



Credit: DC Greens

# GROWING FARM TO SCHOOL PARTNERING WITH FARM CREDIT

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**NATIONAL  
FARM to SCHOOL  
NETWORK**

### **GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER**

The National Farm to School Network is an information, advocacy and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing and food and agriculture education into school systems and preschools.

**F**arm to school efforts strengthen rural communities by building new markets for family farmers and educating youth about agriculture and healthy, sustainable food systems. Agricultural lending institutions rooted in your local community can be great partners in growing farm to school and expanding the market capacity for local products. Farm Credit is partnering with the National Farm to School Network to support efforts to increase local food purchases and bring agriculture education to schools.

### **Getting to know Farm Credit**

**Who is Farm Credit?** Farm Credit supports rural communities and agriculture with reliable and consistent credit today and tomorrow. The national network of 80 local lenders provides financial services to farmers, ranchers and rural businesses across the country. Each local Farm Credit lender is a cooperative that is independently owned by its customers and has a deep understanding of agriculture in its area.



### **What does Farm Credit do to support rural communities and agriculture?**

Farm Credit funds agricultural producers of all kinds – operations large and small, organic and conventional, in rural communities and in the city. They also focus on helping young, beginning and small producers, who are vital to the economic health of agriculture and rural communities.

**Where is Farm Credit?** With more than 80 Farm Credit lenders across the country, you can find a local branch serving every county in the United States and Puerto Rico. Search by your zip code at [FarmCredit.com](http://FarmCredit.com) to find and contact your local Farm Credit and start exploring ways to build a relationship and work together.

**Why should I connect with Farm Credit?** Farm Credit is focused on helping rural communities and agriculture thrive, including collaborating on building successful farm to school programs. When schools and farms have relationships with Farm Credit, local contacts can act as a liaison to support farm to school. Farm Credit lenders also support community organizations with volunteer hours, marketing partnerships and financial giving. Learn more on the next page.

**How do I partner with Farm Credit?** Each Farm Credit organization is independently owned, so it is important to get to know your local Farm Credit contacts and explore their interest in and willingness to support farm to school efforts. Start the relationship by inviting your local Farm Credit contacts to events, meetings and conferences to get to know them and to help them get to know you.

## Ideas for partnering with Farm Credit

### Education and Outreach

- Agriculture and nutrition education (Farm Credit nationally supports the National Farm to School Network, 4-H and National FFA)
- Outreach to and education for farmers about farm to school, institutional market opportunities and local procurement (e.g., trainings and events)

### Assistance to Farmers

- Cost-share for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification
- Support for development and growth of school-based markets for farmers (e.g., season extension, forward contracting)
- Grants to farmers for Cosmetically Imperfect Seconds (CIS) to match market prices
- Identification of farmer clients that are participating (or interested) in farm to school



### Infrastructure and Production Loans

- Food hub and on-farm infrastructure development (e.g., refrigeration, processing, aggregation, distribution)
- Support for small and medium-scale agricultural production
- Research and support to overcome supply chain barriers

### Financial Support / Sponsorships

- Small business loans for equipment
- Funding for projects to increase land used for vegetable/fruit production
- Loans to young, beginning, small, underserved and veteran farmers
- Sponsorships and collaboration on state and regional farm to school conferences
- Grants for farm field trips (e.g., preparing farms to host, funds for transportation)
- Supporting farmer visits to classrooms

## What can a farm to school partnership with Farm Credit look like?

**Infrastructure partnership:** CoBank, a Farm Credit member institution, supported nonprofit D.C. Central Kitchen's ability to procure and process local foods with a donation to purchase a refrigerator and freezer space. The additional infrastructure meant that D.C. Central Kitchen could purchase more local foods and extend the local season, benefiting both local farmers and their communities.



**Marketing partnership:** American AgCredit, a Farm Credit member institution serving Western and Midwestern states, partnered with Greeley-Evans School District 6 in Greeley, Colo., to fund school banners and local newspaper ads during National Farm to

School Month and National School Lunch Week. This marketing support helped raise awareness of farm to school, educating the public about the value of local agriculture and extending the school nutrition message throughout the community.

**School garden partnership:** Farm Credit Services of America, a Farm Credit member institution serving farmers and ranchers in Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming, provided a grant from its Working Here Fund to York High School in York, Neb., for a school garden to educate students about food production. Now the garden supplies fresh produce to the school cafeteria and serves as an educational classroom.

### Make the connection!

Just like farm to school is unique in each community, so is each Farm Credit organization. Get to know your local Farm Credit, their interests and how they support local farmers. Remember, good relationships take time to build.

- Visit FarmCredit.com and find your local lender
- Reach out and introduce yourself
- Invite them to attend an upcoming farm to school event (e.g., conference, farm field trip or farmer classroom visit), or set up a time to meet
- Stay in touch by keeping them informed of farm to school news and impacts in your community

### Be creative

It's important to think beyond grants and gifts for farm to school. As you learn about your local Farm Credit, explore how they support farm businesses through their regular lending services and how they can be a connector between schools and farms.

This fact sheet was developed by the National Farm to School Network as part of a generous grant from Farm Credit. Learn more about Farm Credit's National Contributions Program at FarmCredit.com.