

SCHOOL MEALS FROM CONNECTICUT FARMS

The objective was to develop a statewide system to facilitate use of locally grown foods in Connecticut public schools. Farmers were surveyed to determine current types and levels of production, to gauge interest in supplying schools, and to explore existing and potential delivery and processing options. Schools and school districts were surveyed to determine current use of local food, and to explore their motivations, barriers, and concerns about sourcing locally. The surveys uncovered significant interest in increasing use of local products in schools despite challenges for both parties. An action plan was developed.

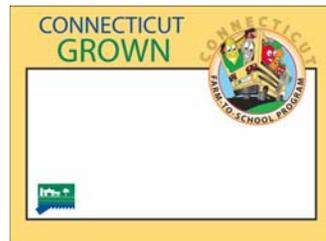
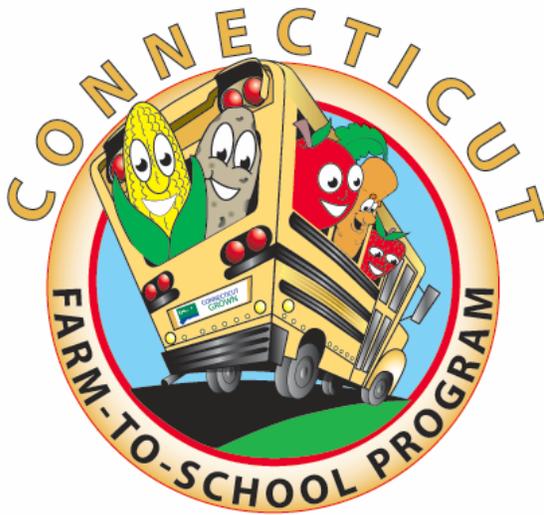
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SCHOOL MEALS FROM CONNECTICUT FARMS

FINAL REPORT

December 2005



The 'School Meals From Connecticut Farms' program was supported by a subcontract from the CT Department of Agriculture to the Hartford Food System with funds from the USDA Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program. The goal of this grant was to build the capacity of the Farm to School program within the State of Connecticut.

From December 2004 to December 2005 a program coordinator was hired to assist with identifying and matching farms to schools, developing promotional materials, and conducting outreach to farmers and food service directors. A researcher was also recruited to provide a background report and feasibility study investigating producer and school interest while mapping possible new pathways for Farm to School programming.

Note: In addition to the following summary, please consult the 'F2S Background Report' and 'F2S Survey Report' for more comprehensive research details.

The following summary of accomplishments is a record of the hard work and commitment of several individuals who worked together to increase Farm-to-School programming in Connecticut. In particular, this work was accomplished by Elizabeth Fleming and Debbie Humphries, with supervision by Rick Macsuga of the CT Dept. of Agriculture and support from Jiff Martin of the Hartford Food System.

School Meals From Connecticut Farms

Summary of Accomplishments

Matching Farms and Schools

- As of fall 2005, over **50 schools and school districts** were involved in the Program, **up from 25 in 2004**.
- **Farms** selling directly to schools **increased from 15 in 2004 to 28 in 2005**.
- **6 produce distributors** are working with their school accounts to inform them of what they are purchasing that is CT Grown.

School Programming

- **Cheshire's** Dodd Middle School introduced new CT Grown dishes such as Squapple Crisp and Balsamic Roasted Vegetables.
- **South Windsor** High School students are growing herbs and tomatoes that will be used in the cafeteria and composting kitchen waste.
- **Mansfield's** Annie E. Vinton Elementary School hosted a month long nutrition program last March emphasizing CT Grown produce.
- **Stratford** worked with the Program to give first graders a taste of CT Grown winter squash.
- Third graders at Cherry Brook School in **Canton** learned about worms, farming, and healthy food through a visit to nearby Wild Carrot Farm.

Promotional Materials Development

- A new **logo** for the Program was developed with the assistance of the University of Connecticut.
- The logo has been formatted into a "**price card**" which is already being used in many schools to denote lunch items that are CT Grown.
- UCONN is also assisting in the development of a promotional **brochure** for the program.
- A **website** for the program will be hosted on the Department of Agriculture website.

Program Expansion

- "Breakfast with the Farmers" workshop, sponsored by **CT Farm Bureau**, held at **School Nutrition Association of CT** annual conference.
- **Farm tour** of Dondero Orchard and Old Maids Farm in Glastonbury for food service personnel, with a CT Grown lunch prepared and served by Dept. of Agriculture staff.

- WTNH-TV featured CT Farm-to-School on location at **Hindinger Farm in Hamden**.
- Collaboration with the CT State Dept. of Education and Dept. of Agriculture in preparation for the **Federal Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program**; this program has the potential to feature CT Grown in up to 25 participating schools starting in 2006.
- Collaboration with CT Dept. of Administrative Services to introduce CT Grown via the Federal **Dept. of Defense “Fresh Program”**.

Feasibility Study

- A **review of other models** around the nation for farm to school programs was presented in the spring of 2005.
- Researched **historical challenges** to farm to school programming.
- A **survey** was conducted that was mailed to 130 farmers, 178 schools, and 159 school districts
- Gathered and **analyzed responses** to the survey from 25 farmers, 26 schools, and 70 school districts.

Research Findings

- The most commonly purchased fresh produce items by schools are **apples, lettuce, and tomatoes**.
- The most commonly purchased processed fresh produce items are **shredded lettuce, baby carrots, and cut celery**.
- Approximately **85% of school and school districts** in the survey indicated a **willingness to buy from a local grower** if ‘price and quality were competitive and source was available.’”
- **30% of schools and school districts** in the survey agreed or strongly agreed that they would be **willing to pay a higher price** to buy locally grown foods; another 32% were ‘uncertain’.
- The **top requested locally grown items** by schools and districts are **lettuce, apples, tomatoes and cucumbers**.
- Schools and districts reported that the **most important reason to buy locally grown foods is to support the local economy and community**; the next important reasons were food quality and freshness.
- **Cost, delivery, and reliability** were the **principal concerns** listed by schools and districts about buying local food.
- The major **perceived barriers** for schools and districts to buy local food were the **number of farmers and seasonality**.

School Meals from Connecticut Farms

Background Report for Economic Feasibility Study

Prepared by Debbie Humphries, PhD, MPH

For The Hartford Food System
and
The Connecticut Department of Agriculture

March 2005

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In 2004 the Connecticut State Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Hartford Food System, received a grant from the USDA Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program. This grant is to increase the Farm to School capacity within the State of Connecticut. Farm to School programs work to incorporate food from local farms into school meals and also to provide educational materials to increase student awareness of nutrition and agricultural issues. An economic feasibility study is in process for Connecticut, to investigate farm to school potential. The feasibility study will incorporate a background report on Farm to School Programs in Connecticut and other states, a survey of farmers and schools, and will investigate possible pathways to economic feasibility of the Farm to School program. This background report is the first step of the economic feasibility study.

Connecticut Farm to School Programs

Origins. The Farm to School program in Connecticut was one of the first in the country, beginning in the mid-1990s. From 1994-1996 the Farm Fresh Start program was implemented in the Hartford School District, with the assistance and leadership of the Hartford Food System. This program combined connections with local farmers and culinary assistance to provide fresh, local foods during an eight week period each fall and spring. Connecticut Farm to School programs are challenged by the limited overlap between the school season (September to June) and the agricultural season (May to October). The Farm Fresh Start model focused on an eight week period in September and October and another eight week period in May and June. During those two periods, local produce was integrated into the school menus.

One of the challenges addressed by the Farm Fresh Start program was the distribution of produce to the schools. The choice of the Hartford School District (38 schools, ~25,000 students), the largest in the state, increased the complexity of the distribution issues. Farmers found it too difficult to make direct deliveries to schools for the small quantities that were needed in each school. The program identified a local food wholesaler who was able to delivery to each school. The wholesaler purchased all needed produce items, identified for the school district which foods were local, and to deliver the produce directly to each of the schools involved.

During the Farm Fresh Start program, the Hartford Public School Food Service purchased thousands of pounds of local produce. For example, from Sept 6 to November 15,

1996 the three pilot Farm Fresh Start schools purchased approximately 17,495 pounds of Connecticut grown fruits and vegetables; this amount represented 76 percent of their total cost of produce purchased in the eleven-week period (from Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids). Records are not available of the number of farmers involved in the program or the amount of money each farmer received through Farm Fresh Start purchases.

The Farm Fresh Start Program was designed to work within the cafeteria and also in the classroom. However, when the Hartford Food System stopped providing the program with a chef and other programmatic assistance the viability of the Farm Fresh Start decreased. At this point the Hartford School District purchases all produce through the same local wholesaler, but it does not identify which produce items are local and which are not. In addition, classroom activities around farm to school are not in systematic use.

Current Situation. In the winter of 2002 Mary Ragno of the Connecticut State Department of Education invited Rick Macsuga from the Connecticut State Department of Agriculture to speak and have a booth at the Connecticut School Food Service Directors' Annual Meeting. Rick's talk centered on the topic of whether Connecticut farmers and local school food services could become partners (Farm to School Program, R. Macsuga). Growing out of that presentation, a number of school districts are looking for local connections. For example, the South Windsor school district (7 schools, ~5000 students) purchases some produce directly from a local farmer, including a regular baked potato bar that is offered in the middle school (conversation with Mary Ann Lopez, February 1, 2005).

Rick Macsuga reports that currently many schools are buying apples and pears. Schools have also expressed interest in other commodities such as late season peaches, musk melon, watermelon, strawberries, peppers, green beans, carrots, winter squash, and potatoes.

Highlights of the 2002-2003 programs

- South Windsor School System used posters and banners to promote Connecticut Grown products and the area farmers from which they're purchasing.
- South Windsor schools provided a CT Grown potato bar two days a week in their cafeterias and promoted the nutritional value of apples purchased from a local orchard.
- Meriden School System has been buying Connecticut apples direct from Connecticut farmers for a number of years and has expanded into vegetables and purchased \$3,000 worth of late-season vegetables from an area grower.
- The West Haven School system, after receiving their first delivery of 32 cases of Connecticut Grown apples, reported to the Department of Agriculture that "the apples were gorgeous - wonderful, rich flavor. The food service staff were thrilled with them and plan to do more."

(Rick Macsuga, Dec 3, 2004;
<http://www.ct.gov/doag/cwp/view.asp?Q=270554&A=1401>

Approximately 24 farmers and 14 school systems (districts) were involved in the School Meals From Connecticut Farms initiative in 2004.

Farm to School in Other States

According to the National Farm to School Program website, there are now Farm to School programs in 16 states. Several organizations have been at the forefront of research and evaluation on farm to school programs. The Center for Food & Justice at Occidental College in Los Angeles coordinates national farm to school efforts in collaboration with the Community Alliance of Family Farms, Pennsylvania State University, New Jersey Urban Ecology Program, Community Food Security Coalition, Cornell Farm to School Program, and the California Department of Education (see <http://www.farmtoschool.org/>). The Center for Food & Justice has worked to support Farm to School programs nationwide, primarily as a clearinghouse for work that is done by others. The Center has described a number of different distribution models, provided references for how to put together farm to school programs, and has also collected important resources describing impact of farm to school programs on school districts and school children (see e.g., Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Salad Bar Program, <http://www.farmtoschool.org/ca/saladbareval.pdf>). One of the tools used in the California Farm to School program is implementing salad bars, which provide fresh fruits and vegetables. This model has been extensively studied and evaluated, with detailed information available on changes in sales for farmers, costs of purchasing salad bar equipment, changing the kitchen, setting up the salad bars, and changes in school meal purchases. (See, e.g., The Crunch Lunch Manual; Rethinking School Lunch)

Models of Farm to School Procurement

Success of Farm to School programs depends on getting farm products to the schools in a timely manner. In their October 2004 report to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Center for Food & Justice described the five models of food distribution they have observed within Farm to School programs. These include a forager model, wholesale, farmers market (direct sales), Department of Defense and cooperatives (Healthy Farms & Healthy Kids, October 2004). Each of these models is appropriate for a particular subset of schools and farmers, and it may be helpful for states to develop a number of alternative ways for produce procurement. Farmers and school food service personnel will need to adapt to each other to make these programs a success.

Forager Model. Foragers traditionally collected whatever food was available, covering a particular area in search of food items. Within the farm to school context, foraging is used to describe a third party organization that works with schools and farmers to find out what agricultural products are available from farmers and needed by school districts, and then to make the appropriate connections. This model is active in a number of settings including the Davis Joint Unified School District (Davis JUSD) in California and within Connecticut. The Davis JUSD relies on the Community Alliance for Family Farms to identify appropriate local sources for needed produce items. In Connecticut, the Hartford Food System and the Department of Agriculture have worked to assist school districts when they are seeking out a particular local agricultural item, and have worked to assist farmers when they have a crop, such as strawberries, that they want to sell to the schools.

The forager model has the benefit of making direct connections between farmers and schools. However, the forager has often been funded through grants, and the cost of the forager has not been carried by product sales. Farmers using this model can generally count on prices that are between wholesale and retail. Sales and quantities from this model vary significantly. Some of the variation is from menu differences that demand different levels of produce purchasing, variation is also due to differences in local growing seasons, different levels of commitment to purchasing local products and differences in number of students. The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District in California purchased \$41,901 worth of produce from 11 farmers between September 2000 and June 2001. The farmers averaged \$3,809.18 income during the 10 month school year, and total sales to individual farmers ranged from \$356 to \$17,854. However, in the Hannibal School District in New York, the purchases from farmers during the month of September 2003 were a total of \$1,340 from two farmers (Farmer Resource Guide, pp. 60-61).

Wholesale Model. Some farmers have a large enough volume that they are able to sell at a wholesale price, and still be profitable. Such farmers are then able to participate in the farm to school program without any extra work on their part. This model is most effective when there are local produce wholesalers that are already connected to schools. In the Hartford Food System's pilot Farm Fresh Start program from 1994-1996 they found the size of the Hartford School District made it difficult for farmers to deliver directly to the 35 schools in the district. Working through a local wholesaler, the Hartford School District was able to purchase primarily local products during the 16 weeks of the program. During an eleven week period in the fall of

1996, three schools purchased 76% of their produce budget through the Farm to School program. Details on the number of farmers involved and the average amount paid to each farmer are not available.

Direct Sales. Some schools go directly to farmers, either by asking an outside organization such as the state Department of Agriculture or a forager organization, or by identifying a local farmer independently. The economic impact of such sales is difficult to evaluate.

Department of Defense. Another model of procurement utilizes the Department of Defense produce buying system. In 1994 the Department of Defense began a pilot program in eight states (South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, New Hampshire, Florida, Texas, Maryland and South Carolina) where institutional buyers for schools, prisons and Indian reservations could purchase state grown produce from Department of Defense buyers. The program is currently operational in schools in New Mexico, Kentucky, North Carolina, Michigan, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia and New Jersey. Illinois and New York are in the process of developing a program (Department of Defense Produce Buying website, <http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/produce/school.htm>; Farm to School website, <http://www.farmtoschool.org/faq.htm#eight>). One of the benefits of this system is that schools can use commodity purchase funds for produce – they are given a certain credit, based on federal school meal guidelines, and then orders of produce are billed against the credit.

North Carolina has used the Department of Defense as a procurement and financial manager for farm to school purchases since 1997. This program began with a partnership between the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Department of Defense. The Food Distribution Division of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services surveys schools to determine the needed quantities of produce. The Department of Defense then works with the Markets Division to identify farmers and to procure the food. The Food Distribution Division picks up the produce and delivers it to the schools, and the Department of Defense bills the schools for payment and pays the farmers. (North Carolina Farm to School, National Farm to School website: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/nc/index.htm>) In 2002, 60 of the 117 school districts in North Carolina purchased food through this program. In the 2002 calendar year the Department of Defense purchased \$289,057.83 of fresh produce from approximately 30 farmers for the Farm to School program (<http://www.farmtoschool.org/nc/programs.htm>). Produce purchased included strawberries, fall

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decoration kits, pumpkins, blueberries, cantaloupe, watermelon, apples, cabbage, broccoli crowns, sweet potatoes, sweet potato chips, and tomatoes. (North Carolina Department of Agriculture, <http://www.ncagr.com/fooddist/Farm-to-School.html>).

Grower Collaboratives. Larger school districts have a high volume of produce purchases. Smaller farmers may not be able to provide the desired volume alone. There are several grower cooperatives across the country focusing on institutional and school customers.

Florida – New North Florida Cooperative was established in 1995 with the assistance of the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, Florida A&M University and the West Florida Resource Conservation and Development Council. This cooperative is made up of small farmers, and has been successful in providing reliable deliveries to schools and providing increased income for the farmer members. In 2002 the cooperative sold to 15 school districts in 3 states, and has purchased equipment to provide additional processing. It is clear that membership in the cooperative is a key part of the marketing strategy and the profitability of farmers. (“Taking it to the Next Level”, in Farmer Resource Guide, p. 66-77)

California – The Gold Coast Growers Collaborative has been established in collaboration with farmers and the Community Alliance for Family Farms, a nonprofit that has been working as a forager for farm to school programs. The collaborative will provide the procurement link between local growers and institutional buyers such as schools, colleges and other educational programs. (see “Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids”)

PlacerGROWN is a farmer collaborative in Placer County, California. The membership organization maintains a website with a directory of farmers, ranchers, and other interested parties. Consumers can identify and contact producers of specific products in their area. The organization has an annual newsletter and is working primarily as a marketing organization to build the markets for Placer County agricultural products. (www.placergrown.org).

In addition to the Gold Coast Growers Collaborative, in the Farm to School feasibility study conducted for the Monterey School District in 2003, the primary recommendation was to develop a collaborative of mid-size farmers that would work together with several school districts (“Smart Food”). It is still early to see the results in the Monterey School District.

School Food Policies

Viability of farm to school programs depends on a number of variables. From the education and policy side, increasing the demand from school food service personnel for fruit and vegetable products that are locally available is critical . Demand for local produce can increase in different ways:

1. Substitution of local produce for imported produce.
2. Increasing quantities of produce used in schools by offering salad bars, baked potato bars, open bins of fruits and vegetables (“Children Love...”)

To make marketing to schools a significant part of the business plan for New England farmers, it is likely that there will need to be a combination of menu changes within schools to increase fresh fruit and vegetable consumption, and state policy guidelines for school food service that emphasize the importance of purchasing local produce. School food service personnel are committed to providing healthy meals within the constraints of their budgets. Increasing the amount of local foods purchased by schools will be most effectively done by supporting the interest of school food service and educational personnel in local foods with policies emphasizing fresh, healthy meals in the schools.

There is a wide spectrum of policies that will affect demand for farm to school programs. Policies to improve the nutritional quality of foods available in schools can be explicitly linked to an emphasis on purchasing local foods, wherever possible. For example, the Seattle, Washington School District has passed and is in the process of implementing a nutrition policy. Included in the policy is the goal to “improve the quality, variety and appeal of food offered in the school meal program.” While the Seattle policy does not directly address local produce purchases, the policy of the Santa Monica School District in California does include the purchase of local produce as a continuing part of the school meals program.

Up to date information on policies being enacted in different states and school districts is somewhat difficult to obtain. There is a recent, thorough review in a working paper prepared by the Center for Food and Justice at Occidental College. This working paper describes policies and provides sample text from different states and levels of government. Over 40 different policy areas and suggestions are incorporated. (Healthy School Food Policies, 2002; <http://www.farmtoschool.org/policy.htm>)

Food Crops Produced in Connecticut

While Connecticut has a shorter growing season than California and Florida, and thus has more limited options for farm to school connections, there are still a wide range of fruit and vegetable crops that are available in Connecticut. These include apples, pears, peaches, strawberries, blueberries, melon, broccoli, lettuce, cabbages, cucumbers, potatoes, tomatoes, corn, squash, beans and pumpkins. School food service personnel have expressed interest in a number of these crops, and regularly purchase many of these items for use in their schools. With over 500,000 students, building connections between farms and schools in Connecticut could open a new market for local farmers.

Season Extension and Food Processing Capacity in Connecticut

In addition to increasing the demand from schools, it is also important for farmers to make changes to improve their ability to meet the needs of schools. States as diverse as Florida, Iowa, and California have mentioned that food processing capacity increases the potential for Farm to School programs. Washed and cut lettuce and greens are more easily utilized by schools, as are cut carrots, snipped green beans and husked and cut corn on the cob. In addition, season extending technology such as greenhouses and crop covers may also increase the availability of local products during the school year.

Conclusions

Connecticut has significant agricultural resources that could be utilized by school districts. Other states have managed to institutionalize the connections between farmers and schools in a way that benefits farmers economically and improves the nutritional quality of school meals. Action can be taken on a short term basis to encourage school districts to substitute Connecticut produce for imported produce, and on a longer term basis to increase the demand for fresh produce within the schools and improve the farmer capacity to meet the needs of the school food service.

Marketing relationships between farms and schools are complicated, and the experience of other farm to school programs show that the details of fiscal and delivery arrangements are critical. There are 166 school districts within Connecticut, and identifying appropriate marketing arrangements for interested districts is the next step. The farmer and school surveys that will be completed in the next few months should provide crucial information for making farm to school connections.

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School Meals from Connecticut Farms

Report on Connecticut Farm to School Surveys

Prepared by Debbie Humphries, PhD, MPH

For The Hartford Food System
and
The Connecticut Department of Agriculture

December 2005

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1) Introduction.

In 2004 the Connecticut State Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Hartford Food System, received a grant from the USDA Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program. This grant is to increase the Farm to School capacity within the State of Connecticut. Farm to School programs work to incorporate food from local farms into school meals and also to provide educational materials to increase student awareness of nutrition and agricultural issues. This report is part of an economic feasibility study conducted in Connecticut, to investigate farm to school potential. The final report will incorporate a background report on Farm to School Programs in Connecticut and other states, a survey of farmers and schools, and will investigate possible pathways to economic feasibility of the Farm to School program. This report covers the survey of farmers and schools and identifies possible structures for the Farm to School program.

2) Methodology

Three surveys were developed, tested and sent out. The Farmer survey covered questions of products available, delivery and processing capabilities, and pricing mechanisms (wholesale, retail or a combination). The School survey covered equipment available, menu planning and food purchasing, produce items purchased, and motivation, concerns and barriers to purchasing local products. The District survey covered information similar to the school survey.

- a) Farmer Survey. The Farmer survey was mailed to 130 farmers, from a list compiled by the Hartford Food System. This was a combination of farmers known to be selling products to schools (11), organic farmers (30), small farms (38) and wholesale farmers (51). The response rate was highest among farmers already participating in selling foods to schools (5/11), next among organic farmers (9/30), followed by a very low response rate among small farmers (5/38) and wholesale farmers (6/51). The list was not random, and we cannot assume that the responses are representative of Connecticut farmers. However, we can use the interest of the farmers that responded and their concerns in moving forward with the program, to identify possible frameworks for the program. Because of the important differences in practices for different size farms, we divided the farms into three sizes – small (<5 acres), medium (5-25 acres) and large (>25 acres).
- b) School Survey. The School survey was mailed to 178 randomly selected schools. In addition, the survey was e-mailed to the Connecticut State Department of Education

School Child Nutrition e-mail distribution list. Of the 26 responses, 9 were from the mailing (9/178 – 5%), and 17 were from the e-mail appeal (1000+ - specific number not known). Thus the school response, in addition to being quite low, is actually a response from all the schools, rather than a subsample. We wanted to consider whether there were differences in produce purchases and use for different school levels. However, it was difficult to separate schools. A number of responses were from schools that combined different levels such as combination elementary schools and middle schools, and others were stand alone elementary, middle or high schools. We divided schools into four categories – elementary schools (ES=8 schools), elementary and middle (combined elementary and middle and middle alone ES/MS= 7 schools), middle and high (combined middle and high and high alone MS/HS=8 schools), and schools with all twelve grades (ES/MS/HS=3 schools, all small private schools).

c) District Survey. The District survey was mailed to 159 districts and also e-mailed to the Connecticut State Department of Education School Child Nutrition e-mail distribution list. There were 70 district surveys returned for a response rate of 44%. There are an estimated 527,000 students enrolled in Connecticut public schools, and survey responses covered over 300,000 students. Because of the variation in size, we divided the districts into four categories (<1500, 1501-3000, 3001-6000, and >6000), based on the number of students.

3) Most Commonly Used Produce Items. Districts and schools were asked the question “What were the top 6 FRESH PRODUCE purchases you made in 2003-2004?” The intention was to determine which products were more likely to be purchased in a high enough volume to be profitable to farmers. The list was very similar for schools and districts, as would be expected (See Table 1). The most commonly purchased produce item was apples, followed by lettuce and tomatoes. Of the districts responding, 87% reported that apples were one of the top six items and 80% reported purchasing tomatoes as one of the top 6 items.

Table 1. Top Produce Purchases as a percentage of respondents

Schools	Apples	Lettuce	Tomatoes	Cucumbers	Oranges	Carrots	Bananas	Peppers	Potatoes
ES (8)	75.0	62.5	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	12.5	37.5	25.0
ES-MS (7)	71.4	42.9	42.9	28.6	42.9	14.3	28.6	0.0	0.0
MS-HS (8)	87.5	75.0	75.0	50.0	37.5	50.0	37.5	25.0	25.0
ES-HS (3)	0.0	100.0	100.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	33.3	66.7
All	72.0	68.0	64.0	48.0	44.0	36.0	24.0	24.0	24.0

Districts									
<1500 (18)	72.2	66.7	61.1	61.1	61.1	33.3	16.7	22.2	
1501-3000 (17)	94.1	76.5	76.5	35.3	70.6	52.9	11.8	41.2	
3001-6000 (19)	89.5	73.7	94.7	73.7	57.9	52.6	36.8	26.3	
>6000 (16)	93.8	87.5	78.5	31.3	68.8	56.3	37.5	25.0	
All	87.1	75.7	80.0	51.4	64.3	48.6	25.7	28.6	

Districts and schools were also asked “What were the top 6 PREPARED PRODUCE purchases you made in 2003-2004?” Here there were fewer districts and schools that reported purchasing prepared produce, though 50% of the districts and 44% of the schools did report purchasing shredded lettuce, and 20% of the schools and 43% of the districts reported purchasing salad mix. The other primary prepared items were baby carrots and cut celery.

Table 2. Top Processed Produce Items

Schools		Shredded Lettuce	Baby Carrots	Cut Celery	Salad Mix
ES (8)		25.0	50.0	37.5	25.0
ES-MS (7)		57.1	14.3	42.9	14.3
MS-HS (8)		37.5	25.0	12.5	25.0
ES-HS (3)		66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
All		44.0	28.0	28.0	20.0
Districts					
<1500 (18)		44.4	38.9	27.8	38.9
1501-3000 (17)		35.3	41.2	17.6	52.9
3001-6000 (19)		57.9	47.4	47.4	47.4
>6000 (16)		62.5	31.3	37.5	31.3
All		50.0	40.0	32.9	42.9

4) Characteristics of Farms. Twenty five farmers responded to the survey. Using the different size categories we looked at whether different size farmers were more likely to have different products and pricing and delivery practices (See Table 3A).

a) Currently Selling to Schools. Eight farmers (out of 25) responded that they are currently selling products to schools. More large farmers supplied schools than small farmers (57% vs. 10%), and the proportion of mid-size farmers was in between the two. This suggests that for purposes of the Farm to School program, it is most important to target medium and large farms, those over at least 5 acres.

Table 3A. Farm Characteristics

	Small	Medium	Large	All
Products Available				
Apples	0.0%	37.5%	42.9%	24.0%
Pears	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	8.0%
Potatoes	20.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.0%
Cider	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	4.0%
Can Expand	30.0%	87.5%	85.7%	64.0%
Can Deliver	20.0%	87.5%	100.0%	64.0%
Pricing Structure				
Wholesale	10.0%	75.0%	85.7%	52.0%
Retail	60.0%	25.0%	14.3%	36.0%
Selling to Schools	10.0%	37.5%	57.1%	32.0%

b) Common Products. The most common products farmers mentioned were apples, followed by peaches, pears, tomatoes, lettuce, onions and peppers (See Table 3B). Ten farmers grow apples, six grow peaches and another six grow tomatoes, five grow pears, potatoes, peppers and squash, four grow strawberries and cucumbers, and three farmers reported growing lettuce, beans, and blueberries. Six farmers reported growing “vegetables,” and their response could not be categorized. Table 3B focuses on products that schools have expressed an interest in, to see how much overlap and potential supply there is. We asked whether farmers could expand their farming operation for farm to school programs. Sixteen farmers responded that they could. Of these 16, three were small (30%) and thirteen were medium and large (87% & 86% respectively).

Table 3B. Farm Products

Farm Size	Lettuce	Tomatoes	Apples	Pears	Strawberries	Potatoes	Cucumbers	Peppers
Small	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Medium	0.0%	25.0%	62.5%	0.0%	12.5%	37.5%	25.0%	25.0%
Large	14.3%	28.6%	71.4%	71.4%	28.6%	0.0%	14.3%	28.6%
All	12.0%	24.0%	40.0%	20.0%	16.0%	20.0%	16.0%	20.0%

c) Delivery and Processing Available. Only three farmers responded that they do value-added processing, but sixteen reported having the equipment and personnel to deliver to schools. Almost all of the medium and large farms reported delivery capabilities, while only 20% of the small farms could.

d) Pricing Structure. A number of the farmers (12/26) use wholesale pricing. Again, it is the medium and large farmers that use wholesale pricing. Eight farmers use retail pricing, three did not respond to the question, one uses both wholesale and retail depending on point of sale, and the last one uses another method of pricing but did not elaborate. Wholesale pricing is important as it increases the likelihood the farmer can provide competitive prices for schools.

5) Characteristics of Districts and Schools. We expect that elementary schools, middle schools and high schools will offer different foods. In fact, when we asked districts about whether menus vary, the most common variation they described was differences between the elementary schools and upper grades.

a) Schools.

Equipment. In order to prepare fresh produce, schools need to have onsite food preparation and access to appropriate equipment, such as refrigerators and freezers. Table 4A shows that few schools have salad bars. Salad bars, because of the emphasis on fresh produce, increase the volume of produce schools use. It is important to note that half the middle and high school category have salad bars (4/8).

Menu Planning, ordering and delivery. For schools to purchase local items, it is helpful for them to plan their own menus, order their own produce and have it delivered to them. Unfortunately, of the schools that responded, over 60% reported that their districts have centralized ordering (Table 4A). This makes it difficult for individual schools to decide to use local produce. However, 54% develop their own menus on site, which allows opportunity to incorporate available seasonal foods.

Table 4A. Characteristics of Schools

	Onsite Prep	Freezer	salad bar	central ordering	site menus
ES (8)	87.5%	100.0%	12.5%	75.0%	62.5%
ES&MS (7)	71.4%	100.0%	28.6%	57.1%	28.6%
MS&HS (8)	87.5%	87.5%	50.0%	62.5%	50.0%
ES,MS,HS(3)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	100.0%
All	73.1%	84.6%	26.9%	65.4%	53.8%

b) Districts. Seventy districts out of 163 districts in the state responded to the survey.

Menu Planning, ordering and delivery. For districts that are interested in local purchases it will be easier if there is centralized ordering and menu planning. Table 4B shows that 50-69% of the districts have centralized ordering, and 61-100% use district menu planning.

If an individual school is going to initiate local purchase it is important that they have relative autonomy over their menu and ordering. Table 4B also shows that 20-33% of the districts have decentralized ordering and 11-28% develop their own menus.

Another concern that was expressed by a few farmers and districts is whether the farmer will be able to deliver to all the schools. One large farmer specified that he would have to deliver to one site. For those farmers that want a central delivery point, it will most likely be best for districts that have some capacity for delivering to schools themselves. If farmers are able to deliver to multiple sites, it will work best for smaller districts where there are fewer delivery points. Just over half the districts use central ordering.

Table 4B. Characteristics of Districts

	Central Orders	Decentral Orders	District delivers	District Menus	Site Menus	Menus Vary
<1500 (18)	50.0%	33.3%	5.6%	61.1%	27.8%	44.4%
1501-3000 (17)	52.9%	29.4%	17.6%	82.4%	11.8%	100.0%
3001-6000 (19)	68.4%	21.1%	26.3%	89.5%	21.1%	42.1%
>6000 (16)	50.0%	31.3%	37.5%	100.0%	12.5%	75.0%
All (70)	55.7%	28.6%	21.4%	82.9%	18.6%	78.6%

c) Suppliers. There are ten suppliers that a number of schools and districts purchase from (See Table 4C). There are also a number of suppliers that were mentioned by one or two schools or districts. Several of the top ten suppliers are local businesses who may be amenable to tracking and reporting local purchases for schools. This option should be pursued, as it would allow schools to intentionally purchase local produce without adding an additional agent (the farmer) to the list of those they work with.

Table 4C. Top Suppliers

Supplier	District	Schools
*Fowler	10	3
?G&A	5	
*Mancarella	2	2
*Michaels	5	3
*Pezello Bros	5	
?PFG Springfield	4	
Sysco	11	6
*Thurstons	25	11
Vistar	9	3

*Local company; ?Not sure

6) Likelihood of purchasing local items. In addition to asking about current practices and equipment, we also asked both school and district respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “I would purchase food directly from a local producer (grower/farmer) if price and quality were competitive and a source was available.” Table 5A shows that if quality and price were competitive most of the schools (85%) and districts (88.6%) strongly agreed or agreed that they would purchase local products.

Table 5A. Purchase if Competitive Price and Quality

District	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Uncertain
<1500 (18)	44.4%	44.4%	0.0%	5.6%	5.6%
1501-3000 (17)	70.6%	23.5%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%
3001-6000 (19)	63.2%	21.1%	5.3%	0.0%	10.5%
>6000 (16)	62.5%	25.0%	6.3%	0.0%	6.3%
All	60.0%	28.6%	2.9%	1.4%	7.1%
Schools					
ES (8)	62.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
ES-MS (7)	57.1%	28.6%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%
MS-HS (8)*	62.5%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
ES-HS (3)	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
All	61.5%	23.1%	0.0%	0.0%	11.5%

*One School did not respond to the question, so percentages do not add up.

Since we are aware that at times local products are more expensive, we also asked school and district respondents whether “My program would be willing to pay a higher price to buy locally produced foods to serve in cafeterias.” As shown in Table 5B, most of the respondents disagreed with, strongly disagreed with, or were uncertain about this question. Interestingly, no schools strongly agreed with the statement, but some districts did, indicating a district

commitment to local produce, and a likelihood that they would purchase locally. [Check Table 5B with free and reduced price information.]

Table 5B. Would Pay a Higher Price

District	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Uncertain
<1500 (18)	11.1%	16.7%	16.7%	22.2%	33.3%
1501-3000 (17)	11.8%	17.6%	29.4%	5.9%	35.3%
3001-6000 (19)	21.1%	10.5%	15.8%	15.8%	36.8%
>6000 (16)	0.0%	31.3%	31.3%	12.5%	25.0%
All	11.4%	18.6%	22.9%	14.3%	32.9%
Schools					
ES (8)	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	62.5%
ES-MS (7)	0.0%	28.6%	14.3%	28.6%	28.6%
MS-HS (8)*	0.0%	25.0%	37.5%	25.0%	0.0%
ES-HS (3)	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%
All	3.8%	19.2%	19.2%	26.9%	26.9%

*One School did not respond to the question, so percentages do not add up.

7) Top Wanted Produce Items. Schools and Districts were asked to choose from a list of Connecticut grown products those local foods they would be interested in purchasing. The most common foods were lettuce, apples, tomatoes and cucumbers (See Table 6). These foods are also the top four items on the list of most commonly purchased items (See Table 1). There appears to be significant interest from Connecticut school food service personnel in purchasing products that are grown in Connecticut. The key question is how to make the purchase, delivery and payment system smooth and economically viable. Crop budgets available from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst website for (http://www.umassvegetable.org/food_farming_systems/crop_production_budgets/) make it clear that lettuce is most consistently profitable, in terms of net revenues per acre. Tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes all depend on the wholesale price at time of sale and the yield per acre. According to the crop budgets from Rutgers University (which are now in the process of being revised and are no longer available on-line) profitability of apples, strawberries and peaches is also marginal. Thus farmers who make a direct connection to a school district and are able to sell a sufficient volume at slightly above wholesale, may find it beneficial financially.

Table 6. Desired Produce Items

Schools	Lettuce	Tomatoes	Apples	Pears	Strawberries	Potatoes	Cucumbers	Onions	Peppers
ES (8)	62.5%	50.0%	62.5%	50.0%	37.5%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	37.5%
ES-MS (7)	57.1%	71.4%	57.1%	57.1%	71.4%	14.3%	57.1%	28.6%	42.9%
MS-HS (8)	87.5%	87.5%	75.0%	37.5%	50.0%	75.0%	87.5%	50.0%	50.0%
ES-HS (3)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	66.7%	66.7%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

All (26)	73.1%	73.1%	69.2%	50.0%	53.8%	46.2%	69.2%	42.3%	50.0%
Districts									
<1500 (18)	50.0%	83.3%	83.3%	50.0%	44.4%	50.0%	61.1%	44.4%	55.6%
1501-3000 (17)	70.6%	88.2%	94.1%	52.9%	76.5%	47.1%	82.4%	70.6%	64.7%
3001-6000 (19)	63.2%	78.9%	84.2%	78.9%	52.6%	57.9%	68.4%	63.2%	73.7%
>6000 (16)	87.5%	87.5%	93.8%	87.5%	81.3%	37.5%	81.3%	68.8%	75.0%
All (70)	67.1%	84.3%	88.6%	67.1%	62.9%	48.6%	72.9%	61.4%	67.1%

8) Motivations, Concerns, Barriers. In order to prepare materials to work with schools and districts on Farm to School issues, it is important to understand the perceptions and concerns of school food service personnel. We asked three questions designed to investigate motivations to serve local products, concerns about purchasing local produce, and barriers to serving local produce.

a) Motivations. We asked both school and district personnel “what would motivate you to serve locally grown or processed foods in your cafeteria?” The most common responses from schools and districts were to support the local economy and local community (See Table 7A). For schools, the next most common response was to get a higher quality food. For districts, the next most common response was to get access to fresher food. Both the school and the district responses make it clear that food service personnel value local products, and they are aware that local products are generally fresher and of a higher quality.

Table 7A. What would Motivate you to serve local foods

Schools	Support Local	Increase F&V	Help CT	Fresher	Quality	Good PR
ES (8)	50.0%	62.5%	50.0%	37.5%	50.0%	50.0%
ES-MS (7)	57.1%	28.6%	42.9%	42.9%	57.1%	42.9%
MS-HS (8)	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	62.5%	50.0%	50.0%
ES-HS (3)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	66.7%
All (26)	57.7%	53.8%	53.8%	53.8%	57.7%	50.0%
Districts						
<1500 (18)	77.8%	44.4%	61.1%	61.1%	44.4%	50.0%
1501-3000 (17)	82.4%	47.4%	76.5%	64.7%	52.9%	70.6%
3001-6000 (19)	84.2%	52.6%	78.9%	78.9%	52.6%	63.2%
>6000 (16)	100.0%	62.5%	56.3%	87.5%	87.5%	56.3%
All (70)	80.0%	54.3%	68.6%	72.9%	58.6%	60.0%

b) Concerns about Purchasing Local Foods. In addition to asking about motivations to serve local products, we also asked schools and districts “what concerns do you have with regard to purchasing locally produced foods?” Here both schools and districts were most concerned about the cost (See Table 7B). There was also some

concern about the reliability of the supply – could local farmers be a reliable source of produce. Other common concerns included delivery considerations and quality.

Table 7B. Concerns about local foods

	Safety	Reliability	Consistency	Volume	Delivery	Cost	Quality
Schools							
ES (8)	12.5%	37.5%	0.0%	25.0%	62.5%	75.0%	25.0%
ES-MS (7)	42.9%	57.1%	57.1%	42.9%	71.4%	85.7%	42.9%
MS-HS (8)	37.5%	37.5%	50.0%	37.5%	37.5%	87.5%	62.5%
ES-HS (3)	66.7%	66.7%	33.3%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%	100.0%
All	34.6%	46.2%	34.6%	34.6%	57.7%	84.6%	50.0%
Districts							
<1500 (18)	50.0%	61.1%	22.2%	44.4%	44.4%	61.1%	33.3%
1501-3000 (17)	47.1%	58.8%	35.3%	35.3%	70.6%	82.4%	35.3%
3001-6000 (19)	26.3%	57.9%	26.3%	47.4%	84.2%	68.4%	26.3%
>6000 (16)	56.3%	87.5%	56.3%	50.0%	62.5%	75.0%	43.8%
All	44.3%	65.7%	34.3%	44.3%	65.7%	71.4%	34.3%

c) Barriers to Purchasing Local Foods. We also asked districts and schools “what barriers currently stop you from purchasing foods directly from local producers?” Both schools and districts identified the lack of local products available during certain times of the year (seasonality) as a key barrier (see Table 7C). Other identified barriers included a lack of local producers in the area from whom to purchase, and budget constraints.

Table 7C. Barriers to purchasing local foods

	No Producers	Seasonality	Budget	Convenience	Lack Facilities	Staffing	Policies
Schools							
ES (8)	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%
ES-MS (7)	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%	14.3%	14.3%
MS-HS (8)	50.0%	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
ES-HS (3)	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%
All	26.9%	38.5%	30.8%	23.1%	15.4%	11.5%	15.4%
Districts							
<1500 (18)	55.6%	55.6%	27.8%	22.2%	33.3%	33.3%	11.1%
1501-3000 (17)	52.9%	64.7%	29.4%	23.5%	17.6%	23.5%	0.0%
3001-6000 (19)	57.9%	63.2%	21.1%	36.8%	26.3%	26.3%	10.5%
>6000 (16)	50.0%	62.5%	31.3%	31.3%	25.0%	25.0%	31.3%
All	54.3%	61.4%	27.1%	28.6%	25.7%	27.1%	12.9%

9) Potential Farm to School Pathways. For this project to be economically viable, schools and districts will need to have a supply route that matches their needs. The variety of concerns and practices suggests that multiple pathways for connecting farmers and schools will be necessary. Some farmers may be able to work directly with schools and others will be better served by going through a wholesaler.

a) Pathway A: Direct Connection, centralized delivery. For the program to make a contribution to farmer incomes through direct connections, farmers need to sell a significant amount of product to the schools. This will require that a farmer be matched with enough school districts to purchase a sufficient portion of their product. The proportion available for farm to school will vary with farm size and management practices. Some farmers will want to deliver to one central location. This will most likely work best for districts with centralized menu planning and delivery capability. Table 8 shows that 14 of the districts interested in Farm to School (agree or strongly agree to question in 6A above) have these characteristics.

b) Pathway B: Direct Connection, decentralized delivery. Farmers that are willing to deliver to schools will be best matched with districts without too many schools (we used less than 10). Also, if farmers are delivering to individual schools, it may work best for districts where schools are in control of menus. Table 8 shows that only 6 of the districts meet these characteristics.

c) Pathway C: Wholesale Purchases. For farmers who are already going through a wholesaler, and school districts that cannot feasibly work directly with a farmer, the schools could choose to indicate to the wholesaler a preference for Connecticut Grown produce. This model would follow up on the Farm Fresh Start pilot program of the Hartford Food System, where Fowler & Hunting provided tracking on the invoices of which products were Connecticut Grown. This pathway will work for the most schools, though it will be more difficult for farmers and food service personnel to be aware of a Farm to School connection.

Table 8. Districts for Potential Farm to School Pathways

	<1500 (18)	1501-3000 (17)	3001-6000 (19)	>6000 (16)	All
Pathway A	1	2	5	6	14
Pathway B	2	1	3	2	8
Pathway C	15	12	11	8	46

10) Conclusions and Recommendations.

Based on the results of the surveys, there appears to be significant interest from both schools and districts in purchasing local products. In addition, farmers are interested in developing schools as an additional market. There are clear concerns from districts and schools about local purchases, including cost and a reliable supply, which will need to be kept in mind as the program moves forward. Some food service personnel also reported difficulty finding out what was currently ripe in Connecticut.

We suggest three different areas on which to work: (1) direct connections between farms and school districts, with a focus on districts identified through the survey; (2) wholesaler connections where wholesalers provide a Connecticut Grown section on the school produce invoices; and (3) a “what’s ripe in Connecticut” update from the Department of Agriculture that could be e-mailed to the food service list serve on a regular basis.