



# Definition of Farm to School

## DEFINITION

Farm to School is an initiative that links children to nearby small and mid-size farms and ranches that produce fresh, healthy and minimally processed foods that are served at their schools.

## Goals

Farm to School advances the following goals:

- Promote children's health by providing fresh, healthy and minimally processed foods in schools and supporting the development of healthy eating habits
- Enhance children's "food literacy" by familiarizing them with foods grown nearby, teaching them how and where their food is grown, building knowledge about how to prepare healthy foods, and educating them about the health, nutrition, social and environmental impacts of food choices
- Strengthen local economies by expanding markets for small and mid-size agricultural producers and food entrepreneurs whose products have typically been unavailable in school meal programs
- Build vibrant locally oriented food systems by fostering positive relationships and increase understanding of local food systems among children, farmers, parents, educators and school districts, healthcare professionals, and other community members
- Advance environmental stewardship, where practicable, by supporting more sustainable food production methods, reducing reliance on long distance transportation, and reducing food waste

## Values

Farm to School is rooted in the following values:

- An individual's lifelong well-being depends on healthy eating habits
- Children should have access to fresh, healthy and minimally processed foods as part of a nutritionally-balanced school meals program
- Small and mid-sized farms that serve local markets are essential to a transparent and diverse food system
- School nutrition professionals can be important partners in supporting community well being, the local economy and environmental stewardship through their food choices and purchasing practices
- Food literacy and other school and community-based learning opportunities<sup>2</sup> contribute to the development of healthy eating habits as well as children's understanding of and engagement in their community's food system

## Specific Attributes of Farm to School Foods

A food item must meet **all** of the following attributes to be considered a Farm to School Food by IATP:

- A. The food is grown or raised in proximity to schools where they are served to minimize the distance between "farm and fork"
- B. The food is grown by farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers with small and mid-sized operations who control management decisions on their farm/ranch and engage in day to day management
- C. The grower or grower collaborative that grew or raised the food is clearly identified on the product or purchasing documents
- D. Food meets the following category-specific criteria:

### Fruits, Vegetables, Legumes, Seeds, Nuts, Honey and Maple Syrup:

- The food is purchased in minimally processed form, and does not contain any artificial flavor or flavoring or coloring ingredient
- Includes whole and pre-cut fresh produce, frozen and dried produce items, and juice/cider

### Meat/Poultry

- The animals are raised by farmers and ranchers with small and mid-sized operations who own the animals, control management decisions on their farm/ranch and engage in day to day management
- The food is purchased in minimally processed form (e.g. ground meat, whole parts) and does not contain any artificial flavor or flavoring, coloring ingredient, chemical preservative or any other artificial or synthetic ingredient

## Cheese

- Limited to specialty, artisan and farmstead cheeses<sup>6</sup>.

## Grains and Wild Rice

- Includes grains that are prepared off-site by an independently owned bakery

*This document may be reviewed and revised by IATP given changes in federal policy and other developments. August 2010.*

1. IATP defines "minimally processed" as traditional processes used to make food edible or to preserve it or to make it safe for human consumption e.g., smoking, roasting, freezing, drying, and fermenting, or those physical processes which do not fundamentally alter the raw product and/or which only separate a whole, intact food into component parts, e.g., grinding meat, separating eggs into albumen and yolk, and pressing fruits to produce juices.
2. Farm to School learning opportunities include garden-based learning, food preparation, tastetesting, classroom curriculum, educational information provided in the cafeteria, farm visits, interaction with agricultural producers and other experts, and participation in waste management programs like waste reduction, recycling and food composting, among other activities.
3. IATP defines "Specialty, Artisan and Farmstead Cheese" as follows:
  - Specialty Cheese: Cheese of limited production, with particular attention paid to natural flavor and texture profiles. Specialty cheeses may be made from all types of milk (cow, sheep, goat) and may include flavorings such as herbs, spices, fruits and nuts. Does not contain any artificial flavor or flavoring or coloring ingredient.
  - Artisan or Artisanal Cheese: Cheese is produced primarily by hand, in small batches, with particular attention paid to the tradition of the cheese maker's art, and thus using as little mechanization as possible in the production of the cheese. Artisan, or artisanal, cheeses may be made from all types of milk and may include various flavorings. Does not contain any artificial flavor or flavoring or coloring ingredient.
  - Farmstead Cheese: The cheese must be made with milk from the farmer's own herd, or flock, on the farm where the animals are raised. Milk used in the production of farmstead cheeses may not be obtained from any outside source. Farmstead cheeses may be made from all types of milk and may include various flavorings. Does not contain any artificial flavor or flavoring or coloring ingredient.

\*Adapted from American Cheese Society