



FARM TO SCHOOL



Louisiana Farm to School Programs: Evidence from the 2019 Farm to School Census

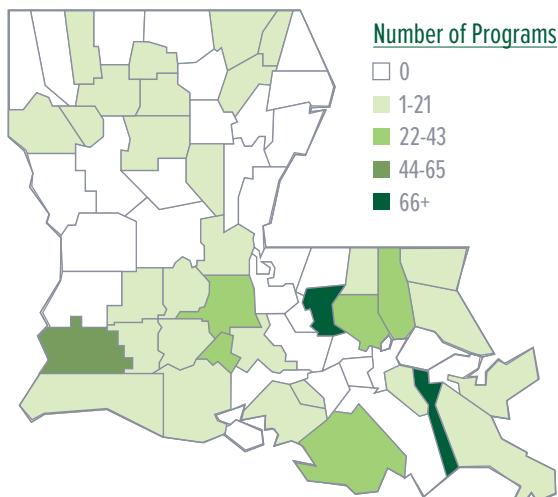
Farm to School (F2S) programs are initiatives participated in by schools with the intent to promote healthy lifestyle choices among students and introduce agricultural lessons. The three main components of F2S programs are local food procurement, school gardens and educational activities. In this report we present the findings from the 2019 F2S Census for the Louisiana public school districts.

Louisiana's public school system is comprised of 68 public school districts, with 64 districts representing parishes and four districts representing cities. At the conclusion of the 2018-2019 school year, the Louisiana public school system was comprised of 1,259 schools that served 638,959 students. The number of students in each race category appear below.

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Two Races	Native American	Pacific Islander
FEB 2019	302,965 (47%)	254,247 (40%)	48,600 (8%)	10,306 (2%)	18,046 (3%)	4,270 (1%)	525 (0%)

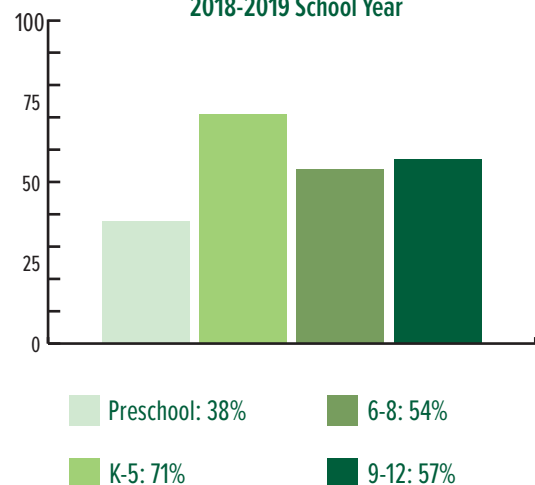
The F2S Census, conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, provides information regarding schools' interest and implementation of F2S activities. As of 2019 (2018-2019 SY), there were 37 public school districts in Louisiana that indicated participation in F2S activities with 606 documented programs. This a 298% increase from the 2013-2014 SY, where only 152 programs were documented.

2018-2019 School Year



F2S reaches more students. F2S programs are primarily targeted towards elementary aged children, with 70% of school districts participating in F2S indicating that their programs reach students in kindergarten through fifth grade. However, F2S programs have started to reach older children in recent years.

2018-2019 School Year



F2S offers a variety of activities. School districts throughout Louisiana have implemented various F2S activities, with the intent of strengthening children's relationship with agriculture. The most commonly implemented activities during the 2018-2019 school year include local food procurement, promoting local foods, using food coaches and establishing edible and educational school gardens.

Activities:	Average (n=37)	Standard Deviation
Serving local foods	65%	0.48
Promoting local foods	46%	0.51
Using food coaches	35%	0.48
Establishing school gardens	32%	0.48
Providing tasting demos	32%	0.48
Using themed promotions	30%	0.46
Generating media coverage	22%	0.42
Serving school garden produce	19%	0.40
Conducting farm field trips	19%	0.40
Training staff	19%	0.40

Challenges persist. School districts participating in F2S programs face challenges that hinder their participation. Common challenges reported by school districts include lack of year-round availability, difficulty in finding new suppliers, local items not available from primary vendors, lack of processed products, local producer bidding issues and lack of precut products available.

Challenges:	Average (n=37)	Standard Deviation
Lack of year-round availability of products	52%	0.51
Difficult to find new suppliers	45%	0.51
Items not available from primary vendor	39%	0.50
Local producers not bidding	29%	0.46
Lack of processed/precut products	27%	0.45
Product requirement issues	22%	0.22
High product prices	19%	0.40
Local foods not identified by vendor	19%	0.40
Difficulty in coordinating procurement	17%	0.38
Payment procedure issues	16%	0.38

School districts that do not participate in F2S activities perceive these challenges as barriers to participation.

Challenges:	Average (n=12)	Standard Deviation
Lack of year-round availability of products	83%	0.39
Items not available from primary vendor	58%	0.52
Lack of processed/precut products	58%	0.52
Difficult to find new suppliers	58%	0.52
Staffing issues	42%	0.52
Difficulty in coordinating procurement	33%	0.49
Local foods not identified by vendor	33%	0.49
Local producers not bidding	25%	0.45
Lack of product availability information	25%	0.45
Narrow range of vendor products	17%	0.39

Public support continues. Within the last 12 years, F2S programs have received attention and support from state legislators and advocates. As of 2018, Louisiana is one of 14 states with the highest levels of governmental support and advocacy of F2S programs in terms of comprehensive legislation. This political support is essential in the continued implementation and awareness of F2S programs throughout the state.

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