



FARM TO PLATE TALKING POINTS-SCHOOLS

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

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

GOOD FOR SCHOOLS

- Schools report a 3 to 16 percent increase in school meal participation when quality, local food is served
 - More funds are brought into the school
- Less price fluctuation
 - Products are not sourced from many different venues across the country
- Local produce can actually cost less than products with high delivery costs
- Farm to Plate programs are known to facilitate education about nutrition, food and agriculture in and out of the classroom

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

- Ask for local
- Start small
 - Try one available item or incorporate a local food into an existing recipe (ex: local tomatoes in pizza sauce)
 - Serve and highlight one local food each month
 - Incorporated lettuce or other local vegetables into your salad bar
 - Do local food taste tests in the cafeteria
 - Highlight local foods at special events
 - Prepare or freeze local foods in season for use throughout the year
 - Keep recipes flexible and introduce new foods gradually
- Look within your community
 - Many producers are not aware that schools are interested in purchasing local
- Get advice
 - Find out what has worked well for others and evaluate what will work best in your community



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 far 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.

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)

Talking Points for Food Service Staff

- Local foods are fresh-they generate less waste and have a longer shelf life than foods that travel across the country.
- The cost of seasonal, local foods are often the same or less than what other vendors charge (especially if you buy when growers have a surplus).
- Local foods help students learn about nutrition and the environment. When they appreciate their food they are more likely to eat and enjoy it.
- Buying locally supports local small and mid-size producers in surrounding communities.
- Farm to Plate is environmentally friendly because it reduces the distance foods must travel decreasing the "carbon footprint".



BEYOND THE CAFETERIA

Enthusiasm for eating quality, healthy and nutritious foods can be extended past the cafeteria.

- **Taste Tests**
 - Help get students excited about trying new foods or introducing new foods into the menu

- **In the Classroom**
 - Teachers can talk to their students about where their food comes from, nutrition, the environment and more
 - Teachers can tie lessons plans into cafeteria offerings

- **School Gardens**
 - Gardens can be used as educational resources
 - Items grown by students can be incorporated into meals

- **Field Trips**
 - Field trips to local producers provide the connection between where the food comes from and how it gets to their plates
 - Field trips also provide additional educational opportunities for other curricular topics

- **Chef/Producer Demonstrations**
 - Chefs and producers can come into the classroom and do hands-on cooking or demonstrations for students
 - These presentations help students understand where their food comes from

- **Good Press!**
 - Improving children's nutrition and supporting local producers is an easy "sell" to the media
 - Positive media coverage generates positive support from schools, producers and the entire community
 - Keep all media coverage (newspaper clippings, photos, etc.) to show your relevance and growth in the community



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.

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, delivery will be combined with regular orders

A Purchasing Agreement Should Include:

- Detailed description of product, including type and quality (grade)
- Count/Volume of products
- Cost per unit, total cost, payment terms, invoicing and payment process
- Delivery details-refrigeration, time of day, frequency, location, unloading
- Packing requirements-standard box, loose pack, bulk, etc.
- Post-harvest handling practices-cleaning, processing, cooling
- Names and phone numbers of the contact people.