



Farm to Summer How Sponsors Can Use Local Foods and Agriculture-Based Activities

With harvests at their peak in many regions, summer is a perfect time to highlight local products and get kids involved in food, agriculture, and nutrition-based activities. Incorporating local foods into Summer Meal Programs can increase the quality and appeal of meals, connect the community with local agricultural producers, and provide hands-on enrichment activities that keep children and teens nourished and engaged while school is out. There are many ways sponsors can “bring the farm” to their Summer Meal sites.

Go to [Resources](#).

Serve Local Foods

Sponsors can boost participation and engagement in their programming by improving the quality of meals and snacks served. Local foods can fill the entire plate, and sponsors can integrate local foods into their Programs in many ways.

Source local products for use in meals and snacks:

- Find out what’s seasonal and available in your region.
- Consider the many sources for local foods in your community: direct from the farm, through a distributor or food service management company or from a food hub, farmers market, or school or community garden.
- Ask existing vendors where your food is coming from, and communicate a preference for local foods in future solicitations.
- Seek out USDA’s *Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs* and other helpful procurement resources for more tips:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods>



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Promote local foods through special events:

- Conduct a taste test using locally sourced ingredients.
- Host cooking demonstrations featuring local foods.
- Participate in a Harvest of the Month program, featuring the use of a designated local item each month.
- Celebrate local foods in kick-offs or other events that raise awareness and build community support.

Offer Fun Activities that Complement Local Foods

Kids are more likely to try and enjoy new items or recipes when they are able to participate in fun, hands-on activities that relate to the meal being served. There are many ways to get kids excited about and engaged in the programming offered at Summer Meal sites. Try some of these activities this summer:

- Grow or visit edible gardens.
- Promote agriculture and nutrition-based lessons and discussions about seasonality and where food comes from.
- Organize field trips to local farms or farmers markets.
- Host farmer visits to meal sites or kick-off events.
- Teach children how to cook or prepare locally grown food.
- Conduct taste tests with fresh local foods.
- Send newsletters home for parents about local foods served and sources for local food in the community.
- Share recipes highlighting local foods.





Connect with Partners

The following partners can provide assistance to State agencies and sponsors in promoting local foods and related activities in Summer Meal Programs.

- **USDA Regional Farm to School and Farm to Summer Staff**

There is a farm to school lead and a farm to summer point of contact in every Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office who are prepared to help State agencies and sponsors incorporate farm to summer principles in Summer Meal Programs.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/usda-farm-school-staff>

USDA's E-letter, *The Dirt*, provides updates on farm to school, farm to summer, and farm to preschool from the Office of Community Food Systems. Sign up here:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/subscriber/new?preferences=true>

- **State Farm to School Coordinators**

A number of States have farm to school coordinators in their Departments of Agriculture or Education. Find out who is engaged in supporting farm to school, farm to summer, and farm to preschool efforts in your State.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/state-contacts>

- **National Farm to School Network State (NFSN) Leads**

NFSN identifies champions in each State who can help you learn more about accessing local foods in your communities, connecting with schools and producers; and identifying Summer Meal Programs that may already be incorporating local foods and related activities.

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-network>

- **Community Organization Leaders**

Organizations that work on child nutrition and youth development can support sponsors in their efforts to increase local foods and related enrichment activities in Summer Meal Programs. Reach out to the organizations in your community to see if they can help out.





Tap into Existing Resources

Sponsors can find more information about “bringing the farm” to their Summer Meal sites, as well as training materials and possible grant funding opportunities.

- **USDA Farm to Summer Website**
This site features our farm to summer fact sheet, along with links to other helpful FNS and partner resources.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/farm-summer>
- **Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs**
This guide will help sponsors discover a variety of strategies that they can use to find, buy, and serve local food.
http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S_Procuring_Local_Foods_Child_Nutrition_Prog_Guide.pdf
- **USDA Farm to School Grant Program**
Currently, USDA’s Farm to School Program supports the integration of local food and related activities at school-based sites. Stay tuned for the next Request for Applications to review upcoming priority areas.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/farm-school-grant-program>

For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and compatible with your Program. For additional questions, sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for help. State agencies should contact their FNS Regional Office.

List of FNS Regional Offices: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

List of State Agencies: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

USDA and its recipient institutions share responsibility for compliance and oversight to ensure good stewardship of Federal funds.

