

# The School Lunch Tray: December 20, 2023

Dear School Sponsors of Child Nutrition Programs:

The School Lunch Tray contains the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) weekly email notifications for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school nutrition programs. This week's topics are listed below.

## **Action Items**

- None

## **Need to Know**

- Last School Lunch Tray for 2023
- Resource Roundup: Qualifications for Child Nutrition Programs Staff

## **Good to Know**

- Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) Webinar on January 4, 2024: Produce Procurement: Understanding Availability and Specs, Determining What You Want, and the Importance of a Collaborative Relationship with Your Produce Distributor
- Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program: Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Application Open
- Applications Open for Innovation and Partnership in Rural School Food Systems!
- New Resource from International Fresh Produce Association, Communications Toolkit: Food Rooted in Better Health

Please review and share with appropriate staff members. For previous versions of the School Lunch Tray, visit the CSDE's [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage.



# The School Lunch Tray: December 20, 2023

## Need to Know

### Last School Lunch Tray for 2023

This is the last School Lunch Tray for 2023. The School Lunch Tray will resume on January 3, 2024.  
**Have a wonderful holiday season!**

---

### Resource Roundup: Qualifications for Child Nutrition Programs Staff

Links to resources on guidance for staff qualifications are available in the “[Qualifications for Child Nutrition Programs Staff](#)” section of the CSDE’s Professional Standards for School Nutrition Professionals webpage.

---

## Good to Know

### Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) Webinar on January 4, 2024: Produce Procurement: Understanding Availability and Specs, Determining What You Want, and the Importance of a Collaborative Relationship with Your Produce Distributor

In this session, a school nutrition leader and produce distributors will discuss their commitment to making fresh produce more readily available in school meals. Participants will hear about how school operators set goals and plan their procurements, while distributors will share how they work with school customers to maximize quality, variety, and overall collaboration. Together, their goals are to provide students with great-tasting produce that encourages increased consumption of these healthy foods. Additionally, distributors will provide guidance about how schools can request and spec certain items for their bid, share their knowledge about local and year-round growing seasons, and on-farm factors that may impact the supply of various produce commodities. This conversation will also provide an opportunity to share what information and flexibility each party may need from each other to enhance the overall business partnership.

- **Date and time:** January 4, 2024, 3:00 p.m.
- **SNA Key Areas:** 1 – Nutrition, 2 – Operations
- **USDA Professional Standards Codes:** 1100 – Menu Planning, 2400 – Purchasing/Procurement
- **Registration:** [https://theicn.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_yg-Vr4FaTVKUJhi5zqAYJw#/registration](https://theicn.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_yg-Vr4FaTVKUJhi5zqAYJw#/registration)

---

### Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program: Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Application Open

## The School Lunch Tray: December 20, 2023

There's still time to apply for the USDA [Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program](#). The USDA expects to award approximately \$12 million in grant awards for projects that support farm to school activities like training, planning, purchasing equipment, developing school gardens, and incorporating local foods in child nutrition program meals. Visit the [Resources for Farm to School Grant Program Applicants webpage](#) for more information. Applications are due via Grants.gov on Friday, January 12, 2024.

---

### **Applications Open for Innovation and Partnership in Rural School Food Systems!**

As part of the USDA's Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative (HMI), funding and learning support is now available for a cohort of up to 35 rural school food authorities (SFAs) across the nation. Project SCALES (Supporting Community Agriculture and Local Education Systems) will work with SFAs over a two-year period as they build partnerships for innovative solutions to increase local procurement in their school meal programs. The [Center for School and Community Partnerships](#) at Boise State University will provide a subgrant (up to \$150,000) for each SFA, with technical assistance including a learning community provided by the experts at [LunchAssist](#).

Many districts in Connecticut meet the definition for rural used for this opportunity, which are those with a locale code of 41, 42, or 43 according to the National Center for Education Statistics; click [here](#) to check their online tool. For more information, please visit [www.projectscales.com](http://www.projectscales.com).

---

### **New Resource from International Fresh Produce Association, Communications Toolkit: Food Rooted in Better Health**

The International Fresh Produce Association is offering the [Communications Toolkit: Food Rooted In Better Health](#) to encourage consumers to eat more fruits and vegetables.

---



For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SLT/2023/SLT\\_12\\_20\\_2023.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SLT/2023/SLT_12_20_2023.pdf).

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems, gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; status as a victim of domestic violence; or criminal record in state employment, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; or by telephone 860-713-6594; or by email [louis.todisco@ct.gov](mailto:louis.todisco@ct.gov).