

NEW YORK'S FARM TO SCHOOL SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT



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PURPOSE

In 2018, the NYS legislature passed a farm to school (F2S) law providing financial incentives for school districts who purchase at least 30% of their procurement to local, NY verifiable sources. For the new law's landmark opportunity to succeed, gaps in the supply chain--limiting past farm to school purchasing--must be identified, resourced, and resolved. At present, few school systems have the ability to source local farm products in New York. Few food producers have the ability to sell into the school market. From our discussions with multiple current F2S coordinators, they have difficulty accessing a supply chain beyond a tight radius. They express a need for access to a regional supply chain to meet their unmet demand. Given the current structural conditions, this shortfall of local sourcing will likely persist even with the subsidy. Unless resolved, the legislative path to 30% will go unfulfilled.

Based on CADE's key informant interviews with project partners and stakeholders, an analysis of the national Farm to School Census data on NY, and past/current work to support F2S efforts, we identified the following supply chain challenges that prevent schools from successfully procuring local food:

1. PRODUCTION. Local farmers lack information about the scale and timing of demand for specific foods. Without this information, they cannot grow or produce what is needed, nor bid for school contracts. Additionally, a single farm may not be able to produce the scale of what school purchasers require; there is no current system of aggregating commodities from other farms. Farmers also lack information on where and how food should be processed or co-packed based on needs of school purchasers, and how to contract with processors or distributors.

2. PROCESSING / CO-PACKING. Few local processing facilities exist, often lacking efficiency to support a range of processing needed by schools, including minimal processing of fruits/vegetables (cutting/freezing), meat processing, and baking. They also lack information on scale/predictability of demand and planning capacity to lower their risk of capital investment.

3. DISTRIBUTION. Lack of stable, consistent local distributors set up to deliver foods along the supply chain nodes - whether from farm to school, from farm to processor, from processor to a storage facility then to school, etc. Some farms will directly distribute products to nearby schools, but many lack capacity to deliver more widely at reasonable delivery cost/lb. The delivery cost/lb will be reduced by aggregation of products.

4. SCHOOL PURCHASING. School purchasers lack knowledge and experience on how to procure food directly from farmers using a geographic bidding process (often due to lack of information on the farms and processors that produce the full range of potential foods they require). Schools may not know how to time a bid in time so farmers can plan for the growing season. One school purchaser noted a preference for having a standard ordering system in place, like those provided by food hubs, as the current way of ordering is a fragmented “free for all”.

5. OVERALL SUPPLY CHAIN. Lack of communication and knowledge sharing among stakeholders - including school purchasers, producers, processors, and distributors - and absence of institutionalized mechanisms to overcome food supply chain gaps.

There is currently no comprehensive effort in New York designed to understand, plan, and address these and other specific barriers for each major commodity toward providing schools an easy-to-access supply chain. CADE’s Farm to School program has set forth to provide a systems approach to significantly increase the number of schools capable of procuring locally sourced food by creating a model for closing the gaps in the food supply chain.

CADE has worked to build a stakeholder-informed model that will close gaps in the regional food supply chain, unlocking the potential for 50 eligible school districts in NY’s Southern Tier and Mohawk Valley to purchase 30% of food locally, to help realize NY’s new F2S law. As a result, F2S Coordinators and food purchasers will have increased capacity to procure local, nutritious food for our communities’ children. Farmers, processors, and distributors will access vast new markets and increase profits contributing to a strong agricultural economy.

As an additional outcome, CADE will put forward this regional model to be replicated and scaled in other regions across NYS where such challenges continue to persist.

ABSTRACT

CADE conducted a landscape analysis and stakeholder-informed process to better understand gaps in the regional food supply chain --from farm to processor to distributor to school. The goal of this research is to provide meaningful data that can support the success of the F2S program in NYS and identify tools and models that support local food procurement across the state.

CADEs research resulted in two key areas of focus:

- (1) Improving communication and education
- (2) The immeasurable value of support staff and legislation

With this research, CADE and other service providers can provide support to farmers, processors, and distributors to access vast new markets and increase profits contributing to a strong agricultural economy.

METHODOLOGY

CADE started this project by conducting a comprehensive literature review to better understand the New York reimbursement program around Farm to School. Summaries of this research can be seen in the Findings Chapter. Upon reviewing literature, phone calls and interviews were set up with existing partners and stakeholders in the Farm to School and Farm to Institution space. These interviews and research informed the questions that were developed in the nearly 100 question survey which was distributed from February 15, 2020 through March 15, 2020.

The survey was created to garner information from any entity that is involved in the Farm to School supply chain. The following definitions and distinctions are used throughout this report and are how survey participants were categorized and asked questions based on their respective industry.

Farm to School Supply Chain classification definitions:

- **Producer:** farmer, grower, etc.
- **Distributor:** food aggregator, food hub, food processor, etc.
- **School:** purchasing authorities, food service professionals, kitchen staff, etc.
- **Other:** Farm to School support personnel, educators, etc.

Questions were specifically tailored to each supply chain classification but ultimately asked them to rank what they value in Farm to School, describe their successes and challenges, provide information about the level of their involvement - including their procurement history of New York State products, and had ample space to provide general feedback regarding the Farm to School program.

Surveys were compiled digitally via SurveyMonkey and then analyzed and sorted by a CADE program manager. Survey findings were compiled and a SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity and threat) analysis was performed to better understand where Farm to School needs the most support to increase its participation of producers and schools. The SWOT analysis combined with the survey feedback were used to develop some introductory solution proposals to review with stakeholders. Survey participants who agreed to follow up contact were purposefully selected based on their participation to be a part of a convening in later months where said introductory solution proposals would be proposed, discussed and dissected.

Additionally, interviews of key stakeholders and partners in this project were conducted to better understand the specifics of each point of the supply chain's standard operation regarding farm to school including capacity, distribution and record keeping through content analysis. These interviews were recorded with deductive coding with a start list of producer gap; producer strength; distributor gap; distributor strength; school gap; school strength; value; capacity; and knowledge.

After surveys and interviews were analyzed, participants of ranging industry representation were purposefully selected to be a part of a convening to discuss possible solutions to the gaps identified in the research and find ways to strengthen the Farm to School program. The convening was initially intended to occur in April 2020 as an in-person gathering of 12-17 stakeholders ranging in supply chain classifications. Due to unforeseen circumstances related to COVID-19, the gathering was modified to be a virtual gathering. To better fit the needs and limitations of digital gatherings, the convening resulted in two gatherings of six and eight participants, respectively, and was held in May 2020.

With support of the survey findings and convening participants the recommendations below were put forward by CADE.

FINDINGS

LITERATURE REVIEW

American Farmland Trust: “Growing Opportunity for Farm to School: How to Revolutionize School Food, Support Local Farms, and Improve the Health of Students in New York”, 2020

After the first year of this incentive, American Farmland Trust (AFT) surveyed over 300 school food authorities, or SFAs, at K-12 schools across the state to learn whether this program successfully stimulated more purchasing of New York grown and raised food. While many schools saw 30% as a challenge, 49 SFAs applied to the New York State Education Department for the extra reimbursement claiming they reached 30% within just one year. This includes Buffalo Public Schools, the second largest district in the state, which spent over \$2.6 million on food from New York farms during the 2018–19 school year.

AFT’s research found that 72% of schools felt optimistic that with the right support they would achieve 30% within five years. Achieving this outcome would cause schools to spend nearly \$150 million at New York farms over the next five years while increasing access to healthy, New York grown food for almost 700,000 K–12 students by 2024. Conservatively, this would generate over \$210 million in economic impact statewide while costing the state just over \$94 million over the course of five years in reimbursement and support. However, schools still face barriers when attempting to buy more New York grown food and reach 30%, and more must be done to help them in order to unlock the incredible economic and public health potential of this program. Food service directors reported not having enough staff time to dedicate to Farm to School, and difficulty navigating procurement regulations that favor “least cost” options as their main barriers to buying more local food. Regarding participating in the incentive program specifically, many schools reported that 30% was too high of a threshold, and that there was a lack of clarity around program guidelines and requirements. When asked what would help them increase their purchasing of New York grown food, food service directors reported that getting their main vendor, which is often a distributor, to provide more New York food products would be most helpful in getting them to increase the amount of New York food products they purchase in order to reach 30%.

Based on the research conducted for Growing Opportunity for Farm to School, recommendations for achieving the significant potential of Farm to School to support New York farms and improving the health of students across the state over the next five years include:

- Continuing to fund the New York Farm to School Purchasing Incentive and increasing funding for the Farm to School Grants Program in the New York State Budget;
- Investing in regional and statewide Farm to School Coordinators to provide critical support to Food Service Directors to increase their purchases of New York grown and raised food;
- Creating consistent, stable, and clear written guidelines on how to qualify for and verify achievement of the 30% threshold so schools know what is required in order to receive the extra reimbursement;
- Incorporating accountability mechanisms into the program for intermediaries that bring food from farms to schools to ensure the accuracy of the geographic origin information they provide, while ensuring the process of verification is clear, efficient and based on supply chain realities;
- Providing trainings for school administrators, Food Service Directors, and key staff to better understand the incentive program, how to procure New York grown and raised food, and strategies to replicate the success of schools that have achieved 30%;
- Passing state and federal legislation to make it easier for Food Service Directors to spend money on food from local farms through both formal and informal procurement methods;
- Investing in the supply chain and equipment to build processing capacity and scratch cooking at schools; and
- Expanding the Farm to School Purchasing Incentive to all meals for schools that spend 30% of their total budget on New York food products to remove barriers to participation, increase economic impact, and improve access to local food for students.

Ecotrust: “*The Impact of Seven Cents: Examining the Effects of a \$.07 per Meal Investment on Local Economic Development, Lunch Participation Rates, and Student Preferences for Fruits & Vegetables in Two Oregon School Districts,*” 2011

In examining participation rates in PPS’s lunch program during the 2008-2009 school year, we had hoped we might see a relatively quick increase in participation rates in addition to the higher participation on HOM and LL days as compared to all other days, and that participation rates would be more responsive for students claiming paid lunches. The analysis did not show this to be the case, and in some instances revealed the opposite to be true.

It is generally understood by those in the farm to school community that to be successful, a program must not only make changes to the food that is served in the cafeteria, but also back up those changes by connecting them to the classroom and community. The program did not include consistent district-wide educational or promotional components to support the changes in the cafeteria simply because resources were not available to support such efforts (e.g., taste testing new foods multiple times is a proven strategy to

get children to try new foods as well as develop a preference for them, but such an effort across 87 schools would require a massive deployment of money and labor).

Furthermore, while there was some community support provided in PPS via a Community Partner Program with local retailers, resources were not abundant enough to create a robust program with a wide reach. Thus, it is not clear that students, school staff, or parents were aware of the changes taking place in their school cafeterias, or of the benefits to student and community health.

In hindsight, it may have been unreasonable for us to expect to so quickly reverse a trend that has been at least 40 years in the making in terms of changing consumer preferences and school lunch programs' attempts to compete with, or at least track, some of the offerings from fast food restaurants. It is likely to take at least a decade or two of concentrated effort to reverse the commercial push for foods higher in salt, sugar, and fat. There are many potential explanations for why this change will require a great deal of energy and financial resources over many years. They include issues such as student willingness to try new foods and the speed of the lunch line—it is difficult to “sell” students on an unfamiliar item when there is little time to educate them about new foods and without multiple opportunities for them to try the new item before committing—as well as a single menu item being offered rather than multiple choices (students at PPS often perceived this negatively), and also contextual factors that we did not assess for (such as the availability of complementary nutrition education and promotion activities, and whether or not schools have open campus policies).

Center for Regional Food Systems, Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies, Michigan State University: “Results from the 2009 Michigan Farm to School Survey: Participation Grows from 2004,” 2018

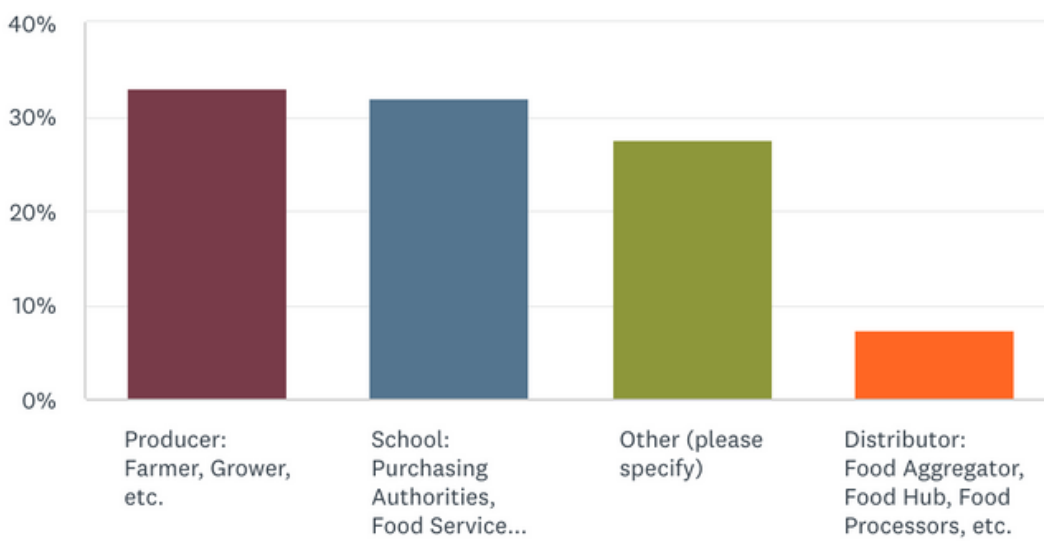
This study investigated changes in Michigan school food service directors' farm to school (FTS) participation levels and perspectives since a 2004 survey and factors that would facilitate FTS expansion. Survey respondents were asked about local food purchasing behaviors, interests, motivations, concerns, and barriers. Participation in FTS was more than 3 times higher (41.5%) than in 2004 (10.6%), and the vast majority of school districts (77.0%) had taken at least 1 step to connect students with local food. Budget and cost issues were ranked higher as barriers to FTS than in 2004, but the desire to help Michigan farms had also substantially increased. Fresh and whole produce items were generally preferred for local procurement over frozen or canned items. Education to reverse perceived limits of procurement regulations, food safety assurances, and strategies to mitigate tight school food budgets are needed to encourage FTS expansion.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Survey

CADE’s survey resulted in 95 responses across 34 counties. Participants in various industries were well represented in the survey with producers, schools and other (primarily including educators and program managers) making up about 30% of the responses each. Distributors’ participation was about 7%, which is on par for the number of distributors available in our region comparatively to the other roles in F2S previously mentioned.

Which of the following best describes your role in F2S?



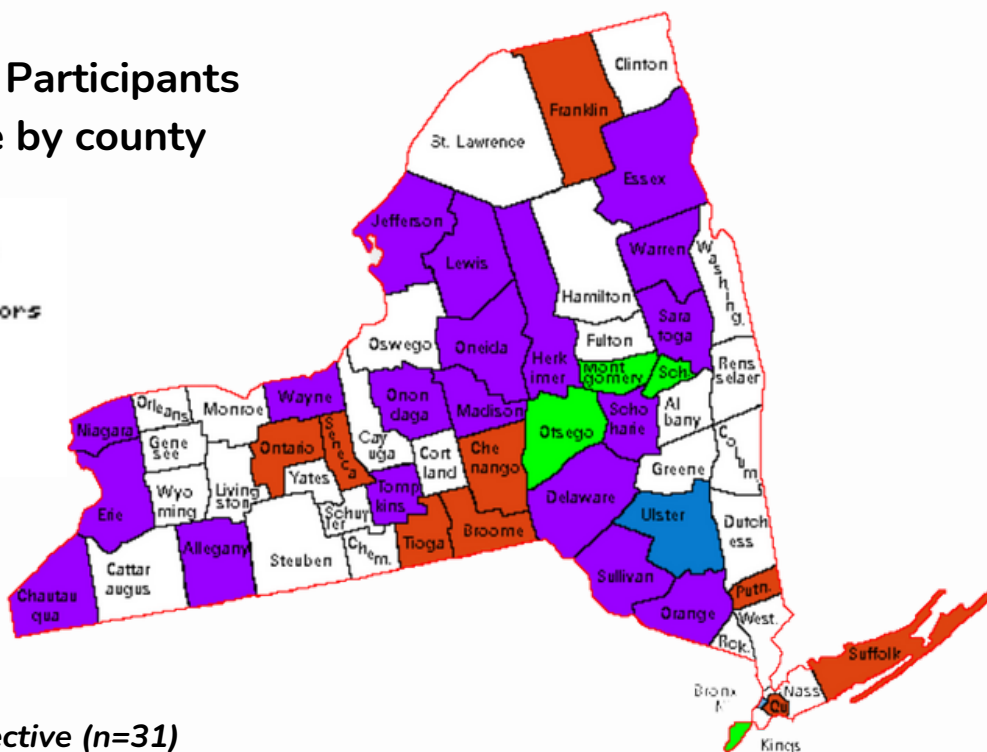
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Producer: Farmer, Grower, etc.	32.98%	31
▼ School: Purchasing Authorities, Food Service Professionals, etc.	31.91%	30
▼ Other (please specify)	27.66%	26
▼ Distributor: Food Aggregator, Food Hub, Food Processors, etc.	7.45%	7
TOTAL		94

The primary driving force or value of survey participants was overwhelmingly “Healthy Kids”. Below is a chart describing the top ranked value of F2S based on survey participant contact type

Supply Chain Type	Healthy Kids	Nutrition	Local Economic Development	Increased Sales	Increased Farm Production	Other Values	Positive PR
Producer	9	3	6	7	2	1	2
Distributor	1		2	2		1	
School	19	5	1	1			
Other	15	4	2	1	1	1	
Grand Total	44	12	11	11	3	3	2

Survey Participants by type by county

- - Producers
- - Distributors
- - Schools
- - Other



Producers' perspective (n=31)

Among producers, meat, vegetables and fruit were the top three represented commodities from producers. Of the producers surveyed, every county in New York has representation of at least one item from the producers. The most products are seen in Albany, Delaware and Otsego. Of the producers surveyed, only 26% have experience supplying food to schools, with the primary means of distribution being direct to school. Of those who are selling Farm to School, 77% of producers state that those sales make up between one and five percent of their sales comparative to other market channels

When asked “what do you like most about working in F2S sales” producers’ responses were predominantly centered around the rewarding impact of building community and feeding fresh foods to kids. Additional responses included having revenue through late fall and winter, developing regular customers and enjoyment collaborating with schools on planning, marketing and nutrition

When asked “what is difficult about working in F2S sales” producers’ responses were less cohesive. Struggles ranged from formal processes like completing bids and meeting state requirements to increasing price point, slow payment from schools, and working with schools that are not used to working with raw ingredients.

The number one challenge for producers to supply food directly to schools is “seasonality of my products and needs of schools” at 63% of respondents, followed by price point and profitability (54.55%) and then tied for risk of schools’ incentive/funding going away after investing in F2S infrastructure and lack of contacts within schools (36.36). Listed in other included packaging requirements.

Producers' Key Challenges

Top challenges selling to schools:

1. Lack of knowledge of F2S program and incentive
2. Lack of contacts within schools,
3. Claiming to not have the requisite certifications (GAP, NY Grown and Certified etc.) or insurance
4. Lack of volume/scale of goods

Top challenges selling to distributors:

1. Lack of knowledge of distributors, food aggregators and food hubs
2. Lack of contacts within distributors, food aggregators and food hubs
3. Lack of volume / scale of goods
4. Claiming to not have the requisite certifications (GAP, NY Grown and Certified etc.) or insurance

59% of producers claim they do not have experience in F2S because they are unsure how to enter the market, and 53% respectively said they lack the knowledge of the F2S program. The number one need identified by producers not currently selling to F2S is know-how, followed by additional certifications, and then supplying produce to distributors. Some producers not currently selling to Farm to School identified personal gaps such as needing to find co packer partners, increasing kitchen infrastructure, timing, and schools' and distributors' price point expectations.

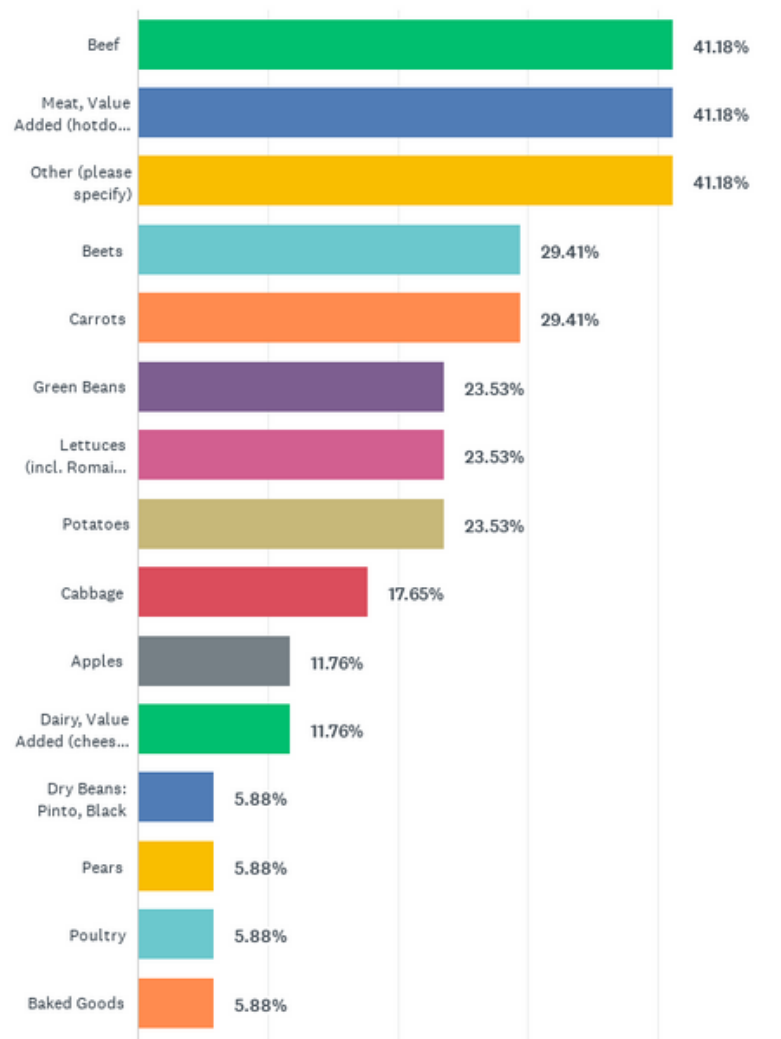
Distributors' perspective (n=7)

77% of distributors do not have experience in Farm to School bidding; three distributors are already selling NY food to NY schools but are not working towards the Farm to School reimbursement program. 70% of distributors allocate 0-5% of their business to Farm to School sales; Outliers include an additional two distributors spend 10% and 95% of their time on F2S sales.

The products that are easiest for distributors to fulfill for schools are meat and meat products, greens, tomato sauce, root vegetables and milk. The most difficult to fulfill items include tomatoes, fruits, seasonal vegetables and prime cuts of meats.

The graph below indicates what foods are being supplied by distributors to schools, which based on survey data is primarily meat and value-added meat products followed by "other" which includes value added fruit and vegetables products (tomato and apple sauces), stone fruit, IQF vegetables, nutrient powders, nutraceutical drinks, dietary supplements, and grain products.

Q37 What foods are you supplying? Check all that apply.



Distributors are primarily receiving products from farmers either from direct farm pick up by the distributor (25%) or delivered by farmers themselves (40%). The clear advantage of working with a distributor is that they then become the middle person. For the farmer, the distributor is just another wholesale account. For the schools, the distributor is a single contact for the aggregation of multiple needs (NY products and otherwise). Distributors are promoting themselves in this way to both their farmer suppliers, and to schools – one interviewee identified their ability to track and source product and keep records for reimbursement audits down the line.

When asked “what do you like about vending with schools/school food purchasers” respondents unified around feeding wholesome products to kids and supporting local farmers. When asked “what is difficult about vending with schools/school food purchasers” responses included: school payments can be difficult, working with kitchen staff unfamiliar with working with their products, difficulty completing and securing bids and contracts. The greatest need identified by distributors in order to expand to

additional schools included processing equipment and collaboration with other food hubs to share product, vendors and transportation. One interviewee identified an additional need to purchase from more New York producers, and that they are lacking those connections in the farming community. Matchmaking and networking continues to be a need for distributors to be able to increase supply for New York product demand.

Schools' perspective (n=24)

Schools currently working towards the Farm to School reimbursement program are purchasing from a wide range of vendors. This is in response to being unable to fulfill order quantities from a single source (including direct to school deliveries made by farmers). The wide range of vendors poses difficulties for product traceability and increases record keeping for schools to comply with a Farm to School Reimbursement audit.

According to Levy and McPeters, 61% of schools spend the most on New York food products from distributors, followed by 17% directly from farmers, and 11% directly from manufacturers – this is much higher than CADE's survey results, but correlates to the expanded reach of distributors to many school districts; The scalability of distributors is beyond what a single producer can manage and may be one explanation for the difference in data sets. Schools have no preference for how they get their New York products, though several interviewees noted that they have limited staff capacity to adequately maintain records for reimbursement. Interviewees with specific Farm to School staff were far more successful with procuring, preparing and tracking New York products for reimbursement - proving the need for staff investment if the program is to be successful. Schools also mentioned their enjoyment of partnering with farms, and in bringing F2S education beyond the cafeteria and into their classrooms.

Ordering Logistics

More than 80% of schools reported being able to purchase from more than one vendor, contrary to common perceptions that institutional bidding is premised with a single-contract agreement with a vendor. Additionally, some schools also participate in a geographic bid preference. Geographic Preference is a credit system designed to provide advantage to local providers in the bidding process. In addition to the traditional evaluating criteria of price, food safety, and distribution capabilities, schools may offer advantage to bidders that fall within a geographic radius determined by the school. For example, local bidders may be awarded a 10% credit on the bid price for a given product. This will vary from district to district, and requires a formal procurement policy change at the school board level. Geographic Preference bids take place during each individual school districts' bid period and vary by district.

Of the Top 4 Challenges in procuring NY products are as follows: (1st) food pricing and cost competitiveness, (2nd) limited staffing in terms of physical labor, and tied for 3rd and 4th are insufficient transportation to get NY products, and limited kitchen space (to prep, cook or other). Three interviewees identified the need for more shelf-stable items and value added items available in bulk at wholesale pricing – stating that these items are far and few between.

Key partner interviews reinforced the data in the survey, as many interviewees were also survey participants. However, these interviewees became increasingly valuable after the first F2S audit process. In 2019, 49 NY schools invested infrastructure in local food procurement and applied for the F2S reimbursement. After audits, this originally robust number dwindled down to a sobering count of three who actually met the 30% threshold. Several interviewees identified frustration that the auditing process has been unclear from the start. Specifically, it was cited that there was little framework provided of what “traceability” is required, and that there was inconsistent behavior from varying auditors.

Based on the summaries of the survey and interviews, the following SWOT analysis was created to guide CADE’s convening with supply chain stakeholders.

STRENGTHS

- Value in supporting healthy kids, followed by nutrition and economic development
- Increases local food consumption, supporting farmers
- Decreases carbon footprint

WEAKNESSES

- Knowing about the program
- Understanding paperwork and requirements
- Connections to appropriate stakeholders at all supply chain levels
- Kitchen knowledge and capacity to work with local product

OPPORTUNITIES

- Product aggregation collaboration
- Traceability and record keeping for reimbursement
- Diversify markets for producers
- New infrastructure and entrepreneurship opportunities i.e. processing facilities, value added production
- Matchmaking

THREATS

- Price competitiveness of products if reimbursement funding were to go away
- Impact of COVID-19 on school closures, staffing and prioritization of funding

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholder Convening

CADE gathered 17 stakeholders over the course of three sessions in mid-May to share survey data and get direct feedback from supply chain contacts on proposed solutions based on the SWOT analysis.

The following key themes were continually presented across the conversations:

(1) Improving communication and education

(2) The immeasurable value of support staff and legislation

With support from surveys, interviews, and a convening of stakeholders, the following themes were identified as part of the discussion.

Improving Communications & Education

Support improved communication and networking to connect stakeholders across Farm to School, including growers, producers, processors, distributors and institutions.

Improve production of and communication on guidelines to NY's Farm to School program including requirements, audits, etc. Stakeholders report a need to improve connectedness and strengthen relationships from State Education department as well as NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. Requests such as having clear, written guidelines of the program will help them inform producers, distributors and schools on what to expect, how the program works, etc.

Support farmers' need to scale up their business for wholesale accounts. This will include: record keeping support to improve traceability and create product formulation statements (PFS), education on creating food safety plans, improving invoicing systems, as well as knowledge around completing bids, wholesale packaging and account management.

Support communication across 'fields' from farmers to institutions to better understand the nuances of local food procurement, seasonality, and most importantly how to build purchasing relationships that are a good match, i.e. matchmaking producers and institutions.

Support Staff and Legislation

The people behind New York's robust Farm to School program are without a doubt irreplaceable. The continued support of organizations with education staff and Farm to School support staff is a top priority. The "people" cannot be replaced by modern technology and online matchmaking tools, as they provide valuable training, tools and one-on-one support to both producers and the SFAs they represent. Additionally, as stakeholders report that the last mile of distribution continues to be a struggling point for the supply chain, Farm to School support staff are crucial for seeing that the food properly makes it to its final destination.

Farm to School procurement and purchasing is most successful with dedicated staff and/or a motivated committee or working group at a school level. Support staff are instrumental in connecting the "three c's" of farm to school: cafeteria, classroom and community. They support menu development, recipe testing, student engagement, crop planning, farmer and school relations and more.

Many stakeholders also report that these F2S support staff are often bogged down by bureaucracy, and need more authority in the F2S space. To alleviate this lack of autonomy in their work, a Farm to School work team has been created under Cornell Extension's leadership, which has provided significant improvements on inter-school communication, and a more strategic and unified voice to distributors, farms, producers, and even State Department of Education and Agriculture and Markets.

Recommendations:

Communication & Matchmaking

The need to improve communication across the line of Farm to School is a unanimous top priority that would have significant trickle-down effects to support the development of the supply chain, and increase farm to school food procurement and purchasing. By launching a matchmaking and networking tool that is not duplicative of current tools and resources, but additive to the Farm to School landscape is essential.

A tool that can assist with matchmaking, while taking the burden off of farmers' limited availability to maintain a profile or platform, and can glean data from existing databases, work and research completed (ex. AFT's report, Harvest NY's 30% database) has the potential to transform the F2S matchmaking space. A multidirectional tool as described could become a single source tool that networks, maps, and "talks to" the collaboration already occurring with Farm to School stakeholders,, while mitigating gaps in the supply chain, bringing a resourceful tool to local procurement in Farm to School. Additional

support is needed for processing (specifically minimally processed goods) which increase kitchens' capacity for scratch cooking, and such a platform can, as an outcome of usership, map and assess where these facilities would be best utilized based on profiles of institutions and farms alike.

Policy and Legislation

Legislature support is needed to entice this systematic change in purchasing behavior which in turn supports farming communities through economic development, job creation and more.

A primary recommendation is to include summer lunch in the Farm to School program. As summer is the timeframe in which farmers have their most consistent and diverse offerings, summer purchasing would innately improve farmer interest and retention in the program, simply through their ability to more easily meet schools' wholesale requirements. These relationships built from summer sales will be the foundation of trust and interest in the Farm to School program during the academic year.

A summer program would also provide twofold benefits for school kitchens who purchase in bulk in the summer. (1) Summer products are more abundant and affordable. (2) Processing whole fruits and vegetables during the busy school year is an obstacle for kitchens. Purchasing in bulk in the summer when school is not in session would allow staff the time needed to par-process ingredients for use throughout the school year.



Recommendations for Producers

- Develop wholesale accounts with food hubs & distributors
- Increase production in areas needed from distributors & schools
- Improve tracking & invoicing



Recommendations for Distributors

- Increase third party partnerships for minimally processed goods
- Work with local agencies to increase farm connections to diversify products available
- Collaborate with other food hubs to aggregate product, if needed via a Food Hub Association



Recommendations for Schools

- Invest in Farm to School staff to bring "The Three C's" of Cafeteria, Classroom & Community together
- Approve a Geographic Bid Preference amendment to bidding process

CONCLUSION

ripeCommunity

In April 2021, with support of stakeholders, CADE and ripe.io launched ripeCommunity. ripeCommunity is a first-of-its-kind platform that supports matchmaking between farm and food businesses and buyers. Local farms and food businesses with wholesale products can create a comprehensive profile on ripeCommunity, listing their product, business description and purchasing instructions for buyers to view and make informed decisions about their local purchasing. Institutions will be able to conduct a targeted search of farm and food businesses, filtering based on criteria like distance, farm size, product type and growing practices. Searches can also be filtered by ownership to support marginalized communities like Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+ and women. Similarly, institutions can create profiles that list their specific needs so farms and food businesses can search for and match with them. Ultimately, ripeCommunity streamlines the process of finding farm and food businesses that meet specific criteria, creates opportunities for producers to find local markets, and lays the foundation for creating data-driven, values-based supply chains in our local communities.

ripeCommunity is built with an eye towards long term tracking and traceability needs. Developed and launched by ripe.io – a company that uses blockchain technology to create a more transparent food system – ripeCommunity has been purposefully designed as a buildable platform, embracing an ever changing landscape of our food system. It is a forward thinking platform preparing for changing needs, and values, around transparency and tracking within the farm to institution supply chain.

Emerging Markets Training Program

In 2020, CADE continued its Farm to Institution programming with the launching of its “Emerging Markets Training Program” (EMTP) which aims to build out the Farm to Institution network from both ends - producers and purchasers. Under EMTP, CADE has provided market research and networking opportunities for farmers in the Central NY region. CADE has developed new tools and opportunities for farmers to connect specifically with local institutional buyers--from colleges to retirement communities--and with food hubs and other aggregators in the vicinity of Central NY. Taking lead from local farmers, CADE is diving into pressing market research, ranging from agrotourism, to value-added dairy, to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, so that farmers have access to information and resources that can save them time and money and add value to their enterprises.

Additionally, CADE will support institutional purchasers by providing education and support to help institutions purchase more locally sourced ingredients. CADE has partnered with experts in this field, Healthcare Without Harm, and is leading case studies right here in NY that demonstrate how institutions can effectively partner with local farms.

Additionally, CADE is providing technical assistance and training directly to local distributors in order to support this new model of purchasing from farms. To compliment the technical assistance and educational components, we will be supporting matchmaking and marketing support for distributors to gain traction in the market. This program is designed with a holistic approach to build capacity within the supply chain to spur thoughtful farm to institutional sales.

ABOUT CADE

CADE is a 501(c)(3) established in 1991 whose mission is to increase the number and diversity of successful farm enterprises and related businesses in New York.

Our pathway to fulfilling our mission is to create a stable food supply chain that results in a strong regional food system by:

- Optimizing production
- Enhancing infrastructure, processing, & supporting industries
- Expanding markets & sales

To achieve these ends, we provide technical assistance, investment matchmaking, market linkages, and more for farm and food stakeholders. Based in Otsego County, we work primarily in NY's Southern Tier, Mohawk Valley, and the Catskills.

With regard to Farm-to-School (F2S) specific programming, CADE has:

- published research in partnership with Farm Catskills and local public schools in Delaware County--"Right Time, Ripe Place: The State of Farm to School in Delaware County, New York"--on closing the gaps in F2S procurement. The project is now moving into a strategic planning phase with CCE-Delaware, Food and Health Network of South Central NY, among others
- conducted a milk market research analysis in 2015 on local capacity for processing and packaging local milk for local schools (not feasible, due largely to supply chain gaps)
- worked over 30+ years at all levels to build a strong regional food supply chain--incubating new farm operations and facilitating the development of new profit-generating products; facilitating the development of food processing facilities; establishing a regional distribution hub; increasing the market share for regional producers locally and in New York City; etc.

- Board members who are members of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) F2S Coordinating Committee supporting state-level strategic planning; created and ran NYS’s only program offering NYS raised and processed beef to K-12 schools in the districts from Buffalo to Long Island from 2013-2018; are members of New York Grown Food for New York Kids Coalition organized (by) the American Farmland Trust; and serve on the Leadership Team for Farm to Institution NYS; and operates a regional farm to school program serving 26 school districts.

APPENDIX

SURVEY

To view a full copy of the survey questions, please visit <https://bit.ly/3xvxBIh> or scan the QR code at the right:



INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT KEY

Interviewee Number	Distribution Point
Interviewee 1	Producer
Interviewee 2	Other
Interviewee 3	Other
Interviewee 4	Other
Interviewee 5	Other
Interviewee 6	Producer Liaison
Interviewee 7	Processor
Interviewee 8	Other
Interviewee 9	Producer Liaison
Interviewee 10	Other
Interviewee 11	Other
Interviewee 12	Distributor
Interviewee 13	Producer Liaison
Interviewee 14	Other
Interviewee 15	Distributor
Interviewee 16	Other