

Examples of Federal Programs that Link Farming, Health and Communities

USDA Community Food Projects

Established through the 1996 Farm Bill and re-authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, the Community Food Projects program supports projects that enhance their community's food security.

This competitive grant program promotes self-sufficiency and food security in low-income communities through community food projects (CFP) and Training and Technical Assistance projects (T&TA).

CFPs unite the entire food system, assessing strengths, establishing linkages, and creating systems that improve self-reliance over food needs. T&TA helps successful applicants carry out and evaluate their projects.

The grant program is designed to:

- meet the needs of low-income people by increasing access to fresher, more nutritious food supplies;
- increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs;
- promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues;
- meets specific state, local, or neighborhood food and agricultural needs for infrastructure improvement and development;
- plans for long-term solutions; and
- create innovative marketing activities that benefit both agricultural producers and low-income consumers.

Grants are intended to help eligible private nonprofit entities in need of a one-time infusion of federal assistance to establish and carryout multipurpose community food projects. Projects are funded from \$10,000 to \$300,000 and from 1 to 3 years. These one-time grants require a dollar-for-dollar match in resources.

While this program receives \$5 million per year in mandatory funds (funds not subject to yearly appropriations processes), it is still underfunded as only 18 percent of proposals have received awards during the program's history.

This program was funded through 2007 as part of the 2002 Farm Bill. It will be up for renegotiation in the current Farm Bill discussions.

For more information, go to <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/fundview.cfm?fonum=1080>.

Farm to Cafeteria

Farm to Cafeteria programs link cafeterias (food services in schools, hospitals, colleges, day-cares) with local farmers and food processors to secure fresh, wholesome, healthy food from local sources. Many schools use these programs to promote nutrition education, establish school gardens, or incorporate experiential learning opportunities (e.g. farm tours) into the curriculum. These programs have been shown to have a positive effect on children's fruit and vegetable consumption while contributing economically to the community.

However, cafeterias face major challenges in terms of money, time and labor to implement these projects. To address these challenges, the Child Nutrition Act of 2004 created a seed grant fund to help create these new projects.

Section 122 "Access to Local Foods and School Gardens"¹ of the Child Nutrition Act of 2004 created a competitive seed grant fund to create new 'Farm to Cafeteria' projects. These one-time grants cover the initial costs of a Farm to Cafeteria project, including:

- food procurement
- storage and cutting equipment
- staff time and training
- educational and promotional materials
- school gardens

While the Act authorized the program in 2004, **no money has been appropriated for it since that time**. On February 6, the President released his budget for fiscal year '07. The appropriations process will start with hearings, meetings, and letters urging support for key programs. By mid-April, Senators and Representatives will be asked to identify their priorities for appropriations--the actual doling out of money. To function, Farm to Cafeteria appropriations must be on those priority lists, and members of the Appropriations Committees are needed to support funding for Farm to Cafeteria.

What Distinguishes Farm to Cafeteria

- Local Focus: "Farm to Cafeteria" focuses on bringing locally-grown food into school cafeterias around the country. Local food is typically the freshest possible, and it highlights what foods are grown in a region.
- One-Time Funding: The grants provide the resources to create financially self-sufficient, long-term Farm to Cafeteria projects.
- Experiential Nutrition Education: Students learn where their food comes from by visiting farms, growing gardens, and seeing educational displays with their food. This education has been shown to have a direct effect on kids' healthy food choices.
- Win-Win Benefits for Kids, Farmers, and Communities: Not only does Farm to Cafeteria encourage children to eat healthy, it also benefits independent, typically small-scale farmers. Purchasing directly from local farmers generates more money in the local economy and strengthens community ties.