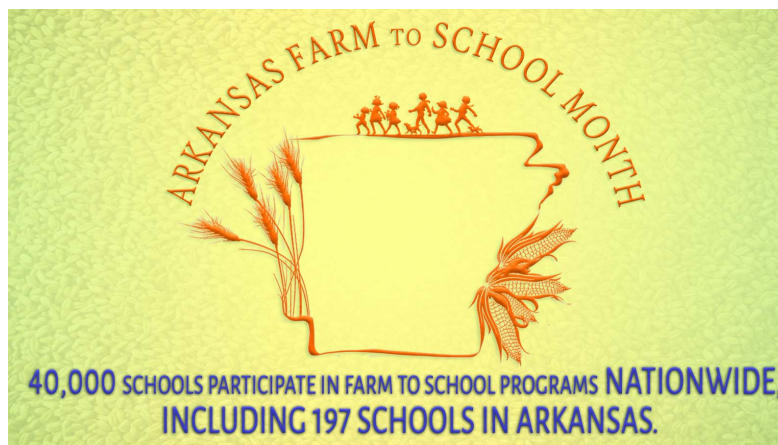




# Arkansas House Newsletter

**October 25, 2019**

## **Farm to School Month**



Childhood obesity is a serious problem across the country. 1 in 5 children are now obese.

Several studies have shown that students will eat more fruits and vegetables when they have easy access to a variety of high quality fresh items. And one way to provide more healthy options is through Farm-to-School programs.

October is National Farm-to-School Month. Farm-to-School programs connect Arkansas's growers and local food producers to learning environments in the community.

The three main farm-to-school practices are local food procurement, nutrition education, and school gardens. Students, farmers, and communities all win when they participate in this program.

Students win as they are provided access to nutritious, local food. Students also see educational opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons, and farm field trips.

Farmers win as the program can provide a significant financial opportunity as schools' purchasing dollars are re-directed to the local economy.

And communities win as it provides opportunities to build family and community engagement. Buying from

local producers and processors creates new jobs.

Top products for the farm to school sales in Arkansas are apples, watermelon, berries, sweet potatoes, and lettuce.

In the most recent legislative session, we sought to strengthen the program with Act 506. This legislation establishes a Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program and creates a Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator Position within the Arkansas Agriculture Department to administer the program. This expansion will help to children to develop healthy eating habits even earlier.

In Arkansas, 47 school districts are using farm to school practices. That's an impact on 95,605 students. But there thousands more who could still benefit.

Making local food purchases do not require any extra paperwork on the part of the farmer or the school. The best way to get started is to find out who is interested in farm to school in your area. You can do so by visiting [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org).