variety
- Easy ordering and funds tracking

Form Buying Cooperatives

- Neighboring school districts develop a group purchasing strategy

Adapted with permission from the Kentucky Farm to School Handbook.



How to Get Kids to Eat Their Fruits and Vegetables

- 1. Get them while they're hungry.** Do taste tests before lunch or at the end of the school day. If students are hungry, they'll eat and maybe find that they like fresh produce. Serve colorful vegetables, such as carrots, cucumbers, and red bell peppers, along with a hummus or low-fat salad dressing.
- 2. Put produce at the front of the serving line.** Make the produce prominent—the biggest, brightest and first thing they see. Research shows that placement of food makes a big difference in selection.
- 3. Make it pretty.** This is easy to do because Oklahoma produce is beautiful. Display it well, don't overcook it. Garnish!
- 4. Use cute names.** McDonald's does it. You can, too. Have a contest for students to name the salad bar and special dishes. That way you know the name will be age appropriate and cool and you'll create buzz before you start.
- 5. Make it fun.** Make lettuce leaf bowls. Feature ethnic cuisine—Chinese, Mexican, French—and have background music to match. Invite fun guests—athletes, family members, the mayor.
- 6. Cut it up.** Between missing teeth and braces, eating crunchy produce may not be as easy as you think. Cutting up apples and oranges greatly increases the likelihood that children will eat them.



- 7. Involve them.** If children help grow or prepare produce, they're often more interested in trying it.
- 8. Meet the farmer.** If you've met the farmer, heard about her work or been to the farm, it's pretty hard to pass up one of those carrots.
- 9. Promote. Promote. Promote.** Signage, poster contests, announcements, contests, games, songs, skits. Partner with teachers encouraging them to teach about what's being served in the cafeteria.
- 10. Encourage.** Having staff simply ask students if they would like to try the baked sweet potato "fries" increases consumption. With younger kids, invite adults to eat with them and encourage trying new foods.
- 11. Acknowledge.** Give younger students "I tried it stickers" for trying new local foods.
- 12. Sneak it.** We don't recommend a steady diet of sneaking but it can be a part of the strategy. Zucchini muffins, applesauce in baked goods, veggies in spaghetti sauce all work well.
- 13. Garnish.** A splash of color and artful placement can catch children's attention and make produce even more inviting. Becoming skilled with garnishing and presentation could add to job satisfaction for staff members who have a knack for this kind of work. Books, online tools and local chefs are good resources for cultivating these skills.

Adapted with permission from the Kentucky Farm to School Handbook.

What to Share with Farmers About the School Nutrition Program

Farm to School thrives on relationships. In order to be successful, each partner must understand the needs and working conditions of the other. Sharing the information below with farmers can go a long way toward a good working relationship.

- An understanding of the school nutrition program—its history, purpose and how it operates.
- An explanation of the school system's bidding process.
- How farmers will be notified when bids are released.
- An estimate of what items and how much of those items will be needed throughout the school year.
- The total estimated volume of each item to be purchased.
- Delivery schedule needed: date, time of day, frequency, and location.
- Packing requirements: standard box, grade, loose pack, or bulk.
- Post-harvest handling practices: Is the product to be delivered pre-cooled? How clean should the product be? Does the product require processing prior to delivery?
- Payment terms and payment processes.
- Names and phone numbers of the contact people for ordering, billing and trouble shooting.

Adapted with permission from the Kentucky Farm to School Handbook.



What Farmers Need to Know: Selling to School Nutrition Programs



The more each partner understands the other's business, the better. School nutrition programs have a way of doing business—just like all other businesses. Consider this information about school nutrition purchasing when planning to sell to a school system.

- Customer service and professionalism are considered when school nutrition purchasers make business partner selections.
- Food bid contracts are created and/or renewed annually, usually in the late winter or spring. Preparation for the bid process may start as early as the fall or early winter.
- Products that do not travel well are usually expensive and are difficult to obtain. They may be perfect produce items to consider offering to the school nutrition program.
- Traditionally, school nutrition programs conduct business with a small number of vendors allowing them to handle a limited numbers of orders, delivery schedules, and invoices. A farmers' cooperative could reduce

the paperwork that might discourage a school nutrition director from doing business with multiple sources.

- A product that requires minimal preparation may be easier to market to schools.
- School nutrition purchasers want safe, reliable, and sometimes ready-to-use products.
- School nutrition purchasers expect reliable, consistent, and high quality products.
- Standardized packaging and weight may be required in order to meet federal regulations.
- Some school systems require one to two deliveries a week on specific days in order to utilize their storage space and meet demanding menus.
- Because school nutrition programs are self-supporting, cost could be the major consideration when evaluating bids.
- As a rule there is no payment upon delivery.

Adapted with permission from the Kentucky Farm to School Handbook.

Frequently Asked Questions About Doing Business with Schools

What if I sign a contract with a school and my crop fails?

If your crop fails the Food Service Director can order from the food distributor they have been ordering from for years. These large companies have the ability to procure and deliver product quickly. This removes the burden from the local producer if he or she is unable to fulfill a contract due to crop loss or other unforeseen occurrences. It is not the typical business model and many farmers are skeptical at first, but once they understand the ordering and delivery process of the schools it is a well received and welcome change that works for both parties.

Do I have to be an Oklahoma Grown member to sell schools?

No, you don't have to participate in OK Grown to be a Farm to School producer. However, it's quite simple to fill out the form and there are many advantages for both the school and the farmer.

Do I have to be GAP Certified to sell to schools?

Being GAP (Good Agricultural Products) certified is not a mandate in Oklahoma, however we do recommend you consider attending the Produce Safety Alliance grower training course. It is taught by OSU FAPC, and is funded through the FDA Produce CAP grant. To see scheduled classes and register visit <http://fapc.biz/workshops/produce-safety-alliance-grower-training-course>

Another program to consider is the On-Farm Readiness Review. A farm can request a visit to the farm, and an expert from both OSU and ODAFF will walk around the farm with the farmer and help them find areas that they can improve in food safety. You can request this service at <https://apps.dasnr.okstate.edu/fapc.okstate.edu/on-farm-readiness-review>

Do I need liability insurance?

Although most school districts don't require farmers to be GAP certified, they do require farmers and wholesale distributors to maintain Product Liability Insurance before purchasing items from them.

Isn't selling to schools more trouble than it's worth?

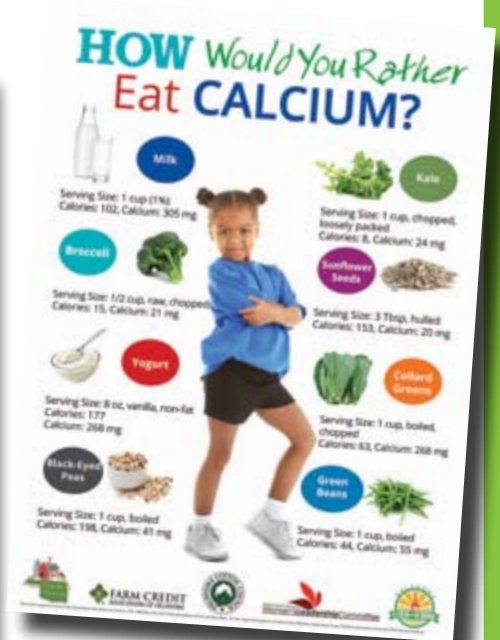
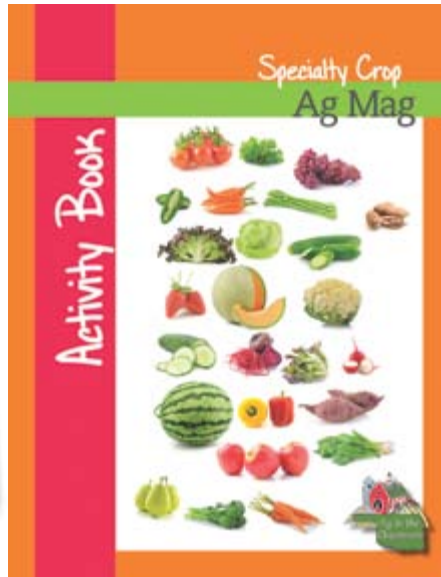
For a long time school systems have not been viewed as a viable market for producers. But if you consider the huge number of meals they serve, the ability to get a contract so you can create a farm plan and the timely consistent compensation, your conclusion will likely be that the Farm to School program is a viable and profitable market. Many Oklahoma farmers have found that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. Though it may take some time up front to get things set up, once that's done it may actually be one of your easier sales.



Agriculture Nutrition Education with Ag in the Classroom

Nutrition Education Resources to use with Farm to School

These resources and more can be found at www.agclassroom.org/ok



AITC Content:

Using research-based agriculture topics to reinforce core subjects that include reading, math, science, social studies, language arts and visual arts, teachers may broaden their teaching skills to include agriculture themes as a vehicle for teaching the Oklahoma Academic Standards. All lessons are on the website.

AITC Connections:

Oklahoma State Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
 Oklahoma State Department of Education & Oklahoma Cooperative Extension, OSU

AITC Lessons:

Read Before You Eat, Journey through the Digestive System, Grain Game, Fit with Fiber and more.



Additional Resources:

Farm to You, Oklahoma 4-H, Oklahoma Agritourism

OKLAHOMA AG IN THE CLASSROOM

Melody Afill
Professional Development Coordinator
405.795.0121
melody.afill@ag.ok.gov

Cheri Long
Professional Development Coordinator
405.249.9234
cheri.long@ag.ok.gov

Audrey Harmon
Professional Development Coordinator
405.740.0160
audrey.harmon@ag.ok.gov

www.agclassroom.org/ok



AUTHENTIC

AITC staff is highly trained in the field of education, providing real-world, standards-based resources. These resources revolve around engaging, interactive, science-based learning activities which connect agriculture to existing curriculum.

IMPACT

Every year, AITC reaches more than:



6,951
TEACHERS



479
PRESERVICE
TEACHERS



173,775
STUDENTS

TRAINING

AITC has a reputation for providing high-quality, impactful professional development. We provide free workshops tailored to your school's needs.

CURRICULUM

AITC lesson plans target Oklahoma Academic Standards for grades PreK-12. All lesson plans are available for free download.



Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom



@okagclassroom



@okagclassroom



@okagclassroom



youtube.com/okagclass






Connecting communities to fresh, healthy, local food.

Farm to School connects students to healthy, local foods as well as educational opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons and farm field trips.

Farm to School empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities.

Farm-to-School efforts are taking place in more than 2,035 school districts across the United States, including nearly 100 school districts in Oklahoma.

Implemented Farm-to-School programs look different at each school but always include at least one of the following elements:

-  Procurement: Local foods are purchased, promoted and served in the cafeteria or 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.

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 activities and lessons related to food, health, agriculture and nutrition, such as Ag in the Classroom activities.

FARMERS WIN

Farm to School can serve as a significant financial opportunity for farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors and food manufacturers by opening the 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 also creates new jobs and strengthens the local economy.

www.okfarmtoschool.com
facebook.com/okfarmtoschool



Oklahoma Department of
Agriculture, Food & Forestry
Oklahoma Farm to School
2800 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Cheri Long
405-249-9234
cheri.long@ag.ok.gov

Audrey Harmon
405-740-0160
audrey.harmon@ag.ok.gov

Melody Afill
405-795-0121
melody.auffill@ag.ok.gov

Oklahoma

Farm to school is a common sense approach to child nutrition and community economic development and is uniquely designed to address the ways in which each of these rates intersects with one another through policy, programming, and partnerships. In Oklahoma, the childhood obesity rate is 17.4%,¹ the food insecurity rate is 15.5%,² and the rate of students receiving free and reduced-price meals is 60.9%;³ farm to school can be used to address these issues. In addition, studies show that every dollar spent on local food can generate up to an additional \$2.16 in economic activity,⁴ indicating school districts' local food purchases can lead to over \$1 billion in local economic activity over one school year.⁵

USDA Farm to School Census (School Year 2013-14) in Oklahoma

The U.S. Department of Agriculture tracks farm to school activities at the state and school district level.

Oklahoma invested \$4,311,260 in local foods, with the average school district spending 15% of their budget on local products.

- 63% Vegetables
- 74% Fruit
- 18% Milk
- 12% Meat or Poultry

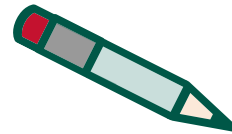
Oklahoma ranks 25 out of 50 states in local food purchasing.

There is demand for farm to school in Oklahoma:

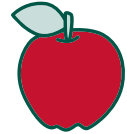
14% of districts surveyed plan to start farm to school activities in the future.

37% of districts surveyed plan to increase local food purchases in the future.

21% of Oklahoma school districts report participation in farm to school.



63 school districts



442 schools



233,013 students



at least 45 school gardens

In Oklahoma, 67% of school districts are engaging preschool children in farm to school activities, and 19% of school districts are using local foods in summer meals.

State Farm to School Network* and Organizations in Oklahoma



***There is no state farm to school network in Oklahoma, however, there is an opportunity to create one**

Federal Support for Oklahoma Farm to School

The USDA administers the Farm to School Grant program, which has awarded the following funds in Oklahoma:

2018 - Cherokee Nation (\$49,318), Oklahoma City Public School District (\$42,500), Muscogee (Creek) Nation (\$29,466).

2017 - Stilwell Public Schools (\$90,950), Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry (\$17,764), Comanche Public Schools (\$32,252).

2015 - Stilwell Public Schools (\$41,535).

2014 - Osage Hills Public Schools (\$44,847), Pryor Public Schools (\$45,000).

2013 - Chickasaw Nation Nutrition Services (\$99,994).

**Between FY 2013 - FY 2018, Oklahoma was awarded 10 of 39 grant requests.
Funds awarded total \$490,871 of \$2,880,913 requested.**

Oklahoma Farm to School Administrative Efforts

State agency and university Extension positions can support farm to school, and do in many states. The following shows FTE devoted to supporting farm to school:

Oklahoma has fewer farm to school FTEs than 20 states.

Department of Education (FTE 0)	Department of Agriculture (FTE 1)
Department of Health (FTE 0)	University Extension (FTE 0)

Oklahoma Enacted State Farm to School Policies

2015 – Relating to the Oklahoma Food Service Advisory Council

S.B. 1357 adds a school food position to the state Food Service Advisory Committee. The bill requires that one member represent the School Nutrition Association in Oklahoma. CODIFIED AT OKLA. STAT. TIT. 63, § 1-106.3 (2016)

2008 – Authorizing the Oklahoma Food Security Act

H.B. 2833 establishes an Oklahoma Food Security Committee to coordinate food services among federal, state, faith-based, and nonprofit organizations. CODIFIED AT OKLA. STAT. TIT. 56, § 245 ET SEQ.

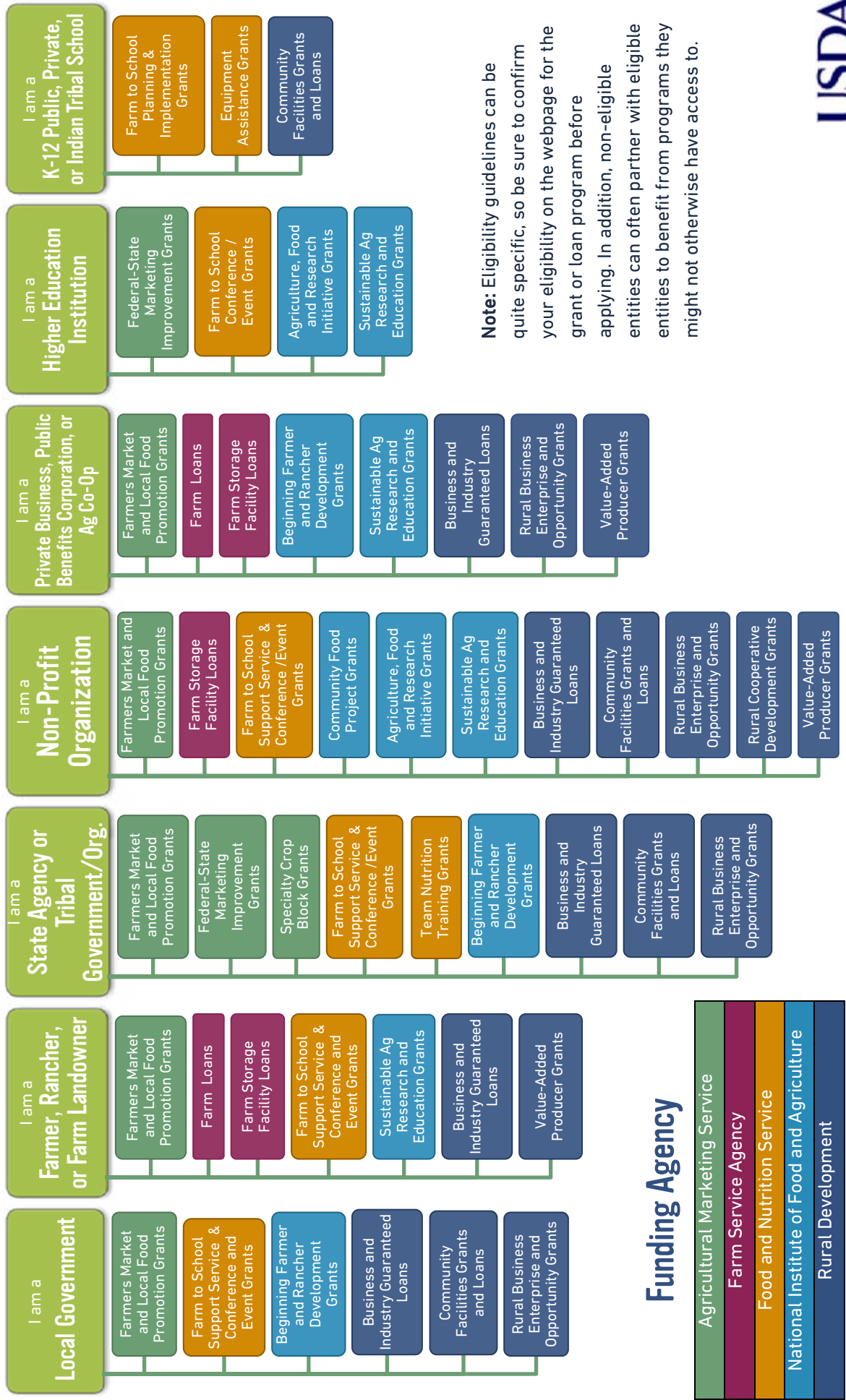
2006 – Creating a Farm to School Program

H.B. 2655 establishes the Oklahoma Farm to School Program and creates a director position within the state Department of Agriculture. H.B. 2655 also requires the Department of Agriculture to establish a website to coordinate fresh food procurement. CODIFIED AT OKLA. STAT. TIT. 2, § 5-60 ET SEQ.

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.

USDA Grants and Loans that Support Farm to School Activities

Funding from the US Department of Agriculture is available to assist farms, schools, and every link in between in feeding kids healthy local meals; teaching them about food, farming and nutrition; and supporting local agricultural economies. While the programs listed below provide a good starting point for those looking to bolster farm to school efforts, other USDA grant and loan programs support local food systems work as well. Visit www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer for more information.





School Garden Ideas

Using Gardens to Grow Healthy Habits in Cafeterias, Classrooms, and Communities

Across the nation schools are growing gardens to provide food for child nutrition programs, connect children to the source of their food and create hands-on interdisciplinary classrooms.

Space for Gardens in All Seasons

School gardens come in all shapes and sizes, and districts with varying levels of land are finding ways to establish gardens both within and outside school grounds. Gardens can be as simple as a few containers on a windowsill or cover acres, and gardens can thrive in all climates. Program operators find that even small gardens help children gain familiarity and comfort with the fruits and vegetables they are seeing more of at meal times.

Using School Gardens Produce in the Cafeteria

Food service directors use school garden products in the cafeteria every day, from herbs to spice up a pizza, to serving garden-grown lettuce on the salad bar, to roasting vegetables for the main meal. For more information on procuring from school gardens and using school food service funds to support garden activities, please refer to Farm to School and School Garden Expenses Memo [SP 06-2015], as well as, School Garden Q&As Memo [SP 32-2009] and the school garden section of the Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs.

Food Safety in the Garden

Food safety is a priority for all food served in child nutrition programs and products that come from school gardens are no exception. Food from school gardens has the shortest physical distance to travel from harvest to plate, so its safety can be managed directly and with more direct oversight than food that travels long distances – a food safety benefit. While safe growing, harvesting and storage practices should be followed when implementing school gardens, there is no research that indicates produce from school gardens carries greater food safety risk than produce from other sources.

4 Steps to Maintaining Food Safety in the Garden

1. Garden Planning: Below are basic garden safety considerations for planning a garden.
 - Soil: Those planting gardens in urban areas are especially encouraged to have a qualified laboratory check for lead and other industrial contaminants in soil. Land Grant Universities, Cooperative Extension Offices and local health departments are great resources to learn about soil safety; for contaminated soils, schools can bring in soil from an outside source and plant in raised beds.
 - Placement: Place the garden uphill from contamination sources or on level ground, and away from streets and areas where wild or domestic animals have easy access to the garden.
 - Water: Municipal water is safe; properly used and cared for rain barrels can also be water sources. Test all wells and ponds before use.

2. **Harvesting:** Follow safe food practices, including hand washing and using clean containers to harvest.
3. **Transport/Record keeping:** Keep a simple harvest log to record who was harvesting, what type of products were harvested and when they are harvested.
4. **Storing:** Follow the same guidelines for storing school garden produce as other produce and products. Please refer to Best Practices: Handling Fresh Produce in Schools.

Good Agricultural Practices [GAPs] and Good Handling Practices [GHPs] are industry best practices that can be used. USDA and Oklahoma State Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry do not require GAP or GHP certification for school gardens, at this time. Dozens of districts and states have created comprehensive school garden food safety manuals and checklists. For examples of strong school garden safety guides, please refer to the USDA Farm to School Resources page.

Gardens and Summer Meals

School gardens are often in full bloom during summer months, but summer can be a challenging time to staff gardens. Volunteers and community organizations can help support gardens while schools are out; include summer maintenance in your garden planning by coordinating with summer meal program sites. Connecting gardens with summer meal programs is a perfect way to ensure that gardens receive upkeep during those months and enhance Summer Food Service Program meals.

Gardens in Preschool and Early Child Care Settings

Early childhood is the ideal time to establish healthy eating habits. Studies have shown school gardens encourage preference and consumption of fruits and vegetables, increase parental support and involvement, and improve children's enthusiasm about preschool/child care, teamwork skills and self-awareness.

Staffing School Gardens

It takes more than one person to keep gardens

growing strong. School nutrition directors can use program funds to help support garden personnel. Cooperation and partnerships between school personnel, teachers, students, non-profits, parents, volunteers and community members is essential for garden success.

Funding Your Garden

Funding diversity is key when planning a sustainable school garden. Here is some food for thought:

- Matching funding sources with needs is a good start. What is the primary funding need? Supplies? Construction? Staff? Once you know your needs, approach local hardware stores if you need supplies or consider looking for a volunteer agency, if your greatest need is staff.
- Think local! Parent associations, healthy fundraisers, local non-profits and public agencies have all supplied resources to start and sustain school gardens.
- Federal funds, including USDA Farm to School Grants, Team Nutrition funds and even National School Lunch Program funds, can and have been used to support garden supplies, equipment and staff.

Learn More

The USDA Farm to School Resource page hosts a curated list of school garden planning, fund, procurement, food safety and curricula resources from across the country. If you have questions, examples, tips or information to share on school gardens please be in touch by emailing us at farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov





This publication, printed by Paragon Press, Oklahoma City, Okla., is produced by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry as authorized by Jim Reese, Secretary of Agriculture. 7,500 copies have been prepared at a cost of \$5,234.68. Twenty-five copies have been deposited with the Oklahoma Dept of Libraries. 9/18

10 Good Reasons To Buy Locally Grown Food

1 Locally grown food tastes and looks better.

It was grown close to home and served at peak freshness. It came from down the road, not from across the country or overseas.



2 Local food supports local families.

When you buy Oklahoma food, you help local farm families make a living. Your business helps them pay the bills, put their kids through school, and stay on the farm.

3 Local food builds trust.

In these days of concern for food safety and homeland security, it's reassuring to look into the eyes of the person who grew your food and be able to drive past the field where it grew.

4 Local food shows you're Oklahoma Proud.

Buying local food bearing the familiar Made in Oklahoma logo gives this program more meaning. It encourages consumers to look for Made in Oklahoma quality and businesses to supply it.



5 Local food preserves farmland.

When farmers get more money for their products, they are less likely to sell their land for development.

6 Local food keeps taxes down.

Several studies show that farms pay more in taxes than required in services, while most residential developments need more services than they pay for with their taxes.

7 Local food benefits the environment and wildlife.

Oklahoma farms nestle in a patchwork of fields, meadows, woods, streams, and ponds that provide vital habitat for wildlife.

8 Local food preserves genetic diversity.

Local farms often grow heirloom varieties of fruits and vegetables with superior flavor and nutritional value.



9 Local food travels shorter distances from farm to plate.

On average, food travels 1,500 miles from farm to plate. Each calorie requires an average 10 calories of fuel for travel, refrigeration, and processing. Locally grown food reduces the use of fossil fuels.

10 Local food is an investment in our future.

When you buy local, you preserve the strength and character of the community for your children and grandchildren.

