

CT Farm to School Action Plan

Working Groups and Strategies*

*created at the Summit (11/6 & 7, 2019)

Overall Group Goal:

By 2032, 100% of CT ECE Centers and K-12 schools have tangible, sustainable processes that connect education, agriculture and nutrition, where at least 25% of food served in CT ECE Centers & K12 Schools is sourced locally, and all students enrolled in CT ECE Centers and K-12 schools have access to meaningful, empowering experiences with the local food system in their classrooms, cafeterias and outdoor learning spaces.

Group 1: Ability to Deliver CTFTS's Value**

Goal: For all CT farm to school stakeholders to understand the value of CT farm to school as it pertains to their role.

Strategy Shared: The creation of regional farm to school liaisons, potentially hosted at UConn Extension offices in the 8 counties across CT.

Other Strategies Produced:

1. The development of a CT Farm to School Institute (statewide version adapted from the Northeast Farm to School Institute in VT, like Massachusetts has implemented)
2. FTS Buyer/Provider or Buyer/Buyer Mentorship Program - to function as a way for buyers and providers to build a relationship, and/or directors with more experience with implementing farm to school initiatives to be paired with those less experienced, but interested to provide gentle guidance
3. Requirement for Farm to School to be integrated into mandatory educational curriculum.
4. Tiered Employee Training based on capacity of kitchen spaces and culinary skill sets.
5. Facilities assessment and farm to school specific equipment grant.
6. Establish sustained funded regional or county wide networks to support farm to school, with the guidance of regional coordinators.
7. Embed farm to school specific training into the Office of Early Childhood's normal training schedule.

** Does this group need a new name or need to be absorbed into another group? It spans a lot of territory.

Group 2: Ability to Match CT Farm to School Demand & Supply

Group Goal: We will bridge relationships to educate, market and outreach the mutual benefits of farm to school to all stakeholders to drive demand that will dictate infrastructure needs (aggregation, processing and storage) to serve the diversity and scale of local farms and schools.

Strategy Shared: Hire Coordinator(s) to create a web platform to aggregate resources, develop educational tools, provide direct procurement mentorship services, and enact marketing and outreach campaigns.

Other Strategies Produced:

1. Grant driven program to connect farm infrastructure for season extension to subsidized sales to a specific school(s) they arrange a pre-contract with for procurement.
 2. Create a comprehensive marketing type outreach tool like the Farmer Bucket List about selling to school/buying from farms based on best practices to be included anywhere and everywhere farmers and school community members gather.
 3. Organize to resource 4 regional food hubs in geographically strategic location across the state by utilizing current businesses and organizations, and hire someone to do this. Food Hub strategy resource facilitator. 3 year grant cycled position, potentially embedded in Connecticut Dept. of Economic and Community Development.
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Group 3: Resource/Funding for CT Farm to School

Group Goal: By 2032 CT will have 5 million* bonding for Farm to School in the state budget, annually.

*this is not a well-researched ask, yet. This number would depend on the amount estimated to fund other projects as they emerge, and would be reevaluated as time goes on.

Strategy Shared: Have a proposal for funding farm to school in CT with legislative and state food policy council support in the 2021 budget.

Other Strategies Produced:

1. State policy established to incentivize/ fund schools/ECE and producers to participate in farm to school activities.

2. Increased visits by legislators and the Governor to sites during CT Grown for CT Kids Week 2020. Integrate a DEI lens in all CT FTS strategies.
 3. Regional food hubs under each RESC in the state to provide access to schools/ECEs.
 4. Engage other stakeholder organizations to support proposed legislation- CABA (CT Assoc of Boards of Ed), CASBO (CT Assoc of School Business Offic.), CAPSS (CT Assoc of School Superint.), CAND(CT Academy of Nutr. & Dietetics), CAAE(CT Assoc of Ag Educators).
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Group 4: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Group Goal(s):

- a) CT Farm to school network works as a cohesive and inclusive unit to ensure equitable processes and culturally appropriate resources.
- b) Increase accessibility in the CT FTS network to ensure community needs are met, voices are heard, and institutionalized power is shared.

Strategy Shared: Develop a clear, shared, agreed upon definition of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as it exists in each sphere of the CT F2S Systems Map, prior to activation of action plan.

Other Strategies Produced:

1. Engage with organizations and individuals with expertise in racial equity and shifting power to ensure the space values different forms of knowledge and lived experience, is accessible and inclusive for all, balances privilege, and centers those who have been historically marginalized.
 2. Recruit community stakeholders across race, place, class, gender, sex, and other marginalized identities - that group develops a clear, shared agreed upon definition of DEI as it exists in each sphere of the CT F2S Systems Map.
 - a. White communities work through their own stuff not on the backs of communities of color.
 - b. Apply the definition in a way that develops processes for each sphere of the CT farm to school Systems Map (for example, increase demand for culturally relevant food grown).
 3. Lobby for policy backed reparations to communities of color.
 4. A direct investment in farmers of color.
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Group 5: Economic Value

Group Goal: To build the economic case for the value of CT farm to school in local communities and develop resources to support CT farm to school's economic value.

Strategy Shared: In the next 12 months, 10% of all CT children enrolled in ECE programs will have a farm to school experience.

Other Strategies Produced:

1. Collect and share stories of success from farmers doing F2S in CT to build interest. (We could also do this with schools.)
 2. Make the case for economic value of F2S with schools by:
 - a. Doing a kitchen waste study to show local food can lead to less waste
 - b. Doing a study to see if local food can increase meal sales
 3. Explore innovative strategies within the early childcare space to expose family and future consumers to local agriculture (& capture economic power). (We could also do this with K12.)
 - a. CSA/Farmer's market on site
 - b. Farm field trips
 - c. Aggregate purchasing power
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Group 6a: Educational Value - Student Impact

Group Goal: 100% of students in ECE and PreK-12 will have at least one meaningful, culturally relevant hands-on experience with Farm to School every year.

Strategy Shared: Farm to School Education Coordinator in every school district.

Other Strategies Produced:

1. Define & quantify hands-on culturally relevant Farm-To-School experiences.
2. Develop a scope and sequence of experiences that are developmentally appropriate.
3. Require every district to document and report activities.
4. Give every district supplemental funds for activities, but funding is contingent upon documentation and reporting.

5. Develop groups or meetings to share best practices.
 6. Every school has to establish a garden/outdoor classroom or indoor growing tables by 2032.
 7. Embed curriculum through science NGSS realignment.
 8. Establish an annual CT Farm To School Institute (aka like Northeast Farm to School Institute in VT)
 9. Establish a CT Farm To School Fund that schools/districts apply for to fund their activities (addendum to the supplemental fund strategy above).
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Group 6b: Educational Value - Adult Educator Impact

Group Goal: ...comprehensive educational program ... expert support network to train/educate adults on ... implementation... classroom resources...all aspects of farm to school... how it will help children and our society to succeed...

Strategy Shared: The development of a committee, who would: develop resource connections to classroom standards, produce a resource guide, and develop a training for professional educators and create an outreach plan.

Other Strategies* Produced:

1. Have a Farm to School Institute yearly, like Vermont does. (NE Farm to School Institute)
2. Establish a marketing campaign (video) to introduce people (politicians, school board, teachers, parents, farmers, etc) to Farm to School and convince people of its importance.
3. Strategies for farm to school curriculum implementation, train teachers/coaches/etc on curriculum implementation.
4. Farm to School network point person (in each district?)

*The idea here is that the committee (the strategy that we dug deeper on) will carry out each of the above strategies.