Fostering Healthier Communities through Locality-based Farm to School Programs and Policies

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Introduction

In 2007, CDS issued a special issue exploring the connection between sustainable development and sustainable agriculture (Beaulieu & Jordan, 2007).

In 2011, Green & Robinson, Jr. state local food systems are one of the important emerging issues within the field of community development.

Local food systems are commonly described in terms of distance/geography, production methods, type of farm, and supply chain (Martinez et al., 2009).

Farm to School programs are one form of a local food system which attempt to reestablish the importance of community in the local economy (Green & Robinson, Jr., 2011).
Farm to School

- Defined as a program that “connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers” (National Farm to School Network, 2012).

- Often includes diverse stakeholders such as those involved with community health and nutrition, agricultural education, community and economic development, and public policy.
Farm to School Programs

- Developed in the 1990’s from two different initiatives in Florida and California (Vallianatos, Gottlieb, & Haase, 2004).

- Today, Farm to School programs exist in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. (National Farm to School Network, 2012).

- There are approximately 2,500 Farms to School programs involving over 9,945 schools across the U.S. (National Farm to School Network, 2012).
In 2001, states started to develop and implement legislation supporting Farm to School (National Farm to School Network, 2010).

California (SB19) and New Mexico (HJM34) were first two states (National Farm to School Network, 2010).

Currently, 38 states have passed at least 79 locality-based policies.
## Types of State-based Farm to School Legislation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Legislation</th>
<th>Number of Policies (Thru Sept. 2011)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project implementation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local preference</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Promotional event or program</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Grant money allocation</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget appropriations/ official state fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating a task force/council/ working group</td>
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<td>Resolutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating a directory or database</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Additional reimbursements</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wellness policies</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot program implementation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Legislation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>HB5326 (2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>HC112 (2012)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Growth of State-based Farm to School Legislation (To Date)
## Recent State-based Farm to School Legislation (Failed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>AB909 (2012)</td>
<td>Additional $0.05 reimbursement for every meal served with California produce.</td>
<td>Failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>HB1718 (2012)</td>
<td>The Farm to School Bill</td>
<td>Failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>HB1089 (2012)</td>
<td>Development of “Farm to School“ plans in schools</td>
<td>Failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>HB828 (2012)</td>
<td>Creation of an interagency Farm to School Council</td>
<td>Failed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five Recommendations for Locality-based Farm to School Legislation
1. Legislation that provides incentives and allows for Food Service Directors and/or School Nutrition Directors to purchase more local, regional, and in-state food. Such as legislation that:

- Increases the small purchase threshold for school districts.
- Provides greater emphasis and incentives to purchase in-state products over out of state products.
- Provides tax credits for in-state producers selling to schools.
- Establishes a minimum percent of commodity funds that must be used to purchase local and regional food.
- Mandates a minimum percent of local food purchases.
- States new school construction projects must consider kitchen facilities.
- Asks school food officials to report types and amounts of in-state farm products purchased.
2. Legislation that brings together diverse individuals and organizations from agriculture, public health, education, and community development to form a Farm to School network, advisory board, task force, or working group. Often times the focus of this legislation is to:

- Assess or implement Farm to School programs and make recommendations for future actions.
- Explore ways Farm to School related activities can be incorporated into existing positions.
- Explore external funding sources to support and strengthen Farm to School.
- Examples states and legislation include:
  - **Colorado (SB 10-081),**
  - Maine (HP 784), or
  - Texas (SB 1027).
- In Missouri and North Carolina, Farm to School has been written into legislation that creates a state food policy council.
3. Legislation that establishes a designated Farm to School day or week within the National Farm to School Month taking place each October. Often times this legislation:

- Gives farmers, schools, state agencies, and communities an extra incentive to develop and promote local Farm to School programs.
- Allows for those individuals involved with Farm to School to share in celebrating local, healthy food and better child health and nutrition.
- Can come from a variety of decision makers including the state legislature, governor, and secretary or commissioner of agriculture or education.
- Examples states and legislation include:
  - **Maryland (SB 158/ HB 696),**
  - New York (2002 Laws), or
  - Virginia (HJR 95).
4. Legislation that establishes an official state Farm to School program in a state department of agriculture, education, public health, or cooperative extension service.

- State agencies are often tasked with matching up farms, distributors, and schools that are looking to buy, sell, or distribute local and regional foods.
- One example is the Oklahoma Farm to School Program Act (2006).
  - Formally establishes the **Oklahoma Farm to School Program** and designates the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry as the lead agency.
- Other excellent examples include:
  - Alaska (HB 70),
  - Oregon (HB 3601), or
  - Washington (SB 6483).
5. Legislation that creates a Farm to School grant program to fund Farm to School pilot projects, needed infrastructure, school gardens, experiential education programs, or the purchasing of more local and regional healthy foods.

- Seed money to help grow Farm to School Programs.
- Funds can support purchasing school food equipment such as salad bars, stovetops, ovens, extra pots, pans, and utensils.
- Funds can compensate for school staff members’ time when preparing local food or planting and maintaining a school garden.
- Some examples include:
  - Alaska (HB 70),
  - Illinois (HB 78), or
  - Michigan (W.K. Kellogg Foundation).
Recommendation Conclusions

- **Recommendations 1-4:**
  - Best suited for states or localities that are in the process of developing Farm to School programs.

- **Recommendation 5:**
  - Better suited for states or localities that have already researched best Farm to School practices, developed programs, and are looking to further strengthen Farm to School.

- **Passage of legislation is often best done through:**
  - Partnership building and collaboration between individuals and organizations.
  - Working closely with a key representative.
  - Including a mix of education and advocacy.
  - Connecting Farm to School to pressing social issues.
Case Studies Exploring Farm to School Policy

Five case studies exploring the development and implementation of primarily state-based Farm to School legislation.

1. Alaska
2. Texas
3. Washington, D.C.
4. Washington State
5. Wisconsin
Texas & The Sustainable Food Center

- Began planning for a Farm to School project in 2005 which launched in 2007.
- Invited to join the Partnership for a Healthy Texas in 2009.
- Partnered with State Senator Kirk Watson who introduced Senate Bill 1027, which established an Interagency Farm to School Coordination Task Force.
- Task force developed a 25-page report and recommended the creation of a state Farm to School Coordinator position.
- Recommended to use National School Lunch Program (NSLP) funds to support the position.
- Currently still working to create coordinator position.
In 2008, Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act was introduced in the Washington State Legislature by Representative Eric Pettigrew.

Established a Farm to School Program designed to connect schools with community-based farms.

Created the Washington Grown Fruits and Vegetables Program.

Adapted government purchasing policies to help direct state dollars towards local farms and food sellers.

Allocated funding for 2.5 employees to conduct statewide outreach.
Washington State & The Washington State Department of Agriculture

Outputs, Outcomes, & Impacts:

- Staff has presented Farm to School topics at 50+ events, reaching an estimated 1,500 people.
- Listserv now has over 650 members.
- Staff work directly with 100+ school districts and 50 farms.
- Peer-to-peer training model with mobile tours and hands-on cooking training.
- Support Taste Washington Day with 60 schools and 50 local farms teaming up to celebrate Washington-grown produce.
- Awarded over $700,000 in externally funded grants to enhance the Washington Farm to School.
Acknowledgements

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  - Community Food Security Coalition,
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References


