



Making the Case for Farm-to-School

There are many reasons to support Farm-to-School, but when advocating for policy, it is crucial to frame the issue in the way that will have the most traction with your target decision maker. Here are several different arguments for supporting Farm-to-School along with some supporting statistics.

Health

- In Oregon, as fruit and vegetable choices were increased to 6 items per day, food waste decreased by as much as 36%.¹
- Case studies of farm-to-school programs suggest that using local fresh foods increases school meal participation and consumption of salad and other vegetables.¹
- Researchers found in three Los Angeles schools that developed a farm-to-school salad bar consumption of fruits and vegetables increased from an average of 2.8 to 4.2 servings per day and 56% of the children ate from the salad bar everyday or most days.²

Wealth

- Current estimates find that if Kentucky were to raise its per farm average direct marketing sales to the national average, it would generate an additional farm-level income of \$7.9 million and have an estimated statewide economic impact of \$15.8 million.³
- A Maine study indicates that shifting just 1% of consumer expenditures to direct purchasing of local food products could increase farmers' income in that state by as much as 5%.⁴
- A Chicago study found that for every \$100 in consumer spending with a local firm, \$68 remains in the Chicago economy, versus \$43 with a chain firm.⁵

Sustainability

- Transporting food long distances uses tremendous energy: it takes 435 fossil-fuel calories to fly a 5-calorie strawberry from California to New York.⁶
- The conventional system of transporting food used four to 17 times more fuel than the Iowa-based regional and local systems, depending on the system and truck type. The same conventional system released from five to 17 times more CO₂ from the burning of this fuel than the Iowa-based regional and local systems.⁷
- Growing and transporting 10% more of the produce for Iowa consumption in an Iowa-based regional or local food system would result in an annual savings ranging from 280 to 346 thousand gallons of fuel and an annual reduction in CO₂ emissions ranging from 6.7 to 7.9 million pounds, depending on the system and truck type.⁷

Safety

¹ Buzby J, Guthrie J, Ralston K. "A Healthy School Meal Environment, Food Assistance Research Brief." USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Report Number 34-5. July 2003. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr34/fanrr34-5/>

² Slusser, W. and C. Neumann. "Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Salad Bar Program in the Los Angeles School District," Los Angeles: School of Public Health, University of California, Los Angeles, 2001.

³ Van Erden, Don. "Direct Marketing of Agricultural Products: A Kentucky Opportunity." Presentation at the Infrastructure for Delivery of Direct-Marketed Products: A Rural Development Project, organized by Partners for Family Farms. Lexington, KY. August 29, 2003.

⁴ Gandee, Jesse. "Economic Impact of Maine Food System and Farm Vitality Policy Implications: A Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, Second Regular Session of the 120th Maine Legislature." Nov. 2002.

⁵ Civic Economics, 2004, Andersonville Study of Retail Economics; found at <http://www.civiceconomics.com/Andersonville/html/reports.html>

⁶ Gussow, Joan Dye. "This organic life: confessions of a suburban homesteader." White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Pub. Co., 2001.

⁷ Pirog, Rich, Timothy Van Pelt, Kamyar Enshayan, and Ellen Cook. "Food, Fuel, and Freeways: An Iowa perspective on how far food travels, food usage, and greenhouse gas emissions." Ames, IA: Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. 2001.

- A direct link from producer to consumer lessens the risk and impact of illnesses resulting from contaminated food. In 2006, spinach tainted with E. coli from a single field in San Benito County, California, killed three people and sickened more than 200 others in nearly 30 states.