

Farm to School initiatives at schools and child care centers connect children with local food through a variety of activities.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) program operators can replicate farm to school activities using farm to site.

Farm to site activities provide a solid foundation for establishing healthy habits, promoting strong communities and strengthening local economies.



Summer meal sites can add local flavor to meals and teach children about Texas agriculture with farm to site activities. It starts with using locally sourced ingredients in meals and snacks, creating garden-based learning environments, including nutrition education in enrichment activities, and connecting children with local farmers and ranchers.



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Growing Farm to Site in Summer Meal Programs



**Texas Statewide
Farm to School Initiative**

Planting *the Seeds for* Student Achievement
while Supporting Texas Farmers *and* Ranchers.



SFSP and SSO program operators can incorporate farm to site activities to enhance the quality of their programs.

Offering local, seasonal fruits and vegetables during a peak growing season ensures that children learn the benefits of enjoying foods that are fresh and tasty.

Additionally, connecting children and parents to local food through educational opportunities, taste tests, cooking demonstrations, garden-based learning or field trips to local farms, will strengthen a family's understanding of the local food economy and encourage their long-term support.



Examples of farm to site activities for summer nutrition programs

Purchasing Local Food

Nutritious and visually appealing food draws more children to a site and ensures they have energy to participate in enrichment activities. One creative strategy for improving quality and appeal is to develop menus that incorporate local dairy, fruit, grain, protein and vegetable items. Incorporating locally sourced ingredients can benefit farmers and ranchers as well as the local community. For much of Texas, bountiful summer harvests make it cost effective to incorporate local ingredients. When that economic benefit is paired with educational activities, it results in a win-win for sites and children.

Local food items can be purchased directly from a farmer or rancher, from a group of farmers and ranchers working together, or a contracted distributor.

Garden-Based Enrichment Activities

The summer months in Texas represent the peak harvest time for many fruits and vegetables and the timing is ideal for garden-based learning. Fresh harvests offer children the opportunity to taste just-picked items while learning what a fruit or vegetable looks like in a natural, unprocessed state.

If there is not an existing onsite garden, an SFSP or SSO program operator may partner with a community school or organization with a garden or develop a new garden. Tending school gardens during the summer vacation offers a great partnership opportunity.

Reclaiming Local Produce

Farmers and farmers markets sometimes have excess produce they are willing to donate for distribution within the local community. SFSP or SSO program operators can enhance the support of families in need, by discussing with a local farmer or farmers market the ability to distribute reclaimed fruits and vegetables to families participating in the summer nutrition programs.



Additional information and resources for incorporating these activities in summer nutrition programs is available in the Farm to Site Toolkit. Go to www.SquareMeals.org/FarmtoSchool.