



News Release

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Michigan Legislature Expands Program Serving Locally-Grown Food in Schools

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LANSING—Schools in three regions of Michigan have the opportunity to learn the difference a dime can make in their efforts to serve students Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans. That's due to the expansion of a popular pilot program in the state's School Aid Budget that Governor Rick Snyder signed into law earlier this summer.

Legislators expanded the pilot program, called 10 Cents a Meal for School Kids and Farms, from \$250,000 in state funds to \$375,000 for the upcoming school year. A third, six-county region is being added where schools are eligible to apply for funds via competitive grants, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) announced today.

Schools in 29 counties in Michigan Prosperity Regions 2, 4, and 9 now can apply for the match incentive funding of up to 10 cents a meal to purchase Michigan-grown produce. The program is designed to provide fresh, locally-grown produce to students while investing in state agriculture.

In addition to 23 counties in west and northwest lower Michigan, six new counties have been added to the pilot in the Washtenaw region.

State Sen. Darwin Booher, of Ewart, the original legislative champion of the program, said the results of the first year of the state pilot were compelling. Last school year, food service directors who served 48,000 students in the 16 grant-winning school districts provided nearly 50 different Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans to their students.

"We hopefully will see an increase in the number of schools requesting the 10 Cents a Meal program," Sen. Booher said. "I look forward to seeing this as a big part of our future in our state and in our schools. I'd like to feed 1.4 million kids fresh fruits and vegetables grown in the great state of Michigan. We want this to go statewide."

State Superintendent Brian Whiston agreed that the timing was right for the expansion of the pilot program.

“Schools are serving a greater variety of fruits and vegetables and that is exactly what Michigan farmers grow,” Whiston said. “Additionally, surveys show that school food service directors want to purchase more local produce, and Michigan farmers are interested in selling it to schools.”

In its first year, the program stimulated sales for at least 86 different farms in 28 counties and 16 additional businesses such as processors and distributors, according to a report to the Legislature by MDE, which administers the program.

Food service directors named 30 new foods that they tried in meals.

“The kids are now asking, ‘Any new fruits or veggies to try?’ They keep me on my toes,” one food service director said in an MSU Center for Regional Food Systems survey for the project.

The MDE report is filled with stories and quotes from food service directors, educators, farmers, and other local food businesses such as distributors impacted by 10 Cents a Meal. The full report, quotes, stories, and resources that can help schools be successful in applying for and utilizing 10 Cents funds are available at TenCentsMichigan.org.

MDE receives support for this program from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities, and Prosperity Region offices, which for the upcoming year are Networks Northwest, Grand Valley Metro Council, and the Region 2 Planning Commission.

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Editor’s Note: A map of Michigan’s Prosperity Regions can be found here: http://www.michiganworks.org/files/resources/Prosperity_Map1_430346_7.pdf

These are the counties where schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program, are eligible to apply:

Prosperity Region 2 - Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford

Prosperity Region 4 - Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa

Prosperity Region 9 – Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, and Washtenaw

The following 16 school districts were part of the first year of the state pilot project: Boyne Falls Public, Frankfort-Elberta Area, Glen Lake Community, Leland Public, Manistee Area Public, Northport Public, and Traverse City Area Public schools in northwest lower Michigan (Prosperity Region 2); and Coopersville Area Public, Forest Hills Public, Grand Haven Area Public, Montague Area Public, Muskegon Heights Public School Academy System, Muskegon Public,

Oakridge Public, Ravenna Public, and Whitehall District schools in west Michigan (Prosperity Region 4).

The MDE 10 Cents a Meal report and additional information on the program is available at <http://www.tencentsmichigan.org/>.