



VERMONT FARM TO SCHOOL & EARLY CHILDHOOD NETWORK

Support Vermont's Local Foods Incentive Program!

The Incentive, which includes \$500k in funding annually, provides schools with an increased reimbursement per meal if they purchase 15% or more from Vermont farms and producers.

Two-thirds of Vermont School Food Authorities have engaged with the Incentive. Last year's grantees alone reported **spending about \$1.2 million on local foods** in the 2023-24 school year.

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

Funding the Program Means:

Expanded markets for Vermont producers & more money for our agricultural economy.

Over 100 Vermont farms sell food to Vermont schools and early childhood programs. **Every \$1.00 spent on local food for school meals contributes \$1.60 to Vermont's economy.** Schools spend approximately **\$25 million** on food every year, and we want more of those dollars going to Vermont farmers.

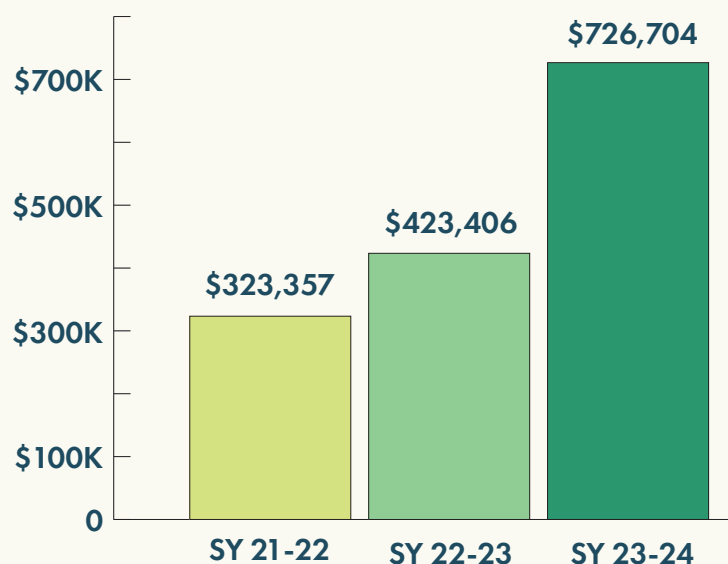


"We do harvest of the month events, and the kids are so amazed when they see the produce and learn it came from a farm down the road. It makes them so much more interested in what they're eating. Highlighting local foods, like Boyden Beef, helps the community and students understand where their food comes from. This connection increases participation and support, which allows us to buy more local food."

—**Jen Hutchinson**, Manager of School Nutrition Services, Barre Unified Union School District, pictured above with a students from Spaulding Educational Alternatives High School

Since 2021, Vermont food hubs are selling more local food to schools every year!

Data shows combined total annual sales for Green Mountain Farm Direct, Food Connects, Vermont Farmers Food Center, and Addison County Relocalization Network.



Learn more @ vermontfarmtoschool.org
or email Dana Hudson at dhudson@shelburnefarms.org

2 Vermont 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, giving school food programs more dollars to buy more local food, sending more money back into the local economy.



"Universal School Meals has allowed our budget to grow, and we're able to think more about supporting local producers now than we were a few years ago. And, Universal Meals has increased the volume of food we serve. Now we can spend more on food, and buy better quality, more local food. We're committed to keeping Vermont dollars in the state and bringing as much Federal money as we can into the state food system and keeping it here."

—**Scott Fay**, Director of Child Nutrition, Essex Westford School District

3 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.

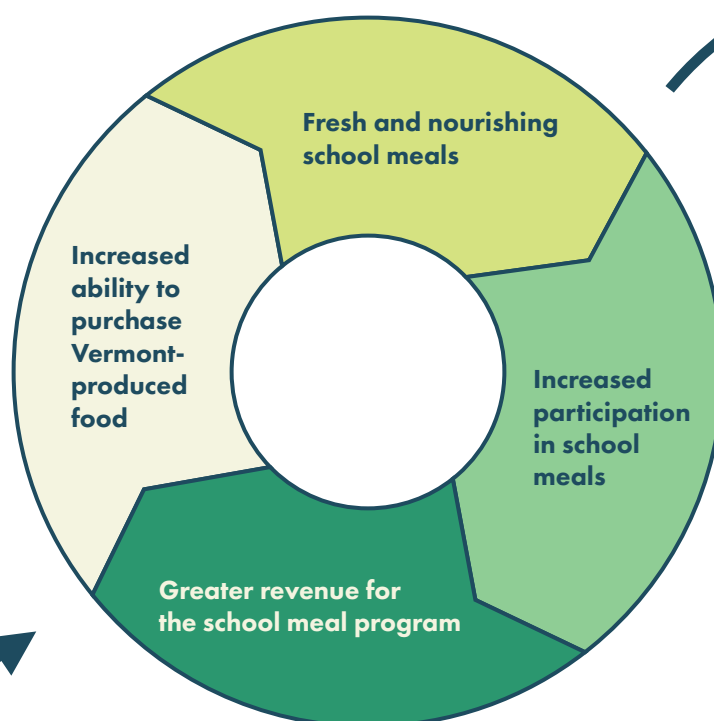


"We're transitioning to local cheese and yogurt and moving toward more scratch-cooked meals. The goal is to focus on quality and make meals that both meet the kids' preferences and support local producers. Almost everybody here is wanting to let go of the prepackaged stuff and get back to scratch cooking. It's a big step in moving toward more local foods and creating meals that kids actually enjoy."

—**Karyl Kent**, Director of School Nutrition, Mount Mansfield School District

The Virtuous Cycle

Universal school meals for all students, a fully funded **Farm to School & Early Childhood Grants** program, and a fully funded **Local Foods Incentive** work collectively to support a thriving school meal program.



The outcomes:

- Improved student learning and health
- Strong local farms
- Stigma and lunch shaming eliminated