FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH HIGHLIGHTS BENEFITS TO FARMERS, KIDS, AND COMMUNITIES**

Farmers in Minnesota and across the country are facing another year of global prices so low they don’t cover the cost of production. Increasingly, Minnesota farmers are turning to local markets and supply chains that offer more stable income, boost the local economy, and provide healthier food to our communities. One of the biggest opportunities for farmers to access local, stable buyers is through Farm to School programs.

October is National Farm to School month, and farmers, schools and Minnesotans around the state are celebrating to highlight how important this program is for farmers, kids, and local economies.

“These programs not only get fresh, healthy food to the kids who need it most, they also open up new markets for small to midsize farmers who want to diversify their business model,” Says Erin McKee, Farm to Institution Program Director at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. “This is an opportunity for students to learn where their food comes from, which builds strong relationships and strengthening ties within communities all across the state.”

The signature event of Farm to School Month is the [Great Apple Crunch](https://www.cias.wisc.edu/applecrunch/) on Thursday, October 12th. At noon, tens of thousands of Minnesota kids in schools and early care all over the state will take a bite out of a Minnesota grown apple altogether at noon. In 2016, over a million people participated across the Great Lakes region! In addition, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture will be hosting a series of cafeteria tours, highlighting schools and early care settings that are receiving [Farm to School grant](https://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/mnfarmtoschool.aspx) funds.

**Jackson Elementary Farm to School Tour**

1601 Lusitano Street

Shakopee, MN 55379

Tuesday, October 3, 2017 from 11:30 a.m.

**Northfield Middle School Farm to School Tour**

2200 Division Street South

Northfield, MN 55057

Thursday, October 5, 2017 at 11:00 a.m.

**Reach-Up Head Start Farm to School Tour**

350 Highway 10 South

St. Cloud, MN 56304

Thursday, October 12, 2017 at 11:00 a.m.

One of the biggest obstacles farmers face in selling to schools is the lack of local processing facilities that can meet school menu guidelines. Investing in better farm to school programs will make it easier for local processors and other businesses to expand and generate more local jobs in Greater Minnesota. A recent study from Upstream Public Health found that every dollar spent on farm to school programs returned $2.16 to the local economy. A coalition of nearly 90 school, food, and farm groups are pushing for a [statewide Farm to School policy bill.](http://www.farm2schoolmn.org)

# An immediate opportunity for school districts to serve more fresh, healthy, local food to their students is coming up soon. Schools can apply for a Farm to School Grant through the MN Department of Agriculture to improve school kitchens to prepare local food. Applications are due on November 16, and more information can be found at <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/agri.aspx>

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*Based in Minneapolis with offices in Washington, D.C. and Berlin, Germany, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy connects the dots of global justice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems.*