

Local Foods, Lucas County

Connecting Farms, Health, and Community

Getting Started with Farm to School

Farm to school initiatives help strengthen the connection communities have with the local food system. Farm to school assists families in making positive food choices, supports the local economy, and contributes to vibrant communities. Programs may differ by location but generally includes one or more activities in the following areas:

- Cafeteria: Local foods are purchased, promoted, and served in the cafeteria, as a snack, or as classroom taste-test.
- Classroom: Students participate in standards-based education activities related to agriculture, science, health, or nutrition.
- Community: Schools are purchasing from local growers, developing school gardens, engaging in community events, and educating staff, students, and parents on the benefits of local food support.

Build Your Team

Farm to School programs have the potential to effect both small and large changes in the community. To create a sustainable project, participation from a diverse group of school and community members is needed. Some schools have formed School Nutrition Action Councils (SNACs) as one way to bring stakeholders together. SNACs have taken on projects ranging from changing school menus to coordinating garden projects and farm field trips.

Key Stakeholders and Supporters include:

- School Administrators, Teachers, and Staff
- School Food Service Directors
- Farmers, Distributors/Processors
- Parents and Students
- Policy makers/Local Government
- Local Extension and Master Gardener Volunteers
- Local media

Establish Goals

- ❑ Consider the Big Picture- What do you want to accomplish in the long or short term? Are you trying to incorporate local foods into the cafeteria? Establish a school garden? Integrate food and agriculture into classroom curriculum? Address school or district wellness policies?
- ❑ Determine Your Capacity- What infrastructure is in place to handle changes to the menu or curriculum? Who has been trained in appropriate food safety and handling procedures? Is there space, time, and funding to establish Farm to School Activities?
- ❑ Start Small- Begin with one or two small goals that can be accomplished with current funding and equipment. Consider purchasing a local food for a special event (apples for a fall classroom party), or using potted vegetable plants indoors for science, math, or literacy activities.

Connect and Learn

Talk with other schools and districts with established Farm to School programs. They may be able to provide advice on the challenges they faced when starting their program. Visit your local farmers market to meet with farmers and producers. Connect with the Ohio Department of Education to learn more about state and federal policies for local food procurement. USDA has many resources available on their website. The National Farm to Schools Network provides advice, research, and resources from across the country. Don't forget, your local OSU Extension office is a valuable resource for additional Farm to School information. Visit lucas.osu.edu.



NATIONAL
FARM to SCHOOL
NETWORK

Defining Local

Serving local foods through school meal programs is often a central component of farm to school initiatives. Before purchasing local foods, schools and districts must determine what foods are grown, raised, caught, and processed in the area and when those foods are available.

Your school food service department will likely make the decision on what "local" means for your school or district. Definitions may be based on needs, availability, or purchase size.

Potential "Local" definitions:

- Within a radius (50 miles, 100 miles)
- Within a county (Lucas county)
- Within a state (Ohio)
- Within a region (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana)

A district's definition of local may change depending on the:

- Season
- Product
- Special events

Remember we can incorporate local foods throughout the meal tray. Local can be expanded to include the nearest bakery for school breakfast. It can include prepared protein foods like stewed chicken or ground beef patties. Dairy foods are generally considered local, as they are generally costly to transport.

Resources for Lucas County

National Farm to School Network- www.farmtoschool.org

OSU Extension Farm to School- farmtoschool.osu.edu

OSU Extension, Lucas County Local Foods program- lucas.osu.edu/program-areas/local-foods

Ohio Department of Education Office for Child Nutrition- education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Food-and-Nutrition/Office-of-Food-and-Nutrition-Overview

Ohio Fruit and Vegetable Seasonality chart- ofbf.org/whats-in-season

Ohio MarketMaker, producer availability database- oh.foodmarketmaker.com

Toledo-Lucas County library system- www.toledolibrary.org

Northwest Ohio Food Council- www.northwestohiofoodcouncil.com

Creating Healthy Communities, Lucas County Health Department- www.lucascountyhealth.com/community-outreach/creating-healthy-communities

Toledo GROWS, gardening support and education- www.toledogrows.org

USDA Resources

USDA's Farm to School Program was formally established with the passage of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The Program is housed in the Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community Food Systems (OCFS). www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school

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AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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Contact your local OSU Extension office for more information.

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