



INSTITUTE FOR AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY

PRESS RELEASE

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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 Geneva.

Minnesota farmers embrace Farm to School, finds new survey

Farmers see opportunity to educate students and reach new markets

MINNEAPOLIS – Farmers, ranchers and other food producers are interested in providing more of their fresh, locally grown food to Minnesota K-12 schools, according to a new survey released today by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

The survey, completed by 67 small- and medium-scale producers and multi-farm collaboratives, showed strong interest in selling more locally grown foods to Minnesota K-12 schools and broad support for educating students about local food and farming issues. Ninety-five percent of respondents indicated that they are either “very” (60 percent) or “somewhat” (35 percent) interested in selling to K-12 schools. When asked about the reasons for their interest, respondents’ top three reasons were to “educate children about the food system,” to “increase access to healthy, locally grown food” and to “[generate] new revenue for my farm.”

“Farmers’ enthusiasm, not only for supplying locally grown food to schools, but for helping our young people understand where and how their food is grown, is very encouraging,” said IATP’s JoAnne Berkenkamp. “The number of Minnesota school districts engaged in Farm to School has risen from just ten in 2006 to 123 districts in 2010. This represents a terrific new opportunity for farmers and schools to partner more closely in making fresh, local foods available to K-12 students around the state.”

“The benefits of building connections between Minnesota farms and schools are clear,” said Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture Dave Frederickson. “Our students, our farmers and our local economy all win when local farm products reach school cafeterias.”

Among the respondents who have sold to K-12 schools in the past, 50 percent described their experiences as “very successful,” with 37 percent calling the experience “somewhat successful.” Key challenges include meeting schools’ particular product specifications and volume needs, and building closer relationships and purchasing mechanisms between farmers and school food buyers.

As one farmer put it, “Tremendous opportunity exists, and it’s exciting to see it beginning to come together! As some of the hurdles are addressed, the growth could be terrific.”

The survey is part of IATP's ongoing Farm to School initiative and compliments a similar survey of Minnesota K-12 foodservice directors released in March 2011. The full survey results and more information about IATP's Farm to School initiative are available at www.iatp.org and www.farm2schoolmn.org.

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