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FARM TO SCHOOL ADVOCACY

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NATIONAL
FARM to SCHOOL
NETWORK

GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER

The National Farm to School Network is an information, advocacy and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing and food and agriculture education into school systems and preschools.

There are several federal laws that impact the farm to school community including the Farm Bill, the Child Nutrition Act (or Child Nutrition Reauthorization) and the Food Safety Modernization Act. Many states have legislation to support farm to school efforts too. Each of us has an important voice that can help shape smart policy. This fact sheet offers ideas for **how you can get involved** in informing and advocating for policy that supports farm to school.

Get involved and tell your story

Policy makers are looking for information from their constituents. Is a law being drafted or revised? Are your elected officials trying to decide what programs to fund? Throughout all stages of the policy process, elected officials need to know what's going on in the communities they represent. You are a constituent with an important story to tell and a vote.

Got five minutes? Start building a relationship with your elected officials.

- **Who represents you?** Visit www.votesmart.org for names and contact information for all elected officials representing your community.
- **Call your legislator** Phone calls matter! Introduce yourself, make your request to a person or to a voicemail and be polite. Send a follow-up email thanking them for their time, reiterate your request and provide additional information.
- **Email your legislator** Just like a phone call, make your email personal and be specific about what you are asking your legislator to do and explain why your request is important. An email is also a great way to start building a relationship with your legislator and their staff, even if you don't have a specific request.
- **Tweet your legislator** Most elected officials are on Twitter, and unlike phone calls and emails, many manage their own Twitter accounts. Twitter can be a great way to get the direct attention of the people who represent you.
- **Add all of your elected officials to your mailing list.** Keep them informed.

Got more than five minutes? You are an expert in your field, so share your work. Invite your legislator...

- to tour a farm with school children
- to serve lunch to children in a school cafeteria: "Legislator in the lunchroom"
- to work with children in a school garden
- to cook with children in a classroom

All of these are great photo opportunities. Snap them and share them!



Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization (CNR)

What's CNR?

Roughly every five years, Congress renews the Child Nutrition Act in a process known as the Child Nutrition Reauthorization, or CNR for short. This bill authorizes many key child nutrition programs and includes policies that impact school meals and child nutrition including:

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
- Afterschool Snack and Meals Program
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP)
- Special Milk Program
- Farm to School Grant Program

The Basics

The current Child Nutrition Act (the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010) expires on September 30, 2015. Congressional committees will begin discussing the bill in 2014 and continue into 2015, making these important years for all farm to school stakeholders to communicate with Congress regarding what is important to include in the 2015 CNR.



Who are the key decision makers? All members of Congress (Senators and Representatives) will vote on the new bill, however, the work starts in committees:

- Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
- House Education and the Workforce Committee

Visit these committee websites (www.agriculture.senate.gov and www.edworkforce.house.gov) to see if a Senator or Representative from your state or district is on one of these committees.

Note: Committee assignments change so check in periodically. If your elected officials are on these committees, share your farm to school story with them. Did you receive a USDA Farm to School Grant? Let them know what it helped you achieve.



CNR and Farm to School

The National Farm to School Network and our partners worked hard to win \$5 million per year in mandatory funding for the USDA Farm to School Grant Program in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. That was a huge victory and one to build on. Let's make the 2015 CNR one that further supports and strengthens farm to school initiatives!

What You Can Do Today

As the process moves forward, there will be opportunities for you to tell your members of Congress what is needed and why farm to school matters in your state and community. You can make calls, send letters and invite your legislators to be part of farm to school activities. Getting involved in the shaping of CNR is a great opportunity to advocate for the health of our nation's children. Visit www.farmtoschool.org to learn more and get involved!

Local policies matter too!

Is farm to school included in your school district's local wellness policy? Does the school district's nutrition services/business department have a procurement policy that includes local food procurement language? What about the school district's fundraising policies? Important policy change and support for farm to school happens locally too.