

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS
Resolution in Support of Farm to School Programs

Obesity has become one of the most serious health threats facing America. The rate of overweight children in the U.S. has doubled during the past 25 years and quadrupled since the late 1960s. Overweight or obese children and teens have a higher likelihood of continuing to be overweight or obese adults, increasing their risks for heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, and some types of cancer. While many factors contribute to the increase in overweight children, poor nutrition is universally accepted as one of the primary culprits. Federal health experts recommend everyone should eat at least two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables each day, but only about 20 percent of high school students do.

Schools play an important role in meeting children's nutritional needs. School lunches provide an opportunity for children to eat healthful foods that can influence what they choose to eat later in life. Just as unhealthful foods can reinforce poor eating habits, serving foods that are nutritious can establish a foundation for eating nutritious foods that can last a lifetime.

Farm to School programs provide schools with fresh produce grown on farms near the schools they serve. In addition to promoting better nutrition in school lunches, these programs provide health and nutrition education and support local small farmers by providing another market for their commodities. Farm to School programs provide more than fruits and vegetables. In some places, these programs also provide meat, eggs and honey for school lunches.

According to the National Farm to School Program, a non-profit organization that has been active in the development of Farm to School programs nationally, nearly 2,000 programs operate in 38 states, providing fresh produce and other farm goods to students in more than 8,000 schools.

Until now, Farm to School programs have been developed and maintained primarily by states and agreements between schools and growers. Congress has included a provision in the 2008 Farm Bill (H.R. 2419) to expand an existing fruit and vegetable program with \$1 billion over the next five years. Currently, a pilot program operates in just 14 states. The Farm Bill would expand the Fruit and Vegetable Program to provide locally grown fruits and vegetables to schools in all 50 states.

The federal government should take a more active role in supporting Farm to School programs nationwide. This resolution calls on Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide funding for and to support efforts to ensure that children everywhere have access to fresh fruits, vegetables and other farm commodities while simultaneously providing additional markets to farmers. Additionally, states that have not already taken action to encourage Farm to School programs and provide funding for their successful operation should do so.

Additional Resource Information

1. The National Farm to School Program. <http://www.farmtoschool.org/index.php>
2. *Going Local: Paths to Success for Farm to School Programs*. A publication produced by the National Farm to School Program.
<http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/publications/goinglocal.pdf>
3. *Farm to School Programs*. An issue brief produced by the Southern Legislative Conference. http://www.slcatlanta.org/Publications/Education/farm_to_school.pdf
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nutrition Topics.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/>

Management Directives

Management Directive #1: Support state efforts to develop, maintain and expand state Farm to School programs.

Management Directive #2: CSG staff will forward copies of this resolution to all members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives Agriculture and Appropriations committees; and to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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WHEREAS, Farm to School programs connect schools with local farms to serve healthy meals in school cafeterias, improve student nutrition and provide health and nutrition education that will last a lifetime; and

WHEREAS, schools buy farm fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables, eggs, honey, meat, and beans for their menus; incorporate nutrition-based curriculum; and provide students experiential learning opportunities through farm visits, gardening and recycling programs; and

WHEREAS, farmers have access to a new market through schools and connect to their community through participation in programs designed to educate kids about local food and sustainable agriculture; and

WHEREAS, during the past 25 years the rate of overweight children has doubled in the United States; and

WHEREAS, children frequently have access to unhealthful foods and drinks on school campuses, influencing their choices towards eating; and

WHEREAS, only 20 percent of high school students eat the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables each day, according to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a decline from 24 percent in 1999; and

WHEREAS, communities are strengthened by the creation of a system linking schools, children, agricultural producers, parents and other community stakeholders to procure local foods for school meals; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress has approved funding for the national Fruit and Vegetable program in the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, which would provide grants to states to increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables to elementary school children; and

WHEREAS, the Farm Bill reauthorized by Congress initially included language mandating the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to “encourage...(the) purchase (of) locally produced foods to the maximum extent possible;” and

WHEREAS, approximately 2,000 Farm to School programs operate in 38 states, providing fresh foods to more than 8,000 schools;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that The Council of State Governments strongly supports the implementation of a comprehensive, national Farm to School program that helps schools provide staff training, conduct menu planning, locate sources of locally produced food,

purchase food, and assists farmers and schools to purchase the necessary equipment to encourage the utilization of locally produced food products; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The Council of State Governments supports the use of federal grants included in the 2008 Farm Bill to increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The Council of State Governments strongly encourages each state to develop, maintain, support and promote Farm to School programs to ensure that locally produced farm commodities are available for school lunches and snacks.

Adopted this 31st day of May, 2008 at the
CSG Spring Meeting
In Lexington, Kentucky

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is for Governor M. Jodi Rell, and the signature on the right is for Representative Kim Koppelman. Both signatures are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Governor M. Jodi Rell

Representative Kim Koppelman

2008 CSG President

2008 CSG Chair