

A Working History of Farm to School Legislation in Oregon **Updated August 2013**

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Farm to School Legislation in Oregon in 2013: House Bill 2649

In 2013, the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network's Policy Workgroup* submitted House Bill 2649, which requested \$5,000,000 to continue the Farm to School and School Garden grant program created via House Bill 2800 in 2011.

The legislature voted unanimously for HB 2649 at a reduced funding level of \$500,000. Additionally, based on the Governor's proposal to continue the program at 2011 levels, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) budget independently provided approximately \$200,000 in funding. On the final day of the session, legislators allocated \$500,000 more, bringing the total funding for Farm to School and School Garden grants to nearly \$1,200,000 for the 2013-15 biennium. Read more about this win [here](#).

As with the 2011 pilot, the funds were awarded to school districts through competitive grants to purchase qualified Oregon foods (up to \$0.15 per lunch) and to do food, garden, and agriculture-based educational activities. HB 2649 eliminated the requirement that precisely 87.5% of each grant support procurement, and that precisely 12.5% support educational activities. School districts must now show that they will do both program components in order to receive grant funds, but the percentage allocation between the two is more flexible. ODE must ensure that at least 80% of *total* grant funds support procurement, and that at least 10% of total grant funds support related educational activities. Read about the 19 districts who will receive funding in this round of grants [here](#).

Fall 2012 Update

Due to a statewide hiring freeze, ODE was unable to rehire for the position of Farm to School and School Garden Coordinator following Joan Ottinger's retirement in 2011. As a result, ODE lacked capacity to administer the Farm to School and School Garden grant program that passed in 2011. In the summer of 2012, Rick Sherman was hired to fill the position, and launched the grant program. Eleven out of 19 applicant school districts [received funds](#), which they spent between January and June 2013. Due to the timing, evaluation of the 2011-13 pilot program was not possible in time for the spring 2013 legislative session, but Farm to School programs were active and in the news during the session.

Farm to School Legislation in Oregon in 2011: House Bill 2800

In 2011, the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network submitted House Bill 2800, requesting \$22,600,000 out of general funds to:

1. Reimburse school districts up to \$0.15 cents per meal for the purchase of Oregon grown or processed food products
2. Fund food-based, agriculture-based, and garden-based educational activities in school districts

For a grant received under this bill, each school district was required to spend 87.5% of funds on food reimbursements, and 12.5% of funds on related educational activities. The House and Senate voted unanimously to support House Bill 2800, although the total budget of the bill was reduced to \$200,000. Despite the reduction in overall funding for the bill, in a year when many programs saw funding cuts or were eliminated entirely, farm to school and school garden advocates considered this new funding from the state a significant win.

Summer 2010 Update

In January 2010, Michelle M. Ratcliffe was hired as the new Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Farm to School Coordinator, after previously working on Farm to School at Ecotrust.

Farm to School Legislation in 2009: House Bill 2800

In 2009, the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network submitted House Bill 2800 requesting \$22,580,000 from general funds to:

1. Reimburse Sponsors of the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program 15 cents per lunch, and 7 cents per breakfast to buy Oregon agricultural products:
 - a. 55,000,000 Lunches @ .15 = \$8,250,000 per year X 2 years = \$16,500,000
 - b. 22,000,000 Breakfasts @ .07 = \$1,540,000 per year X 2 years = \$3,080,000
2. Provide grants for complementary food and garden-based education:
 - a. 150 grants of up to \$10,000 per school year for each of two years = \$3,000,000

Over 80 organizations representing tens of thousands of Oregonians formally endorsed House Bill 2800. The Policy Work Group of the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network, along with many concerned parents, children, farmers, food service staff, and other community members advocated tirelessly for the bill, including providing testimony to the legislature on two separate occasions. Although House Bill 2800 did not pass, momentum and statewide support for the bill grew exponentially. A testament to the value of the bill and the breadth of support it garnered, House Bill 2800 was in play until the last week of the session. Ultimately, the bill hit a budget wall: In response to a deep recession, the Legislature was tasked with decreasing government spending while still protecting essential services, and legislators had to make the tough decision *not to fund any new bills*. But there was one farm to school win in the 2009 session – the Oregon Department of Education's Farm to School Coordinator position was saved— no small task with the Department facing severe budget cuts.

Farm to School Legislation in Oregon in 2007 and 2008

The Oregon Legislature first considered farm to school and school garden legislation in 2007 when a coalition of over 80 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Oregonians endorsed a trio of farm to school and school garden bills. These bills proposed to:

- HB 3307 - Create a single focus position within the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to ready the Oregon agricultural community to work with Oregon schools;
- HB 3476 - Create a farm to school program in the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and reimburse school districts that utilize Oregon agricultural products; and
- HB 3185 - Provide grants to schools throughout the state to start or maintain school gardens.

These bills passed unanimously out of the House Subcommittee on Education Innovation and the full House Education Committee. The Joint Ways & Means Committee took no action on the three bills, although a Farm to School Coordinator position was established in the ODA in the final iteration of the department's budget. Cory Schreiber was hired as the ODA's Farm to School Project Manager.

During the 2008 Supplemental Session, Oregon Legislators responded to an urgent need to fill an inter-agency gap in coordination related to farm to school and school garden programs between ODA and ODE. Though ODA had the coordinator position to work with the agriculture community, ODE is the agency that oversees school food. In response, legislators unanimously passed HB 3601A, creating position authority for a Farm to School and School Garden Coordinator in the Oregon Department of Education Child Nutrition Program who would:

1. Assist school districts in utilizing Oregon agricultural products and produce from school gardens;
2. Promote food and garden-based educational activities;
3. Coordinate farm to school and school garden activities with school district wellness policies;
4. Report to the 75th Legislative Assembly on activities conducted as part of the pilot program; and
5. Coordinate with ODA's farm to school activities.

In July 2008, ODE hired Joan Ottinger as its Farm to School and School Garden Coordinator.

The Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network (OFSSGN) & Policy Workgroup
Convening regularly since 2007, the mission of the OFSSGN is to convene statewide leadership to promote the health and well-being of youth, families, farms and the environment by increasing access to locally grown and locally processed food in schools and by supporting food and garden-based education in Oregon.

To ensure that diverse perspectives and key players are involved in shaping farm to school in Oregon, the Network includes representatives from Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Education, OSU Extension, non-profit organizations, school food services administrators, distributors, youth, public health professionals, farms and food producers, and educators.

*The Policy Workgroup of the Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network consists of more than 40 organizations and agencies representing agriculture, health, environmental, economic development, education, and hunger organizations. It is currently co-led by [Upstream Public Health](#) and [Ecotrust](#). For the 2013 Legislative Session, Upstream was able to hire a contract lobbyist to talk daily to key legislators, in addition to the grassroots lobbying of Network members.

Background:

Oregon Farm to School policy approach

Check out [this analysis](#) of the Oregon Farm to School policy approach and collection of associated [intervention materials](#) that was conducted by the Center for Training and Research Translation in 2012 (covers legislative efforts through 2011).

Farm to school programs

Farm to school programs are typically defined as those practices that connect local food producers and processors with schools and school communities. Effective programs combine food and garden-based education with local food procurement in the classroom, cafeteria, and community through activities such as field trips to farms and on-site gardening [1].

Farm to school and school garden programs are a win for Oregon's kids and a win for Oregon's agricultural community. These programs have been shown to:

- Increase children's participation in the school meals program and consumption of fruits and vegetables, thereby improving childhood nutrition, reducing hunger and preventing obesity and obesity-related diseases [2-3];
- Improve children's and the communities' knowledge about, and attitudes toward, agriculture, food, nutrition and the environment [4-5];
- Increase market opportunities for farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors and food manufacturers [6];
- Support economic development [6]; and
- Promote food security while reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and reliance on oil.

Importance of school food for children

For many Oregon children, school meals may be their primary source of food and nutrients all day. The significance of school meals cannot be overstated. Research shows that children who eat breakfast do better in school and get better grades [6]. Increasing participation rates in school meal programs is relevant in the fight against obesity because children who eat school lunch are known to consume twice the servings of fruits and vegetables and greater amounts of grains and dairy than students who don't participate in the school meal program [7]. Students who eat school lunch may have significantly reduced rates of overweight [8]. Research also shows that procurement of local agricultural products for the lunch line, when coupled with food and garden-based education, also increases student participation rates in school meal programs [1]. Only one fifth of Oregon's 11th graders consume the recommended amount of fruits and

vegetables [9]. Increasing access to and availability of fruits and vegetables through farm to school and school garden activities contributes to the health and well-being of Oregon’s youth and helps combat obesity.

Economics of school food

After schools have paid their fixed costs, there remains approximately \$1.20 for school food services to spend for food on the plate. To ensure that students get a balanced meal, USDA regulations stipulate what must be served. As a result, schools spend approximately 22% of their food dollars on milk, 28% on fruits and vegetables, 10% on grains, and 40% on protein. One might say school food services operate on a “fixed income.” When food prices go up, as they are currently, USDA does not adjust reimbursement rates for the cost of food. Additionally, schools rely heavily on the USDA commodity program to provide them with low cost foods.

Other than the Farm to School grants awarded via HB2800 and 2649, the state of Oregon does not contribute additional funds to support implementation of the National School Lunch Program. There has never been a more important time for Oregon to fund school meal programs. Existing state investments in ODA and ODE coupled with the urgent need for state funding of school food creates a unique opportunity for the Oregon agricultural community to meet that need.

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