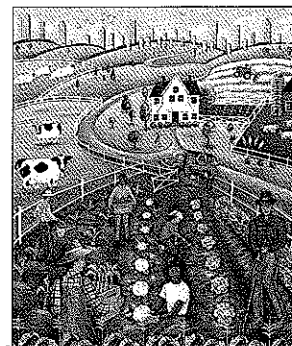


COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION

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Community Food Security Coalition Policy Objectives for the 2009 Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization

What is the Community Food Security Coalition?

The Community Food Security Coalition is a national alliance of 250 groups dedicated to building strong, sustainable local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally affordable food to all people at all times. We seek to develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, distributing, and selling food that is regionally based and grounded in the principles of justice, democracy, and sustainability.

Core Targets

1. Establish a national Farm to School grant program with \$50 million in mandatory funding

In the 2004 CNR, CFSC gained passage of legislation that authorized a national farm to school grant program at \$10 million/ year. This program was intended to catalyze farm to school projects through removing a key barrier--- the need for start-up funds for extra labor and equipment. This initiative is the highest priority of CFSC in the CNR, as it will broaden the number of schools able to implement farm to school projects, especially in cash-strapped school serving low-income children. Maximum grants should be increased to \$200,000 over a three-year period to ensure the sustainability of the programs.

2. Increase reimbursements for all child nutrition meal programs, tied to increased servings of fruits and vegetables and whole grains. A pilot program to provide an additional few cents per meal for the purchase of in-state food should be established in 20 districts of diverse sizes, geographical considerations and demographics.

Food services operate under incredible financial constraints, especially as the cost of food has soared in the past year. Improvements in the quality of meals require the commitment of additional funds. Reimbursement rate increases should be made available to school districts on the condition that they use the funds for foods that help them meet dietary guidelines, such as produce and whole grains. In addition, a pilot program to provide an additional few cents per meal for local food should be created, based on a competitive process. The purpose of this pilot is to remove one of the barriers to using locally grown food—that it is more expensive than conventionally sourced food.

3. Establish a farm to school initiative within the Secretary of Agriculture's office.

Farm to school should be elevated in profile within USDA as an agency priority. In doing so, it will send a clear message to school districts that not only is procurement of local food permissible, but a priority for improving school meals and improving the welfare of family

farmers. A key purpose of this initiative should be to coordinate supply and demand. As farm to school projects multiply, the lack of available product is fast becoming a real constraint.

4. Provide \$10 million a year for non-food assistance grants to schools that will allow them to purchase food preparation equipment.

Until the early 1980s, USDA provided funding to schools for kitchen equipment. Over the past 25 years, many schools have removed their cooking facilities. If schools are to improve their meals, less processing and more cooking will be a necessity. Schools will need funds to purchase the equipment they no longer have, or wish to acquire, such as salad bars.

Secondary Targets

1. Convert reduced price meals to free meals.

Currently children from families with income between 130-185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced price school lunch. The 40 cents per meal charge can be a barrier for participation by low-income families, resulting in increased childhood hunger during the school day. CFSC supports the elimination of this category to expand the number of children who receive free meals.

2. Give the Secretary the ability to regulate sale of food and beverages outside the cafeteria throughout the school day.

Currently USDA has the ability to regulate the nutritional content of those foods served as part of a federally-funded child nutrition program. Yet, schools make available other foods during the day through vending machines, competitive meals, student stores, and sales. School districts are under too much financial pressure, or have an inherent conflict of interest to regulate themselves. Hence it is up to the federal government to set nutritional standards as a floor, and allow states or districts to develop more stringent guidelines as desired.

3. The National Food Service Management Institute should do training on using farm fresh foods

The NFSMI provides on-site and remote learning opportunities for state and food service leaders on a variety of topics related to child nutrition programs. To implement farm to school programs, food service directors may require training in specific areas, such as procurement, product handling, and seasonal menu preparation. NFSMI can help to build food service directors skills and further institutionalize farm to school projects through specific training in these areas.

4. Provide mandatory and consistent funding for Team Nutrition Network to enable a consistent and coordinated nutrition education approach across child nutrition programs. Incorporate education about agriculture and a local foods approach where feasible

The childhood obesity epidemic, along with increased rates of chronic diseases in children and skyrocketing healthcare costs, demonstrate the need for a more comprehensive nutrition education and promotion program, coordinated within and across child nutrition programs. Under the current competitive grant structure, states continue to have minimal or no funding for nutrition education and promotion. The Society for Nutrition Education proposes a one cent per school lunch allocation to this program (\$69.8 million/year). This program should be directed to develop curriculum about farm to school, and about where food comes from.