

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES
COMMISSIONER

January 4, 2010

The Honorable Rick Perry, Governor
The Honorable David Dewhurst, Lieutenant Governor
The Honorable Joe Straus, Speaker of the House

Gentlemen:

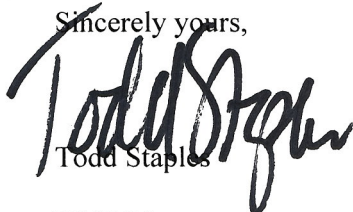
During the 81st Legislative Session, SB 1027 established the Interagency Farm-to-School Task Force. This task force was charged with developing and implementing a plan to facilitate the availability of locally grown food products in all Texas schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program. The task force included representation from the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), the Texas Education Agency, the Department of State Health Services and stakeholders representing farmers, school nutrition, distributors, health advocacy, parents and higher education.

The task force examined Farm-to-School programs both within and outside Texas, focusing on best practices that could be duplicated. The task force also identified barriers to, as well as opportunities for, implementing a statewide Farm-to-School program. In conclusion, the task force determined that Texas has the resources necessary to support a formal statewide Farm-to-School program, but that a coordinator position within TDA is needed to implement it. This position could be funded through state administrative dollars from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

It is no secret Texas faces a growing obesity epidemic that is threatening the future health and economic prosperity of our state. At TDA we are committed to improving the health of all Texas children, and as such, have developed an initiative called the "3E's of Healthy Living – Education, Exercise and Eating Right." We believe it takes this three-pronged approach to ending obesity, and the Farm-to-School programs are a positive method to contribute to the "Eating Right" part of this initiative. By providing our schoolchildren with increased access to Texas-grown agricultural products, we can help reverse the obesity trend and secure the future of our great state.

I commend the work of this task force in examining this important issue, and look forward to working with you as we promote the health of our youngest Texans.

Sincerely yours,



Todd Staples

TS/KG/kg



Shaping Texas' Farm-to-School Future:
A Report from the Interagency Farm-to-School
Coordination Task Force



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Shaping Texas' Farm-to-School Future: A Report from the Interagency Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 81st Legislature enacted SB 1027, which established the Interagency Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force. The goal of Farm-to-School programs is to improve child nutrition by making locally grown fruit, vegetables and meat more accessible to Texas schools, thereby enhancing the freshness and nutrition of school meals and assisting the operations of small to mid-sized farms and ranches. The bill directs the Interagency Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force to develop and implement a plan to facilitate the availability of locally grown food products in all public schools in Texas.

In order to understand the opportunities, barriers and best practices related to integrating locally grown agricultural products into school meal programs, the Interagency Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force researched the following areas/issues and compiled them into this report:

1. Success stories and materials on how to incorporate local purchasing into school meal plans, which includes identifying partners, funding sources and grants for school food authorities (SFAs);
2. Existing resources on nutrition and food education that could be used by schools and school districts;
3. School procurement issues, processes and training needs for SFAs to be able to obtain and use locally grown produce;
4. Processes and training needs for producers to meet the needs of the SFAs; and
5. Databases of locally grown food products for use by school food service agencies.

In reviewing these components, the Interagency Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force noted that Texas is well-positioned to begin Farm-to-School programming statewide. Many of the elements already exist – nutrition education, marketing assistance for farmers and training for school food service workers. However, a full time Farm-to-School Coordinator is critical to bring together the elements and coordinate efforts across the state.

Recommendation:

Create a Farm-to-School Coordinator position within the Texas Department of Agriculture. Administrative dollars provided to the state from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) may be used to fund the position. The proposed Farm-to-School Coordinator will:

- A. Provide technical assistance, training and resources for schools and farmers;
- B. Connect farmers and schools wanting to implement a Farm-to-School program;
- C. Modify existing resources to suit Texas' needs,
- D. Manage a database of products and producers;
- E. Market the Farm-to-School program to producers and schools; and
- F. Establish regional pilot projects using grant funds to form model programs tailored to Texas' diversity.

HISTORY, PURPOSE AND PROCESS

During the 81st Legislative Session, Senator Kirk Watson and Representative Tim Kleinschmidt passed SB 1027, establishing the Interagency Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force (Farm-to-School Task Force). The purpose of the bill was to “promote a healthy diet for school children and the business of small to mid-sized local farms and ranches.”¹ The bill directed the Farm-to-School Task Force to develop and implement a plan to facilitate the availability of locally grown food products in all public schools in Texas.

In accordance with the bill, the Farm-to-School Task Force was chaired by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) with representation from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), farm organizations, school organizations and other relevant public and nonprofit partners. TDA invited members to represent a variety of organizations with interests in the Farm-to-School program.

Farm-to-School Task Force Members:

- Robin Roark, Presiding Officer, Texas Department of Agriculture
- Julie Harris-Lawrence, Texas Education Agency
(Marissa Rathbone served as proxy for Ms. Harris-Lawrence)
- Tracie Wood, Texas Department of State Health Services
- Jenna Anding, Texas AgriLife Extension Service
- John McClung, Texas Produce Association
(Laura Sparks served as proxy for Mr. McClung)
- Jody Houston, Corpus Christi Independent School District
- Daniel Barnes, Hardies San Antonio
- Baker Harrell, Active Life
- Kyle Ward, Texas Parent Teacher Association
- Deneen Carter, Education Service Center, Region 6

Farm-to-School Task Force Ex-Officio Members and Advisors:

- Heather Bernard, Legal Counsel, Texas Department of Agriculture
- Sam Varela, Texas Department of Agriculture
- Richard De Los Santos, Texas Department of Agriculture
- Andrew Smiley, Sustainable Food Center
- Stacy Bates, Texas Beef Council
- Jo Ann Slack, United States Department of Agriculture

As the lead agency, TDA provided additional guidance to the Farm-to-School Task Force. The goal of the Farm-to-School Task Force was to encourage a healthy diet for school children while supporting all forms of agriculture rather than promoting one at the exclusion of another. The focus was on locally grown food products only to the extent that it did not create a disparate impact on any segment of production agriculture. An additional

¹ Senate Bill 1027 Interagency Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force. Accessed at www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/81R/billtext/html/SB01027F.htm on November 8, 2010.

focus was to determine both opportunities and barriers to providing locally grown food products to the School Food Authorities (SFAs).

During the first meeting of the Farm-to-School Task Force, members reviewed the bill, the guidance from TDA, and the timeline to develop a report for the Legislature. The group summarized the bill and determined the need to address the following five major topic areas in order to understand the opportunities and barriers to integrating locally grown agricultural products into the schools:

1. Success stories and materials on how to incorporate local purchasing into school meal plans, including identifying partnering/funding sources and grants to school food authorities (SFAs);
2. Existing resources on nutrition and food education that could be used by schools and school districts;
3. School procurement issues, processes and training needs for school food authorities to be able to obtain and use locally grown produce;
4. Processes and training needs for producers to meet the needs of the SFAs; and
5. Databases of locally grown food products for use by school food service agencies.

After determining the key topic areas, each member of the Farm-to-School Task Force was assigned to a topic to conduct further research and present the information back to the group. The group determined that the research should be compiled into a report for the Texas Legislature and the executive staff from TEA, TDA and DSHS. The group met three times throughout the year to discuss progress and develop the report. During the meetings, the Farm-to-School Task Force also heard updates on Farm-to-School programs across the nation from Jo Ann Slack, USDA Southwest Regional Office representative; Le Adams, the Regional Lead Director for the Farm-to-School National Network in New Mexico; and Chris Kirby, the Oklahoma Farm-to-School Coordinator. Also, Eric Cooper of the San Antonio Food Bank gave a presentation on how food banks could assist with linking producers and districts.

Throughout the research process, the committee continued to agree on the critical need for a full time Farm-to-School Coordinator (funded by administrative dollars provided to the state from USDA) to oversee the Farm-to-School coordination efforts throughout the state.

WHAT IS FARM-TO-SCHOOL?

Farm-to-School programs vary across the nation, but generally include incorporating local farm products into school meals and conducting nutrition activities that are directly related to fresh produce. Many programs also include school gardening, tours of local farms, meet-the-farmer activities, cooking classes, compost/recycling programs and nutrition education classes. There are over 2,200 Farm-to-School programs nationwide.

An evaluation report from the non-profit National Farm-to-School program found that Farm-to-School programs that include nutrition education efforts increase child preference for fruits and vegetables at school and at home, and create economic sustainability for farmers.² The Texas-based Sprouting Healthy Kids program evaluation found that students exposed to the Farm-to-School program had an increased preference for healthy foods compared to those who did not.³

Currently, Texas participates in a Farm-to-School purchasing program coordinated by the Department of Defense and the Texas Department of Agriculture. However, this program does not connect local farmers to specific schools, nor does it include a nutrition education component, both of which are key components of effective Farm-to-School programs.

Texas is well-positioned to start a more robust Farm-to-School program statewide. Many of the elements already exist – nutrition education, marketing assistance for farmers and training for school food service workers. In addition, there are numerous tools available that, with minimal changes, can support Farm-to-School initiatives.

Opportunities and Challenges of Texas Implementation

There are many advantages for communities and schools to participate in Farm-to-School initiatives, including improved dietary habits among school children, support of local food systems and economies, and alignment with current state policy for school nutrition and education. Texas is fortunate to have a long growing season and the ability to produce diverse products that are culturally appropriate to regions throughout Texas. Additionally, there is an abundance of accessible resources and best practices provided through the USDA and other statewide Farm-to-School initiatives allowing Texans to move forward simply by adapting existing resources as opposed to creating new resources for education and implementation. Furthermore, coordinators from other states who have already implemented successful Farm-to-School programs as a result of legislation are willing to provide technical assistance to Texas by sharing lessons learned and useful resources for different audiences.

² Joshi A., Azuma A. *Farm-to-School Program Evaluations Resources and Recommendations* National Farm-to-School Network Center Accessed on 10/31/10 at <http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfi/publications/BF%20full%20report.pdf>

³ Evans A, Ranjit N, Hoelscher D, Stigler M, Medina J, Jennings R *Evaluation of Sprouting Healthy Kids* University of Texas School of Public Health. October 13, 2009.

One of the first challenges identified by this Farm-to-School Task Force was the lack of a recognized definition of the word “local.” For some individuals, eating local means consuming foods that are grown within a defined distance from their community. Others may focus on foods or food products grown within a state or region. The latter definition may be more realistic for Texas, given the size of the state and the diverse foods that are produced. It would also lend support to Texas Department of Agriculture’s GO TEXAN program, which promotes Texas-grown foods and food products. A second challenge recognized by the Farm-to-School Task Force was that strategies and resources that are successful in one region of the state may not be conducive to other regions, especially as they pertain to the types of foods produced, the style of school foodservice operation and the availability of distribution systems for food transportation. Though Texas is fortunate to have an extensive growing season of diverse products, some regions of the state either don’t have access to these products or they don’t produce them locally. Connecting schools with food banks, which often have food distribution capabilities, and local extension agents, who can help promote the production of desired food products, may be a way to address this challenge. TDA can also help create relationships between local growers and existing foodservice companies that currently serve school lunch programs. For Texas to have a successful Farm-to-School initiative, the state will need funding to conduct targeted regional pilot projects to form model programs tailored to Texas’ diversity. Additionally, a full-time Farm-to-School Coordinator will be imperative for a state this size to oversee pilot projects, provide technical assistance among partners and stakeholders and manage resources for local schools.

Texas Farm-to-School Programs

While there is not a statewide Farm-to-School program in Texas that includes nutrition education, there are two successful **local** Farm-to-School programs (Lancaster Independent School District and Austin Independent School District) that serve as model programs. Lancaster Independent School District purchases local products from existing distributors and grower cooperatives, conducts in-class nutrition and health education and offers farm tours to students in eight schools. Austin Independent School District has a comprehensive program that is coordinated through the Sustainable Food Center (SFC) and incorporates nutrition education and purchasing local products in 15 schools and two charter schools.

Detailed operations and evaluation information was available from the SFC about the organization’s Austin-based Sprouting Healthy Kids farm-to-school and food-systems education project. Sprouting Healthy Kids includes hands-on gardening and cooking, after-school activities, classroom lessons aligned with core-curriculum Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and local foods in school cafeterias supported by awareness materials, veggie-sampling, field trips to farms and farmer visits to the schools. SFC works with the Austin Independent School District foodservice administrators to incorporate local, fresh foods into school menus, seek out producers of local products and train school food-service workers. Resources available through this program include SFC staff support for establishing educational school gardens and organizing school wellness teams, as well

as materials such as after-school activity guides, TEKS-aligned lesson plans and promotional materials such as farmer-profile posters. An intensive evaluation of this program found that it was effective at increasing child preference for fruits and vegetables, and that the response was greatest when students were provided with multiple nutrition education opportunities.

Since Texas has so much variability between regions, strategies that are effective in the Dallas and Austin areas may not be as effective in other areas of the state. Therefore, additional pilot projects should be undertaken to see what works well in other regions. Other states have found that multiple implementation strategies are needed and that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to implementation. The proposed Farm-to-School Coordinator is key to documenting what works in different areas of the state and helping school districts and farmers communicate their successes to one another.

Farm-to-School Programs in Other States

Each state and each school district uses a slightly different strategy to implement Farm-to-School programs. The keys to success are creating connections between small and mid-scale farmers and districts, offering educational programming for students and providing state or regional level support for a comprehensive program.

To date, 33 states have passed legislation regarding Farm-to-School programs and provide varying levels of support.⁴ Several states, including Oklahoma, New Mexico and North Carolina have established permanent positions that coordinate Farm-to-School programming, which appears to be key in the development and growth of such efforts. The role of the coordinator in these states is to assist with training and technical assistance for farmers and foodservice workers, menu planning, procurement and distribution, and program monitoring and evaluations. In other states with successful programs, like New Mexico, Oklahoma and California, another common element is state-level support for educational programs and activities. Also, nonprofit community organizations, such as the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project in North Carolina and Farm-to-Table in New Mexico provide local-level program support. See Appendix A for additional information on states with strong Farm-to-School programs.

⁴ Farm-to-School Legislation Report Updated 11/2/10 accessed at www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications_177.pdf on November 13, 2010.

SCHOOL AND PRODUCER CHALLENGES

Both schools and producers face several challenges in initiating Farm-to-School Programs. Potential challenges for schools include tight budgets and a lack of information about local producers. On the producer side, farms may not have adequate cooling and storage facilities to properly store the fresh produce for schools. Quality standards in produce from Farm-to-School could cause communication challenges between schools and farms. However, many other states facing similar challenges have implemented Farm-to-School programs, and Texas can utilize many available resources. This section of the report discusses key challenges for producers and schools. The next section describes resources available to overcome those challenges.

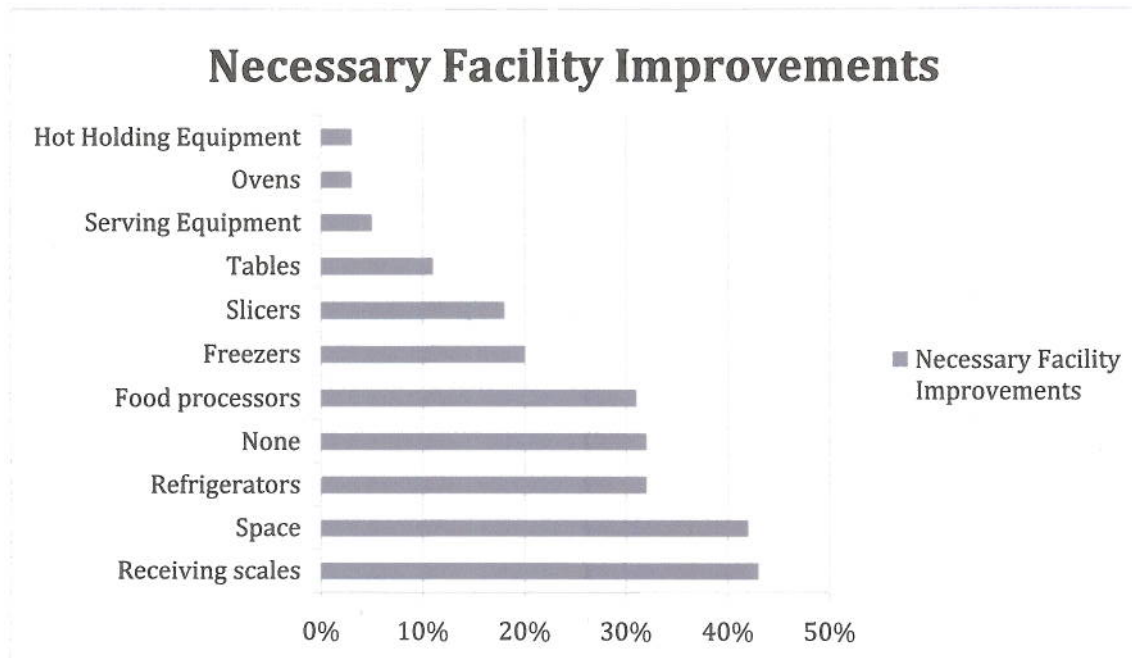
School Challenges

In order to understand the challenges for schools, the Farm-to-School Task Force, in association with the Texas Association of School Nutrition, facilitated an online survey of their school foodservice directors across Texas. The Farm-to-School Task Force received 75 responses that were representative of the state and included rural and urban areas and large and small school districts.

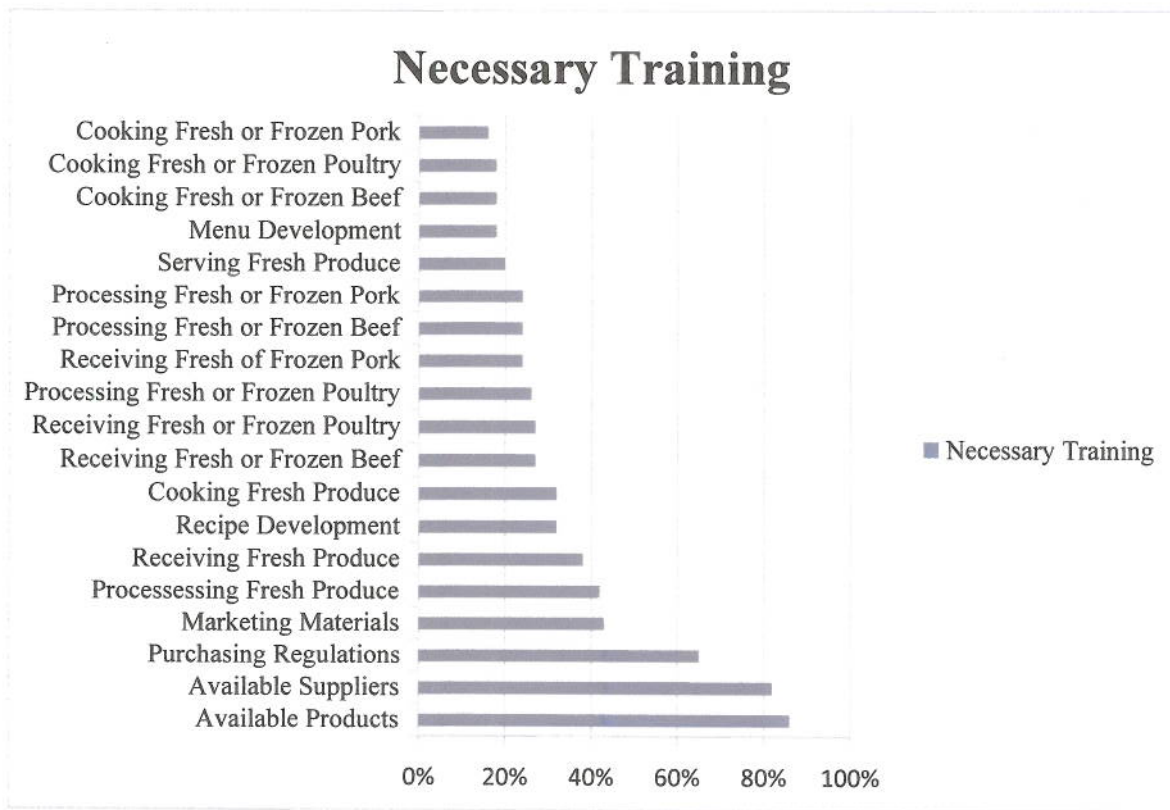
The survey found:

- 73% of responders have participated in the Department of Defense and Texas Department of Agriculture Farm-to-School Program
- 88% of responders do not purchase foods directly from local producers
- 72% of responders' schools do not have a school vegetable garden for use as nutrition education
- 89% of responders' school districts do not plan to purchase foods directly from local farmers

According to those who responded, the following facility improvements would be required in order to purchase locally grown agriculture products:



School food service directors also indicated that they would need training in order to purchase locally grown agriculture products. The most highly requested trainings were on available products, purchasing regulations and processing fresh produce.



According to the survey, one of the key needs as indicated by the schools is information on available products. The Farm-to-School Task Force has identified the need to create a database of growers and local farms in Texas and then maintain that database. Supply and crops change frequently so it would be imperative to regularly update the database for the schools. The best and most efficient way to maintain this database is to hire a project coordinator to assist in the effort.

Producer Challenges

One of the greatest challenges for producers is the ability to market their products to schools. The proposed Farm-to-School coordinator position would be key to assisting in this effort to connect farmers to schools interested in developing a Farm-to-School program. The availability of products near large urban areas may be also be problematic and require work on the supply side. Additional issues for producers include controlling handling and delivery costs, and having adequate cooling and storage facilities to properly store the fresh produce for schools until needed. Quality standards in produce from Farm-to-School could also cause communication challenges between schools and farms.

Farm-to-School Training, Education and Marketing

To address producer and school training needs, the Farm-to-School program will need targeted educational components specific to producers and school food authorities. The Farm-to-School initiative should also provide annual comprehensive information to stakeholders. This would help ensure that school districts, parents, teachers, farmers and foodservice directors have access to resources and are able to interact more extensively. This also supports efforts for outreach, promotion and developing partnerships, while tailoring existing resources to Texas crops and regional needs. The Farm-to-School Task Force recommends using grants and other funding opportunities for a pilot project in Texas to better understand what the needs for a statewide initiative would be, as well as USDA administrative funds to support a full-time Texas Farm-to-School Coordinator.

Some additional activities to compliment these goals include consulting with subject matter experts to gather information on best practices, providing summer workshops for foodservice directors and superintendents, and holding regional “Ag in the Classroom” conferences to connect local growers to schools within a region.

Additionally, the Farm-to-School program will need to be marketed to both schools and producers. One approach is to develop a website. A website could explain the program, provide information on harvest and availability of crops, share recipes, link to GO TEXAN and Pick Texas websites, and list school districts using local products with featured activities. Another marketing tool could be the development of a Farmers Market Summer Program. This tool would allow farmers markets to create summer education programs for children, allow schools to partner with participating producers to purchase produce during the school year, and assist with pricing issues. A successful marketing program should also utilize partnerships with commodity groups and associations that have strong child nutrition programs already built into their outreach plans.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT FARM-TO-SCHOOL

There are numerous resources available to help overcome the barriers to implementation and to help educate producers, schools, parents and children. There are resources at the state agency level, as well as associations and non-profits within Texas that can provide training, marketing and educational programming assistance. There are funding opportunities from USDA. In addition, there are numerous educational and marketing materials that have been developed by other states that can be adopted with minimal changes to support the Texas Farm-to-School program.

Texas Technical and Educational Resources

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) oversees the agricultural, school nutrition, and commodity programs in Texas. For example, TDA provides training and technical assistance to school foodservice agencies through the Education Service Centers to provide cafeteria managers and staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare and serve healthy foods. TDA has several education initiatives that also align with the Farm-to-School messages including the **“3E’s of Healthy Living – Education, Exercise and Eating Right!”** campaign, the **TDA Square Meals** website and materials, and the **“Texans Bring It!”** campaign. There are also two state funded grant programs (**Best Practices in Nutrition Education** and the **Urban Schools Grant Program**) that can be used to help schools fund educational efforts related to Farm-to-School.

For producers, TDA offers promotional incentives and marketing assistance through the **GO TEXAN** program and **“Fruit and Vegetable Month”** in Texas. The **Pick Texas** program provides listings of local fruit and vegetable farmers, and contact information for these growers. TDA, in partnership with the Texas Food Bank Network, facilitates delivery of fresh Texas produce to food banks throughout the state through the Surplus Agricultural Grant Program. The logistics of this program may be shifted to also accommodate Farm-to-School programs by facilitating delivery of produce to schools. TDA also oversees the multi-agency collaboration for farm-to-school efforts through **SB 1027 Interagency Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force**. For more information on the TDA programs please see Appendix B.

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) oversees the school health program and promotes the multi-faceted **Coordinated School Health (CSH)** model, which supports children’s health in schools, through training, technical assistance and resources.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides leadership in helping schools meet health education standards. Among TEA’s roles are reviewing and approving **Coordinated School Health** curricula and recommending other statewide health and nutrition education resources.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service offers research-based information and education programs in the areas of nutrition, health, agriculture and youth development. With a presence in nearly all Texas counties, Texas AgriLife Extension Service is positioned to support Farm-to-School programs.

In addition to resources at the state agency level, there are several associations and networks that can provide support. For more information on the agencies listed below, see Appendix B:

- **Texas Food Bank Network**
- **Texas Association for School Nutrition**
- **Dairy Max**
- **Texas Produce Association**
- **Sustainable Food Center**

USDA Funding Opportunities

The United States Department of Agriculture has several funding opportunities that routinely fund projects related to Farm-to-School programs, including

USDA Team Nutrition Grants:

- **The Federal State Marketing Improvement Program**
- **The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**
- **USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program**
- **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program**

Funding from these programs could be used to develop Farm-to-School pilot projects, adapt Farm-to-School resources to Texas, and support the proposed Farm-to-School coordinator position. For additional information on these grant programs, please see Appendix B.

Educational and Training Resources

After a broad review of literature and resources, the Farm-to-School Task Force found that there is an abundance of existing educational materials for producers, school districts, students and parents that would work for Texas with minimal modifications. Materials may need to be updated based on crop/produce availability and translated into Spanish depending on the region of Texas being targeted. See Appendix B for a list and description of educational resources that could be adapted for Texas.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The goal of Farm-to-School programs is to improve child nutrition by serving healthy meals and promoting the business of small to mid-sized farms and ranches. Successful Farm-to-School programs have been launched in several other states, including New Mexico and Oklahoma.

The Farm-to-School Task Force was asked to determine where the opportunities are and what the barriers are to getting locally grown food products into Texas schools. To research opportunities and barriers, the Farm-to-School Task Force looked at the following areas:

1. success stories and materials on how to incorporate local purchasing into school meal plans, including identifying partnering/funding sources and grants to school food authorities (SFAs);
2. existing resources on nutrition and food education that could be used by schools and school districts;
3. school procurement issues, processes and training needs for school food authorities to be able to obtain and use locally grown produce;
4. processes and training needs for producers to meet the needs of the SFAs;
5. databases of locally grown food products for use by school food service agencies.

The Farm-to-School Task Force found that Texas is well-positioned to start a robust Farm-to-School program. Many of the necessary elements already exist – nutrition education, marketing assistance for farmers and training for school food service workers. In addition, several states have developed training materials that Texas can adapt with minor changes.

The Farm-to-School Task Force also found that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to statewide or local implementation; each state and each school district uses a slightly different strategy. The keys to success are creating connections between small and mid-scale farmers and districts, offering educational programming for students and providing state level support for a comprehensive program. Other states have found that a Farm-to-School Coordinator is crucial to bring together the elements and coordinate efforts across the state.

Recommendation:

Create a Farm-to-School Coordinator position within the Texas Department of Agriculture. Administrative dollars provided to the state from USDA may be used to fund the position.

The proposed Farm-to-School Coordinator will:

- A. provide technical assistance, training and resources for schools and farmers,
- B. connect farmers and schools wanting to implement a Farm-to-School program
- C. modify existing resources to suit Texas' needs,
- D. manage a database of products and producers,
- E. market the Farm-to-School program to producers and schools, and
- F. establish regional pilot projects using grant funds to form model programs tailored to Texas' diversity.

APPENDIX A: Profiles of Farm-to-School Programs in Other States

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project; Western North Carolina

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) worked to transition tobacco growers to horticulture crops with a focus on opening school foodservice as a market for these farmers. The program includes several school districts and producers, and focuses on direct relationships between farmers and the districts. Key to their success is the role of ASAP in farmer training through their tobacco transitions program and other professional development efforts, and providing product information to schools through a local buying guide. ASAP also provides educational gardening, cooking and field trip programs to schoolchildren, which is vital in generating awareness of local foods among students. ASAP is a participant in the Buy Fresh, Buy Local Food Routes Network, and utilizes this campaign as a means of increasing local food awareness in the schools.

More information at www.asapconnections.org and <http://growing-minds.org/>

Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Farm-to-School was an initiative of the Oklahoma Food Policy Council, starting with a pilot program in one district that increased to three districts. The successful pilot led to the introduction and passage in 2006 of state legislation titled the "Oklahoma Farm-to-School Program Act." The act formally establishes the Oklahoma Farm-to-School Program, and a Farm-to-School Coordinator position designating the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry as the lead agency.

Oklahoma works on two different models:

1. Volume: Statewide/regional distribution of products from larger-scale producers selling wholesale to distributors; the state has negotiated a per-case handling/delivery fee with several distributors (\$1.70 per case of product)
2. Relationship: farmers sell and deliver directly to the district or schools

Oklahoma legislation recognizes that successful Farm-to-School programs often feature activities providing students with hands-on learning opportunities. They can include farm visits, school gardens, indoor learning labs, tasting and cooking demonstrations along with educational and nutritional curriculum. Oklahoma now has over 400 schools participating in Farm-to-School programs statewide.

The Oklahoma Farm-to-School website includes numerous publications and manuals to help communities get started as well as a link to HB 2655 which created the Oklahoma Farm-to-School Program Act. <http://okfarmtoschool.com/index.htm>

Maryland

Sponsored by the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the Maryland State Department of Education, the Farm-to-School program works to bring more Maryland-grown products to school lunches with the aim of educating students about where their food comes from, how it is produced and the benefits of a healthy diet.

Maryland is the only state in the country in which all of its public school systems participate in the program, according to the National Farm-to-School Network. The program also has the support of more than 30 different Maryland farms providing fresh product to the schools. It is a true example of a successful federal, state, local and private collaboration that is working.

Maryland has a variety of promotional outreach and educational materials available on its site for download, including sample media tools, signs, table tents, posters and resources for parents and children. www.mda.state.md.us/mdfarmtoschool/index.php

Minnesota

Farm-to-School is growing rapidly in Minnesota. A survey of foodservice staff conducted by the Minnesota School Nutrition Association (MSNA) and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) in March 2010 found that the number of public school districts engaged in Farm-to-School rose to 69 districts in 2009, more than double the figure 15 months earlier. At least 100 districts, and a variety of private, charter and tribal schools, are slated to have Farm-to-School programs in place by the fall of 2010. Additional information is available at www.farmtoschool.org/MN.

Minnesota also has numerous resources available for parents, teachers and students, including newsletters, recipes, videos, posters and classroom enrichment materials for tasting events. Materials are available for download at www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu/promoting_program_2.html.

New Mexico

Support for Farm-to-School in New Mexico includes a 2001 legislative memorial encouraging schools to purchase from local farmers. Through that initiative, farmers sold individually and through cooperatives to several schools and districts. Currently, the non-profit Farm-to-Table in New Mexico also works to connect farmers and school districts. With funding through the USDA Community Food Projects grant program, Farm-to-Table developed their program to include nutrition education resources and programs, and assistance for schools in purchasing local products. Farm-to-Table publishes a seasonal produce availability chart to help with menu planning and a listing of farmers that school food authorities can contact. Farm-to-Table also offers technical assistance and professional development programs for farmers, to improve handling, meet food safety requirements, and extend seasonal production.

North Carolina

Originally this program was run with the Department of Defense, but beginning with the 2008-09 school year, the North Carolina Farm-to-School program has been successfully operated by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) Food Distribution and Marketing Divisions.

All school districts in North Carolina have the ability to be part of the North Carolina Farm-to-School Program that now includes strawberries, watermelons, cantaloupes, several varieties of apples, slicing and grape tomatoes, sweet potatoes, red and green cabbage,

broccoli, apple slices, sweet potato sticks and blueberries that are locally grown on North Carolina farms.

NCDA&CS Food Distribution Division works with the Child Nutrition Directors across the state to see what items of produce the school cafeterias can utilize. Next, as the various produce items come into season, Food Distribution sends out order forms to the school districts to verify quantities needed. The Markets Division works with the North Carolina commodity associations and individual farmers to harvest, pack and store the produce in climate-controlled facilities in order to maintain optimum quality and shelf life. The Marketing Division also develops promotions for the school districts to promote North Carolina-grown produce and sends out educational materials supplied by commodity associations to schools statewide. The Food Distribution Division utilizes its fleet of tractor-trailers to pick up the produce and deliver it to the school systems.

The program has been well-received. Buying produce directly from North Carolina farmers ensures child nutrition directors that students are getting locally grown produce. The program also has opened an additional market for the North Carolina farmers.

Resources, including lesson plans and activities, are also available on the North Carolina Farm-to-School website available at www.ncfarmtoschool.com.

Vermont

Farm-to-School efforts within Vermont are lead by Vermont Food Education Every Day (VT FEED), a collaborative project of the Food Works, Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont and Shelburne Farms. The project was implemented in the Jay/Westfield Elementary School in 2000 and spread to 10 schools by 2004. By 2007, VT FEED worked with over 75 schools throughout the state. VT FEED was designed with the goal of creating food system change and was organized on three levels: 1. The Classroom, with standard-based food, farm and nutrition-based curriculum that involves in-depth graduate level teacher training, including summer workshops and in-class mentoring; 2. The Cafeteria, through the integration of local food and nutrition education through foodservice institutes, in-cafeteria mentoring, and peer support; 3. The Community, through reconnecting people to their food sources, farms and farmers.

<http://greenmountainfarmtoschool.org>

Washington

The Washington State Legislature created the Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act in 2008. The Farm-to-School Program at the Washington State Department of Agriculture helps schools identify local farms and Washington-grown products that meet foodservice needs; provides model district and school policies that support healthy, local foods and garden projects; plans and helps solve problems for specific school programs; and provides a listserv for sharing methods.

For farms, the program provides outreach, introductions and assistance in selling to school buyers, either directly or through existing supply chains, and works in partnership with

farms and organizations around the state to explore options for processing and distribution. More information is available at www.agr.wa.gov/Marketing/farmtoschool.

Additional information about all states profiled can be found at www.farmtoschool.org.

APPENDIX B: Resources

Texas Department of Agriculture Programs

- **Best Practices in Nutrition Education Grant Program**
This program rewards schools monetarily for increasing awareness of the importance of good nutrition, especially for children, and to encourage children's health and well-being through education, exercise and eating right. Among the uses for this proposed award money should be Texas Farm-to-School programming such as professional development, educational materials, local food purchases or even infrastructure improvements to school cafeterias to enhance fresh fruit and vegetable handling capacity. Linking this program with Farm-to-School will expand its impact beyond schools and into the agriculture sector.
- **Square Meals Website and Materials**
The TDA Square Meals school nutrition education program provides nutrition education resources to families, educators and food and nutrition professionals. Included in Square Meals are nutrition education materials and lessons available for teachers, schools and districts.
- **The "3E's of Healthy Living – Education, Exercise and Eating Right!" Campaign**
This campaign reinforces the concept that child health depends on comprehensive strategies and efforts. Education, exercise and eating right are all components of a healthy life. Farm-to-School efforts complement the 3E's.
- **Texas Senate Bill 1027**
Senate Bill 1027 authorized TDA to establish an Interagency Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force and provide a presiding officer and necessary staff and resources. This Farm-to-School Task Force can continue to be utilized to support Farm-to-School efforts statewide.
- **Urban Schools Grant Program**
This grant program provides funding for schools in urban districts to establish school gardens as teaching tools. The grant program has potential for great success by supporting school gardens that serve as center points of experiential food and nutrition lessons for students of elementary and middle schools.
- **Producer Marketing Materials**
The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) offers promotional incentives and marketing assistance through the GO TEXAN program and "Fruit and Vegetable Month" in Texas. The Pick Texas program provides listings of local fruit and vegetable farmers, and contact information for these growers. Lists of other products that meet school food nutrition standards and are approved for purchase and service in schools are provided through other TDA resources.

- **Surplus Agricultural Grant Program**
TDA, in partnership with the Texas Food Bank Network, facilitates delivery of fresh Texas produce to food banks throughout the state through the Surplus Agricultural Grant Program. The logistics of this program may be shifted to also accommodate Farm-to-School programs by facilitating delivery of produce to schools.

Texas-Based Organizations that Can Support Farm-to-School

- **Texas Food Bank Network**
The Texas Food Bank Network may have the capacity to help connect farmers with school foodservice using the network's member agencies' delivery vehicles that make regional pick-up and delivery routes.
- **Texas Association for School Nutrition**
The Texas Association for School Nutrition (TASN) provides resources that enhance and promote non-profit child nutrition programs for the benefit of schoolchildren. TASN is committed to providing leadership assistance, nutritional information and program guidance to all school food authorities in developing effective and comprehensive nutrition services.
- **Dairy Max**
Dairy Max is a non-profit organization affiliated with the National Dairy Council funded by dairy farmers in Texas and the Southwest. The organization has educational resources available for teachers and students to help support the Farm-to-School effort.
- **Texas Produce Association**
The Texas Produce Association includes growers and distributors of fruits and vegetables in Texas.
- **Sustainable Food Center**
The Sustainable Food Center oversees a successful Farm-to-School program in the Austin Independent School District and has developed a curriculum for farm-to-school programs in 15 schools in Central Texas. The Sustainable Food Center has a number of activities that work to create opportunities for individuals to make healthy food choices and participate in a vibrant local food system, including gardening, relationships with area farmers, interactive cooking classes and nutrition education.

USDA Grant Funding Opportunities

- **USDA Team Nutrition Grants**
Team Nutrition is an initiative of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service to support the Child Nutrition Programs through training and technical assistance for

foodservice; nutrition education for children and their caregivers; and school and community support for healthy eating and physical activity.

www.fns.usda.gov/TN

- **Federal State Marketing Improvement Program**

This matching grant program, also known as FSMIP, provides matching funds to state departments of agriculture and other appropriate state agencies to assist in exploring new market opportunities for food and agricultural products, and to encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the marketing system.

www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0

- **Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**

Specialty crop block grant funds can be requested to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and nursery crops (including floriculture).

www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0

- **USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program**

Community Food Projects should be designed to (1): (a) meet the food needs of low-income people; (b) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (c) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues; and/or (2) meet specific state, local or neighborhood food and agriculture needs for (a) infrastructure improvement and development; (b) planning for long-term solutions; or (c) the creation of innovative marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers.

www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/communityfoodprojects.cfm

- **NIFA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program**

SARE helps to advance farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound and good for communities through a nationwide research and education grants program. The national outreach office of the SARE program is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), U.S. Department of Agriculture.

www.sare.org

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Technical Assistance Resources:

- **USDA Farm-to-School Website**

This website includes information on the Farm-to-School initiative, procurement policy Q&A's, USDA procurement, a list of available USDA grants and archived webinars. www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/FARM-TO-SCHOOL/Default.htm

- Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food**
 This USDA initiative focuses on the importance of understanding where our food comes from and how it gets to our plate. In response to the growing demand for Farm-to-School activities, the "USDA Farm-to-School Team" was developed out of the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" Initiative.
www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/knowyourfarmer?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER
- Delivering More: Scaling up Farm-to-School**
 This report published by Community Food Security Coalition, features case studies of four successful programs including Farm-to-Table in New Mexico.
http://foodsecurity.org/pub/Delivering_More-Scaling_up_Farm_to_School.pdf
- Tips, Tools and Guidelines for Food Distribution and Food Safety**
 This document published by Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, includes program information for schools and farmers, including cost calculators, distribution recommendations and food safety information.
www.okfarmtoschool.com/resources/fts-distrofoodsafetymanual/fts-web.pdf
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guide to Fruit & Vegetable Strategies to Increase Access, Availability and Consumption**
 This document provides guidance and direction in selecting strategies to increase access and availability of fruits and vegetables.
www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/TheEvidence/Texts/StratstoIncreaseFruitVegConsumption.pdf
- National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)**
 Through the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service program, this site provides a searchable database of production and marketing information for farmers, including information specific to Farm-to-School. <http://attra.ncat.org>
- Ecoliteracy: Through the Rethinking School Lunch Guide**
 This guide is a planning framework based on a positive vision: healthy children ready to learn, "food literate" graduates, invigorated local communities, sustainable agriculture and a healthy environment. The guide is a downloadable pdf that explains the rationale for reforming school food and explores the 10 pathways that constitute this planning framework. Additional links lead to essays, interviews and other tools. www.ecoliteracy.org

Educational Outreach Methods/Materials to Promote Farm-to-School

For School Foodservice Staff and Producers

- National Farm-to-School Website**
 The Farm-to-School website has a number of food service resources and a number of resources for producers. www.farmtoschool.org/publications.php?pt=buys

- **Education Materials from Oklahoma**

Tips, Tools and Guidelines for Food Distribution and Food Safety includes information on the development of the program in Oklahoma, the fresh produce purchasing and distribution practices of schools, Farm-to-School distribution examples, information on food safety, and tips and tools for Farm-to-School distribution. This site also includes a produce calculator and a Farm-to-School distribution cost template. www.okfarmtoschool.com/schools/resources.htm

- Information on Local Marketing, Processing & Distributing is available at http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/local_food/marketing.html.

For Teachers

- **The Sustainable Agriculture Resources and Programs for K-12 Youth**

This resource is a 16-page PDF that lists lesson plans, programs, DVDs and organizations from around the U.S. that feature sustainable agriculture. www.sare.org/publications/edguide.htm

- **Farm-to-School Farm Visit Manual**

This manual is designed to prepare farmers, teachers and classes so that they can get the most out of a visit to the farm. www.caff.org/programs/Farm-to-SchoolManual.shtml

For Parents

- **10 Reasons to Buy Local**

This handout discusses the top 10 reasons to buy local. www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications_218.pdf

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Website**

This CDC website includes a link to several school wellness policies and a document called Going Local: Paths to Success for Farm-to-School Programs. This document provides a snapshot of the diverse ways Farm-to-School is being implemented in schools across the nation. www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/healthtopics/wellness.htm

- **USDA Parent Education Tools**

The parent education section of the USDA Team Nutrition Website includes resources on Changing the Scene and Improving the School Nutrition Environment. www.fns.usda.gov/tn/parents.html

For Youth

- **Texas Ag in the Classroom**

This free resource was developed by the Texas Farm Bureau to teach students in grades 1-6 how agriculture touches our daily lives. The site has a variety of lesson plans that can be downloaded covering produce and other Texas agriculture products. www.beagsmart.org/HomePageIndex.aspx

- **United States Department of Agriculture – Agriculture in the Classroom**

This site is an online resource center/directory that has hundreds of educational resources for educators to increase agricultural literacy from pre-K to 12th grade. Includes numerous lesson plans involving produce. The site also has a student center with games and information for kids and teens. www.agclassroom.org

- **The Action for Healthy Kids Network**

This network has developed several resources for schools including the Game On! Ultimate Wellness Challenge that has challenge activities related to making better food choices and physical activity; and the Students Taking Charge website where students investigate whether their school is healthy and take charge to make their school a healthier place. www.actionforhealthykids.org

- **Junior Master Gardener**

The Junior Master Gardener program, which is supported by Texas AgriLife Extension Service, promotes learning, success and service through gardening education. Through their hands-on experiences in the garden, children have the opportunity to learn about topics such as horticulture, nutrition and health, math and science, and water conservation. www.jmgkids.us