

# GREAT APPLE CRUNCH



NATIONAL  
FARM to SCHOOL  
NETWORK



ILLINOIS  
FARM to SCHOOL  
NETWORK

## 2015 Great Apple Crunch Report

### Illinois Farm to School Network

2015 was the first year that Illinois schools participated in the Great Apple Crunch. In celebration of National Farm to School Month, the Crunch is designed to raise awareness about eating healthier and buying locally grown foods by serving school children apples from local growers. On October 22nd, thousands of children around the state participated by crunching into apples sourced from orchards in Illinois and Michigan.

This report will ...

- Describe the agricultural landscape of Illinois and the impact of Farm to School (Page 2)
- Describe the prep for the Apple Crunch (Pages 2-3)
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  - Lessons Learned
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## **Why source locally?**

Food and agriculture are essential features of the Illinois economy, contributing over \$120 billion in output and supplying 1 in 17 jobs. 75.8% of Illinois is farmland, of which 27 million acres is classified as prime farmland (FARM). With its excellent rail and waterway transportation system Illinois is well suited for easy export of agricultural products to other states and countries. However, selling via conventional wholesale chains can lead to much less revenue for farmers, who can receive up to 7 times more net revenue when selling via local chains (NCSU). Farm to School is a great way to create markets for wholesale farmers and bring more money to the local economy, while also making healthy fruits and vegetables available to the community.

In central Illinois, some counties dedicate over 96% of their farmland to growing corn and soybeans (ISU). The Midwest region supplies 86% of the US corn crop, and 81% of its soybean crop. Less than 5% of the \$14.6 billion spent on fruit and vegetable purchases in Illinois in 2010 went towards food grown in Illinois (FARM). An analysis by Iowa State University found that supplying Illinois consumers' demand for fruits and vegetables could be met using just 0.3% of the state's cropland (FARM). If purchases of local fruits and vegetables increased to 11% and 2% respectively it could provide \$4.7 million in output and create 19 new jobs in central Illinois alone (ISU). The number of vegetable farms is increasing in Illinois, but fruit farms have not followed suit. (ISU) Schools can provide a steady, reliable supply chain where farmers can sell their products, giving them the potential to expand their production of fruits and vegetables.

For Illinois students, eating locally grown apples in schools could provide them with more nutrients, such as vitamins C, E, and A than apples grown across the country and shipped long distances (NCSU/chgearvard.org). Fresher produce is tastier produce, which can help children eat their recommended servings of fruits and vegetables each day; a benchmark that US children rarely reach (CDC). Coupling local produce with fun educational activities can help children get excited about what they're eating and how food is grown. Illinois students showed great enthusiasm for the local apples during the 2015 Great Apple Crunch!

The Great Apple Crunch of 2015 was a stand-alone event designed to make it as easy as possible for schools to buy local food. By working with distribution companies and by creating a demand for local product on one day, Illinois grown apples were put into the institutional buying market in a way that would not have happened without the Crunch. Exposing food service directors and other school staff to the process of sourcing local foods for the Crunch helped jumpstart process of local procurement, with the goal that schools could continue to source locally grown foods for their cafeterias long after the apple crunch finished.

## **Outreach and Preparation**

The Great Apple Crunch began four years ago in the Great Lakes Farm to School region, and over the years the program has grown with increased participation in Wisconsin, Minnesota,

Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. The Farm to School Networks of each state have taken the lead on organizing the Crunches in their states. In 2014, the Wisconsin Farm to School Network developed branding and a registration for schools. The Illinois Farm to School Network re-formed in January of 2015, and we decided to focus on the Great Apple Crunch as a main organizing vehicle for the Network's first year.

Organizing the event began in June with preliminary outreach to partner organizations to introduce the event and for assistance with outreach and contacts. Contact with distributors and schools began in July, with the assistance of the Illinois Farm Bureau. We formed a partnership with the IFB and their educational arm, Agriculture in the Classroom, in order to gain access to rural schools and the largest food distribution companies in the state. The IFB and ISFN wrote a joint letter that was sent to food service directors in 200 school districts, as well as a letter that was sent to the heads of distribution companies.

In August, the IFSN held a 30-minute webinar for food service directors and school administrators about how to participate in the Great Apple Crunch. All of the outreach that was done for the Crunch focused on this webinar, and after the event the webinar was made available on YouTube. This method allowed busy school staff to watch the webinar at their convenience. There was also an online registration for schools at the IFSN website, and when schools registered they were sent a link to the webinar along with a folder of materials.

In order to make sure that local apple availability would be adequate once we created the demand for the Crunch, we started working in July with distribution companies to tell them about the Apple Crunch and how they could be a part of it. Most companies were happy to make sure that they sourced extra local apples in October. For many distribution companies, this meant getting apples from Michigan. For others, Illinois apples were prioritized.

Aside from procurement, the goal of the Apple Crunch was to create excitement in schools about agriculture and nutrition. Instead of simply putting local apples on student's trays, the Apple Crunch encourages a fun promotion that is simple and easy. Our partnership with Agriculture in the Classroom gave schools the opportunity to receive an Apple Crunch poster and the Apple Ag Mag free of charge. The webinar also included a lot of optional extra activities that could be done in classrooms on the day of the Crunch.

A list of fun crunch-related activities was distributed with ideas on how to make the event interactive for the students. Suggestions included making a Crunch-o-Meter to compare different apples, have a taste test of different varieties, or writing an apple related song. Accompanying the activities were some quick apple nutrition facts for schools to share with their students.

A social media campaign was started, with posts from the ILFSN on blogs, facebook, and twitter. Press releases were created and sent to local news stations, WBEZ, and local papers. During and after the event,



participants were encouraged to share their images and stories online with the hashtag #GreatAppleCrunch.

## The 2015 Great Apple Crunch

The pilot year of the Great Apple Crunch was an overwhelming success. Over 90,000 students in Illinois were served local apples on October 22, 2015. Over 35,000 students participated in Great Apple Crunch activities, including nutrition education. Low-income school districts such as Springfield and Chicago served local apples due to IFSN-supported involvement of distribution companies.

### Sourcing

Get Fresh Produce, Inc. was one of the first distribution companies to come on board for the Crunch. Get Fresh, through their affiliate company Vermillion Valley Produce, holds the DOD Fresh contract for the state. As the distributor of fresh fruits and vegetables for schools around the state who qualify for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Get Fresh is a distributor for over 450 schools. Other produce and distribution companies were involved as well, such as Central Illinois Produce, GFS, PFG and Sysco Chicago.

Get Fresh produce supplied a total of 1,383 cases of Red Apples and 613 Golden apples from Illinois. Peter Sikorski, Chief Financial Officer at Get Fresh, stated that their company sold “over \$40,000 worth of Apples that probably would have gone to Michigan growers had Illinois not been an option.” The Great Apple Crunch provided the incentive for the distributor to purchase Illinois apples. Get Fresh sold their locally purchased apples to 450 schools in Northern Illinois, and even more in Central and Southern through their affiliate companies. Other distribution companies provided apples from within a 250-mile local radius, including Michigan. Michigan apples were sold to schools for \$30.25 per 138ct case. In some cases, Wisconsin apples were sold to schools for \$31.00 per 138ct case.



One of the farms that provided Illinois apples, Rendleman Orchards, had never sold apples to schools before. The Great Apple Crunch provided the demand for local apples at such a large volume that Rendlemen’s was able to sell them at a competitive price. The Great Apple Crunch increased their revenue and from a business perspective it was highly successful.

Chicago Public Schools sourced their local apples through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) and participated separately from the crunch. As a part of the Upper Midwest Regional Learning Lab of School Food FOCUS, CPS served an entire tray on 10/22/15 of



regionally sourced food for Food Day. In CPS, 54,000 students received a Midwest Meal and a local apple through FFVP.

### **Nutrition Education Activities**

The main activity of the Great Apple Crunch is when students are given apples at lunch and they *crunch* into them at the same time. Participation beyond that was up to individual schools.

In advance of the Crunch, the IFSN offered an online training for food service directors and school administrators. The training outlined some of the fun extra activities that could be included with the Crunch. Additionally, in-person training for teachers was offered through Ag in the Classroom. The IFSN spoke at one event in Countryside sponsored by the Cook County Farm Bureau. As a part of the partnership with Ag in the Classroom, this training included information on how to participate in the Apple Crunch along with the local Ag Literacy Educator's training on their educational materials and books, plus Apple Crunch posters. Ag in the Classroom's 100 educators did these trainings with their partner schools across the state.

The Illinois Farm to School Network visited schools in Oak Park, IL to see what activities they had going on for Crunch day and to get pictures and quotes from the students. Oak Park River Forest High School has their own farm to school student group who created booths with posters and games in support of the crunch. They used the nutrition education activity ideas from the webinar to teach something about apples while handing them out for the Crunch. One of their unique activities was a guessing game with a basket of apples and a mason jar of Hershey's kisses. Both contained the same amount of calories, and students had to guess how many calories there were. The winner received the entire basket of apples! This is a great example of a school using our ideas and making them their own.



Students at Oak Park River Forest High School were given the apples for free. Many were familiar with local apples from the farmers' market. One student remarked, "I would eat more fruit at school if it all tasted this good." Another student noted that "local apples are cheaper, better for the economy, they are fresher because they aren't in transport as long, and they are healthier for us."

The Illinois Farm to School Network also attended the Great Apple Crunch at a local parochial school, St. Giles. Students at St Giles Elementary assembled outside of the school for their apple crunch, and had a lesson on apples and the Great Apple Crunch. After crunching into their sliced apples they planted daffodils around the building for next spring. All of their apples were sourced from Harvard Illinois. The Apple Crunch at St. Giles was different than the majority of apples crunches, due to the fact that the school does not serve lunch. The

procurement aspect was not available to the school, so they reached out to local farmers to purchase apples and also receive donations. Some of the students gave feedback on the Apple Crunch: “The apples taste really good and fresh, ”“Local food is better food,” “It was fun; it had fresh food and was a good idea,” “These apples were better than other apples I've had before.” A teacher mentioned: “[The students] were very energetic, more so than usual about apples. I think it’s because we are planting daffodils and eating apples in the same event.”

### **Media**

In the weeks before the Great Apple Crunch, the Illinois Farm to School Network sent out a press release and a media release to different outlets across the Chicago area, Springfield area, and in other regions of Illinois. We used social media to spread share examples of what the Crunch would look like, and on the day of the Crunch we shared photos from schools from all over the state. It was a huge goal of the Great Apple Crunch to gain media attention and share information about Farm to School, Farm to School Month, and the Illinois Farm to School Network along with the event.

News articles about the event appeared on wsiu.org, chicagotribune.com, bs2d.org, and growspringfield.org. The IFSN was featured alongside a Carbondale school district on a radio interview that aired on Apple Crunch day.

### **Lessons Learned and Plans for 2016**

The 2015 Illinois Great Apple Crunch was a successful pilot and our goals for 2016 are large! We want to expand our partnerships and grow the number of participating schools to at least double our 2015 levels. Conducting outreach earlier in the year, starting in the winter of 2016, will be key to gaining school awareness and creating excitement about the event. Schools who participated in the 2015 Crunch will become the experts and will share their experiences with new districts. The IFSN will create materials that are more streamlined, branded, and slightly more prescriptive so that schools know exactly what to do and say on the day of the Crunch. We will also work with our for-profit partners to gain entry into distributor vendor fairs in the summer of 2016 and make sure that even more school food service companies are ready for the program.



An additional goal is to find additional funding for the Crunch. We want to create more materials and have the ability to mail them ourselves and go out to districts for in-person trainings. There are also larger programs that we could implement to draw more links to health and wellness.

In 2016, we want to connect the Great Apple Crunch to other farm to school programs. The goal of this would be to bring more attention to these programs and utilize the way that they connect students to health and wellness. School gardens teach students more about how food grows, seasonality, and have been proven to increase students' willingness to try new foods (Slow Food). For 2016, we would also like to create a program for distributing apple trees and planting orchards in school gardens to go along with the Crunch. Agriculture in the Classroom provides nutrition education materials about apples that would supplement the tree planting, especially because the planting would not be able to occur on the day of the Crunch.

Nutrition education also extends to cooking and eating. On the day of the 2016 Crunch, we have a goal that schools will provide apple-themed cooking lessons for their students. We will include these cooking demonstrations in our trainings to teachers and at our Illinois Farm to School Conference. Recipes, materials, and lesson structures will be provided with Great Apple Crunch logos. Our goal will be for at least 25% of Great Apple Crunch school participants to include food education in the form of cooking classes as a part of their event. All of these classes will include evaluative tools, given by IFSN and analyzed after the event by IFSN, to learn more about the impact of the Great Apple Crunch on students' willingness to try healthy foods and their excitement about healthy foods. Healthy food marketing is a key tactic in improving child health outcomes and combating the mainstream messages that children receive from food companies that value profit over health.

**List of 2015 School District Participants (NOTE: this list is incomplete, will be finished with IFB input after 11/12)**

<b>School/ District</b>	<b>No of Students</b>
Lombard School District 44	500
Benton CCSD 47	1200
Springfield School District 186	1070
Chicago Public Schools	53308
St. Johns Lutheran School – Buckley IL	102
Smithton Community Consolidated School District No. 130	504
Alpine Christian School	60
Peotone CUSD 207U	1735
Unity Point School – Carbondale IL	700

Wheeling CCSD21	4200
North Wamac Grade School – Centralia IL	145
St. Paul Christian Day Care and Kindergarten – Villa Park IL	42
Oakbrook Elementary – Wood Dale IL	250
Lake Zurich CUSD 95	6000
Montessori School of Long Grove	70
Glenbard High School District 87	8445
Community Unit School District 201	1400
St. Giles School – Oak Park IL	
Bensenville SD2	1600
Johnston City School District #1	435
Jonesboro School District	364
Wesclin CUSD #3	394
North Elementary School – Sycamore IL	300
The HUB project / Rochelle CCSD 231	300
Harlem122	1500
Community Consolidated School District 15	4000
Centennial Elementary & University of Illinois Extension – Polo IL	285
Madison Elementary School – Lombard IL	479
Manor Hills Elementary School, Illinois District 44	280
Lanphier High School – Springfield IL	280
Kings #144	90
Oak Park River Forest High School	3255
Oak Park District 97	5922
Cambridge	509



Total number of students = 99,724

Total number of students not including CPS = 46,416

**Sources:**

CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/fruit-vegetables/>

Harvard: [http://www.chgeharvard.org/sites/default/files/resources/local\\_nutrition.pdf](http://www.chgeharvard.org/sites/default/files/resources/local_nutrition.pdf)

FARM:

[http://farmillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/FARM-IL-Report-2015\\_FULL\\_vF3.pdf](http://farmillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/FARM-IL-Report-2015_FULL_vF3.pdf)

ISU: <http://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=mte>

NCSU:

<http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/resources/guides/research-based-support-for-local-food-systems.pdf>

Slow Food: <http://gardens.slowfoodusa.org/current-academic-research>

For a larger sized version of this shareable infographic below, look on the Illinois Farm to School Network website!

# Serving Local Apple in Illinois Schools: Farmers win, kids win, communities win!



In 2015, Illinois schools participated in the first annual Great Apple Crunch! On October 24th, thousands of children across Illinois CRUNCHED and learned about local apples while participating in fun apple related activities!



## Apples

Schools served local apples of many varieties, and at noon on 10/22 students across the state CRUNCHED together!



## Schools

Over 35,000 students from nearly 50 school districts around Illinois participated



## Transport

Conventional apples travel at least 2,000 miles, on average to Illinois. Local apples came from within 250 miles - saving the environment in CO2 emissions and gas



## Local Dollars

Over \$40,000 dollars of apples were purchased from farmers in Illinois and Michigan

For every dollar spent on local products



more money recirculates locally\*

6 in 10 children in the US do NOT eat



their daily serving of fruit, according to the CDC

Freshly picked apples contain more vitamins



than apples that travel for over 7 days

## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



\*<http://www.amiba.net/resources/multiplier-effect/>