



Farm to School Benefits

Farm to School programs connect schools to local farmers by serving local produce in school cafeterias and providing agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities.

Impact on School Meals Participation and Foodservice Operations:

Increase in school meals program participation

- A review of nine farm to school programs found student meal participation rates increased between **3% and 16%** after implementing farm to school programs .¹
- A study of one particular school cafeteria found that after starting a farm to school program, school lunch participation rose by :¹
 - **4%** for students receiving free lunches
 - **5.3%** for students receiving reduced price lunches
 - **8.5%** for paid students.
 - **26.9%** for adults
 - **9%** overall

Economic impact on school foodservice operations

- Due to increased meals participation and the competitive pricing of local products, schools have been able to cover their additional costs for labor and equipment .¹
- By applying the geographic preference rule, child nutrition directors can allow up to 10% preference for local products over other products.²
- Buying local helps foodservice comply with the Buy American Act.³

Impact on Student Wellness:

Increases in Fruit and Vegetable consumption

- Student fruit consumption increased by more than 1/2 serving per day when participating in a farm to school program in Springfield School District, Oregon .¹
- Students increased their fruit and vegetable consumption from 2.8 servings to 4.2 servings per day after a farm to school salad bar was implemented in three Los Angeles schools .⁴

Improved Nutrition Knowledge

- After a farm to school program, 90% of students could choose a healthier food option at the supermarket as compared to 62% before .¹
- Correct responses to questions about where food comes from more than doubled from 33% to 88% after students went on farm tours .¹

Impact on Arkansas Farmers and Local Food System:

Opportunity for new markets

- If Arkansas public schools sourced 15% of the food purchased for school meals from Arkansas producers, **\$14 million** in new income would be generated for Arkansas farmers. ⁵
- Farmers participating in farm to school programs have gained opportunities for direct marketing through farm field trips, speaking opportunities at schools, and community events related to farm to school .¹

Potential for localizing food in Arkansas

- Of the \$7 billion spent on food annually in Arkansas, \$6.3 billion goes to purchase food grown in other states.⁶
- Arkansas has the capacity to produce 73.2% of food needed to feed the entire state population .⁷

If you have questions or would like to learn more about how you can implement farm to school, contact:

**Andrew Carberry, Program Development Coordinator, Arkansas Grow Healthy Study
ACHRI Obesity Prevention Program, Office (501) 364-6555, Cell (501) 813-5646
ancarberry@uams.edu**

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