



# The USDA Farm to School Census: 2019

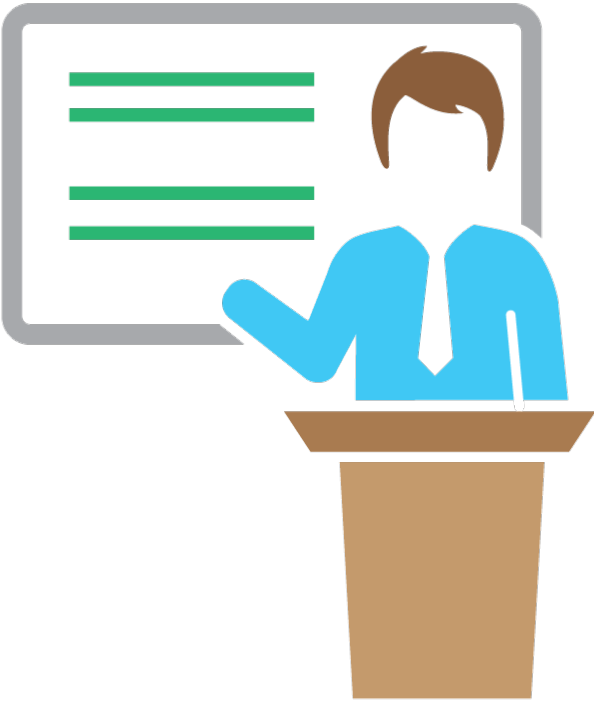


**Robert Ek, Program Analyst, USDA Food and Nutrition Service**

**Rachel Spencer, Regional Lead**



# Goals for Today



- Quickly Review Background and Purpose of the Farm to School Census
- Provide an Update on the Status of Farm to School Census Data Collection
- Highlight Useful Activities for Preparing School Feeding Authority Officers



*The Secretary shall provide technical assistance and information to assist eligible schools, State and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, and nonprofit entities—*

*“(A) to facilitate the coordination and sharing of information and resources in the Department that may be applicable to the farm to school program;*

*“(B) to collect and share information on best practices;*

*and*

*“(C) to disseminate research and data on existing farm to school programs and the potential for programs in underserved areas.*

**- Section 18 (g)(7) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act**



# The 2019 Farm to School Census



- Q. What is the Farm to School Census?**
  
- Q. Why is USDA conducting the Farm to School Census?**
  
- Q. Have there been other Farm to School Census Reports?**



## Who is participating in the Farm to School Census?

- Every School District receiving National School Lunch Program (NSLP) funding should complete the Census.
  - Public Schools
  - Charter Schools
  - Not-for-Profit Private Schools
  - RCCIs

**NOTE:** Even if a district did not conduct any Farm to School activities in SY2018-2019, their completion of the census is still important for the most accurate report of total Nationwide activity.

[Farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov](https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov)



## How Is the Census Used?

- Academic Research
- Policy Making
- Promoting Local Food Procurement
- Educate Families on their School's Support for Local Food
- Schools Applying for Farm to School Grants
- USDA uses Farm to School Census data for future planning



**FNS will conduct a third Census in 2019 to further assess the nationwide impact of farm to school activities over time.**

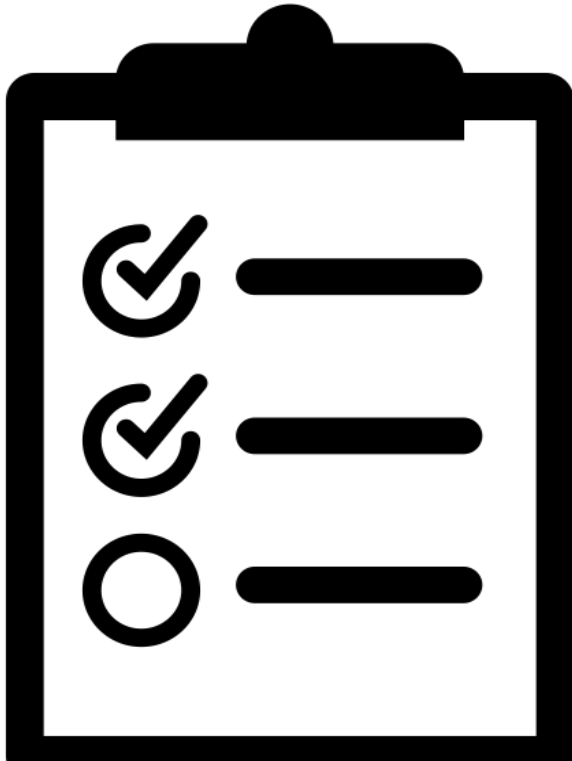
*The Census will survey all public, private, and charter SFAs operating the National School Lunch Program in all 50 states, as well as Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Washington D.C.*



## Where do we go from here?

- **JUNE 2019** - USDA begins Advance Outreach for Census to core School Lunch Partners
- **JULY 2019** - USDA conducts outreach to other relevant partners
- **AUGUST 2019** - Abt Associates begins contacting SFAs directly regarding Census
- **Early-SEPTEMBER 2019** - Abt Associates will contact SFAs directly via e-mail with unique links to the individual survey form
- **Early November 2019** – Data Collection Ends
- **Winter 2020** – Abt completes Data Analysis
- **Spring 2020** – Census Data Released Online





check list by Julynn B. from the Noun Project

## New Features for 2019 Farm to School Census

New features are being introduced to make completing the Farm to School Census easier:

- **USDA** is working with **Abt Associates** to conduct the Farm to School Census and analyze collected data.
- The Farm to School Census will be completed online and respondents can save progress and complete the survey at a later time.
- A toll-free technical support hotline will be available for respondents in addition to dedicated email inbox.

## PLEASE KEEP IN MIND ...

- ✓ “Farm to School” Covers a Spectrum of Activity
- ✓ Identify and Enlist Relevant Stakeholders Early
- ✓ Pre-Work Cuts Down on Guess-Work



OFFICE of  
**COMMUNITY**  
FOOD SYSTEMS



## Common Errors or Misunderstandings

- School Gardens – a Farm to School activity - can be **undercounted**, especially if they are not providing products used in school cafeterias
- Uncertainty regarding the definition of “local”
- Some SFA officers are **unaware of Farm to School activities** going on **outside the school lunch/breakfast procurement chain**

**EVEN SFAs NOT DOING ANY FARM TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ARE IMPORTANT**

## What type of information is needed for the Census?

- The SFA's definition of local;
- The amount of money spent on local purchases;
- the most common products purchased locally;
- the sources of local products;
- benefits and challenges of participating in farm to school;
- the number and use of edible school gardens within the SFA; and,
- the number of salad bars within an SFA.





## What can States do to prepare?



- Promote participation in the Census early – start notifying your SFAs now!
- Prep SFAs – share the “Pre-Work” Sheet with SFAs so they can begin gathering materials, aggregating, and analyzing data
  - Make sure SFAs know that they will be contacted by Abt Associates
- Share data! – Do you collect data on school gardens, salad bars, ag-education or other farm to school activities? Share that data with your SFAs in advance of the Census



## Will answers be publicly available?

- Yes. FNS will post SFAs' responses on a Census website and include findings in subsequent reports in 2020
- Summaries will be posted online and the full Census datasets for all three Farm to School Census projects will be available
- Census Data will available in Microsoft Excel format



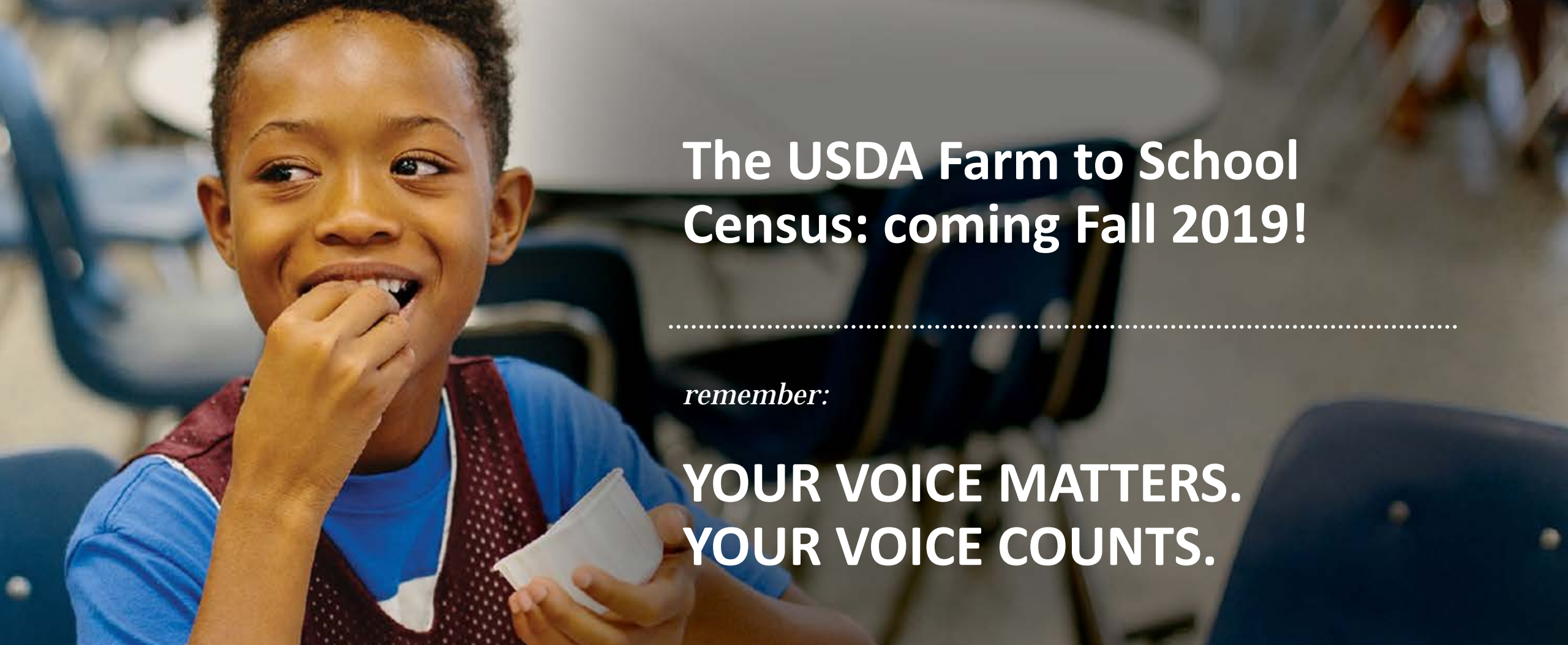
## Where can you get more info?

- For more information about the Census and farm to school in general, check out our website:

[www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool)

- Reach out to your USDA Farm to School Lead!

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/usda-farm-school-staff>



# The USDA Farm to School Census: coming Fall 2019!

---

*remember:*

**YOUR VOICE MATTERS.  
YOUR VOICE COUNTS.**