



Hawthorn McCracken

Farm to ECE Program Associate
National Farm to School Network



NATIONAL
FARM *to* **SCHOOL**
NETWORK



Our Vision

Our Core Functions

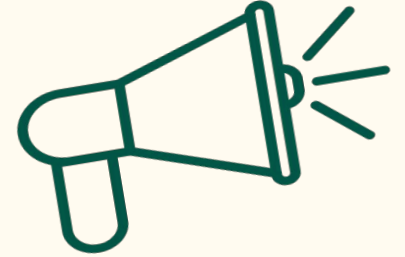
We are a hub
for:



Information



Networking



Advocacy

Connecting
people to:



Resources



People



Policy

We are a part of a
Growing
Movement!



According to the 2021 National Farm to ECE Survey...

CORE ELEMENTS OF **FARM** *to* **ECE**



What Is Farm to ECE?

Where are you with your local food journey?



Why Connect with Farmers?

Fresh, Nutritious Foods



Stronger Local Economies



Enhanced Curriculum



Fun & Fresh Mealtimes



Community Connections



Farmers as Keepers of Traditional Knowledge



The most important thing to know...

There are farmers who want to work with early care sites!



ECE Purchasing is a great opportunity for...

- Small farms
- Urban farms
- Specialty growers
- Beginning farmers
- CSA farmers
- Market gardeners



Tips for Local Food Purchasing

- Start small!
- Buy whole produce
- Consider CSA
- Leverage year-round schedules



Beyond Veggies – Local Food Across the Plate



A Year in the Life of a Small Farmer



What a small farmer needs:

- Pre-orders are ideal
- Quantities and frequency of purchases
- Preferred varieties
- Reliable, regular purchases
- Delivery/pick up that works for both of you
- Flexibility for unpredictable weather or growing conditions



Food Safety Questions?

- Almost all farms must comply with FSMA guidelines
- Many are GAP certified
- Ask farmers about their food safety practices
- Connect with Extension or state Ag Department if you need to buy from a producer with specific certifications.



Not direct purchasing? You can still buy local!

- Food hubs
- Co-ops
- Local tags at your grocery store
- Local food through your distributor



Other Community Connections

Farmer's Union

Farm Bureau

Extension

Master Gardeners

Farmer's Market Association

Young Farmers' Coalition



How to Connect with Farmers

Step One – Know What Your Site Needs



Farm to Early Care and Education Self-Assessment

PUBLISHED | OCTOBER 2021



Farm to early care and education (farm to ECE) is a set of activities that include purchasing and serving local foods, gardening (indoors or outdoors), and food and agriculture education activities.* Farm to ECE supports access to nutritious food for young children and their families, and engages families and communities in their food system. This self-assessment is designed to help you assess and document your ECE's current farm to ECE activities and identify goals for the future.

How To Complete the Assessment:

- This assessment should be completed by the team of staff that work on planning or doing farm to ECE at your site. This could include teachers, kitchen and nutrition staff, family engagement staff, and administrators/directors. For smaller centers or family child care homes, this could be just one or two individuals.
- As a group, the team reviews each item, marks the column that best describes where the ECE site currently is with the activity, and shares any comments.
- After reviewing current activities, the team identifies one area that they would like to work on and up to three goals they would like to work towards in that area.
- The team should agree to a date to do this assessment again to review their progress.

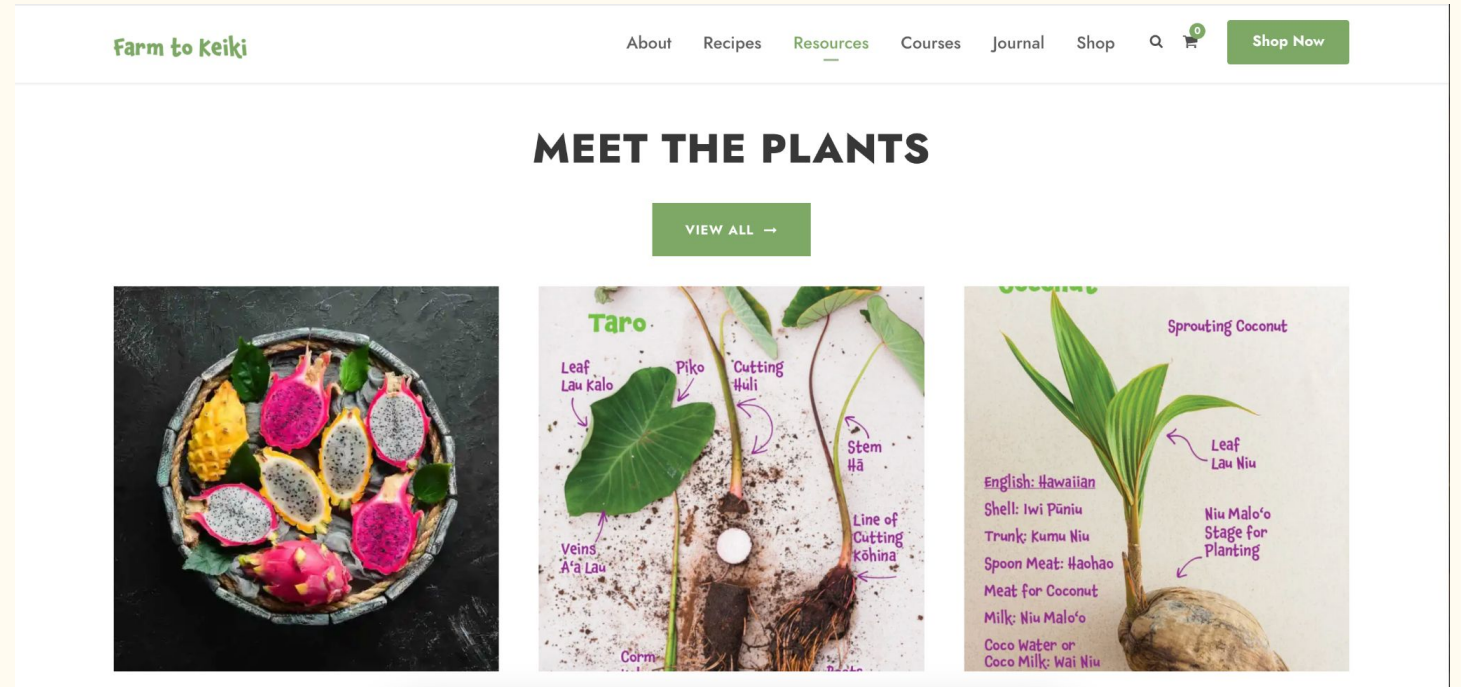
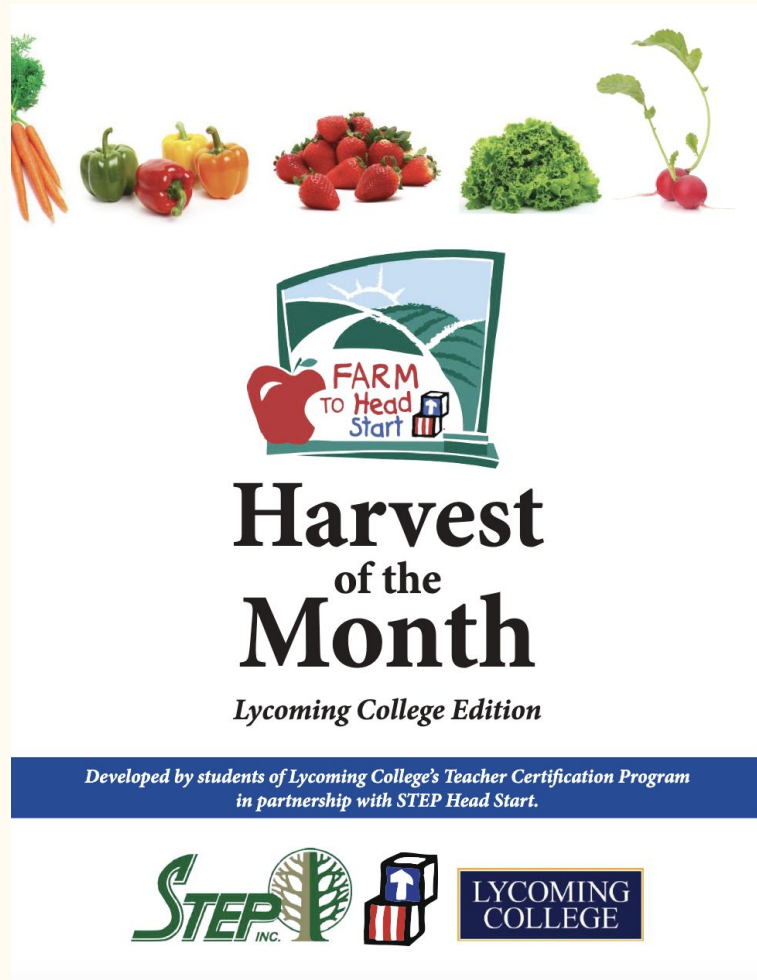


Preparing Your Site for Local Foods



- Know what your kitchen can do.
- Have a plan in the kitchen and the classroom.
- Taste, taste, and taste again!

Find a Curriculum That Fits Your Needs



farmtoschool.org/resources-main/farm-to-early-care-and-education-curricula

Know What Your Students Like – and What They Might Want to Try!



Purchasing for Your Goals

This guide will help you find a farmer-producer that have growing practices that make sense to you and your operations:



Step Two – Find a Farmer Who's Growing It



Local Foods Database

25,002 views

Published yesterday at 11:04 AM

SHARE

Producers in the WI Local Foods Database

A & W Maplecrest

Alsum Farms & Produce, Inc

Anisoptera Acres

Apple-Licious Orchard

...

128 more

Producers that have worked with the AC F2...

Adam's Heirlooms

AJ Wholesale Produce

Almost Eden Farms

Alpine Ridge Orchard

...

195 more

School interested in buying local products

Adams Friendship School District

Ashwaubenon School District

Auburndale School District

Beloit Turner School District

88 more

A map of Wisconsin and surrounding areas, including parts of Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. The map is populated with numerous location pins, each containing a stylized icon of a person and a fork. The pins are color-coded: green, yellow, and purple. The map shows major cities like Minneapolis, St. Paul, Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago, as well as various state and national forests and reservations. The map is sourced from Google My Maps, with data from 2025. A scale bar indicates 20 miles.

A square QR code with a black and white pixelated pattern, used for quick access to the Local Foods Database.



NORTH CAROLINA Farm to ECE Connections

[► Farm to ECE Connections Map](#)[What is Farm to ECE?](#)[Farm to Preschool Network](#)[ECE Resources](#)[Farmer Resources](#)[CACFP](#)[How to Use the Map](#)

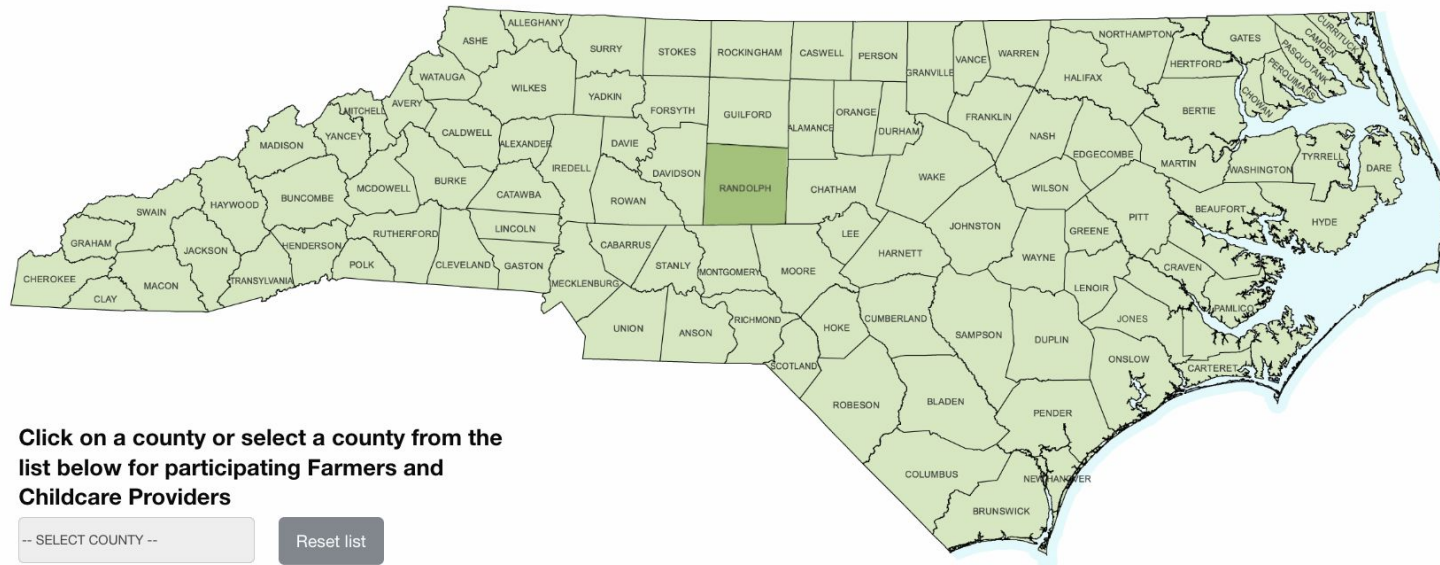
North Carolina Farm to ECE Connections Map

Display this page in (Mostrar esta página en)

[English](#)[Español](#)

Farm to Preschool or Early Care and Education (ECE) programs are instrumental in nurturing healthy eating habits and fostering a deeper understanding of food origins in young children. By introducing locally sourced foods and hands-on experiences like gardening and farm visits, these initiatives not only promote nutrition but also environmental awareness, support for local economies, and community interconnectedness.

The map below serves as a tool for connecting childcare sites with local farmers, facilitating the use of locally sourced foods, and contributing to healthier communities in North Carolina.

[Add Your Farm Organization to the Map](#)[Add Your Childcare Organization to the Map](#)[Remove Your Organization From This Map](#)

Click on a county or select a county from the list below for participating Farmers and Childcare Providers

-- SELECT COUNTY --

[Reset list](#)



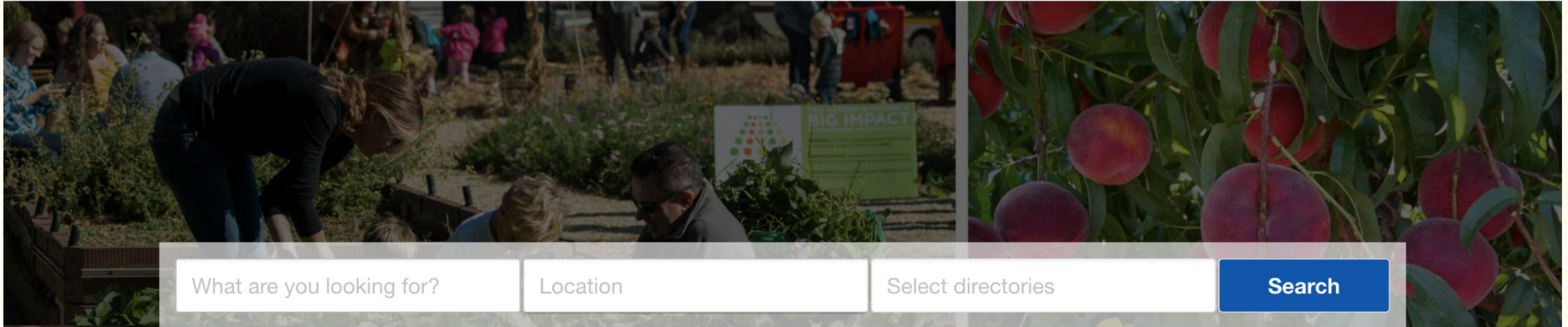
Approved Supplier Program

The NM Grown Approved Supplier Program is designed to grow and diversify the base of New Mexico producers selling to schools and other institutions. The Approved Supplier Program helps ensure that fresh produce that moves through schools, early child care facilities, and senior centers is safe, traceable, and comes from a garden or farm using sound and current food safety practices. The program also helps connect statewide farmers and buyers to streamline internal purchasing processes.

Last updated on Thursday, December 19, 2024

Note: This list is updated quarterly and as needed to reflect the various products and availability from all of our Approved Suppliers. The list is subject to change based on product availability, growing season, and other conditions that may affect farm and/or ranch operation.





<https://www.usdalocalfoodportal.com/>

Activity: Find a Farmer! (10 minutes)

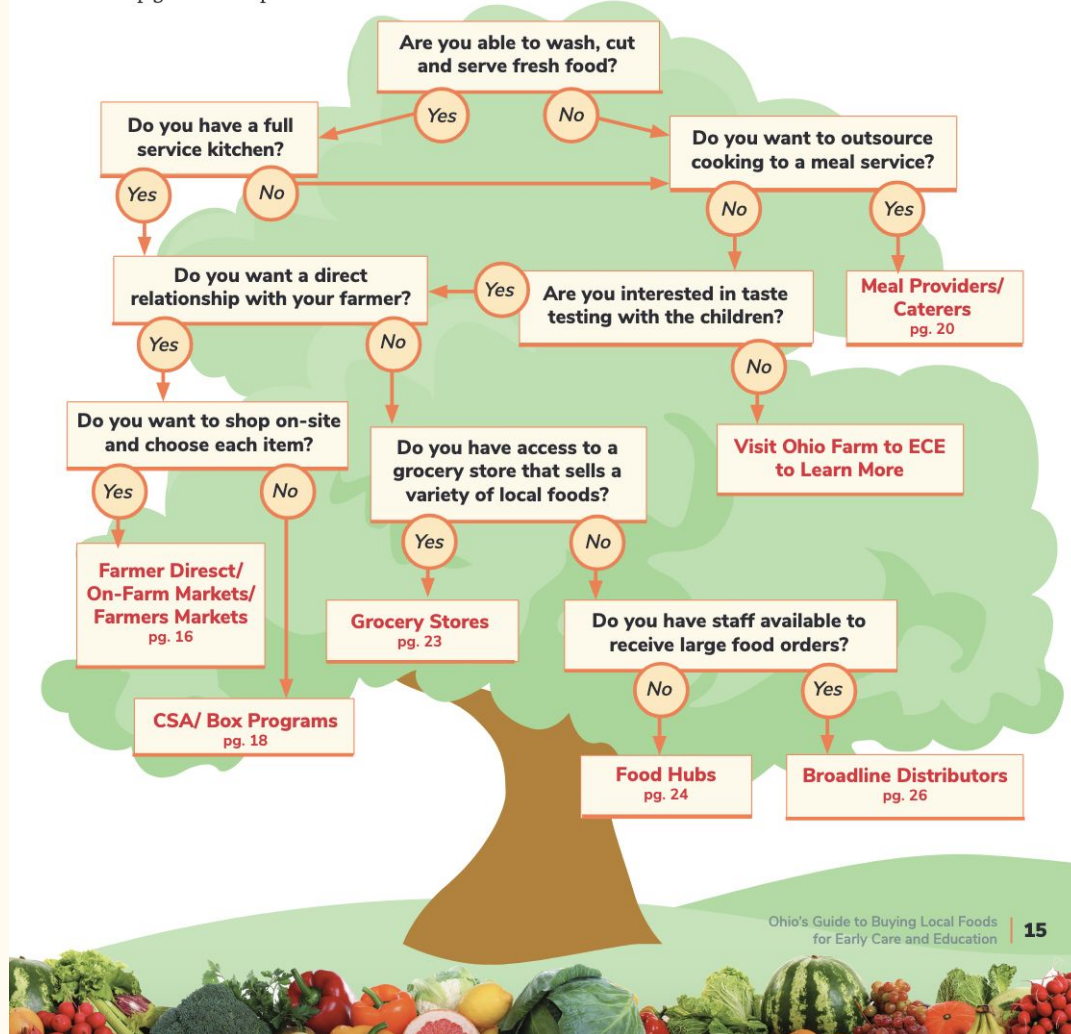
1. Find a local food database for your state.
 - a. If one does not exist, use the USDA Local Food Database.
2. Identify one farmer local to your early care site (if you manage multiple sites, pick one to use as an example).
3. See what kind of products they grow.
4. Choose one product that you use in your current meal pattern.
5. Find the farmer's contact information.
6. Save for later!

Step Three – Determine Your Procurement Method



I Want to Buy Local Foods for My ECE Site

You have decided to purchase local foods for your site but want to know the best way to proceed. Follow the tree below to find which vendor best fits your needs and visit the page listed for step-by-step guidance to purchase local food.



From [Ohio's Farm to ECE Local Buying Guide](#)



Creative Opportunities in Farm to ECE: Cooperative Purchasing

NFSN Staff

January 10, 2022



Many early care and education (ECE) sites struggle with local procurement. One of the reasons local procurement can be difficult is due to the often small volume needs, which can be lower than the smallest unit a farmer is willing to sell. Sites also can lack the equipment and staff time to plan menus, cook from scratch, and make multiple grocery trips per week. One approach to overcoming these barriers is through cooperative purchasing. Cooperative purchasing means sharing a purchase order, either with another early learning site, with families, or with a school district.

Recent Posts

Action Alert! USDA Terminates \$660M Program for Local Food in Schools and Child Care

March 11, 2025

Farm to School Policy in 2024 and What Comes Next

December 16, 2024

Here's What You Can Do for the Next Round of USDA's Local Food for Schools (LFS) Funding - Deadline 4/30/2025

December 11, 2024

Watermelon Day at Edible Schoolyard New Orleans: A Tradition Rooted in Connection | National Farm to School Network Series

October 28, 2024

Expanding Local Seafood with Maine Sea to School | National Farm to School Month Series

Get Creative With Purchasing!



Step Four – Contact!



Step Five – Trial and Feedback





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Farm to Early Care and Education Shared Metrics:

Outcomes, Indicators, and Measures for Farm to ECE Evaluation
User Guide and Framing Resource

Step Six – Share Your Success!

Others want to hear your story! It can be as simple as sharing a photo and a few sentences.

Be sure to share photos with families to show off your delicious meals.



Step Seven – Rinse (Chop, Serve) and Repeat



Resources

ASPHN Procurement Resource Library



NFSN Procurement Resource Library



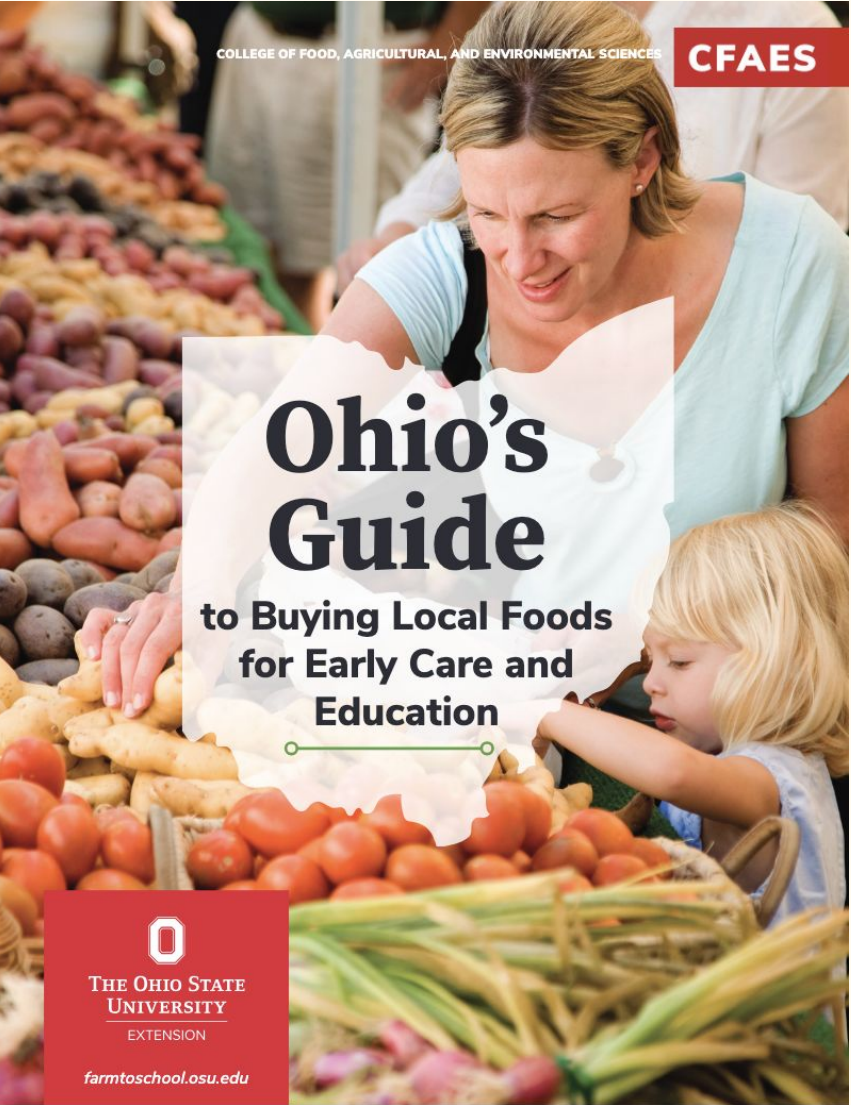


Resource Directory

Discover resources to help you operate the CACFP.

<https://info.cacfp.org/resources>

Ohio's Farm to ECE Buying Guides





Enhancing Young Children's Access to Local Foods and Farm to ECE: **Federal Funding Guide** VERSION 2

July 2024 | www.asphn.org | www.policyequity.com | www.frac.org | www.farmtoschool.org



Farm to Early Care and Education Continues to Foster Bright Futures for Children and Communities



Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) promotes child health and well-being and increases access to healthy foods through a collection of strategies that are centered in experiential learning and family and community engagement.

Farm to ECE brings three core elements — gardening, food and agriculture education, and local food procurement — into every type of ECE setting, including family child care homes, child care centers, Head Start, and preschools in K-12 districts. Not only does farm to ECE create opportunities to influence the eating habits of children at a critical time in development by encouraging children to eat fresh, wholesome foods, but, when approached equitably, has the potential to reduce health and education disparities, improve household food security and food access, and support community food systems.

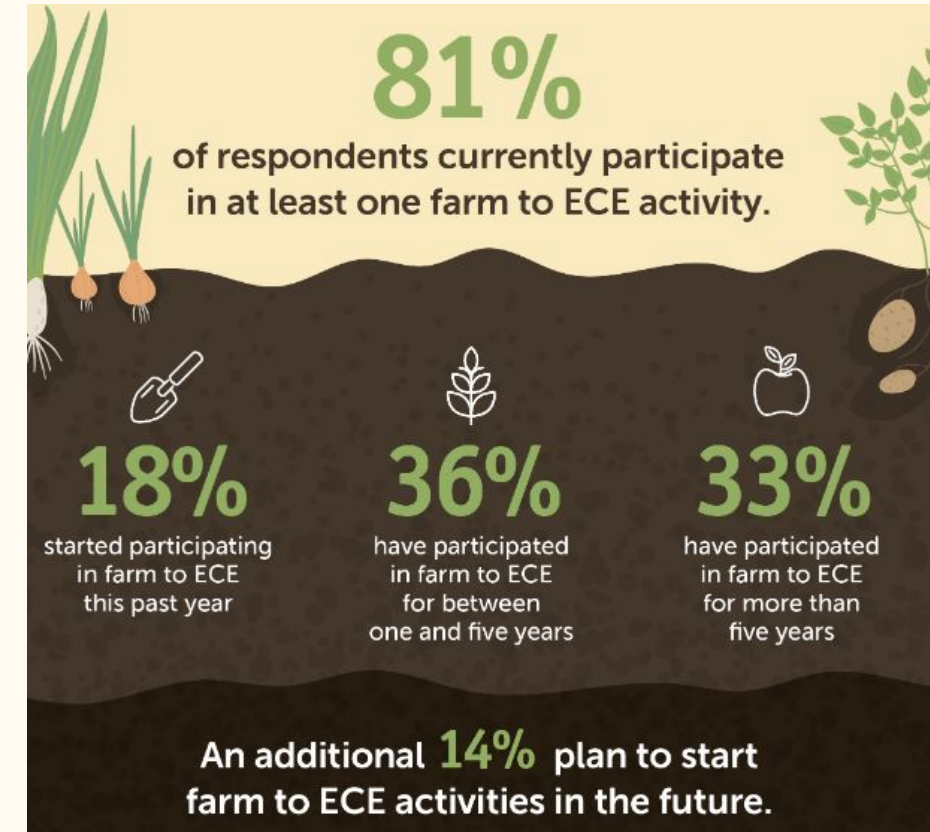
Farm to ECE's many benefits provide a unique opportunity to address the challenges providers face during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though ECEs have provided critical services for families with young children during the pandemic, child care workers continue to be underpaid, with one in three childcare workers experiencing food insecurity¹. COVID-19 safety measures such as closures and group size limitations have put additional burden on the already strained and inadequately funded ECE system. Many providers, farm to ECE supportive organizations, and government agencies have seen the opportunity to improve

CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM to SCHOOL

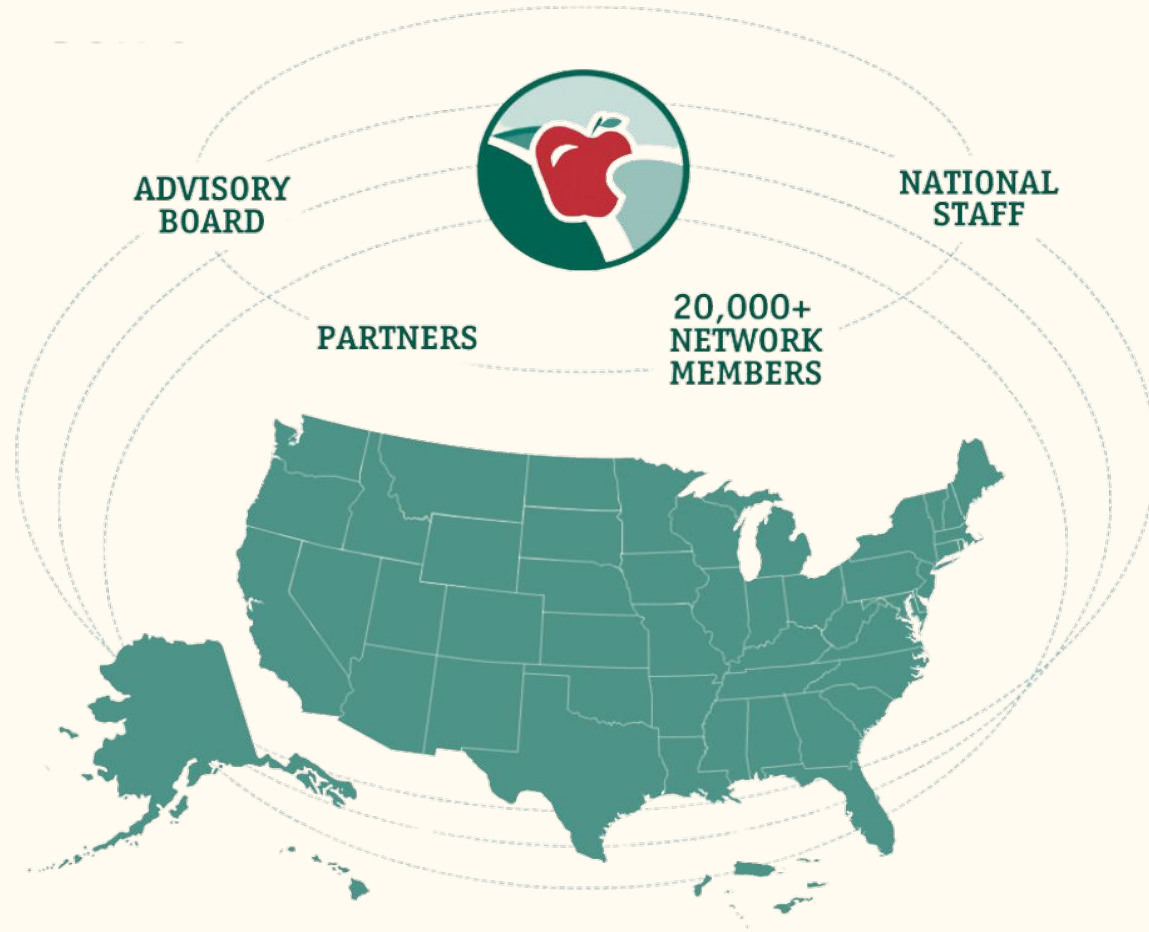


"Farm to ECE has had a wonderful impact on science, cultural sharing and introduction to new foods for the children (and families). It was very influential in helping our program remain open during COVID."

2021 National Farm to ECE Survey



Join Our Network!





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ACTION CENTER

Call to Action on Federal Policy

- Contact and educate your legislators!
- Review our materials:
<https://www.farmentoschool.org/policy/take-action>
- Share your story through NFSN's Impact Survey





Thank You!

Does anyone have any questions?

