



Farm Fresh Challenge

Success Guide

Instructions, Tips, and Resources to help you achieve Farm Fresh Challenge Recognition



Food and Nutrition Division
Farm Fresh Initiative



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

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www.SquareMeals.org

Step 1: PLEDGE

Click: [2024 Pledge Form](#)

Scan:



Step 2: Plan activities and menus

Step 3: Contact distributors and/or producers

Step 4: Hype up your campus staff

Step 5: Have fun (take pictures)!

Use the new tool to track activities, products served, expenses, and social media posts

Step 6: Submit your attestation

Step 7: Receive your recognition

Step 8: Watch SquareMeals for new Success Stories featuring your activities



1

Pledge to Participate

- ***NEW*** three tiers
- Recognition parameters

2

Plan for Participation

- What to plan
- Resources to use

3

What Qualifies

- Definition of Local
- Activity suggestions

4

Attestation

- Information to include
- Requirements for recognition

Pledge to Participate





**TDA has added
a third tier to
Farm Fresh
Challenge
Recognition
requirements**



**You've pledged
Now what?**



Three Tiers for recognition

- **Prime Participant – easiest tier to achieve, best for beginners**
- **Best of the Bunch – intermediate tier**
- **Cream of the Crop – highest tier**
new in 2024

Prime Participant

Perfect for Beginners

- Serve three different local foods during the month of the Challenge

Must be three separate meal components

- Complete one nutrition education activity **each week**

Handing out “I tried local” stickers is not an educational activity

- Share at least one social media post during the Challenge

Use the hashtags #FarmFreshTexas or #FarmFreshChallenge

Posts should be on Facebook, Instagram, or X to reach the largest audience



Best of the Bunch

Middle Tier - Intermediate

- Serve three different local foods **each week** during the Challenge

Must be three separate meal components

- Complete one nutrition education activity **each week**

Handing out “I tried local” stickers is not an educational activity

- Share at least one social media post during the Challenge

Use the hashtags #FarmFreshTexas or #FarmFreshChallenge

Posts should be on Facebook, Instagram, or X to reach the largest audience



Cream of the Crop

Farm Fresh Challenge Expert

- Serve **six** different local foods during the Challenge

Must be 3 different meal components

At least 2 local foods served each week

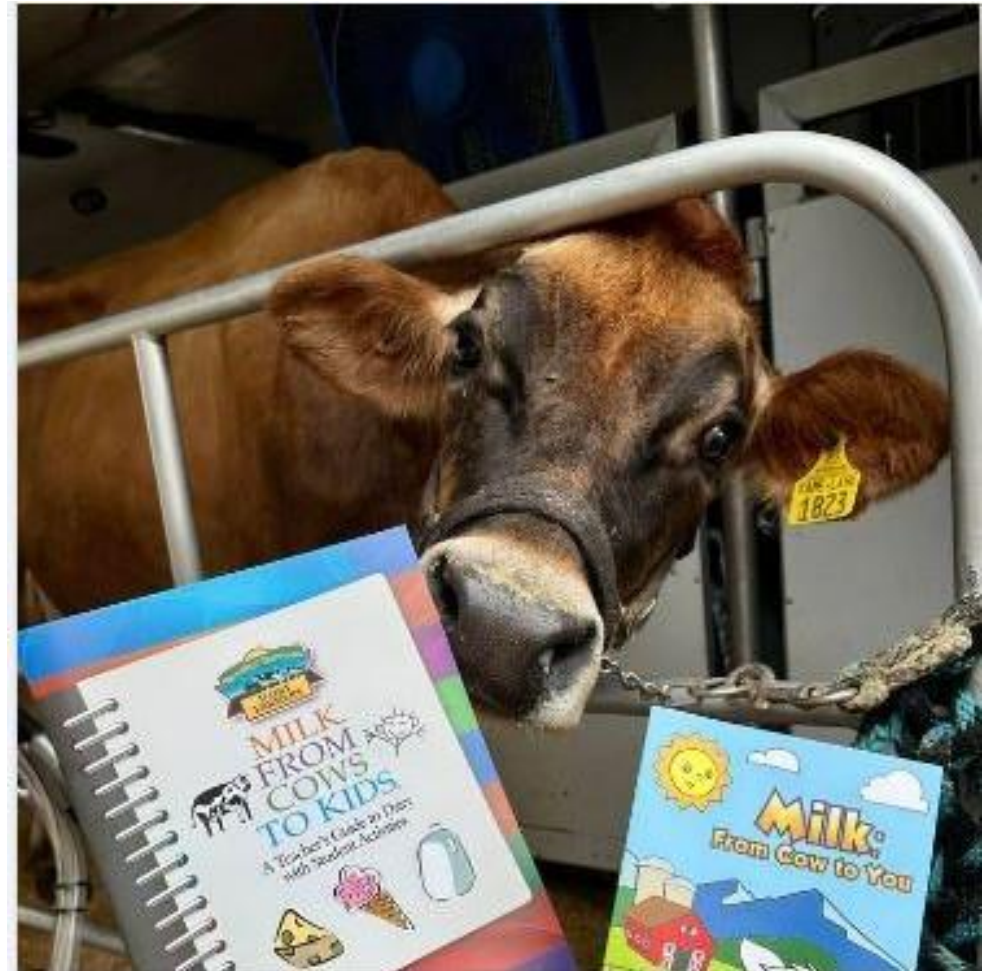
- Host at least one educational activity each week
(Two activities should be “above and beyond” the minimum effort)

See next slide for examples of what qualifies

- Share at least **two** social media posts during the Challenge

Use the hashtags #FarmFreshTexas or #FarmFreshChallenge

Posts should be on Facebook, Instagram, or X to reach the largest audience



Cream of the Crop Qualifying Activities **

Parameters increased to recognize those who go above and beyond

- If you have HART students, use them to help promote the Farm Fresh Challenge
Have them conduct taste testings or create promotional flyers/posters, etc.

- Bring in outside vendors to present

Farmers, mobile dairy classrooms, food banks to host student farmers' markets

- Create new learning activity sheets for each week

Something you made, not pulled off a website or provided by your distributor(s)

- School garden activities

Start a garden, use produce from your current garden, have students help plan, plant, or harvest



** examples of previous activities

Please do not feel obligated to use these, let your creativity guide your activities

Cream of the Crop Qualifying Activities **

Parameters increased to recognize those who go above and beyond

- Host a tasting event and collect feedback

Use stickers or surveys to gauge student interest in the item(s)

- Use produce in a new way

Previous examples include making pickles and jelly, fruit-infused waters, and using vegetables in baked goods

- Use local produce to create enticing displays

Carve fruits and vegetables, create a cornucopia – see [success stories](#) from previous years

- Create your own informational flyers

Examples include local produce nutrition facts and growing information, producer bios, and creative uses for local produce

- Partner with a new producer

Find a local farmer or producer you haven't used before and try their product(s)



** examples of previous activities

Please do not feel obligated to use these, let your creativity guide your activities



Prime Participant *

- Certificate signed by Commissioner Sid Miller
- Digital badge
- TDA Farm Fresh Challenge lapel pin



Best of the Bunch*

- Certificate signed by Commissioner Sid Miller
- Digital Badge
- TDA Farm Fresh Challenge lapel pin
- Physical award engraved with Farm Fresh logo and "Best of the Bunch"



Cream of the Crop*

- Certificate signed by Commissioner Sid Miller
- Digital Badge
- TDA Farm Fresh Challenge lapel pin
- Physical award engraved with Farm Fresh logo and "Cream of the Crop"



Planning your Participation

What to Plan

1. Your level of participation
2. Your menu
 - a) Which local products will you use
 - i. Check to see which local products you already purchase
 - ii. Most CEs receive local fluid milk
 - b) How often will local products be served?
3. Activities you plan on having
 - a) Will you host outside vendors?
 - b) Will your HART students participate?
 - c) Will you create materials?
4. Your social media posts
 - a) How many will you share?
 - b) Which platform(s) will you use?
 - c) What will you highlight?
 - i. Local products?
 - ii. Activities?
 - iii. Both?
5. Local producers
 1. Will you add new producers?
 2. Will your current producers be able to supply your needs for the Challenge?

Planning your Participation

Resources

- Squaremeals.org
 - [Farm Fresh Network](#)
 - [Farm Fresh Challenge Resources](#)
 - [Farm Fresh Challenge Success Stories](#)
 - [Meal Appeal Resources](#)
- MyPlate.gov
 - [Infographics](#)
 - [Food Group Quizzes](#)
 - [Worksheets and Info Sheets](#)
- Team Nutrition on USDA.gov
 - [Recipes](#)
- Institute of Child Nutrition
 - [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#)
- Texas Farm Bureau
 - [Agriculture education videos](#)
- Texas Agri-Life
 - [Information Sheets](#)





What Qualifies?

Definition of local products and qualifying activities

What is Local?

Local products are grown and produced in Texas by a Texas-based business. These include premade items (tamales, pizza) fruits, vegetables, proteins, fluid milk and milk products, and grains.

Products produced in other states using some Texas ingredients do **not** qualify. (e.g. Cool-Tropics slushies, Tyson chicken)

What is an Educational Activity

- Flyers teaching about local ingredients – nutrition and growing information, health benefits, etc.
- Agricultural activities – videos, farmer visits, mobile dairy classrooms, gardening, etc.
- Nutrition education – word searches, crosswords, worksheets, etc.
- Placing “We Serve Local” decals on serving lines and handing out “I Tried Local” stickers are **not** educational activities



Have Fun!

Unsure what to do? Suggestions below:

- Run agricultural videos during lunch periods
- Flavor water with local produce and herbs
- Create a fun display with locally grown produce
- Give students coloring pages featuring local foods and decorate the cafeteria with them
- Have a local item scavenger hunt
- Host a student farmers' market with local producers
- Create a local produce trivia game using facts about Texas products
- Have a "mystery" taste test using a local item and have students guess what it is
- Put a poster on the wall with your menu and have students guess which products were locally grown or produced

The Farm Fresh Challenge is meant to be a month-long celebration of Texas agriculture and school meals. It should be a fun way to begin or expand on your farm to school activities. Be creative and get your students engaged!



Attestation Forms

What do you need to report?

TDA has created a new Farm Fresh Challenge tracking tool to help (click on the photo to open)

The tool helps you stay on top of information for your attestation

- Local items served
- Expenses
- Activities
- Social media posts
- HART student participation
- Vendors used

Purpose: track Farm Fresh Challenge information for attestation form (can attach sheet to attestation, if desired)

Local Items Served: lists dates, items served, and component (**drop-down**), new for Challenge (**drop-down**), student opinion (**thumbs up, thumbs down**), ce automatically, spot to include a sample menu, if desired (link to menu and/or screenshot are both acceptable options)

Expenses: tracks items purchased by category; category totals and grand total spent automatically figured; **amount is unit total** (cs, ea., lb., etc.)

Educational Activities: dates, activity description, source (**drop-down**), include photos/screenshots, share? (**drop-down**), *photo release? (**drop-down**)

Social Media: track social media posts by date, platform (**drop-down**), include links (right click, scroll down to link, click {pop up window}, use "text to display for CI "address") - **see screenshots below**

HART: (for districts w/HART students) student name and activity student helped with/completed

Vendors: list any vendors used, type (**drop-down**), and link website

* - must be **signed** TDA photo release (click the link to download):

[Photo Releases](#)

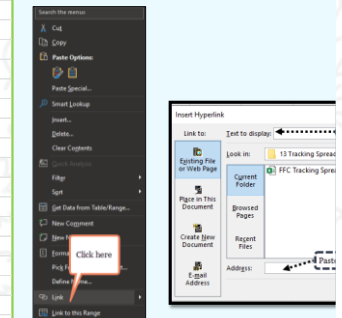
Instructions to save this sheet: download from website -> File -> Save As -> Name and save in your preferred location

Pledge Date:

Attestation Date:

Attestation Checklist	Done or N/A (drop-down)
List of items served	
Expenses/Category	
Activities	
Social Media	
HART?	
Vendors	
SIGNED Photo Release(s)	

How to hyperlink your social media posts - right click to open then "add link", follow the directions



Tips

Check the spelling of all names and addresses on pledge and attestation forms - **be sure to use a street address, not a PO box**

Use high definition photos to ensure the best presentation for your activities and food photos - **Don't forget to label photos w/CE name**

Update each tab frequently to avoid losing track of items served, expenses, social media posts, etc.

Ensure you have completed all requirements for the recognition level you wish to achieve



What to Expect after Attestation

- The attestation period has been extended to include the full month post-Challenge
- Once results are compiled and reviewed, emails will be sent to recognition awardees
- CND/Superintendent letters and digital resources will be sent within 90 days
- Certificates, lapel pins, and physical awards will be presented at MegaCon
- Those unable to attend MegaCon will be mailed certificates, lapel pins, and/or physical awards after the conference has ended

The Challenge is over.
What's next?

Submit attestation

1. Remember your signed photo releases
2. Fill out every question that applies
3. Make sure you have fulfilled requirements for the level of recognition requested

Check your email frequently

Watch the mail for CND and Superintendent letters

Attend MegaCon to receive your physical awards and certificates



Contact Us



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www.SquareMeals.org



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2. fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. email:

program.intake@usda.gov

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