

# FARMS FOR SCHOOL MEALS



**Funds to Advance Rural Markets (FARMS) for School Meals** invests in North Carolina farms, rural economies across the state, and North Carolina school children.

Today, we know that only about 2% of funds spent on produce in North Carolina's public schools is for produce grown in North Carolina.

North Carolina's agricultural sector is the state's largest economic driver and largest employer, and yet many schools are not able to put local products on their menus because their budgets are very tight.

FARMS for School Meals will give schools what they need to buy more **North Carolina-grown food** for our kids and give schools flexibility to provide meals to students who are unable to pay. In receiving funds, schools will purchase North Carolina-grown products instead of products that are currently coming from out of state.

**That keeps money in North Carolina, feeds our kids local food, and supports North Carolina farmers.**



## Economic Development

1. Buying food from local farmers keeps money in our communities.
2. NC is losing farmers and farmlands at a rapid rate; between 2007 and 2017, **we lost 5,113 farms**.
3. Institutional markets, like schools, diversify markets and provide reliable revenue that keeps farms in business.
4. Rural communities depend on the agricultural sector for economic stability.
5. Expanding farm to school supports students and rural economies



Agriculture is an important contributor to NC's economy, representing more than **600,000 jobs**.

Studies show that:

- funding in farm to school programs can generate more than \$2.00 of economic activity for every \$1.00 spent on local produce for school nutrition, and
- for every job created through local school food purchases, 2.61 jobs are created in the local economy.



## Public Health

More than **400,000 children** in North Carolina, or one in five, **face hunger**. School is a key place, and sometimes the only place, for many to get nutritious food.

Almost **60%** of our kids **rely on school meals** to meet their nutrition needs. We can do more to invest in our children.

A school lunch in North Carolina costs \$3.44 to make. State funding for farm to school would increase the amount of funding for food.



## Education

Kids who eat healthy meals do better in school, making healthy, local meals an important part of **improving student performance**.

Research shows that healthy school meals are associated with

- better attendance,
- decreased tardiness, and
- decreases in disciplinary actions.

All of this supports student achievement, improves outcomes for schools, and increases the readiness of young adults entering the NC workforce or higher education.

