



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE**

ARKANSAS FARM TO SCHOOL  
2020 ANNUAL REPORT



# CONTENTS

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What is Farm to School?.....	1
Background .....	2
FY2020 Farm to School Impact .....	4
School Gardens.....	4
Education .....	5
Local Procurement.....	9
Federal Farm to School Awardees.....	11
Summary of Stakeholder Support .....	12
Arkansas Department of Agriculture .....	13
Arkansas Department of Education.....	16
Arkansas Department of Health .....	20
Arkansas Department of Human Services .....	21
University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service.....	23
Moving Forward to FY2021 .....	27
Appendices	
Appendix A - Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative .....	29
Appendix B - Funding.....	30
Appendix C - Events and Resources.....	32

Respectfully submitted to:

The Honorable Asa Hutchinson, Governor

House and Senate Committees on Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development

Prepared by:

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Human Services, and the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service.

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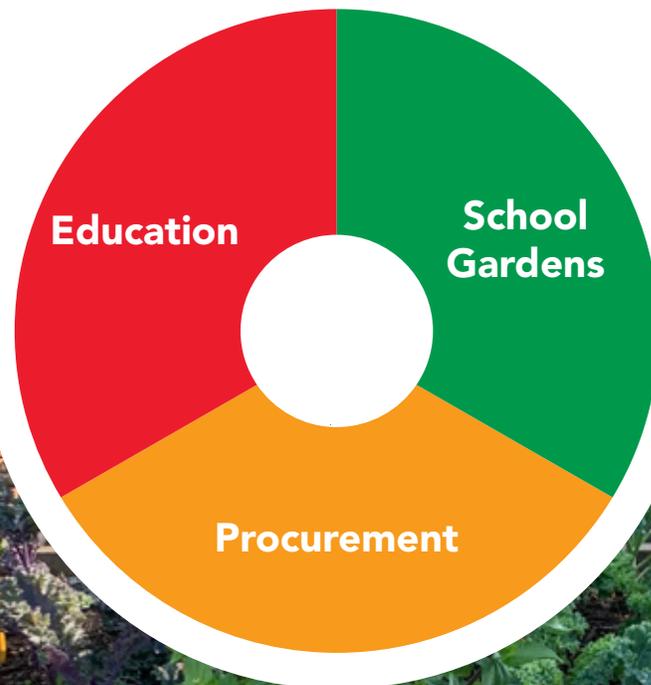
## WHAT IS FARM TO SCHOOL?

Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education sites.<sup>1</sup> Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as educational opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons, and farm field trips. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. Farm to school implementation differs by location, but always includes one or more of the following:

- School Gardens: Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening and farming;
- Education: Students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health, or nutrition; and
- Procurement: Local foods are purchased, promoted, and served in the cafeteria or as a snack or taste test.



**ARKANSAS**  
**Farm to School**



Leverett Elementary School,  
Fayetteville School District



1. <http://www.farmtoschool.org/about/what-is-farm-to-school>

## BACKGROUND

At the national level, the birth of the phrase “farm to school” can be traced back to the 1990s when pilot projects began in California and Florida to explore the possibility of transforming children’s relationship with food by exposing them to fresh, local food.

Arkansas’s initial steps with farm to school also occurred in the 1990s. In 1992, Dunbar Garden started next to Gibbs Magnet Elementary School and Dunbar Middle School in Little Rock as a nonprofit to provide educational resources and interactive opportunities for youth, families, and the community through sustainable urban agriculture. In 1995, several Arkansas producers participated with the New North Florida Cooperative Association, Inc. (NNFC) that worked with 60-100 Black farmers in five southern states to provide fresh produce to schools.

Progress with farm to school continued to build in Arkansas over the next decade. In 2005, Fayetteville School District became the first school district to develop a farm to school program to procure local products to serve its students. In 2007, Apple Seeds, Inc. was formed to inspire healthy living through garden-based education. The nonprofit established and supported school gardens at Fayetteville School District initially and expanded its programming over the years to include cooking classes, garden clubs, and field trips to farms and farmers markets.



*Washington Elementary, Fayetteville School District*

In early 2009, the first meetings were held to formally discuss farm to school. Two were hosted by the Arkansas Department of Education’s Child Nutrition Unit, and Heifer International hosted the first Arkansas Farm to School Conference. These meetings resulted in the formation of the Arkansas Farm to School Steering Committee and a farm to school pilot program where locally grown food was supplied to 24 school districts around the state. The work of the steering committee was initially led by the Arkansas Food Policy Council.

In 2012, a Community Advisory Board for the Arkansas Grow Healthy Study that was led by Arkansas Children’s Research Institute (ACRI) was formed to advise on pilot farm to school projects around the state. In 2013, ACRI was chosen as the state’s Core Partner by the National Farm to School Network (NFSN) and assumed the state farm to school leadership role.

In 2013, Fayetteville School District became the first school district in Arkansas to receive a Farm to School grant from the U. S. Department of Agriculture. A total of \$617,430 has been provided to nine Arkansas entities through the program since 2013.

In 2014, then-Governor Mike Beebe proclaimed October as Arkansas Farm to School Month. Governor Asa Hutchinson continued the practice in 2015 and each year since. Also in 2015, a USDA Farm to School Census was completed using information from the 2013-2014 school year. The USDA found that in Arkansas 47 school districts, 195 schools, and 95,605 students participated in farm to school; \$1,255,960 was invested in local food; and 36 school gardens existed.

In 2017, a group of state agencies and statewide nonprofits formed the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative (Collaborative). The NFSN recognized the following as farm to school Supporting Partners: Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Arkansas Department of Education – Child Nutrition Unit, Arkansas Department of Human Services, and the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service. The Collaborative continues to meet regularly, and more information about its work can be found in Appendix A.

Legislation enacted by the Arkansas General Assembly in 2017 and 2019 solidified the momentum of farm to school in Arkansas. The passage of the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act (Local Food Act) in 2017 created a local food preference by requiring state agencies that received at least \$25,000 in state funding for the purchase of food products to set a goal to ensure that 10 percent of the food budget was spent on local farm and food products in the first year. The goal increased to 20 percent in subsequent years. Amendments to the Local Food Act in 2019 increased the goal to at least 20 percent and expanded the number of agencies required to report local food purchases.

Through the passage of Act 506 in 2019, the Arkansas legislature established a Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program and a position for a full-time Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator within the Arkansas Department of Agriculture. The program and the coordinator work to: 1) address the issues of supply, demand, procurement, and consumption of local farm or food products in schools and early childhood programs; 2) take reasonable steps to incorporate more agriculture and nutrition education into schools and early childhood programs; 3) create a statewide program in collaboration with stakeholders; and 4) prepare an annual report.

In 2020, the Department moved into the role of Core Partner for NFSN, and ACRI shifted to a Supporting Partner.

A more detailed chronology of farm to school development can be found on the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's website at [agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-department-of-agriculture-programs/farm-to-school/arkansas-farm-to-school-2](https://agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-department-of-agriculture-programs/farm-to-school/arkansas-farm-to-school-2). A complete list of farm to school funding can be found in Appendix B, and notable events and resources can be found in Appendix C.



## FY2020 FARM TO SCHOOL IMPACT

School gardens, education, and local procurement are the three pillars of farm to school. Below is a summary of the cumulative impact of farm to school efforts in Arkansas in FY2020 by topic area. Information is also provided about the awardees of the FY2020 USDA Farm to School Grant and FY2020 CDC High Obesity Prevention Farm to School Supplemental Grant.

### School Gardens

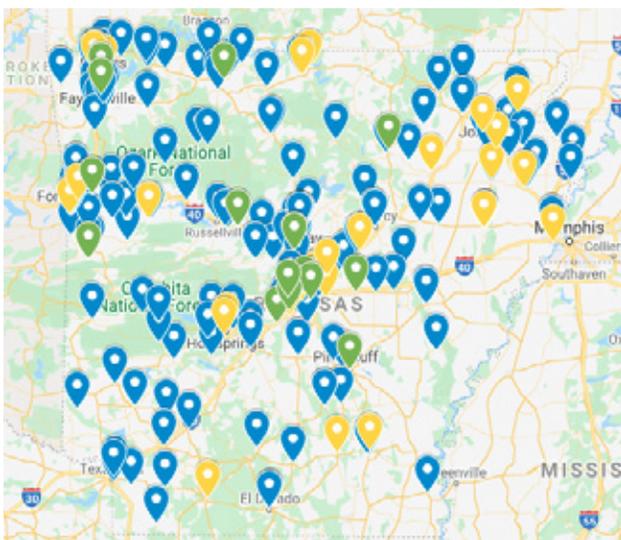
A garden is considered a school garden when the location supports the learning of children 18 or younger. This includes schools, early care and education facilities, and alternative learning environments.

School gardens are fantastic educational tools and provide students with opportunities to eat healthy foods, connect to nature, and learn about nutrition. School gardens also provide an avenue for students to engage in hands-on learning through gardening and farming. Studies show that when kids are involved in growing food, they are more likely to eat more fruits and vegetables and more willing to try different kinds.

Through conducting outreach to schools across the state, compiling information from a variety of stakeholders, and researching grant funding for school gardens from the last decade and beyond, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) developed a list and map of school gardens in Arkansas. Additional information was provided by Arkansas Farm Bureau, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, FoodCorps Arkansas, and others.



*Hugh Goodwin Elementary, El Dorado School District*



The map and list detail the name and type of facility where the school garden is located. The Department identified 302 school gardens across the state of Arkansas. 246 (81.4%) are located at schools, 44 (14.6%) are located at early care and education facilities, and 12 (4.0%) are at alternative learning environments. The school garden map can be viewed on the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's website at <https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-department-of-agriculture-programs/farm-to-school/school-gardens/>.

Funding is available for those interested in starting or expanding a school garden. Some noteworthy funding streams include:

- Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest - Arkansas Department of Agriculture funded by Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas

- Arkansas School Garden Grant Program - Arkansas Department of Agriculture funded by the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant
- Conservation Education Grants - Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
- Garden Grants - Arkansas Farm Bureau
- Mini Grants - Blue and You Foundation
- Growing My Plate Stipends - Apple Seeds, Inc.
- Farm to School Grant - USDA

## Education

Schools, early care and education facilities, and alternative learning environments all play a critical role in providing students with avenues to increase their knowledge of how food is grown and produced, their understanding of the importance of healthy, nutritious food to their health and development, and their ability to make healthy food and beverage choices.

In a farm to school and early child care and education setting, students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health, or nutrition. This can take on many different forms. Nutrition education can happen through lessons in a school garden and the classroom. It can come through a curriculum tailored to illuminate healthy nutrition while also providing take-home recipes for children to try with their parents or guardians. It can come through the cafeteria providing taste tests of locally grown fruits and vegetables and providing learning materials that enhance children's understanding of the foods they're consuming. Additionally, even more advanced lessons focused on sciences and math can include elements focused on plants, animals, the natural world, and how our overall health is connected to other processes. There is no specific mold for delivering farm to school and early care educational components.



*Alma Kiddie Kollege, Western Arkansas Child Development Inc.*

The following members of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative have prioritized education in their farm to school and early care work across the state:

1. Apple Seeds, Inc.
2. Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance
3. FoodCorps Arkansas
4. University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service

## **1. Apple Seeds, Inc.**

Apple Seeds is a nonprofit based in Northwest Arkansas that creates garden-based and virtual programs to educate young students about healthy food and works to increase students' access to those healthy foods. Apple Seeds operates a teaching farm and teaching kitchen in Fayetteville as a place for students to learn, cook, share healthy meals together, and be inspired to do the same in their kitchens at home. The nonprofit also provides cooking education in schools and through farm to table cooking classes.

Between the months of August 2019 until August 2020, Apple Seeds achieved the following:

- Reached 7,209 students (pre-COVID-19);
- Taught 1,417 students through Farm Lab Field Trips;
- Taught 4,863 students through the Cooking in the Schools program;
- Taught 126 students through Growing My Plate Cooking Classes;
- Reached 803 individuals through the Farm to Table Cooking Class; and
- Achieved partnerships with 59 different schools and organizations.

In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Apple Seeds shifted its work to focus on increased food production and food distribution to the community's students and their families. Its education work transitioned to a virtual domain with garden education and cooking demonstrations in a video format.

From March 2020 until August 2020, Apple Seeds distributed 3,468 total pounds of food that reached 2,111 students and their families. Food was distributed at 15 locations. Online, Apple Seeds' virtual education offerings had an impact as well, totaling 10,435 views overall, 4,251 views of cooking demonstration videos, 3,760 views of garden education videos, and 2,424 views of 3rd grade virtual farm field trip (plus additional views showing as part of Arkansas Alternative Methods of Instruction (AMI) on Arkansas PBS).

## **2. Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance**

The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance is a nonprofit organization representing a network of six Feeding America food banks and more than 500 hunger relief organizations around the state. The Alliance works with local and national nonprofit organizations as well as state and federal agencies in implementing programs designed to increase access to food and teach low income Arkansans the skills necessary to make healthy food choices.

Some of the impactful programs administered by the Alliance include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach, technical assistance to expand school breakfast, after-school, and summer meals programs, as well as Cooking Matters - an innovative nutrition education program offering 6-week courses and grocery store tours that teach individuals and families the skills they need to cook healthy meals and get the most from their food budgets.



In FY2020, the Alliance achieved the following:

- Taught 4,193 total participants and 1,913 student participants; and

- Trained more than 250 K-12 Arkansas teachers on a universal lesson plan to incorporate nutrition principles into any subject at any grade level.

A sizable amount of student participation came through the Alliance’s Cooking Matters at the Store pop-up grocery store tours with partners at Arkansas Children’s Hospital Community Outreach. Hosted by trained facilitators in classrooms across the state, these events teach students, with limited resources, the skills they need to plan and shop for economical, healthy meals.

### 3. FoodCorps Arkansas

FoodCorps is part of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) AmeriCorps service network that receives a portion of its funding from the federal AmeriCorps program. FoodCorps service members connect kids to healthy food in schools. Members focus on hands-on learning, healthy school meals, and a schoolwide culture of health.

FoodCorps Arkansas places trained FoodCorps AmeriCorps service members in schools across the state for a year of service. Nine FoodCorps Arkansas service members served in Springdale, Conway, Van Buren, Huntsville, and Cedarville school districts.

In FY2020, FoodCorps Arkansas achieved the following:

- Reached 6,229 students;
- Led 2,581 hands-on lessons;
- Led 901 taste tests in the classroom;
- Led 177 cafeteria taste tests;
- Engaged volunteers in 480 hours of volunteer work; and
- 45% of students in Arkansas showed improvement in their overall preference for vegetables.<sup>2</sup>

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, service members adapted their service to be responsive to the needs of their school and community. The main focuses were meal distribution, garden produce distribution, garden kit distribution, virtual classes, and virtual cooking camps.

First, members worked with their district food service departments to prepare and distribute meals to their community. They connected with local churches and food banks to offer support and continued to grow food in the school garden. Service members also sent gardening kits, seeds, recipes, SNAP applications, and other resources to students’ homes through the meal service and through digital platforms.

2. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data provided is from the 2018 - 2019 Vegetable Preference Survey.



Van Buren School District



Springdale Public Schools

Second, members shared age-appropriate FoodCorps lessons and activities with teachers that could be sent home in distance learning packets and they filmed lessons to be shared on the school's social media accounts or directly with parents. Many members hosted live lessons over digital platforms and worked in tandem with classroom teachers to support student learning.

#### **4. University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service (Cooperative Extension)**

SNAP-Ed is a program that promotes nutrition education so that Arkansas children and their families can eat better and live better. The program is the result of a partnership between the Cooperative Extension Service, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. The goal of SNAP-Ed is to provide educational nutrition programs that help SNAP participants and those eligible for SNAP benefits make healthier food choices and adopt active lifestyles that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA Food Guidance System. The program is designed to teach skills that help participants to:

- buy and prepare healthful meals and snacks based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA Food Guidance System;
- become more physically active;
- improve safe handling, preparation, and storage of food; and
- develop spending and savings plans to make food dollars last throughout the month.

Cooperative Extension agents, located in all of Arkansas's 75 counties, bring nutrition education lessons to schools to assist in farm to school activities that grow students' knowledge of locally grown, healthy foods.

In FY2020, Cooperative Extension agents achieved the following:

- Taught 7,395 lessons in schools;
- Reached 88,517 children participating in nutrition education (all youth participating in all locations, unduplicated);
- Had 9,032 total direct education contacts with children using garden-based curricula (duplicated + unduplicated);
- 84% of individuals taught increased their knowledge of Arkansas-grown foods; and
- 69% of individuals taught intend to follow MyPlate guidelines as a result of participating in the UA Cooperative Extension Service SNAP-Ed program.

## Local Procurement

Schools, early care and education facilities, and alternative learning environments have the opportunity to serve local foods to students as part of their farm to school program. Local foods can be served in the classroom, cafeteria, or other locations depending on the structure of the learning environment.

The USDA feeding programs such as the National School Lunch Program, Child and Adult Care Feeding Program, and Summer Food Service Program, as well as food service programs that do not operate under that umbrella, have the opportunity to purchase, promote, and serve locally grown foods. In USDA's vision, child nutrition programs championing U.S. agriculture and proudly promoting locally sourced foods are the norm, not the exception.



Fayetteville School District

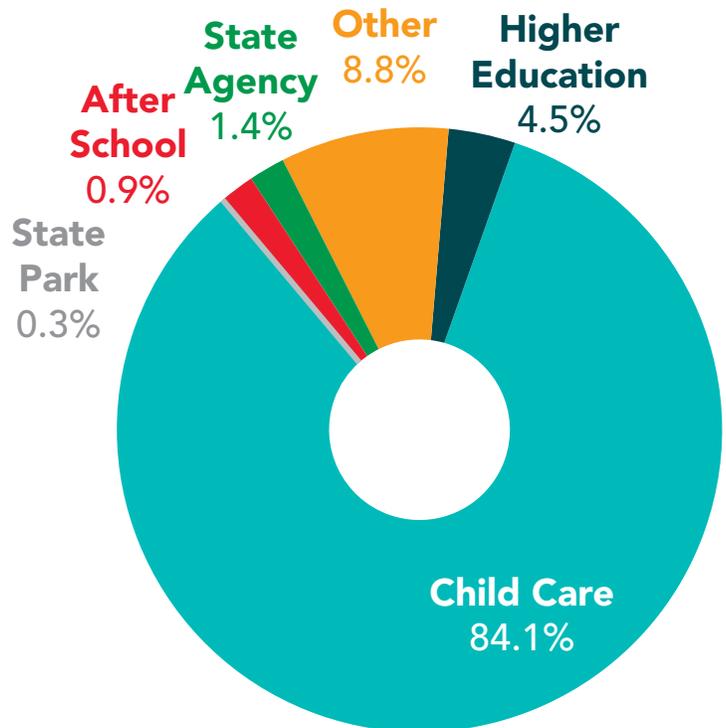
For schools interested in purchasing local but not sure how to start, a first step can be the development of their definition of local. As the USDA does not define the definition of local, schools can craft their own definition depending on their unique geography, climate, and abundance of local food producers and manufacturers. Many schools define local as within a certain number of miles from the school, within the county, or within the state.

The Arkansas Legislature defines local food as food products that are grown in Arkansas and/or packaged and processed in Arkansas. This definition comes from the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act and the Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program.

Next, schools can decide whether they would like to purchase local food directly or indirectly. When schools buy direct, they purchase foods from nearby farmers, processors, and producers. Information on where to find local foods can be found on the [Arkansas Grown](#) and [Arkansas Made](#) or [Arkansas Market Maker](#) databases. Another helpful list comes from the 2020 Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act Annual Report which can be found on the [Department's website](#).

When schools buy local indirectly, they purchase it through a wholesaler or broadline distributor. Increasingly schools are including expectations about local sourcing in their contracts with food service management companies and/or distributors. Even without contractual obligations regarding local, many distributors already offer local products and can provide that information to those placing the orders. This approach is an easy way to bring local products into schools without creating separate distribution channels.

As part of the requirements of the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act, agencies that receive at least \$25,000 in state funding annually and operate a food service program are required to report information about their local procurement efforts. Agencies subject to the Local Food Act include schools, early care and education facilities, and alternative learning environments.



In 2020, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) partnered with the Office of Community Health and Research at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) to meet the requirements of the Local Food Act. 2,322 agencies were identified as receiving funding from the state at some level or offering a food service program. 673 respondents (29.0%) completed the screening questions and 352 (52.3%) of those respondents met the criteria for reporting. Respondents used information from fiscal year 2020.

Of the 352 agencies who met the criteria for reporting, 296 (84.1%) were child care facilities. This agency group includes K-12 schools, early child care and education facilities (early childhood education centers, home-based child care centers, etc.), and alternative learning environments (juvenile detention centers, youth residential treatment facilities, and other child care facilities). The other 56 agencies (15.9%) were institutions of higher education, state parks, after-school programs, state agencies, and other entities of the state, and others.

In FY2020, agencies reported the following:

- Total food budget and the middle number (median) of the range was \$174,478.50. All responses together totaled \$135,535,048.62.
- Total local food budget and the median of the total food budget range was \$20,000.00. All responses together totaled \$24,003,280.06.
- Median percentage of FY2020 total food budget spent on local food was 12.0%.
- Top two vendors reported were Hiland Dairy and Tyson Foods.
- Top local farm and food products reported were sweet potatoes, apples, milk, chicken, bread, juice, and packaged items.
- Products of interest for purchasing local food were vegetables (84.6%) and fruit (75.4%).
- Needing enhanced internal infrastructure (88.9%) and connections with local vendors (72.2%).
- Intent to work with a broadline or wholesale distributor (49.3%) and directly with a farmer or producer (31.6%) to meet procurement goals.
- Motivators for purchasing local products included meeting the requirements of the Local Food Act (46.1%) and higher quality products (35.9%).
- Barriers faced when purchasing local farm and/or food products were lack of supply (39.8%) and lack of access to information on where to purchase products (37.9%).
- Opportunities for further expansion of local farm and/or food products procurement include leveraging food vendor relationships and enhancing distributor technical assistance.

More information on the [2020 Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act Annual Report](#) can be found on the Department's website.

## Federal Farm to School Awardees

In FY2020, funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was awarded to entities in Arkansas. Information about the awardees and their use of federal funds is provided below.

### FY2020 USDA Farm to School Grant

**Carroll County Resource Council - \$50,000**  
Green Forest, Arkansas

The Carroll County Resource Council, in collaboration with the Green Forest Public Schools and Jeremiah House shelter for battered women, will establish a plan to provide locally sourced food to Carroll County schools. The project will work to establish self-sustaining farm-to-school relationships for local food producers and boost schools' ability to buy locally. In addition, the project will work to identify curriculum resources for integrating agricultural education into classes.

**Springdale Public Schools - \$20,000**  
Springdale, Arkansas

This project, impacting approximately 960 students and families of Central Junior High, will mobilize community entities to facilitate an introductory meeting and create an action plan. The project will also extend the agriculture classroom by collaborating with local farmers, nonprofits, and the University of Arkansas Animal Science department to provide practical experiences to agriculture students to increase nutritional literacy. The practical knowledge gained by students working on a farm, will deepen students' understanding of the world's reliance on farmers and the inestimable importance of land stewardship. In addition, the project will produce fresh vegetables on the Central Junior High campus for use at the school and in the snack pack program. The feasibility of adding fresh food to the snack pack program will be explored with a local nonprofit.



*Central Junior High School, Springdale School District*



*Manila Elementary, Manila School District*

### FY2020 CDC High Obesity Prevention - Farm to School Supplemental Grant

**University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service - \$83,688**  
Mississippi County, Arkansas

Manila School District is a rural school district in Mississippi County, Arkansas. The district covers 142 square miles and includes the communities of Manila, West Ridge, Etowah, Lost Cane, and Milligan Ridge. However, the majority live in Manila. The District serves around 5,000 residents with a student body around 1,100.

Initial objectives include preparing for school garden implementation, acquiring and constructing the school garden, and building a sustainable school garden program with student and community members. Following the first successful harvest, the school plans to initiate tastings during the school day, will donate produce to the local food pantry and to in-need students/community members, and will conduct a pop-up concession event with the harvested produce. The local healthy living coalition, Moving Manila Forward, as well as the local Master Gardener program will also support garden efforts.

## SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

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In addition to creating the Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program, Act 506 of 2019 also required an annual farm to school report to be prepared in collaboration with the following stakeholders:

- Arkansas Department of Agriculture
- Arkansas Department of Education
- Arkansas Department of Health
- Arkansas Department of Human Services
- University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service

The Act also mentioned the Child Nutrition Unit at the Department of Education and Healthy Active Arkansas. These stakeholders are listed under the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Health, respectively, due to the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019.

Updates on FY2020 farm to school activities and achievements from the noted stakeholders are included on the following pages of the report.



*Sheridan Elementary, Sheridan School District*



## ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

The Department is recognized as the Core Partner by the National Farm to School Network and joins the USDA Southwest Region in regional farm to school development and growth. The Department's Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program leads farm to school efforts and its Arkansas Grown, Arkansas Made, and Homegrown By Heroes branding programs support farm to school efforts in the state.

### **Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program**

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program (Program) connects schools, local growers, and the community to food and farm education experiences paired with healthy, locally grown food. The Program provides equitable and just programming, resources, funding, and technical assistance to schools, farmers, and partners in the local food system. Website: <https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-department-of-agriculture-programs/farm-to-school/>

The Program administers the following programs:

- Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest: Established in 2014 to showcase Arkansas schools that have built and developed gardens to support innovative and hands-on learning. Funding is provided by Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas.
- Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative: Established in 2017 to coordinate statewide farm to school efforts between state agencies, non-profits, schools, and farms.

### **Team**

Sarah Lane, Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator  
Mark Nelson, Farm to School Innovation Lead, AmeriCorps VISTA  
Hanna Davis, State School Garden Manager

### **Accomplishments**

- Provided technical assistance to 214 schools, farmers, agencies, and nonprofits;
- Collaborated at 39 regional and national farm to school meetings;
- Hosted 14 farm to school educational trainings, webinars, and events with 551 attendees;
- Hosted the 2019 Arkansas Farm to School Month Celebration with partners at the State Capitol in Little Rock that 150 people attended. The event included a proclamation from Governor Hutchinson and an informational roundtable with 15 staffed displays;
- Co-hosted a Local Conversations event with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture at the Woodruff County Share Grounds site located at the Three County Fairgrounds with over 30 attendees;
- Presented 5 staffed displays;
- Spoke about farm to school at 7 educational programs and invited talks;

- Managed and awarded \$3,000 total to the 5 winning schools of the 2019 Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest;
- Facilitated 8 Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative meetings that engaged 12 state agencies and nonprofit partners;
- Developed 10 farm to school resources and videos including the first annual Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act report;
- Released 16 media pieces; and
- Created a farm to school landing page on the Arkansas Department of Agriculture website.

## COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, the Program created the Arkansas COVID-19 Food Access Map that listed 1,500 locations to find food from school meals, community spaces, or to purchase local food from farmers. The Food Access Map was made possible because of state agency and nonprofit information sharing and collaboration. It was kept up to date with information from March - August 2020. The Program and food system partners also helped expand SNAP through an online SNAP pilot program.

The Program also responded innovatively to the pandemic by hosting a virtual farm field trip and expanding an AmeriCorps program in Pulaski County. The virtual farm field trip, hosted in collaboration with Heifer USA, provided more than 300 teachers and students with an interactive farm to school experience. The Full Circle FarmCorps program, an AmeriCorps program designed to confront food insecurity and strengthen communities through farming, outreach, and teaching, added 20 additional AmeriCorps members and 7 new school and community garden sites. Full Circle FarmCorps was hosted by the St. Joseph Center of Arkansas.

## Marketing Branding Programs

The Marketing Branding Programs (Branding Programs) were established to equip farmers and producers with marketing tools to identify their goods as products from Arkansas. The programs focus on added exposure and creating new opportunities for local farmers and producers to increase sales and transactions. Website: <https://www.arkansasgrown.org/>

The Department administers the following marketing branding programs:

- Arkansas Grown: Established in 2012 to promote the many agricultural products that are grown in our state by local producers. The program is often instrumental in making the critical connection with consumers. The membership for this program is now over 700.
- Arkansas Made: Established in 2014 to promote goods and products made in our state by local makers and connect them with buyers. The membership for this program is now over 330.
- Homegrown By Heroes: In 2015, the Department adopted the national Homegrown By Heroes branding program that enables farmer veterans to market their local agriculture products by labeling them as veteran-produced. The membership in Arkansas for this program is now over 50.

## Team

Karen Reynolds, Grants Program Manager

## Accomplishments

- Provided technical assistance to the 900 farmers, producers, and markets on the Arkansas Grown database and increased membership by 68 for the three branding programs combined;
- Presented 8 staffed displays;
- Spoke about the Branding Programs at 3 educational programs and invited talks;
- Attended the 2019 Arkansas Farm to School Celebration in Little Rock at the State Capitol;
- Co-hosted a Local Conversations event with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture at the Woodruff County Share Grounds site located at the Three County Fairgrounds with over 30 attendees;
- Produced 8 videos;
- Released 7 media pieces, provided interviews to 3 media platforms, and connected 8 members to 2 media outlets for interview opportunities;
- Restructured the Arkansas Grown and Arkansas Made programs;
- Awarded two \$1,500 Homegrown By Heroes Scholarships in partnership with Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas;
- Updated the existing Arkansas Grown website, added a Farm to School and School Garden landing page, and initiated development of new multi-site website incorporating the branding programs and Arkansas Farm to School;
- Collaborated with Arkansas Farm Bureau and the Arkansas Department of Veteran Affairs to provide support for the formation of the Arkansas chapter of the Farmer Veteran Coalition;
- Initiated collaboration with existing Arkansas Made program through the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism;
- Initiated collaboration and partnership with the Arkansas Service Commission-EngageAR to increase opportunities for local farmers and makers and address food insecurity in the state; and
- Cross-promoted farm to school information in 18 Facebook posts.

## COVID-19

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Branding Programs initiated a partnership to support farmers through Uplift Arkansas, a statewide resource that provides a comprehensive list of information on local businesses, restaurants, and services for Arkansans during the pandemic, generating over one million impressions on multiple media platforms through publicity efforts. The Branding Programs assisted the Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program in executing, updating, and promoting the COVID-19 Food Access Map.



## ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is to provide leadership, support, and service to schools, districts, and communities so every student graduate is prepared for college, career, and community engagement.

ADE is recognized as a Supporting Partner by the National Farm to School Network and is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Child Nutrition Unit and Coordinated School Health support farm to school efforts in the state.

### **Child Nutrition Unit**

The Child Nutrition Unit (CNU) provides technical assistance, training, monitoring, and processes claims for reimbursement of federal funds used in the operation of local school nutrition programs in accordance with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations. Website: <http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/child-nutrition-unit/programs>

CNU administers the following programs:

- National School Lunch Program: This program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. The program provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches.
- School Breakfast Program: This program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions.
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grants: This program provides all children in participating schools with a variety of free fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the school day. It is an effective and creative way of introducing fresh fruits and vegetables as healthy snack options.
- After-School Snack Program: The National School Lunch Program offers cash reimbursement to help schools serve snacks to children in after-school activities aimed at promoting the health and well being of children and youth in our communities.
- Seamless Summer Program: Schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program are eligible to apply for the Seamless Summer Option that allows schools to serve meals free of charge to children, including teenagers through age 18.
- Farm to School: This program connects schools to local farmers by serving local produce in school cafeterias and providing agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities.

### **Team**

Suzanne Davidson, Director  
Stephanie Alsbrook, Associate Director  
Sheila Chastain, Associate Director  
Myia McBride, USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Coordinator  
K.D Wooten, Charter Specialist  
Nancy Dill, Fiscal Support Manager  
Krista Jackson, Fiscal Support Manager  
Area Specialists

### **Accomplishments**

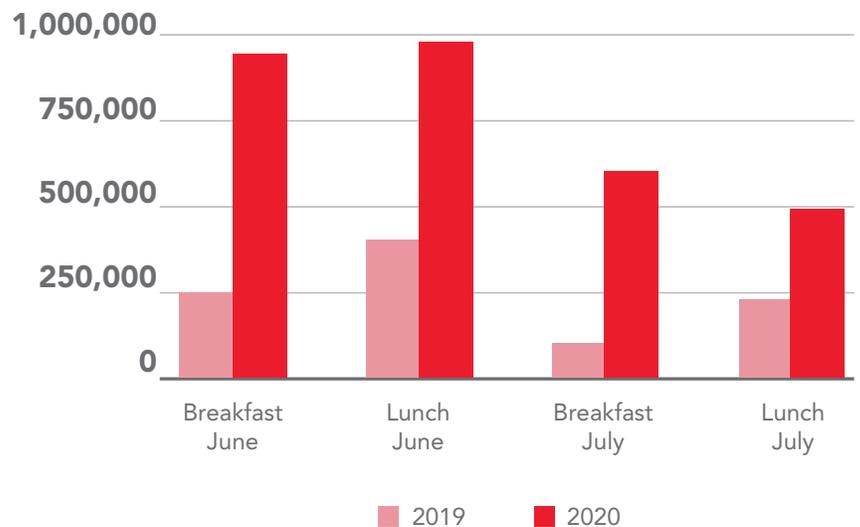
- Hosted 10 Child Nutrition Programs webinars/online modules in 2020;

- Hosted the 2019 Director’s Conference that included a farm to school partner booth, presentation from Eureka Springs Agriculture Class on growing lettuce for the school cafeteria, and Cooperative Extension partner booth showcasing “Arkansas Foods” project;
- Hosted 8 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Online Trainings/Modules, and 2 trainings/modules included farm to school information;
- Attended the 2019 Arkansas Farm to School Celebration in Little Rock at the State Capitol;
- Managed 190 million federal and 1.65 million state funding dollars for child nutrition programs that resulted in 31.7 million breakfasts, 45.7 million lunches and over 1 million snacks;
- Managed \$2.9 million in federal funding for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program that operated at 92 districts (155 schools);
- 75 school districts (256 schools) achieved the Community Eligibility Provision;
- 24 school districts (100 schools) achieved Provision 2;
- Supported the USDA’s Farm to School Census by following up with school districts to encourage completion;
- Supported the Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act Survey by following up with school districts to encourage completion;
- Updating Wellness is Worth It! Workbook to include farm to school as a special project for local school wellness committees; and
- Cross promoted farm to school information in 1 Resource Round-up e-newsletters and 2 email blasts.

## COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, all schools completed the 2019-2020 school year virtually. Food service programs continued to provide meals to schools. 90% of school districts provided some form of a meal to students.

The Child Nutrition Unit applied for many waivers from the USDA to support the changing climate during the pandemic and supported the child nutrition programs as they needed.



## School Health Services

The Arkansas School Health Services Initiative is an interagency collaboration between the Division of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) and the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH). This state-level infrastructure provides support to Arkansas schools in the implementation of health and wellness activities that create a safe and healthy school environment that supports learning.

The School Health Services Offices at DESE and ADH focus on providing professional development, technical assistance, training, and resources to aid schools in meeting school health legislative mandates. Additionally, the offices work together to help schools implement healthy school practices in areas including: health education, physical education, conducting the School Health Index Assessment, development and implementation of district wellness

policies and committees, developing a school improvement wellness strategy, school-based health care services, and mental health services. Website: <http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/learning-services/school-health-services> and <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/school-health>

School Health Services administers the following programs:

- **Coordinated School Health:** This program was founded on the ten components of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model. In 2018, Arkansas was one of 17 states awarded the Improving Student Health and Academic Achievement Through Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Management of Chronic Conditions in Schools (DP18-1801 Healthy Schools) five-year grant. This grant is a collaborative agreement between the ADH School Health Services and DESE School Health Services. State grantees support the implementation and evaluation of evidenced-based strategies and activities to prevent obesity and reduce the risk of children developing chronic diseases and manage students' chronic health conditions including asthma, food allergies, seizure disorders, diabetes, other diseases, and disabilities or conditions.
- **School-Based Health Centers:** These centers provide students access to health care in a location that is safe, convenient, and accessible in their school. They are staffed by licensed professionals with the experience and expertise to deliver quality care addressing the broad range of concerns affecting students' healthy development. They provide physical and mental health care when and where needed. Families and staff receive support with their healthcare needs, insurance, enrollment concerns, and a variety of health education opportunities. Although governed and administered separately from the school, the centers integrate into the education environment to support the school's mission of student success. <https://www.sbhaar.org>
- **Act 1220 (BMI):** The Act created the Child Health Advisory Committee (CHAC) and provides funding for Community Health Promotion Specialists and School Health Services staff. Act 1220 staff involve schools and communities in strategies to prevent and reduce childhood obesity. The requirements of Act 1220 have led to improvements in physical education, nutrition, BMI assessment, and BMI data reporting. Quality policies and assessment methods promote health and wellness.
- **Joint Use Agreements:** These agreements promote healthy lifestyles through community partnerships by encouraging schools and other community organizations to share indoor and outdoor spaces, such as gymnasiums, athletic fields, playgrounds, and walking tracks, to increase opportunities for children and adults to become more physically active and lead healthier lifestyles. The agreements provide funding to schools to create safe places for students and community members to play and exercise in and out of school time. Infrastructure that promotes an active lifestyle is a necessary component in the achievement of education and health goals.
- **Medicaid in the Schools:** Arkansas public school districts may submit claims to Medicaid for reimbursement for eligible services. These services may be provided by school district employees, contracted employees, or agencies. Services that must be included in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are Physical Therapy Services, Occupational Therapy Services, Speech-Language Pathology Services, and Personal Care Assistant Services. Services and administrative duties for general education and special education students are: Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT); vision and hearing screenings; school-based mental health services; and audiology services. <http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/learning-services/schoolhealth-services/arkansas-medicaid-in-the-schools>

## Team

### Arkansas Department of Education

Lisa Mundy, Coordinated School Health Director  
Brittany Rogers, Grants Manager  
Ashley Williams, Act 1220 Coordinator

### Arkansas Department of Health

Ariel Schaufler Rogers, Coordinated School Health Director  
Crystal Brown, School Based Health Center Advisor  
Shannon Borchert, Act 1220 Coordinator

## Accomplishments

- Facilitated the completion of the annual Indistar report which resulted in a completion rate of 98% school districts and 93% of schools;
- Hosted 8 summer professional development trainings for health and physical education teacher and 4 summer professional development trainings for wellness committee chairpeople;
- Hosted 3 Coordinated School Health professional development opportunities for school wellness coordinators;
- Hosted coordinated school health teacher professional development summer opportunities that included 2 farm to school sessions led by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture;
- Funded and supported 6 priority school districts: Blytheville, El Dorado, Magazine, Malvern, Marvell-Elaine, and Springdale Public Schools;
- Increased partnerships to include over 40 organizations such as hospitals, state agencies, and physical activity and obesity prevention coalitions;
- Participated in activities supporting the Governor’s Healthy Active Arkansas initiative;
- Created the Arkansas Health Standards Crosswalk that details health and nutrition standards related to farm to school; and
- Cross promoted farm to school information in 2 e-newsletters.

## COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, the Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Education, and Arkansas Department of Human Services established a school and child care hotline. This hotline is available 7 days per week to answer questions about quarantine and isolation guidelines, verify positive COVID-19 cases, fast-track contact investigation for positive cases and contact tracing for their probable close contacts, provide guidance on pivoting from face-to-face learning to virtual learning due to shortage of staff or prevalence of positive cases and probable close contacts, and provide guidance on COVID testing in schools.

The Coordinated School Health program wrote a grant for \$333,000 to provide school districts with training and resources to limit spread of the virus in the school setting. Each of the 15 educational cooperatives were provided a stipend to purchase playground stencils of physical activities that children could do separately instead of playing close contact games.

Nutrition			
Students will apply concepts of how food choices impact the overall health of self and others, and investigate how different types of eating disorders damage body systems. How can I make healthy food choices to optimize health?			
Grade Band	Student Learning Objective	Math	ELA
K-2nd	I can identify and choose healthy snacks.	K.CC.B.4-5, K.MD.B.3, K.G.A.1, 1.0A.A.1, 1.MD.C.6, 2.MD.C.6	
	I can identify the food groups and discuss the importance of choosing foods from each group		
3rd-5th	I can make healthy food choices based on nutritional information.	3.NF.A.1-3, 3.MD.A.2, 3.MD.B.3, 4.NF.A.1, 4.NF.B.3(?), 4.MD.A.2, 4.MD.B.4, 5.NF.B.4, 5.NF.B.7	
	I can discuss healthy and unhealthy food intake patterns and the consequences of both.		
6th-8th	I can recognize different types of eating disorders and identify resources for treatment.	6.NS.A.1, 6.SPA.1, 7.RPA.2-3, 7.EE.B.3, 7.SPA.1-2	
	I can develop a personal eating plan that contributes to overall health and well-being.		
9th-12th	I can evaluate personal eating habits and patterns for the purpose of determining how I can live a healthy lifestyle as it relates to nutrition.		
	I can identify unhealthy nutrition choices in self and others and determine the warning signs of unhealthy choices and disorders related to nutrition.		



## ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) is to protect and improve the health and well-being of all Arkansans.

ADH is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Office of Healthy Active Arkansas and Coordinated School Health support farm to school efforts in the state.

### **Office of Healthy Active Arkansas**

The Office of Healthy Active Arkansas (HAA) aims to increase the percentage of adults, adolescents, and children who are at a healthy weight by working with individuals, families, communities, worksites, organizations, and governments across the state.

In 2015, Healthy Active Arkansas (HAA) grew from a 10-year, statewide initiative endorsed by Governor Hutchinson to combat obesity in Arkansas. A group of public health scientists developed the initial framework to include nine priority areas with strategies and action steps. The following year, a Board of Directors coalesced around these ideas, and in 2017, HAA became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

In 2019, the Arkansas Department of Health created the Office of HAA and hired an Executive Director to help leverage resources and foster collaboration with regional partners. The HAA board reorganized the original framework to shift the focus to the community and to maximize the group's collective power for future HAA endeavors. Website: [www.healthyactive.org](http://www.healthyactive.org)

### **Team**

Tina Pilgreen, Executive Director

### **Accomplishments**

- Reduced priority areas from 9 to 3 to foster community engagement and create a more manageable approach. The new priority areas became:
  - Community Access to Healthy Foods
  - Community Access to Physical Activity
  - Policy and Change
- Conducted the Lunch and Learn program which addresses food waste, cooking on a budget, and healthy snacking and eating;
- Hosted Cooking Matters programs developed by the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance;
- Collaborated with Curricula Concepts and the Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention to promote healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood education centers in their Better Together Project; and
- Cross-promoted farm to school information in 16 Facebook posts.

### **COVID-19**

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, HAA connected with existing partners to assist children and adults in Arkansas with limited food access and to promote healthy eating. HAA provided resources such as simple recipes and cooking videos, one-minute mindfulness sessions, and the Arkansas COVID-19 Food Access Map, developed by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

### **School Health Services**

The Arkansas School Health Services Initiative is an interagency collaboration between the Division of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) and the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH). This state-level infrastructure provides support to Arkansas schools in the implementation of health and wellness activities that create a safe and healthy school environment that supports learning.

Due of the collaboration between the Arkansas Department of Health and Arkansas Department of Education, the information on School Health Services can be found on pages 17-19.



## ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) is to serve, protect, empower, educate, and encourage children, at-risk youth, families, adults, aging adults and seniors, and people with disabilities as they move towards a better future.

DHS is recognized as a Supporting Partner by the National Farm to School Network and is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Health and Nutrition Program supports farm to school efforts in the state.

### **Health and Nutrition Program**

The Health and Nutrition Program (HNP) provides reimbursement for well-balanced, nutritious meals served to individuals enrolled in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) including our Commodities Distribution Unit. Website: <https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dccece/snp/WelcomeSNPM.aspx>

The Health and Nutrition Program administers the following programs:

- Child and Adult Care Food Program: This program provides reimbursement to organizations providing licensed nonresidential day-care services. Adult day-care centers may participate.
- National School Lunch Program: This program provides reimbursement to an educational unit of high school grade or under, operating under public or nonprofit private ownership in a single building or complex of buildings and organizations that are licensed to provide residential child care.
- Summer Food Service Program: This program ensures that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session.
- USDA Processing Program: The Commodity Distribution Unit works with 35 processors approved by USDA and chosen by Arkansas schools through the National School Lunch Program. The processor in Arkansas approved by the USDA is Tyson Foods. Raw bulk items such as chicken, beef, pork, and cheese are sent to Tyson Foods for further processing into items such as chicken patties, chicken nuggets, chicken strips, chicken fajita meat, popcorn chicken, beef steak burgers, meatballs, beef crumbles, Salisbury steak, pork rib patties, pork sausage links, pulled pork, and shredded pork. Bulk cheese is used for pizza sticks, cheese sticks, and egg pretzel sticks.
- Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program: Schools and agencies under the National School Lunch Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program may use entitlement funds provided by the Commodity Distribution Unit to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables through this program. The current vendor for the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is KT Produce.

### **Team**

Thomas Sheppard, Assistant Director  
Rhonda Betzner, Program Administrator  
Pamela Burton, Program Administrator  
James Ponzini, Program Administrator  
Perry Hunter, Program Manager  
Wayne Thornberry, Program Manager  
Sharon Hagen, Program Manager

Stephanie Clowers, Program Manager  
Sharon Parker, Quality Assurance  
Kimberly Cogshell, Program Manager  
Louise Scott, Program Manager  
Maurice Anderson, Program Manager  
Frank Battisto, Quality Assurance Coordinator  
Theresa Taylor, Quality Assurance Coordinator

### **Accomplishments**

- Hosted 53 Child and Adult Care Food Program trainings and each included information on farm to early care and education;
- Hosted 9 National School Lunch Program trainings and each included information on farm to school;
- Hosted 9 Summer Food Service Program trainings and each included information on farm to school;
- Presented a staffed display at the 2019 Arkansas Farm to School Celebration in Little Rock at the State Capitol;

- Managed \$37,879,998.00 in funding as part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).<sup>3</sup> This included 419 contracts (324 centers, 85 at-risk, 10 homes) serving a total of 22,620,582 meals (13,919,455 free, 1,910,839 reduced, 5,116,440 paid);
- Managed \$1,499,603.00 in funding as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).<sup>4</sup> This included 29 contracts and 41 facilities and sites serving a total of 645,906 meals (566,769 free, 11,330 reduced, 67,807 paid);
- Managed \$5,694,957.00 in funding as part of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).<sup>5</sup> This included 67 contracts and 233 facilities/sites serving a total of 1,766,694 free meals;
- Managed \$1,569,096.06 as part of the USDA Processing Program that equaled to \$995,045.49 (1,054,744 lbs) of chicken, \$508,387.81 (218,314 lbs) of beef, \$27,792.88 (21,250 lbs) of pork, and \$37,870.88 (22,774 lbs) of cheese; and
- Managed \$5,401,240.00 allocated for schools in the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

## COVID-19

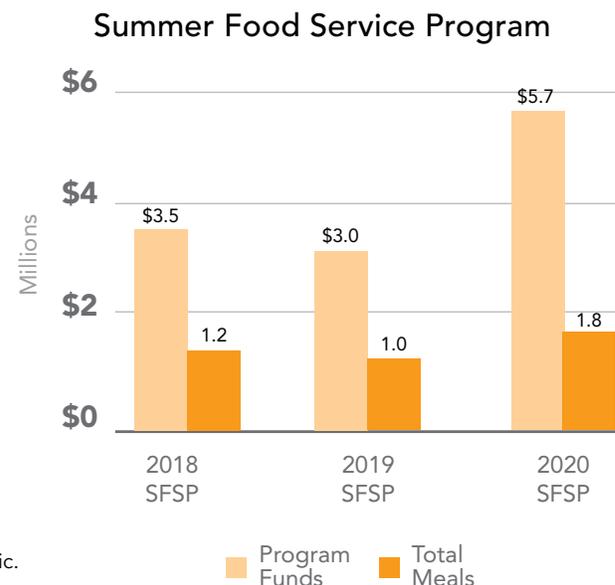
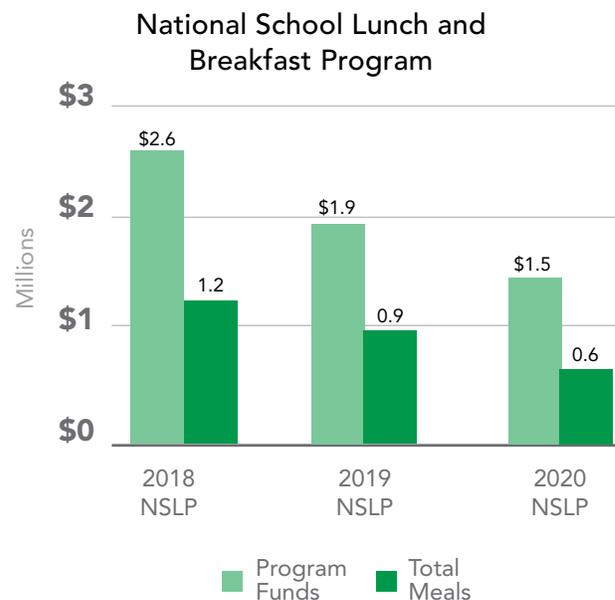
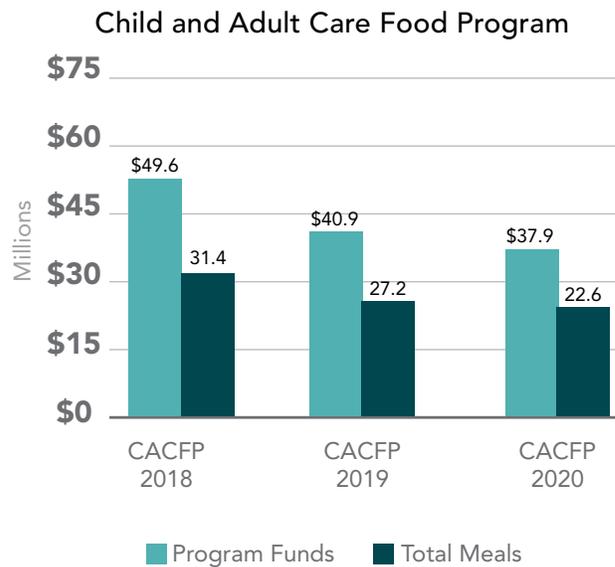
In response to COVID-19, NSLP ended in March and SFSP began. DHS created a map of child care facilities that were open to track closures due to COVID-19. Half of the CACFP providers closed in March. DHS was successful in getting 150 waivers approved for CACFP.

Additionally, the USDA Farm to Food Bank Program, part of The Emergency Food Assistance Program began in 2020. The USDA awarded funding to 19 states for a total of \$3,752,000. Arkansas applied and received funding for \$69,090 of the national total with 100% of the funds being passed through to Emergency Feeding Organizations. Emergency Feeding Organizations were able to partner with local farmers to harvest, process, package, and transport food for distribution to families in need who live in the communities served by the organizations.

3. Half of the CACFP providers closed in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. NSLP closed in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. SFSP began in March due to the COVID 19 pandemic.





## UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS SYSTEM DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

### **DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE** **RESEARCH & EXTENSION**

*University of Arkansas System*

The mission of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service (UACES) is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service is recognized as a Supporting Partner by the National Farm to School Network and is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Family and Consumer Science Programmatic Area and the Local, Regional & Safe Foods Team support farm to school efforts in the state.

### **Family and Consumer Sciences Programmatic Area**

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) was founded as Home Economics. FCS affords Arkansans immediate and timely access to cutting-edge, reliable, unbiased information to develop critical life skills in health, nutrition, family life, and personal finance, empowering individuals and families to thrive. FCS promotes 21 youth curricula and five are garden focused: Grow It, Try It, Like It; Great Garden Detective; School Gardening Lessons; Eating from the Garden; and Dig In. Website: <https://www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/default.aspx>

The Family and Consumer Sciences Programmatic Area administers the following programs:

- SNAP-Ed Program: The Arkansas Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed) is a partnership between the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. The goal of SNAP-Ed is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Youth SNAP-Ed programming occurs mainly within schools.
- EFNEP Program: The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is a program of the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Cooperative Extension Service fund the program. The Mission of EFNEP is to empower individuals, families, and youth with limited resources to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior changes necessary to maintain nutritionally sound diets and enhance personal development. The youth are taught in summer or year-round enrichment programs conducted by EFNEP assistants and volunteers.
- High Obesity Prevention Program (HOP): Arkansas Delta Region Obesity Project (ArDROP) is an initiative funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to address obesity in six Arkansas counties: Chicot, Phillips, Lee, St. Francis, Mississippi, and Crittenden. This project focuses on making community-wide, lasting impacts with a special emphasis on policy, systems, and environmental change in the areas of nutrition, physical activity, and coalition building.

### **Team**

Bryan Mader, Assistant Professor of Health  
 Sarah David, SNAP-Ed Finance Manager  
 Amy McClelland, SNAP-Ed Program Manager  
 Katie Holland, SNAP-Ed Curriculum and Evaluation  
 Jessica Vincent, Instructor of Health, HOP Program Manager  
 Tyler Brown, HOP County Operations Coordinator  
 Caitlin Palenske, HOP Communications Coordinator  
 Darby Treat, HOP Program Associate  
 County Extension Staff

## Accomplishments

- Taught 7,395 lessons in schools;
- Reached 88,517 children participating in nutrition education (all youth participating in all locations, unduplicated);
- Had 9,032 total direct education contacts with children using gardening curricula (duplicated + unduplicated);
- 84% of individuals taught increased their knowledge of Arkansas-grown foods;
- 69% of individuals taught intend to follow MyPlate guidelines as a result of participating in the UA Cooperative Extension Service SNAP-Ed program;
- Pulaski SNAP presented a staffed display at the 2019 Arkansas Farm to School Celebration in Little Rock at the State Capitol; and
- Farm to School Supplemental funding and focus from the CDC on Manila Public Schools.

## COVID-19

The SNAP-Ed program has continued to provide nutrition education to schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Agents have worked with schools to identify safe, socially-distanced methods for providing in-class, virtual, and outdoor education across the state. Staff worked with schools to identify methods that work within the safety guidelines specific to that school, based on local conditions. Agents continue to provide gardening education.

## Local, Regional & Safe Foods

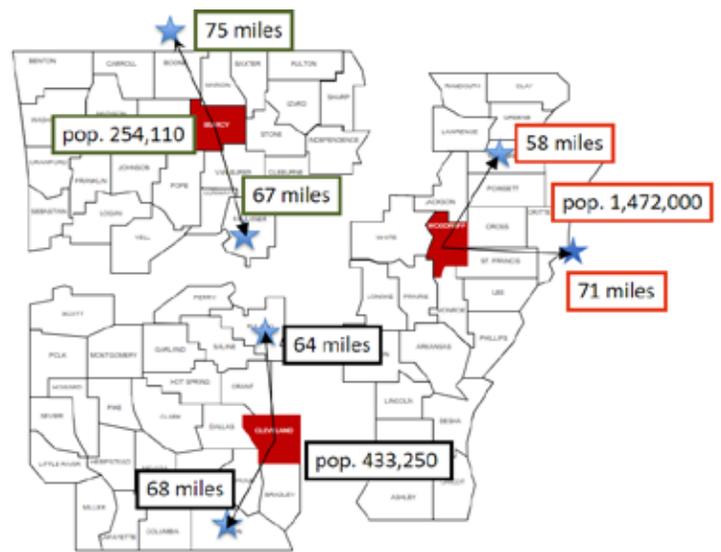
The Local, Regional & Safe Foods (LRSF) program team supports specialty crop growers with understanding and implementing food and produce safety regulations and associated practices and who foster the development of local and regional food systems. Food safety covers outreach, education, and technical assistance regarding state and federal regulatory programs such as the Food Safety Modernization Act that protect the public's health and farms' viability. Local and regional food systems development covers the food supply chain from farm to table and provides technical assistance from evidence-based research to support production, market access, community & economic development, food safety, value-added food product development, and access to healthy food. Website:

[www.uaex.edu/localfoods](http://www.uaex.edu/localfoods)

The Local, Regional & Safe Foods team administers the following programs:

- **Arkansas Produce Safety:** The Arkansas Produce Safety team coordinates the State's effort to educate and train Arkansas produce growers whose farms are covered under the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. These efforts include all planning, outreach, execution, and evaluation for the trainings. In addition to overseeing these trainings, the team conducts On-Farm Readiness Reviews to prepare produce farms for inspection by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture. Through these activities, the team reduces risk in the local food supply for Arkansans including those working in schools, the farm-to-school movement, and the children they serve. As the Arkansas Farm to School program continues connecting schools to local produce, these efforts will support a food supply that reduces the risks of contamination and other food safety hazards. Website: [www.uaex.edu/producesafety](http://www.uaex.edu/producesafety)
- **Share Grounds:** The Share Grounds Commercial Kitchens and Distribution Centers officially opened in 2019 to clients from around Arkansas for local food business development, value-added food processing, and produce distribution and aggregation. The three sites, in Cleveland, Searcy, and Woodruff counties, utilize existing fairground facilities and infrastructure to establish county and regional food system incubators and aggregation hubs that contribute to local community development and the State's overall food system. All sites are certified by the Arkansas Department of Health. Website: [www.uaex.edu/sharegrounds](http://www.uaex.edu/sharegrounds)

1. Cleveland County Share Grounds (Rison, Cleveland County Fairgrounds)
2. Searcy County Share Grounds (Marshall, Searcy County Fairgrounds)
3. Woodruff County Share Grounds (McCrary, Three County Fairgrounds)



Note: Mileage is distance to major population centers with corresponding regional population totals.

## Team

Dr. Amanda Philyaw Perez, Food Systems & Food Safety Specialist

Dr. Natacha Cureau, Post-Doctoral Associate

Angela Gardner, Program Associate

Julia Fryer, Program Associate

Rip Weaver, Program Assistant

County Extension Staff

## Accomplishments

- Made 3,645 produce safety and 2,410 local and regional food system contacts through direct and in-person methods including demonstrations, classes, online courses, farm visits, meetings, one-on-one consultations, conferences, workshops, and county meetings across the statewide programs;
  - Provided produce safety one-on-one consultation and technical assistance to 219 contacts through 164 meetings and communications;
  - Offered 24 on-farm visits for technical assistance, education, and readiness reviews;
  - Hosted 3 Produce Safety Grower Trainings with 39 attendees that included 2 extension county agents and 14 farms;<sup>6</sup>
  - Presented 5 staffed Produce Safety displays, including 1 at the 2019 Arkansas Farm to School Celebration in Little Rock at the State Capitol;
  - Spoke at 12 Produce Safety educational programs and invited talks which included 1 focused on farm to school: "Produce Safety in School Gardens";
  - Presented 3 Produce Safety posters;
  - Produced 15 Produce Safety educational videos, podcasts, interviews, and newspaper articles;
  - Opened 3 Share Ground commercial kitchens;
  - Worked with 21 Share Ground clients producing value-added food products;
  - Supported the completion of 3 permits for food production and 1 value-added product;
  - Collaborated monthly, since February 2020, with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program to strengthen local food system capacity development at the three Share Grounds sites;
6. Program participation was down due to COVID-19 and lower interest in virtual grower trainings.

- Co-hosted a Local Conversations event with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture in McCrory at the Woodruff County Share Grounds site located at the Three County Fairgrounds with over 30 attendees; and
- Cross-promoted farm to school information in 5 e-newsletters and 12 Facebook posts.

## COVID-19

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LRSF team created resources and “went virtual” in order to continue outreach and education to farmers, clients, and stakeholders. These efforts created 507 contacts through direct and in-person<sup>7</sup> methods including demonstrations, classes, online courses, farm visits, meetings, one-on-one consultations, conferences, and workshops for COVID-19 outreach and education.

The LRSF team began hosting Local Food Open Space discussions as a virtual space for information sharing and discussion sessions were attended by local food stakeholders including farmers, food business owners, farmers market managers, local and state officials, Extension staff, community and non-profit representatives, and school personnel. The team hosted 6 discussions.

Lastly, the team created 2 information sheets and 8 web pages on COVID-19 for Arkansas farmers, small food businesses, agritourism, and other food system stakeholders. Additionally, the team promoted the Arkansas COVID-19 Food Access Map on its Local Foods and COVID-19 Resources webpage. Website: [www.uaex.edu/covid19](http://www.uaex.edu/covid19)



*Clover Community School, Clover School District*

7. When possible using approved public health precautions.

## MOVING FORWARD TO FY2021

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Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by enhancing food purchasing and education practices at schools, early care and education facilities, and alternative learning environments. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices that strengthen the local economy and contribute to vibrant communities.

Farm to school is a triple win providing benefits to the areas of public health, education, environment, economic development, and community engagement. It provides kids access to nutritious, high-quality, local food so they are ready to learn and grow. The activities enhance classroom education through hands-on learning related to food, health, agriculture, and nutrition.

Farm to school serves as a significant financial opportunity for farmers, ranchers, food processors, and food manufacturers by opening doors to an institutional market worth billions of dollars. It also benefits students, teachers, administrators, and parents by providing opportunities to build family and community engagement. Buying from local producers and processors creates new jobs and strengthens the local economy.

Using the fiscal year 2020 information, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Human Services, and the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Services will continue to work together to build a comprehensive farm to school program in Arkansas.

As members of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative, the stakeholders in Act 506 will continue to finalize the long-term and short-term plans and will expand on the following priority aligned themes: 1) collaborate and work together; 2) foster student understanding of where their food comes from; 3) cultivate children's leadership and self-efficacy; 4) create equitable access to local food; and 5) support farmers. Additionally, each stakeholder has set goals for the upcoming 2021 fiscal year.

The **Arkansas Department of Agriculture** will build upon the Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest and the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Department will identify farm to early care and education programmatic needs through a Farm to Early Care and Education Questionnaire. Two new programs will be introduced by the Department in FY2021: the Arkansas School Garden Grant Program and the Harvest of the Season Program. The Arkansas School Garden Grant Program will award \$500 grants to K-12 schools, early care and education facilities, and alternative learning environments to start or expand their gardens. The Harvest of the Season Program will feature turnkey specialty crop promotional materials and farmer profiles that schools and other markets can use to highlight local food. The Department will launch a new website for Arkansas Grown and Arkansas Farm to School.

The **Arkansas Department of Education** will support public and charter schools in Arkansas in the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. Schools will continue to provide healthy and safe meals during the pandemic on regular school days, weekends, virtual days, and holidays. Almost every public and charter school in Arkansas that previously operated the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is currently operating under the Seamless Summer Option, and all schools with NSLP are currently offering meals at no cost to the family through the school year.

The Arkansas Department of Education's Child Nutrition Unit will launch a 2021 Procurement Series – a five session overview of Child Nutrition Federal Procurement Regulations – that will connect to farm to school's core element: local procurement and the School Health Services will continue to support additional school health services. Both will continue to identify farm to school partners at the Division of Career and Technology and the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The **Arkansas Department of Health** will weave farm to school work into the Community Access to Healthy Foods team to: increase the nutrition education, healthy eating, and school gardens at early care and education facilities; increase education and awareness around food insecurity/access; develop early care and education nutrition education best practices and perform a needs assessment; and increase the family engagement at early care and education facilities using school gardens and nutrition education as vehicles.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services will remain focused on feeding healthy and nutritious meals to children. It will increase outreach in rural areas and aims to increase engagement with the current sponsors and the community using informational flyers and brochures. It will continue to provide exceptional support to the feeding program sponsors and looks to streamline the onboarding processes. Lastly, it will continue to collaborate with partners by cross promoting information to the staff via e-newsletters and other social media outlets and will continue to identify farm to school partners within the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service will offer mini grant opportunities to County Cooperative Extension Service offices statewide to implement farm to school projects locally. Up to \$5,000 per year until 2023 can be requested due to the indirect funding accumulated from the CDC grant. Evaluation and implementation measures have been established, and technical assistance will be provided to assist County Cooperative Extension Service Agents in carrying out their farm to school projects.

Additionally, the Local, Regional & Safe Food Teams will be targeting and providing support to small and very small farms as the next phase of implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule. The produce distribution and aggregation component is the next phase of the Share Grounds program, and preliminary farm to school planning has begun. The Share Grounds team plans to continue this outreach and planning into the early part of 2021 with hopes for small-scale produce processing and aggregation to begin during the 2021 growing season.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is honored to support the goals of Act 506 of 2019 and is pleased to submit the 2020 Arkansas Farm to School Annual Report. For more information about the report, please contact Sarah Lane at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.



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*Marshall Elementary, Searcy County School District*

# APPENDIX A: ARKANSAS FARM TO SCHOOL COLLABORATIVE

In September 2017, a small group of state agencies and organizations convened for the first time at Arkansas Children’s Research Institute to discuss collaborating and moving farm to school forward in the state. This group became known as the Arkansas Farm to School Leadership Team. One of the major successes of the partners on the Leadership Team was co-hosting the 2018 statewide Arkansas Farm to School Summit with over 60 attendees.

In 2018, the Access to Healthy Foods Research Group at Arkansas Children’s Research Institute began its role as the group’s convener with co-facilitation amongst the group’s members. Later in the year the group voted to change its name to the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative.

In late 2019, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture became the facilitator of the Collaborative and in 2020 the Collaborative launched the Arkansas Farm to School Network Conversations as a peer-to-peer learning opportunity for teachers, farmers, and farm to school partners. At the same time, the Collaborative dove into a strategic planning process to detail long-term and short-term goals.

## Guiding Principles

- Trust and Transparency
- Continuous Evolution
- Appreciative Collaboration
- Justice & Equity
- Sustainable Resource Stewardship

## Vision

We envision a future for Arkansas in which every school and community provides a healthy environment for every child. We foresee leaders at every level who have developed supportive policies and programs, effective marketing, and streamlined communication and procurement processes to make farm to school an integrated cultural norm. As a result, Arkansas children no longer struggle with obesity, schools and school gardens are seen as community assets, Arkansas growers are sustainable, supported, and more abundant, and every Arkansan has greater access to good health, a vibrant community, economic prosperity, a clean environment, and social justice.

## Long-Term Goal

100 percent of schools in Arkansas will participate in farm to school by 2025.

- Schools: k-12 schools, early care and education facilities, and alternative learning environments.
- Participate: provide programming/activity one time per year.



## APPENDIX B: FUNDING

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The largest amount of farm to school funding in Arkansas comes from federal sources. The sources of federal funding are: the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Corporation for National and Community Service, which operates AmeriCorps. A much smaller portion of farm to school funding comes from the state, foundations, and other organizations.

### Federal

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): Funding from the USDA that supports farm to school comes from their Farm to School (F2S) grant, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension (SARE) grant, Specialty Crop Block (SCB) grant, Agriculture Research Service (ARS) grant, and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grant.

- 2009 USDA ARS: Arkansas Children’s Research Institute Delta Garden Study \$2,522,550
- 2011 USDA NIFA Arkansas: Children’s Research Institute Arkansas Grow Healthy Study \$1,300,000
- 2011 USDA SARE: University of Arkansas + Fayetteville Public Schools Building a Model Farm to School Program Using Community Partnerships \$10,000
- 2012 USDA SARE: Fayetteville Public Schools Creating a Sustainable Farm to School Program \$10,000
- 2013 USDA F2S: Fayetteville School District Implementation Grant \$99,058
- 2013 USDA F2S: Lawrence County School District Planning Grant \$45,000
- 2014 USDA F2S: Mansfield School District Planning Grant \$32,721
- 2015 USDA F2S: Arkansas Children’s Research Institute Conference and Event - Regional \$49,918
- 2015 USDA F2S: Lawrence County School District Implementation Grant \$100,000
- 2016 USDA F2S: Conway School District Planning Grant \$44,927
- 2016 USDA F2S: The Wallace Center at Winrock International Training - Regional Grant \$47,646
- 2016 USDA SCB: Arkansas Children’s Research Institute Providing Technical Assistance to Increase the Use of Farm to School Practices \$69,359
- 2017 USDA F2S: Arkansas Agriculture Department Training Grant \$31,381
- 2018 USDA F2S: Conway School District Implementation Grant \$96,779
- 2019 USDA SCB: Arkansas Children’s Research Institute Increasing Access and Awareness of Specialty Crops within the Farm to Institution Supply Chain \$60,605
- 2020 USDA SCB: Arkansas Department of Agriculture 2018 Re-Scope School Grounds and Alternative Selling Methods for Specialty Crop Farmers in Response to COVID-19 \$78,077
- 2020 USDA F2S: Carroll County Resource Council Planning Grant \$50,000
- 2020 USDA F2S: Springdale Public Schools Planning Grant \$20,000

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Funding from the CDC for farm to school has come in part of an expansion of their High Obesity Prevention (HOP) grant.

- 2019 CDC HOP: University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service F2S Supplemental \$83,688

Corporation for National and Community Service - AmeriCorps: Funding from AmeriCorps has provided humanpower in the form of trained service members who provided hands-on farm to school development. All three branches of service: State and National, VISTA, and NCCC have added to the growth of farm to school. Below is a list of farm to school related state and national programs:

- 2012 - 2018 Arkansas GardenCorps, Arkansas Children's Research Institute \$1,427,065
- 2011 - present FoodCorps Arkansas, FoodCorps \$3,291,339
- 2018 - present Full Circle FarmCorps, Arkansas Resource Conservation and Development Council & St. Joseph Center of Arkansas \$350,318

## State

The state funding available to support farm to school efforts is built into the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's budget to fund a Coordinator position. No additional state funds are available for farm to school at this time.

- FY2020 Arkansas Department of Agriculture Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Coordinator Position \$43,889.40

## Foundations and Other

Foundations and other organizations have supported statewide farm to school research, programming, and development.

- 2016 Arkansas Biosciences Institute: Arkansas Children's Research Institute *Health Impact Assessment of Farm to School on Childhood Obesity Rates in Arkansas* \$55,000
- 2017 Lindsey Robison Endowment, a fund of the Arkansas Community Foundation: Arkansas Children's Research Institute *Arkansas Farm to School* \$15,000
- 2017 Kohl's Foundation: Arkansas Children's Research Institute *Education, Outreach, and Implementation of Arkansas Farm to School* \$169,921
- 2017 National Farm to School Network: Arkansas Children's Research Institute *Core Partner Application* \$12,000
- 2017 Brown Foundation: Arkansas Children's Research Institute *Arkansas Farm to School Initiative* \$125,000
- 2018 Bank of America Foundation: Arkansas Children's Research Institute *Banking on School Gardens to Grow Food Security* \$25,000
- 2019 Kohl's Foundation: Arkansas Children's Research Institute *Arkansas Farm to School K-12 Toolkit and Growing MyPlate* \$85,000
- 2020 Center for Childhood Obesity Prevention: Arkansas Children's Research Institute *Characterizing Farm to Preschool in Early Childhood: Farm to Early Care and Education* \$50,000

## APPENDIX C: EVENTS AND RESOURCES

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The following are the most notable farm to school events and resources since 2009.

### Events

- 2009 Farm to School Interest Meeting hosted by the Arkansas Department of Education, Little Rock
- 2009 Farm to School Pilot Meeting hosted by the Arkansas Department of Education and New North Florida Cooperative Association, Stuttgart
- 2009 Arkansas Farm to School Conference hosted by Heifer International, Little Rock
- 2012 School Food Service and Farmer Field Day hosted by Heifer International, Little Rock
- 2012 Farm to School Workshop hosted by the University of Arkansas and Fayetteville Public Schools, Fayetteville
- 2015 Farm to School Workshops hosted by the Arkansas Children’s Research Institute, Statewide
- 2015 Farm to School Forum hosted by Fayetteville School District and the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) in conjunction with the DigIn Food and Farming Festival, Springdale
- 2016 Farm to School event hosted by the Arkansas Department of Human Services
- 2017 Farm to School Month Celebration hosted by the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center
- 2017 Arkansas Farm to School Summit: Growing Together hosted by FoodCorps Arkansas and NCAT, Van Buren
- 2018 Arkansas Farm to School Month Celebration hosted by Department of Human Services, Arkansas Career Training Institute, Hot Springs
- 2018 Local Conversation hosted by Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Jonesboro
- 2018 Farm to School Summit hosted by FoodCorps Arkansas, NCAT, Arkansas Children’s Research Institute, and the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Conway
- 2019 Local Conversation hosted by Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Hermitage
- 2019 Farm to School Celebration, hosted by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture and the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative, Little Rock
- 2020 Local Conversation hosted by Arkansas Department of Agriculture and the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, McCrory
- 2020 Virtual Farm Field Trip hosted by Arkansas Department of Agriculture and Heifer USA, YouTube LIVE

## Resources

- 2009 Arkansas Farm to School Informational Toolkit
- 2012 Delta Garden Study Curriculum
- 2014 Fayetteville School District Harvest of the Month Program
- 2014 Springdale Public Schools Harvest of the Month Program
- 2014 Child Nutrition Unit: Marketing Toolkit
- 2014 Arkansas Foods Project
- 2015 Farm to School in Arkansas: Policy and Planning Report
- 2016 Conway Public Schools Harvest of the Month Program
- 2017 Health Impact Assessment: Arkansas Farm to School
- 2018 Arkansas Farm to School Groundbreaker Profiles
- 2019 Arkansas Farm to School K-12 Toolkit
- 2019 Growing My Plate Curriculum
- 2019 Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act Annual Report

# Serving all Arkansans

WHILE PROTECTING AND PROMOTING ARKANSAS AGRICULTURE, FOOD, FORESTRY, AND NATURAL RESOURCES



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**ARKANSAS FARM TO SCHOOL  
2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

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