New York State Farm to School
2012 Survey of School Food Service Directors

Highlights

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Survey objectives
Survey methods
Participant demographics
Operational resources
Purchasing
Survey Objectives

- Determine extent of New York’s farm to school activity
- Assess interest in farm to school
- Identify opportunities and barriers
- Determine distribution systems
- Identify most commonly purchased products
- Determine use of Geographic Preference\(^1\)
- Focus the activities of NYSDAM and Coordinating Committee Members on greatest needs and interests

\(^1\) Geographic Preference helps schools purchase locally-grown food items. In 2008, the Farm Bill directed the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage institutions operating Child Nutrition Programs to purchase locally-grown agricultural products. Geographic Preference provides an avenue for schools to engage with and support their local farmers by purchasing local foods.
Survey Methods

- **Quantitative Survey**
  - 58 closed and open questions
  - Web-based, Survey Monkey
  - Emailed survey link to NYS Ed contact list of >1,000 k-12 school food service directors
  - 30-day data collection period

- **Survey Foci**
  - Processes (i.e., menu development and purchasing)
  - Resources and infrastructure
  - Local sourcing habits and interests
  - Barriers to purchasing local foods
  - State support for local procurement
  - Farm to School educational activities
### Participant Demographics

#### Counties represented:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Albany</th>
<th>Dutchess</th>
<th>Livingston</th>
<th>Orange</th>
<th>Seneca</th>
<th>Wyoming</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allegany</td>
<td>Erie</td>
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<td>Steuben</td>
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<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>Putnam</td>
<td>Suffolk</td>
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<td>Cattaraugus</td>
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<td>Rensselaer</td>
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<td>Onondaga</td>
<td>Schenectady</td>
<td>Washington</td>
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<td>Kings</td>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>Schoharie</td>
<td>Wayne</td>
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Participants Demographics

- **307** participants with a **20%** response rate
- School District Enrollment (n=238)
  - Average = **1,844 children**
  - Range = **18 – 12,000 children**
- **80%** self-manage food service operations (n=176)
- Average Daily Participation (ADP):
  - Breakfast = **298** (n=164)
  - Lunch = **916** (n=166)
  - Dinner = **28** (n=130)
Operational Resources

- Average total food service staff = 14
- Range = 1-60 (n=164)

Percentage (%) of schools that need the following additional resources to handle fresh, unprocessed foods:

- Equipment to prepare fresh produce (n=170): 31.8%
- Staff with skills to prepare fresh produce (n=168): 23.8%
- Cold storage for fresh food (n=171): 21.1%
- Facilities in which to prepare fresh food (n=171): 16.4%
- Dry storage for shelf-stable product (n=170): 14.7%
Operational Resources

- Percentage of respondents (n=166) who introduce new items/recipes to students by:
  - Highlighting new items on menus and website: **51%**
  - Using promotional fliers/posters: **23%**
  - Offering samples/taste tests: **72%**
Produce

- Annual produce budgets range: <$1,000 - $300,000

- Of the respondents:
  - 77% sell fresh produce a la carte (n=149)
  - 56% have salad bars in schools (n=145)
  - 57% receive 1 fresh produce delivery per week; 35% receive 2 deliveries; 8% receive more (n=152)
Top fresh produce items purchased by schools (excluding oranges and bananas):

- Apples
- Lettuce
- Carrots
- Tomatoes
Top *minimally-processed* produce items purchased by schools:

- Baby Carrots
- Salad Mix
- Shredded Lettuce
- Broccoli Florets
Local Purchasing

- 69% of 147 respondents had purchased local food
- 26% of the 147 respondents had not previously purchased local products but expressed interest in doing so
- 103 respondents agreed to be listed in a directory of schools interested in buying local products
- 43% of respondents specified Geographic Preference to suppliers (n=62)
- Most local purchases were made through distributors rather than directly from farmers
The top resources considered very useful in facilitating the purchase of local foods (%):

1. Financial support
   - 88% (n=136)
2. Directory of local farms that serve schools
   - 85% (n=133)
3. List of local products available through current distributors
   - 81% (n=129)
4. Simplified state procedure for local purchasing
   - 80% (n=129)
5. Direct assistance identifying local food suppliers
   - 73% (n=129)
**Local Purchasing**

- **Top locally-purchased items:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Local Item</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Local Item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Onions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cucumbers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yogurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Cabbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Grapes</td>
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Local Purchasing

Percentage (%) of respondents with the following concerns associated with local purchasing (n = 142):

- Too Expensive: 55%
- Delivery is unreliable: 35%
- Inconsistent Quality: 30%
- Too complex to purchase: 25%
- Food safety: 22%
- Doesn't meet school specifications: 11%

(n = 142)
Percentage (%) of respondents \((n = 140)\) who agreed that benefits of serving locally-grown foods included:

- Local Purchasing: 90%
- Knowing source of products: 78%
- Local farm economy: 71%
- Good public relations: 69%
- Access to healthier foods: 65%
- Increasing students' consumption of F & V: 59%
- Lower transportation costs: 44%
- Meeting parents' demand for local food: 40%
- Ability to purchase variable quantities: 33%
- Ability to purchase special varieties: 32%
- Safer food: 26%
Farm to School Activities

Percentage (%) of respondents (n=104) who reported that their district participated in the following activities during 2011:

- Planted a school garden: 51.00%
- Served special meals featuring NYS products: 41.00%
- Visited farms and/or farmers' markets: 39.00%
- Celebrated Farm to You Festival: 33.00%
- Incorporated education on NYS food and agriculture into the school curriculum: 32.00%
Farm to School Activities

Percentage (%) of respondents with districts that offer the following activities:

- Garden-based learning: 35% (n=236)
- School garden: 36% (n=241)
- Food, nutrition & agriculture curriculum: 40% (n=232)
- Taste-tests: 60% (n=237)
- Cooking lessons: 63% (n=238)
- Nutrition education: 85% (n=242)
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