

# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Regional Organization Celebrates Farm to School Month All Year Long

**JACKSON, Mich.**— Schools across the nation are celebrating National Farm to School month this October. Jackson County schools have much to celebrate in this regard, as well. Five school districts in Jackson County currently purchase some amount of food from local farmers. The catalyst for this change in Jackson County is an organization called the Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP). FSEP connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objective of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers.

One school district participating in FSEP's Farm to School program is Concord Community Schools. Through FSEP's technical assistance, school Food Service Director Alan Breneman was able to implement a year-round Farm to School program in the school district. Having fresh produce available in the schools helps him bring awareness of healthy eating habits to the students and their families. Giving the students a variety of options with fresh produce helps engage them in healthier eating. Not only does this program create benefits for the school, it supports the local economy. The main source of the fresh produce for the schools meal program is from local farmers.

Concord Schools' produce is supplied by two farms located within twenty miles of the school, which helps reinvest their food dollars back into the community. Students develop a connection to the farmers who grow their food, and their families can support the farmers by shopping at nearby farmers markets. Since farmers selling to the school are nearby, they are able to provide produce picked at its peak, full of flavor, vitamins and nutrients. The farmers make weekly deliveries of produce to the schools which increases quality, reduces waste, and cuts down on travel costs. Alan witnesses the success of the program when he sees the interest and excitement from the students at the produce station in the lunch line.

The FSEP Farm to School Program has given the school district the inspiration to start their own hoop house to further agricultural education and learning opportunities. Alan is proud to be a success story of the Farm to School program, and hopes that it continues to expand and improve. To learn more about farm to school, contact the Food System Economic Partnership at [www.fsepmichigan.org](http://www.fsepmichigan.org) . ###