



Communications Toolkit

www.farmtoschoolmonth.org

Introduction

In November 2010, Congress approved a resolution introduced by Representative Rush Holt (NJ) to officially designate October as National Farm to School Month. The passage of House Resolution 1655 demonstrates the growing importance and role of Farm to School programs as a means to improve child nutrition, support local economies and educate children about the origins of food.

The National Farm to School Network developed the following materials to help communities, schools and other organizations promote Farm to School Month and raise awareness about the value of connecting students with local food. We hope these tools will help your Farm to School programs and organizations gain well-deserved media attention and make direct connections to the public through social media, newsletters and outreach events.

This year, we're promoting an initiative called "Farm to School Counts" that will encourage individuals across the country to report how much Farm to School activity takes place in their program during the month of October. Our goal with Farm to School Counts is to help communities brag about their Farm to School success and to collect a snapshot of what's happening nationally, so we can generate additional press. Programs that participate will also be entered in a drawing for a cash prize. For full details, visit our website at

Farmtoschoolmonth.org.

Also new for 2012 are Theme of the Day activity and communications suggestions. Each weekday in October, we'll feature a new theme—ranging from tributes to farmers and teachers to celebrations of specific fruits and vegetables—and offer ways to celebrate and communicate that theme. Our website will feature a downloadable theme calendar and daily updates on our homepage and the Theme of the Day page.

We hope the tools we provide will enable every community in the country to celebrate Farm to School Month in a way that best meets their needs and resources.

This toolkit contains:

- Suggested Twitter and Facebook posts –
- Sample text for e-newsletters –
- Customizable press releases –
- Media pitch suggestions –

Social Media

Posting tweets and status updates about Farm to School Month is a great way to build

excitement, promote specific events and raise awareness about Farm to School in general. When you tweet about Farm to School Month, use the hashtag **#F2SMonth**. Hashtags allow people to quickly find and monitor specific stories or events on Twitter.

Here are a few suggested tweets to get you started:

Last year @FarmtoSchool programs spent an estimated \$13 million on local food. Be counted: <http://bit.ly/LWX5Dj> #F2SMonth

October is #F2SMonth. Farm to School programs reach an estimated 5.7 million students in all 50 states. That's something to celebrate!

October is Nat. Farm to School Month - celebrate the connections between schools and local food. <http://bit.ly/MekRMp> #F2SMonth

Kids + real food from local farms = a healthy nation on the right track! Celebrate at www.farmtoschoolmonth.org #F2SMonth

It's October - get your Farm to School Month Resources at www.farmtoschoolmonth.org #F2SMonth

Here are some suggested Facebook status updates:

It's time to celebrate the school food revolution: October is National Farm to School Month! Find resources at www.farmtoschoolmonth.org and www.kyagr.com

Last year Farm to School programs spent an estimated \$13 million on local food. How much will your school spend during Farm to School Month this October?

<http://www.farmtoschoolmonth.org/farm-to-school-counts-pledge/>

Farm to School programs reach an estimated 5.7 million students in all 50 states. That's something to celebrate! www.farmtoschoolmonth.org

Kids + real food from local farms = a healthy nation on the right track! Happy Farm to School Month! www.farmtoschoolmonth.org

What are you having for lunch today? Change is on the menu at schools across the country! Celebrate at www.farmtoschoolmonth.org

For more ideas on our Kentucky Farm to School program, follow us on Twitter@FarmtoSchoolky and on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/#!/FarmToSchoolKentuckyDepartmentOfAgriculture>

For more ideas on National Farm to School Network, follow us on Twitter @FarmtoSchool and on Facebook (<http://on.fb.me/nfsnf2s>) or visit the Theme of the Day page on farmtoschoolmonth.org

Sample text for newsletters

Celebrate National Farm to School Month in October

October is National Farm to School Month, a time to celebrate the connections that are happening all over the country between schools and local food. In November 2010, Congress approved House Resolution 1655 officially designating October as National Farm to School Month.

Over the past decade, the Farm to School movement has exploded across the United States. According to the National Farm to School Network (NFSN), an estimated 5.7 million students in 12,429 schools benefited from Farm to School during the 2011-2012 school year, and close to \$13 million was spent on local products in schools.

[Insert information about local Farm to School programs or statistics]

This year NFSN is asking schools across the country to participate in “Farm to School Counts” by pledging to serve local food and participate in Farm to School activities during October. Visit farmtoschoolmonth.org to sign up and find additional resources and materials to help you spread the word in your community.

Farmtoschoolmonth.org will also spotlight a different aspect of Farm to School or an activity each weekday during the month, with ideas for how to feature that food or idea in your cafeteria, classroom or community. So whether you are a food service professional, a farmer, a teacher or a food-loving family, there are plenty of other ways to celebrate and get involved, even if your school doesn't currently have a Farm to School program.

Sample press release – General purpose

For Immediate Release—[MONTH, DAY, 2012]

[LOGO]

[ACTIVITY] celebrates fresh, healthy foods with kids at [YOUR SCHOOL] on [DAY]

[ACTIVITY] spotlights local success in thriving local and the national Farm to School movement

[YOUR TOWN—ACTIVITY] will happen at [YOUR SCHOOL] on [DAY] as part of Kentucky Farm to School week and National Farm

to School Month celebrations happening across the country. In 2010, the United States House of Representatives declared October National Farm to School Month, recognizing the strong role Farm to School plays in promoting good health and strong economies. Commissioner Comer proclaimed October 22-26, 2012 as Farm to School Week in Kentucky.

["QUOTE ABOUT CONNECTING KIDS WITH PEOPLE WHO GROW THEIR FOOD OR OTHER

BENEFITS OF FARM TO SCHOOL," said FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR / PRINCIPAL / OTHER.]

[PARAGRAPH WITH SUCCINCT DETAILS ABOUT LOCAL PROGRAM: FARMS AND SCHOOLS

PARTICIPATING, TYPES OF LOCAL FOOD IN SCHOOLS, DATE/TIME, SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATIONS]

Farm to School is a win-win situation for farmers, children, communities, the economy and the environment. In the U.S., the typical food item travels 1,500 to 2,400 miles from farm to plate, which means a head of California lettuce shipped to Washington, DC requires 36 times more fuel energy to transport than the food energy it provides. Research has shown that fresher products are tastier too, which encourages children to eat more healthy foods.

“By instilling healthy eating habits early in life, we're preventing a health crisis and saving on healthcare spending along the way,” says Anupama Joshi, executive director of the National Farm to School Network (NFSN). “There are other economic benefits as well. Buying direct from local farmers keeps 80-90 percent of each dollar in the farmers' pocket, meaning more money stays in your community.”

Over the past decade, the Farm to School movement has exploded across the United States. According to NFSN estimates, 5.7 million students in 12,429 schools benefited from Farm to

School during the 2011-2012 school year, and close to \$13 million was spent on local products in schools.

NFSN has representatives in every state to help connect schools with local farmers. For more information about Farm to School in Kentucky, contact Tina Garland with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture at tina.garland@ky.gov or 502-382-7505# # #

Media contact:

[NAME]

[EMAIL]

[PHONE]

Sample press release – “Farm to School Counts”

For Immediate Release—Month, Day, 2012

[LOGO]

[YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT, SCHOOL or CLASSROOM] Pledges to “Count” Its Local Food Activity during Kentucky Farm to School Week October 22-26 and National Farm to School Month in October

Pledge spotlights local role in thriving national Farm to School movement

[YOUR TOWN—YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT/ SCHOOL/ CLASSROOM] has pledged to [serve at least {AMOUNT OF LOCAL FOOD} / to engage at least {NUMBER} children in a Farm to School related

educational activity] during October, 2012, when the second annual Kentucky Farm to School Week and National Farm to

School Month will be observed. In 2010, the United States House of Representatives declared October National Farm to School Month, recognizing the strong role Farm to School plays in promoting good health and strong economies.

The pledge is part of “Farm to School Counts,” a campaign organized by the National Farm to School Network (NFSN), to demonstrate how much Farm to School activity takes place in the United States during a single month.

“QUOTE STATING THAT WE’RE EXCITED TO BE PART OF THIS NATIONAL EFFORT TO DEMONSTRATE THE SHEER SCOPE OF THE FARM TO SCHOOL MOVEMENT,” said

FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR / PRINCIPAL / OTHER. “WE’RE PROUD OF OUR COMMUNITY’S CONTRIBUTION.”]

Farm to School programs are widely recognized as an effective way to encourage healthy eating and boost local agriculture sales while educating students about nutrition and the source of their food.

“Farm to School is a win-win-win for kids, farmers and communities,” says Anupama Joshi, executive director of NFSN. “Educating children about the origins of their food and providing them with healthy options helps instill good eating habits early in life. Buying direct from local farmers keeps 80-90 percent of each dollar in the farmers’ pocket, meaning more money stays in your community.”

[PARAGRAPH WITH SUCCINCT DETAILS ABOUT LOCAL PROGRAM: FARMS AND SCHOOLS

PARTICIPATING, TYPES OF LOCAL FOOD IN SCHOOLS, DATE/TIME, SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATIONS.]

At the end of October, every school that has made the pledge will be asked to report the total amount of local foods served and student activities during the month. NFSN will announce the national total on November 15.

Over the past decade, the Farm to School movement has exploded across the United States. According to NFSN estimates, 5.7 million students in 12,429 schools benefited from Farm to

School during the 2011-2012 school year, and close to \$13 million was spent on local products in schools.

NFSN has representatives in every state to help connect schools with local farmers. For more information about Farm to School in Kentucky, contact Tina Garland with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture at tina.garland@ky.gov or 502-382-7505. For more information about National Farm to School Month or Farm to School Counts, visit www.farmtoschoolmonth.org.

###

Media contact:

[NAME]

[EMAIL]

[PHONE]

Media pitches

Press releases are a great way to share your story, but media professionals receive dozens of press releases every week, so it might take a little extra effort to get the attention of an editor or reporter. Having a great pitch or angle always helps make your story more unique and allows the editor to better visualize the final product. It also helps ensure that the story they tell is the one you want them to tell.

Here are some suggested pitches for Farm to School Month activities:

- Follow the food: Invite news crews to follow your local foods from the farm or the producer all the way to the cafeteria.
- Cooking demo: If you have a local TV talk program, suggest having your food service director highlight some of the Farm to School dishes your kids are eating by preparing them on the show.
- Farm to School Counts: Create a visual representation of the foods served or activities that you've pledged to hold during Farm to School month and send a photo to local media.
- Schedule a field trip to a dairy farm, farmers market, fishery or any of the sites that are part of your Farm to School program and invite the news media.
- Kids views: Invite news – radio / TV / print – to talk to kids about where their food comes from. Kids can be unpredictable, but they could be balanced out by interviews with FSDs, teachers, the principal, etc.
- Teacher op-ed: Have a local teacher write about the changes s/he has seen in the classroom since the Farm to School program started.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- If you don't have a media list already, do an online search to find the news media, reporters, or bloggers who have covered local food, schools, the environment, agriculture, food, and food-related businesses in your area.
- Email your press release to your media list. Emphasize the local angle in your headline.
- People in the media receive many emails each day, so it's a good idea to call as well as email. Prepare a short telephone script explaining who you are, your story idea and how to contact you. Don't assume that they've seen your release. If you reach a live person, say hello and who you are. If you liked a recent story they covered, you might want to mention it. Say you have a story idea and ask if they have a minute to talk before launching into it. If you get their voice mail, leave a shorter version of the message

you've prepared or try calling back later.

- Emphasize the fact that your story will be very visual and include nice action, especially if you are dealing with a television station.
- Explain why the story is timely—emphasis that this is National Farm to School Month and mention any recent Farm to School reports or statistics from your state that demonstrate the local relevancy.
- Keep in mind that children will need permission slips before being photographed for a story. It might be necessary to set up a small photo-op with students who have the proper forms.