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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 6/13/2024

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Arkansas Farm to School Hosted Connection Events for Producers and School Nutrition Staff

LITTLE ROCK, AR— The Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Farm to School Program hosted a series of engaging regional connection events, uniting local producers, and school nutrition staff from across the state.

“Producers and school nutrition staff were given an opportunity to connect, something that doesn’t happen every day, and they responded enthusiastically,” said Jessica Chapman, Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator. “These events are crucial for developing meaningful connections that improve our local communities. By building these relationships, we are not only supporting our local farmers and economy but also ensuring that our children have access to nutritious and locally sourced meals.”

Held in North Little Rock, Hope, Batesville, and Fayetteville, these events aimed to strengthen the bonds between farmers and schools, fostering a community-focused approach to healthy eating and local food sourcing. The events featured enlightening sessions led by national partners, with the Central and South Arkansas events led by Sunny Baker, Senior Director of National Farm to School Network, and the Northeast and Northwest Arkansas events led by Ally Mrachek, School Nutrition Consultant for LunchAssist.

Producers benefited by expanding their market reach through meetings with school nutrition staff, engaging with the community to promote their farms, networking with other professionals, and making a positive impact by supplying fresh, nutritious produce to local schools. Participants enjoyed lively networking sessions and conversations while the program’s national partners highlighted the importance of connecting local producers with schools and purchasing local food. These events were not just about sharing insights, but also about fostering meaningful connections that benefit everyone involved.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture, forestry, and natural resources to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while conserving natural resources and ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit [agriculture.arkansas.gov/](https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/). The Arkansas Department of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.