

How Food Service Managers Can Get Involved with Farm-to-School

■ Contact Katie Strack, *Oklahoma Farm to School Program Administrator*

OK Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry,
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405/990-6372, Katie.Strack@ag.ok.gov
www.okfarmtoschool.com

■ Get a copy of *The Oklahoma Farm-To-School Report* and *The Oklahoma Food Connection 2005: A Directory of Agricultural Producers, Crops and Institutional Buyers*.

Oklahoma Food Policy Council
c/o Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, PO Box 588,
Poteau, OK 74953. (918) 647-9123.
Farm-To-School Report, www.kerrcenter.com/publications/Farm-to-School_report.pdf
The Food Connection, www.kerrcenter.com/publications/food_connection06.pdf

Make sure your school district is listed in *The Food Connection*.

Check *The Food Connection* to see what items farmers are growing in your area.
<http://sde.state.ok.us/home/defaultns.html>

■ Learn more about the many great farm-to-school programs taking place around the country by checking out these organizations and publications:

ATTRA – National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service.
PO Box 3657, Fayetteville, AR 72702. 1(800) 346-9140.

Bringing Local Food to Local Institutions: A Resource Guide for Farm-to-School and Farm-to-Institution Programs.
www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/farmtoschool.html

Community Food Security Coalition
PO Box 209, Venice, CA 90294. (310) 822-5410.
www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_school.html

Rethinking School Lunch
Center for Ecoliteracy,
2528 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702
Food and Health: Rethinking School Lunch Guide
www.ecoliteracy.org/programs/pdf/rethinking_food-health.pdf
Procurement: Rethinking School Lunch Guide www.ecoliteracy.org/programs/pdf/rethinking_procurement.pdf

■ Work with school principals and PTA. Ask for parent volunteers to assist with kitchen prep of fresh produce, or in planning and coordinating hands-on nutrition education activities, such as food tastings, cooking activities, farmer visits and school gardens. Members of your school's Health Advisory Committee may be able to help. To learn about some great working models of these type activities, take a look at these resources:

Cooking with Kids
3508 Camino Jalisco. Santa Fe, NM 87507.
www.freenewmexican.com/news/13629.html

Feeding Young Minds: Hands-on Farm-to-School Education Programs.

Community Food Security Coalition,
www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html#feeding

Slow Food USA
Slow Food in Schools, 20 Jay Street - Suite 313, Brooklyn, NY 11201. (718)260-8000.
www.slowfoodusa.org/education/

■ Make the connection with local farmers

1. Contact Farm to School Administrator to help find a farmer in your area.
2. Using the *Food Connection* as a reference, contact a few farmers to inquire about the availability of specific produce items for use in your school meal programs.
3. Request from each farmer a list of produce grown, showing typical periods of availability during the school year. Many crops normally harvested in the spring and summer months can also be grown in Oklahoma for harvest in the fall and early winter. Just ask the farmers to indicate which produce could be available during the periods Aug. – Dec., Dec. – Mar., Mar.- May, and also May – Aug. if you have summer feeding programs.
4. Upon reviewing the lists of available produce, estimate the approximate volumes used weekly for each item in which you're interested.





5. Arrange appointments to meet with farmers to gather information about possible quantities available, grading, packaging, delivery, pricing and payment. Use this information to help create appropriate product specifications. To ensure the freshest product possible, consider using a “days from harvest” requirement in your product specs.

6. Obtain price quotes for produce items as you specify, in order to get the freshest product at the best price.

Find out about the Department of Defense (DoD) Farm-to-School Program, which allows schools to order Oklahoma-grown produce through a special DoD program. Contact Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Commodity Distribution and School Nutrition, 405-521-6079.

Other Useful Resources:

5 A Day for Food Service

Produce for Better Health Foundation, 5341 Limestone Rd., Wilmington, DE 19808, (302) 235-2329
www.5aday.org/html/industry/foodservice.php

Community Food Security Coalition

Distribution Models for Farm to School
www.foodsecurity.org/f2s_distribution_method.pdf
DoD Farm-to-School Program – Frequently Asked Questions
www.foodsecurity.org/dod_f2s.pdf

Healthy School Meals Resource System

USDA's Team Nutrition, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 632, Alexandria, VA 22302. (703)305-1624.
Healthy School Meals, Recipes and Cooking Tips for Food Service
www.schoolmeals.nal.usda.gov/Industry/tips.html

USDA-Agricultural Marketing Service, Marketing Services Branch

1400 Independence Ave., SW., Room 2646 - S, Stop 0269, Washington, DC 20250-0269. (202) 720-8317.
How Local Farmers and School Food Service Buyers Are Building Alliances
www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/MSB/PDFpubList/localfarmsandschool.pdf



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