



For Immediate Release

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Twenty-Two States Pass Farm to School Legislation in 2014 *National Farm to School Network Reports Growing Trend in State Policies that Connect Students to Healthy Food and Family Farmers to New Markets*

Washington, D.C., March 5, 2015 – Twenty-two states passed 41 farm to school-supportive bills and resolutions in 2014, a 64 percent increase over 2013, according to a report released today by the National Farm to School Network. The *State Farm to School Legislative Survey: 2002-2014*, prepared by researchers at Vermont Law School's Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, is a comprehensive review of state-level farm to school policies, analysis of national trends, and advocacy guide for those working to advance the farm to school movement across the country.

Farm to school started as a grassroots movement built on programs that increase schools' access to local food, improve child health and open new economic opportunities for local and regional farmers. Over the last decade, the movement has grown from a few programs in a handful of states to more than 40,000 schools across the country. As of October 2014, 39 states and Washington, D.C., have institutionalized farm to school practices with legislation that ranges from funding grant programs and state farm to school coordinator positions to online directories that connect schools and agricultural producers, local preference laws that encourage local food purchases, and broader initiatives relating to health and wellness, food security, economic equality and the creation of food hubs.

"State governments play a crucial role in the growth of farm to school," said Helen Dombalis, Policy and Strategic Partnerships Director with the National Farm to School Network. "The success of states like Alaska, Oregon and Texas is having a domino-like effect across the country, paving the way for more state legislatures to encourage farm to school initiatives through policy. It's clear, strong laws facilitate strong programs."

In 2014, 73 new bills and resolutions advancing farm to school were introduced by state legislatures, and more than half were enacted into law. Some of the strongest trends include the following:

- State-level farm to school policy is on the rise as more states recognize it as a strategy to improve community health and economic opportunities. The number of bills and resolutions enacted in 2014 increased by 64 percent over 2013.
- States are providing greater support for school gardens. In 2014, the number of bills and resolutions encouraging, establishing and/or funding school gardens increased by 46 percent over similar bills from 2002-2013 combined. States proposed 11 and enacted eight such pieces of legislation.
- States are emphasizing the role farm to school plays as part of broader local food system initiatives. In 2014, there was an increase in legislation to establish statewide food system departments, including the California Office of Farm to Fork and the Washington, D.C., Food Policy Council, as well as an increase in legislation to encourage the development of local food hubs.

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“One of the most impactful ways to grow these programs is for states to embed farm to school coordinators in their departments of agriculture and education, but funding for these positions continues to be a roadblock,” said Jamie Renner, Assistant Professor of Law and Clinical Lead at Vermont Law School’s Center for Agriculture and Food Systems. “The *State Farm to School Legislative Survey* is a valuable tool to help advocates approach policy at a level that makes sense for their state.”

The *State Farm to School Legislative Survey* provides state-by-state summaries of every enacted, defeated or pending farm to school-related bill from 2002-2014. It also includes analysis and infographics on state farm to school legislative trends; case studies on successful farm to school advocacy efforts in Alaska, Oregon, Texas and Washington, D.C.; and additional resources for farm to school advocates, state lawmakers, state agencies and school districts nationwide, among others, to learn about and potentially replicate the wide variety of existing state farm to school laws, policies and programs. Download the full report at <http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/statelegislativesurvey>.

About National Farm to School Network

The National Farm to School Network (NFSN) is the leading voice for the U.S. farm to school movement, providing information, advocacy and networking for communities working to bring local food sourcing and food and agriculture education into school systems and preschools. To meet your NFSN state lead and learn more about what farm to school activities are happening in your region, visit farmtoschool.org.

About the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems

The Center for Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) at Vermont Law School has a dual mission: to train the next generation of food and agriculture advocates and entrepreneurs, and to produce law, policy and market tools that advance environmentally and economically sustainable food and agriculture systems, public health, local and regional agricultural economies, food access and animal welfare. For more information about CAFS, visit vermontlaw.edu/cafs.

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