



PENNSYLVANIA
FARM TO SCHOOL
NETWORK

FARM TO SCHOOL POLICY

STATE LEVEL

Why is state farm to school policy important?

Farm to school initiatives—local procurement, school gardens and experiential education—have been shown to have many benefits to communities across the country.¹ These activities can be supported in meaningful, sustainable ways through legislative policy. There are federal policies and funding streams that bolster farm to school efforts, but these policies are limited in scope. There is enormous opportunity to create complementary, lasting change through state policy. This fact sheet covers trends in state farm to school legislation across the country and current supportive policies in Pennsylvania.

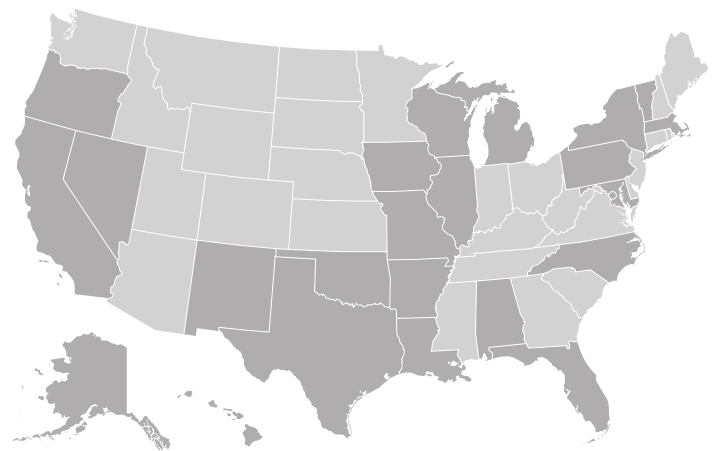


Across the Country

The National Farm to School Network (NFSN) published a comprehensive review of state farm to school legislation across the country from 2000 to 2018 in its [State Farm to School Policy Handbook](#). During this time frame, 46 states, D.C. and one U.S. territory introduced more than 460 farm to school-related bills and resolutions. Significantly, 25 states have passed comprehensive farm to school legislation with funding attached. Examples include:

Grant Programs: Funding is critical to ensure implementation of farm to school activities, and many states have passed legislation which sets up grant programs for schools, early care and education sites, and communities to carry out farm to school work. Vermont was the first state to create such a grant program in 2006. [Its exemplary programs](#) have expanded over the years and include a strong technical assistance component. Read more about Pennsylvania's Farm to School Grant Program below.

Funded Coordinator Positions: More than a dozen states across the country have legislatively mandated and funded farm to school coordinator positions. These full-time positions can be housed at relevant state agencies, such as State Departments of Education or Agriculture. For example, Hawaii's [Senate Bill 376](#) established a farm to school program and statewide coordinator position with the goals of improving student health, developing the agricultural workforce, expanding farm- and garden-based education, and increasing local food procurement for public schools. Specific job descriptions for Hawaii and other states can be found in the NFSN's [State Farm to School Positions Guide](#). Though Pennsylvania does not have specific farm to school



States that have passed Farm to School legislation, 2002–2018

positions created through state policy, several state agencies include farm to school in their work and participate in the Pennsylvania Farm to School Network's leadership team.

Funded Local Procurement Incentives: This type of increasingly popular farm to school legislation provides additional funding to schools and sites that include locally sourced products in their Child Nutrition Program menus. Michigan's [10 Cents a Meal Program](#) is a leading example. For more general background information around the structure of Child Nutrition Programs, see the Pennsylvania Farm to School Network's [fact sheet](#) on the topic.

Emerging Foundational Opportunities: Advocacy efforts related to universal school meals are gaining momentum as a way to advance farm to school procurement and to strengthen child nutrition programs more generally. Universal school meals would mean all children would be eligible to receive school meals at no cost, regardless of their families' income. Such a policy, whether passed at the state or federal level, would allow schools to maximize available funding and minimize administrative burdens. As of summer 2021, both Maine and California have passed statewide universal meals legislation.

In Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Farm to School Grant Program: As part of the Pennsylvania Farm Bill, the state legislature passed the Pennsylvania Farm to School Program, [House Bill 1514](#) in 2019. This grant program makes funds available to schools and certain early care and education sites to implement farm to school activities, including the procurement of Pennsylvania agricultural products for use in Child Nutrition Programs. The grant is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. The Pennsylvania Farm to School Network has opportunities to push for improvements to the program, such as expanding timelines and eligibility, as well as strengthening administrative components of the program, like the scoring rubric and technical assistance structure.

The Pennsylvania Commission for Agricultural Excellence: Recent relevant legislation in Pennsylvania also includes [House Bill 178](#), which aims to increase agricultural education into the public school curriculum through the establishment of a Commission for Agricultural Excellence. This bill was passed in 2017; up-to-date information on the work on the Commission is available [here](#). The Pennsylvania Farm to School Network holds a spot on its leadership team for a representative from the Commission.

LEARN MORE

- **For more information on how a bill becomes a law in Pennsylvania,** see [Making Pennsylvania Law](#), a resource from the House of Representatives.
- **For information about your representatives and how to connect with them,** visit the PA General Assembly [website](#).

GET INVOLVED

To get involved with state farm to school policy efforts, join the Pennsylvania Farm to School Network's policy working group at pafarmtoschool.org/get-involved.



1 <http://www.farmtoschool.org/Resources/BenefitsFactSheet.pdf>

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, visit pafarmtoschool.org. For technical assistance, please contact us at: pafarmtoschool@thefoodtrust.org