

Proposed Farm to School Laws Continue Move Forward in Louisiana

For Immediate Release

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Yesterday, the Louisiana House Agriculture Committee moved a Farm to School bill forward that could bring more fresh local food to schools, by allowing them to directly connect with farmers, and sets up a database of farmers and schools interested in participating in such a program.

HB 730 would increase the “small purchase threshold,” which is the maximum amount of money schools can spend on a contract to buy food items, without having to engage in a lengthy and complicated formal public bidding process with potential food providers. In Louisiana, the threshold is just \$30,000; most school food purchases require formal bidding, and this often prevents smaller-scale farmers from selling to schools. Additionally, the bill creates a database so that farms and schools able and willing to participate in such programs can identify one another and easily make contact.

“Raising the small purchase threshold to the federal amount, now \$150,000, is good for our children, farmers and the state economy; establishing a database is critical to facilitate the program”, said Katie Mularz, Executive Director of the [Louisiana Farm to School](#) Alliance.

The bill, introduced by Rep. Ebony Woodruff, is supported by many and was crafted with assistance from Loyola University of New Orleans, School of Law students, the Louisiana Farm to School Alliance and the Recirculating Farms Coalition.

Representative Woodruff said, “I am thrilled to be working with so many colleagues, groups and individuals in promoting Farm to School programs in Louisiana.”

Marianne Cufone, the Executive Director of the Recirculating Farms Coalition noted, “This bill is an important way to support farmers in Louisiana.”

According to the [LSU Agricultural Center](#), Louisiana farming operations are some of the poorest in the U.S. One problem is that about a third of farm food goes to waste in Louisiana, which for fruits and vegetables translates to over forty million dollars in losses.

“Making new markets, schools, for Louisiana farmers, can help reduce waste of good food, and put it to very good use - feeding our children.” Cufone said.

Over sixty-eight percent of Louisiana public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. If more fresh food is served in Louisiana schools, it can reach a majority of public school children.

HB 730 comes on the heels of SB 184, a bill with a similar focus, introduced by Sen. Francis Thompson. SB 184 passed through the Senate Education Committee unanimously two weeks ago. Both will now move through the full House and Senate respectively.

“Louisiana is ready to join 44 other states and the District of Columbia in championing the Farm to School movement.” Woodruff concluded.

The **Recirculating Farms Coalition** is a collaborative group of farmers, educators, non-profit organizations and many others committed to creating local sources of healthy, accessible food through promoting and supporting eco-efficient farms. RFC is headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana. <http://www.recirculatingfarms.org>

The **Louisiana Farm to School Alliance** is a network of 90 groups and growing; providing leadership, advocacy and coordination to new and existing Farm to School programs. <http://www.louisianafarmtoschool.org/>