

**CALIFORNIA FOOD AND JUSTICE COALITION
COMMUNITY ALLIANCE WITH FAMILY FARMERS**

**Healthy Students – Healthy Farms
AB 826 (Nava) --The CA Farm to School Child Nutrition Improvement Act**

Summary: In order to increase the nutrition and health of California children, while also improving the economic viability of California farmers, the California Food and Justice Coalition (CFJC) and the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) are co-sponsoring AB 826 (Nava), *The California Farm to School Child Nutrition Improvement Act*. The bill creates the California Farm to School (F2S) program, and brings together the CDE, CDFA, and CDHS to work collaboratively to encourage and support all public schools purchasing locally and California grown farm products, for the school meal program.

The California Farm to School Child Nutrition Improvement Act:

1. Declares that it is the policy of the state to encourage and support the purchase of locally and California grown farm products by public schools, and other public institutions, such as universities, hospitals and correctional facilities.
2. Provides training to schools on how to link with California farmers to include local, fresh and seasonal farm products into the school meal program.
3. Provides outreach and training for farmers on the opportunities and best practices for selling products to schools.
4. Promotes the purchase of local and California grown produce by the Department of Defense Fruit and Vegetable program, which allows schools to purchase local and California grown product through existing DoD procurement channels with their entitlement funds.
5. Creates a farm to school seed grants program to help schools purchase needed equipment, create procurement procedures accessible to local farmers, and buy more local produce. These seed grants will also help leverage federal funding into California schools through the federal farm to cafeteria and school garden program.

The Problem Facing School Children: California is suffering from a growing obesity epidemic that is most dramatically affecting our kids. More than a quarter of California children are overweight, and almost half are physically unfit, and while fruit and vegetable consumption is an essential component of a healthy diet, only 21 percent of California children ages 9-11 eat a minimum five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. There is an urgent need to educate children about healthy eating, and engage them in activities that promote lifelong health and wellness.

The Problem Facing Farmers: California's small and mid-sized farmers, who grow a wide variety of fruits and vegetables year round, are in need of reliable and steady markets that offer a fair price for their farm fresh products. These farmers are well positioned to meet the needs of children suffering from a lack of fresh fruits and vegetables in their diets, yet they frequently lack the infrastructure and information to meet the demands of this market.

The Farm to School Solution: Across the state approximately 200 schools, in more than 25 districts are operating F2S programs designed to connect schools and local farmers. These schools procure and include farm fresh foods on their menus through salad bars, meals and snacks. F2S programs also incorporate nutrition based curriculum, and provide students with learning opportunities through farm visits, cooking demonstrations, gardening and composting programs. Studies of F2S programs show that more students participate in the school meal program when farm fresh products, instead of prepackaged, canned and processed fruit and vegetables, are on the menu. Studies also show that students choosing F2S options eat significantly more servings of fruits and vegetables compared to their peers eating hot lunches. In addition to supplying schools with the freshest fruits and vegetables available, these programs give farmers access to a reliable and steady market that allows them to establish better controls on planting, harvesting and marketing.

For More Information Contact: Heather Fenney, heather@foodsecurity.org, 310-822-5410
Pete Price, nete@ricecon.com, 916-448-1015