



VERMONT FARM TO SCHOOL & EARLY CHILDHOOD NETWORK

Support Vermont's Local Foods Incentive Program

The Incentive provides schools with an increased reimbursement per meal if they purchase at least 15% from Vermont producers.

35 of 63 Vermont School Food Authorities and eligible independent schools have participated in the Local Foods Incentive, resulting in **\$1.2M+** spent on local foods in SY22-23.

Food Connects started selling Boyden Farm grass-fed, grain-finished beef in March 2021, a fifth generation family farm in Cambridge. Farmer Mark Boyden cares deeply about serving public schools. He says:

"The big thing is getting kids to expect local food, and they keep that when they grow up. That's more important than sales."

The next school year (SY 2021-22), Food Connects sold approx. \$35k of Boyden Farm beef to Vermont public schools. Since July 2022, another \$97k+ worth of beef has been sold.



"By eating at school every day I was trying more new foods and eating a vegetable or fruit everyday with lunch. I still like fruits and vegetables to this day, [and] now I often choose fruits and vegetables as snacks and even sometimes as a dessert. I think it's great that kids have access to different options and a whole salad bar where they can eat veggies that they might not have access to at home. They might not know it, but eating school lunches can change the way you eat in a positive way for the rest of your life."

—Cora, 7th Grade Student, Crossett Brook Middle School, John Farr of Green Mountain Harvest Hydroponics, and Harwood Union Unified School District Schools Food & Nutrition Co-Director Erika Dolan

This opportunity is essential for a resilient, equitable school food system that feeds more Vermont kids with fresh local food and directs more dollars to Vermont farmers.

"Our approach has always been systemic local purchasing. It's apples, beef, corn, maple syrup — these are the strategic, big ticket items we buy regularly from local sources. So when national supply chains were breaking down [during the pandemic], our local meat purchases continued like normal."

– Harley Sterling, Food Service Director, Windham Northeast Supervisory Union

Funding the Local Foods Incentive Means:

More money for Vermont's agricultural economy.

Every \$1.00 spent on local food for school meals contributes \$1.60 to Vermont's economy. Schools spend over \$20 million on food every year and we want more of those dollars going to Vermont farmers.



Increased access to high quality foods for Vermont school kids.

Every Vermonter should grow up with local food on their lunch tray. By giving schools the resources they need to buy from Vermont farmers, we are ensuring equitable access to high quality, local food for all Vermont school children.



Expanded markets for Vermont farmers & producers.

Over 100 Vermont farms sell food to Vermont schools and early childhood programs. Let's grow that number!



School meal programs THRIVE.

Universal School Meals and the Local Foods Incentive work together to increase participation in school meals, so more students are nourished and ready to learn. When paired, these programs increase meal participation, which gives school food programs more dollars to buy more local food, sending more money back into the local economy.

