FARM TO SCHOOL

Louisiana Farm to School Initiatives in Louisiana

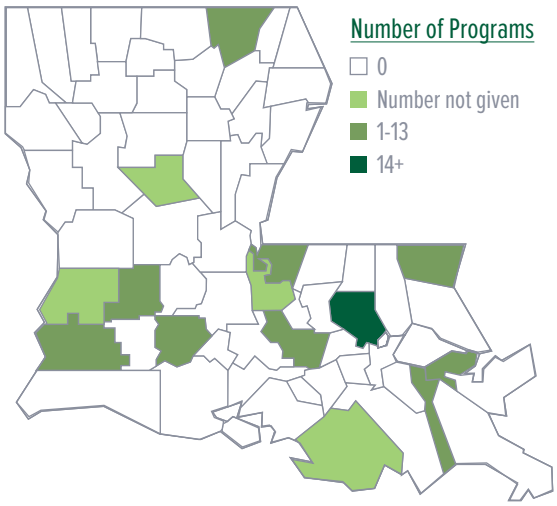
Farm to School (F2S) programs are initiatives participated in by schools with the intent to promote healthy lifestyle choices among students and introduce agricultural lessons. The three main components of F2S programs are local food procurement, school gardens and educational activities. This report presents the findings from the F2S Census conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The report provides information regarding schools' interest and implementation of F2S activities in 2013 (2011-2012 school year) and 2015 (2013-2014 school year).

Louisiana's public school system is comprised of 64 districts representing parishes and four districts representing cities. At the conclusion of the 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 school years, the Louisiana public school system was comprised of 1,339 schools that served 662,451 students and 1,305 schools that served 665,174 students, respectively. The number of students in each race category appear below.

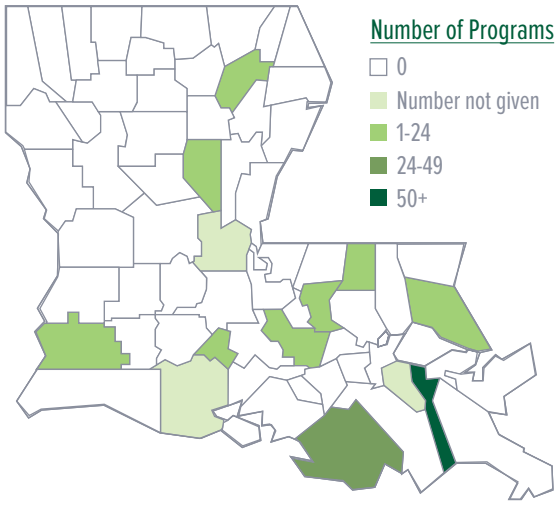
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Two Races	Native American	Pacific Islander
FEB 2012	328,912 (50%)	282,169 (43%)	27,443 (4%)	9,927 (2%)	8,188 (1%)	5,385 (1%)	427 (0%)
FEB 2014	325,105 (49%)	279,461 (42%)	33,347 (5%)	10,284 (2%)	11,318 (2%)	5,092 (1%)	567 (0%)

As of 2015, there were 13 public school districts in Louisiana that indicated F2S participation, with 152 documented programs. This is a 145% increase from the 2011-2012 school year, where only 62 programs were documented.

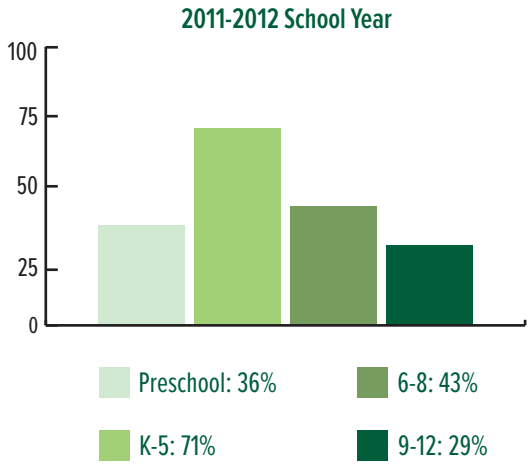
2011-2012 School Year

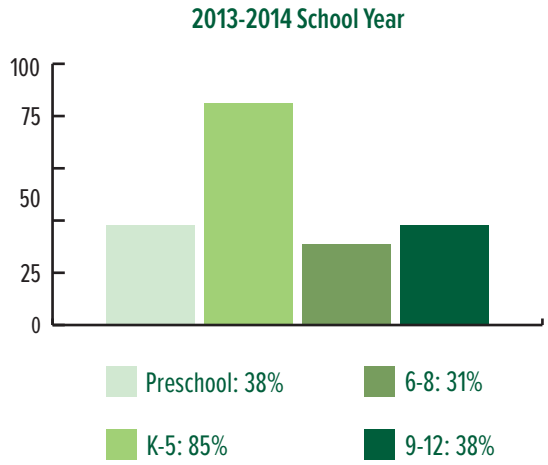


2013-2014 School Year



F2S programs are primarily targeted towards elementary aged children. However, school districts that conducted F2S activities reached students across a wide range of ages.





School districts throughout Louisiana have implemented various F2S activities, with the intent of strengthening children's relationships with agriculture. The most commonly implemented activities include local food procurement, school gardens, tasting demonstrations and farm field trips.

Activities	Mean 2011-2012 (n=14)	Mean 2013-2014 (n=13)
Local procurement	29%	46%
Tasting demos	36%	23%
School gardens	64%	23%
Farm field trips	50%	23%
Curriculum integration	14%	31%
Serving school garden produce	14%	8%
Tasting demos of school gardens	36%	46%
Promoting local foods	14%	8%
Community events	7%	15%

School districts participating in F2S programs face challenges that make participation difficult. Common challenges noted by school districts include year-round availability, local items not available from primary vendors, lack of processed and precut products available, pricing issues and difficulty obtaining information.

Challenges	Mean 2011-2012 (n=14)	Mean 2013-2014 (n=13)
Year-round availability	50%	46%
Non-availability of primary vendors	71%	31%
Small vendor product range	29%	39%
High prices	57%	23%
Unstable prices	29%	31%
Lack of reliability	14%	23%
Lack of compliance with purchasing rules	21%	15%
Lack of processed/precut products	36%	31%
Difficult to find new suppliers	17%	31%
Difficulty obtaining information	21%	31%
Difficulty getting deliveries on time	21%	8%
Quality requirements	21%	23%

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

Challenges	Mean 2011-2012 (n=14)	Mean 2013-2014 (n=13)
Year-round availability	61%	57%
Non-availability of primary vendors	61%	36%
Small vendor product range	32%	14%
High prices	13%	25%
Unstable prices	16%	11%
Lack of reliability	39%	32%
Lack of compliance with purchasing rules	39%	18%
Lack of processed/precut products	26%	21%
Difficult to find new suppliers	36%	29%
Difficulty obtaining information	26%	25%
Difficulty getting deliveries on time	19%	14%
Quality requirements	32%	14%

Since 2002, there has been increased introduction of F2S legislation throughout the U.S., which is key in ensuring the future success of F2S programs. This is specifically true in Louisiana, as it is one of 14 states with the highest levels of political support through funded grant programs, procurement incentives, reimbursement programs and funded coordinator positions. These legislative acts help to create awareness of the F2S program, as it is still in its infant stages in Louisiana.

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