



In 2009, Congress will be reauthorizing the Child Nutrition Programs, which include the National School Lunch and the Child Nutrition Acts. The USDA is currently seeking public comments to gather input that will help the Department better understand the needs and concerns of program cooperators and participants, which will be compiled for the incoming Presidential administration. This presents us with a wonderful opportunity to increase support for Farm-to-School.

Make your voice heard! Sign the letter below and send it to the USDA, before October 15, 2008, in one of these ways:

*Federal eRulemaking Portal:* Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments electronically.

*Mail:* Address comments to Mr. Robert M. Eadie, Chief, Policy and Program Development Branch, Child Nutrition Division, Food and Nutrition Service, Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 640, Alexandria, Virginia 22302-1594.

*Fax:* Submit comments by facsimile transmission to: 703-305-2879, attention Mr. Robert M. Eadie.



Mr. Robert M. Eadie  
Chief, Policy and Program Development Branch, Child Nutrition Division, Food and Nutrition Service,  
Department of Agriculture  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 640  
Alexandria, Virginia 22302-1594

Dear Mr. Eadie:

With the most recent Farm Bill, Congress has made it clear that Child Nutrition Directors can express geographic preference for local products in the procurement process. This concept—called Farm-to-School—combines the advantages of serving locally-grown food as a part of school meals with experiential learning opportunities such as farm visits and school gardens. It is a win-win strategy for all involved: children benefit from the increased fresh fruit and vegetables in their school lunches, family farmers benefit from new markets for their products, and schools benefit by preserving the property tax base on which they rely.

In order to further encourage these programs, we recommend these changes to the 2009 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act:

- 1. Provide \$10 million in mandatory funding for *Section 122: Access to Local Foods and School Gardens***  
Besides providing resources for staff time and training, kitchen equipment and school garden construction, a dedicated pool of money will give a clear green light to many schools who may wish to implement a Farm-to-School program but are not sure if they are allowed to.
- 2. Increase meal reimbursement rates**  
Child Nutrition Directors do the very best they can to feed our children well with limited resources and many cannot afford to purchase fresh produce.
- 3. Include training for local food procurement in *Section 115: Procurement Training* and increase the funding available for this**  
Not only would this reassure Child Nutrition Directors that they could include local products in their menus, it would give them the know-how to do so.
- 4. Adopt these language changes in existing CNR feeding programs to facilitate more local food purchases**
  - A. Explicitly incorporate farm-to-school as a component of nutrition messaging in *Section 101: Nutrition Promotion*.
  - B. Carve-out a special pot of funds for farm-to-school under *Section 116: Summer Food Service Program For Children* to help jump-start programs and get schools accustomed to the practice during the summer when local agricultural products are most plentiful.
  - C. Explicitly allow funds in *Section 117: Commodity Distribution Program* to be used on local purchases and if possible, set aside a portion of the funding specifically for that purpose.
  - D. Explicitly allow funds in *Section 119: Child and Adult Care Feeding Program* to be used on local purchases and if possible, set aside a portion of the funding specifically for that purpose.
  - E. In allocating funds for *Section 120: Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program*, give priority to schools that submit a plan to use them on local purchases.

To reiterate, Farm-to-School contributes to the health and wealth of our children and communities. Please seize the opportunity to spur this vital practice by accepting these recommendations for the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2009.

Sincerely,