



Farm to School Act of 2021

Supporting Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids & Healthy Communities

BACKGROUND

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

PROGRAM IMPACTS

Since the program’s inception in 2013, USDA has awarded over **\$52 million** through Farm to School Grants, funding a total of **719 projects** across all 50 States, the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico, reaching almost **21 million students** in **47,000 schools**.

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

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

WHY THIS IS NEEDED

As our country rebuilds from the pandemic, communities need help building back equitably. Targeting funds to help kids, schools, and farmers through federal farm to school grants is more important than ever. The Farm to School Act will improve access to the USDA Farm to School Grant Program for low-income communities, Tribal organizations, and underserved producers. It will also raise the annual mandatory funding to \$15 million, guaranteeing that the grant program can continue and expand its support for innovative activities in communities across the country.

The Farm to School Act will accomplish the following goals:

- Increase annual mandatory funding for the USDA Farm to School Grant Program from \$5 to \$15 million, and increase the individual grant award maximum to \$250,000.
- Advance equity by prioritizing grant applications that engage beginning, veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers and serve racially diverse and high-need student populations.
- Increase access among Native and tribal schools to farm-fresh and traditional foods, especially from tribal producers.
- Fully include early care and education sites, summer food service program sites and after school programs.



Farm to School Act of 2021 (S. 1328, H.R. 1768) Sponsors

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC), Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), Representative Stacey Plaskett (D-VI), Representative Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), Representative Alma Adams (D-NC)

For more information contact National Farm to School Network Policy Director Karen Spangler at karen@farmtoschool.org.

MORE DETAILS: FARM TO SCHOOL ACT OF 2021

Increase annual funding to \$15 million & increase grant award maximum to \$250,000.

Demand for the USDA Farm to School Grant Program is nearly five times higher than current mandatory funding. Funding the program at \$15 million annually will better support the high demand of this important program. Furthermore, increasing the individual grant award maximum to \$250,000 will better support grantees from state agencies, large school districts and other organizations in launching and establishing long-term, sustainable programs that benefit children, farmers and communities for years to come.

Advance equity by prioritizing grants that engage diverse farmers & serve high-need schools.

Communities with the least access to farm to school resources should have a competitive opportunity to benefit from the support of the USDA Farm to School Grant Program. The program must prioritize applications that engage beginning, veteran and socially disadvantaged agricultural producers, as well as those that serve racially diverse and high-need student populations, to ensure equitable access to its resources and the benefits that new farm to school efforts offer.

Increase access among tribal schools to 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.

Fully include early care and education sites, summer food service sites & after school programs.

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

WHAT IS FARM TO SCHOOL?

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

CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM to SCHOOL



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

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

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



BENEFITS: A WIN FOR EVERYONE

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

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

