

What is farm to early care and education?

Farm to early care and education (farm to ECE) enhances ECE settings by incorporating local food sourcing, school gardens, and food and agriculture education. This approach enriches the educational experience across various ECE environments, including preschools, child care centers, and Head Start programs. Farm to ECE supports experiential learning, community engagement, and promotes life-long health and wellness for children, families, and caregivers.



A Vision for Farm to Early Care and Education

As a leader and national convener in the farm to early care and education (farm to ECE) movement, NFSN aims to support the development of vibrant and equitable, community-based food systems and enhance the health and well-being of young children and their families through comprehensive farm to ECE initiatives. NFSN works to achieve this aim by (1) broadly sharing information and resources, (2) promoting state, regional, and national networking, and (3) supporting advocacy efforts. To meet these objectives, National Farm to School Network convenes the Farm to Early Care and Education Working Group, a cohort of experienced leaders and stakeholders in the field that work collaboratively in identifying and addressing barriers and strategic opportunities to further the national farm to early care and education movement.

For ECE Practitioners

Getting Started with Farm to Early Care and Education This fact sheet offers steps for instituting farm to early care and education practices in early care and education settings (preschools, Head Start, center-based, programs in K-12 school districts, and family child care programs). It also discusses differences between school districts and early care settings. Other topics: benefits, promotion, resources, networks, goals and collaboration. Examples from Oregon and California.



Local Procurement for Child Care Centers This fact sheet offers advice for those looking to institute farm to early care and education procurement practices in a child care center setting. It discusses procurement from distributors, farmers' markets, farmers, CSAs, and gardens. This resource offers tips for getting started and highlights a successful program in Minnesota.



Farm to Early Education Self-Assessment Farm to early care and education (farm to ECE) includes activities like purchasing local foods, gardening, and food and agriculture education. The Farm to ECE Self-Assessment from the National Farm to School Network (NFSN) and the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) helps ECE providers evaluate and enhance their farm to ECE practices, available in both English and Spanish. NFSN and ASPHN welcome feedback on this tool via the Farm to ECE Self-Assessment Feedback Form.



Farm to ECE Movement Trends

Farm to Early Care and Education Positions Brief 2023 This report surveys state-wide Farm to Early Childhood Education (ECE) positions and the nature and scope of their work, outlining partnerships, funding sources, and their impact on the Farm to ECE movement. This report was offered in partnership between National Farm to School Network and the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) with the goal of presenting potential state position models for the field.



WEBINAR ARCHIVE: Statewide Farm to ECE Network Building Building a statewide farm to early care and education (ECE) network is crucial for institutionalizing farm to ECE and expanding its benefits to all children, families, and communities. In the April NFSN Farm to ECE Webinar, Emily Jackson of the North Carolina Farm to Preschool Network and Erin Croom of the Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition share successful models and key strategies for developing such networks.



Adapting Vermont FEED's Farm to School Institute Model for the Early Childhood Audience Vermont FEED's Farm to School Institute is a successful model for creating sustainable farm to school programs by engaging whole-school teams to integrate initiatives across classrooms, cafeterias, and communities. Its adaptable design has led to nationwide replication and growing interest in adapting it for early childhood education. This guide offers strategies and considerations for states to plan and implement a Farm to Early Childhood Institute.



ECE Metrics and Evaluations

Farm to Early Care and Education Shared Metrics: Outcomes, Indicators, and Measures for Farm to ECE Evaluation The National Farm to School Network (NFSN) and The Policy Equity Group's (PEG) Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Shared Metrics resource aids practitioners and evaluators in planning, implementing, researching, evaluating, and reporting farm to ECE efforts. It includes a resource guide, a library of specific metrics, and an orientation video, all with a focus on equity. This resource aims to unify the farm to ECE movement under shared priorities and language, enhancing decision-making for policymakers and funders regarding its growth and direction.



Aligning Farm to Early Care and Education with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) Integrating farm to early care and education (ECE) into Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) standards can broaden access to farm to ECE programming and reduce barriers. Farm to ECE aligns with QRIS domains like professional development, family engagement, and learning environments. This fact sheet offers strategies, case studies, and sample language for states to incorporate farm to ECE into their QRIS.

