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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 7/20/2023

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Arkansas Department of Agriculture to Host Arkansas Farm to School Pilot Institute

LITTLE ROCK, AR— The Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) is pleased to announce that the Department’s Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program will host the first Arkansas Farm to School Institute (Institute). The Institute is a year-long professional development program where Arkansas farm to school teams will develop action plans for the 2023-2024 school year.



“Farm to school initiatives play a crucial role in improving the health of students, building relationships between producers and schools, and strengthening the local food system through local procurement and education,” said Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward. “We look forward to providing Arkansas schools with the resources and training to build on existing farm to school efforts.”

The Institute will begin with a summer retreat held from July 24 to 26, 2023, at the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute, and continue into the following school year. Teams will meet throughout the year to discuss action plan progress and provide feedback to Arkansas Farm to School and Early Childhood Development Program staff and coaches.

“The Institute provides a unique opportunity for the Department to support the growth of existing farm to school programs across the state,” said Jessica Chapman, Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator. “From the retreat to the end of the school year, we get to assist schools in the implementation of a school-wide plan that integrates all three aspects of farm to school – school gardens, education, and local procurement.”

To learn more about the Arkansas Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program, visit arfarmtoschool.org/. For more information on the Institute, contact Jessica Chapman at jessica.chapman@agriculture.arkansas.gov.

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.