

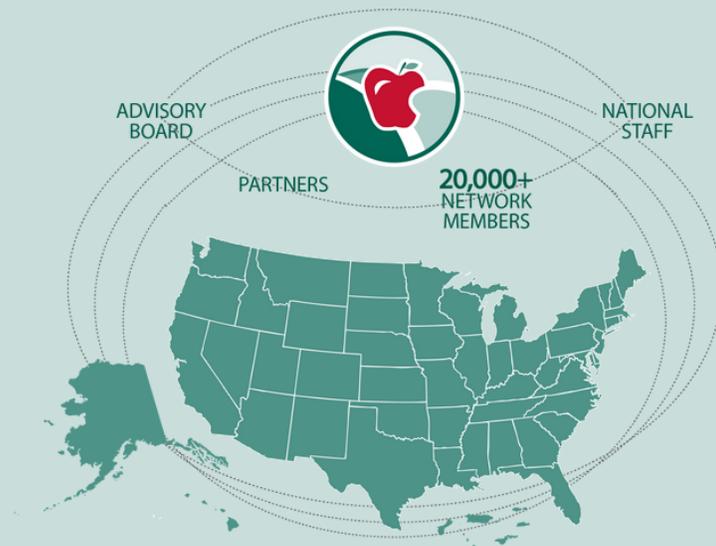


NATIONAL  
FARM to SCHOOL  
NETWORK

# FARM BILL POLICY PRIORITIES



# WE ARE THE NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK.



National Farm to School Network (NFSN) represents multi-sectoral national partners, organizations in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., the U.S. Territories, and Native nations, and tens of thousands of farm to school and early care and education (ECE) supporters. NFSN has a vision of a strong and just food system for all, and we seek deep transformation toward this vision through farm to school – the ways kids eat, grow, and learn about food in schools and early care and education settings. NFSN serves as a hub for networking, information, and advocacy to grow this movement.

Despite the growth of farm to school activities (65.4 percent of school food authorities report participating in some form of farm to school activities in 2018-2019) racial disparities persist within the areas of our society that farm to school touches, impacting every community's ability to thrive.

## OUR CALL TO ACTION

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### **100% of Communities Will Hold Power in a Racially Just Food System.**

In Fall 2020, National Farm to School Network released a Call to Action for ourselves and for the entire food system. This Call to Action guides all of our work, from policy advocacy to resource design to partnership cultivation. The federal Farm Bill, renewed every five years, offers the opportunity to put these values into action through coordinated advocacy efforts. This package of legislation sets important structural parameters, such as financial support for producers, trade and conservation policies, and nutrition assistance programs, that can get us closer to the vision of a just food system.



# 2023 FARM BILL PRIORITIES

NFSN Partners and members are brought together by our commitment to the Call to Action, and to the belief that farm to school activities built on six shared community values: economic and environmental justice, health, racial equity, workers rights, and animal welfare - will move us closer to a just, equitable food system that promotes the health of all school children and benefits producers, workers, educators, and their communities.

**We know that farm to school and farm to early care and education is one piece of change needed for a truly just food system.**

While the core elements of farm to school emphasize nutrition education, hands-on gardening, and local procurement, our NFSN Partners' priorities include broader goals. This platform reflects NFSN's support for policy changes within our core sphere of expertise, and wider spheres where we can stand in solidarity with calls to shift the economic, cultural, and decision-making power governing our food system.



# 2023 FARM BILL PRIORITIES

**NFSN seeks to ensure that the 2023 Farm Bill gets us closer to wins for all communities.**



## **01 — Build on Ten Years of Success in Farm to School**

Expanding and improving the successful Farm to School Grant Program will ensure that more communities have access to this small but mighty support for farm to school activities.



## **02 — Support Farm to School and Farm to ECE in Agriculture and Nutrition Programs**

Expanding farm to school as an encouraged focus for existing programs like SNAP-Ed funds and Specialty Crop Block Grants will maximize the coordinated impact for health and market support.



## **03 — Support Opportunity in Local Food Systems**

Farm to school activities like local purchasing or educational connections rely on a robust local food sector. The Farm Bill can build market opportunities and target the barriers that keep Black, Indigenous, and People of Color from benefiting equitably from local food markets.



## **04 — Ensure Equity and Resilience in Agriculture and Nutrition as a Whole**

Farm Bill policies touch every aspect of farm to school activities. NFSN Partners support opportunities to shift power for greater food sovereignty, climate resilience, racial equity, and economic justice.

# BUILD ON TEN YEARS OF SUCCESS IN FARM TO SCHOOL

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The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program is one of the only dedicated sources of funding to meet the growing demand for farm to school activities. Ensuring expanded stable funding, as well as improving access for applicants, will build on the successful momentum of grant investments.

The repeated deferral of Child Nutrition Reauthorization has denied the chance for common-sense measures to expand and improve this program based on its first ten years of implementation. It is important to address these changes in the 2023 Farm Bill so that grantee school districts, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations can complement the work of Farm Bill programs to support agricultural producers.

## EXPAND AND IMPROVE THE SUCCESSFUL FARM TO SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM

- **Incorporate the measures in the Farm to School Act, including:**
  - **Ensure a mandatory budget of \$15m per year**
  - **Raise the grant cap to \$500,000 for projects that need it**
  - **Better target funding to support Tribal projects, community need, and beginning/socially disadvantaged producers**

## REDUCE BARRIERS TO FARM TO SCHOOL GRANTS

- **Reduce barriers to applying for Farm to School Grants by granting USDA the authority to modify or waive the current 25% matching requirement**

**"Farm-to-school connects us to community in a way that we've connected to each other for generations."**

- Sophia Riemer Bopp, former NFSN Program Associate



# SUPPORT FARM TO SCHOOL AND ECE IN AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS

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Farm to school and farm to early care and education (ECE) stakeholders work with nutrition education and agricultural support programs to increase kids' and families exposure to fresh, local and season foods such as specialty crops. Programs such as SNAP-ED and Specialty Crop Block Grants have increased impact and can be tailored to meet state or community needs.

## F2S IN SNAP-ED

- **Maintain or expand the budget of SNAP-Ed to support farm to school and farm to ECE work and encourage farm to school/ECE as a successful strategy for child and lifelong health.**

## ENSURE EQUITY SNAP-ED

- **Elevate SNAP-Ed approaches, and approaches to nutrition education and dietetics as a whole, that are culturally responsive/sensitive and informed by racial equity. SNAP-Ed funding should also encourage Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change (PSE) approaches to the nutrition environment.**

## SPECIALTY CROP SUPPORT

- **Maintain or expand support for Specialty Crop Block Grants, particularly encouraging uses of SCBG that use farm to school/ECE to increase specialty crop familiarity and consumption, and that use SCBG to increase farm to school market access for specialty crop producers.**

**"As someone who comes from an immigrant background, I value the farm to school movement's capacity to foster an environment that enables culture, traditions, and equity at the core of working with communities through food."**

-Trisha Bautista Larsen, NFSN Program Manager



# SUPPORT OPPORTUNITY IN LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

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The 2023 Farm Bill offers many ways to increase investment in local food infrastructure and ensure these market opportunities are available to all producers. Congress should focus on refining successful programs based on producer and stakeholder feedback and expanding these needed investments. Congress should also direct USDA to use the levers at their disposal as an agency to center small- and mid-sized producers, particularly producers of color, in their own purchasing programs.

## SUPPORT LOCAL AGRICULTURE MARKET PROGRAM (LAMP) GRANTS

- Increase market opportunities and decrease barriers to local food with investments in the Local Agriculture Market Programs (LAMP), actions to decrease barriers to these programs, and overall support for local food infrastructure

## TARGET SUPPORT TO INCREASE EQUITY

- Provide targeted support for small and "socially disadvantaged" producers to access market opportunities and overcome regulatory barriers.

## LEVERAGE USDA PURCHASING

- Support flexibility for local purchasing in USDA programs through measures such as the Unprocessed Fruit and Vegetable Pilot and emergency food procurement
- Increase transparency and traceability in USDA purchasing, and identify opportunities for USDA procurement to increase racial equity in its solicitation and contract oversight practices.

**"For years, we have heard from our school partners that they are eager and ready to prioritize more local food in school meals, and want more options to do so. Equitable investments in local food get us closer to resilience."**

- Karen Spangler, NFSN Policy Director



# ENSURE EQUITY AND RESILIENCE ACROSS AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION POLICIES

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Many things need to change in order to shift power in our food system and our society, and farm to school activities alone cannot effect that transformation. NFSN is proud to support policy measures that address the larger institutional and economic forces that shape the choices and power that we have in our grocery stores and markets, our farms and food businesses, and our school and ECE meal programs.

## **ADDRESS HISTORIC AND ONGOING BARRIERS TO RACIAL EQUITY IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION**

- **Invest in opportunities for land access, land ownership and tenure, capital and credit for communities of color, including producer and worker cooperatives.**
- **Support technical assistance, research and outreach through funding to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal colleges and universities.**
- **Ensure adequate access to all USDA services and funding opportunities through outreach, language access, and streamlining government processes.**
- **Secure the rights and dignity of food and farm workers through new labor measures and increased accountability for labor abuses.**

## **INVEST IN DIVERSITY, RESILIENCE, AND COMPETITION**

- **Address barriers to market opportunities for small and mid-sized producers through measures such as cost-share programs, infrastructure needs, and examining regulatory burdens.**
- **Prioritize risk management, safety nets, and USDA programs to better support healthy dietary staples for human consumption (such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, or animal products) to allow producers to nourish their communities.**
- **Strengthen competition by enforcing antitrust laws and expand measures to reverse the trend toward market consolidation. Continue investments in capacity such as local meat processing and the development of a valued workforce in this sector.**

# ENSURE EQUITY AND RESILIENCE ACROSS AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION POLICIES

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## ELEVATE FARMER-CENTERED PRACTICES FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- Recognize the importance of Indigenous and traditional agroecological practices that safeguard ecosystems in incentivized climate mitigation/adaptation strategies.
- Reward farmers who are already implementing these stewardship practices, and help others transition to become more resilient in the face of climate change.
- Ensure effective guardrails on climate-based financial incentives to maximize their benefit to small and mid-sized producers, beginning farmer and ranchers, and "socially disadvantaged" producers

## PROTECT NUTRITION ASSISTANCE AND IMPROVE HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

- Protect benefit amounts and program access for nutrition programs, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Advance food sovereignty by shifting program authority to Tribal governments or organizations for programs on Native Nations.
- Extend SNAP to Puerto Rico and U.S. Territories.
- Expand and improve access to healthy food programs, such as farmers market incentive programs, support for farmers market vending, and other projects to increase healthy food retail options.

**"Farm to school builds community because it takes a community to nourish your body. Food always brings us together, and intentionally cultivating a connection between our youth and our food plants the seed for resilient, dynamic, and enriched communities."**

-Tomas Delgado, NFSN Program Manager

