



**INSTITUTE FOR
AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY**

PRESS RELEASE

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Freshest for the youngest: Launch of Minnesota Farm to Childcare pilot to serve as national model

About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

MINNEAPOLIS – A new partnership between the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and child-care provider New Horizon Academy (NHA) is delivering fresh, local foods from Minnesota farms to child-care centers around the state.

Beginning this month, 13 New Horizon child care sites located in the Twin Cities metro, St. Cloud and Rochester areas will serve as pilot locations for a new Farm to Child Care initiative. In 2013, the program will be extended to all 60 of NHA's Minnesota locations, reaching a total of 7,500 children. After rigorous evaluation of the program, IATP will report its findings nationally and provide tools to encourage others to adopt the model.

Healthy food from nearby farms and experiential learning opportunities, garden-based education, and interactions with farmers will connect young children with local foods and educate them about how their food is grown.

“IATP has helped catalyze the rapid growth of Farm to School in Minnesota and we are now bringing what we've learned to child care,” said IATP's JoAnne Berkenkamp. “Reaching young children, particularly between the ages of three and five, is a golden opportunity to influence lifelong eating habits, all while creating new opportunities for the local farm economy.”

Leading up to the June launch, IATP and NHA have been building relationships with area farmers, revamping menus to include locally grown fruits, vegetables and wild rice, developing curriculum for the children and generating helpful tips for parents. IATP has also released national research on nascent Farm to Child Care programs around the country and the opportunities and challenges in connecting farmers with children in child-care settings.

“We are excited to be on the ground level of such a unique partnership,” said NHA's Chief Operating Officer, Chad Dunkley. “Given our mission to provide children with the best possible environment for healthy development, providing farm-fresh, local foods is a natural fit for New Horizon Academy and the families we serve.”

“As a farmer, it’s important to me that younger generations know where their food is coming from and how it was grown—that carrots grow in the ground and that apples grow on trees—and that fresh food choices are good choices,” said Chuck Fields, whose farm, Ed Fields & Sons, will be supplying some of the fresh produce to be featured in the pilot program.

IATP’s work to expand Farm to School programs in Minnesota has contributed to an increase from fewer than 20 participating school districts in 2006 to 145 districts by 2011. Read IATP’s report, *Farm to Child Care: Opportunities and Challenges for Connecting Young Children with Local Foods and Farmers* on iatp.org.

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