



FARM TO PLATE TALKING POINTS-CONSUMERS

BACKGROUND

- Nearly one in four children are at-risk for hunger
- The Senate Agriculture Committee passed a CNR (Child Nutrition Reauthorization) bill – The Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act of 2010
- As part of CNR, Farm to School is broadly defined as a program connecting school and local farms with the objectives of:
 - Serving healthy meals in school cafeterias
 - Improving student nutrition
 - Providing agricultural, health and nutrition education opportunities
 - Supporting local and regional producers
- 43 states currently have school districts with Farm to School programs
 - Over 300,000 students are served through these programs
 - Producers focus on three to four seasonal items that can be served year-round
- Farm to Plate programs are as diverse as the products available
- It takes an entire community to fully embrace the Farm to Plate concept

WHY IMPORTANT?

- Farm to Plate programs...
 - Increase participation in school meal programs
 - Help strengthen schools food service programs
 - Facilitate agricultural, health and nutrition education opportunities
- Mealtime can be a place of learning and discovery where children learn to eat well and enjoy nutritious foods
- Food is more likely to be appreciated and enjoyed when people have a connection with where their food came from

5 Reasons to Start a Farm To Plate Program

1. To provide quality and nutritious foods for growing children and the community.
2. To serve high-quality foods that don't have to travel farm from producer to consumer-they are fresh, flavorful and have a longer shelf life.
3. To increase school lunch participation rates by offering foods students will eat!
4. To demonstrate to the community that schools and other food service businesses support local foods and producers.
5. To take advantage of the variety and quantity of foods available locally while reducing transportation costs and carbon footprint.



BARRIERS TO PURCHASING LOCAL FOODS

- Limited variety and availability
- Difficulty/inconvenience of communicating with producers to arrange transactions
- Higher costs for certain products
- Lack of knowledge of local food sources-where and what are they?
- Lack of knowledge of local food needs-who will buy and how much?
- Need for additional training
- More preparation or storage areas
- Additional labor for food preparation
- Additional appliances for processing local foods

GOOD FOR KIDS

- Choice of healthier options in school meals results in an average increase of one serving per day of fruits and vegetables
- Quality, local items taste better; Studies show children prefer quality, local items to non-local products
- Farm to Plate programs can help improve children's health; help alleviate childhood obesity and Type II Diabetes
- Providing children with wholesome and nutritious foods supports their physical and mental wellbeing

ECONOMIC: AFFORDING LOCAL FOODS

- Local foods can cost more, but can also cost less. Distribution costs, seasonality, availability, relationships between buyers/sellers and additional preparation time are all factors to consider
 - Buying in season can drive prices down
 - Farmers can sell at a lower price when they have a guaranteed market
 - Schools can buy "seconds" and process or freeze them for later use
 - Local foods can be combined with less expensive items to "stretch" their use
 - Volunteer help can save on labor costs
 - Use existing funding opportunities to purchase local (FFVP or DoD Fresh)

WHAT CAN YOU DO

- Organize a group of stakeholders in your community
 - Create interest by running a taste-test, recipe contest or organizing a local trip to a producers operation
- Find out who is growing locally in your area
- Join the Farm to School listserv

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/subscriber/new>



WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Encourage your children to eat well
- Serve local foods at home
 - Children who eat healthy choices at home are more likely to eat them at school and develop healthy, life-long eating habits
- Talk to your school's food service manager about local options
 - Food service managers operate on a tight budget serving hundreds of meals; often they are trying to incorporate local foods and parents are not aware of it
 - Share resources with your food service manager and ask what you can do to help.
- Make Farm to Plate an agenda item for PTO or other parent groups
 - See what support PTO or other groups can put behind incorporating local foods into menus
 - Brainstorm other ideas such as implementing school gardens or producer tours
- Reduce access to unhealthy options
 - Provide healthy snacks for birthday or other celebration treats
 - Ask your school to provide healthy options rather than sugary snacks or beverages
- Find out what your school is already doing
 - Start by reading the school's wellness policy

5 Reasons Why Local Is Better

1. Price: You will always find better prices when foods grown nearby are in season and abundant.
2. Taste: Foods in season are at their peak and taste better.
3. Travel: Reducing the miles a food has to travel from producer to consumer means a fresher product that lasts longer and has a smaller "carbon footprint".
4. Missing Out: When we eat foods from far away, we miss out on fantastic local foods that have been grown and perfected by local producers.
5. "Big Food": Purchasing through large, wholesale distributors puts money in the pockets of a few large corporations instead of in our local economy.



MECHANISMS FOR PURCHASING LOCALLY

- **Wholesale Distributors**
 - Distributors are the link to many institutional food service operations and a true resource for producers who do not have transportation or storage capabilities
 - Request local food products from your distributor whenever possible
- **Direct Purchasing**
 - Institutions can purchase bulk food products at wholesale prices directly from the producer
 - Food service staff can call or meet with the producer directly to establish purchasing arrangements
 - Producers with a guaranteed market can often offer reduced prices
- **Contract Growing**
 - Institutions and producers can prearrange a price and quantity of a given product for the coming year
 - Producers can provide a better price as they have a guaranteed market
 - Some risk is involved due to weather and other natural occurrences
- **CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)**
 - CSA subscribers receive weekly shares of a producers crop after paying an up-front price for operating costs
- **Marketing Cooperatives**
 - Producers can work together to share in the distribution, marketing, processing, selling and/or billing of their products
 - The benefit of buying from a cooperative is that there are more options for variety and quantity

DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

Getting products from the producer to the consumer is often challenging. Some options include:

- Producers deliver directly to the consumer
- Producers may add destinations to an established delivery route
- Producers can collaborate by bringing all products to one place and having a single producer do all the deliveries
- If purchasing through traditional wholesalers, deliver will be combined with regular orders