



Farm to School Programs



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Farm to School programs are available in all 50 states. The primary goal of these initiatives is to make local food and agricultural education available at early care and educational settings. A form of *geographic preference procurement policies*, they offer farmers additional market opportunities to support farm viability and increase access to local farm products in public institutions. Programs advance core elements including local procurement, school gardens, and food and agriculture education.

Virginia Program Description

PURPOSE

The [Virginia Farm to School program](#) promotes opportunities for schools, distributors, and growers to work together to increase the volume of and equitable access to locally grown foods served in school cafeterias and dining halls at all levels of education.

HOW IT WORKS

The Virginia Farm-to-School program increases access to fresh, healthy, Virginia-grown food while providing hands-on learning opportunities in a variety of school settings. Created to teach students about the seasonality

of farm products, it promotes the importance of supporting local agriculture and the benefits of protecting farmland. The program also expands market opportunities and boosts sales of local farm products. In school year 2022-2023, 88% of the state's School Food Authorities participated in the program in at least some capacity.¹ According to the Virginia Department of Education, Farm to School has significantly increased the volume of locally grown food served in school cafeterias, providing farmers with a consistent market and raising awareness about the value of Virginia-grown products.²

Farm to School programs are supported by Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) through hands-on learning, AITC-designed lessons and resources, and educator training to support core subjects and uphold the Virginia Standards of Learning. Virginia AITC is a statewide educational program which offers resources, training and support to help educators and volunteers connect children to agriculture.

CONSIDERATIONS

Farm to School (and to other public institutions) programs have many benefits. They bolster the local agricultural economy, help farmers diversify their markets,



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and improve farm viability. At the same time, they improve health and nutrition and provide educational opportunities and hands-on learning. These benefits are highlighted in the [Page County Farm to School profile](#).

But contracting and coordinating deliveries of local farm products can be logistically challenging, and maintaining programs can require significant time and resources. Plus, not all schools have the kitchen staff or equipment to prepare fresh meals. So it is important for communities to plan carefully to make sure they have the supply of local products and the institutional capacity to create a successful program.

To Learn More

- › [VDACS Office of Food Distribution](#)
- › [National Farm to School Network](#)
- › [USDA Farm to School Resources](#)
- › [Virginia Farm-to-School Toolkit](#)
- › [Virginia Department of Education: Farm to School](#)
- › [Virginia Farm to School Census](#)
- › [Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom](#)
- › [National Agriculture in the Classroom](#)

NOTES

- 1 U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Farm to School Census: State Profile for Virginia,” 2023, <https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/census-results/states/va>
- 2 Virginia Department of Education, “Virginia Farm to School,” 2025, <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/school-nutrition/programs-promotions-and-initiatives/virginia-farm-to-school>