



News Release

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MICHIGAN LANDS \$70K GRANT TO GROW FARM-TO-SCHOOL PROGRAM

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LANSING – Michigan schoolchildren soon will eat more fresh, locally-grown produce thanks to a farm-to-school grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) announced today.

“Hundreds of applicants from across the nation competed for limited funding, so I’m very excited that Michigan was selected as a grant recipient amid such overwhelming interest in this latest round of USDA Farm to School Grants,” State Superintendent Brian Whiston said.

In announcing the \$70,280 grant, the USDA said Michigan’s application stood out because it “demonstrated your strong experience and readiness” to oversee ongoing farm-to-school initiatives.

Michigan’s funding will help strengthen partnerships and improve farm-to-school data collection to support achieving a goal of public K-12 schools purchasing at least 20 percent of their fruits and vegetables from local sources by 2020.

Specifically, the MDE plans to use the funds to:

- Expand school food service director (FSD) networks and cultivate their leadership via a new Cultivate Michigan Farm to School Leadership Institute;
- Host a series of regional Cultivate Michigan Marketplace networking events to help FSDs strengthen relationships with local food suppliers;
- Build a more stable, informed school market for local food producers; and
- Develop more FSDs as community food systems leaders.

The grant project is a collaboration among the MDE, Michigan State University (MSU) Extension, MSU's Center for Regional Food Systems, The Ecology Center, and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD).

For the past decade, Michigan has supported several farm-to-school efforts, such as 10 Cents a Meal, an effort by MDE and several state partners to improve school nutrition, encourage local produce consumption, and incentivize economical farm-to-school produce pipelines in communities statewide. Schools purchase and serve local produce and are reimbursed by up to 10 cents per meal under the pilot program.

In Michigan, 47 percent of K-12 students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals through USDA Child Nutrition Programs. MDE administers the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, Food Distribution programs, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and various local purchasing efforts such as Farm to School, Farm to Institution, and 10 Cents a Meal.

For more information about Michigan's farm-to-school efforts, please contact Jaime Malnar, MDE School District Consultant, at 517-335-3792 or Colleen Matts, Farm to Institution Specialist, MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, at matts@msu.edu or 517-432-0310.

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