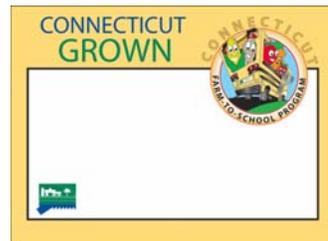
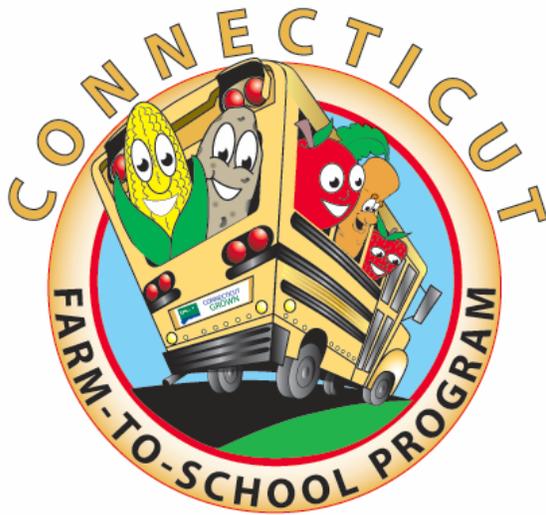


SCHOOL MEALS FROM CONNECTICUT FARMS

FINAL REPORT

December 2005



The 'School Meals From Connecticut Farms' program was supported by a subcontract from the CT Department of Agriculture to the Hartford Food System with funds from the USDA Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program. The goal of this grant was to build the capacity of the Farm to School program within the State of Connecticut.

From December 2004 to December 2005 a program coordinator was hired to assist with identifying and matching farms to schools, developing promotional materials, and conducting outreach to farmers and food service directors. A researcher was also recruited to provide a background report and feasibility study investigating producer and school interest while mapping possible new pathways for Farm to School programming.

Note: In addition to the following summary, please consult the 'F2S Background Report' and 'F2S Survey Report' for more comprehensive research details.

The following summary of accomplishments is a record of the hard work and commitment of several individuals who worked together to increase Farm-to-School programming in Connecticut. In particular, this work was accomplished by Elizabeth Fleming and Debbie Humphries, with supervision by Rick Macsuga of the CT Dept. of Agriculture and support from Jiff Martin of the Hartford Food System.

School Meals From Connecticut Farms

Summary of Accomplishments

Matching Farms and Schools

- As of fall 2005, over 50 schools and school districts were involved in the Program, up from 25 in 2004.
- Farms selling directly to schools increased from 15 in 2004 to 28 in 2005.
- 6 produce distributors are working with their school accounts to inform them of what they are purchasing that is CT Grown.

School Programming

- Cheshire's Dodd Middle School introduced new CT Grown dishes such as Squapple Crisp and Balsamic Roasted Vegetables.
- South Windsor High School students are growing herbs and tomatoes that will be used in the cafeteria and composting kitchen waste.
- Mansfield's Annie E. Vinton Elementary School hosted a month long nutrition program last March emphasizing CT Grown produce.
- Stratford worked with the Program to give first graders a taste of CT Grown winter squash.
- Third graders at Cherry Brook School in Canton learned about worms, farming, and healthy food through a visit to nearby Wild Carrot Farm.

Promotional Materials Development

- A new logo for the Program was developed with the assistance of the University of Connecticut.
- The logo has been formatted into a "price card" which is already being used in many schools to denote lunch items that are CT Grown.
- UCONN is also assisting in the development of a promotional brochure for the program.
- A website for the program will be hosted on the Department of Agriculture website.

Program Expansion

- "Breakfast with the Farmers" workshop, sponsored by CT Farm Bureau, held at School Nutrition Association of CT annual conference.
- Farm tour of Dondero Orchard and Old Maids Farm in Glastonbury for food service personnel, with a CT Grown lunch prepared and served by Dept. of Agriculture staff.

- WTNH-TV featured CT Farm-to-School on location at **Hindinger Farm** in **Hamden**.
- Collaboration with the CT State Dept. of Education and Dept. of Agriculture in preparation for the **Federal Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program**; this program has the potential to feature CT Grown in up to 25 participating schools starting in 2006.
- Collaboration with CT Dept. of Administrative Services to introduce CT Grown via the Federal Dept. of Defense "**Fresh Program**".

Feasibility Study

- A review of **other models** around the nation for farm to school programs was presented in the spring of 2005.
- Researched **historical challenges** to farm to school programming.
- A **survey** was conducted that was mailed to 130 farmers, 178 schools, and 159 school districts
- Gathered and **analyzed responses** to the survey from 25 farmers, 26 schools, and 70 school districts.

Research Findings

- The most commonly purchased fresh produce items by schools are **apples, lettuce, and tomatoes**.
- The most commonly purchased processed fresh produce items are **shredded lettuce, baby carrots, and cut celery**.
- Approximately **85% of school and school districts** in the survey indicated a **willingness to buy from a local grower** if 'price and quality were competitive and source was available.'
- **30% of schools and school districts** in the survey agreed or strongly agreed that they would be **willing to pay a higher price** to buy locally grown foods; another 32% were 'uncertain'.
- The **top requested locally grown items** by schools and districts are **lettuce, apples, tomatoes and cucumbers**.
- Schools and districts reported that the **most important reason to buy locally grown foods is to support the local economy and community**; the next important reasons were food quality and freshness.
- **Cost, delivery, and reliability** were the **principal concerns** listed by schools and districts about buying local food.
- The major **perceived barriers** for schools and districts to buy local food were the **number of farmers and seasonality**.