



A project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology

Farm to School Programs: Good for Montana kids, communities, and economy

Farm to School efforts connect schools (K-12) and local farms and ranches in order to serve fresh and healthy Montana-grown foods in school cafeterias and provide agriculture, health, and nutrition education to students. More than forty Montana schools already enjoy some components of Farm to School!

Farm to School helps farmers, ranchers, and businesses.

Farm to School efforts are good for Montana's farmers, ranchers, processors, and distributors. **Montana's public K-12 schools spend approximately \$19 million annually on food products—this represents a significant, consistent market for Montana's agricultural producers.**

When Montana producers sell Montana beef, lentils, milk, wheat, cherries, melons, raspberries, and other foods to Montana schools, everyone wins!

Farm to School keeps money in our communities.

Farm to school programs are good for farmers and ranchers, and they also benefit local food processors, distributors, and packers who create the products that school food service programs need.

Farm to School also has economic benefits for non-food businesses. For example, a study of the economic impact of Farm to School in Oregon, found that **every dollar schools spent on local products generated more than twice that much in successive rounds of spending.**

Farm to School is good for kids.

Every day, 80,000 Montana public school students

eat school lunch. When these young people know where their food comes from, they often make healthier choices. **Since the Center for Disease Control predicts that one in three of today's kindergarteners will suffer from Type II Diabetes in their lifetime, Farm to School is crucial in disease prevention.**

But with less than one dollar per student per day to spend on food, many school foodservice programs face significant challenges getting started.



How can Montana's government support Farm to School?

- Continue to fund FoodCorps Montana, an AmeriCorps program hosted by NCAT that puts boots on the ground to launch Farm to School programs across the state. FoodCorps is currently supported by the Governor's Office of Community Service.
- Support and increase the efforts of the Office of Public Instruction to promote Farm to School in the state, including putting more Montana-made foods on their cooperative bid purchasing list.
- Encourage other departments, including Department of Agriculture, Department of Livestock, and Department of Health and Human Services, and the state university system to implement policies to help schools purchase food from Montana producers. These policies might include:
 - Providing technical assistance to food producers interested in accessing the school food market.
 - Streamlining food safety rules to make it easier for local processors to safely sell food to schools.
 - Providing educational and networking opportunities for producers, processors, students, and food service directors.
- Create a grant program for schools that want to start Farm to School projects in their communities. One of the greatest challenges for Farm to School programs is the up-front cost of developing new foods, methods, and purchasing patterns. A grant program would give schools the boost they need to overcome these initial barriers and develop long-term relationships with local producers.
- Brainstorm with us! **For more information, please contact:**
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Grow Montana Food Policy Council, a project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology, is a coalition working to build a more robust and vibrant Montana food system. We work on research, projects, and policies that

- Retain the value of our agricultural products in Montana communities;
- Reconnect rural and urban economies;
- Enhance stewardship of Montana's natural resources, and;
- Improve Montanans access to healthy, nutritious food

This project is in partnership with

