

NEW YORK GROWN FOOD FOR NEW YORK KIDS

Food insecurity, especially among households with children, has risen dramatically over the past year, and schools have been a primary source of food for many New York families during the pandemic. K-12 schools across the state serve breakfast, lunch, snack, and afterschool meals to 1.7 million schoolchildren each year, providing, on average, half of students' daily calories. Raising the quality of these school meals by incorporating more fresh, locally-grown New York foods is an effective way to improve access to healthy food for our most vulnerable children while also improving student health outcomes and academic performance. Farm to school purchases also create new markets for New York farmers while building local food supply chains more resilient to the kinds of disruptions experienced in the spring of 2020. **For the past three years, the state has funded two nation-leading farm to school programs that incentivize schools to purchase and serve more healthy, fresh, local food to kids, and which can now help New York build back better.**

Schools are Committed to Farm to School Purchasing, Even in Face of the Pandemic

The 30% New York Farm to School Reimbursement Incentive was created in 2018 to help more schools purchase and serve New York grown food to students by quadrupling the state's per-lunch meal reimbursement for K-12 schools that spend at least 30% of their lunch budget on New York grown food. Since it began, this program has grown from 7 to 57 schools, and with continued commitment it can contribute to the state's economic recovery while improving public health. **The recent "Growing Resilience" report released by American Farmland Trust reveals that 75% of schools feel confident that with the right support, they will achieve 30% by 2025. This would increase access to healthy, local food for over 900,000 students and increase the amount schools spend on food from New York farms to \$250 million with a total statewide economic impact of nearly \$360 million—a \$3.50 return on investment for every taxpayer dollar spent.**

The Farm to School Grants Program works hand in hand with this incentive, playing an essential role in unlocking its potential by funding the training, equipment, and staff that schools need to increase local food purchases. In particular, this program, funded at \$1.5 million in the last three enacted state budgets, has helped many schools hire farm to school coordinators who forge relationships with farmers and navigate the logistics of purchasing from farms to help them reach 30%.

Realizing Farm to School's Economic and Public Health Potential in the SFY22 State Budget

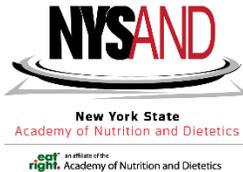
In his FY22 Budget proposal, Governor Cuomo proposed to maintain funding for the incentive program for lunch at \$10 million and for the Farm to School grants program at \$1.5 million in the agriculture and education budgets. Our coalition appreciates the continued commitment to these programs during this difficult budget year, and encourages the legislature and the Governor to include this proposed funding in the enacted SFY22 state budget while also:

- Changing budget language for the incentive program to allow schools serving lunches through USDA summer meals programs, which has been necessary due to the pandemic, to participate.
- Directing NYSDAM, Cornell and other stakeholders to create a plan to ensure every school across New York has support from a regional Farm to School coordinator in the future.
- Increasing the state Small Purchase Threshold in GML § 103 so that schools can purchase more fresh food directly from New York farmers using informal bidding methods, and reach 30%.
- Expanding this incentive to other school meals, such as breakfast, in the future.

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