

The School Lunch Tray: September 24, 2025

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

- Register for SNACT's 2025 Fall Conference at Foxwoods: October 28-29, 2025

Need to Know

- Reminder to Receipt USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Orders in FFAVORS Within Two Days
- New Video: Tips for Taking a Fabulous Photo for the CT Fresh Ed Great Plates Contest 📺
- Announcing Farm to School Live! 📺
- Applications Now Open for USDA's FY 2026 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program: Due December 10, 2025 📺
- Resource Roundup: Resources for Reducing Added Sugars in the School Nutrition Programs

Good to Know

- None



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.

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Action Items

Register for SNACT's 2025 Fall Conference at Foxwoods: October 28-29, 2025

Registration is open for **Solving the School Nutrition Puzzle: Every Piece Counts**, the SNACT's 2025 Fall Conference at Foxwoods on October 28-29, 2025.

The keynote speaker is Christos Provistalis. Christos is a seasoned hospitality professional with a passion for creating transformative experiences and fostering genuine connections. Through thought-provoking discussions and real-life examples, Christos will empower you to elevate YOUR impact—personally and professionally—by creating meaningful and lasting experience.

Also, on the agenda.

- CSDE Updates: Things that make us go hmmm.... (presented by the CSDE)
- From Roots to Regions: Strengthening Farm to School for the Year Ahead (presented by the CSDE)
- Harvesting Solutions: How Farm to School Programs Complete the Nutrition Puzzle (panel presentation)

SNACT's conference is for all CT school nutrition professionals, including self op and food service management companies, large and small districts, SNACT members, and non-SNACT members. All school nutrition professionals will benefit and learn from attending this event. Not for-profit partners are welcome to register.

- Registration link: <https://snact.org/page/Annualconf>
 - [Full agenda](#)
 - Questions: execdir@snact.org
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Need to Know

Reminder to Receipt USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Orders in FFAVORS Within Two Days

As the school year is now in full swing, please ensure all USDA Foods DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable orders are being receipted in FFAVORS within 2 business days of delivery. Without receipting, the vendor can't be paid for their services.

New Video: Tips for Taking a Fabulous Photo for the CT Fresh Ed Great Plates Contest



Not sure how to snap the perfect photo? Check out CT Fresh Ed's quick video, [Tips for Taking a Fabulous Photo for the CT Fresh Ed Great Plates Contest](#), for easy tips, then add some local flavor to the school meals plate or tray and share the best photo. Contest entry instructions and additional photo resources are available on the "[CT Great Plates Contest](#)" section of the CSDE's CT Fresh Ed webpage. Help the CSDE showcase the nutritious, delicious, and local food schools and early child education programs are serving their students by entering the fall Great Plates contest.

Announcing Farm to School Live!



This week, the CSDE Regional Farm to School Coordinators are launching a new way for the school food authorities (SFAs) in their regions to connect with them and each other. Farm to School – Live! is a monthly 1-hour virtual, regional space offered to help support and grow local farm to school efforts. SFAs are strongly encouraged to attend, learn, and engage with peers in this informal but supportive space aimed at meeting individual and regional needs.

The goals of Farm to School – Live! are to:

- create community within the region;
- uplift stories of success, best practices, challenges;
- identify opportunities for peer support; and
- discuss timely topics.

Each meeting will include a topic for discussion and 15 minutes of office hours to allow for extra conversation on SFA ideas or needs. Watch your weekly regional farm to school emails for all the details and look out for calendar invites from your Regional Farm to School Coordinator.

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Applications Now Open for USDA's FY 2026 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program: Due December 10, 2025

The USDA has posted a new Request for Applications (RFA) for the [Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program](#). After cancellation of the FY25 grant cycle, the USDA announced up to \$18 million in funding for FY26 projects that bring more local food and agricultural education into schools. Grants range from \$100,000 to \$500,000 and will support efforts like school gardens, taste tests, field trips, and local food sourcing for Child Nutrition Programs. The application deadline is December 10, 2025

Resource Roundup: Resources for Reducing Added Sugars in the School Nutrition Programs

As a reminder, effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), requires product-based limits for added sugars in breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk in the school nutrition programs for grades K-12. The same limits for added sugars in breakfast cereals and yogurt are also required for preschool menus in the school nutrition programs. The limits for flavored milk do not apply because is not allowed for preschoolers.

Foods that do not meet these limits are not allowed in the school nutrition programs. For resources on meeting the added sugars limit, visit the "[Product-based Limits \(Effective July 1, 2025\)](#)" section under "Dietary Specifications" on the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's [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/2025/slt_09_24_2025.pdf.

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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

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