



Healthy School Food

M A R Y L A N D

Jane Lawton Farm-to-School Program – Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week – Occurrence

HealthySchoolFoodMD.org

Background

In 2008, the Jane Lawton Farm-to-School Program was passed in the Maryland legislature, resulting in a successful, one-week program called “Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week”. It was designed to promote and facilitate the sale of farm products grown in the State to Maryland schools and to educate students about where their food comes from, how it is produced and the benefits of a healthy diet. The original act also requires each local educational agency to report the types and amounts of farm products purchased from farms in the state each year.

Purpose of the Bill

This bill expands the farm-to-school program (also known as Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week) from one week to two weeks a year, with one week in the fall and one week in the spring.

Benefits to our Children and Families

- Children will learn that healthy food comes from farms, not from factories and grocery store shelves.
- Children will learn how food is grown and the benefits of a healthy diet.
- 26% of Maryland’s high school students are overweight or obese (CDC, 2013), yet many children do not eat the fruit and vegetables served at school because they are unappetizing. Local produce is picked when it is at its peak taste, in season, most abundant, and least expensive. Local fruits and vegetables are fresher, more appetizing and taste better.
- Local, fresh produce contains higher levels of the nutrients necessary for our health. Vitamin content is depleted by light, temperature and time, which happens when produce is transported over long distances.
- A second Homegrown School Lunch Week will help our children learn the correlation between farm fresh produce and their health, as well as better understand farming seasons and which crops are produced in which seasons.
- Children will learn the benefits of buying local and can encourage their parents to shop at farmers markets and stores selling local foods.



Benefits to Local Farms

- Buying local supports Maryland's farmers. Many Maryland farmers are struggling to remain in operation due to the rising costs of production, development pressure and the aging of the farmer. Helping establish relationships with schools gives farmers access to a new and consistent market for their products. A farm-to-school connection can provide farmers with the economic stability they need to remain on their land and in production.

Benefits to Maryland's Economy

- Small farms reinvest more money into local economies by purchasing feed, seed and other materials from local businesses.
- For each dollar of revenue raised by farms, forest or open space, governments spend only 37 cents on services (as opposed to developments that require more than a dollar).
- Buying local maintains our food supply and creates jobs. Approximately 350,000 people are employed in some aspect of agriculture, making it the largest commercial industry in Maryland. Agriculture also remains the largest single land use in the State, with 2.05 million acres, or roughly 32 percent of total land area used for farming in 2013.
- In 2012, the total cash farm income was approximately \$2.3 billion. Total farm expenses exceeded \$1.9 billion, while per farm expenses averaged \$158,312. Net farm income was over \$477 million while income per farm averaged \$38,920.

Benefits to our Environment

- In the United States, the average grocery store's produce travels 1,500 miles between the farm where its grown and your refrigerator. This can mean between 7 and 14 days in transit before reaching the supermarket. A tremendous amount of fossil fuel is used to transport food such long distances in refrigerated cars.
- Selling directly to schools reduces fuel used in transport, necessity of lengthy refrigeration, packaging and therefore the negative environmental impact. Buying local is better for our environment.

Healthy School Food Maryland coalition partners:

Brickyard Educational Farm
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Coalition Halting Obesity Everywhere in Children (CHOICE)
Crossroads Community Food Network
First Bites
GrowingSoul
Healthy Kinder, Inc.
Maryland Environmental Health Network
Montgomery County Food Council
Montgomery County Sustainability Network
Montgomery Victory Gardens
Prince George's County Food Equity Council
Real Food for Kids - Montgomery
Safe Grow Montgomery
Student Section of the Maryland Public Health Association
Young Activist Club