



Arkansas Department of Agriculture

Farm to School Annual Report 2024



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Respectfully submitted to:

*The Honorable Sarah Huckabee Sanders, 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, 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:

- *Jessica Chapman, Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator*
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A special thanks to the following individuals for their contributions to the report: Beth Moore, Amy Lyman, Shealyn Sowers, Ayden Massey, and Alex Johnston at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture; Sheila Chastain, Lisa Mundy, and Eyona Lewis at the Arkansas Department of Education; Ariel Schaufler at the Arkansas Department of Health; Sarah David, Amy McClelland, and Josh Phelps at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service; Ryan Patterson at Apple Seeds, Inc.; Nicole Chandler at FoodCorps Arkansas; and Jami Kirksey at the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance.

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 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 farm to school in Arkansas can be found at arfarmtoschool.org/about/history.



FARM TO SCHOOL IN ACTION IN FISCAL YEAR 2024

In state fiscal year 2024 (FY2024), 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 from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.



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 aged 18 or younger. This includes gardens located at 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 fruits and vegetables and more willing to try different kinds.

Currently, there are 356 school gardens across the state of Arkansas. These gardens vary in type and include greenhouses, raised beds, and/or containers inside a classroom.

Schools grow and produce all types of products, including fruits, vegetables, herbs, chickens, bees, flowers, and more in an effort to teach students about our local food system. A map of all the school gardens can be found at arfarmtoschool.org/school-gardens/map/?category=school-gardens&sort=a-z.

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 educational activities related to agriculture, food, health, or nutrition, which can take on many different forms. Nutrition education can happen through hands-on lessons in a school garden or in the classroom. Schools may utilize curriculum tailored to teach healthy nutrition while providing take-home recipes for children to try with their family. Educational opportunities can also happen in the cafeteria by conducting 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 components, but education can easily connect to existing state academic standards.

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



Apple Seeds, Inc. is a nonprofit organization founded in Fayetteville, Arkansas that educates and excites children about fresh fruits and vegetables while increasing access to healthy food.

Apple Seeds’ mission is to inspire healthy living through garden-based education. Apple Seeds facilitates experiential garden and culinary based nutrition education through programs with elementary schools in Northwest Arkansas and Central Arkansas, provides access to fresh produce to students’ families, and trains others across the state to lead garden-based educational programming. For more information about Apple Seeds, visit appleseedsnwa.org/.

Accomplishments in FY2024 include:

- Team launched the implementation of the K-5 farm to school educational program model in Central Arkansas in partnership with Arkansas Children’s. The team connected with 2,207 students at eight elementary schools to provide hands-on, nutrition, garden, and culinary education in Central Arkansas in this first year of programming.
- Continued growth in Northwest Arkansas reaching a total of 8,256 students and strengthened partnerships with elementary schools and school districts in the region.
- Produce donations to food insecure students and family members increased this year, with 12,069 lbs. of fresh, farm grown produce shared to help families incorporate it into their meals.



The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance (The Alliance) is an association of hunger relief organizations, advocates, and state/federal programs that seek to reduce hunger through

emergency food assistance, education, empowerment programs, and advocacy. The mission of the Alliance is to collaborate as a statewide voice advancing equitable solutions to hunger.

Nutrition Education is one of the Alliance’s core programs in a holistic approach to combatting food insecurity. The Alliance believes everyone should have access to nutritious food and envision an Arkansas where all people have reliable, affordable food choices, and the skills to create enjoyable meals for their health.

The Alliance’s Nutrition Education and Wellness Initiatives Team uses a Train-the-Trainer Model to support a statewide network of community partners who lead evidence-based cooking classes. Participants learn about cooking, meal planning, grocery shopping, food budgeting, stretching their SNAP dollars, and nutrition.

Accomplishments in FY2024 include:

- Supported partner network to reach 1,045 participants with 46 classes and grocery store tours;
- Reached 3,606 people through Alliance led classes, single-session nutrition education/grocery store tours, and through indirect education like recipes/nutrition handouts at outreach events; and
- Became a SNAP-Ed Implementing Agency.



FoodCorps partners with schools and communities to nourish kids’ health, education, and sense of belonging. FoodCorps envisions a future where every child, in every school, experiences the joy and power of food.

FoodCorps is part of the AmeriCorps service network. FoodCorps service members connect kids to nourishing food in schools. Members focus on hands-on learning, nourishing 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. Ten FoodCorps Arkansas service members served in the Springdale, Little Rock, Van Buren, and Cedarville school districts.

Accomplishments in FY2024 include:

- Reached 5,679 students;
- Led 2,399 hands-on lessons;
- Led 1,022 taste tests in the classroom; and
- Chicot Elementary, a FoodCorps site, was an inaugural Farm to School Institute member.



**The University of Arkansas System
Division of Agriculture (UADA)
Cooperative Extension Service
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
Program - Education (SNAP-Ed)** is a

federally funded, multi-level program that focuses on assisting low-income individuals and families to establish healthy eating habits and a physically active lifestyle.

The program consists of direct education, indirect education, and policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change components. The program is the result of a partnership between the UADA Cooperative Extension Service, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service.

The goal of SNAP-Ed is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA Food Guidance System.

The program is designed to teach skills that help participants to:

- Buy and prepare healthful meals and snacks based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA Food Guidance System;
- Become more physically active;
- Improve safe handling, preparation, and storage of food; and
- Develop spending and savings plans to make food dollars last throughout the month.

Some PSE change activities at schools include:

- Promoting healthy snacks, fundraisers, and concessions;
- Incorporating physical activity into classroom activities and the school day; and
- Implementing garden-based nutrition education classes.

Extension agents across the state bring nutrition education lessons to schools to assist in farm to school activities that grow students' knowledge of locally grown, healthy foods.

Accomplishments in FY2024 include:

- 2,477 lessons were conducted in early care education centers and K-12 schools;
- 33,675 children participated in nutrition education (all youth participating in all locations, unduplicated);
- 29,483 children (unduplicated) were reached with K-12 school-based PSE interventions designed to make the school environment healthier for the students and staff;
- 23,074 total direct education contacts were made with children using garden-based curricula (duplicated + unduplicated);
- 11,179 total direct education contacts were made with children using the Arkansas Foods program (duplicated + unduplicated);
- 3,910 children participated in the interactive Farm to You exhibit through SNAP-Ed and learned how food is grown and processed, along with how their bodies use the food they eat;

- 2,152 children learned cooking skills through the Kids in the Kitchen and Teen Cuisine programs;
- After trying a locally grown food as part of the Arkansas Foods program, 39% reported liking a food they did not like before;
- Parent surveys showed 76% of children were more willing to try new foods at home, 74% were eating fruit more often, and 64% were eating vegetables more often; and
- Student surveys showed 84% of children intended to follow MyPlate guidelines as a result of participating in the SNAP-Ed program.

Arkansas Foods programs in Crawford and Sebastian counties resulted in the following comments about trying new foods:

- Student: "I don't even like tomatoes, but I love this!" in reference to making salsa.
- Parent: "...has always loved fruits but now has branched out and even has a new favorite (kiwi) and she is always teaching me 'to be healthy'. I think it is so important to keep this program for the kids."

Garden-based nutrition education programs in Pulaski County resulted in the following comments:

- "Gardening is the best!"
- "I need to eat sugar snap peas for lunch on the weekend!"
- "I need to talk to my uncle about growing peas in his garden, they are good."
- "I love sugar snap peas so much! I can't stop eating them!"



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. United States Department of Agriculture (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 schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments. USDA's vision is that child nutrition programs, championing United States 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 state FY2024 reporting form was completed by 327 institutions that serve children aged 18 and younger. Of those, 237 were school districts, 86 were early childhood education centers, and four were alternative learning environments. The 327 institutions serving children 18 and younger reported:

- Spending \$254,207,640.58 total on food; and
- Spending \$39,981,819.28 (15.7% of their food budget) on local foods, including fluid milk.



ARKANSAS FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH

Each 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. Former Governor Asa Hutchinson and Governor Sarah Sanders have continued the tradition every year since.

In October 2023, commitment grew to new heights as Arkansas schools embraced all aspects of farm to school. To celebrate Arkansas Farm to School Month, stakeholders gathered together at Forest Park Elementary in Little Rock to announce the winners of the 2023 Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest.

More information on Arkansas Farm to School Month can be found at arfarmschool.org/about/farm-to-school-month.



Arkansas Farm to School Month Poster, designed by Joby Miller, Arkansas Department of Agriculture

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. Funding for farm to school comes from federal, state, foundation, and other organizations. The largest amount of funding in Arkansas comes from federal sources. The main sources of federal funding are the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and AmeriCorps. Below are summaries of major funding received and managed, events hosted, and resources created during federal FY2024, from October 2023 through September 2024.

FUNDING

The following represents current farm to school funding available throughout the state:

- Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program:
 - USDA Farm to School Grant Program 2021- \$97,915
 - USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program 2022 - \$70,382
 - USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program HR133 - \$66,819
 - USDA Formula Grant - \$78,362
- Fort Smith Boys & Girls Clubs:
 - USDA Farm to School Grant Program 2024 - \$75,000
- Nettleton Public Schools:
 - USDA Farm to School Grant Program 2024 - \$44,115
- Healthy Flavors, Inc.:
 - USDA Farm to School Grant Program 2024 - Arkansas/Tennessee - \$497,759

The State of Arkansas funds the Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Program Coordinator position and partially funds the State School Garden Manager position. The numbers below reflect salaries and fringe benefits:

- Arkansas Department of Agriculture Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Coordinator Position - \$75,802.32
- Arkansas Department of Agriculture State School Garden Manager - \$25,581.16

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

- Arkansas Department of Agriculture:
 - Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas - \$10,500

EVENTS

- Arkansas Farm to School Institute Team Training Retreat hosted by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture;
- Arkansas Farm to School Celebration Event and Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest announcement hosted by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture; and
- Arkansas Farm to School Connection Events, four regional gatherings, hosted by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture across the state.

RESOURCES

- 2023 Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act Annual Report
- 2023 Arkansas Farm to School Annual Report
- Series of 32 farm to school handouts
- Arkansas Farm to School website maintenance

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 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 Arkansas Department of Education, which is listed under the Arkansas Department of Education due to the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019.

Updates on state fiscal year 2024 (FY2024) 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 conserving natural resources and ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

The Department is recognized as a partner by the National Farm to School Network and joins the United States Department of Agriculture (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 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.

Websites: agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-department-of-agriculture-programs/farm-to-school and arfarmtoschool.org

Staff: Jessica Chapman, Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator

Programs: Arkansas Farm to School Kitchen Equipment Grant Program, Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest, Harvest of the Season, and Arkansas Farm to School Institute

Accomplishments:

- Participated in 31 regional and national farm to school meetings;
- Hosted and spoke at 42 farm to school educational trainings, webinars, and events with 1,377 attendees;
- Visited 34 schools, farms, and organizations to outreach about farm to school;
- Facilitated six Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative bi-monthly meetings that engaged 22 state agencies and non-profit partners;
- Coordinated one Governor's proclamation, distributed seven press releases, and responded to two interview requests on farm to school;
- Wrote two reports and one letter of support on farm to school;
- Created 32 handouts and infographics on farm to school;
- Produced one video and eight webinars on farm to school;
- Increased total Arkansas Farm to School Facebook followers to 3,605;
- Distributed 12 newsletters, attracting 338 new subscribers, reaching a total audience of 2,550 with an average open rate of 45.54%, a click rate of 3.78%, and an unsubscribe rate of .20%;

- Managed and awarded \$5,500 total to nine winning schools and early childhood education facilities as part of the Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest;
- Managed and awarded \$7,500 total to five schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments as part of the Arkansas Farm to School Institute Program;
- Managed and awarded \$41,250 total to 11 schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments as part of the Arkansas Farm to School Kitchen Equipment Grant Program; and
- Launched and managed the Arkansas Farm to School Institute Pilot Program, a year-long program that engaged 25 participants and five coaches, organized into five teams from across the state.

THE ARKANSAS GROWN, ARKANSAS MADE, AND HOMEGROWN BY HEROES BRANDING PROGRAMS

The Arkansas Grown, Arkansas Made, and Homegrown by Heroes 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. The Arkansas Grown branding program promotes the many agricultural products that are grown in the state and supports the farmers, ranchers, and producers who grow them.

The Arkansas Made branding program promotes goods and products made in our state by local producers, craftsmen, and artisans. In 2015, the Department adopted the national Homegrown by Heroes branding program that enables farmer veterans to market their local agricultural products by labeling them as veteran-produced. Homegrown By Heroes is administered by the Farmer Veteran Coalition and is offered as a free program to farmers who have veteran, active duty, National Guard, or Reserve member of the United States Armed Forces status. These three programs help make the critical connection between producers and buyers.

Website: arkansasgrown.org

Team: Karen Reynolds, Grants and Program Manager (through June 2024), and Beth Moore, Program Manager

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

Accomplishments:

- Collaborated with eight state associations to host the second statewide gathering of producers in the local food system, the Arkansas Grown Conference and Expo with over 600 registrants and 120 vendors;
- Cross-promoted Arkansas Farm to School in 19 Facebook posts;
- Increased membership in Arkansas Grown, Homegrown By Heroes, and Arkansas Made programs for a total of 1,064 members;

- Increased social media followers to:
 - Facebook followers: 10,894
 - Instagram followers: 2,580
- Continued assisting in connecting Arkansas Grown farmers with the Arkansas Department of Human Services for the \$3.7 million Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative grant program funded to the state through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Amy Lyman, Director of Brand Programming and Outreach, is now the lead;
- Worked with the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act team to update the reporting form to be used in support projects and grants;
- Attended bi-monthly Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative meetings;
- Coordinated and promoted Arkansas Farmers Market Week proclamation presentation, estimated 50 total attendees;
- Managed the Farmers Market Promotion Program providing 22,000 bags to 16 farmers markets and \$11,500 in promotional funds to 21 farmers markets around the state, funded by Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas; and
- Awarded Homegrown By Heroes scholarship to one veteran farmer to attend the Center for Arkansas Farms and Food farm school.



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 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 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations.

Website:

dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/District-Operations/child-nutrition-unit

Team: Sheila Chastain, Associate Director; Krista Jackson, Associate Director; Courtney Erick, Fiscal Support Manager; Area Specialists and Grants Managers

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

Accomplishments:

- Managed approximately \$300 million federal and \$1.65 million state funding for child nutrition programs that resulted in approximately 33 million breakfast, 51 million lunches, and over 1.75 million snacks;

- Managed \$3.6 million in federal funding for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program in 200 schools;
- Hosted in-person Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program grants management training that included a discussion of local purchasing and farm to school;
- Provided support by presenting at the Farm to School Institute (Institute) and provided funds for Farm to School Garden Grant Activities;
- Coded garden-based educational lessons to the Arkansas Frameworks to be posted to the CNU website;
- Hosted Teaching in Nature’s Classroom professional development course for Institute schools;
- Completed the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act survey for the Arkansas Department of Education; and
- Supported the Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act survey by following up with school districts to encourage completion.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION UNIT/ FOOD DISTRIBUTION UNIT

The Health and Nutrition Unit/Food Distribution Unit (FDU), formerly known as the Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education under the Department of Human Services, knows that the earliest years are critical for brain development and learning so they work to ensure children and families have access to safe, high-quality, and nurturing care.

The FDU is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative through the Department of Education. The Health and Nutrition Program supports farm to school efforts in the state.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Health and Nutrition Program (HNP) is federally funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service to provide reimbursement for well-balanced, nutritious meals served to individuals enrolled in Child and Adult Care Food Programs (CACFP), At-Risk, National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). In Arkansas, these programs are administered by the Arkansas Department of Education FDU.

The FDU falls under the umbrella of the Health and Nutrition Unit at the Department of Education which ensures that Arkansas children and families have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally appropriate early-learning environment. The FDU accomplishes this by educating and assisting parents, licensing, regulating, and supporting childcare providers, and working with communities to prepare children for future success. The FDU provides reimbursement for well-balanced, nutritious meals served to individuals.

Website:

dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/District-Operations/health--nutrition-programs



Team: Pamela Burton, Director; Sharon Hagen, Program Administrator; James Ponzini, Commodities Program Administrator; Perry Hunter, Program Manager; Letha Hassen, Application Team Manager; Wayne Thornberry, Correspondence/Billing Team Manager; Jamilah Goodman, Review Team Manager; Tomia Sutton, Review Team Manager; Stephanie Starks, Review Team Manager; Maurice Anderson, Review Team Manager; Jessica Clay, Quality Assurance; Sharon Parker, Quality Assurance; and Eyona Lewis, Training Project Manager

Programs: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), USDA Processing, and Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD FFVP)

Accomplishments:

- All CACFP, At-Risk, NSLP, and SFSP Online Refresher trainings are available on demand for providers to access. All trainings include farm to school information;
- Began providing on demand New Participant Training for CACFP and At-Risk providers to access any time during the month. All new participant trainings include farm to school information;
- Continued providing a Health and Nutrition Unit Quarterly Newsletter to sponsors, independent centers, family home daycares, adult daycare centers, potential institutions, and partners;
- Managed \$47,531,067.58 in funding as part of the CACFP, which served 4,358 meals;

- Managed \$3,497,840.75 in funding as part of the NSLP, which served 277 meals;
- Managed \$1,653,948.00 in funding as part of the SFSP, which served 151 meals;
- Managed \$52,158,132.65 as part of the United States Department of Agriculture Processing Program;
- Managed \$7,000,000.00 for the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA);
- Managed \$2,200,000.00 for the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program (LFS);
- Managed \$1,131,429.00 for FY21 Technology Innovation Project;
- Managed \$1,561,191.00 for the Emergency Food Assistance Program Reach and Resiliency Grant; and
- Managed \$761,149.00 in Supply Chain Assistance Funds.

SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

The Arkansas School Health Services Initiative is an interagency collaboration between the Arkansas Department of Education Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (ADE) 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 ADE and ADH, the information on School Health Services can be found in the ADH section.



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 School Health Services office supports farm to school efforts in the state.

SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

The Arkansas School Health Services Initiative is an interagency collaboration between the ADE Division of Elementary and Secondary Education and 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:

dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/learning-services/school-health-services and healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/school-health

Team: Arkansas Department of Education: Lisa Mundy, Coordinated School Health Program Advisor; Shy Whitley-Smith, Act 1220 Coordinator; and Cheria McDonald, State School Nurse Consultant.

Arkansas Department of Health: Ariel Schaufler Rogers, Coordinated School Health Program Advisor; Amy Davidson, School-Based Health Center Advisor; and Shanetta Agnew, Act 1220 Coordinator

Programs: Coordinated School Health; School-Based Health Centers; Act 1220 (Body Mass Index Screenings); 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 four coordinated school health professional development opportunities for school wellness coordinators;
- Hosted a one and half day conference for wellness coordinators, health/physical education teachers, and school nurses;
- Funded and supported one priority school district: Blytheville increased attendance of school personnel and districts represented at the quarterly meetings;
- Cross-promoted farm-to-school information in two partner updates to school personnel; and
- A link to the Arkansas Farm To School website is provided on the Coordinated School Health Google Site/Coalition. The Google site averages 70 user visits a month.





UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS SYSTEM DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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

The UADA is a member of the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative. The Family and Consumer Science Programmatic Area and the Local, Regional, and Safe Foods Program support farm to school efforts in the state.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE PROGRAMMATIC AREA

The Family and Consumer Sciences Programmatic Area (FCS), founded as home economics, 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. Through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed), FCS promotes 20 youth curricula and four are garden focused: Grow It, Try It, Like It; School Gardening Lessons; Eating from the Garden; and Dig In.

FCS Website: uaex.uada.edu/life-skills-wellness/

SNAP-Ed Website: uaex.uada.edu/arsnaped

SNAP-Ed Team: Josh Phelps, Associate Professor of Nutrition; Amy McClelland, SNAP-Ed Program Manager; Sarah David, SNAP-Ed Finance Manager; Katie Holland, SNAP-Ed Curriculum and Evaluation; and County Extension Staff

Program: Arkansas SNAP-Ed

Accomplishments:

- Managed \$2,150,558 in SNAP-Ed funds in FY24 to deliver statewide nutrition education program, with a large emphasis on school-based programming;
- Continued work to develop, pilot, and evaluate Arkansas Foods lesson materials, including inclusion of additional foods, development of new resources, translation of existing resources, and creation of the annual AR Foods recipe calendar to use with nutrition programs;
- Hired a new SNAP-Ed Curriculum Trainer to provide more intensive training to county staff state-wide, such as in-service training for staff on implementing School Garden Lesson Plans;
- Hired a new SNAP-Ed Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Coordinator to support policy, systems, and environmental change efforts in statewide program, which includes school-based gardening interventions and efforts to increase locally grown foods in schools;
- Increased delivery of the Teen Cuisine curriculum statewide, which supported teens in gaining skills to prepare healthy meals and snacks;

- Presented a poster at the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior National Conference titled "Learning and Growing Together: From Classroom to the Garden and Beyond" that detailed a nutrition and gardening program at an elementary school in Pulaski County;
- Presented a poster at the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior National Conference titled "Partnering for Health-Middle School Health Classes Connect with SNAP-Ed" about the impact of Teen Cuisine cooking programs in schools; and
- Presented a poster at the National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences national conference titled "Development and Implementation of a SNAP-Ed Educational Program within the Garden," focusing on garden-based educational programs in Crawford County.

LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND SAFE FOODS

The Local, Regional, and Safe Foods (LRSF) Program 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 and economic development, food safety, value-added food product development, and access to healthy food.

Website: uaex.uada.edu/localfoods

Team: Dr. Amanda Philyaw Perez, Food Systems & Food Safety Specialist, Assistant Professor; Dr. Renee Threlfall, Research Scientist; John Swenson, Food Innovation Associate; Rip Weaver, Program Technician; Gaby Sanders, Program Associate; and David Hill, Program Associate

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



MOVING FORWARD TO FISCAL YEAR 2025

Using the fiscal year 2024 (FY2024) 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 Service 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 2025 fiscal year.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture

(Department) will continue to offer farm to school leadership and support in the state. Through the Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program, the Department will host the second Arkansas Farm to School Institute, organize a Farm to School Connection Event at the Arkansas Grown Conference to foster relationships between schools and producers, and collaborate with the Arkansas Department of Education's Child Nutrition Unit to develop and implement educational school garden support initiatives. Additionally, the program will continue offering the Arkansas School Garden of the Year Contest.

The Arkansas Grown, Arkansas Made, and Homegrown By Heroes branding programs within the Department will partner with Arkansas agriculture associations and organizations to host the third Arkansas Grown Conference and Expo. The Arkansas Grown Conference and Expo will be open to all parties interested in the Arkansas agriculture industry and focus on the farmers and producers who grow for our local food system. In addition, the branding programs will continue to manage a robust advertising campaign to promote the purchase of Arkansas Grown products to consumers throughout the state.



The Arkansas Department of Education will support public and charter schools in Arkansas in the upcoming 2024-2025 school year. All National School Lunch Program public and charter schools in Arkansas, administered by the Child Nutrition Unit, are currently operating under National School Lunch Regulations, which require districts to establish free/reduced eligibility for students and claim meals served in the correct category.

The Child Nutrition Unit received a farm to school grant to promote agricultural education. Activities will be in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program and include funding for educational school garden support.

School Health Services will offer trainings and resources to schools to increase the knowledge and skill level among students, staff, and the community on nutrition, physical activity, farm-to-school, and the management of chronic conditions.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture (UADA) Cooperative Extension Service plans to continue to incorporate new curriculum, materials, and Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) resources to improve school programming and increase access to Arkansas grown foods. The UADA SNAP-Ed team is working on an in-depth curriculum expansion of the Arkansas Foods program, which will provide more intensive direct education to youth across the state on locally grown foods.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is honored to support the goals of Act 506 of 2019 and is pleased to submit the 2024 Arkansas Farm to School Annual Report. For more information about the report, please contact Jessica Chapman at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

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