# Solano Farm to School
## Public Forum



# Welcome!

# Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Current Farm to School Initiatives (Sacramento & Vacaville)
3. Solano Farm to School Project
4. California Dept. of Food & Ag (CDFA) – Office of Farm to Fork
5. Solano County SALC Project:  Farm to School & Institutional Purchasing Strategy
6. Q&A
7. Thanks & Next Steps



# What is Farm to School?



# Farm to School in Vacaville!




VUSD
Vacaville Unified School District



# Farm to School in Vacaville!






# Farm to School in Vacaville!





# Solano Farm to School Project

USDA Food and Nutrition Administration
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

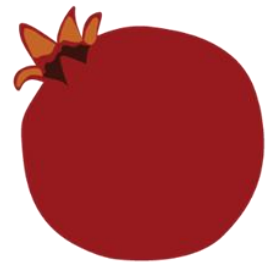
Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program

NURTURING INITIATIVES FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE
Sustainable Solano

conscious kitchen

VUSD
Vacaville Unified School District

INNOVATIVE HEALTH SOLUTIONS



conscious kitchen


Welcome to
the conscious kitchen
Bayside MLK Academy
a fresh local organic seasonal sustainable school food program

# TRANSFORMING SCHOOL FOOD

## How the Conscious Kitchen model works:

- Strengthen district capacity for organic, scratch-cooking
- Expand procurement pathways
- Build lasting supply chains
- Nourish students and communities



# OUR IMPACT

**2.1M+**
students reached across California

**$8M**
directed to organic farmers

**136+**
districts engaged

**~70**
local organic farms in school supply chain



**OUR NORTH STAR:**

*Organic school meals for all 6 million California public school students, and a model other states can follow*

# USDA DoD Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program

## 468% increase in volume of organic purchases over 3 years

- SY 2023–24: Organic purchases = $1.1 million with 17 organic produce options available
- SY 2024–25: $3.9 million with 30 different organic options available
- SY 2025–26: $6.3 million with 26 items; down slightly due to market availability of lettuce, spring mix and squash



"Judi has made me a believer in the collective power that school districts can come together to serve our children's health and well-being for the nearly 6 million public school students in California. From Conscious Kitchen's work, there has been a 468% increase in the volume of organic product!" — **Kim Frinzell,** Director of Nutrition Services, California Department of Education

# SUCCESS STORIES

With Conscious Kitchen's support, **Frog Hollow Farm** increased school sales from **$204K** to **$617K in one year.** The DoD Fresh channel became the farm's largest buyer in its 50-year history.



When Conscious Kitchen first met **Yadira Mendiola** of **Queen of Vegetables Organic Farm** in 2023, she feared she would have to give up farming. Conscious Kitchen helped connect her to school markets, creating new opportunities for her farm. Today, Yadira leads a co-op of Central Coast farmers growing **organic romaine lettuce** and other produce specifically for local schools.



When I started in 2015, I lost a lot of money because I had to throw away so many strawberries. After working with Conscious Kitchen, everything changed. Now I'm working to sell to as many schools as I can. Things are better because I get a fair price, and kids get to eat organic strawberries. I've been to school events and meetings, and seeing the kids smiling and enjoying the fruit keeps me going. It makes me so happy." — **Domitilia Tapia, Owner of Mimi's Organic Farm**



# THE NATION'S FIRST ORGANIC SCHOOL FOOD PURCHASING CO-OP

After more than a decade of doing this work, we saw the same opportunity time and again: schools wanted greater access to organic ingredients, and organic farmers and food makers wanted dependable institutional markets. Each district was working through the same puzzle on its own.



The Conscious Organic School
Food Purchasing Cooperative

# Solano Farm to School Project

conscious kitchen

- Case study of VUSD's farm to school program
- Readiness Assessment among 5 other districts
- Technical Assistance to Schools and Farmers
- Buyer's Guide
- Seller's Guide
- 3 Convenings



# Solano Farm to School Project

Vacaville Unified School District

- Interview for Case Study
- Share insight & experience with other districts
- Coordinate on Youth Wellness Program
- Provide feedback on final documents
- Hold the vision for “Solano County having the best school food in the state!”



# Solano Farm to School Project

## Youth Wellness Program



# Youth Wellness Program

## Experiential Learning:  In the Kitchen





# Youth Wellness Program

## Experiential Learning: In the Garden





# Youth Wellness Program

## Wellness Tools: In the Garden





# Youth Wellness Program

## Farm Field Trip!





# Youth Wellness Program

## Final Presentations






# Solano Farm to School Project

INNOVATIVE HEALTH SOLUTIONS

- Evaluation Framework
- Reporting
- Expertise in partnerships
- Strategic planning & outreach



# Solano Farm to School
## Public Forum



California Department of Food & Agriculture

# Farm to School Program



# Overview

**Farm to School Programs**

- California Food Procurement
- Education that connects classrooms, cafeterias, and outdoor learning spaces (gardens/farms/etc.)
- Experiential learning with the community (gardens, field trips, guest teachers, etc.)

**Our Vision:**

**Every student, every school, every day!**

- Freshly prepared
- Locally sourced
- Climate smart, Organic, and Regeneratively grown
- Produced with fair wages
- Paired with hands-on food education

https://cafarmtofork.cdfa.ca.gov/farm_to_fork/focus_areas/farm_to_school.html



FARM TO SCHOOL TIMELINE

# A Farm to School Movement

## 1912

4-H programs began in California; at the time they were known as "agriculture clubs"

## 1928

California Future Farmers of America (FFA) founded

## 1946

National School Lunch Program founded

## 1978

Life Lab established their first school garden at Green Acres Elementary School in Santa Cruz, CA

## 1995

Edible Schoolyard and Center for Ecoliteracy founded in Berkeley, CA

## 2004

California Farm to School Taskforce established



## 2006

California School Instructional Garden Act (Assembly Bill 1535, Chapter 437, Statutes of 2006) passed, providing $15 million in new and ongoing school garden funding

California School Garden Network established by California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), California Department of Education (CDE), California Department of Public Health (CDPH), UC Davis, Life Lab, California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, California Integrated Waste Management Board, and Western Growers Foundation

## 2007

National Farm to School Network established by Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College and the Community Food Security Coalition

## 2009

CDE launched Fresh Fruits & Vegetables: A Centerpiece of a Healthy Environment, Creating & Sustaining Your School Garden, and Garden Enhanced Nutrition Education Training Programs

FARM TO SCHOOL TIMELINE

## 2010

Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 mandated meal pattern requirements for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and authorized the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to establish Farm to School Program

## 2012

Los Angeles Unified School District adopted Good Food Purchasing Program policy

## 2013

California Farm to School Network founded

USDA Farm to School Grant established, awarding six California grantees in the inaugural class

## 2017

Karuk Tribe received USDA Farm to School Grant, the first California Tribal organization to receive solo funding

The California Grown Fresh School Meals Grant Program allocated $1.5 million in one-time funds administered by the California Department of Education to incentivize the purchase of California-grown food in schools and expand the number of freshly prepared school meals offered within the state using California-grown ingredients

California Farm to School Network transitioned from the Community Alliance with Family Farmers to CDFA Office of Farm to Fork (CDFA-F2F)

## 2019

California Division of State Architecture approved first-ever formal farm to school cooking school infrastructure: a 4,500 square foot zero net energy facility at Floyd Farm at Leataata Floyd Elementary School in Sacramento



## 2020

First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom championed California's first-ever dedicated funding for farm to school in Governor Newsom's 2020 Budget Act, with $1.5 million allocated in permanent funding for California Farm to School Program and $8.5 million in one-time funding to pilot the California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program

First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom and CDFA Secretary Karen Ross convened the Farm to School Interagency Working Group and Advisory Committee, a diverse cross-section of stakeholders and practitioners engaged in farm to school in California

## 2021

CDFA-F2F hosted a virtual California Farm to School Conference

CDFA-F2F awarded $8.5 million to 60 grantees, the inaugural class of the California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program

Governor Gavin Newsom increased the state's investment in the California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program to $60 million and signed School Meals For All legislation to provide every student in California with free school meals

# Updates & Impact

- **Permanent Program Funding:** Governor Newsom signed SB 172 in July 2026, codifying the nation-leading Farm to School program championed by First Partner into permanent state law.

- **Impact:**
  - Since 2021, the Farm to School Incubator Grant Program has invested $86 million in 375 local projects since 2021, directly benefiting 49% of all California public school students.
  - Every $1 invested leads to $2.10 in regional economic activity.
  - 80% of incubator grantees are Title I schools.
  - 100% of producer grant funds to small, mid-size, or socially/economically disadvantaged producers

*https://www.gov.ca.gov/2026/07/13/governor-newsom-signs-legislation-securing-permanent-funding-for-nation-leading-farm-to-school-program-championed-by-first-partner/*



# CA FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM STAFF

## NORTH COAST REGION:



**Network Lead -** Jennifer Lutge



**Producer Specialist -** Meerae Park

## BAY AREA REGION:



**Network Lead -** Catherine O'Brien

**Producer Specialist -** TBD, Position Open

## SOUTH COAST REGION:



**Network Lead -** Jacqueline Day



**Producer Specialist -** Chris Massa

## GREATER LA REGION:



**Network Lead -** Carmen Carrasco



**Producer Specialist -** Tracey Perez




## SUPERIOR REGION:



**Network Lead -** Jenn Rogge



**Producer Specialist -** Mike Whamond

## CENTRAL REGION:



**Network Lead -** Diana Avalos



**Producer Specialist -** Michael Ackley-Grady

## SAN JOAQUIN REGION:



**Network Lead -** Jane Alvarado-Banister

**Producer Specialist -** TBD, Poistion Open

## SOUTHERN REGION:



**Network Lead -** Sandra Avila



**Producer Specialist -** Jennifer Huang

## STATEWIDE STAFF:



**Program Manager -** Nick Anicich



**Special Projects Coordinator -** Rachel Beck



**Special Projects Coordinator -** Andi Sitchler



**NorCal Operations Manager -** Pamela Lee



**SoCal Operations Manager -** Sophia Riemer Bopp

# Regional Farm to School: Farm to School Network Leads

Support F2S Grantees

Share Resources, Funding, Partners

Host Regional Events

Building Regional F2S Networks

# Regional Farm to School: Producer Engagement Specialist

Support F2S Grantees

Value Chain Coordination

Host Regional Events

Build Relationships with Producers

# CA Farm to School Network: Statewide Activities




Monthly Network Calls

CALIFORNIA FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK

CDFA OFFICE OF FARM to FORK

CDFA Updates

Monthly e-newsletter

CA FARM TO SCHOOL CONFERENCE

cdfa

Biennial Conference 2026

cdfa

CDFA-F2F

CALIFORNIA FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK

# Cohort 4 F2S Grant Program Updates

- **Cohort 4 F2S Grant :**
  - The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Cohort 4 California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program will award competitive grants to support projects that cultivate equity, nurture students, build climate resilience, and create scalable and sustainable change.
  - Three Funding Tracks
    - Track 1: Farm to School TK-12 Procurement and Education Grant ($19.5 mil)
    - Track 2: Farm to School Technical Assistance (TA) Subaward Grant (up to $5.5 mil)
    - Track 3: Farm to School Producer and Food Hub Grant ($13 mil)

- **Cohort 4 F2S Grant Program**
  - **Website:** https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/caf2sgrant/
    - Includes recordings of Info Sessions + slide deck from Public Comment Period
  - **Updates:**
    - Public Comment Period ended Friday, September 11
    - CDFA Staff are currently reviewing the comments and finalizing the RFA
    - Next Up: CDFA will post a document to the website responding to the questions/comments that were submitted



# RESOURCES + OPPORTUNITIES

- **Chef Ann Foundation - Salad Bars to Schools**
  - ✓ **Application Due**: March 31, 2027
  - ✓ **Organization Focus**: K-12 school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program with an enrollment of at least 100 students per school site
  - ✓ **Website**: https://www.thelunchbox.org/apply-for-a-grant/salad-bars-to-schools/
- **CDFA CA Underserved and Small Producer Program (Farmer/Producer)**
  - ✓ **Application Due**: Rolling basis
  - ✓ **Organization Focus**: Farmer/Producer
  - ✓ **Website**: https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/CUSP/
- **CDE Intersessional Meals Opt-In**
  - ✓ **Opt-In Period Closes**: November 9, 2026 at 4pm
  - ✓ **Focus**: Public school districts, county offices of education and direct funded charter schools providing at least one free meal per day to children in low-income areas in which at least 50% of children are eligible for Free and Reduced-Price meals during school intersessional periods of less than ten days.
  - ✓ **Website**: https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/mealgrantoptinapplic.asp
- **Kids Gardening**
  - ✓ https://kidsgardening.org/grant-opportunities/
- **This Week in Farm to School**
  - ✓ https://www.farmtoschool.org/this-week-archive
- **Ben & Jerry's Foundation Grant**
  - ✓ Rolling applications
  - ✓ https://benandjerrysfoundation.org/national-grants/
- **Newmans Own Foundation**
  - ✓ Food Justice for Kids
  - ✓ https://newmansown.org/food-justice-for-kids-prize/
- **CAFF Farm to Cafeteria Signage Request**
  - ✓ https://caff.org/farm-to-cafeteria-signage/
- **Center for Eco literacy – Digging In: Farm to School Activities, Case Studies, and Resources**
  - ✓ https://ecoliteracy.org/download/digging-in-farm-to-school



# Solano Farm to School
## Public Forum



# Objectives

## 01 Economic Development

Create an agricultural economic plan ensuring investment in a profitable and enduring future for producers, processors and supporting industries.

## 02 Infrastructure

Identify infrastructure needs required to support ag conservation and economic development.

## 03 Land Use

Assess current ag land use policies and make recommended updates recognizing agriculture as a business while also preserving working agricultural lands.

valley vision
Community Inspired Solutions

ag INNOVATIONS
collaboration with impact

# Draft Recommendations

**Establish an Agricultural Enterprise Support Program**

**Protect Working Agricultural Lands**

**Position Solano County as an Agricultural Innovation and Bioeconomy Hub**

**Activate the Northeast Dixon Industrial–Agricultural Services (I-AS) District**

**Assess Suisun Valley Economic, Infrastructure and Land Conservation Needs**

**Plan for Agricultural Water, Transportation and Energy Infrastructure Improvements**

**Explore creation of a Signature Agritourism Venue**

**Support Local Food Access and Institutional Procurement**

SOLANO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY:
DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

# Recommendation 8: Support Local Food Access and Institutional Procurement

**Purpose:** Connect local agricultural producers with institutional buyers to expand market opportunities, promote local food consumption and improve public health outcomes.

- **Assist in building partnerships and facilitating participation in a local and/or regional food hub and institutional procurement network.**



valley vision



# Questions?

# Solano Farm to School
# Next Steps!

Help us move this work forward!

- Survey for Foodservice Teams
- Survey about Ultra-Processed Food (Scan QR code)
- One Step at a Time — Every Step Counts
- All of us can work toward healthy, local food in all of Solano's schools!



# Solano Farm to School
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# Thank you!