

NATIONAL
FARM to
SCHOOL
MONTH



Communications Toolkit

www.farmtoschoolmonth.org

Introduction

In November 2010, Congress approved a resolution introduced by Representative Rush Holt (NJ) to officially designate October as National Farm to School Month. The passage of House Resolution 1655 demonstrates the growing importance and role of Farm to School programs as a means to improve child nutrition, support local economies and educate children about the origins of food.

The National Farm to School Network developed the following materials to help communities, schools and other organizations promote Farm to School Month and raise awareness about the value of connecting students with local food. We hope these tools will help your Farm to School programs and organizations gain well-deserved media attention and make direct connections to the public through social media, newsletters and outreach events.

We are suggesting that schools across the country celebrate the Farm to School Month by inviting a farmer or chef to visit during October. Not only is this a fun and educational activity most schools can participate in, regardless of their current involvement in Farm to School, it also lends itself to a very focused media pitch with great stories and visual content.

We encourage you to schedule a farmer or chef visit anytime during the month of October, but recommend that ideal days for garnering media attention are October 18, 19, and 20. While complementary, there are other food related events happening in the month of October: October 10-14 is National School Lunch Week and October 24 is Food Day. You may choose to piggyback on these events to promote Farm to School Month or avoid them so as not to compete for media attention and public participation.

We hope the tools we provide will enable every community in the country to celebrate Farm to School Month in a way that best meets their needs and resources.

This toolkit contains:

- Suggested Twitter and Facebook posts – page 3
- Sample text for e-newsletters – page 4
- Customizable press release – page 5
- Media pitch suggestions – page 6

Twitter and Facebook

Posting tweets and status updates about Farm to School Month is a great way to build excitement, promote specific events and raise awareness about Farm to School in general. When you tweet about Farm to School Month, use the hashtag **#F2SMonth**. Hashtags allow people to quickly find and monitor specific stories or events on Twitter.

Here are a few suggested tweets to get you started:

Planning is underway for National Farm to School Month activities in October!
#F2SMonth

The first ever National Farm to School Month is taking place this October. How will your school celebrate? #F2SMonth

Kids + real food from local farms = a healthy nation on the right track! Celebrate at www.farmentoschoolmonth.org #F2SMonth

It's October - get your Farm to School Month Resources at www.farmentoschoolmonth.org #F2SMonth

Here are some suggested Facebook status updates:

It's time to celebrate the school food revolution: October is the first National Farm to School Month! Find resources at www.farmentoschoolmonth.org.

Farmers and chefs will be visiting classrooms all over the country this October for National Farm to School Month. Get involved: www.farmentoschoolmonth.org

What are you having for lunch today? Change is on the menu at schools across the country! Celebrate at farmentoschoolmonth.org

Sample text for e-newsletters

October marks the first National Farm to School Month

Farmers, chefs to visit schools across the country

October is National Farm to School Month, a time to celebrate the connections that are happening all over the country between schools and local food.

In November 2010, Congress approved a resolution introduced by Representative Rush Holt (NJ) to officially designate October as National Farm to School Month. The passage of House Resolution 1655 demonstrates the growing importance and role of Farm to School programs as a means to improve child nutrition, support local economies and educate children about the origins of food.

To celebrate the first National Farm to School Month, schools across the country are inviting farmers and chefs to visit schools during the month of October. [INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL EVENTS HERE.]

Whether you are a food service professional, a farmer, a teacher or a food-loving family, there are plenty of ways to celebrate and get involved. Visit farmtoschoolmonth.org for ideas about how to celebrate and materials to help you spread the word in your community.

Sample press release

For Immediate Release—Month, Day, 2011

[LOGO]

Farmers / Chefs celebrate fresh, healthy food with kids at YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL on DAY Visit celebrates local success in thriving national Farm to School movement

YOUR TOWN—FARMER/CHEF from FARM/RESTAURANT will visit SCHOOL on WEDNESDAY, OCT. 19, 2011 as part of National Farm to School Month celebrations happening all across the country. Last year, the United States House of Representatives declared October National Farm to School Month, recognizing the strong role Farm to School plays in promoting good health and strong economies.

“QUOTE ABOUT CONNECTING KIDS WITH PEOPLE WHO GROW THEIR FOOD OR OTHER BENEFITS OF FARM TO SCHOOL,” said FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR / PRINCIPAL / OTHER.

“OPTIONAL QUOTE FROM FARMER / CHEF”

PARAGRAPH WITH SUCCINCT DETAILS ABOUT LOCAL PROGRAM: FARMS AND SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING, TYPES OF FRESH PRODUCE IN SCHOOLS DATE/TIME, SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATIONS

Farm to School programs are widely recognized as an effective way to encourage healthy eating and boost local agriculture sales by bringing local vegetables, fruit, and other products into schools. INCLUDE LOCAL FARM TO SCHOOL STATISTICS IF AVAILABLE.

Over the past decade, the Farm to School movement has exploded across the United States. There are now more than 2,300 Farm to School programs in schools across all 50 states, according to the National Farm to School Network. The National Farm to School Network has established contacts in every state to help connect schools with local farmers. In YOUR STATE, the contact is NAME, EMAIL and PHONE.

United States Department of Agriculture is preparing to announce the availability of competitive Farm to School grants worth up to \$100,000 for planning and implementing Farm to School programs – including supporting staff salaries, purchasing equipment, developing school gardens and other activities. Stay tuned for more information on www.farmtoschool.org

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Media contact:

Name

Email

Phone

Media pitches

Press releases are a great way to share your story, but media professionals receive dozens of press releases every week, so it might take a little extra effort to get the attention of an editor or reporter. Having a great pitch or angle always helps make your story more unique and allows the editor to better visualize the final product. It also helps ensure that the story they tell is the one *you* want them to tell.

Here are some suggested pitches for Farm to School Month activities:

- Farmer/chef visit: Have cameras on hand to film farmer/chef in the school.
- Follow the food: Invite news crews to follow your local produce from the farm all the way to the cafeteria.
- Cooking demo: If you have a local TV talk program, suggest having your food service director highlight some of the Farm to School dishes your kids are eating by preparing them on the show.
- Kids views: Invite news – radio / TV / print – to talk to kids about where their food comes from. Kids can be unpredictable, but they could be balanced out by interviews with FSDs, teachers, the principal, etc.
- Teacher op-ed: Have a local teacher write about the changes s/he has seen in the classroom since the Farm to School program started.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Emphasize the fact that the story will be very visual and include nice action, especially if you are dealing with a television station.
- Explain why the story is timely—emphasis that this is the *first* National Farm to School Month and mention any recent Farm to School reports or statistics from your state that demonstrate the local relevancy.
- Keep in mind that children will need permission slips before being photographed for a story. It might be necessary to set up a small photo-op with students who have the proper forms.