

Recirculating Farms Coalition Celebrates National Farm-to-School Month!

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NEW ORLEANS, LA October is National Farm to School Month, and Louisiana nonprofit [Recirculating Farms Coalition](#) and partners are celebrating their successes in bringing fresh, local food to Louisiana schools.

“It’s been an amazing year, we have a new statewide law and local projects expanding Farm-to-School programs in Louisiana!” said Marianne Cufone, Recirculating Farms Coalition Executive Director.

Farm-to-school (F2S) programs generally include schools offering a combination of: locally grown food in the cafeteria; classes with agriculture, food, health or nutrition topics; and/or hands-on gardening and cooking.

Recirculating Farms Coalition was instrumental in promoting [F2S in Louisiana](#), advocating for new laws and policies. As a result, public schools can now buy more fresh food direct from farms. Over 65% of Louisiana public school students qualify for free/reduced price meals. The new law will help get fresher local food to children who may have their primary meal, or even all of their meals, at school.

The Coalition works directly with schools too. Students from the [NET Charter High School](#) in New Orleans intern at Recirculating Farms Coalition’s community garden, Growing Local NOLA. Interns learn about planting and growing fresh food, and eat what they grow in cooking classes.

“It’s a great opportunity for students to have hands-on experiences in a garden, and then connect what they grow to what they eat,” said Tim Sattler of the NET Charter High School. Sattler continued, “We’re excited to be a part of the Farm-to-School movement.”

Over the past decade, F2S programs exploded across the United States, reaching millions of students. Congress declared October “Farm-to-School” month in 2010, recognizing fresh, local food is important for children’s health and strong local economies.

“We are thrilled that F2S is rapidly expanding and gaining recognition nationally and in our state,” said Cufone.

[35.9% of Louisiana school-aged children are overweight or obese](#), making health-supportive school initiatives crucial. Students in schools with F2S programs often choose healthier options in their cafeterias, and eat more fruits and vegetables.

F2S can come with important economic benefits too. Louisiana farmers lose about 40 million dollars annually from wasted fruits and vegetables that never make it to market. Creating new, local markets – schools – can help reduce waste and feed children healthier fresh food.

“Farm-to-School programs are good for our kids, farmers and the economy,” Cufone said.