

# TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES  
COMMISSIONER



June 19, 2007

Dear Stakeholder:

According to a recent study, the Texas Department of Agriculture's Square Meals program is enjoying much success and reaching many of its goals.

Last fall, TDA contracted with researchers from Texas A&M and Sam Houston State universities to conduct the first assessment of the Square Meals program. Square Meals is TDA's school nutrition education and outreach program, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

The Square Meals program assessment included feedback from parents, teachers, school administrators, nutrition professionals and health care professionals. Respondents completed an online survey to determine their opinions about Square Meals education and outreach goals, approaches used, distribution channels and impact of this important education and outreach program.

Overall, respondents rated the program goals and materials as effective in improving nutrition knowledge, providing tips for healthy eating and physical activity, and raising awareness of the school meal programs and healthy meal options being served in schools. The majority of stakeholders reported the program materials were somewhat to very effective in impacting families' eating and activity habits.

We also received valuable insight into areas for development and are taking immediate actions to further improve the Square Meals program. For example, school administrators were the least confident in the program's potential for impacting the obesity epidemic. This is an important goal of the program, and TDA staff will be diligent in improving this area. In fact, TDA is committed to tracking the success and impact of all six goals through ongoing monitoring and assessment. We will conduct focus group discussions consisting of members from the target audiences to address the strengths and weaknesses of the program and to develop a long-term strategic plan.



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Respondents also indicated materials in Spanish would be useful. TDA offers many of its materials in Spanish and will continue this service to better meet the needs of our diverse Texas population.

Texans have never settled for less than the best when it comes to educating our schoolchildren and families about good nutrition and exercise. We remain your partner in promoting the value of the healthy food served in your schools and in providing nutrition education to Texas children and their families. I look forward to the continuous improvement and exciting growth of the Square Meals program in Texas.

It is my pleasure to send you a copy of the 2005-2006 program assessment. I hope the information provides valuable insight into the Square Meals education and outreach program. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Deborah Lehman at [deborah.lehman@tda.state.tx.us](mailto:deborah.lehman@tda.state.tx.us) or at (512) 463-2569. To download the report, please visit [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org) or call 888-TEX-KIDS for a hard copy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd Staples". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Todd Staples  
Commissioner

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