



Kids Eat Local Act

Expanding School Food Options and Economic Opportunities for Family Farmers

BACKGROUND

The Kids Eat Local Act will support farm to school efforts by making it easier for schools to source locally grown, locally raised and locally caught food and farm products for their meal programs.

Currently, schools are not able to specifically ask for “local” products in their food procurement requests. A geographic preference option is available, but many school food service providers find it burdensome and confusing to implement.

IMPACTS OF LOCAL PURCHASING

Between 2008 and 2014, the sale of local food in the U.S. grew from \$5 billion to \$12 billion. School food purchases have and will continue to play a major role in the growth and success of local and regional food and farm businesses. In the 2013-2014 school year (SY) alone, schools purchased nearly \$790 million in local food from farmers, ranchers, fishermen and food processors – a 105% increase over SY 2011-2012! ([USDA Farm to School Census 2015](#))

Considering that every dollar spent on local food generates up to an additional \$2.16 in economic activity, the purchasing power of school districts alone has the potential to generate over \$1 billion in local economic activity. ([USDA Farm to School Census 2015](#))

THE KIDS EAT LOCAL ACT WILL:

- Bring more local food into school meal and child nutrition programs
- Reduce burdensome red tape, making it easier for schools to source local food
- Provide market opportunities for local family farmers, ranchers and fishermen

THE KIDS EAT LOCAL ACT WILL NOT:

- Raise the cost of school meal programs
- Require schools to have a farm to school program
- Define “local” (each school would be allowed to define it themselves)
- Increase costs to the federal government



Kids Eat Local Act (S. 1401, H.R. 2896) Sponsors

Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), Representative Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Representative Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), Representative Josh Harder (D-CA), and Representative Alma Adams (D-NC)

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

MORE DETAILS: KIDS EAT LOCAL ACT

Currently, most schools can purchase and/or preference locally produced foods using the geographic preference option, through which they can give extra ranking points to vendors using locally procured product. However, many school food service providers find it burdensome and confusing to implement. By including the *Kids Eat Local Act* in the next Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization, schools will have more flexible purchasing options available.

The *Kids Eat Local Act* would present a new, easier to use local product specification option through which schools can specify “locally grown,” “locally raised” or “locally caught” in their procurement language, and then make the award to the lowest bidder who can meet that product specification.

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.

CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM to SCHOOL



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.

CHILD NUTRITION ACT REAUTHORIZATION

The Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization (CNR) authorizes federal school meal and child nutrition programs including the National School Lunch Program, among others. The last CNR, known as the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, was groundbreaking for farm to school stakeholders nationwide because it provided (for the first time) \$5 million in annual mandatory funding for USDA Farm to School Grant Program.

