

# State Farm to School Policy Handbook 2002-2023

Includes state policies introduced between January 2002 and December 2023, as publicly available at the time of the Handbook's publication.

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**NATIONAL  
FARM to SCHOOL  
NETWORK**



**Center for Agriculture  
& Food Systems**  
VERMONT LAW & GRADUATE SCHOOL

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## About the Authors



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National Farm to School Network (NFSN) is an information, advocacy, and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing, school gardens, and food and agriculture education into schools and early care and education settings. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. National Farm to School Network provides vision, leadership, and support at the state and national levels to connect and expand the farm to school movement, which has grown from a handful of schools in the late 1990s to approximately 42,000 schools in all 50 states as of 2014. Our network includes partner organizations in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and US territories, thousands of farm to school supporters, a national Advisory Board, and staff. For more information about the National Farm to School Network, visit [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org).



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The Center for Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) is a research-based institution housed at Vermont Law and Graduate School. With its students, CAFS produces original scholarly research in the field of food and agriculture law and policy to serve the broadest range of food system stakeholders. With local, regional, national, and international partners, CAFS addresses food system challenges related to food and nutrition security and affordability, farmland access, food system workers, farm viability, local economies, and public health, among others. CAFS works closely with its partners to provide legal services and develop resources that respond to their needs. Through CAFS's Food and Agriculture Clinic and Research Assistant program, Vermont Law and Graduate School students work directly on projects alongside partners nationwide, engaging in innovative work that spans the food system. To learn more, visit [www.vermontlaw.edu/cafs](http://www.vermontlaw.edu/cafs).

## Additional Acknowledgments

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# INTRODUCTION



# Introduction

The **State Farm to School Policy Handbook: 2002–2023** (2023 Handbook) is a tool for those working to advance farm to school,<sup>1</sup> which is a movement for improving food systems through the ways kids eat, grow, and learn about food in school and early care and education settings. The 2023 Handbook identifies, summarizes, and analyzes [bills](#) and [resolutions](#)<sup>2</sup> introduced between January 1, 2002, and December 31, 2023, from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories.<sup>3</sup> This new edition of the Handbook enables users to search bills by jurisdiction, multiple topics, and year.

## The Handbook provides:

- Analysis and infographics on state farm to school legislative trends;
- Links to our new public database of proposed bills since 2002, which includes summaries and qualitative categories to describe the bills;
- Links to relevant case studies on farm to school policy development and implementation efforts; and
- Additional resources to support state farm to school policies.

## Project Goals

This project enables those interested in farm to school to:

- Navigate the farm to school policy landscape **in their state or region**;
- Compare farm to school policies and programs across **geographic contexts**;
- Learn about **specific policy topics** for potential replication; and
- Use the comprehensive dataset to **conduct national research**, assess the impact of policies, and inform future farm to school initiatives more broadly.

Importantly, because policies can change over the years, this report reflects a moment in time. The 2023 Handbook is intended for use as a reference guide to provide an accurate snapshot of state farm to school [legislation](#) as of December 31, 2023. The new public database will be maintained and updated periodically by the project team. Our goal is to gather input through a [public form](#), inviting feedback, edits, and suggestions to keep this a relevant and dynamic resource for farm to school.



# How to Use this Handbook



## SEE THE TRENDS

This report highlights key trends in farm to school policy, providing a concise overview of the current farm to school policy landscape. While it emphasizes successful legislation, it also highlights notable bills that did not pass, showcasing innovative ideas and demonstrating ongoing political interest. This report is an ideal starting point for anyone looking to understand the most pressing issues and emerging opportunities in farm to school legislation.



## EXPLORE THE DATABASE

The [interactive policy database](#) is searchable and can be used to easily filter policies by state/territory, year, status, and a variety of topics. You can use this database to find bill numbers, links to bill webpages, and short bill summaries.



## REVIEW CASE STUDIES

Review case studies detailing successful state farm to school efforts. This report includes many links to recent NFSN and CAFS briefs and case studies, showcasing effective policy strategies and implementation.



## LEARN MORE

Find more information about farm to school policy on [NFSN's policy and resource webpages](#). Additional content, such as reports, evaluations, etc., regarding the implementation of particular bills will continue to be added to the interactive state policy database over time.

## What's New in this Edition

### Interactive Policy Database

**We have transitioned our state policy information from a standalone document format to a new interactive database.** You can use this database to find bill numbers, links, and summaries from the current and previous Farm to School Legislative Surveys and Policy Handbooks. This database is searchable and can be used to easily filter policies by state, year, status, and topic.



[Visit the Database](#)

### A Holistic Systems Approach

In this edition, we have broadened our research scope beyond the three core elements of farm to school (school gardens, education, and local procurement). This update includes three new policy areas that, while not necessarily tied to farm to school, have a significant impact on its success:

- Substantively expanding school meals access;
- Supporting the rights of essential workers and elevating the work of child nutrition professionals; and
- Funding kitchen infrastructure and equipment upgrades.

These related school food policy areas (explored more on pages 25-27) have the potential to shape farm to school implementation on the ground. While the database includes bills addressing these areas, the following trends analyses explore these additional topics only when they intersect with the core elements of farm to school, unless otherwise noted.



## New Methods

To build upon prior editions and improve policy analysis, we introduced two key changes to our methodology. While the movement is expanding overall, the two changes listed below have likely increased the number of bills observed from 2021 to 2023 compared to previous years:

- **Inclusion of Budget Bills**

Funding for farm to school programming often occurs within state budgets, yet previous editions only included some [budget bills](#) due to technology limitations. With new policy tracking software, this edition attempts to include enacted budget legislation more comprehensively.

- **Unconsolidated Bills**

Previous editions consolidated several related bills into a single entry, such as those introduced in the same chamber during the same session, even when their statuses differed (e.g., [dead](#) vs. [enacted](#)). This edition treats all distinct bills separately—unless they are [companion bills](#)—providing a more granular view of introduced policies and their respective outcomes to better understand the legislative process.



## New Categories

As outlined in our [methodology](#), we introduced several new categorical classifications for bills from 2021 to 2023 that reflect farm to school as it matures and evolves:

- **Values-based purchasing:** Tracks bills that promote food purchasing aligned with values that account for issues beyond price or where the product was grown;
- **General support (procurement):** Tracks when bills explicitly provide support for local food purchasing at or by schools;
- **Public hearings:** Tracks instances when public hearings occur, which can signify policy traction;
- **Other grants:** Classifies grant programs beyond the traditional state-level farm to school grant scope. Examples include [local food purchasing incentive](#) grants or grants focused solely on school gardens or composting initiatives;
- **Budget or appropriations bills:** Tracks when and how funding for farm to school occurs;
- **Other revenue stream:** Tracks unique funding mechanisms for farm to school policies;
- **Farm to school positions:** Tracks a broader range of positions that support farm to school, beyond a traditional state-level coordinator; and
- **Procurement preference** (now includes goals): Tracks state policies introducing local food purchasing goals, typically encompassing a percentage by a specific date (e.g., 25% local by 2025).

### What's included:

- Bills and resolutions that relate to the three core elements of farm to school;
- Bills and resolutions that expand access to school meals, support child nutrition professionals, and improve school kitchen facilities; and
- Enacted appropriations and budget legislation that fund farm to school initiatives.

### What's not included:

The laws of Native Nations are not included within the scope of this project. As independent self-governing (i.e., sovereign) nations, Tribes have their own constitutions and codes and do not operate under the laws of the federal government as states do. However, Native American communities play a vital role in, and are impacted by, the state governments they interact with. The [2021 Handbook](#) featured a case study on Strategies to Support Native Food and Tribal Sovereignty, which explored key strategies and promising practices.

# What is Farm to School?

Farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following:

## CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM to SCHOOL

### School Gardens

Students learn about food, agriculture, and nutrition through gardening.



### Education

Students participate in educational activities related to food, agriculture, and nutrition.

### Local Procurement

Schools purchase, serve, and promote local foods in their cafeterias.

# Why Farm to School?

A triple win: Farm to school benefits everyone involved—children, farmers, and communities.



## KIDS WIN.

Farm to school is a win for kids when they eat nourishing food in meals and snacks, participate in hands-on activities, and learn about the importance of where our food comes from.



## FARMERS WIN.

Farm to school is a win for farmers when school market opportunities provide reliable and consistent sales and fair pay.



## COMMUNITIES WIN.

Farm to school is a win for communities when food is grown, distributed, prepared, and consumed for the benefit of every community member.

For more information, review the [Benefits of Farm to School](#) fact sheet.



## Why State Farm to School Legislation Matters

State legislation complements federal law and policy by providing solutions tailored to the unique political and geographic needs of each state and territory. Working at the state level is often more personal because community led efforts can have significant influence due to relationships and shared priorities with local and state representatives.

Since 2002, lawmakers continue to recognize the myriad benefits of farm to school. The upward trajectory of state farm to school legislation mirrors the growth of farm to school activities. According to the [2023 USDA Farm to School Census](#) 74,433 schools with 45.6 million students, representing 74.1% of school food authorities across the country, reported participating in farm to school activities in the 2022-23 school year ([Machata et al., 2024](#)). Collectively, these schools spent an estimated \$1.8 billion on local food.

Research from 2011-2012 analyzing USDA Farm to School Census data found that state farm to school laws are linked to higher participation rates and increased local food purchasing ([McCarthy et al., 2017](#)). More recent research using the 2002-2018 edition of the Handbook and 2019 census data also showed that state procurement policies have a positive association with farm to school participation. The same research found a negative association between state-level school garden and agriculture education policies, which may be caused by challenges such as lack of funding or time to devote to these activities ([Kashyap et al., 2024](#)).

A 2024 USDA survey showed that state policies can drive increased local food purchases ([USDA, 2024](#)). Due to supply chain disruptions spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, more than one-fifth of school food authorities reported increased local food purchases and nearly one-third reported increased scratch cooking in the 2023-24 school year. Among those that increased purchases, 46% cited state or local policies, programs, or performance goals as a reason, compared to 28% the previous year. Over half (52%) reported that grants or other funding played a role, up from 23% in the previous year.

Although participation in farm to school continues to rise, there are still significant gaps that vary greatly by region. Given its recognized benefits, every state and territory should consider comprehensive legislation that supports all three core elements of farm to school: local procurement, school gardens, and food and agriculture education. This report is intended to make that process easier to navigate.





# TRENDS IN FARM TO SCHOOL POLICY

## In this section:

- Overall Look at State Policy Efforts: 2002-2023
  - Recent Policy Trends: 2021-2023
  - Related School Food Policies

# Overall Look at State Policy Efforts: 2002-2023

As of December 2023, 45 states, the District of Columbia (DC), and two US territories<sup>4</sup> passed bills and resolutions supporting farm to school activities. Only three states (Idaho, Ohio, and Utah)<sup>5</sup> have been unsuccessful in passing farm to school legislation. A small number of states and US territories (North Dakota, South Dakota, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands) have not introduced bills supporting farm to school activities specifically. However, both South Dakota and North Dakota proposed legislation to expand school meals access in 2023, with North Dakota passing two of these bills ([H.B. 1494](#), [S.B. 2284](#)).

Many states have significantly invested in farm to school by funding grant programs, coordinator positions, or local procurement incentives (see popular farm to school bill categories on page 13). Collectively, these three types of farm to school bills require a high level of political support.

The most common bill type provides **funding** for farm to school; of 809 introduced bills, 301 are categorized as appropriations, 171 provided [limited funding](#) (authorizing annual or otherwise restricted funding for farm to school activities), 23 included funding from [other revenue streams](#) (such as revenue from an official state lottery or special fund), and 47 bills established permanently funded programs (for more information about appropriations bills and the budget process see page 16). Of the three farm to school core elements, local food procurement bills have been the most common, with 110 Local Food Purchasing Incentive (LFPI) bills and 116 bills relating to a procurement preference or goal (see page 21 for more information about local procurement bills).

FIGURE 1

## State and Territory Farm to School Legislation 2002-2023

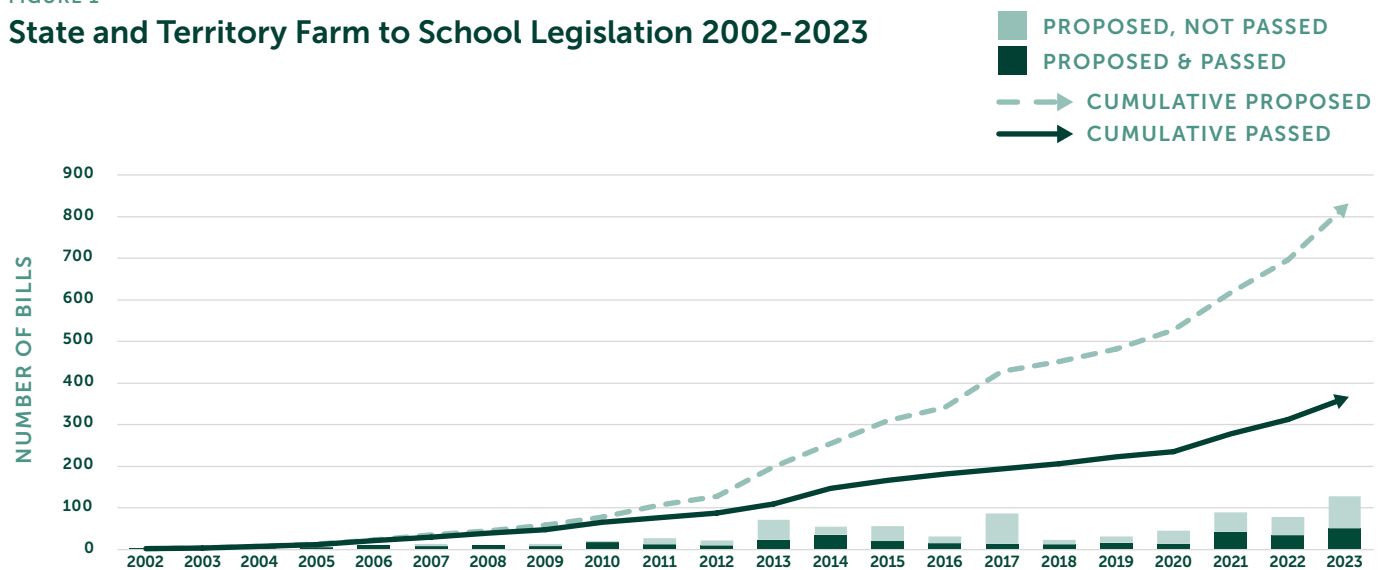


Figure 1 shows an increase in the total number of farm to school bills introduced from 2002 to 2023. The bar charts show the breakdown between the numbers of farm to school bills proposed (but not passed) each year and the number of bills proposed that passed. The line graphs show the cumulative (total) number of bills proposed and passed over time. Of the cumulative proposed farm to school bills (dotted line), about half passed (solid line) from 2002 to 2023.

## A Note about Legislative Cycles

Most legislatures meet annually, though some state legislatures meet once in a two-year period during odd-numbered years. Moreover, even jurisdictions with legislatures that meet annually may see a difference in total bills introduced from year to year depending on how frequently a new legislature convenes. Most states convene a new legislature every two years (a "biennium"). This could, in part, explain why during each odd year (when the new legislature first convenes) there is generally a higher number of farm to school bills introduced than during the even year (in the second year of the biennium).

BETWEEN 2002 AND 2023

**48 STATES, DC & 2 TERRITORIES**  
**INTRODUCED 809**

farm to school bills & resolutions

Of those,  
**363 (45%) passed**  
and **13 were pending**  
as of December  
2023.

MORE THAN A THIRD OF ALL FARM TO SCHOOL BILLS  
WERE INTRODUCED FROM 2021 TO 2023:

IN 2021

**34 STATES**  
**INTRODUCED**  
**90** farm to school  
bills & resolutions

IN 2022

**31 STATES**  
**INTRODUCED**  
**78** farm to school  
bills & resolutions

IN 2023

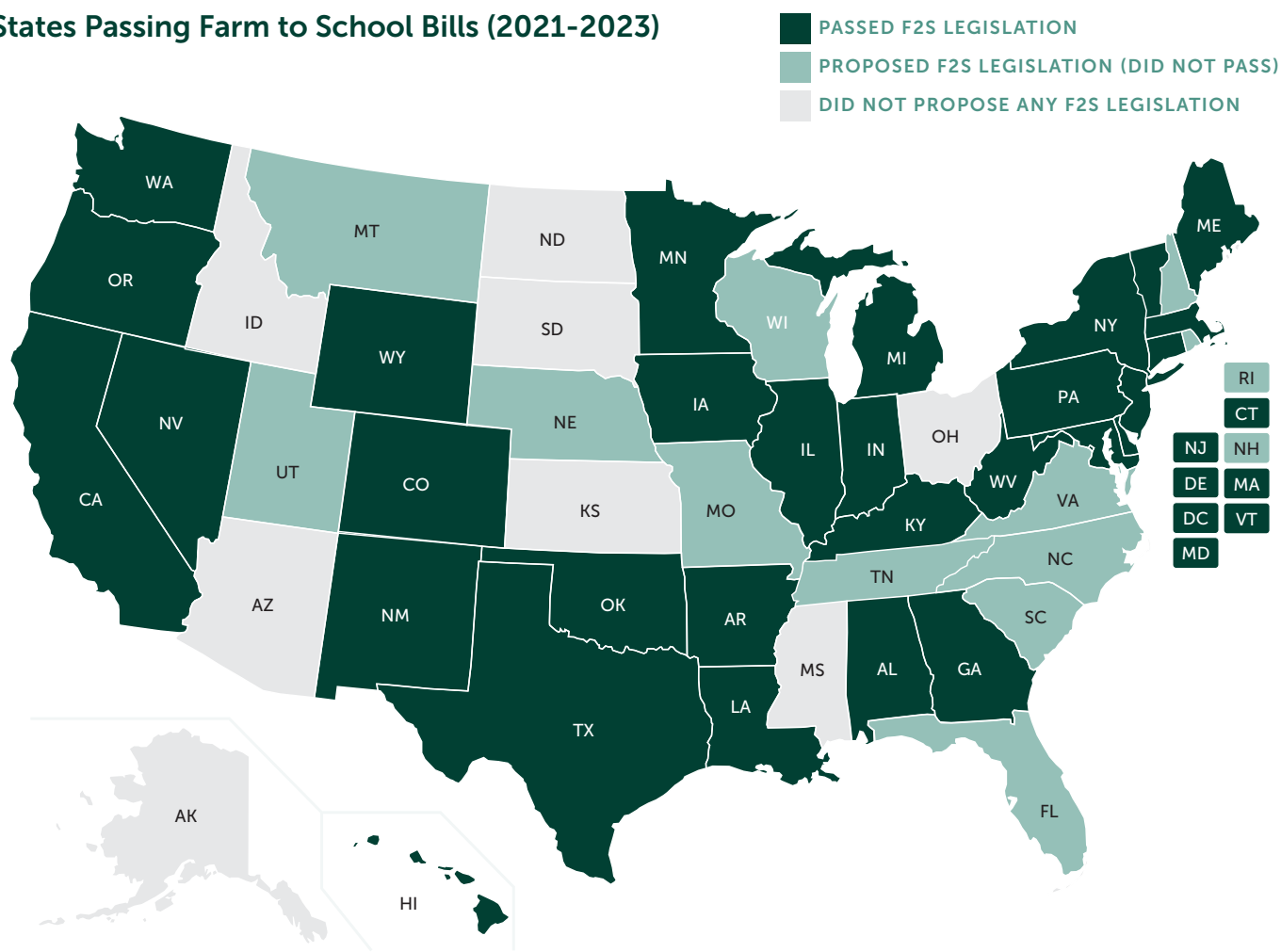
**37 STATES**  
**INTRODUCED**  
**128** farm to school  
bills & resolutions

## Recent Policy Trends: 2021-2023

From 2021 to 2023, 43 states and the District of Columbia proposed 296 bills that relate to at least one of the core elements of farm to school: 206 related to local procurement, 146 related to food, nutrition, and agriculture education, and 65 related to school gardens. Of the 296 bills proposed, 128 passed, 13 are pending, and 155 did not pass.

FIGURE 2

### States Passing Farm to School Bills (2021-2023)



**Figure 2** is a map of the US that shows states that proposed and passed farm to school legislation from 2021-2023. Dark green states proposed and passed at least one farm to school bill, and light green states proposed at least one farm to school bill from 2021-2023 but were unable to pass any bills. No bills were identified from the US territories during this timeframe.



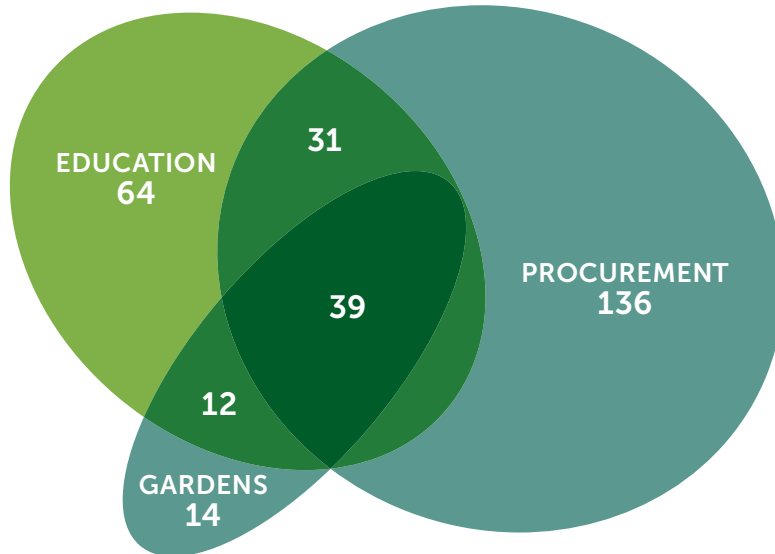
## Popular Farm to School Bill Categories

The most popular farm to school bill category was Local Food Purchasing Incentives (LFPIs), representing nearly a quarter (22%) of introduced bills. (Read more about LFPI programs in the procurement section on page 22.) Many bills also supported grant programs, with 12% relating to farm to school grant programs and 15% relating to other grant programs that touch on core aspects of farm to school but have a narrower scope.<sup>6</sup> Bills relating to state procurement preferences or goals were also popular, totaling 15% of all bills.

Bills that established state-level farm to school programs, funded positions, or task forces or working groups were also common, each representing roughly a tenth of all introduced bills. Farm to early care (or early childhood) and education (farm to ECE) has been an area of growth in the farm to school movement and farm to school state policy (see page 18).

FIGURE 3

### Number of Farm to School Bills by Core Element (2021-2023)



**Figure 3** is a weighted Venn diagram that shows the number of bills from 2021-2023 that relate to the three core elements of farm to school. 82 bills address more than one core element, with 39 bills relating to all three. Interestingly, there are no bills that relate to both procurement and school gardens simultaneously, unless the bill mentions all three elements.





## The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the urgency to create stronger local food systems that can withstand shocks and stressors. The pandemic radically shifted how child nutrition programs operate, with child nutrition professionals working tirelessly to feed kids under emergency conditions with limited resources. In addition to the rise of state-level school meals for all programs, farm to school policy was also changed by the pandemic. On some occasions, anticipated COVID-19 related budget constraints caused rollbacks or pauses for farm to school funding. Federal COVID-19 relief programs prompted farm to school supporters to adjust their legislative priorities. For instance, the USDA State Farm to School Formula Grant funded many coordinator positions nationwide, leading supporters in one state to shift their focus to other requests. While we did not specifically track mentions of COVID-19 in bills, several themes emerge from the dataset:

### 1. Referencing COVID-19 as motivation for creating new programs

Proposed bills in this category include those that would have created a farm to school task force (AL [S.J.R. 5](#)), established a school meals for all program that mandates reporting of local foods (RI [H.B. 6007](#) and [H.B. 5639](#)), established a child care assistance program for essential workers (WV [H.B. 3212](#)), and created and funded a LFPI program (IA [H. F. 239](#)). Similar successful bills include NJ [S. 3945 / A. 5884](#), which established an Office of the Food Security Advocate, HI [H.B. 767 \(Act 175\)](#) and [Act 144](#), which designated local food purchasing goals for schools and other government agencies, and MD [H.B. 831 / S.B. 723](#), which formed a Food System Resiliency Council that requires a representative from a school with experience in food security and local procurement.

### 2. Creating temporary state-level programs during the COVID-19 pandemic

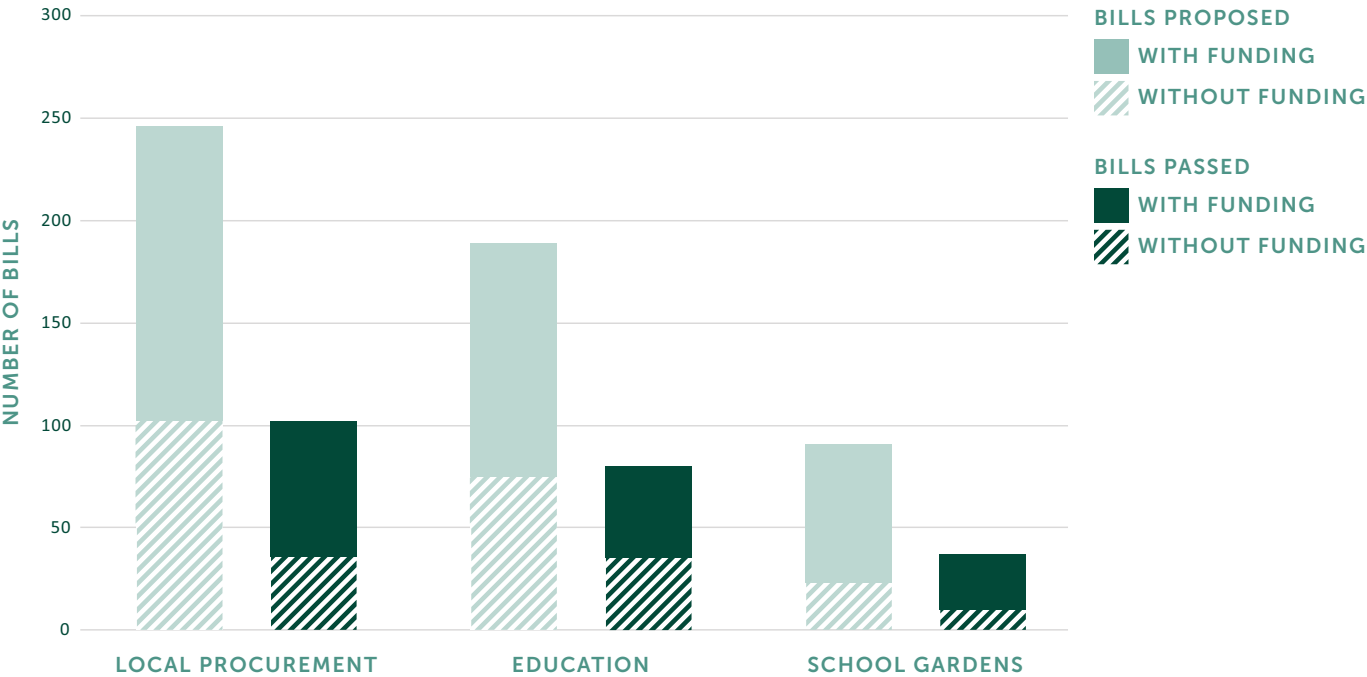
New Jersey introduced bills that would have appropriated \$1 million to purchase produce from in-state farmers most affected by the coronavirus pandemic for donation to schools ([S. 2446 / A. 4149](#) and [S. 583](#)).

### 3. Continuing to fund farm to school efforts sparked by COVID-19 relief funds

[Washington](#) and [Connecticut](#) first funded their state's LFPIs with COVID-19 relief funds, either through the American Rescue Plan or through the USDA Local Foods for Schools Cooperative Agreement (LFS) funding and now have permanent state-funded programs. Massachusetts has proposed a pilot LFPI ([H. 3993](#)) and framed it as a continuation of the LFS program.



FIGURE 4  
**Farm to School Bills and Funding: 2021-2023**



**Figure 4** shows the number of bills from 2021 to 2023 by farm to school element (local procurement, education, and school gardens), how many were proposed or passed, and whether they included funding or not. For all three categories, more than half of all enacted legislation included funding.





## Appropriations Bills and the Budget Process

The 2023 Handbook and its companion database include enacted budget and appropriations legislation introduced between 2021 and 2023 and list preliminary versions of that legislation as related bills. One in every five bills were appropriations bills. Appropriations bills generally fund programs that were established by another bill, but they can also fund initiatives in the absence of standalone legislation, making them an important vehicle for farm to school efforts. For example, Connecticut established two farm to school programs through its annual budget bill, the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program, [codified](#) at Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-215l, through S.B. 1202, and a local foods incentive program, codified at Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-215m, through [S.B. 1](#).

The database also includes a small number of unsuccessful appropriations bills that would have provided funding for a policy initiative not otherwise included in enacted legislation, including several from Hawai'i that reflect repeated efforts by lawmakers to fund capital projects such as the construction of school kitchens and gardens ([S.B. 3342](#), [H.B. 336](#), [H.B. 578](#), and [H.B. 1283](#)).

### What is a Budget Bill?

Most states enact comprehensive budget legislation that includes appropriations (or spending authorization) for government agencies, departments, and programs on an annual or biannual basis. Each state's budget process varies. In many states, the governor proposes an annual or biannual budget to the legislature; the legislature considers various versions of the proposed budget and passes a final budget bill; and the governor signs or vetoes the bill (or portions of the bill). States also routinely enact appropriations legislation that changes portions of an enacted budget law. Generally, appropriations measures do not make changes to a state's laws or codes, although they are included in the state's annually-published public laws.

### What is an Omnibus Bill?

An [omnibus bill](#) is a single bill that includes provisions addressing multiple, often unrelated, topics and may or may not include appropriations. A state's annual or biannual budget bill is one example of an omnibus bill, and the Farm Bill is an example of an omnibus bill at the federal level.

### Between 2021-2023, 17 states introduced 53 appropriations bills that provided funding to support a range of farm to school initiatives, including:

- Local Food Purchasing Incentive programs (AL [S.B. 88](#), CO [S.B. 23-214](#), CT [S.B. 1](#), MI [S.B. 173](#), NY [S. 4003 / A. 3003](#));
- Farm to school grant programs (CA [S.B. 101 / A.B. 101](#), CT [S.B. 1202](#), MI [H.B. 4437](#));
- Farm to school coordinators (MN [S.F. 1955 / H.F. 2278](#), NY [S. 4003 / A. 3003](#)); and
- Agricultural education programs (IL [S.B. 250](#), MN [H.F. 8 / S.F. 25](#), MN [S.F. 1955 / H.F. 2278](#)).

### Funding levels over the years can shed light on a state's support for farm to school efforts. For example:

- Alabama increased funding for its Local Food Purchasing Incentive (LFPI) program from \$225,000 in 2021 to \$300,000 in 2022 to \$400,000 in 2023 ([H.B. 309](#), [S.B. 106](#), [S.B. 88](#));
- Colorado provided level funding for its LFPI (\$675,255) in 2021, 2022, and 2023 ([S.B. 21-205](#), [H.B. 22-1329](#), [S.B. 23-214](#));
- Illinois increased funding to the state's board of education for agricultural education programs from \$5 million in 2021 to \$7.05 million in 2022 and 2023 ([S.B. 2800](#), [H.B. 900](#), [S.B. 250](#)); and
- New York provided level funding for its farm to school grant program (\$750,000) and an LFPI called the 30% NYS Initiative (\$10 million) in 2021, 2022, and 2023 ([S. 2503 / A. 3003](#), [S. 8003 / A. 9003](#), [S. 4003 / A. 3003](#)).

## Non-Monetary Bills

The term **non-monetary bill** refers to any bill or resolution that does not require financial contributions by a state government. These types of bills often aim to support policy goals without direct funding. Some common examples include bills or resolutions that:

- **Express support for an idea or program**, helping to raise awareness and build public momentum. [H.M. 1 / S.M. 7](#) declares January 26, 2023, “New Mexico Food and Farms” Day.
- **Encourage certain activities**, such as incorporating local food in school meals or fostering collaboration. [S.R. 27 / S.C.R. 38](#) urges the Hawai‘i State Department of Education to work with local food hubs.
- **Recognize success** by celebrating schools or organizations that excel in farm to school efforts. [H.C.R. 47](#) commends schools in Madison County, Kentucky, for their work in farm to school procurement.
- **Establish state goals** signifying key priorities for agencies or institutions to pursue. [H. 106 \(Act 67\)](#) establishes Vermont’s local food purchasing goal of 20% by 2023.
- **Make technical changes** that streamline or update existing policies without altering budgets. [H.B. 23-1087](#) allows schools in Colorado to engage in forward contracts for local food using grant dollars.
- **Provide permission structures**, allowing schools or districts to explore new programs or practices. [H.B. 1320](#) allows schools in Indiana to purchase up to \$10,000 annually from youth agriculture programs.
- **Mandate activities**, such as procurement preferences for institutions.<sup>7</sup> California’s [A.B. 778](#) and [S.B. 490](#) mandate the prioritization of domestically grown foods.
- **Create task forces or working groups** to explore policy options or implement new initiatives.<sup>7</sup> [H.B. 831 / S.B. 723](#) establishes the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council.

### Bills vs. Resolutions

The vast majority of farm to school legislation were bills (256, 86%), and the remainder were resolutions (40, 14%). As most resolutions are non-monetary, they had a much higher passage rate than bills (70% versus 39%).

Non-monetary bills are often easier to pass, especially in conservative political environments or during tight budget years. These bills raise awareness and can build public momentum, helping to broaden engagement by bringing multiple collaborators into the conversation (see section on page 30 on seeding farm to school). They also provide opportunities to develop partnerships with legislators and can easily remove cumbersome administrative hurdles. By allowing for seemingly incremental policy change, non-monetary bills can have significant impact over time and lay the groundwork for future funding and policy developments.

However, non-monetary bills also carry risks. They may appease supporters without securing the funding needed to implement or sustain programs. Legislatures might pass these bills without intending to provide future financial support, leaving programs underfunded or ineffective. Farm to school leaders should weigh whether gaining legislative approval for an unfunded program is worthwhile or if waiting to pursue funding and policy goals together would be more effective. This consideration varies by bill type—procurement laws enabling local food preferences often succeed without funding, while new programs may struggle without financial backing.

### CASE STUDY

## Arizona’s H.B. 2518: A Non-Monetary School Garden Food Safety Bill

School gardens provide a valuable opportunity to incorporate fresh produce into school meals and allow students to eat what they grow. This approach has shown success across the country and is permitted by the USDA, yet some areas restrict the use of garden produce due to food safety concerns. This is where state-level policies can step in to provide structures of permission. In 2016, Arizona’s [H.B. 2518](#) established a statewide food safety certification program for school gardens.

[Click here to view the case study.](#)

## Farm to ECE

Farm to early care and education (“farm to ECE,” also sometimes referred to as “[farm to preschool](#)”) includes the three core elements of local food sourcing, school gardens, and food and agriculture education in all types of ECE settings (e.g., preschools, child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start/Early Head Start, programs in K-12 school districts). The [2021 National Farm to Early Care and Education \(ECE\) Survey](#) found that of the 2,914 survey respondents, 82% participated in farm to ECE and 14% planned to start in the future ([Riemer Bopp et al., 2022](#)). Given that the early years of life are critical for developing healthy eating habits, farm to ECE policies can have significant impacts on health and wellness for students and families.

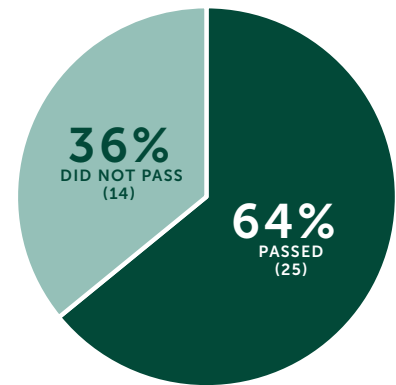
Farm to ECE state policy has seen tremendous growth over the past few years. In 2021-2023, **18 states** proposed **39 bills** and resolutions that support or relate to farm to ECE (13% of all bills). Farm to ECE legislation is gaining support and momentum, with 25 ECE bills passing from 2021-2023, with a higher passage rate for ECE bills than non-ECE bills (see Figure 5). For comparison, from 2002 to 2020 we observed only 20 ECE-related bills (3% of all bills), and only nine of them passed.

Recent farm to ECE bills that passed include a few key strategies, most of which expand farm to school programs and policies to include ECEs:

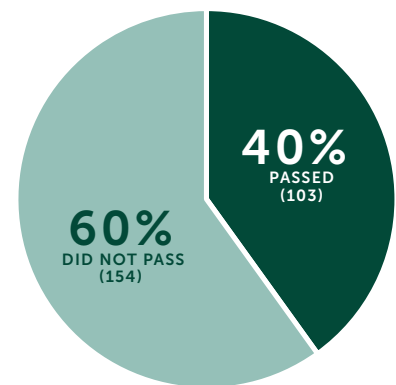
- **Inclusion in statewide programs:** [A.B. 178 / A.B. 179 / S.B. 154](#), California’s Budget Act of 2022, appropriates \$60 million for the Farm to School Incubator Grant Program, which included a specific track for early care and education centers. [L.B. 758](#) amends the Nebraska Farm-to-School Program Act to include early childhood education programs.
- **Inclusion in Local Food Purchasing Incentives:** [H.F. 8 / S.F. 25](#) appropriates up to \$1.6 million over two years to be used to increase farm to school as well as farm to early care and education markets for Minnesota farmers, including by reimbursing schools for purchases from local farmers. Michigan’s general budgeting bills from 2021-2023 included funding for grants that reimburse school districts and other non-school sponsors, including child care centers, up to 10 cents a meal for procuring Michigan-grown products ([H.B. 4411](#), [S.B. 845](#), and [S.B. 173](#)).

FIGURE 5

### Farm to ECE Bills: 2021-2023



### Non-Farm to ECE Bills: 2021-2023



**Figure 5** includes two pie charts that show the difference between the bill passage rate for farm to ECE bills (64%) versus bills not related to farm to ECE (40%).





## School Gardens

Between 2021-2023, 21 states introduced 65 bills relating to school gardens or garden-based education, a core element of farm to school policy. Of the 65 school garden bills and resolutions introduced, 30 passed. Slightly less than half of the 41 bills introduced that included a funding mechanism, either for construction of school gardens or for ongoing educational school garden activities, passed. Six states (Connecticut, Indiana, Maine, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Virginia) introduced school garden legislation for the first time since 2002. Hawai'i was by far the most prolific state, introducing 16 school garden bills, although it only passed two bills.

As in prior years, most of the introduced legislation related not only to the school gardens element of farm to school policy, but also to local procurement and/or education. Of the 14 bills pertaining solely to school gardens, seven passed. Almost a third of the school garden bills introduced (19) also included provisions to expand access to school meals, upgrade school kitchens, or increase support for child nutrition professionals.

While states introduced 15 resolutions that expressed general support for school gardens in 2002-2020, in 2021-2023, they only introduced legislation that actually codified or provided funding for school gardens and related programming. Similarly, while states passed a number of bills related to using school garden produce in school meals in prior years, such as AZ [H.B. 2518](#) (2016), CA [A.B. 1990](#) (2014), and IL [H.B. 2993](#) (2017), they did not do so in 2021-2023.

The strongest support for school gardens came through broader appropriations bills, such as CT [H.B. 5506](#), NY [S.2503 / A. 3003](#), and WA [H.B. 1080 / S.B. 5083](#). Half of the 30 school garden bills that passed were general budget bills that included funding for school gardens.



### School garden bills introduced in 2021-2023 included similar goals seen in previous years, such as:

- **Establishing or funding grant programs that support school gardens**, such as AZ [H.B. 2349](#), NV [S.B. 244](#), NY [S. 2070](#), and WA [H.B. 1080 / S.B. 5083](#).
- **Creating or funding positions to administer programs that include educational school garden activities**, such as HI [S.B. 2957](#), HI [S.B. 2182 / H.B. 2013](#), MN [H.F. 2043 / S.F. 2158](#), and NE [L.B. 396](#).
- **Positioning school gardens as a means of improving students' health and wellness**, such as AR [H.B. 1848](#), CT [S.B. 1202](#), MA [H. 2277](#), and WA [H.B. 1080 / S.B. 5083](#).
- **Connecting schools with community gardens**, such as AZ [S.B. 1546](#), NV [S.B. 297](#), and NM [H.B. 285](#).

### Other emerging themes include:

- **Funding organizations to conduct garden education:** DC [B. 24-0724](#), also known as Act A24-0375, approves and authorizes payment for an emergency modification to a contract with FreshFarm Markets, Inc. to integrate gardening, cooking, and nutrition education into certain elementary school curricula. The bill was preceded by [P.R. 24-0652](#), which called for the \$525,000 contract modification.
- **Establishing a state-level garden coordinator position:** [S.B. 2182 / H.B. 2013](#), also known as Act 258, creates a permanent position in the Hawai'i State Department of Education's Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design to provide technical support and other resources for schools to develop garden programs.
- **Funding for garden construction:** [H.B. 285](#), an omnibus capital projects bill, appropriates between \$25,000 and \$113,750 to 12 schools in the Albuquerque Public School District to create outdoor classrooms and community gardens.
- **Encouraging public land redevelopment for school gardens:** [S.B. 297](#) amends several Nevada state laws to prioritize the use of publicly-owned land for community gardens and urban farms that work with school garden programs.
- **Establishing a community gardens task force:** [A. 735 / S. 3152](#) seeks to expand the use of community gardens in New York, particularly in communities with less access to fresh fruits and vegetables, including by developing after school programs that establish, maintain, and expand community gardens.

## Education

Education is a critical component of farm to school. Farm to school education includes food, nutrition, and agriculture education curriculum, taste tests, farm field trips, cooking demonstrations, and experiential garden opportunities. It teaches students where food comes from and how it fuels their bodies, improves eating habits, and enhances learning.

Between 2021-2023, 38 states introduced 146 bills and resolutions creating, supporting, or otherwise relating to food, nutrition, and agriculture education. Half of all bills from 2021-2023 relate to education in some way, and 82 bills have some overlap between education and another core element of farm to school (see Figure 2). For example, some bills establish and fund a school garden coordinator position that supports experiential education (HI [S.B. 2182 / H.B. 2013](#)), and other proposed legislation includes support for local procurement and education (NJ [A. 2987](#), HI [S.B. 1311](#), WY [H.B. 1](#)).

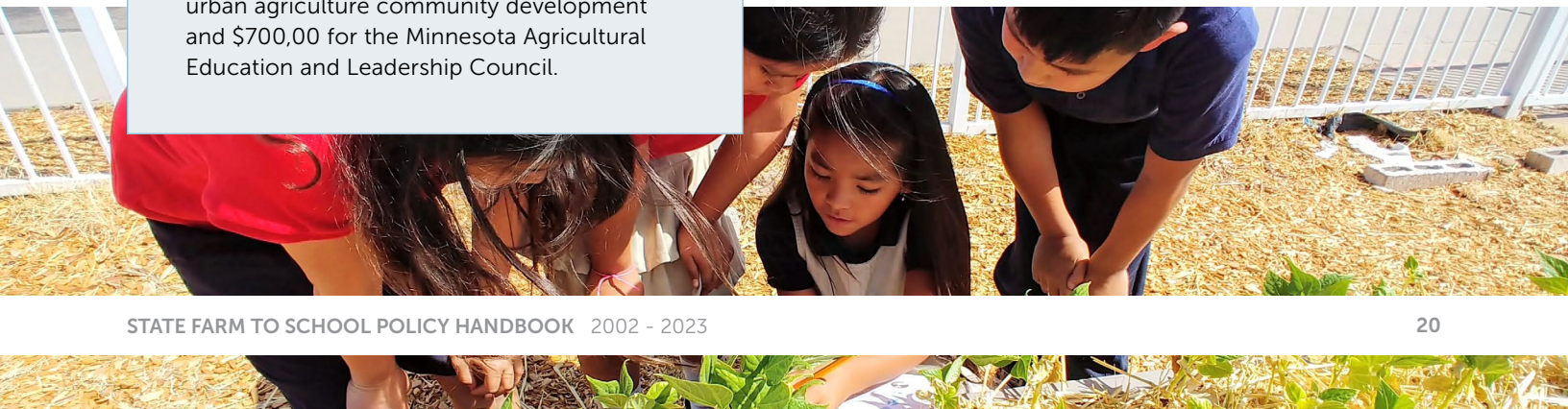
Education policy varies from state to state and has expanded over the years to include state funding for farm to school programs, promotional initiatives, funding specifically for education programs (including Ag in the Classroom, FFA, and 4-H), or support for educators. Hawai'i was the most prolific in this category by far, introducing 26 bills from 2021-2023 (three passed) relating to farm to school education.

### Funding for Urban Agriculture Education

[H.F. 8 / S.F. 25](#) provides \$1.2 million over two years to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for urban youth agricultural education or urban agriculture community development, and [S.F. 1955 / H.F. 2278](#) appropriates \$2.3 million to promote farm to school and early childhood education efforts, including by reimbursing schools and early childhood centers for purchasing agricultural products and equipment and employing a statewide farm to institution coordinator. The legislation also appropriates \$4 million for urban youth agricultural education and urban agriculture community development and \$700,00 for the Minnesota Agricultural Education and Leadership Council.

### Emerging themes in farm to school education legislation include:

- **Funding for educational grant programs:**
  - [H.F. 389](#) would have created an agriculture education grant program in Iowa to cover additional personal services costs for teachers, and included funding up to 100% for newer programs and 50% for established ones.
  - Three Illinois budget bills increased funding to the state's board of education for agricultural education programs from \$5 million in 2021 to \$7.05 million in 2022 and 2023 ([S.B. 2800](#) (2021), [H.B. 900](#) (2022), and [S.B. 250](#) (2023)).
  - [H.P. 1081 / L.D. 1682](#) would have established the Maine Experiential Education Grant Program.
- **Promotional programs and raising awareness for education:** [A. 4132 / S. 3426](#) promotes the New Jersey Agricultural Literacy Program and New Jersey Agricultural Literacy Week; [H.R. 95 / S.R. 73](#) designates California Agriculture Day; and [H.R. 43 / S.R. 21](#) designates FFA Day at the Louisiana State Capitol.
- **Workforce development:** [H.B. 3045](#) would have authorized West Virginia teachers to obtain an agricultural education certification or endorsement through a temporary emergency certification process, and [A. 4129 / S. 3951](#) would have established a student loan redemption program for teachers of agriculture in New Jersey.
- **State administrative support:** [S.B. 2182 / H.B. 2013](#) (Act 258) funds a permanent full-time school garden coordinator in the Hawai'i State Department of Education, and [S.B. 663](#) would have funded a full-time agriculture education coordinator position.
- **State curriculum:** [S.B. 991](#) authorizes the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education to establish the eligible grade levels for agricultural education programs; [A. 5260](#) and [A. 2987](#) would have required New Jersey schools to offer culinary arts courses to provide students with in-person instruction on the preparation of at least one meal made entirely with Jersey Fresh products each school year.

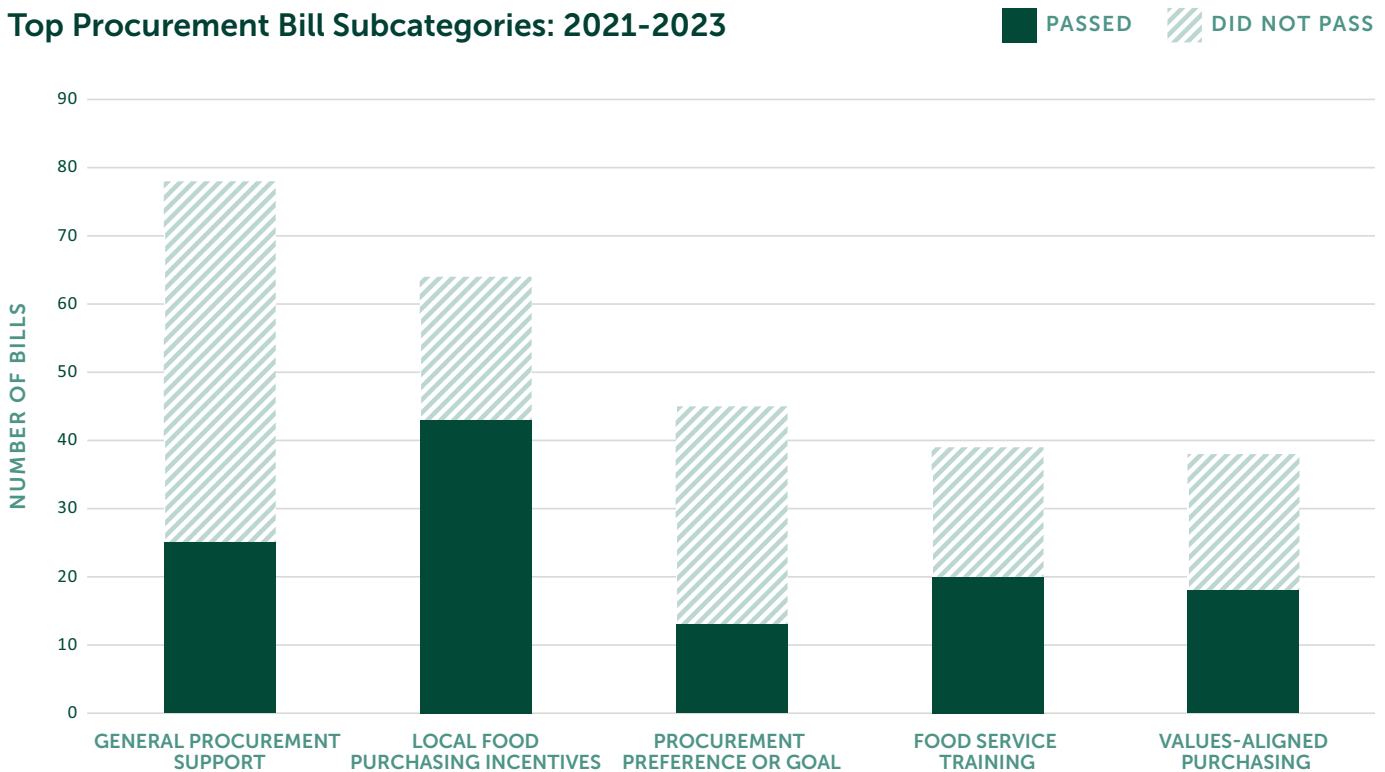


## Procurement

Procurement bills support local food purchasing by schools and represent the most common type of farm to school state legislation, representing 70% of all bills identified from 2021-2023 and 80% of bills identified from 2002-2020. These bills also have a high passage rate (43%); nearly a third (30%) relate to a grant program, and 44% reference economic development as a motivation for the procurement bill. Due to this popularity, the research team has developed several subcategories that describe how state bills are encouraging local food procurement. These subcategories are illustrated in figure 7 and explored in greater detail below.

FIGURE 7

### Top Procurement Bill Subcategories: 2021-2023



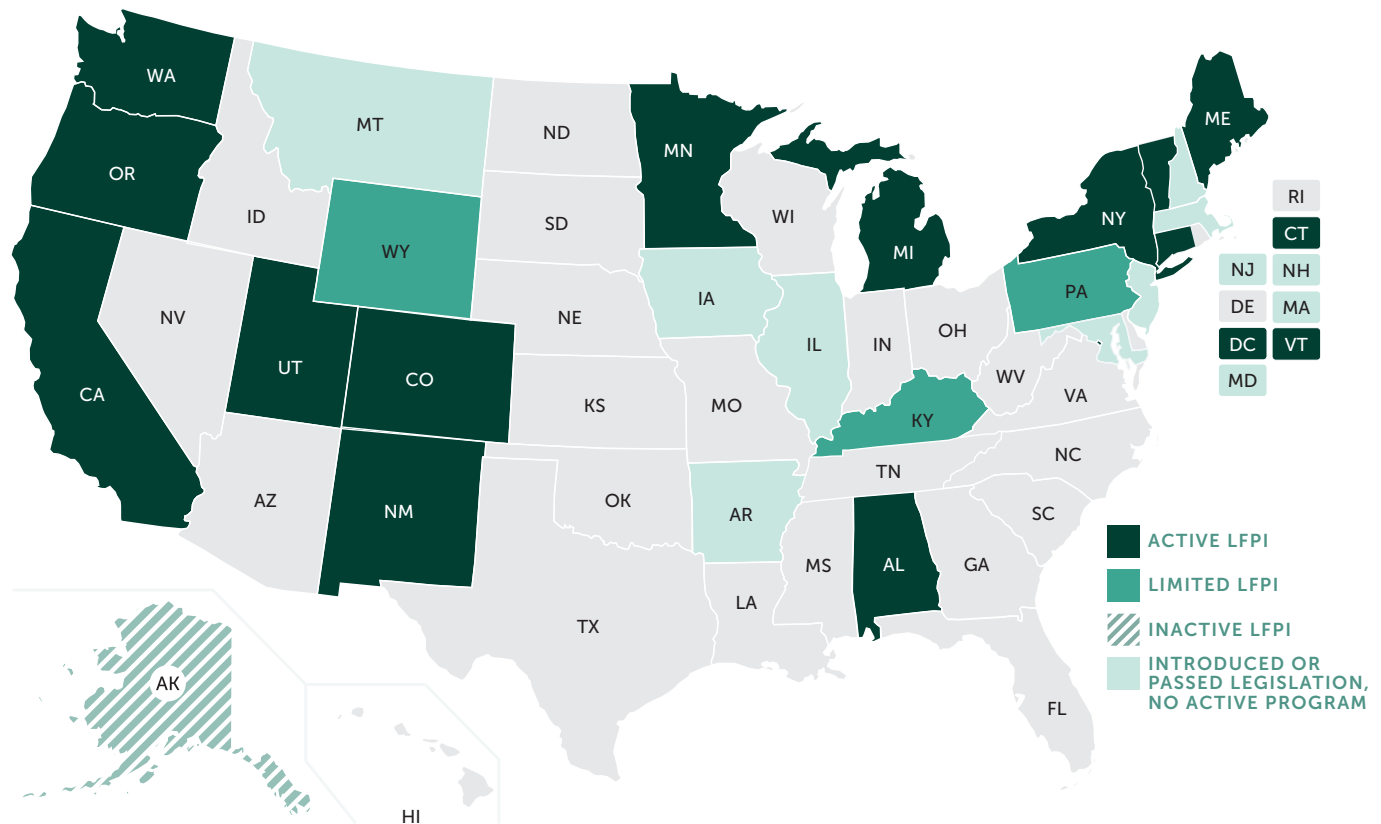
**Figure 7** is a stacked bar chart that shows the number of procurement bills from 2021-2023 by the five most popular subcategories (General Procurement Support, Local Food Purchasing Incentives, Procurement Preference or Goal, Food Service Training, and Values-Aligned Purchasing) and by bill status.

## General Support

General support bills express clear backing for local food purchasing, but lack the additional policy tools needed to drive more significant change. This category was introduced in the 2021-2023 edition to account for the substantial number of bills that fit this description. Among the 206 procurement bills, over a third (38%) were categorized as general support, making it the most common procurement subcategory, with a passage rate of 32%. Roughly one-fifth (19%) of general support bills were resolutions supporting local procurement (NM [H.M. 46](#), HI [H.R. 81](#), KY [H.C.R. 47](#)), and a quarter of general support bills assign task forces to study or increase local procurement (26%) (DE [S.C.R. 90](#), LA [H.C.S.R. 2](#), SC [H. 3312](#)). Lastly, over three-quarters of bills cited at least one state policy goal as a motivation behind the state's support for local procurement, with over half referencing economic development.

FIGURE 8

## Local Food Purchasing Incentive Policy Status: 2002-2023



**Figure 8** is a map of the US showing states with LFPI programs and implementation status (active, limited, inactive, and no active program but introduced or passed legislation). The map does not include US territories, as none have introduced or established LFPIs.

*Note: “Active LFPI” reflects the implementation of LFPIs, rather than passed legislation, as not all states that passed legislation have implemented programs and vice versa (example: [UT Education Board Rule R277-727](#)).*

*“Limited LFPI” reflects any state program that is limited in the products it reimburses (WY), eligible grade levels (PA), or has a lifetime award cap (KY).*

## Local Food Purchasing Incentives

Local Food Purchasing Incentives (LFPIs) are programs that provide additional funding to child nutrition program (CNP) operators to directly offset or incentivize local food purchases. Typically funded and operated at the state level, these programs work to increase the purchase of local foods in school and ECE settings. The first state-level LFPI was established in Maine in 2001. As of December 2023, at least 19 states and Washington, DC, have established LFPIs, reaching all US regions.

LFPIs have been gaining popularity in scale and scope over the last decade (see figure 8). From 2021-2023, 22 states introduced 64 LFPI bills, representing one-fifth of all farm to school bills, demonstrating the popularity of this policy tool. LFPI bills in this time period had a high passage rate (67%), but this is due to the large proportion of appropriations bills that allocated funding for these programs (47% of LFPI bills were appropriations bills).

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Understanding LFPIs

NFSN’s website includes an updated map of state programs and a comprehensive hub of resources, including state-level evaluations and a suite of resources developed by NFSN and the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems in 2024.

[Click here to explore the LFPI webpage.](#)



## Procurement Preferences and Goals

Unlike Local Food Purchasing Incentives, procurement preferences and goals do not inherently require state funding and are often non-monetary. Instead, these bills provide a directive or authorization for child nutrition programs to prioritize local over non-local producers when purchasing ingredients, rather than evaluating primarily on price (CA [S.B. 1308](#), HI [H.B. 250](#), CA [S.B. 490](#)). Procurement preferences have remained popular, representing over 12% of farm to school bills tracked from 2002-2020. From 2021-2023, 15% of all bills (45) were related to preferences or goals, with a low passage rate (29%).

This Handbook edition also added “goals” to the previous “procurement preferences” category to identify the trend of local food purchasing goals in state legislation. Procurement goals typically include a target for the percentage of food sourced locally (or regionally) by a specific date (e.g., 25% local by 2025). Four states have introduced bills establishing local food purchasing goals for schools (HI [H.B. 767](#) (Act 175), WV [H.B. 2633](#) / [S.B. 357](#), VT [H. 106](#) (Act 67), IL [H.B. 3853](#)), and additional states have introduced bills that establish similar goals for other institutions.<sup>8</sup> While state purchasing goals are helpful benchmarks, meeting those goals requires significant infrastructure to support child nutrition professionals in implementing and tracking local purchasing.

### CASE STUDY

## Culture and Values in Hawai‘i Policy

For many years, a coalition of community organizations and public agencies in Hawai‘i worked on legislation to allow for culturally responsive, values-based institutional purchasing. This resource provides an overview of the state’s farm to school policy, including recent statewide local purchasing goals, and shares how this legislation and advocacy strategies have been guided by traditional Hawaiian culture and values.

[Click here to view the case study.](#)

### BRIEF

## Procuring Locally Grown Cultural Food in Maui County, Hawai‘i

This CAFS issue brief explores legislative policy opportunities at the state and local government level to increase the procurement of locally grown foods that hold cultural significance for groups of individuals who share a common cultural bond.

[Click here to read the brief.](#)



## Food Service Training

Child nutrition professionals are the backbone of farm to school. Ensuring staff receive the proper training to source, menu, process, and serve local food is paramount for any farm to school program, which is likely why food service training is a popular policy category. From 2021 to 2023, 39 bills supported food service training, with a relatively high passage rate (51%). Most bills in this category were associated with grant programs, either as part of farm to school grant programs (41%) (CT [S.B. 1202](#), OR [H.B. 5014](#), PA [S.B. 1236](#)) or other grant programs (26%) (CA [S.B. 114 / A.B. 114](#), CO [H.B. 22-1414 / S.B. 22-087](#), CT [H.B. 6842](#)), and over half also included funding for kitchen equipment and infrastructure.

## Values-Aligned Purchasing

While local food purchasing is a form of [values-aligned purchasing](#) in its own right, there is growing interest to make purchasing decisions based on factors that encompass more than price or even where the product was grown. Values-aligned purchasing accounts for the attributes related to the foods that are purchased. This edition incorporates a new “values-aligned purchasing” category, which applies to 38 bills from 12 states, with a 47% passage rate. Of these bills, half were related to incorporating values within Local Food Purchasing Incentives, and almost one-fifth were related to purchasing preferences or goals. For example, Illinois ([H.B. 4813](#)) and New York ([S. 6955 / A. 7264](#)) introduced legislation to allow schools to legally give preference—up to a certain percentage—to values-aligned producers during the purchasing process.

### BRIEF

## What is Values-Aligned Purchasing?

Values-aligned purchasing, also referred to as values-based purchasing, looks into the attributes related to the foods that are purchased and the people producing them. NSFN’s brief provides an overview of values-aligned purchasing and a framework for categorizing values.

[Click here to read the brief.](#)

## Other Procurement Bills

Four additional subcategories related to procurement from 2021–2023 include:

- **Farmer training** (24 bills) (NE [L.B. 396](#), MN [H.F. 2043 / S.F. 2158](#), AZ [H.B. 2354](#));
- **Food aggregation, processing, and distribution** (20 bills) (CO [H.B. 22-1414 / S.B. 22-087](#), NY [S. 829 / A. 615](#), HI [S.R. 27 / S.C.R. 38](#), CA [A.B. 1009](#));
- **State directories of local farms and food businesses** (7 bills) (NJ [A. 1940 / S. 3502](#), NY [S. 829 / A. 615](#), UT [H.B. 256](#), MO [H.B. 173](#)); and
- **Increasing the small purchase threshold** (2 bills) (HI [H.B. 1044 / S.B. 1342](#), NY [A. 3008C / S. 4008](#)).

In the aggregate, these four subcategories yielded 35 bills. Over 42% of the bills introduced are part of grant programs that fund activities such as farmer training.



## Related School Food Policies

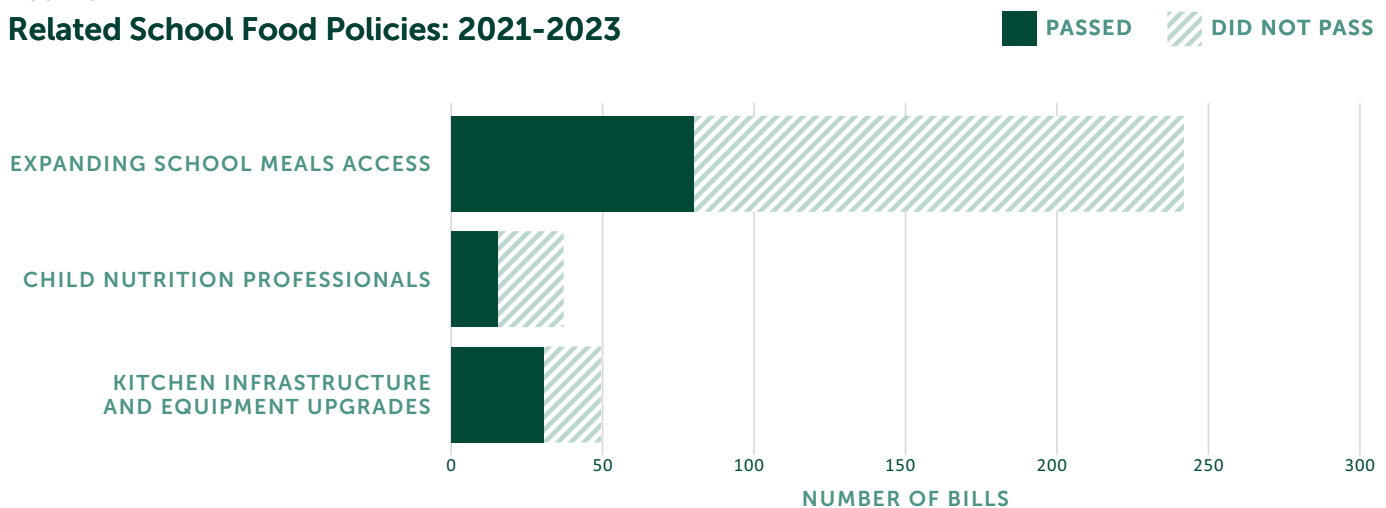
In this edition, we have broadened our research scope beyond the three core elements of farm to school. This update includes three policy areas that, while not explicitly about farm to school, have a significant impact on its success:

- Expanding school meals access;
- Supporting child nutrition professionals;<sup>9</sup> and
- Funding kitchen infrastructure and equipment upgrades.<sup>9</sup>

These policy areas have the potential to shape farm to school implementation on the ground. Overall, we observed 302 bills from 45 states that include at least one of the three additional supportive policies. Figure 9 demonstrates the number of bills we observed and their passage rates.

FIGURE 9

### Related School Food Policies: 2021-2023



**Figure 9** is a stacked bar chart that shows the number of related school food bills from 2021-2023 by three key categories (Expanding School Meals Access, Child Nutrition Professionals, and Kitchen Infrastructure and Equipment Upgrades) and by bill status.

### Expanding School Meals Access

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical need for universal school meals, transforming child nutrition programs by enabling free meals for all students through emergency federal waivers. This flexibility allowed schools to focus on feeding students without the administrative burden of income-based eligibility checks or charging for each meal. However, the return to the pre-pandemic tiered payment system, which limits free or reduced-price meals to income-eligible students, restricts access for many students in need. The pandemic also emphasized the importance of a resilient local food supply. With the waivers' expiration in June 2022, the responsibility to broaden access to healthy school meals has shifted to individual states.

#### CASE STUDY SERIES

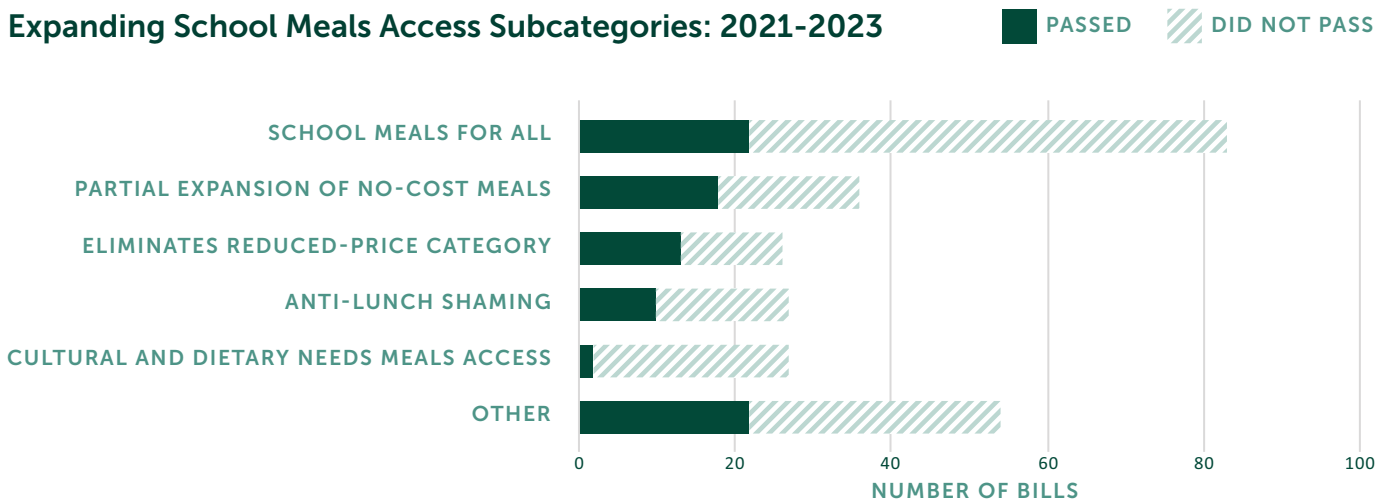
### Healthy School Meals Access in Maine, Vermont, California and Colorado

This four-part case study series explores the policy designs, promotion strategies, and early implementation of four states that passed permanent HSMA legislation.

[Click here to view the case studies.](#)

FIGURE 10

## Expanding School Meals Access Subcategories: 2021-2023



**Figure 10** is a stacked bar chart that shows the number of expanding school meals access bills from 2021-2023 broken down by the top six subcategories (School Meals for All, Partial Expansion of No-Cost Meals, Eliminates Reduced-Price Category, Anti-Lunch Shaming, Cultural and Dietary Needs Meals Access, and Other) and by bill status. All bills have a 50% or less passage rate.

California and Maine were the first to establish permanent School Meals for All (also known as universal meals or universal free meals) legislation starting school year 2022-23, and this type of legislation has been booming ever since. Since 2021, 32 states have introduced 86 School Meals for All bills, and eight states (CA, CO, ME, MA, MI, MN, NM, VT) have implemented permanent programs. Bills such as NM [S.B. 4](#), CO [H.B. 22-1414 / S.B. 22-087](#), RI [H.B. 6007](#), and IL [H.B. 2471](#) incorporate both a local food procurement policy and a School Meals for All policy, further demonstrating the strong relationship between the two.

Other methods to expand school meals access are also gaining in popularity. While these policies do not create universal access to school meals, they are often less costly, can be more politically feasible, and ultimately increase access to school meals. We observed roughly 165 bills in 38 states (37% passage rate) that fall under this category. Common subcategories we tracked include: eliminating the reduced-price meal category, either for breakfast, lunch, or both (26 bills, 50% passage rate), a partial expansion of school no-cost meals, which includes establishing Healthy School Meals for All for limited grade levels or specific schools based on demographics, lowering the minimum income for students to receive free meals, and creating a subsidy or incentive for schools to participate in the Federal Community Eligibility Provision. We also tracked bills that address lunch shaming (27), the amount of time students have to eat (7), and access to meals that accommodate different diets including Halal, Kosher, and plant-based (27).

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Who's at the Table? School Meals Campaign



School meals must be viewed as part of a broader system that not only feeds children but also ensures that everyone along the farm-to-table journey benefits. NFSN's Who's at the Table? School Meals Campaign explores how policies that expand school meals access can go hand-in-hand with farm to school policies to create a resilient food system.

[Click here to access the campaign webpage.](#)



## Child Nutrition Professionals

Without essential child nutrition professionals, there would be no farm to school. The well-being and agency of all people that get food from the farm to the table are integral to the farm to school movement. We observed 37 bills across 17 states from 2021-2023 that elevate child nutrition professionals or protect essential workers' rights. In general, less than a third (32%) included farm to school components. Examples of these bills include:

- Establishing minimum salaries (PA [S.B. 1211](#), MS [H.B. 1289](#)) and increasing wages (CO [H.B. 22-1414 / S.B. 22-087](#));
- Improving conditions, such as regulating work environment temperatures (NY [S. 1825 / A. 8214](#));
- Expanding benefits, such as medical leave (CT [H.B. 6790](#)), unemployment benefits for hourly employees during the summer ([H.F. 2497 / S.F. 2684](#)), and child care for essential workers during the pandemic (WV [H.B. 3212](#));
- Creating school food pathway programs to elevate the school food profession (CA [A.B. 117 / S.B. 117](#)); and
- Allowing retired school cafeteria workers to return to employment without losing retirement benefits, which can help address employment shortages (AR [H.B. 1256](#), CO [H.B. 22-1101](#)).

Bills that support both child nutrition professionals and other essential workers in a farm to school context include multiple iterations of California's Farmworker Protection Bonds Act ([A.B. 408](#) and [A.B. 125](#)), New York's Good Food NY bills that would have allowed school districts to give preference to businesses that practice fair labor standards ([S. 6955 / A. 7264](#)), and Minnesota's Headwaters Community Food and Water Economic Resiliency Program that would have provided affordable and accessible health care for every member of the food web economy ([H.F. 2929 / S.F. 3029](#)).

## Kitchen Infrastructure and Equipment Upgrades

Serving high quality, nutrient-dense local foods is impossible without the appropriate infrastructure. We observed 49 policies across 14 states from 2021-2023 that funded kitchen infrastructure and equipment upgrades. Most of these bills (69%) were directly related to farm to school as a policy measure to boost local procurement. Nearly two-thirds were appropriations bills (63%), such as HI [H.B. 1600](#) (Act 248) and HI [H.B. 300](#) (Act 164), and half (55%) were general farm to school grants (CT [S.B. 1202](#), MA [H. 686 / S. 349](#), NY [S. 4003 / A. 3003](#)) or Local Food Purchasing Incentive grants that fund kitchen upgrades. Other recent grant efforts to support kitchen infrastructure include California's investment of \$750 million for the Kitchen, Infrastructure, and Training Funds, Colorado's Healthy School Meals for All Act ([H.B. 22-1414 / S.B. 22-087](#)), and Washington's Healthy Kids Healthy Schools Grant Program ([S.B. 5200 / H.B. 1147](#)), among others.





# **GET INVOLVED IN FARM TO SCHOOL POLICY**



# Key Strategies for Supporting Farm to School through Policy

Since 2002, state legislatures passed laws creating the following strategies, among others, to explore, establish, and fund farm to school. To learn more about these strategies and find policy examples, [click here to access the interactive policy database](#).

## STATE AND REGIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL POSITIONS

Typically housed within state agencies to develop and implement state farm to school activities

## PERMANENT FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS

To promote local procurement, school gardens, and food and agriculture education

## FUNDING MECHANISMS

To offset school costs through appropriations, grant programs, or reimbursement structures

## LOCAL PURCHASING INCENTIVES, PREFERENCE LAWS, AND GOALS

To encourage or require state agencies, including schools, to purchase food locally

## STATEWIDE ONLINE FARM TO SCHOOL DATABASES OR DIRECTORIES

To connect schools with agricultural producers to facilitate local procurement

## FARM TO SCHOOL PILOT PROGRAMS

To launch local procurement, school gardens, and food and agriculture education activities

## TASK FORCES, COUNCILS, AND WORKING GROUPS

To research, assess, and implement farm to school programs

## BROADER POLICY INITIATIVES THAT INCLUDE FARM TO SCHOOL

To strengthen public health, food security, and food infrastructure



## Seeding, Growing, and Sustaining Farm to School in Your State

Over the last 22 years, states have continued to grow, expand, and sustain farm to school with persistent and evolving policy efforts. Depending on what a state wants to accomplish to raise awareness and build farm to school capacity, grow and expand farm to school programming, or identify ways to better sustain farm to school, there are different types of bills—requiring different levels of political buy-in—that can support your efforts.



### Seeding

Bills that do not authorize funding typically require the lowest amount of political support and can be a critical place to start to generate interest in farm to school. These bills can **seed farm to school** capacity and lead to more robust farm to school policies in the future. Bills that establish working groups, councils, or task forces typically require low political support because they do not create new programs that require funding but rather direct the council to develop recommendations for future action. Establishing working groups or task forces may help provide the data and analysis needed to get legislative buy-in for funded farm to school policies like pilot programs or farm to school coordinator positions. Proclamations also generally require low political and grassroots support because they do not create new law. Rather, they are statements of support or encouragement typically in the form of resolutions that can be adopted by one or both chambers of the legislature without governor signature.



### Growing

Laws that make it easier to purchase local products (such as local preference laws) help **grow farm to school** and tend to take a moderate amount of political support and advocacy to pass because they do not require new funding but do require a change to existing law and purchasing regulations and guidelines. This type of bill is a tool for local economic development, which gives it broader, bipartisan appeal. Local preference laws can demonstrate need and feasibility for a funded procurement incentive program.

Bills that establish pilot farm to school programs also generally require a moderate level of political support and advocacy because the outlay of funding tends to be limited by the pilot's scope and duration and is therefore more politically palatable. Similarly, pilot farm to school programs can be effective pathways to establishing funded permanent farm to school programs.



### Sustaining

Lastly, bills that authorize an expenditure of funds generally require more political support to pass but are a critical part to achieving **farm to school viability**. Within funding bills, those that appropriate funding annually may be easier to generate support for than those that authorize permanent funding year after year. These permanently funded programs and positions are the gold standard for farm to school policy and as demonstrated above, are attainable.

FIGURE 11

### Seeding, Growing, and Sustaining Farm to School





## Specific Strategies

There are many ways to support farm to school policy. All of these strategies are tied together and informed by strong relationships between community based organizations and policymakers, which are essential for collaboration and progress.

### INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE:

- Hosting a site visit (see pop-out box below);
- Consulting the National Farm to School Network for assistance in policy efforts;
- Participating in farm to school bill drafting;
- Identifying key legislative champions;
- Leveraging media and messaging to reach lawmakers regarding the benefits of farm to school;
- Engaging in regulatory and state budget development processes;
- Coordinating educational events at statehouses and training individuals in how to be effective supporters;
- Monitoring and evaluating the triple-win benefits of farm to school and developing promotional and educational resources to share with legislators; and
- Hosting conferences, and leveraging federal grant funds to do so, to facilitate discussions and collaboration among partners around supporting farm to school.

### STATE LEGISLATURES ARE:

- Establishing and funding state farm to school positions, such as coordinators who facilitate and promote farm to school;
- Collaborating with diverse groups (from anti-hunger and nutrition organizations to supporters of agriculture and economic development) to develop and draft legislation;
- Using existing farm to school legislation, including from other states, as models in the legislative drafting process; and
- Extending existing state farm to school programs to early care and education sites.

### STATE FARM TO SCHOOL COORDINATORS AND PRACTITIONERS ARE:

- Coordinating efforts across state agencies and building partnerships with community organizations;
- Facilitating farm and school tours to strengthen connections between schools, farmers, and communities;
- Providing training, technical assistance, and resources to support local procurement and food education; and
- Establishing and managing grant programs tailored to regional and community needs.

### How to Host Site Visits

Showcasing your farm to school program in person is one of the most impactful ways to get more people on board. Some officials may have never heard of farm to school before, and site visits are a great opportunity for them to learn more.

[Click here to learn how to host site visits.](#)

### [Click here to visit](#)

National Farm to School Network's policy webpage to learn more and get involved.





# Emerging Opportunities in State Farm to School Policy

## 1. Seizing the moment for state leadership

The federal policy landscape is shifting. While some programs, like the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program, have permanent baseline funding, others face greater uncertainty. In 2021, USDA launched the \$200 million Local Food for Schools program, providing non-competitive funding to state agencies for fresh, minimally processed local foods. In late 2024, USDA expanded the popular program to include child care, allocating \$660 million over three years. This program was terminated in March 2025 after an administration change.

At the same time, USDA's recent expansion of geographic preference rules allows child nutrition programs to now use "local" as a specification in bidding solicitations. While federal programs provide critical support, these shifts highlight the need for long-term state policy solutions. States have an opportunity to lead by advancing legislation that fills gaps in federal policy and provides sustained funding tailored to local needs.

## 2. Focus on building a resilient food supply chain

The 2023 Handbook has focused mainly on the school prong of the farm to school paradigm, though our project also tracks farm to school bills related to farmer training, state farmer directories, and food aggregation, processing, and distribution. There is a clear need to support producers and manufacturers in strengthening their capacity to meet the growing demand for local food in schools—especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, state legislation can complement federal investments such as the USDA Regional Food Business Centers Program, for more well-rounded or sustained efforts. State legislation that provides investment for technical assistance, equipment, labor, and infrastructure can help farmers scale up and diversify operations, foster collaboration, and navigate institutional markets.

## 3. Think regionally—both within and across states

Thinking regionally is a powerful way to foster collaboration across geographic boundaries. Funding regional farm to school coordinators can support local-level connections specific to different regions of the state, which is why several states such as Oregon, California, and New York have funded regional positions in addition to state-level coordinators. Additionally, acknowledging that food systems do not always exist according to state borders, Connecticut ([S.B. 1](#)) has recently implemented an LFPI that incentivizes regional purchasing, with New Hampshire ([H.B. 1657](#)) and Massachusetts ([H. 3993](#)) proposing similar regional schema.

## 4. Celebrate farm to school as a non-partisan issue

Supporting local economies, knowing your farmer, growing the next generation of agricultural leaders, and feeding our kids the best food possible are talking points that resonate across the aisle. Treating farm to school as a non-partisan issue can be a winning strategy to propel the movement moving forward.

## 5. Coordinate with Healthy School Meals for All efforts

By aligning with campaigns, supporters of farm to school can secure more opportunities for local procurement and other resources to boost school food while increasing the number of students that have access to fresh, high-quality meals, which expands market opportunities for producers. This collaboration also broadens School Meals for All coalitions and allows them to appeal to rural and conservative lawmakers.

### CASE STUDY

## Supporting Producers through Farm to School Grant Programs

California and Oregon are breaking new ground by creating tracks for producers in their statewide farm to school grant programs. These grants support small and mid-sized farmers, prioritizing values-aligned producers, as they engage with schools. By addressing common barriers—like production scale, food safety requirements, and delivery logistics—these states have opened the door for producers to participate more fully in the farm to school movement.

[Click here to view the case study.](#)

## Get Involved – Share Feedback

We rely on strong partnerships to shape our policy work. Our updated policy database allows us to stay current and accurate with your input.

**If you want to strengthen our collective impact, fill out our form to:**

- Recommend bills for inclusion
- Suggest edits to a bill summary or its categorization
- Provide additional resources about a specific bill
- Request a feature on a bill or overarching policy topic
- Share other feedback about the resource

[Click here to share feedback](#)



# Glossary

This glossary includes terms and explanations of how we are using them for the purposes of this report and the policy database.

<b>Adopted</b>	The legislature passed the resolution.
<b>Appropriation</b>	The legislation authorizes funding or relates to a fund for farm to school activities.
<b>Bill</b>	A bill is a proposed law. Unless the context indicates otherwise, we use the term "bills" in this Handbook to include both bills and resolutions.
<b>Budget bill</b>	Most states pass a comprehensive budget bill that includes appropriations (or spending authorization) for government agencies, departments, and programs on an annual or biannual basis. Each state's budget process varies. In many states, the governor proposes an annual or biannual budget to the legislature; the legislature considers various versions of the proposed budget and passes a final budget bill; and the governor signs or vetoes the bill (or portions of the bill). States also routinely pass appropriations bills that change portions of enacted budget legislation. Generally, appropriations bills do not make changes to a state's statutes or codes (although they are included in a state's annually-published public laws).
<b>Codified</b>	The legislature passed the bill and made corresponding changes to the state's code or statutes.
<b>Companion bills</b>	Companion bills are identical or nearly identical bills that are introduced in the house and senate in the same year.
<b>Dead</b>	The legislature did not pass the bill or resolution before the session ended, or the governor vetoed the bill.
<b>Economic development</b>	The legislation connects farm to school activities to a broader state goal of promoting economic development.
<b>Enacted</b>	The legislature passed the bill.
<b>Enacted; not codified</b>	The legislature passed the bill but has not made changes to the state's code or statutes at the time of publication. Generally, appropriations bills do not result in changes to the state's code or statutes.
<b>Evaluation process</b>	The legislation provides for an evaluation process or mechanism for a farm to school initiative.
<b>Farm to ECE</b>	Farm to early care and education or early childhood education (ECE), sometimes referred to as "farm to preschool," includes the same three core elements of local food sourcing, school gardens, and food and agriculture education in all types of ECE settings (e.g., preschools, child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start/Early Head Start, programs in K-12 school districts).



<b>Farm to school grant program</b>	The legislation establishes or relates to a program that provides money to schools to participate in farm to school activities.
<b>Farmer training</b>	The legislation requires or relates to training for producers to sell local foods to schools.
<b>FFA and 4-H</b>	The legislation mentions Future Farmers of America, FFA, or the 4-H program.
<b>Food aggregation, processing, or distribution</b>	The legislation develops or relates to local food aggregation, processing, or distribution infrastructure to support farm to school activities.
<b>Food safety exemption</b>	The legislation loosens food safety requirements to support the use of school garden produce or other local foods in school meals.
<b>Food security</b>	The legislation connects farm to school activities to a broader state goal of increasing food security.
<b>Food service training</b>	The legislation requires or relates to training for child nutrition professionals to purchase or cook local foods from scratch.
<b>General support</b>	The legislation expresses support for schools to purchase local foods without establishing or relating to a specific mechanism to increase local food purchasing.
<b>Health and wellness</b>	The legislation connects farm to school activities to a broader state goal of improving health and wellness.
<b>Legislation</b>	Legislation is a bill or resolution.
<b>Limited funding</b>	The legislation authorizes annual or otherwise restricted funding for farm to school activities.
<b>Local food purchasing incentives</b>	The legislation establishes or relates to a program that provides additional funding to child nutrition program operators to directly offset or incentivize local food purchases.
<b>Omnibus bill</b>	An omnibus bill is a single bill that includes provisions on multiple, often unrelated, topics, and may or may not include appropriations. A state's annual or biannual budget bill is one example of an omnibus bill.
<b>Other grants</b>	The legislation establishes or relates to a grant program that does not constitute a farm to school grant program.
<b>Other revenue stream</b>	The legislation provides for non-appropriations funding, such as a fee or tax, for farm to school activities.
<b>Pending</b>	The legislature has not voted on the bill or resolution at the time of publication.
<b>Permanent funding</b>	The legislation provides for permanent rather than annual funding for farm to school activities.

<b>Pilot program</b>	The legislation establishes or relates to a temporary program that supports farm to school activities.
<b>Procurement preference or goal</b>	The legislation directs or encourages schools to purchase local foods.
<b>Promotional programs and events</b>	The legislation creates a statewide program or event that celebrates farm to school activities.
<b>Repealed</b>	The legislature passed the bill repealing a law, or a law met its sunset provision.
<b>Resolution</b>	A resolution is an expression of the legislature's sentiments that does not have the force of law.
<b>Small purchase threshold</b>	The legislation increases or relates to the amount of money schools can spend on a contract without going through formal bid procedures to make it easier for them to purchase local foods.
<b>State farmer directory</b>	The legislation directs a state agency to create a list or database of local food producers interested in participating in farm to school activities.
<b>Statewide farm to school position</b>	The legislation establishes or relates to a farm to school position within a state agency.
<b>Statewide farm to school program</b>	The legislation establishes or relates to a farm to school program within a state agency.
<b>Sunset provision</b>	The legislation identifies an end date unrelated to the duration of funding for an initiative.
<b>Task force, council, or working group</b>	The legislation establishes or relates to a group that recommends, assesses, or implements policies and programs that support farm to school activities or a group that includes a farm to school representative.
<b>Values-aligned purchasing</b>	The legislation calls for schools to consider values in food procurement, beyond whether the food is local. Values-aligned purchasing is also referred to as values-based purchasing.

# Methodology

A coding procedure was developed to streamline the 2023 Handbook research process on legislation that, directly or indirectly, supports farm to school.

For legislation introduced between January 1, 2021, and December 31, 2023, we first used FiscalNote's state legislation tracking service to search for bills and resolutions, including budget bills, with key terms such as "farm to school," "local purchasing incentive," "school garden," "agriculture education," "universal meals," and "community eligibility provision" for each state and the District of Columbia. (See below for a full list of search terms.) We used similar key terms to search for bills and resolutions for each US territory on its government website, except American Samoa, which does not have a publicly available database of its legislation. Our search did not identify any farm to school legislation introduced in the US territories during this period.

We then assessed each bill or resolution identified through this initial search process against seven threshold questions to determine whether to include it in this edition of the Handbook and its companion database. Each bill or resolution included in the database answers "yes" to at least one of the threshold questions below.

## **Pertaining to the three core elements of farm to school, does the bill or resolution:**

- Explicitly include local food procurement or a local food preference or otherwise support local agriculture within a farm to school or early childhood education context?
- Change the small purchase threshold or include language about values-aligned purchasing, even without explicit farm to school language?
- Explicitly include school gardens within a farm to school or early childhood education context?
- Explicitly include food, agriculture, or nutrition education within a school or early childhood education setting?

## **Pertaining to policies that have a significant, if indirect, impact on farm to school, does the bill or resolution:**

- Expand access to school meals, such as establish a universal meals program or expand the Community Eligibility Provision?
- Explicitly include language about child nutrition professional pay, conditions, or rights?
- Explicitly include language about school kitchen infrastructure, equipment, or other conditions to support scratch cooking?

For each bill or resolution that answered "yes" to at least one of the first set of questions (pertaining to the three core elements of farm to school), our coding identified various farm to school components, such as creating a task force, promotional program, or grant program; providing food service professional or farmer training; or supporting local food aggregation, processing, or distribution. Our coding also identified any funding mechanisms included in the legislation. The scope of our coding process was largely limited to the text of each bill or resolution; we recognize, however, that the text of any piece of legislation does not tell the whole story. Where possible, NFSN shared the coded bills with partner organizations in each state for review and additional insight.

The coding process has changed from the process for the 2002-2020 edition of the Handbook because farm to school policy priorities and trends have shifted since last publication. For example, we typically included final versions of appropriations and budget bills that fund farm to school activities. In addition, taking a holistic view, we included a broader range of legislation that supports farm to school activities, even indirectly. We included legislation that supports school child nutrition professionals' pay, conditions, or rights and school kitchen upgrades that facilitate scratch cooking. We also included bills that expand students' access to school meals in various ways, not only by establishing a universal meals program or expanding the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). We did not, however, fully analyze and code included bills that did not touch on any of the three core farm to school elements.

To provide as complete a picture as possible, we incorporated farm to school legislation from previous Handbook editions, largely as previously coded, into the interactive database created for 2021-2023 legislation according to the updated coding process. We recognize that the database includes a broader scope of 2021-2023 legislation than 2002-2020 legislation. We also note that the scope of some codes were adjusted. For example, we identified 2002-2020 bills that created farm to school coordinators, while we identified 2021-2023 bills that created, funded, or otherwise related to farm to school positions more generally.

The 2023 Handbook and its companion database are intended for use as a reference guide. We believe they provide an accurate picture of state farm to school legislation introduced between 2002 and 2023; however, we welcome suggestions for corrections or additions.

[Click here to fill out our feedback form.](#)



## Search Terms

**~10, ~5, and ~3** mean that the words in the specified search term must appear within 10, 5, and 3 words of each other, respectively, in a bill.

**AND** means that all of the specified search terms must appear in a bill.

**OR** means that at least one of the specified search terms must appear in a bill.

### General

- "Farm to school"~10
- "Farm to cafeteria"~10
- "Farm to summer"~10
- "Farm to table"

### Farm to ECE

- "Farm to preschool"
- "Farm to early care and education"
- "Farm to child care"
- "Farm early care"~10
- "Farm ECE"~10
- "Farm headstart"~10
- "Farm preschool"~10
- "Preschool farm"
- "Child and Adult Care Food Program"~15
- "Farm CACFP"~15

### School Gardens

- "School garden"~10
- "Elementary school farm"

### Procurement

- "Small purchase threshold"
- "Local purchasing incentive"~5
- ("Local food"~3 OR "regional food"~3) AND ("school" OR "early care"~5 OR "preschool" OR "child care" OR "Child and Adult Care Food Program")
- "Values-based procurement"
- "Values-based purchasing"
- "Values aligned"
- "Child nutrition program"
- "School meal"
- "School food"~5

### Expanding School Meals Access

- "School meals for all"~10
- "School" AND "meal" AND ("kosher" OR "plant based" OR "Halal" OR "vegetarian")
- "Universal meals"~5 AND ("school" OR "early care"~5 OR "preschool" OR "child care" OR "Child and Adult Care Food Program")
- "Free meal" AND "school"
- "Community Eligibility Provision"
- "Universal school lunch"~5
- "Universal school breakfast"~5

### Below terms were paired with:

AND ("school" OR "early care"~5 OR "preschool" OR "child care" OR "Child and Adult Care Food Program")

### Kitchen Equipment and Infrastructure

- "Scratch cook"~5
- "Scratch cooking"~5
- "Kitchen equipment"~5
- "Kitchen infrastructure"~5

### Education

- "Food education"
- "Agriculture education"
- "Nutrition education"

### Child Nutrition Professionals

- "Cafeteria staff"
- "Food service director"
- "Food service worker"
- "Cafeteria worker"
- "Kitchen staff"

2024 Farm to School  
Month Youth Art Contest  
winner, Alice H. age 13  
from Louisiana



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## Endnotes

- 1 The term “farm to school” is inclusive of non-farm food production operations, such as fisheries or foraging, and non-school sites that engage children, such as early childcare and after school settings, unless otherwise noted.
- 2 For simplicity, we use the term “bills” in this report to include bills and resolutions, unless otherwise noted.
- 3 For simplicity, we use the term “states” in this report to include the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US territories, unless otherwise noted.
- 4 Although outside the time period considered in this Handbook, Puerto Rico passed laws supporting farm to school in 1923, 1925, and 1999 ([22 L.P.R.A 116](#), [18 L.P.R.A 548](#), and [S.B. 1736](#)).
- 5 Although Utah has not passed farm to school state legislation, it does provide funding to incentivize local purchasing through [Education Board Rule R277-727](#).
- 6 For example, grant programs solely for school garden construction or outdoor experiential education.
- 7 Depending on the state, these bill types may require state spending for implementation such as staff time on technical assistance. Additionally, under Article XIII B, Section 6 of the California Constitution, the state is required to reimburse local governments for costs incurred due to new programs or higher levels of service mandated by the state.
- 8 These states include New York (Executive Order 32, encouraging but not requiring schools), California ([A.B. 778](#)), Maryland (H.B. 1488 / S.B. 0985), and Maine ([L.D. 1584 \(S.P. 557\)](#)).
- 9 Unlike this project’s attempt to comprehensively identify all farm to school expanding school meals access bills, this project does not attempt to identify all bills that support child nutrition professionals or fund kitchen infrastructure and equipment upgrades.