

## Senate Committee on Appropriations

Advocate Hearing April 6, 2017

Farm to School Testimony by Cynthia Greene

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- Hello my name is Cynthia Greene and I work with VT FEED through Shelburne Farms on Farm to School & Early Care and Education actions. Our goal is to build healthy kids, healthy communities and healthy farms through food, farm and nutrition education and by using local foods in our school cafeterias and early care settings. I want to thank the Committee and Senate for the passage of S.33 and I'd like to explain how the budget relates to the bill.
- I'm here because I support and I'd like you to support \$500,000 for FTS/ECE in the budget to expand the implementation of the Rozo McLaughlin FTS Bill. This is a \$369,000 addition to what is currently in the House budget. This appropriation would allow us to double the number of schools we currently serve, support expansion of school nutrition programs and expand FTS to early care and education settings.
- The \$500,000 request was thoughtfully determined by the FTS Network. It reflects what is needed to reach our goals; that 75% of VT schools have integrated food education and nourishing meals, purchasing 50% local and regional products by 2015. Additionally, the Network knows it has the capacity to put this money to work immediately.
- FTS is a win-win-win: it puts money back into the VT economy, improves the health of our children, decreases childhood hunger, supports our communities through networking and community building actions.
- The FTS program is successful and we have strong results. VT childhood hunger rates declined 37% between 2010-2015 and a major contributor is the success of school nutrition programs; \$1.4 million contributed to Vermont's economy from local food purchasing by schools just in 2013-14; Vermont Schools with Farm to School programs have reported twice the national average in vegetable consumption indicating that our children are making improved healthy eating choices.
- We know this investment pays off in several ways!
  - Let's consider children's improved healthy eating choices: we spend \$2 billion on health care costs related to chronic diseases. The Dept. of Health is promoting their 3-4-50 initiative, 3 behaviors leading to 4 chronic health diseases account for over 50% of the deaths in VT. We know that good nutrition and healthy eating choices is one of the three behaviors which can turn the curve on our health outcomes and FTS has a proven track record in promoting the healthy eating choices of our children.
  - We also know from a recent economic study at UVM that if schools can double their local purchasing, \$2.1 million will be contributed to Vermont's economy reflecting that for every \$1 spent by schools on local purchasing, an additional 60 cents is contributed to the economy.
- Currently we cannot meet the demand from schools and can only help a fraction of the schools who are seeking assistance – only around 43% of the applications submitted can be supported at our current level of funding.
- This increased funding will have immediate results – the FTS partners are ready, the early childhood community is ready and we don't want to lose the momentum to reach every part of the state, but we need an investment to do this.
- Farm to School is closely aligned with all three of Governor Scott's priorities:
  - 1) helping vulnerable populations, including the 17,000 VT children that face hunger and the VT children who get a majority of their daily nutrition through school meals;
  - 2) growing our economy, by keeping our food purchasing dollars here in the state with VT producers; and
  - 3) making VT more affordable by sustaining our school nutrition programs, so that *every* VT child has access to healthy, local food.





# Vermont Farm To School Outcomes

— MARCH 2017 —

## Vermont Farm to School Grants Program

**RBA Indicator Impacted:** Percentage of school implementing Farm to School programming

- **112 grants** since 2007
- **138 schools** impacted
- **40,000 students** reached
- **\$1,000,300** state funds invested in schools, **\$500,000 additional funds leveraged**
- In the last four years, only **43% of demand** from schools has been met

## Growing Vermont's Economy

**RBA Indicators Impacted:** Gross domestic product; rate of resident unemployment per 1,000 residents; increase in gross working lands income over previous year for grantees of Working Lands Program; percent of total farm sales; percent of fruit and vegetable farms by sales outlet.

- Every **\$1.00 spent** by VT schools on local foods **adds \$1.60 to the local economy**
- **\$1.4 million contributed** to Vermont's economy from local food purchasing by schools just in 2013-14
- If schools double their local purchasing, \$2.1 million will be contributed to the VT economy, and the Agency of Agriculture estimates that state institutions are a **potential \$11 million market for local foods**
- VT's food system added over **6,000 net new jobs** and **779 new businesses**, and overall **gross sales increased from \$7.6 to \$10 billion (32%)** between 2009-2015

## Promoting Nutrition

**RBA Indicators Impacted:** People of all ages should eat at least five fruits and vegetables a day; reduce the number of Vermonters who are obese; percentage of adolescents eating fruits and vegetables

- Vermont Schools with Farm to School programs have reported **twice the national average in vegetable consumption**
- Students who know a farmer or grow their own food eat more fruits and vegetables

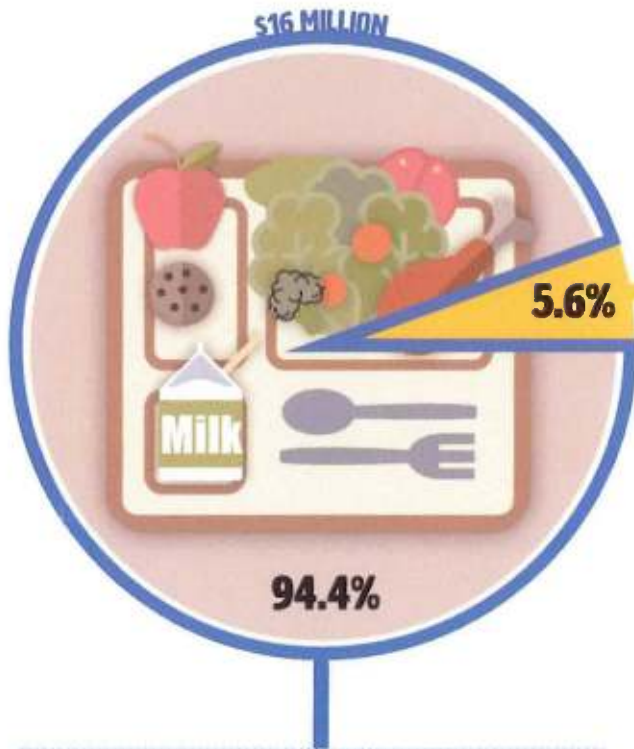
## Fighting Hunger

**RBA Indicator Impacted:** percentage of food insecure households

- **Childhood hunger rates declined 37%** from 2010-2015; a major contributor is the success of school nutrition programs
- **65 Vermont schools** are now providing **universal breakfast** and lunch to over **13,500 students**
- **Five additional schools are preparing to make this move**, thanks to funding expansion for Farm to School Grants Program in the last legislative session
- **37 Vermont schools** are moving breakfast into the school day, and some have seen **breakfast participation increases as high as 642%**
- **83% more summer meals** were eaten by children at **nearly twice as many sites** throughout Vermont in 2015, as compared to 2010
- **In schools with universal meals**, nurses report improved academic performance and improved focus in class, declines in absenteeism, **declines in school nurse visits as high as 72%**, and **declines in behavioral referrals of at least 10%**

# What Happens When Schools Buy Local Food?

EVERY  SPENT CONTRIBUTES ADDITIONAL » **60¢** to the LOCAL ECONOMY



Vermont schools spent **\$16 million** on food in the 2013-2014 school year.

**\$915,000** was spent on local food

Which directly supported local producers and processors...



Which means farmers can **grow** their businesses...

...and **support** other businesses like distributors & stores



All together, local food purchased by schools contributed **\$1.4 MILLION** to Vermont's economy!



**Imagine the possibilities**

if more of the remaining **\$15 MILLION** were spent on local food!

For more information, see "Economic Contribution and Potential Impact of Local Food Purchases Made by Vermont Schools."



# Vermont schools spent **\$915,000** on local foods during the 2013-2014 school year.

**When accounting for inter-industry and household spending effects, the total economic contribution to the Vermont economy was **\$1.4 million**.**

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## Key Findings:

- ▶ 5.6% of food purchased by Vermont schools is produced locally.
- ▶ If Vermont schools doubled their local food spending (from 5.6% to 11.2%) the total economic impact would increase to \$2.1 million.
- ▶ Economic value is one metric of farm to school programming that can be used to determine the value of farm to school programming. Other metrics include:
  - Health and nutrition
  - Education
  - The environment

## Methods:

- ▶ This economic contribution and impact study was conducted by the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont from October 2015 through February 2016 for the Farm to School Network.
- ▶ The data used for this study was acquired from the Vermont Agency of Education, a school food management company, the school food director association, two distributors, and three food hubs. NOFA Vermont and the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund provided guidance to ensure adequate coverage of local food purchases made by schools.
- ▶ An economic contribution study calculates the cumulative amount of money that cycles through an economy between industries, households, and government agencies as a result of changes in the industry or events.

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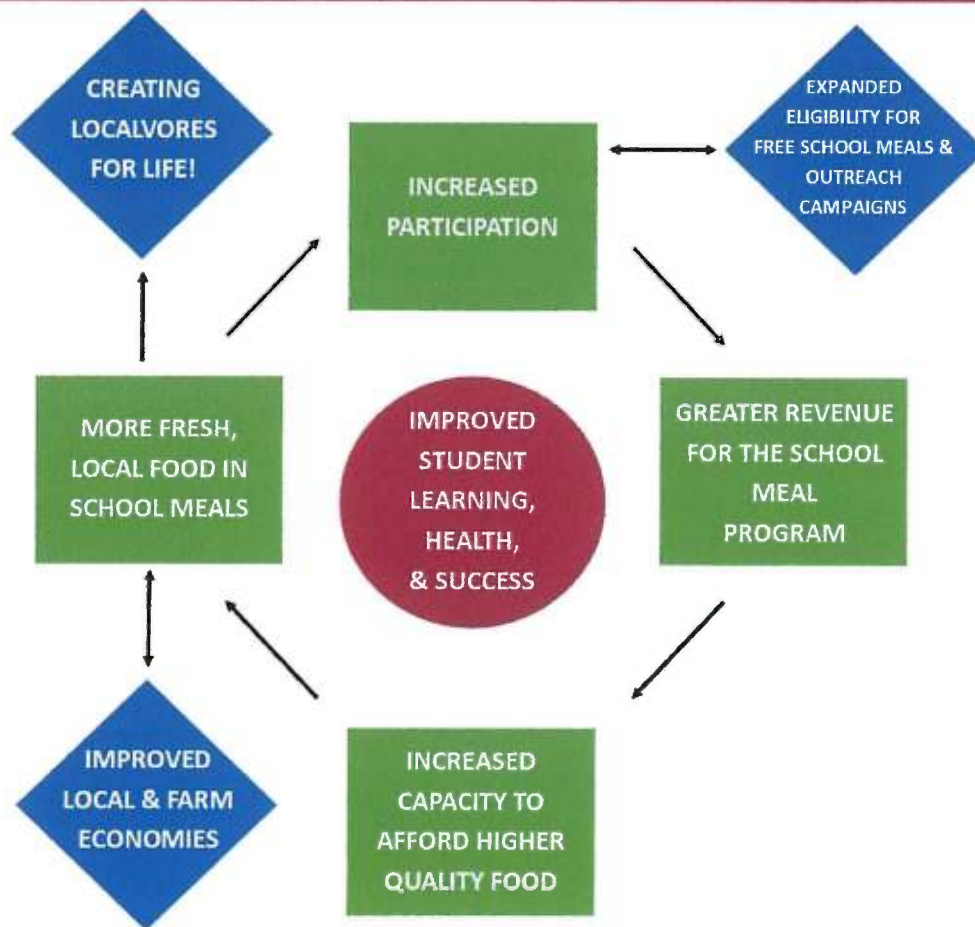
Prepared for the Vermont Farm to School Network by

Funded by



# The Farm To School–School Meal Program “Virtuous Cycle”

Improve Child Nutrition, Reduce Child Hunger  
& Strengthen Local Economies



- Adding fresh, local foods, and making meals universal whenever possible, improves school meal quality and student participation.
- Increased participation means school meal programs have more resources for purchasing and processing local food.
- Strong school meal programs ensure that no student goes hungry.
- Farm to School and universal meals mean all kids get better nutrition and learn to love new foods – creating localvores for life.
- Local farmers get new orders, improving farm viability and Vermont’s economy.

Farm to School strengthens Child Nutrition

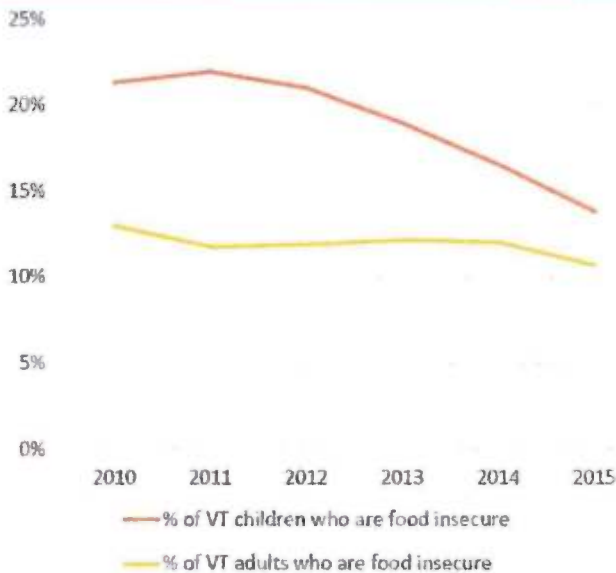


Support Farm to School Grants for  
the Health of Vermont’s Children, Schools & Farms!





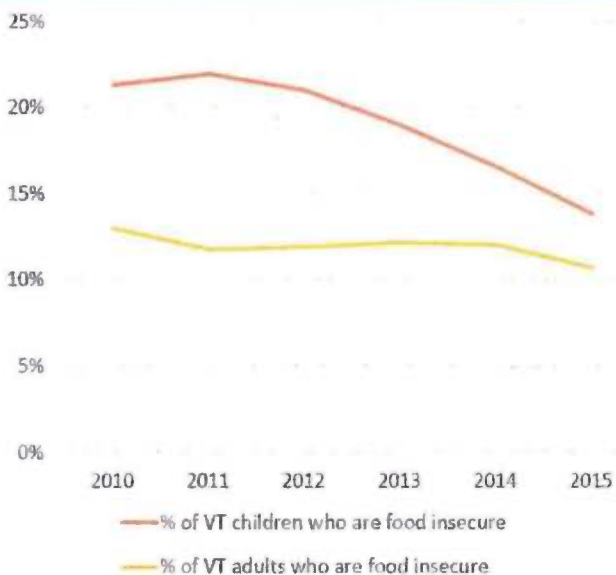
# CHILD HUNGER IS ON THE DECLINE



## WHY?

- Last school year, VT kids ate 13,449,972 school meals.
- 13,800 VT students now have access to universal school meals.
- School meal nutrition & quality have improved.
- Farm to School programs have expanded.
- The number of summer meal sites has nearly doubled, with an 83% increase in meals served.
- There are eight times the number of afterschool meal programs, serving over 7,000 students.
- Hundreds of school nutrition professionals are dedicated every day to student health and success.

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## OUR WORK IS NOT DONE:

OVER 17,000 VERMONT CHILDREN STILL LIVE IN FAMILIES THAT CAN'T ALWAYS AFFORD TO PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE



Kids who struggle with hunger face real barriers to growing up healthy and succeeding in school

They are at a greater risk for:

- Poor quality diets and nutrient deficiencies
- Chronic illnesses and increased hospital visits
- Cognitive, physical and emotional delays
- Lack of school readiness
- Increased, aggression, depression, and hyperactive behavior
- Diminished academic achievement
- Earning low wages as adults, perpetuating the cycle of food insecurity and poverty

Eating school meals decreases these barriers & helps kids succeed

For more information:

[www.hungerfreevt.org](http://www.hungerfreevt.org) | [fconte@hungerfreevt.org](mailto:fconte@hungerfreevt.org)

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