



# 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, school gardens and food and agriculture education into school systems and early and education settings.

This fact sheet offers ideas on **how you can get involved** in shaping and advocating for policies that support farm to school.

## Federal Advocacy Opportunities

There are several federal laws that impact the farm to school community including the Farm Bill, the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act, the Food Safety Modernization Act, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Some of these statutes have to be reauthorized about every five years, offering many opportunities for you and your organization to advance farm to school. Stay up to date on advocacy opportunities through the National Farm to School Network, and also make your own efforts to reach out to your policymakers. Visit [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org) to learn more, sign up for our newsletter, and find ways to get involved!

## State Advocacy Opportunities

Most states also have legislation that supports farm to school activities. In fact, from 2002-2017, over 1,000 state farm to school policies were proposed. However, only just over 300 of these have been enacted. Each of us has an important voice that can help shape and pass farm to school policy, moving it from a concept to an acting policy. Contact your NFSN State Partners at [www.farmtoschool.org/ournetwork](http://www.farmtoschool.org/ournetwork) to learn how to get involved.

## Local Advocacy Opportunities

**School Wellness Policies:** The 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization required all school districts receiving federal funds for school meal programs to adopt a local school wellness policy. These policies address both nutrition and physical activity and involve parents, students, school food authorities, teachers, school boards, school administrators, and the public. School wellness policies are a great opportunity to encourage farm to school activities that promote wellness such as school gardens, farm tours, and local procurement.

**School District Procurement Policies:** Public institutions – including schools – have significant purchasing power and can encourage the production of and access to healthy, farm fresh foods in their region and communities. For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District signed on to the “Good Food Purchasing Program” (GFPP) in October 2012. This is a comprehensive and metric-based food purchasing policy developed by the LA Food Policy Council. Maybe your school district can be a part of GFPP too?



## Lobbying vs. Advocacy

Because of where you are employed (for example, at a state agency or a university), you may worry about your legal ability to lobby. Even if you have lobbying restrictions due to your organization's funding (e.g., federal funding), EVERYONE is allowed to educate decision makers on what is important to you. If you cannot lobby, you can still make a difference! Follow the same actions in this fact sheet, but instead of mentioning specific policy asks, share general information and stories about farm to school in your state. Sharing information is *not* lobbying - it's education, which all of us can do! Additionally, keep in mind that in your personal (not employment) capacity and time, you can use your voice to let the people that represent you know what matters to you and what you would like them to do.

To be considered lobbying, three things must be present:

- Contacting a policymaker or her/his staff
- With a specific ask
- About a specific piece of legislation

All three of these elements must be present to be considered lobbying.

The National Farm to School Network has compiled resources on this topic and others. Find more information and join our network: [farmtoschool.org](http://farmtoschool.org)

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## Get Involved and Tell Your Story

Policy makers are looking for information from their constituents. Is a law being drafted, revised or implemented? Are your elected officials trying to decide what programs to fund? Has s/he done something you are proud of and you would like to thank them for their efforts? Throughout all stages of the policy process, elected officials need to know what's going on in the communities they represent.

Use data and your personal stories of how the policy or programs are important to your organization or the people you serve. You are a constituent with a vote and an important story to tell.



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

- **Find out who represents you.** Visit [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) for names and contact information of all elected officials representing your community. Or you can look up contact information for your two Senators at [Senate.gov](http://Senate.gov) and your Representatives at [House.gov](http://House.gov). Remember farm to school is a nonpartisan issue, so do not be concerned if your elected officials are not of your own personal party. Keep in mind that policy is made at all levels, so contact the people that represent you at the federal, state, and local levels.
- **Call your legislators.** Phone calls matter! Introduce yourself, make your request to a person or to a voicemail, and be polite. For Federal policymakers, call Congressional offices directly or through the Congressional switchboard at 202-224-3121 to speak with the person working on school nutrition or agricultural issues. Send a follow-up email thanking them for their time, reiterate your request, and provide additional information.
- **Email your legislators.** 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.
- **Use social media to contact your legislators.** When you share farm to school success stories and pictures on your Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages, make sure to tag your legislators so they see what farm to school in action looks like in your community. Most elected officials are on Twitter, and unlike phone calls and emails, many manage their own Twitter accounts.
- **Add all of your elected officials and their staff to your mailing list.** Keep them informed when you do not have a request of them, so they are up to speed when you do need their support.

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

- **Visit your legislator.** Schedule an in-person meeting, keeping in mind the 4P's: Prepare, Practice, Persuasive, Politeness. Make sure to share your story and make relevant connections, take good notes in case you need to follow up on questions, and send a thank you follow-up email or letter.
- **Invite your legislator.** Ask them to take a tour farm with students, to serve lunch in a school cafeteria ("Legislator in the Lunchroom"), to work with students in a school garden, or to cook with students in a classroom.

All of these are great photo opportunities and very newsworthy. Snap many pictures and share them on social media and with your local paper!