

Farm-to-School Forum

November 2, 2006

Great Salt Bay School, Damariscotta, Maine

Below is a summary of the benefits and challenges of creating a farm to school connection that were generated during the presentations and panel discussion:

Benefits & Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity to replace junk food in schools because junk food is not OK • Alternative revenue streams • Farmland produces/contributes more in taxes than it requires in services • Greenhouse projects at Boothbay and Edgecomb schools • Lunchroom as classroom - synergy • Farms create jobs and a hospitable environment for residents and tourists • Program published for other teachers to use • Maine apprentice gardening program: understanding and respect for the environment, knowledge of biology and plants as food, hands-on learning • In the works: Maine state-wide Harvest Lunch Day • Harvest Lunch: more students eating "school" food, positive feedback for staff, learn from students, generate excitement at school and home • Environmental benefits of farms: habitat creation • Food security/sovereignty • Multi-generational farmer involvement • Opportunity: value-added (processing kitchens, freezers) for greater availability • Healthy food as safe food for our schools • Healthy food now to reduce long-term health care costs • Proper nutrition prevents obesity • Scientific data supports nutritional/health safety benefits of local food • Agriculture is an economic base • Reduced fuel costs • Demand for local product is growing eg. Northcenter cold called the Applefarm/Lakeside Orchard • Food as farm promotion • We are all eaters; ample opportunity for good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers need enough demand by school to make it profitable • Farmers need a fair price for their product • Communication between farmer and school is difficult • Selling to schools takes planning by farmer and school • Each school system is taking a different approach • Maintaining farmer relationships (they don't always answer the phone) • Farm supply is inconsistent (type, size, price) • Schools don't always pay quickly, much less in cash • Farmers don't always deliver • Distribution • Why should farmers sell at wholesale when they can sell retail? • Food storage • Lack of financial incentives • Farmers sell high, food service buys low • School schedule vs. harvest schedule • \$ • Fresh food requires more prep than frozen/prepared • Are there enough farmers locally to meet school's food needs? • Food service staff confidence • Properly budget \$ to get the most "bang" for your buck • Local food= more work, time, and paperwork for schools • Prioritizing available funds • Fear of change

habit forming

- Diversification of crops, of tastes, of teachers
- Dept. of Ag./Dept. of Ed. Farm-to-school listserv
- Cultural traditions preserved
- Students have a sense of connections to and pride for food they grew, prepared, and ate!
- Students love to eat
- Opportunity for schools to purchase CSA shares
- Specifically potatoes, eggs, apples, and blueberries
- Schools in Maine are buying Maine produce and want to buy more
- Students learn to value community, their bodies, the democratic process, the power of their choice and voice = life lessons
- Community teaching the students and vice-versa
- We are building confidence
- We have dialogue and we are bringing community together
- We have a movement in Maine
- Different activities in different communities: movement provides opportunities for continuity and cooperation

- Making food kids will eat