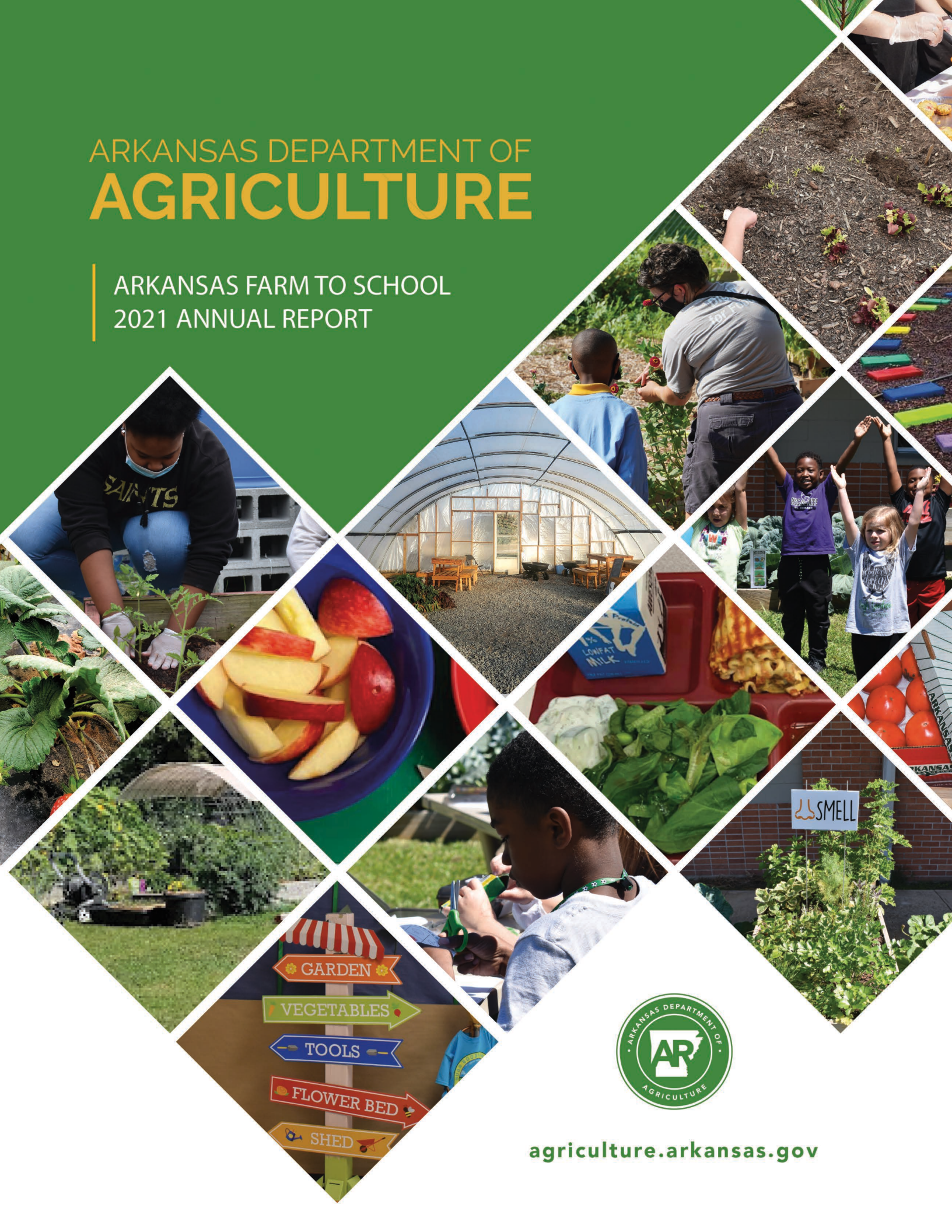


ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ARKANSAS FARM TO SCHOOL 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



agriculture.arkansas.gov

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Respectfully submitted to:
The Honorable Asa Hutchinson, Governor
House and Senate Committees on Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development

Prepared by:
The Arkansas Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Human Services, and the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service.

Written and designed by the following individuals at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture:

- Sarah Lane, Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator
- Joby Miller, Graphic Artist

A special thanks to the following individuals for their contributions to the report: Karen Reynolds, Amy Lyman, and Cynthia Edwards at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture; Suzanne Davidson, Sheila Chastain, and K.D Wooten at the Arkansas Department of Education; Kenya Eddings at the Arkansas Department of Health; Theresa Taylor at the Arkansas Department of Human Services; Sarah David, Crystal Bowne, Jessica Vincent, and Rip Weaver at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service; Mary Thompson and Tanya Collins at Apple Seeds, Inc.; Destiny Schlinker at FoodCorps Arkansas; Sam Stadter at the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance; and A.B. Stewart at Full Circle FarmCorps.

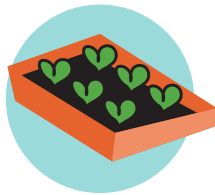
BACKGROUND

Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools, early childhood education sites, and alternative learning environments. Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as educational opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons, and farm field trips.

Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. Farm to school implementation differs by location, but always includes one or more of the following:



ARKANSAS
Farm to School



SCHOOL GARDEN

Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening and farming;



EDUCATION

Students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health, or nutrition; and



LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Local foods are purchased, promoted, and served in the cafeteria, as a snack, or as a taste test.

At the national level, the birth of the phrase “farm to school” can be traced back to the 1990s when pilot projects began in California and Florida to explore the possibility of transforming children’s relationship with food by exposing them to fresh, local food.

Arkansas’s initial steps with farm to school also occurred in the 1990s. More information on the history of Arkansas Farm to School can be found at <https://arfarmtoschool.org/about/history/>.

FARM TO SCHOOL IN ACTION IN FY2021

In fiscal year 2021 (FY2021), schools, farms, state agencies, nonprofits, and other organizations helped the Arkansas Farm to School movement grow. Below is a summary of the cumulative impact of farm to school efforts in Arkansas in FY2021.

SCHOOL GARDENS, EDUCATION, AND LOCAL PROCUREMENT

The three pillars of farm to school are school gardens, education, and local procurement.

SCHOOL GARDENS

A garden is considered a school garden when it supports the learning of children age 18 or younger. This includes schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments.

School gardens are fantastic educational tools and provide students with opportunities to eat healthy foods, connect to nature, and learn about nutrition. School gardens also provide an avenue for students to engage in hands-on learning through gardening and farming. Studies show that when kids are involved in growing food, they are more likely to eat more fruits and vegetables and more willing to try different kinds.

As of October 11, 2021, there are 311 school gardens across the state of Arkansas. The gardens vary in type and include greenhouses, raised beds, and/or containers inside a classroom. Schools grow all types of products, including fruits, vegetables, herbs, chickens, bees, flowers, and more to teach students about our local food system. A map of all the school gardens can be found at <https://arfarmtoschool.org/school-gardens/map/?category=school-gardens&sort=a-z>.



Chicot Elementary, Mabelvale



Pine Bluff High School, Pine Bluff

EDUCATION

Schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments all play a critical role in providing students with avenues to increase their knowledge of how food is grown and produced, their understanding of the importance of healthy, nutritious food to their health and development, and their ability to make healthy food and beverage choices.

In a farm to school program, students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health, or nutrition. This can take on many different forms. Nutrition education can happen through lessons in a school garden and the classroom. It can be a curriculum tailored to illuminate healthy nutrition while also providing take-home recipes for children to try with their parents or guardians. It can also happen in the cafeteria by providing taste tests of locally grown fruits and vegetables and providing learning materials that enhance children's understanding of the foods they are consuming.

Additionally, more advanced lessons in science and math can focus on plants, animals, the natural world, and how our overall health is connected to other processes. There is no specific mold for delivering farm to school and early care educational components.

The following organizations have prioritized farm to school in their education work across Arkansas:

- **Apple Seeds, Inc.**
- **Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance**
- **FoodCorps Arkansas**
- **University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service**



Hugh Goodwin Elementary, El Dorado



Oliver Springs Elementary, Van Buren

Apple Seeds is a nonprofit based in Northwest Arkansas that creates garden-based programs to educate young students about healthy food and works to increase students' access to nutrient-rich foods.

Apple Seeds operates a teaching farm and teaching kitchen in Fayetteville as a place for students to learn, cook, share healthy meals together, and be inspired to do the same in their kitchens at home. The nonprofit also provides cooking education in schools and through farm-to-table cooking classes. Accomplishments in FY2021 include:

- Virtual programming instruction reached 11,238 students;
 - Plant Science & Our Health with 4,879 students
 - Nutrition Labels & Your Food with 6,359 students
- Taught 191 students through Growing My Plate Classes;
- Trained 24 Growing My Plate educators who then went on to instruct 456 students;
- Taught 66 students through the Farm to Table program;
- Developed short, fun, and engaging recipe-based cooking instruction videos that were viewed by 7,153 people; and
- Grew, harvested, and donated 6,285 pounds of fresh farm grown produce.
 - 5,573 portions included Apple Seeds recipes

The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance works with local and national nonprofit organizations as well as state and federal agencies in implementing programs designed to increase access to food and teach low income Arkansans the skills necessary to make healthy food choices.

Some of the impactful programs include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach, technical assistance to expand school breakfast, after-school, and summer meals programs, as well as Cooking Matters - an innovative nutrition education program offering 6-week courses, grocery store tours, and virtual programming that teach individuals and families the skills they need to cook healthy meals and get the most from their food budgets.

The Alliance partners with Arkansas Children's Hospital Community Outreach to lead Cooking Matters at the Store pop-up grocery store tours. These events teach students with limited resources the skills they need to plan and shop for economical, healthy meals. Accomplishments in FY2021 include:

- Taught 3,229 total participants including 1,635 student participants; and
- Trained 98 K-12 Arkansas teachers on a universal lesson plan to incorporate nutrition principles into any subject at any grade level.

FoodCorps is part of the AmeriCorps service network that receives a portion of its funding from the federal AmeriCorps program. FoodCorps service members connect kids to healthy food in schools. Members focus on hands-on learning, healthy school meals, and a schoolwide culture of health.

FoodCorps Arkansas places trained FoodCorps AmeriCorps service members in schools across the state for a year of service. Nine FoodCorps Arkansas service members served in Springdale, Conway, Van Buren, and Cedarville school districts. Accomplishments in FY2021 include:

- Reached 4,315 students;
- Led 1,785 hands-on lessons;
- Led 870 taste tests in the classroom;
- Engaged volunteers in 256.25 hours of volunteer work; and
- 45% of students in Arkansas showed improvement in their overall preference for vegetables.*

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data provided is from the 2018 - 2019 Vegetable Preference Survey.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service's (UADA)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed) promotes nutrition education so that Arkansas children and their families can eat better and live better. The program is the result of a partnership between the Cooperative Extension Service, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service. The goal of SNAP-Ed is to provide educational nutrition programs that help SNAP participants and those eligible for SNAP benefits make healthier food choices and adopt active lifestyles that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA Food Guidance System.

Cooperative Extension agents, located in all of Arkansas's 75 counties, bring nutrition education lessons to schools to assist in farm to school activities that grow students' knowledge of locally grown, healthy foods. Accomplishments in FY2021 include:

- Taught 4,000 lessons in schools;
- Reached 23,137 children participating in nutrition education (all youth participating in all locations, unduplicated);
- Had 11,108 total direct education contacts with children using garden-based curricula (duplicated + unduplicated);
- 43% of individuals taught increased their knowledge of Arkansas-grown foods; and
- 84% of individuals taught intend to follow MyPlate guidelines as a result of participating in the UADA Cooperative Extension Service SNAP-Ed program.

LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments have the opportunity to serve local foods to students. Local foods can be served in the classroom, cafeteria, or other locations depending on the structure of the learning environment.

USDA feeding programs such as the National School Lunch Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program, as well as food service programs that do not operate under that umbrella, have the opportunity to purchase, promote, and serve locally grown foods. In the USDA's vision, child nutrition programs championing U.S. agriculture and proudly promoting locally sourced foods are the norm, not the exception.

The Arkansas Legislature defines local food as food products that are grown in Arkansas and/or packaged and processed in Arkansas. This definition comes from the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act, found at A.C.A. 15-4-3801. In addition to the definition, the Act requires institutions that receive at least \$25,000 in state funding annually and operate a food service program to report information about their local procurement efforts to the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

The FY2021 reporting form was completed by 293 institutions that serve children age 18 and younger. Of that, 202 were school districts, 81 were early childhood education centers, and 10 were alternative learning environments (juvenile detention centers, juvenile treatment facilities, etc.)

The 293 institutions serving children 18 and younger reported:

- Spending \$146,422,519 total on food
- Spending \$18,327,016 (12.5% of their food budget) on local foods, including fluid milk
- Spending \$11,411,837 (7.8% of their food budget) on local foods, without including fluid milk



Ida Burns Elementary, Conway

ARKANSAS FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH

Every year in October the state celebrates Arkansas Farm to School Month. This recognition is part of nationwide efforts to connect schools, early childhood education sites, and other organizations with farms to bring local, healthy food to children.

The National Farm to School Network first started this trend in 2010 by having National Farm to School Month designated by Congress. Since then, more and more states have joined in with celebrations.

Arkansas has been formally recognizing Arkansas Farm to School Month since 2014 when then-governor Mike Beebe first proclaimed October as Arkansas Farm to School Month. Governor Asa Hutchinson has continued the tradition every year since.



Norphlet Middle School, Norphlet

In October 2020, the Arkansas Farm to School Month theme was “Celebrate Local”. From the farmers who grew our food to the educators and parents who taught children about gardening, cooking, and nutrition, we together created a strong local food system. To Celebrate Local, we ate local, grew local, and learned about local food. Another way the state Celebrated Local was by participating in a Virtual Farm Field Trip hosted by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture and Heifer USA.

More information on Arkansas Farm to School Month can be found at <https://arfarmtoschool.org/about/farm-to-school-month/>.

FARM TO SCHOOL FUNDING, EVENTS, RESOURCES, AND STATE LEGISLATION

The growth of farm to school is contingent on funding for programming. In addition, events, resources, and state legislation are important to the increase of farm to school activities. Below are summaries of major funding received, events hosted, resources created, and state legislation passed from October 2020 - September 2021.

FUNDING

Funding for farm to school comes from federal, state, foundation, and other organizations. The largest amount of farm to school funding in Arkansas comes from federal sources.

The main sources of federal funding are the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and AmeriCorps.

- Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program: USDA Farm to School Grant Program - \$97,915 and in partnership with the Arkansas Grown and Arkansas Made Program: USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program - \$95,192
- Fayetteville School District: USDA Farm to School Grant Program - \$82,251
- FoodCorps Arkansas: AmeriCorps - \$507,555
- Full Circle FarmCorps: AmeriCorps - \$327,999
- Healthy Flavors Arkansas: USDA Farm to School Grant Program - \$99,996

The State of Arkansas funds the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Program Coordinator position. No additional state funds are available for farm to school at this time.

- Arkansas Department of Agriculture Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Coordinator Position - \$74,968

Finally, foundations and other sources of funding are available to increase farm to school activities.

- Arkansas Department of Agriculture: Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas - \$32,200

EVENTS

- Local Conversations hosted by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Virtual
- Farm to School Connection hosted by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture and the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's Local, Regional & Safe Foods Team, Virtual

RESOURCES

- Farm to School and Early Childhood Education in the USDA Southeast Region Report
- Arkansas Farm to Early Childhood Education 2021 Survey Results Report
- 2020 Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act Annual Report
- 2020 Arkansas Farm to School Annual Report
- Series of 13 Farm to School Handouts
- Arkansas Farm to School and Arkansas Grown Multi-Site Website

STATE LEGISLATION

- Act 1074 of 2021: Healthy Active Arkansas Schools Act

STATE LEADERSHIP

In addition to creating the Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program, Act 506 of 2019: Farm To School And Early Childhood Education Act also required an annual farm to school report to be prepared in collaboration with the following stakeholders:

- Arkansas Department of Agriculture
- Arkansas Department of Education
- Arkansas Department of Health
- Arkansas Department of Human Services
- University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service

The Act also mentioned the Child Nutrition Unit at the Department of Education and Healthy Active Arkansas. These stakeholders are listed under the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Health, respectively, due to the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019.

Updates on FY2021 farm to school leadership from the noted stakeholders are included on the following pages of the report.





ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

The Department is recognized as the Core Partner by the National Farm to School Network and joins the USDA Southwest Region in regional farm to school development and growth.

The Department's Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program leads farm to school efforts. The Department's Arkansas Grown, Arkansas Made, and Homegrown By Heroes branding programs support farm to school efforts in the state.

FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program (Program) connects schools, local growers, and the community to food and farm education experiences paired with healthy, locally grown food. The Program provides equitable and just programming, resources, funding, and technical assistance to schools, farmers, and partners in the local food system. The Program is the current facilitator of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. Website: <https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-department-of-agriculture-programs/farm-to-school/>

Team: Sarah Lane, Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator; Shannon Newerth-Henson, State Local Procurement Manager; and Erica Benoit, State School Garden Manager

Programs: Arkansas School Garden Grant Program and the Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest

Accomplishments:

- Provided technical assistance to 362 schools, farmers, agencies, and nonprofits;
- Participated in 70 regional and national farm to school meetings;
- Hosted and spoke at 60 farm to school educational trainings, webinars, and events with 1,930 attendees;
- Visited 28 schools, farms, and organizations with farm to school programs;
- Facilitated 5 Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative bi-monthly meetings;
- Coordinated 1 proclamation and responded to 7 interview requests on farm to school;
- Released 12 newsletters, 4 press releases, and 4 blogs on farm to school;
- Wrote 6 reports, 4 articles/quotes, and 6 letters of support on farm to school;
- Created 15 handouts and infographics, and 1 toolkit on farm to school;

- Produced 4 videos and 16 webinars on farm to school;
- Developed an Arkansas Farm to School website in collaboration with Arkansas Grown;
- Managed the 2020 Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest and awarded \$4,000 total to 6 winning schools and early childhood education facilities;
- Managed the Arkansas School Garden Grant Program and awarded \$26,000 total to 52 schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments; and
- Partnered with the Full Circle FarmCorps program, hosted by the Arkansas Resource Conservation and Development Council, to bring on 17 AmeriCorps members in central and western Arkansas.

MARKETING BRANDING PROGRAMS

The Marketing Branding Programs (Branding Programs) were established to equip farmers and producers with marketing tools to identify their goods as products grown and produced in Arkansas. The programs focus on generating exposure and creating new opportunities for local farmers and producers to increase sales and transactions. Website: <https://www.arkansasgrown.org/>.

Team: Karen Reynolds, Grants Program Manager

Programs: Arkansas Grown, Arkansas Made, and Homegrown By Heroes Program

Accomplishments:

- Co-hosted two forums with Arkansas AmeriCorps Service Commission, EngageAR, inviting support organizations to develop pilot programs to overcome food insecurity by connecting with local farmers utilizing AmeriCorps manpower;
- Managed research project funded through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant;
- Produced five videos of members discussing the Alternative Selling Methods developed due to the COVID-19 pandemic for training farmers and market managers through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant;
- Co-hosted Veterans Day Celebration in partnership with the newly established Arkansas Chapter of the Farmer Veteran Coalition with an attendance over 40, generating significant media coverage;
- Hosted a virtual Local Conversations event with over 80 registrants;
- Released nine media pieces, provided interviews to two media platforms;
- Announced restructuring of the Arkansas Grown and Arkansas Made programs, providing free membership with use of the branding program logos to growers and producers with a new Supporter Member category for retail establishments and organizations that sell and/or support Arkansas grown and made products;

- Awarded \$2,000 in scholarships to two awardees with military experience through the Homegrown By Heroes Scholarships in partnership with Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas;
- Managed development of new multi-site website incorporating the branding programs and Arkansas Farm to School;
- Presented two staffed displays;
- Participated by invitation in one research focus group;
- Coordinated one in-person proclamation presentation;
- Awarded \$9,000 in grants to 23 farmers markets through the Farmers Market Promotion Program in partnership with Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas;
- Initiated sponsorship with History is Served program through the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, featuring Arkansas Grown specialty crops in three events;
- Hosted virtual Arkansas Grown Marketing Workshop with over 20 registrants;
- Delivered presentation on the branding programs in partnership with University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service and Arkansas Farm Bureau;
- Cross-promoted farm to school information in 14 Facebook posts.



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is to provide leadership, support, and service to schools, districts, and communities so every student graduates prepared for college, career, and community engagement.

ADE is recognized as a Supporting Partner by the National Farm to School Network and is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Child Nutrition Unit and School Health Services support farm to school efforts in the state.

CHILD NUTRITION UNIT

The Child Nutrition Unit (CNU) provides technical assistance, training, monitoring, and processes claims for reimbursement of federal funds used in the operation of local school nutrition programs in accordance with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations. Website: <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/child-nutrition-unit>.

Team: Suzanne Davidson, Director; Sheila Chastain, Associate Director; Krista Jackson, Associate Director; Nancy Dill, Fiscal Support Manager; and Area Specialists

Programs: National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable, After-School Snack, Seamless Summer, and Farm to School Program

Accomplishments:

- Hosted 5 virtual procurement training sessions for local Child Nutrition Program operators;
- Hosted 6 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Online Trainings/Modules, and 2 trainings/modules included farm to school information;
- The Arkansas Department of Education, Child Nutrition Unit and the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Division collaborated to provide Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) benefits to families last school year to replace meals lost by their children as schools closed or restricted their in-person schedules due to the COVID emergency;
- Managed \$214.1 million federal and \$1.65 million state funding dollars for child nutrition programs that resulted in 30 million breakfasts, 41.1 million lunches, and over 1.4 million snacks;
- Managed \$2.9 million in federal funding for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program that operated at 92 districts (155 schools);
- For school year 2021-22, 73 school districts (258 schools) achieved the Community Eligibility Provision and 17 school districts (76 schools) achieved Provision 2; and
- Supported the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act Survey by following up with school districts to encourage completion.

SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

The Arkansas School Health Services Initiative is an interagency collaboration between the Division of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) and the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH). This state-level infrastructure provides support to Arkansas schools in the implementation of health and wellness activities that create a safe and healthy school environment that supports learning. Websites: <http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/learning-services/school-health-services> and <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/school-health>.

Team: Arkansas Department of Education: Lisa Mundy, Coordinated School Health Director; Brittany Rogers, Grants Manager; and Ashley Williams, Act 1220 Coordinator. Arkansas Department of Health: Ariel Schaufler Rogers, Coordinated School Health Director; Crystal Brown, School Based Health Center Advisor; and Shannon Borchert, Act 1220 Coordinator.

Programs: Coordinated School Health, School-Based Health Centers, Act 1220 (BMI), Joint-Use Agreements, Medicaid in the Schools, and Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment.

Accomplishments:

- Facilitated the completion of the annual Indistar report which resulted in a completion rate of 98% school districts and 93% of schools;
- Hosted 9 summer professional development trainings for health and physical education teachers;
- Hosted 4 coordinated school health professional development opportunities for school wellness coordinators;
- Hosted coordinated school health teacher professional development summer opportunities that included 5 farm to school sessions led by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture;
- Funded and supported 6 priority school districts: Blytheville, El Dorado, Magazine, Malvern, Marvell-Elaine, and Springdale Public Schools;
- Increased attendance of school personnel and districts represented at the quarterly meetings;
- Participated in activities supporting the Governor's Healthy Active Arkansas initiative;
- Updated the Arkansas Health Standards Crosswalk that details health and nutrition standards related to farm to school; and
- Cross-promoted farm to school information in 2 e-newsletters.



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) is to protect and improve the health and well-being of all Arkansans.

ADH is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Office of Healthy Active Arkansas and School Health Services support farm to school efforts in the state.

OFFICE OF HEALTHY ACTIVE ARKANSAS

The Office of Healthy Active Arkansas (HAA) aims to increase the percentage of adults, adolescents, and children who are at a healthy weight by working with individuals, families, communities, worksites, organizations, and governments across the state. Website: <https://healthyactive.org/>.

Team: Kenya Eddings, Wellness Director and Interim Executive Director

Accomplishments:

- Hosted six Lunch 'n Learns: How to Create an Herb Garden, two Basics of Food Safety, Basics of Gardening 101, and partnered with the Little Rock School District to host two Lunch 'n Learns on healthy eating and making healthy beverage choices; and
- Launched virtual workplace breastfeeding support group for breastfeeding and lactating mothers.

SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

The Arkansas School Health Services Initiative is an interagency collaboration between the Arkansas Department of Education Division of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) and the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH). This state-level infrastructure provides support to Arkansas schools in the implementation of health and wellness activities that create a safe and healthy school environment that supports learning.

Due to the collaboration between the Arkansas Department of Education and Arkansas Department of Health, the information on School Health Services can be found on page 14.



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) is to serve, protect, empower, educate, and encourage children, at-risk youth, families, adults, aging adults and seniors, and people with disabilities as they move towards a better future.

DHS is recognized as a Supporting Partner by the National Farm to School Network and is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Health and Nutrition Program supports farm to school efforts in the state.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Health and Nutrition Program (HNP) falls under the umbrella of Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) which ensures that Arkansas children and families have access to a safe, high-quality, developmentally appropriate early-learning environment. The Division accomplishes this by educating and assisting parents, licensing, regulating, and supporting child care providers, and working with communities to prepare children for future success. HNP provides reimbursement for well-balanced, nutritious meals served to individuals.

Team: Pamela Burton, Assistant Director; Rhonda Betzner, Program Administrator; Nora Fawcett, Program Administrator; James Ponzini, Program Administrator; Perry Hunter, Program Manager; Wayne Thornberry, Program Manager; Sharon Hagen, Quality Assurance-Trainer; Stephanie Clowers, Program Manager-Trainer; Sharon Parker, Quality Assurance; Kimberly Cogshell, Program Manager; Louise Scott, Program Manager; Maurice Anderson, Program Manager; and Theresa Taylor, Quality Assurance Coordinator

Programs: Child and Adult Care Food, National School Lunch, Summer Food Service, USDA Processing, and Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Accomplishments:

- Hosted 26 Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) training that included information on farm to early care and education;
- Hosted 1 National School Lunch Program (NSLP) training that included information on farm to school;
- Hosted 11 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) training that included information on farm to school;
- All CACFP, At Risk, NSLP, and SFSP Online Refresher trainings are available monthly for providers to access any time during the month. All trainings include farm to school information;
- Presented a Health and Nutrition Unit Newsletter to Sponsors and Partners;
- Managed \$44,320,919.51 in funding as part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The program included 419 contracts (329 centers, 85 at-risk, 10 homes) serving a total of 41,924,229 meals (26,857,957 free, 4,210,829 reduced, 10,855,443 paid);

- Managed \$1,881,866.76 in funding as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), which included 31 contracts and 40 facilities and sites serving a total of 696,156 meals (604,612 free, 14,917 reduced, 76,627 paid);
- Managed \$4,840,574.74 in funding as part of the Summer Food Service Program, which included 78 contracts and 200 facilities/ sites serving a total of 1,605,932 free meals;
- Managed \$4,108,017.43 as part of the USDA Processing Program; and
- Managed \$5,356,639.00 allocated for schools in the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS SYSTEM DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

The mission of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service (UADA) is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices.

The UADA is recognized as a Supporting Partner by the National Farm to School Network and is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Family and Consumer Science Programmatic Area and the Local, Regional & Safe Foods Team support farm to school efforts in the state.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE PROGRAMMATIC AREA

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) was founded as Home Economics. FCS affords Arkansans immediate and timely access to cutting-edge, reliable, unbiased information to develop critical life skills in health, nutrition, family life, and personal finance, empowering individuals and families to thrive. FCS promotes 21 youth curricula and five are garden focused: Grow It, Try It, Like It; Great Garden Detective; School Gardening Lessons; Eating from the Garden; and Dig In. Website: <https://www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/default.aspx>.

Team: Bryan Mader, Assistant Professor of Health; Sarah David, SNAP-Ed Finance Manager; Amy McClelland, SNAP-Ed Program Manager; Katie Holland, SNAP-Ed Curriculum and Evaluation; Crystal Bowne, SNAP-Ed PSE Coordinator; Jessica Vincent, Instructor of Health, HOP Program Manager; Tyler Brown, HOP County Operations Coordinator; Caitlin Palenske, HOP Communications Coordinator; Darby Treat, HOP Program Associate; and County Extension Staff

Programs: Arkansas Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education, and High Obesity Prevention Program

Accomplishments:

- Taught 4,000 lessons in schools;
- Reached 23,137 children participating in nutrition education (all youth participating in all locations, unduplicated);
- Had 11,108 total direct education contacts with children using garden-based curricula (duplicated + unduplicated);
- 43% of individuals taught increased their knowledge of Arkansas-grown foods; and
- 84% of individuals taught intend to follow MyPlate guidelines as a result of participating in the UADA Cooperative Extension Service SNAP-Ed program.

LOCAL, REGIONAL & SAFE FOODS TEAM

The Local, Regional & Safe Foods (LRSF) program team supports specialty crop growers with understanding and implementing food and produce safety regulations and associated practices and fosters the development of local and regional food systems. Food and produce safety cover outreach, education, and technical assistance regarding state and federal regulatory programs such as the Food Safety Modernization Act that protect the public's health and farms' viability. Local and regional food systems development covers the food supply chain from farm to table and provides technical assistance from evidence-based research to support production, market access, community & economic development, food safety, value-added food product development, and access to healthy food. Website: <https://uaex.uada.edu/localfoods>.

Team: Dr. Amanda Philyaw Perez, Food Systems & Food Safety Specialist, Assistant Professor; Dr. Renee Threlfall, Research Scientist; Dr. Ruben Morawicki, Associate Professor Food Science; Dr. Natacha Cureau, Post-Doctoral Associate; John Swenson, Food Innovation Associate; Angela Gardner, Program Associate; Julia Fryer, Program Associate; Rip Weaver, Program Technician; Mallory Eggleton Allred, Program Technician; Jack Lisle, Food Science Student Intern; Ashlynn Robinson, Food Science Student Intern; Faith Mills, Agriculture Communications Student Intern; Russ Tharp, Food Science Student Intern; and County Extension Staff

Programs: Arkansas Produce Safety, Share Grounds, and Local Food System Development

Accomplishments:

- Co-hosted Farm to School Connection with the Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program staff in March 2021 to bring together Arkansas farmers and school food and nutrition staff for networking and learning. The event had 120+ registrants and 72 attendees. Also, 4 resources were created and published for this event and shared with attendees and the general public;
- Conducted 675 direct and in-person outreach and education methods including demonstrations, classes, online courses, farm visits, meetings, one-on-one consultations, conferences, workshops, and county meetings across the LRSF statewide programs;
- Made 4,049 direct education contacts for all LRSF programs through direct and in-person methods including demonstrations, classes, online courses, farm visits, meetings, one-on-one consultations, conferences, workshops, and county meetings across the statewide LRSF programs;
- Maintained the three Share Grounds food manufacturing kitchens that have served over 45 clientele with over 200 hours of direct technical assistance for food product development;
- Attracted 11,020 visitors to the UA Extension Local Foods webpage in 2021;
- Hosted 36 educational sessions with 6,897 views on the LRSF YouTube site to date;
- Published 26 papers, posters, conference proceedings, factsheets, technical reports, and information sheets in 2021;
- Distributed 16 newsletters reaching 23,348 contacts in 2021;
- Posted 178 social media posts with 65,630 views in 2021; and
- Featured in 17 news or magazine articles.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March, 2020, continued to impact farm to school programming during FY2021. The following provides an overview of ways in which partners adapted.

Apple Seeds adapted their in-person programs to reach students virtually wherever they were learning. Virtual education videos were supported with teaching guides, student workbooks, and learning assessments and all were free of charge. In addition to new methods of education and outreach, Apple Seeds expanded the fresh food donation program initiated at the beginning of the COVID pandemic. Nutrient-rich foods from the farm were shared with children who need it most through area partners. Each portion of farm fresh produce was paired with a kid-pleasing recipe and links to educational videos.

The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance pivoted their nutrition education to be hosted entirely online across several different platforms including Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook Live. While this meant they were unable to cook and share meals together, they were able to reach more families from all across the state through virtual programming. To participate, families didn't need to find transportation or childcare—two major barriers to accessing traditional programming. Some of the partner agencies in their network have begun to resume in-person activities, but recognizing the possible reach and impact of virtual programming, they expect to continue to offer this option in the future.

FoodCorps Arkansas service members adapted their service to be responsive to the needs of their school and community. The main focuses were meal distribution, garden produce distribution, garden kit distribution, virtual classes, and virtual cooking camps. Members worked with their district food service departments to prepare and distribute meals to their community. They connected with local churches and food banks to offer support and continued to grow food in the school garden. Service members also sent gardening kits, seeds, recipes, SNAP applications, and other resources to students' homes through the meal service and through digital platforms. As schools reopened, they maintained their focus on increased food access and connecting aligned community partners and organizations to our districts to expand student opportunities. They also returned to the indoor and garden classrooms to continue connecting students to healthy food through hands-on learning.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture continued to host events, webinars, and training virtually. The Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program provided leadership for a second year to the state AmeriCorps program, Full Circle FarmCorps, which worked to combat food insecurity and strengthen communities in the midst of the pandemic through farming, outreach, and teaching.

The Arkansas Grown, Arkansas Made, and Homegrown By Heroes Programs hosted a virtual Local Conversations event featuring a panel of farmers and farmers market managers to discuss their Alternative Selling Methods during the pandemic. Additional speakers were invited from the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Economic Development Alliance, and Arkansas Small Business & Technology Development Center.

In response to the significant increase in online shopping during the pandemic, the Branding Programs developed a new multi-platform website, in partnership with Arkansas Farm to School, that enables members to create their individual listing and connect farms with schools conveniently.

The Arkansas Department of Education's Child Nutrition Unit supported schools in completing the 2020 - 2021 school year with 80% of the enrolled students attending school in-person. Local Child Nutrition Programs continue to provide healthy meals to students. The Child Nutrition Unit applied for USDA waivers to support the changing climate during the pandemic and to support the changing needs of the child nutrition programs.

The Arkansas Department of Education and Arkansas Department of Health Coordinated School Health program wrote a grant for \$333,000 to provide school districts with training and resources to limit spread of the virus in the school setting. Each of the 15 educational cooperatives were provided a stipend to purchase playground stencils of physical activities that children could do separately instead of playing close contact games. Additionally, 34 schools were awarded mini-grants to purchase social-emotional learning curriculum.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services Health and Nutrition Program opted in on the USDA-FNS Emergency Operational Cost Reimbursement Program to provide additional reimbursements for eligible school food authorities (SFAs) and CACFP operators whose revenues declined or were interrupted during the early months of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Additionally the Program has reached out to over 100 shelters advising them to claim reimbursement for meals and snacks served to individuals under the age of 25 as of March 11, 2021, until the date the COVID-19 public health emergency is lifted due to a USDA-FNS waiver.

The Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, and Arkansas Department of Human Services established a school and child care hotline. This hotline is still available 7 days per week to answer questions about quarantine and isolation guidelines, verify positive COVID-19 cases, fast-track contact investigation for positive cases and contact tracing for their probable close contacts, provide guidance on pivoting from face-to-face learning to virtual learning due to shortage of staff or prevalence of positive cases and probable close contacts, and provide guidance on COVID testing in schools.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service's Local Regional and Safe Foods Team created resources and offered virtual options for workshops and trainings in order to provide outreach and education to farmers, clients, and stakeholders.

The team published an information sheet on Fall Farm Activities and COVID-19 which gives up-to-date guidance to farmers in Arkansas on how to safely operate these cherished seasonal, family-oriented activities during the pandemic. This resource won a 2021 Outstanding Leaflet award from the American Society of Horticultural Science. Additionally, the team continues to maintain 8 webpages on COVID-19 for Arkansas farmers, small food businesses, agritourism, and other food system stakeholders.

MOVING FORWARD TO FY2022

Using the fiscal year 2021 information, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Human Services, and the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Services will continue to work together to build a comprehensive farm to school program in Arkansas.

As members of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative, the stakeholders in Act 506 will continue to 1) collaborate and work together; 2) foster student understanding of where their food comes from; 3) cultivate children's leadership and self-efficacy; 4) create equitable access to local food; and 5) support farmers. Additionally, each stakeholder has set goals for the upcoming 2022 fiscal year.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture will continue to offer farm to school leadership and support in the state.

The Farm to School and Early Childhood

Education Program will develop the Harvest of the Season Promotional Program which will include turnkey specialty crop promotional materials and farmer profiles that schools and other markets can use to highlight local food. Additionally, it will host the first-ever Arkansas Farm to School Institute. The Program will also offer the Arkansas School Garden Grant Program, Arkansas Taste Test Grant Program, and Arkansas School Garden of the Year Contest.

The Arkansas Grown, Arkansas Made, and Homegrown By Heroes Program will offer a cost-match to farmers seeking food safety certifications. Further, the Branding Programs will engage with community members, host trainings and events, and work to get more farmers wholesale ready.

The Arkansas Department of Education will support public and charter schools in Arkansas in the upcoming 2021-22 school year. The Child Nutrition Unit will continue to provide support to schools to ensure healthy and safe meals are available during the pandemic on regular school days. All National School Lunch Program public and charter schools in Arkansas are currently operating under the Seamless Summer Option, and are currently offering meals at no cost to the family through the school year.

School Health Services will offer trainings and resources to schools that increase the knowledge and skill level among students, staff, and the community nutrition, physical activity, farm to school, and the management of chronic conditions. Additionally, due to funding from the CDC, School Health Services will offer training on COVID-19 vaccine confidence and will address mental health in schools.



Marshall Elementary, Marshall

The Arkansas Department of Human Services Health and Nutrition Program will remain focused on feeding healthy and nutritious meals to children. It will increase outreach in rural areas and aims to increase engagement with the current sponsors and the community using informational flyers and brochures. It will continue to provide exceptional support to the feeding program sponsors and looks to streamline the onboarding processes. Lastly, it will continue to collaborate with partners by cross promoting information to the staff via e-newsletters and other social media outlets and will continue to identify farm to school partners within the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. It will also distribute over \$5 million dollars of reimbursement to SFAs and CACFP operators due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service (UADA) SNAP-Ed team will collaborate with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture Farm to School team to update promotional materials for Arkansas Farm to School month. Additionally, both teams are partnering to host a farm to school training for County Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Agents in April 2022.

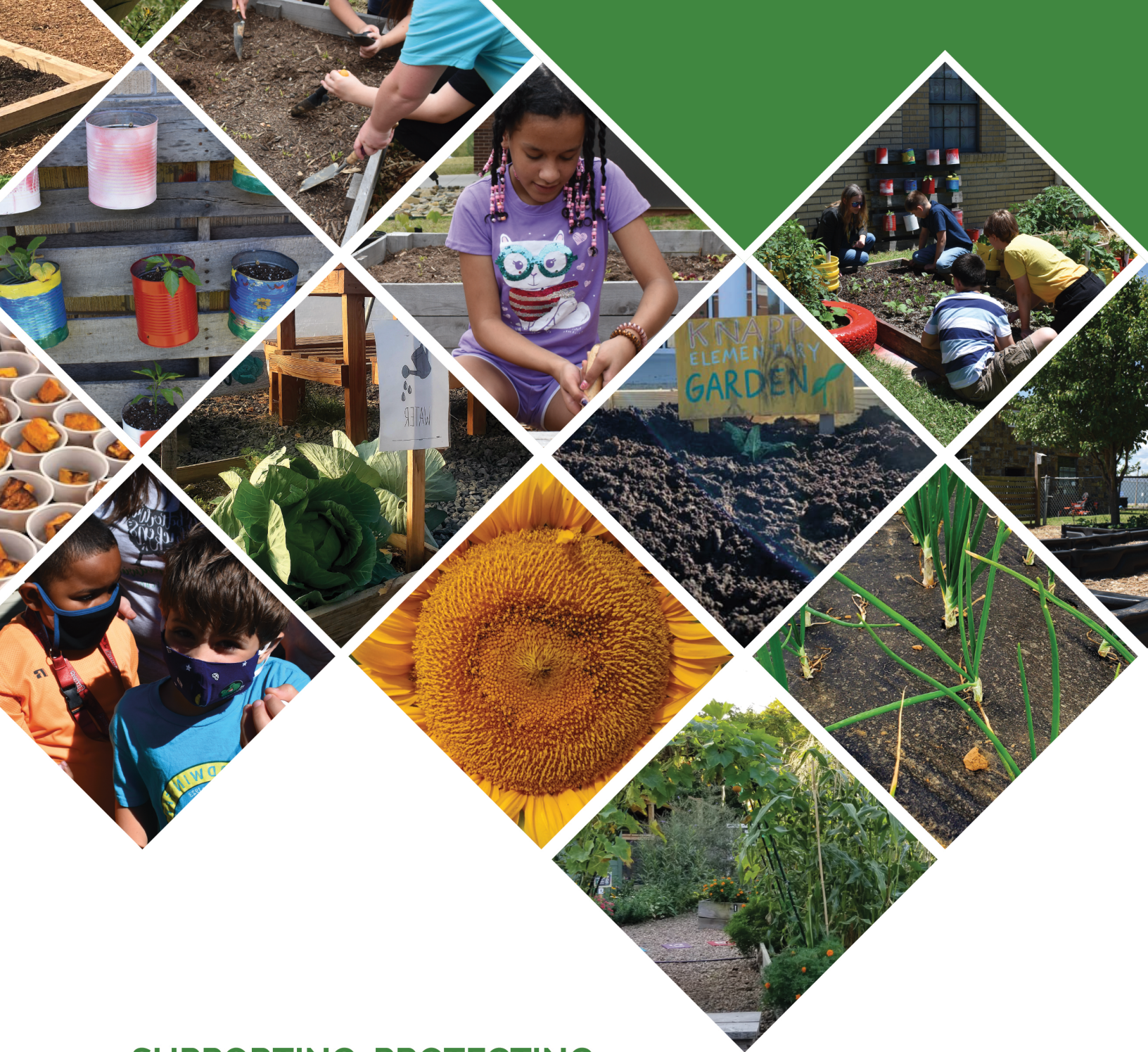
Also, UADA will offer mini grant opportunities to County Cooperative Extension Service offices statewide to implement farm to school projects locally. Up to \$5,000 per year until 2023 can be requested due to the indirect funding accumulated from the CDC grant. Evaluation and implementation measures have been established, and technical assistance will be provided to assist County Cooperative Extension Service Agents in carrying out their farm to school projects.

Additionally, the Local, Regional & Safe Foods team will continue to provide support to small and very small farms as the next phase of implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule. Additionally, there will be opportunities to develop strawberry and microgreens produce safety trainings over the next several months. For the Share Grounds program, the team will build upon successes at the McCrory and Rison sites and will increase client volume in both value-added products and produce aggregation.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is honored to support the goals of Act 506 of 2019 and is pleased to submit the 2021 Arkansas Farm to School Annual Report. For more information about the report, please contact Amy Lyman at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

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SUPPORTING, PROTECTING, AND GROWING ARKANSAS AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY



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