

Celebrate Farm to School Month Anytime, Anywhere with Local Minnesota Foods

October is a time to express gratitude for Minnesota's school nutrition professionals and farmers providing essential services to feed our kids amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

ST. PAUL, Minn. (Oct. 1, 2020) – Governor Tim Walz has proclaimed October as Minnesota Farm to School Month. During the month, Minnesotans are encouraged to celebrate connections between students and local food, share our state's farm to school stories and express gratitude for school nutrition professionals and farmers providing essential services to feed our kids during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As students across the state participate in a variety of in-person, distance learning and hybrid school settings, school nutrition professionals continue to provide students with fresh, nutritious food while supporting Minnesota farmers, which lifts the local economy.

"When our schools serve Minnesota kids locally grown food, it's a win for everybody," Minnesota Department of Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen said. **"Kids eat healthier, small farms have local buyers and our agricultural economy benefits. I'm proud that Minnesota is a national leader in Farm to School."**

Farm to School programs create connections between schools and farmers. Through these relationships, schools can provide fresh food to students, as well as educational opportunities for nutrition and wellness and hands-on learning experiences with school gardens.

"Healthy meals help our students focus on learning," said Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker. **"Through Farm to School programs, students get the nourishment they need with the bonus of opportunities to learn about where their food is produced. Thank you to our school nutrition teams and farmers for working together to support Minnesota's students."**

What "Farm to School" means varies within our diverse communities throughout the state. Some schools purchase apples and dairy products from area growers and farmers, while others may serve wild rice from a local tribal community.

The Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team recognizes that there are gaps in access to nutritious, culturally relevant food and is committed to creating a more equitable system. Across the state, there are many people working tirelessly to help get that food to our tables. That's why this month we thank everyone – including all school nutrition professionals, farmers and farm workers – who continue to improve access to nourishing food for all kids in our communities.

Visit Minnesota's [Farm to School website](#) to learn more ways to get involved. Share your Farm to School story and thank you on social media using #MNFarmtoSchool.

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About Farm to School: The seeds of Farm to School were planted nationally more than 20 years ago when interested groups and organizations began to organize around a series of goals. Their goal was to support community-based food systems, strengthen family farms, and improve student health by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and reducing childhood obesity. In 2010, Congress designated October as National Farm to School Month. In 2011, Minnesota's Farm to School Leadership Team was established to build Farm to School

initiatives “that help kids eat healthy, support nearby farmers, foster economic vitality, and strengthen communities.” The Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team for 2020 includes representatives from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Department of Health, University of Minnesota Extension, Renewing the Countryside, Institute for Agricultural and Trade Policy, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, Minnesota School Nutrition Association, Minnesota Schoolyard Garden Coalition and USDA Rural Development.