

# Healthy Local Food



EcoExperience • Minnesota State Fair 2013

Summary Report

# Summary

The Healthy Local Food exhibit of the EcoExperience at the Minnesota State Fair 2013 was organized by Renewing the Countryside, who has been organizing this exhibit annually since EcoExperience began in 2006. The twelve day event began on Thursday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> and ended on Monday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013. The theme of this year's exhibit was "Farm to School: Good for Children, Farmers, and Communities," and attendance was estimated to be 247,000 people to the EcoExperience building over the entire twelve days.

## Purpose:

Educate MN State Fair visitors on what Farm to School is and why it matters in Minnesota. The exhibit highlighted the benefits Farm to School brings to school children, families, schools, farmers, and communities, and provided tips for supporting Farm to School in Minnesota.

## Partners:

Whole Foods Market,  
HealthPartners,  
Minnesota Farm to School Network,

*The Minnesota Farm to School Network is comprised of: Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Agriculture/Minnesota Grown, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Minnesota Extension, Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota School Nutrition Association, USDA Rural Development, and the Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships.*

## Planning committee:

Several members of the Farm to School Leadership Team from MISA, MDH, UMN Extension, IATP, and BCBS served on a planning committee to advise Renewing the Countryside staff on what the Farm to School exhibit should include and review content for the display.

## Volunteers:

Over 100 volunteers donated their time to help with cooking demonstrations, handing out local food samples, and run the children's activity area over the course of the twelve day event.

Healthy Local Foods Presented by:



renewing the countryside

Healthy Local Foods Partners:



HealthPartners®

WHOLE FOODS  
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The Farm to School Exhibit Partners:



With additional support from: Coop Partners Warehouse and the Wedge Community Co-op, Peace Coffee, Wild Rumpus Bookstore, the Red Balloon Bookstore.

The Cooking Demonstration Stage was provided by Domain Architecture & Design, Dakota Surfaces and Warners' Stellan Appliance Company.

Event photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/103986438@N08/sets/72157636093176386/>

# Exhibit Description

**1. Farm to School informational Display:** The Farm to School informational display consisted of six, three-sided towers and one additional panel. Each tower displayed a large Farm to School photograph, information on the benefits of Farm to School, and an interactive chalkboard or hangtag survey question. The three towers with hangtag surveys included a question designed for adult visitors and the three towers with chalkboard included a survey question for children and adults. All ages were welcome and encouraged to participate in each of the survey questions. See Appendix A for the complete informational display content.

## **Tower 1: What is Farm to School?**

- i. Content: Farm to School is a nationwide collaborative effort to connect school districts with local farmers for the purpose of serving healthy school meals while utilizing local fresh foods.
- ii. Hangtag Question 1: What does a fair and just food system mean to you?

## **Tower 2: Good for Children**

- iii. Content: Farm to School encourages children to adopt healthier eating habits and helps them develop positive social skills and higher academic achievement
- iv. Chalkboard Question 1: What is your favorite Farm to School food?

## **Tower 3: Good for Farmers**

- v. Content: Farm to School allows farmers to create positive relationships with schools and children, and provides new, stable markets for their products.
- vi. Chalkboard Question 2: What kind of farm would you like to visit?





## Tower 4: Good for Community

- vii. Content: Farm to School strengthens relationships between school staff, parents, and the community at large while providing opportunities for increased economic activity and job growth.
- viii. Hangtag Question 2: Why is Farm to School good for your community?

## Tower 5: Look how much school lunch has changed

- ix. Content: Photo of new lunch meal patterns, a lunch tray from before the regulations took effect, and one from after
- x. Chalkboard Question 3: What healthy local food would you like to see in your school lunch?

## Tower 6: What can parents and community members do to support Farm to School?

- xi. Content: Action steps for parents and community members on how they can get involved with Farm to School and the local food system in their community.
- xii. Hangtag Question 3: What can you do to support Farm to School in your community?

## Additional panel:

Farm to School timeline tracing back the concept of Farm to School to the 1600's through the growth of Farm to School over the last few years in the United States.

**The Roots of FARM TO SCHOOL**

**Today: Farm to School is bigger and better than ever!**

During the 2011-2012 school year, an estimated 4,746,400 students were reached at 11,429 schools by Farm to School programs across the country. Thousands of school gardens have been planted and many are supplying vegetables and fruits to their cafeterias.

**2012-2013: New school meal patterns change the face of school nutrition**

The new meal pattern standards require schools to offer more fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods, offer only fat-free or low-fat milk, and limit calories, saturated and trans fat, and sodium. Menus must also be based on food group requirements rather than nutrient calculations. Schools in compliance with the new school meal patterns can receive an additional 6 cents per student meal - the first increase in school meal reimbursement (beyond inflation) in over 30 years.

**2009: USDA established the Farm to School Team**

The Farm to School Team helps connect schools (K-12) with regional and local farms in order to serve healthy meals using locally produced foods.

**2010: The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act is passed**

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (also known as The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act) included \$1 million in mandatory funding for a Farm to School competitive grant program. The funds are designed to help farmers, schools, and nonprofit organizations start and maintain successful Farm to School and school garden projects. This act also required the USDA to develop new nutrition standards for school meals.

**2000: The USDA's National Farm to School Program begins**

The USDA formally recognized the growth of the Farm to School movement, allowing for program development, research, and policy work at the national level.

**Mid 1990s: A new wave of school gardens emerges.**

After nearly disappearing by the 1980s, The American Horticultural Society held a symposium focused on youth gardening in 1993, entitled "Children, Plants, and Gardens: Educational Opportunities." The aim was to recognize ways in which children's gardens could support educational curricula. This generated a new wave of school gardens. In 1995, California's State School Superintendent Delaine Eidson mandated a garden in every school to "create opportunities for our children to discover fresh food, make healthier food choices, and become better nourished."

**2009: The new Farm Bill allows "geographic preference" in school food purchasing**

Most school meal programs rely in part on federal child nutrition funds. To ensure these funds are used wisely, the federal government has purchasing regulations in place that schools must use to ensure that they get "the best and most responsive products at the lowest price." Geographic preference lets schools give "extra credit" to food that is grown locally within their food vendor bidding process. A school system that has adopted a geographic preference policy can easily justify buying the local product over a similar quality, similarly priced product grown elsewhere.

**Late 1990s: Schools begin purchasing from local farmers**

The contemporary movement of purchasing food for school meals from local farmers started with the launch of two Farm to School pilot projects in California and Florida in 1996-1997.

**1916: Momentum builds around WWI food production**

Over one million students contributed to the production of food during the war effort, following a proclamation by President Woodrow Wilson. The tagline for the U.S. government's school gardening program was "A Garden for Every Child. Every Child in a Garden."

**1891: School gardens make their debut in the United States.**

Massachusetts Horticulture Society sent Henry Lincoln Clapp to study school gardens in Europe. On his return, he established the first school garden in America at George Putnam School in Roxbury, Massachusetts.

**1600s: Philosophers recognize the importance of school gardens.**

The Czech philosopher John Amos Comenius stated: "A school garden should be connected to every school, where children can have the opportunity for leisurely gazing upon trees, flowers, and herbs, and are taught to appreciate them." A number of philosophers continued to support this idea, and the early school gardens began in Europe.

[www.renewingthecountryideafarmtoschool](http://www.renewingthecountryideafarmtoschool)

# Cooking Demonstrations

Three 30-minute cooking demonstration took place per day, at 11am, 1pm, and 3pm featuring healthy recipes with locally sourced ingredients. Three K-12 schools participated as cooking demo chefs and included highlights of their Farm to School program into their presentations.

Cooking Demonstration Schedule 2013				
Date	School/Restaurant	Presenter(s)	Recipe	Local Ingredients
Thursday 8/22	Bemidji Area Schools	Marlene Webb, Margene Parkos, Josh Wells, Kim Peterson, Chef Mike Holleman, and Chef Coleen Donnelly	Sicilian Chicken Bowl	Broccoli, red onion, red pepper, cauliflower, oregano, basil and garlic from Headwaters Growers Association; Yellow squash and zucchini from Solway School Garden; and Carrots from Molnar's Garden
Friday 8/23	Hopkins Nutrition and Lifestyle Services (Hopkins Public Schools)	Andrew Karr, Thalesa Clemens, and Tonya Christianson (Barb Mechura present)	Summer Vegetable Frittata	Basil, Swiss chard, parsley and zucchini from Riverbend Farm; eggs from Forsman Farm
Saturday 8/24	Whole Foods Market	Chef Ani Loizzo	Zucchini Spaghetti with Fresh Tomato Sauce	
Sunday 8/25	Whole Foods Market	Chef Ani Loizzo	Walking Taco Salad	
Monday 8/26	St. Paul Public Schools	Chef Adam Simmons	Chicken Suqaar	
Tuesday 8/27	St. Paul Public Schools	Chef Adam Simmons	Thai Sweet and Sour Chicken	
Wednesday 8/28	Birchwood Café	Marshall Paulsen	Three Bean Salad with Horseradish and Dill featured in Minneapolis Public Schools	Black beans from Whole Grain Milling; Peas from SnoPac; Radishes and dill from Heartbeet Farm; Carrots from Featherstone Farm; Zucchini from Riverbend Farm; Horseradish from Garden Farme
Thursday 8/29	Kitchen in the Market / Tastebud Catering	Molly Herrmann	Basil Rice	Onions and carrots from Bossy Acres
Friday 8/30	Sen Yai Sen Lek	Joe Hatch-Surisook	Gay Satay	Produce from Big River Farms
Saturday 8/31	University of Minnesota Dining Services	Scott Pampuch (representing "Farm to University")	Refrigerator pickles	Cucumbers, garlic, and dill from Cornercopia Student Farm
	Whole Foods Market	Chef Ani Loizzo	"Cheesy" Kale Chips	
Sunday 9/1	Whole Foods Market	Chef Ani Loizzo	Sweet Potato Waffles with Apple Maple Syrup – a children's recipe contest winner	
Monday 9/2	Gardens of Salonica	Anna Christoforides	Hortopita	Eggs and greens from MN; feta from WI









## Kids Activity Area

Kids activity table with a nutrition trivia wheel and healthy eating coloring worksheets designed and provided by HealthPartners YumPower team and Veggie Grand Prix: veggie car racing with local vegetables. Children who participated in trivia or racing received an “Eat Your Sweets” (corn) or Farm Ninja temporary tattoo, weekly veggie tracker, or a Farm to School ninja magnet.





## Host Station

Local organizations welcomed visitors to the exhibit and introduced them to their organization's work related to healthy local food.

Host Station Schedule	
Date	Host Organization
Thursday 8/22	Renewing the Countryside
Friday 8/23	Minnesota Department of Health
Saturday 8/24	Minnesota School Nutrition Association
Sunday 8/25	Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Monday 8/26	Urban Roots
Tuesday 8/27	Midwest Food Connection
Wednesday 8/28	University of Minnesota Extension
Thursday 8/29	We Can Grow
Friday 8/30	Project Sweetie Pie
Saturday 8/31	Spark Youth Action Labs
Sunday 9/1	Renewing the Countryside
Monday 9/2	Do It Green Minnesota!

## Prize Drawing

Names and e-mail addresses were collected and entered to win a local food book or farm ninja t-shirt. Twelve winners (one for each day of the fair) were selected randomly at the end of the fair and prizes were mailed to them. Books were provided by UPress, Wild Rumpus, and The Red Balloon Bookshop.

## Farm to School Video

A collection of Farm to School videos featuring Minnesota schools was merged into a 1-hour video montage and screened twice each evening of the fair, starting at 7pm. The video can be viewed on Renewing the Countryside's Farm to School Website: <http://renewingthecountryside.org/farm-school>.





## CSA Showcase

Local Community Supported Agriculture farms engaged visitors who wanted to learn more about farming and CSAs.

CSA Showcase Schedule		
Date	CSA Farm	Location
Thursday 8/22	Foxtail Farm	Osceola, Wisconsin
Friday 8/23	Featherstone Farm	Rushford, Minnesota
	Mighty Axe Hops Hub	St. Paul, Minnesota
Saturday 8/24	Lacey "J" Ranch	Zimmerman, Minnesota
Sunday 8/25	Treasured Haven Farm	Rush City, Minnesota
Monday 8/26	Stone's Throw Urban Farm	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Tuesday 8/27	Blackbrook Farm	Clayton, Wisconsin
Wednesday 8/28	Amador Hill Farm and Orchard of Women's Environmental Institute	North Branch, Minnesota
Thursday 8/29	Wozupi TSA	Prior Lake, Minnesota
Friday 8/30	Growing Lots Urban Farm	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Saturday 8/31	Savory Spring Farms	Wisconsin
Sunday 9/1	Lacey "J" Ranch	Zimmerman, Minnesota
Monday 9/2	Crazy Boy Farm	Rush City, Minnesota



# Sampling Station

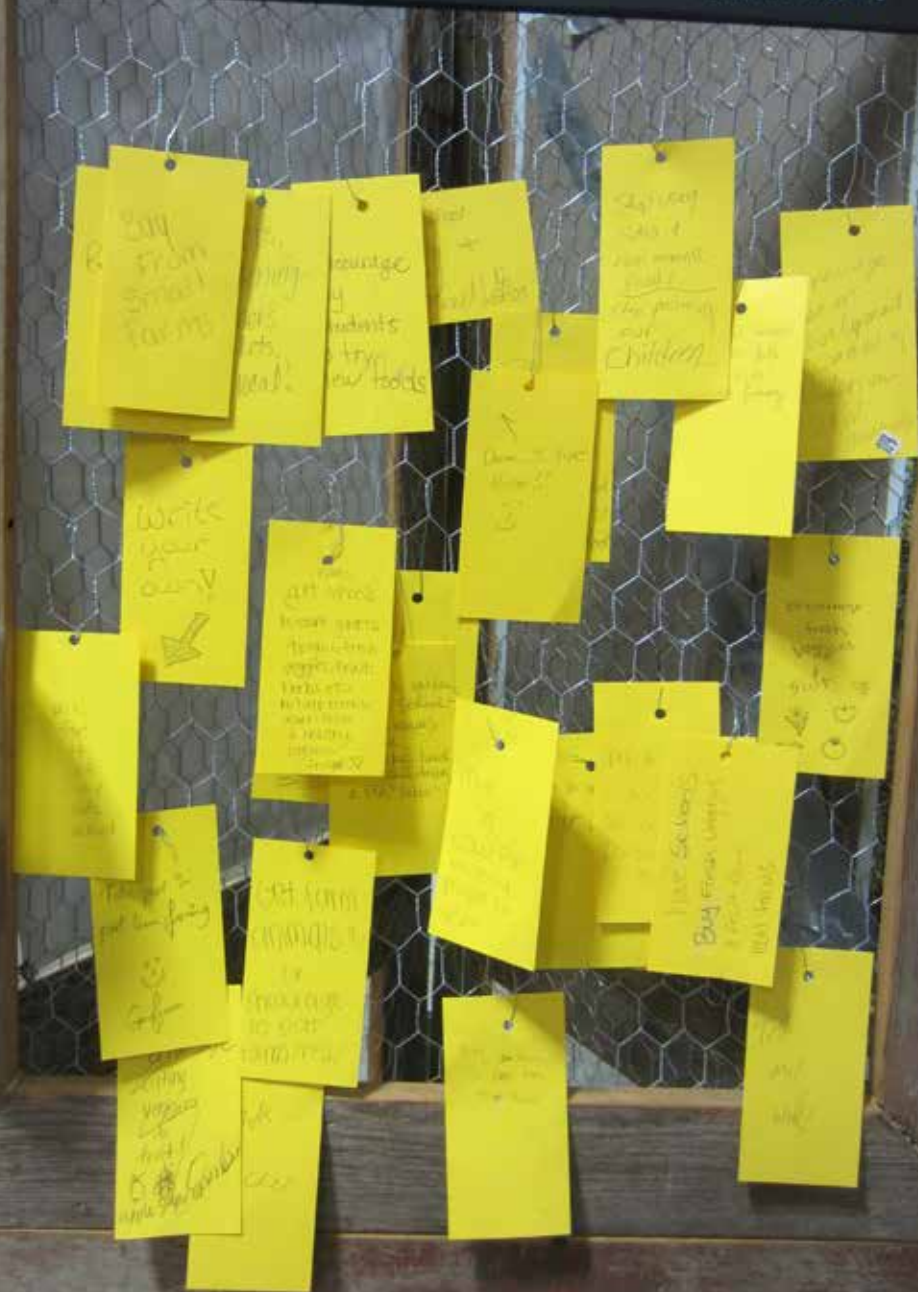
Local food samples handed out all day, every day. A different item was provided each day by Co-op Partners Warehouse and farmers were invited to hand them out in person.

Sampling Station Schedule		
Date	Food Item	Producer / Company
Thursday 8/22	Herb Gouda	Eichten's Hidden Acres, Center City MN
Friday 8/23	Cantaloupe	Featherstone Farm, Rushford MN
Saturday 8/24	Cherry and Grape Cherry Tomatoes	Gardens of Eagan, Northfield MN
	Popcorn	Twin Cities Local Food / Patriot Pops, Lamberton MN
Sunday 8/25	Raspberry Pourable Yogurt	Cedar Summit Dairy, New Prague MN
	Flax	Flax and Crafts, Forest Lake MN
Monday 8/26	Watermelon	Gardens of Eagan, Northfield MN
	Buffalo Salami	Buffalo By Bike, Minneapolis MN
Tuesday 8/27	Mild-Medium Salsa and tortilla chips	Salsa Lisa, St. Paul; Whole Grain Milling, Welcome MN
	Apples	Hoch Orchards, LaCrescent MN
Wednesday 8/28	Chevre cheese on a French baguette	Donnay Dairy, Kimball, MN; Rustica, Minneapolis MN
	Summer Sausage	Thousand Hills Cattle Co., Cannon Falls MN
Thursday 8/29	Sungold Cherry Tomatoes	Featherstone Farm, Rushford MN
	Wild Rice Salad	White Earth Nation, White Earth MN
	Cheese	Philia Foods, Wisconsin
Friday 8/30	Sunny Road Raw Milk Cheddar	Morningstar Farm in Cokato, MN
Saturday 8/31	Hot dogs w/Triple Crown BBQ Sauce	Thousand Hills Cattle Co., Cannon Falls, MN AND Acme Organics, Minneapolis MN
	Peace Coffee	Peace Coffee, Minneapolis MN
Sunday 9/1	Chocolate Milk	Cedar Summit Dairy, New Prague MN
Monday 9/2	String Cheese	Burnett Cheese, Grantsburg WI





## What can you do to support Farm to School in Your Community?



## Hangtag and Chalkboard Survey Results

**Conclusion:** Minnesotans want healthy, locally sourced food and learning opportunities to be available to all Minnesotans, especially school children.

**Hangtag survey responses:** n= 262

The hangtag questions were designed to allow visitors to give lengthy responses to in-depth questions regarding the food system and Farm to School. It was used as an educational tool (reflecting on the information displayed in the exhibit), as well as an information gathering tool for Renewing the Countryside and partners to better understand Minnesotans' thoughts on the food system and Farm to School in Minnesota. The chalkboard questions were designed mainly for children, and were designed to solicit one-word responses and drawings related to Farm to School, as an educational tool and information gathering tool as well.

### Hangtag Question #1:

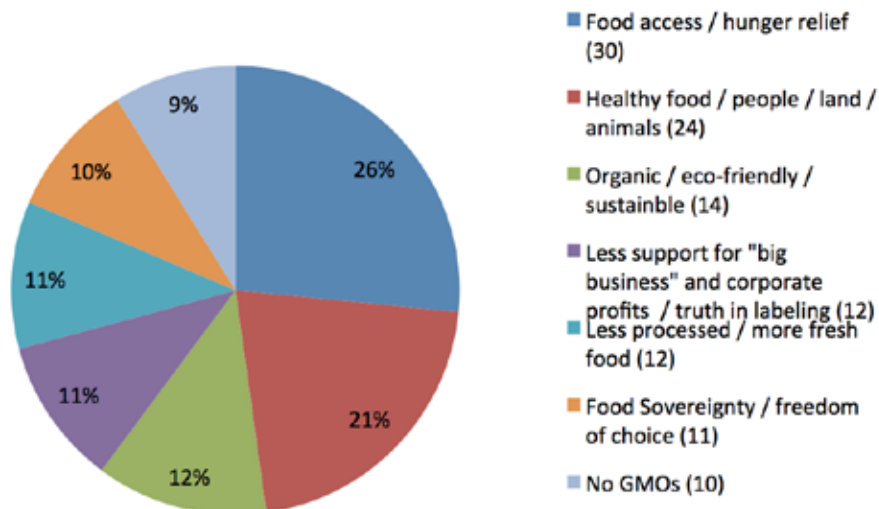
#### What does a fair and just food system mean to you? (n= 102)

This question was included because Renewing the Countryside and partners were particularly interested in studying the difference (if any) between the responses collected to this exact same question during the MN State Fair in 2011 and now. This question received the most responses (n=102), the many whom (26%) want to see less hunger and more healthy food access, particularly locally grown fruits and vegetables. Another strong theme among respondents to this question was that a fair and just food system is one that provides healthy food to nourish healthy people while maintaining healthy land and soil, water, and animals (21%). Several respondents included the word "organic" or "environmentally" friendly as part of their definition of a fair and just food system (12%). A similar number of people want less "corporate control" of the food system, truth in labeling, and less processed / more fresh foods available (11%). A few people touched on the idea of food sovereignty and freedom of choice over one's food choices, which is related to their interest in decreasing "corporate control" of the food system (10%). A small group of respondents simply stated that a fair and just food system means "No GMOs" or "No Monsanto." Additional responses are listed underneath Graph 1; number of respondents per theme is included in parenthesis.

As discussed in our previous report on similar data<sup>1</sup>, it is unclear how well

<sup>1</sup> Turnquist, M. (2012). *Exploring Minnesotans' Thoughts on the Food System: Where We Are and Where We Would Like to Be. A Technical Field Report. Unpublished Master's Thesis Manuscript from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.*

**Graph 1: What does a fair and just food system mean to you?**



the respondents understand the issues they are writing about, or if they are simply repeating things they hear on the news and in popular literature. This round of responses (2013) is very similar to the data that was collected in 2011, with the most popular response being related to hunger and food access issues. One very noticeable difference this round is that there were very few responses related to supporting local/small farmers compared to two years ago, where that was a stronger theme. Additional responses are listed under the graph.

Additional responses include:

- Supporting small/local farmers (9)
- Education for children and adults on food systems/agriculture (8)
- Better agricultural policies / government regulations or deregulation of food system (7)
- Tasty food / food tastes good (6)
- Community connectedness / support (4)
- Vegetarian / vegan / vegetable based diets (3)
- Less food waste (1)
- Humane treatment of animals (1)

## Hangtag Question #2:

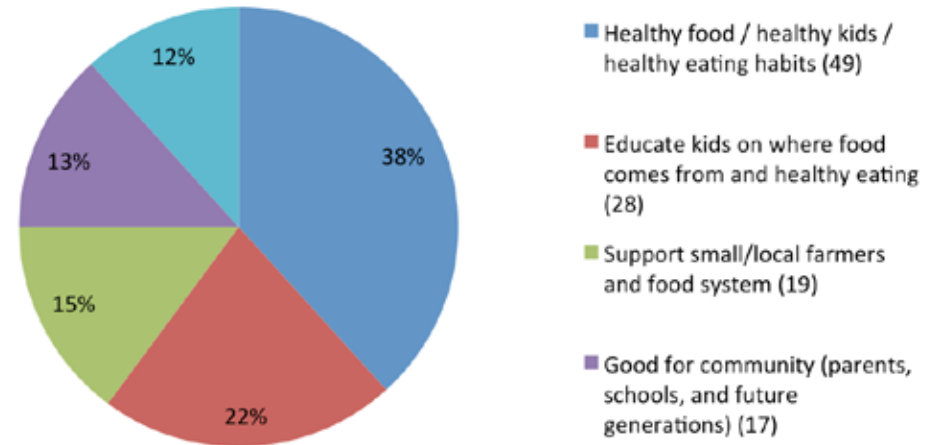
### Why is Farm to School good for your community? (n= 87)

This question was asked for the first time this year, as it was used as an interactive learning tool as well as a data collection tool supporting this year's Farm to School theme. Many respondents believe that Farm to School programs provide healthier food options through school meal programs, and encourage healthy eating behaviors among children both during and outside of school (38%). Many also feel that Farm to School programs help to educate children on where their food comes from and developing healthy eating habits (22%). A smaller number of respondents identified the benefits Farm to School offers to small/local farmers (15%) and communities at large (13%), while another 12% recognized the potential benefit for the environment as a result of local food sourcing for school meals. Respondents also feel that locally sourced food tastes better, that more fresh/less processed food is better for the health of school children, and that Farm to School has the potential to boost the local economy. Additional responses are listed below the graph.

Additional responses include:

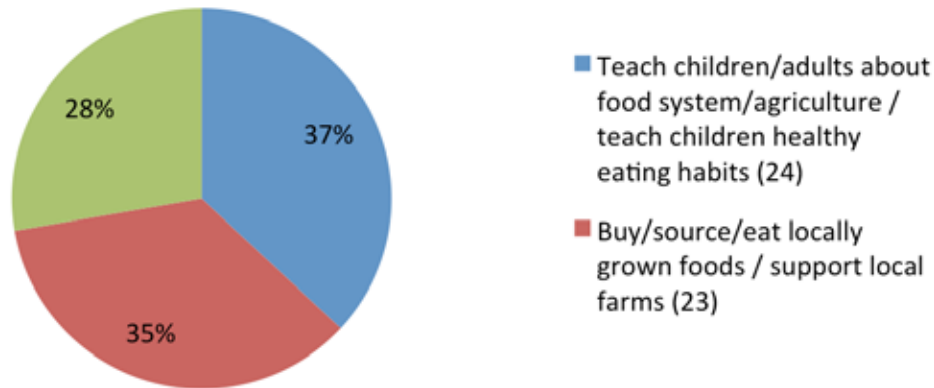
- Provides more fresh, less processed foods to children (9)
- Supports the local economy / job creation (7)
- Tastes good / better (5)
- Reduces GMO use / kids learn about GMOs (4)
- Reduces food waste (1)
- Humane treatment of animals (1)

**Graph 2: Why is F2S good for your community?**





**Graph 3: What can you do to support F2S in your community?**



**Hangtag Question #3:**

**What can you do to support Farm to School in your community? (n= 73)**

This was another new question related to the Farm to School theme this year. Answers varied more widely among respondents to this question than the other two hangtag questions, but three main themes emerged. Many respondents offered ways to support Farm to School that include teaching others about food systems/agriculture and healthy eating behaviors (37%), buying locally grown food and supporting local farmers (35%), and growing their own food, planting a garden, and/or starting a school garden (28%). Additional responses are listed below the graph, including ideas such as talking with their school board, school food service director, or school administrators about the food available in their child's school.

Additional responses include:

- Buy/eat organic and environmentally friendly food and farming methods (9)
- Use more fresh / less processed foods (9)
- Talk to school board / food service director / administration about healthy food at school (6)
- Encourage healthy eating among family and friends (6)
- Stop buying/growing GMOs (3)
- Start / participate in community gardens and grocery co-ops (3)
- Support humane treatment of animals (2)
- Reduce food waste / recycle food scraps to pigs (1)

[illegible]

This question was presented as multiple choice and geared toward children, although all visitors were encouraged to participate. Graph 4, below, depicts how many times each item was written or drawn on the chalkboard. Answers to choose from were dairy farm, vegetable farm, or orchard, and additional space was available for visitors to write in their own choice. The numbers in parenthesis following the food items indicate how many times that item was written or drawn over the entire twelve days of the fair. The most popular answer was orchard, followed by vegetable farm, then dairy farm. The most popular write-in answers were beef, sheep, and bee farms. Additional answers are listed below the table.

- Organic (12)
- Chicken (10)
- Ant, and blueberry (2)
- Llama, goat, all of them, berry, brew, corn, hydroponic, soybean, organic, peach, orange, grape/vineyard, and strawberry (1)

### What is your favorite Farm to School food? (n= 327)

Additional responses include:

- Lettuce / salad / salad bar (5)
- Cucumbers and green beans (4)
- Beets, grapes, orange, and pizza (3)
- Banana, broccoli, kale, onions, pears, pork, pumpkins, raspberries, and spinach (2)
- Blueberries, chocolate milk, cornbread, cucumber, eggplant, fava beans, halibut (in Alaska), hot dogs, hummus, jicama, kiwi, macaroni

and cheese, maple syrup, melon, peppers, rhubarb, rice, wild rice, and zucchini (1)

### Chalkboard Question #3:

#### What healthy local food would you like to see in your school lunch? (n = 211)

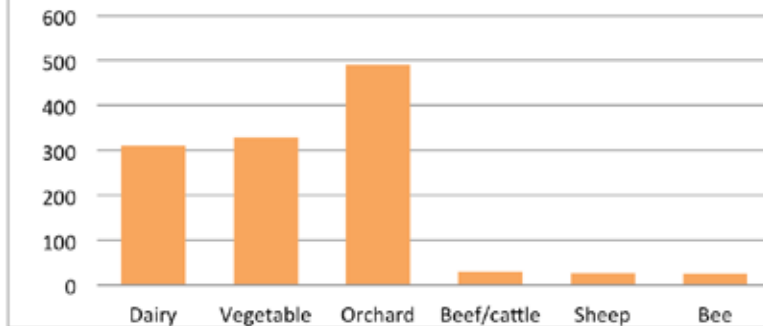
This was an open-ended question geared toward children, but all visitors were encouraged to participate. Graph 6 depicts how many times each item was written or drawn on the chalkboard. The numbers in parenthesis following the food items indicate how many times that item was written or drawn over the entire twelve days of the fair. The most popular answer was apples, followed closely by corn/corn on the cob and watermelon, which aligns exactly with the answers listed for the previous question about favorite Farm to School Foods. Additional answers are listed below the graph.

Additional responses include:

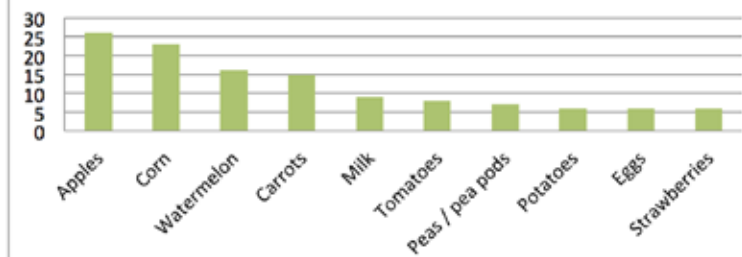
- Almond milk, pea pods, sweet potatoes (fries/chips/baked), and tomatoes (3)
- Asparagus, cheese, cucumber, fish, fried chicken, grapes, greens, honey, hummus, ice cream, mango, organic milk, peaches, pumpkins, raspberries, rice/wild rice, spinach, and squash (2)
- Baked potatoes, bean, black beans and rice, cabbage, cauliflower, chocolate milk, coffee, cookies, corn dogs, craisins, edamame, eggplant, eggs, goat cheese, grass fed bison, lettuce, macaroni and cheese, milk, milk alternatives, NO chocolate milk, nuts, onions, pad thai, peanut butter, pears, peppers, salad, tacos, tofu, venison, whole grain bread, whole milk, whole wheat pancakes, and zucchini (1)

The chalkboard surveys indicate that those who participated have a fairly good understanding of which foods can be produced locally in Minnesota. The number of respondents (total n= 1,812) indicates that this method of collecting information from state fair visitors was successful in engaging people in an interesting way with only a small window of time. The responses from both the hangtags and the chalkboard surveys provide a strong indication that Minnesotans do support Farm to School and healthy eating among children in Minnesota.

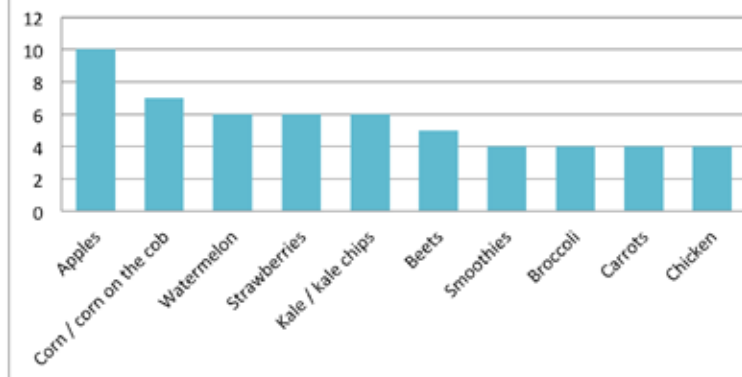
**Graph 4: What kind of farm would you like to visit?**



**Graph 5: What is your favorite F2S food?**



**Graph 6: What healthy local food would you like to see in your school lunch?**





# Conclusions

Overall, the Farm to School exhibit was a success in engaging MN state fair visitors in learning about and sharing their thoughts on Farm to School and local food system concepts. A number of visitors expressed to Renewing the Countryside staff that they enjoyed the Farm to School topic this year, and that it is exciting and inspiring to see Farm to School programs grow throughout Minnesota.

Some comments received in writing from visitors and volunteers after the fair include:

- “The farm to school exhibit was my favorite learning experience at the fair this year!”
- “My family and I enjoyed the exhibit--- the games for the kids were fun & creative and the chef session was so well done. Great job!”
- “The children loved the decorated vegetables”
- “Kids vegetable race was a huge success - kids really enjoyed it.”
- “It was fun interacting with both the kids and parents that visited the health foods booth. In my opinion, it was quite popular!!”
- “The veggie racers were appealing, the racers were entertaining and most people seemed interested in playing the game.”
- “The cooks did a great job organizing themselves and were wonderful representatives for healthy school lunches”

Renewing the Countryside would like to extend a huge thank you to Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for inviting us to be exhibitors once again, all of our partners for supporting us year after year, and all the host organizations, samplers, CSA farms, demonstration chefs/schools, prize drawing contributors, and volunteers who made this event a success.





**renewing the countryside**

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