

BRINGING THE FARM TO SCHOOL

A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) established a three-year cooperative agreement with the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and the National Farm to School Network (NFSN) to develop a farm to school training program for agricultural producers. **The goal of the program is to build the capacity of agricultural producers to launch or expand efforts to market to schools.** There is significant untapped market potential for producers to sell their products to K-12 schools and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The program supports a wide variety of agricultural producers, including farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors, and other local food businesses.

The program includes four phases: needs assessment, curriculum development, regional facilitator workshops, and local producer trainings. Using a tiered, train-the-trainer model, the program prepares State agencies and other representatives with the knowledge, resources, and skills necessary to implement the new training curriculum in their states.

WHY THIS PROGRAM

Farm to school is a strategy for building strong and just food systems. One of the central tenets of farm to school is connecting schools with locally and regionally produced foods to be served in school meals and child nutrition programs, including in K-12 and CACFP settings. According to the USDA Farm to School Census, schools across the country purchased more than \$789 million of locally produced foods during the 2013-2014 school year – a 105% increase over 2011-2012 – demonstrating schools' increasing demand for



PROGRAM PHASES

local foods and a promising new market opportunity for agricultural producers. With more than \$23 billion spent annually on child nutrition programs, there is significant opportunity for these farm to school activities to continue growing.

As schools' demand for locally produced foods has accelerated, a clear need to equip producers with the support they need to reach this unique market has emerged. This project seeks to meet that need and, in turn, increase producers' interest and participation in farm to school activities. Farm to school is a proven multi-sectoral strategy that benefits agricultural producers' businesses, childrens' health, and communities' engagement in and support of local food systems.

WHAT'S IN THE CURRICULUM?

To engage the needs of a wide variety of agricultural producers, a needs assessment was conducted to gauge existing knowledge, skill gaps, and specific needs that this new farm to school training curriculum should address (Phase 1).

The needs assessment found that producers seek targeted training on:

- School food procurement rules and regulations;
- Supply and demand, including price points, volume requirements, and seasonal availability;
- Logistics such as delivery requirements and determining what local foods schools buy;
- Food safety; and
- Relationship building with School Food Authorities.

These topics, in addition to other key farm to school concepts, are being directly integrated into the training curriculum (Phase 2). The curriculum will fit a two-day training format with four topical modules. Each module includes a training lesson, skill-building activities, and supplementary resources (case studies, podcasts, and videos) to support deeper learning. The curriculum will be presented in two formats: as a handbook to guide facilitators through offering the training program, and as a workbook through which producers will learn.

GET INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM

Become a facilitator: The program prepares State agencies and other representatives (e.g., farmer support organizations, nonprofits) with the knowledge, resources and skills necessary to become facilitators and to implement this new training curriculum in their states (Phase 3). Training workshops for State agencies and other facilitators to learn about the new curriculum will begin in 2021. Those interested in becoming a facilitator can visit www.farmtoschool.org/bringingf2s to learn about upcoming facilitator workshops in your region.

Participate in a local producer training: State agencies and other representatives will begin offering the new training curriculum in their states starting Fall 2021 (Phase 4). Agricultural producers interested in participating in a local training can visit www.farmtoschool.org/bringingf2s for support connecting to a local training opportunity.

Help spread the word: Please share information about this program with your networks! Help recruit great facilitators for the regional facilitator workshops and alert agricultural producers in your community that a new training curriculum is forthcoming to learn more about farm to school market opportunities. You can share this one-pager document with interested individuals or direct them to www.farmtoschool.org/bringingf2s where more information is available.

LEARN MORE

We encourage you to stay engaged and informed as this program progresses. Visit www.farmtoschool.org/bringingf2s for the latest project news, information about regional train-the-trainer events, contact information, and more.

PROGRAM PARTNERS



New York University – Independent Evaluation

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- Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems- Wisconsin
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- Farmer Veteran Coalition
- Georgia Organics
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