



United States Department of Agriculture

Volume 2, Issue 9, March 15, 2016

The Dirt

News and Notes from FNS's  Office of Community Food Systems



USDA's Farm to School Census shows schools invest

\$790 MILLION

in local communities.

That's a **105% increase** over previous results!

Farm to school works!

We asked and you answered! The results of the [2015 USDA Farm to School Census](#) have been tallied, and we're happy to share good news.

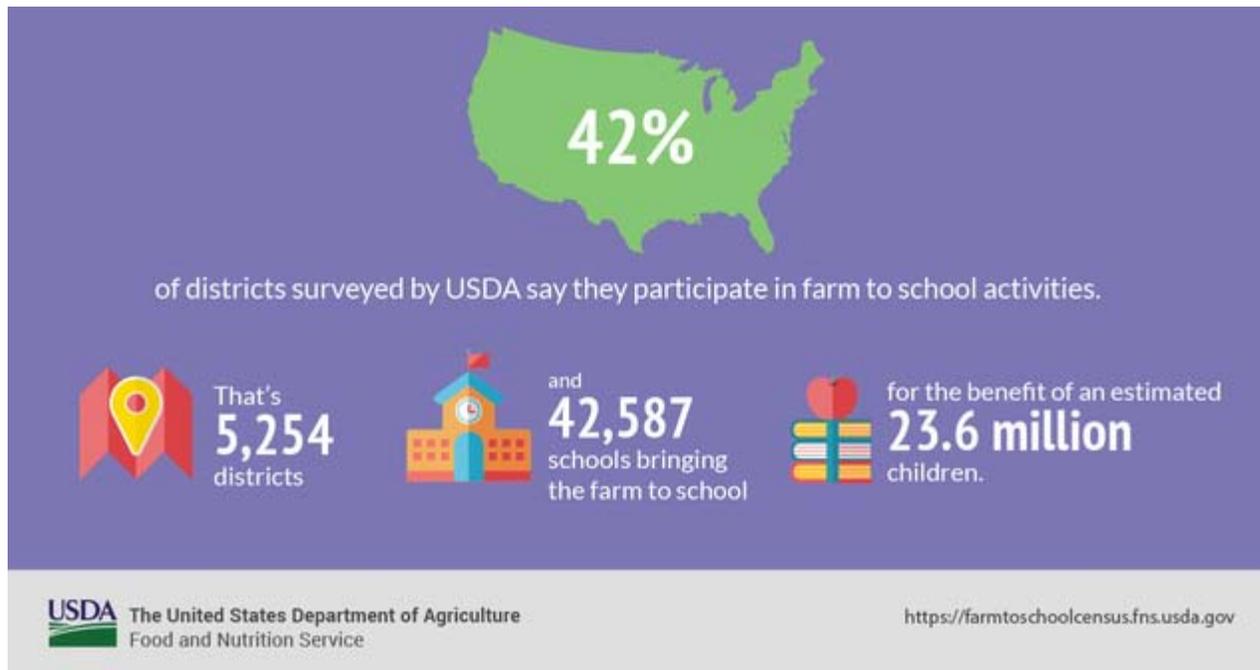
[An investment in the health of America's students through farm to school programming is also an investment in the health of local economies.](#) In school year 2013-2014, school districts purchased nearly \$800 MILLION in local food from farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and food processors and manufacturers. That's a 105 percent increase over the \$386 million of local food purchased in the 2011-2012 school year when the first Census was conducted. Forty-six percent of school districts report that they will buy even more local foods in future school years.

[Through farm to school, healthy habits are taking root all across the country.](#) At the national level, 42 percent of school districts that responded to the Census are operating farm to school programs as of the 2014-2015 school year and another 16 percent have plans to start in the future. Farm to school programs exist in every state in the country in large and small, rural and urban schools alike.

[Farm to school works to make school gardens grow.](#) In school year 2013-2014, school districts cultivated more than 7,100 edible school gardens giving children daily access to fresh fruits and vegetables and helping them learn where their food comes from. This is a 196 percent increase over the 2,401 edible school gardens reported in the 2011-2012 school year when the first census was conducted. 44 percent of districts with farm to school programs reported having at least one edible school garden.

[Salad bars work to help kids make good food choices.](#) 62 percent of Census respondents with farm to school programs reported maintaining salad bars where children access fresh local fruits and vegetables. During the 2013-2014 school year districts participating in farm to school reported having more than 17,000 salad bars.

[Visit the Census site >](#)



Check out these Census highlights!

- [National overview statistics](#)
- [State by state summaries](#) including the dollars invested locally in each state and shout outs to select high performing school districts.
- Full details on every school district that responded to the Census.
- Interactive social media links so you can share results with your networks; look for and click on the white circle in the lower right hand corner of select pages.
- Grab and go graphs and charts; just right click on any graph or chart to save to your own desktop.
- A [photo gallery](#) showcasing the great work of USDA Farm to School grantees.

Learn more at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool> or contact us at farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov.

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