



2025 Annual Report

Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance

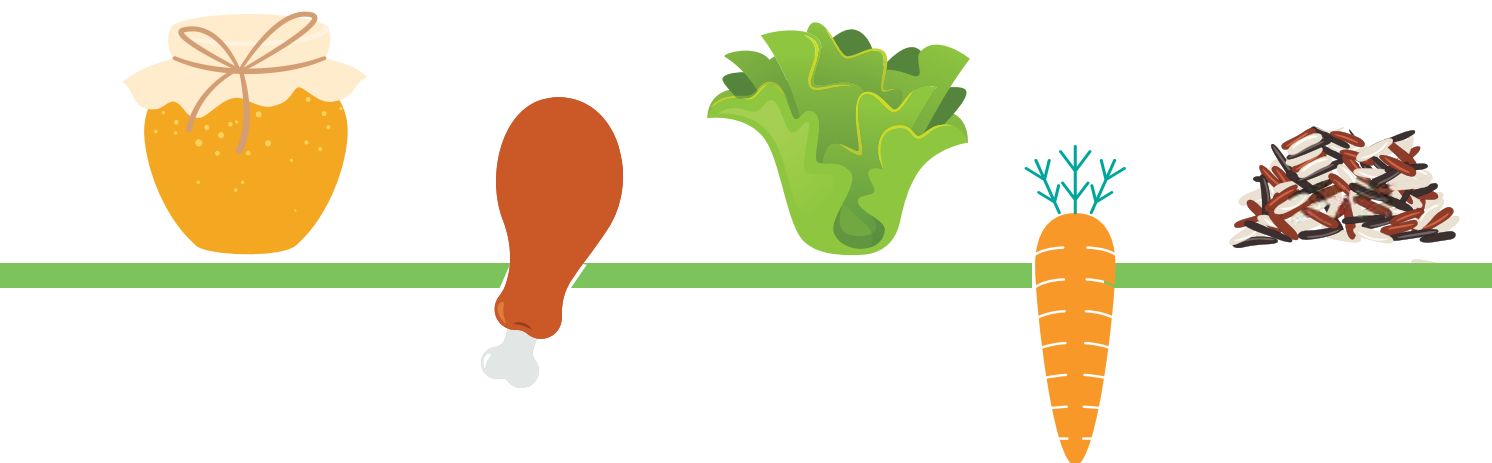


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October 2025

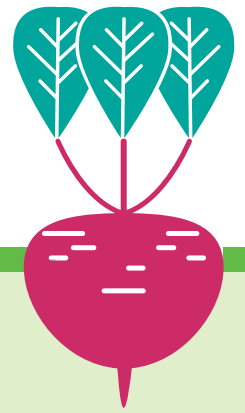
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LETTERS FROM COMMISSIONERS



Minnesota has long been a place where farming is rooted in community and shared across ages. With the creation of Minnesota's first Farm to Kids Strategic Plan and the launch of the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance, we're building on that

legacy with renewed purpose and partnership to increase access to local food and agriculture in educational settings around our state.

At its core, this work opens new doors for Minnesota farmers. By connecting local growers and producers to schools and early care settings, we're building dependable markets that help family farms grow and succeed, especially the small and emerging operations that are vital to the future of our food system. And, we are ensuring that our youngest Minnesotans have the opportunity to taste, enjoy, and learn from all that our state's farmers have to offer.

Farm to Kids represents the intersection of economic opportunity, community resilience, and the pride that comes from knowing Minnesota-grown food is nourishing the next generation. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is proud to be a founding partner in this effort, and we look forward to continuing this important work alongside our partners in education, advocacy, and community for years to come.

Commissioner Thom Petersen
Minnesota Department of Agriculture



At the Minnesota Department of Education, we know Farm to School and Early Care efforts work best when they're part of daily learning and community life. That's what makes the

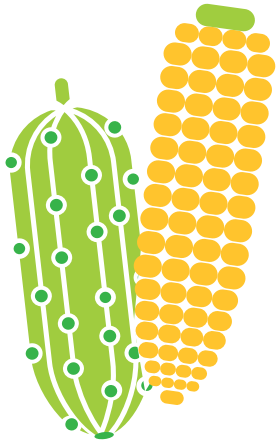
Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance so powerful. When educators, farmers, families, and leaders come together to provide access to wholesome, nourishing food for our students, we know we are fueling both minds and bodies and setting our kids up for success.

We're proud to stand with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and so many others who believe local food belongs not only in the cafeteria, but also in the classroom and the community. The experiential learning opportunities that are part of Farm to Kids is so impactful for our students—whether growing lettuce in an indoor hydroponic garden or taking a field trip to a local farm that supplies food for their meals, students are being exposed and learning about their community food system. When students know where their food comes from and who grows it, they gain pride, purpose, and connection.

We invite you join us in celebrating what's possible when we work together.

Commissioner Willie Jett
Minnesota Department of Education

WHO WE ARE



The Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance aims to unite the efforts of people supporting Farm to School and Early Care to nourish children's bodies and minds, cultivate viable farms, and build vibrant communities in our state.

We work together to support:

- Development of relationships and infrastructure that advance the production and sustained purchase of local foods.
- Integration of food and agriculture into teaching and learning.
- Availability of diversified, flexible funding to advance Farm to Kids strategies.
- Increased public awareness and participation in Farm to Kids in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance formed in 2024, in conjunction with the release of Minnesota's first Farm to Kids Strategic Plan for 2025-2030. Members of the Alliance are committed to working individually and collectively to implement strategies within the strategic plan. We engage regularly with the broader Minnesota Farm to Kids Network—which is open to all individuals and organizations who want to learn, connect, and collaborate with others to advance local food purchasing and agricultural education in Minnesota schools and early care settings.

Members of the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)

Land Stewardship Project (LSP)

Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)

Minnesota School Nutrition Association (MSNA)

Providers Choice

Renewing the Countryside (RTC)

University of Minnesota Extension (UMN Extension)



Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)



Farm to Kids Priorities and Goals

In pursuit of our shared vision, the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance identified the following priorities and goals for our work through 2030:

For more information about the priorities, goals, and collaborative work of the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance, please see the [Minnesota Farm to Kids Strategic Plan: 2025-2030](#).

PRIORITIES	1	2	3
	Increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods by schools and early care settings.	Improve integration of food and agricultural education in classrooms, cafeterias, and other educational environments.	Build and activate a strong Farm to Kids network.
GOALS	➤ Further develop statewide policy and infrastructure that builds capacity for local purchasing. ➤ Support the development of relationships among schools, early care settings, producers, and local partners. ➤ Expand statewide programming that builds capacity and preparedness among producers, schools, and early care providers to engage in Farm to Kids.	➤ Increase support for educational food production in schools and early care settings. ➤ Enhance integration of Farm to Kids into Career and Technical Education (CTE) program frameworks. ➤ Expand standards-based educational resources, training, and support for food and agricultural education for early care through 12th grade.	➤ Establish the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance to foster shared, collaborative leadership among Farm to School and Early Care partners. ➤ Evaluate Farm to Kids efforts to inform future work and measure impact. ➤ Increase reach and awareness of Farm to Kids through coordinated outreach and communication.



This inaugural report presents the current state of Farm to Kids in Minnesota. It highlights some of the many accomplishments achieved by Farm to Kids Alliance members and stakeholders over the past year, showcases innovative efforts happening at local, regional, and statewide levels, and offers a look ahead at what's to come.

YEAR IN REVIEW



Impact by the Bushel

Since October 2024....

- **496** Minnesotans signed a petition and 35 organizations and students wrote letters in support of legislation to increase funding for the State of Minnesota's Farm to School and Early Care Grant Program, organized by LSP and IATP
- **114** school districts finished their 2023 Farm to School Grants (funded by the USDA Local Food for Schools Program), buying **\$3.37 million** of local food from **501** producers in Minnesota
- **96** farmers, school foodservice professionals, and early care providers attended 6 Farm to School Roadshow events for training and networking
- MDE and RTC hired **5** Regional Local Food Coordinators and **2** program staff to support Farm to Kids efforts around the state
- **84** schools and early cares participated in Minnesota's first School Garden Week in 2025
- Monthly Office Hours, led Farm to Kids Alliance members, provided support to stakeholders

- IATP and UMN Extension created **97** new Harvest of the Month early care resources created in **4** languages

Browse
[Harvest of the Month Resources](#)



201,404

youth and adults participated in the
2024 Minnesota Great Apple Crunch

The MDA awarded
\$948,096
in grants and cost-shares to
266 sites
to buy Minnesota grown
and raised food



113

people attended the
2025 Minnesota School Garden Conference

225

school foodservice staff
participated in
UMN Extension
Food Safety Training



50

attended a **Harvest of the Month** workshop at
Bushel Boy greenhouses
and Owatonna High School



Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance members and supporters gathered at the Minnesota State Capitol to celebrate the Minnesota Great Apple Crunch and the release of Minnesota's Farm to Kids Strategic Plan in October 2024.

Formation of the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance and Network

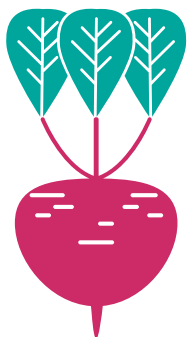
In 2024, Farm to School and Early Care partners in Minnesota came together to develop the state's first Farm to School Strategic Plan—a roadmap for advancing local food procurement and agricultural education in K–12 schools and early care settings.

One of three priorities laid out in the plan was to build and activate a strong Farm to Kids network. This priority included the creation of the Minnesota Farm to Kids Alliance to lead implementation of the strategic plan.

Throughout 2025, members of the Farm to Kids Alliance worked diligently to lay the foundation for this new collaborative body. The Alliance defined its membership and governance structure, developed a shared implementation plan, and launched the Minnesota Farm to Kids Network to engage stakeholders from across the state.

The release of this annual report—a key action outlined in the strategic plan—marks another important milestone in the Alliance's first year of progress.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD



Minnesota's New Farm to School Institute

A new program in Minnesota is helping K–12 schools and districts build sustainable Farm to School programs. Launched by the Minnesota Departments of Education and Agriculture

(MDE and MDA), in partnership with the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, the Minnesota Farm to School Institute is an annual, year-long professional learning opportunity focused on the 3 C's of Farm to School: cafeteria, classroom, and community.

Each June, participating school teams—made up of food service staff, educators, and administrators—gather at the Arboretum's farm for an immersive Kick-Off Retreat. Over the next year, they create and implement customized action plans with support from a dedicated coach.

Six school teams joined the inaugural 2024–2025 cohort: Cannon Falls Area Schools, Kelliher Public School District, The Journey School (St. Paul), District 196: Rosemount–Eagan–Apple Valley, Wayzata Public Schools, and White Bear Lake Area Schools. Each team set unique goals, from building farmer relationships and expanding culturally relevant menus, to strengthening classroom–cafeteria ties and boosting Farm to School promotion.

Photos on right (from top to bottom):

Farm to School Institute participants learn about cold grape production in Minnesota.

Cannon Falls educators visit Churchill Reserve in Cannon Falls, MN.

Kelliher students further-process local beef.





Minnesota Grown Cream of the Crop Awards

In 2025, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the Minnesota Grown program launched the Cream of the Crop Awards for Farm to School and Early Care. This new, annual contest recognizes K-12 school districts, early care centers, and family daycares that are doing exceptional work to serve, promote, and teach about Minnesota Grown food. Congratulations to the 2025 winners: Minneapolis Public School and Little Skeeters Daycare. Eleven additional schools and early cares also received Outstanding in the Field Honors.

2025 School District of the Year: Minneapolis Public Schools

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) has been a Farm to School trailblazer in Minnesota—and nationally—for more than a decade. The district purchases and serves local food year-round from over 20 small- and mid-sized producers across Minnesota.

Through innovative programs like monthly Minnesota Thursday meals, annual Farm to School Community BBQs, and their new Farmer Trading Card sets, MPS highlights local farmers while teaching students about where their food comes from and the importance of supporting local agriculture.



“Through the MPS Farm to School Program we are supporting our local food systems. By partnering with small and mid-size local farmers we are pouring resources into our local food economies, which in turn supports the communities in which we operate.” – Madison Taylor, Farm to School Coordinator for Minneapolis Public Schools

Minneapolis Public Schools was awarded a Fiscal Year 2025 Farm to School Grant from the MDA, along with 62 other schools and school districts and 9 early childhood education centers.



2025 Family Day Care of the Year: Little Skeeters Daycare

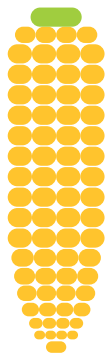
Bagley, MN

Owned and operated by Merry Charles, Little Skeeters Daycare incorporates local food and gardening into daily meals and learning. In addition to buying food from nearby farms, Merry has a large garden that the children help manage.

“The children in my day care learn everyday of good nutrition. They plant and grow all their own vegetables and this year we will be planting fruit trees. We make jams and jelly and they freeze all the vegetables that they grow.” – Merry Charles, Little Skeeters Daycare

Little Skeeters was one of 194 family child care providers that participated in the MDA’s Fiscal Year 2025 Local Tots Cost-Share Program to purchase Minnesota-grown and -raised foods.





Regional Spotlight: Countryside Public Health

In southwestern Minnesota, Farm to Kids is gaining momentum with support from partners like Countryside Public Health—the rural public health agency serving Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow

Medicine counties—through their Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP).

Countryside Public Health SHIP has supported the creation of new school gardens (including a pizza garden and Three Sisters garden), and organized cultural taste tests in school cafeterias featuring culturally relevant and Indigenous foods.



Meet Your Farmer poster, designed by Countryside Public Health SHIP, featuring Toad Hill Farm in Appleton, MN



Pride of the Prairie hosted a Farm to School networking event for school foodservice staff and producers at Lac Qui Parle High School.

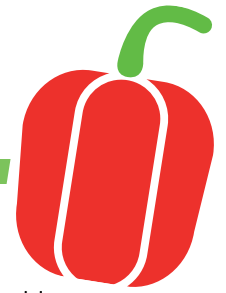
SHIP staff have also taken creative approaches to helping build relationships between local farmers and schools across the five-county area, developing pitch books for local farmers to share with prospective school buyers and designing farmer posters for school cafeterias to introduce students to the people growing their food.

In 2024, Countryside Public Health SHIP partnered with the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission and other regional organizations to relaunch Pride of the Prairie—a collaborative initiative to strengthen Farm to Kids efforts and support broader regional food systems development. Through this partnership, farmers ready to scale up to school markets are identified, and SHIP staff help facilitate introductions to schools. “We’re individually utilizing our strengths, connections, and program goals to together strengthen our food system across the five counties,” says Ashlie Wubben, Countryside Public Health’s SHIP Coordinator.



This exciting work happening in Southwestern Minnesota is a great example of how partner organizations and agencies across Minnesota are working together, and it demonstrates how Farm to Kids can play an important role in reshaping and strengthening regional food systems.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



Farm to Kids in Minnesota is supported by a diverse network of partners and funding sources. We are grateful to the members of the Farm to Kids Alliance who contribute invaluable staff time and resources to advance this work, as well as the organizations and government agencies whose financial contribution make this work possible.

The funders and programs listed below supported staff-time, strategic planning, local food purchasing grants, Minnesota's Farm to School Institute and Harvest of the Month programs, regional networking events and trainings, school gardens, and evaluation over the past year.

USDA Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement

- \$3.42 million award to the MDA (2022-2026) for local food purchases

¹USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants:

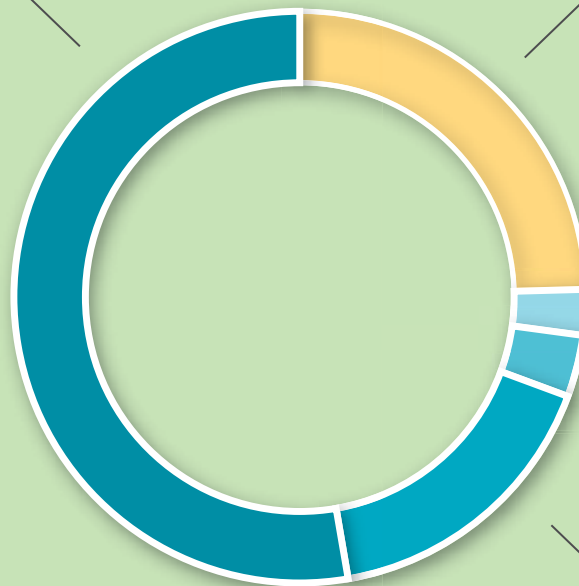
- \$107,000 award to MDA for Farm to Kids-related projects (2024-2027)
- \$60,000 award to IATP, in partnership with UMN Extension, for Harvest of the Month early care materials (completed in 2025)

²USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants

- \$177,222 award to the MDA (2023-2025)
- Sub-awards from Shelburne Farms and Vermont FEED: Farm to School Institute Adaptation Program
 - \$25,000 subaward to the MDA (2023-2025)
 - \$25,000 subaward to the MDE (2024-2026)

State of Minnesota

- \$1,594,000 annually for AGRI Farm to School and Early Care Grant Program and full-time Farm to Institution Coordinator at the MDA



USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants¹

USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants²

USDA Farm to School State Formula Grant (2023-2026)

- \$1.08 million award to the MDE for a full-time Farm to School and Early Care Consultant, Regional Local Food Coordinators, and additional programming

This graphic highlights key funding sources that supported statewide Farm to Kids initiatives over the past year. It does not represent all financial contributions to organizational members of the Farm to Kids Alliance or Farm to Kids efforts in Minnesota.

Local Food for Schools in Minnesota

In 2022, the MDA received \$3.42 million from the USDA's Local Food for Schools (LFS) Cooperative Agreement Program. This funding aimed to strengthen school food systems by building resilient local supply chains and expanding local and regional markets for producers.

The MDA sub-awarded this funding to 114 schools and school districts to purchase Minnesota-grown and -raised foods.



Schools and districts completed their LFS food purchases in January 2025. The outcomes demonstrate that LFS in Minnesota had the profound impact it set out to achieve for Minnesota's farmers, youth and food system.

- Schools brought from 501 Minnesota producers, including 157 socially disadvantaged producers
- Top items purchased: beef, apples, lettuce, carrots
- 20% of funding went to socially disadvantaged producers
- 63% of food purchases were direct from Minnesota producers
- LFS food purchases generated over \$3 million in additional economy activity in Minnesota

JOIN US!



Over the coming year, the Farm to Kids Alliance will continue to use our Farm to Kids Strategic Plan as a roadmap for broadening the reach and deepening the impact of Farm to Kids in Minnesota.

We are especially excited to expand regional support through newly hired Regional Local Food Coordinators, strengthen outreach and communications to our growing Farm to Kids Network, and build stronger connections between Farm to School and Farm to Early Care efforts.

We invite you to stay connected and get involved:



Join the Minnesota Farm to Kids Network to connect with others advancing this work.

Sign up for *The Root Review*, Minnesota's quarterly Farm to Kids newsletter with updates, stories, and opportunities.

Attend Farm to Kids Office Hours and regional events to learn, share, and grow together.