Community Economic Development and Farm to School

This sectoral brief accompanies Evaluation for Transformation: A Cross Sectoral Evaluation Framework for Farm to School, focusing on the community economic development linkages with farm to school / farm to preschool. Farm to school efforts may create new economic opportunities for local and regional producers who may otherwise face barriers to the traditional food system, such as lower income individuals, women, people of color, those in rural areas and those limited by size or scale. Farm to school provides opportunities to explore equity-related considerations in the food system, such as living wages, professional development, safe working conditions and equal marketing opportunities. Key economic outcomes include:

- Increasing purchase of local foods by school districts and early child care centers.
- Encouraging market diversification including opportunities to expand operations.
- Providing job, income or skill expansion in the local food system.
- Establishing and expanding deeper relationships between producers, buyers, learners and educators.

The core elements of farm to school and farm to preschool include: procurement of local and regional food products, gardening and education (food and farm related).

Farm to school activities can support economic development outcomes at multiple levels of the socio-ecological model.

- **National, State and Local Policies:** Lenders make loans for producers to meet local food demand. State procurement policies allow school districts and other public institutions to prioritize local food purchases.
- **Cultural and Society Characteristics:** It is expected that local foods are readily available in school meals and communities.
- **Region, County and State:** Training for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification is available to all growers. Institutional food distributors carry more local products.
- **Community:** Parents request local foods at grocery stores; grocery stores increase the percentage of local foods available.
- **Family, Tribe and Clan:** Families visit farmers’ markets and purchase from producers who supply their schools.
- **Individual:** People buy local food and know where it comes from, due to farm to school activities.
What the Evaluation Framework Offers

The evaluation framework is intended to be a resource for farm to school planning, evaluation, research, reporting. The framework categorizes priority outcomes for community economic development by program, research and policy levels. Example priority outcomes, indicators and measures for each level are provided (refer to document for full listing).

The evaluation framework also provides:

- Common language on farm to school core and supplemental elements, touch points and actors.
- A comprehensive literature review of farm to school and farm to preschool outcomes in four sectors (public health, community economic development, education and environmental quality).
- Guidance on program articulation and tools to track implementation.
- Lists of implementation and evaluation tools.

Evaluation for Transformation: A Cross Sectoral Evaluation Framework for Farm to School was developed as a collaborative project led by the National Farm to School Network, funded in part by the Aetna Foundation.

To download the evaluation framework or to provide feedback, visit www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/evaluation-framework

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 schools and preschools.