Environmental Quality and Farm to School

This sectoral brief accompanies Evaluation for Transformation: A Cross Sectoral Evaluation Framework for Farm to School, focusing on the environmental quality linkages with farm to school / farm to preschool. Participants can observe how core farm to school elements and activities can help children learn an environmental ethic, how schools create new community “greenspace” infrastructure for healthy environments, and how schools buy local or regional foods produced to reduce potential negative environmental impacts. Examples of how farm to school activities link to environmental quality include:

- Encouraging children to learn environmental attitudes and behaviors.
- Creating green-spaces such as gardens and naturescapes.
- Supporting producers who help steward natural environments.

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

- **National, State and Local Policies:** Policies support gardens at every school in the state.
- **Cultural and Society Characteristics:** Increase demand for local foods that are also sustainably produced.
- **Region, Country and State:** Producers increase agricultural innovations to reduce environmental impact.
- **Community:** School districts use integrated pest management policies to maintain their school grounds with less chemicals.
- **Family, Tribe and Clan:** Increase purchase of foods produced with less chemicals.
- **Individual:** Students learn to grow food in a garden using environmentally supportive methods such as composting.

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).
What the Evaluation Framework Offers

The evaluation framework is intended to be a resource for farm to school planning, evaluation, research, and reporting. The framework categorizes priority outcomes for environmental quality 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.