

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION
FARM TO CAFETERIA LEGISLATION FACT SHEET
COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION

The reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act offers a timely opportunity to link nutrition and agriculture policy to improve children's health and benefit family farmers.

The "**Farm to Cafeteria Projects**" Act, known as S. 1755 in the Senate and H.R. 2626 in the House, creates a win-win situation: students eat healthy foods straight from the farm as part of their school lunch, while farmers not only expand their markets, but also become more involved in their communities.

Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) sponsored S. 1755, and Representatives Fred Upton (R-MI) and Ron Kind (D-WI) sponsored H.R. 2626. *If enacted, these bills would provide \$10,000,000 annually for grants of up to \$100,000 to schools, school districts, and nonprofit organizations to create farm to cafeteria projects. This one-time infusion of resources requires a 25% match of funds or in-kind contributions.* The Community Food Security Coalition is working with legislators and partner organizations to enact "Farm to Cafeteria Projects" legislation.

Over 40 Representatives co-sponsored H.R. 2626, and provisions very similar to it were passed as part of the "Child Nutrition Improvement and Integrity Act," which renews all the child nutrition programs.

We need your help in passing Farm to Cafeteria in the Senate!

A PLAN FOR ACTION

YOU are an essential part of the legislative process. Here's how you can help:

- 1) Call your Senators' offices, and ask for the staff person in charge of child nutrition. Tell him or her that you support providing kids healthy food from local farms, and ask that your Senator co-sponsor S. 1755, the "Farm to Cafeteria Projects" Act, and support farm to cafeteria provisions in the child nutrition reauthorization. You can reach your Senators' offices through the Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121 or www.senate.gov.
Note: If you would rather write letters, please either fax or e-mail them to the DC office or else mail it to a district office within your state. Mail coming to Congressional office buildings in DC will be delayed because of recent bioterrorism.
- 2) Place an op-ed about Farm to Cafeteria in your local newspaper. Find a sample op-ed at www.foodsecurity.org.
- 3) Publish this Fact Sheet in your newsletter, web site, or in other forms of communication.

NEED FOR THE FARM TO CAFETERIA INITIATIVE

The development of life-long eating habits begins during childhood. By encouraging children to eat healthy foods, they have a better chance of avoiding serious illness later in life, such as heart disease and diabetes.

- The "epidemic of obesity" has become a national crisis. More than 25% of Americans under 19 are overweight or obese – a number that has doubled in the last 30 years.
- Less than 13% of school-age children eat the USDA recommended amount of fruit, and 20% eat less than one serving of vegetables.

While the health of our nation's youth related to diet is declining, the health of America's independent farming sector is also declining. These facts are less well-known:

- Of all occupations in the U.S., farming is facing the greatest decline. It is no longer listed as an occupation in the U.S. census, as farmers comprise less than 2% of the population.

- The farmer share of the food dollar has dropped drastically from 41 cents in 1950 to less than 20 cents of every dollar in 1999.

FARM TO CAFETERIA ADDRESSES THESE TRENDS BY PROVIDING RESOURCES FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- 1) Initial capital expenses such as cold storage facilities, food preparation equipment, salad bars and other kitchen improvements.
- 2) Initial additional labor costs, for researching the location of regional farms and crop availability, menu planning based on regional products, and staff training.
- 3) Experiential nutrition education linking local agriculture to healthy diets through hands-on activities such as school gardens, visiting local farms, and field trips to farmers' markets.

FARM TO CAFETERIA SUCCESSES

- In **California**, in an elementary school of 500 students, only 5-10 students were choosing the salad bar with produce purchased through conventional means. When the produce was purchased directly from farmers, the average number of students choosing the salad bar increased to 120.
- The farmers in the New North **Florida** Cooperative began selling collard greens to thirteen schools in one county. Six years later, they sell to fifteen school districts in three states and serve 300,000 students annually.
- The **New York** State Legislature has established an annual NY Harvest for NY Kids week that connects students to agriculture through visits to farms and farmers' markets, farmers in the classroom and other hands-on activities.
- In the **Maine** Healthy Foods from Healthy Soils Program, elementary school children experience the cyclic nature of agriculture, while learning how their food choices effect their own health, the farmers and the environment. Students also participate in every aspect of the cycle of food production from compost formation, planting, harvesting, and recycling back to the soil.

SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

“The most valuable benefits of the Farm to School Project are to the kids in our schools. We are building relationships between school children and the whole food system, from farm to cafeteria. All of us are learning where food comes from, how it is grown, and how important New York agriculture is to our quality of life.”

Ray Denniston, Food Service Director, Johnson City Consolidated School District, New York

“This is a great way to diversify and stay in business.”

Michael Nash, farmer, GROWN Locally Cooperative, Postville, Iowa

“The students are understanding more about nutrition, but they're also planting vegetables, seeing how food is served - and then they're composting the leftovers. It helps kids see that we're dependent on agriculture and can keep the cycle going.”

Clark Bryant, Principal, Pioneer Elementary School, Davis, California

“The salad bar rocks.”

6 year old student in the Ventura School District, Ventura, CA

For Additional Information, Please Contact the Community Food Security Coalition:

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