



United States Department of Agriculture

The logo for "THE FARM to SCHOOL E-LETTER". It features a green silhouette of a farm with a barn and a sun on the left, and a green silhouette of a school building on the right. The text "THE FARM to SCHOOL E-LETTER" is in a blue, sans-serif font, with "to" in a smaller, italicized font.

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## **USDA Announces Additional Support to Help Schools Buy Local**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced grants for 71 projects spanning 42 states and the District of Columbia that support the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) efforts to connect school cafeterias with local farmers and ranchers through its Farm to School Program.

“In rural and urban communities across the country, farm to school programs teach students where food comes from, while providing healthy foods that are grown locally on farms and ranches across the nation,” said Vilsack. “These programs also create new market opportunities for local farmers and ranchers interested in partnering with nearby school districts – and by helping to create an even more diverse and thriving agriculture sector, farm to school efforts hold potential to create new jobs in rural areas.”

Selected projects will serve more than 13,000 schools and 2.8 million students, nearly 45 percent of whom live in rural communities. Projects are diverse:

- **Somerville Public Schools in Massachusetts** will work to develop a district-wide farm to school program with community partners that focus on creating youth jobs and promoting healthy eating and physical

education.

- **Olympia School District in Washington state** will partner with two local farms to help students apply biology, American history, and horticulture skills towards farm management. The farms will grow organic produce for the school district and serve as an outdoor educational space for students.
- **Bayfield Regional Food Producers Cooperative in Wisconsin** will overcome the obstacles of a short growing season by helping local school districts install and manage high tunnels to supplement school gardens. In addition to providing nutrient-dense hardy greens and other vegetables to the students in their lunches and snacks, the high tunnels will allow educators to implement experiential, project-based learning in the spring and fall seasons.
- **Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative and Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission in Iowa** will work with local farmers and a newly established food hub to boost production to meet the needs of local schools. They have set a goal with four rural school districts to increase local purchases by 200 percent.

These projects highlight the critical need for a new Food, Farm and Jobs Bill now more than ever, said Vilsack. Producers need renewed and expanded access to Farm Bill programs to fuel the growing demand for local food in new markets, including school meals programs, and to increase economic opportunities for America's farmers and ranchers.

USDA Farm to School grants help schools respond to the growing demand for locally sourced foods and increase market opportunities for producers and food businesses, including food processors, manufacturers, and distributors. Grants will also be used to support agriculture and nutrition education efforts such as school gardens, field trips to local farms, and cooking classes. For a complete list of FY14 Farm to School grant recipients, please see:

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FY\\_2014\\_Grant\\_Award\\_Summaries.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FY_2014_Grant_Award_Summaries.pdf)

USDA recently released the results of the first-ever [Farm to School Census](#), which showed that in school year 2011-2012, school districts purchased and served over \$350 million in local food, with more than half of participating

schools planning to purchase more local foods in the future. School districts that missed the opportunity earlier in the year to respond can submit information regarding farm to school practices through November 30, 2013.

USDA's [Farm to School Program](#) is part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which authorized USDA to provide grants and technical assistance to help schools gain better access to local foods. It is also a core element of the USDA's [Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative](#), which coordinates the department's work on local food systems.

USDA is focused on improving childhood nutrition and empowering families to make healthier food choices by providing science-based information and advice, while expanding the availability of healthy food.

- America's students now have healthier and more nutritious school meals due to improved nutrition standards implemented as a result of the historic [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010](#).
- USDA's MyPlate symbol and the resources at [ChooseMyPlate.gov](#) provide quick, easy reference tools for parents, teachers, healthcare professionals and communities.
- USDA [awarded](#) \$5.2 million in grants to provide training and technical assistance for child nutrition food service professionals and support stronger school nutrition education programs.

Collectively these policies and actions are helping to combat child hunger and obesity, while improving the health and nutrition of the nation's children. For more information on the Farm to School program, please visit [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool).

Learn more at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool> or contact us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).

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