Welcome to this webinar from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Office of School Nutrition on “Bringing the Farm to Summer” for NC Summer Nutrition Programs.
What is Farm to Summer?

- Extends or connects Farm to School with Farm to Summer
- Gives Sponsors the opportunity to tap into locally sourced foods
  - Serving locally sourced foods (in meals, snacks, or taste tests),
  - Conducting educational activities centered around local food and agriculture such as field trips to local farms or farmers markets, cooking demos or classes, or hosting farmers at summer meal sites, or
  - Creating and/or tending to gardens where edible fruits and vegetables are grown

- In many regions across the country, including North Carolina, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option coincide with the peak growing season for local farmers and producers. This season gives sponsors the opportunity to tap into locally sourced foods and incorporate these ingredients into their summer meals.

- Farm to Summer is an extension of the Farm to School initiative and encompasses a variety of efforts that can include:
  - Serving locally sourced foods (in meals, snacks, or taste tests),
  - Conducting educational activities centered around local food and agriculture such as field trips to local farms or farmers markets, cooking demos or classes, or hosting farmers at summer meal sites, or
  - Creating and/or tending to gardens where edible fruits and vegetables are grown.
There are many benefits to implementing Farm to Summer at summer meal sites:

- Sponsors can increase participation by improving the quality of meals served and keep kids engaged in learning and moving through fun educational activities.

- Farm to Summer can both connect children and the community to where their food is grown and the people that grow it and financially support local growers and producers.
NC Farm to Summer Week

- NC Farm to Summer Week is designed to bring awareness to the NC Farm to Summer initiative and NC Summer Nutrition Programs.
- Sites and Sponsors are encouraged to “bring the farm to summer” during Farm to Summer Week.

- The third week in July is designated as NC Farm to Summer Week in our state.
- Farm to Summer Week is focused on promoting the implementation of Farm to Summer within the NC Summer Nutrition Programs.
- During this week and all summer long, we want to encourage sponsors to serve local foods and incorporate agricultural enrichment activities into summer feeding programs to celebrate.
- This time is a great opportunity to take advantage of peak growing season and also promote your summer feeding program to the community.
• Schools, Community Organization Sponsors, students, families and communities are encouraged to “Take the NC Farm to Summer Challenge”. You can register for the challenge from the NC Summer Nutrition Programs page on the NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition website. To take the challenge:

  - Serve local foods as part of meals and/or snacks.
  - Teach about agriculture, nutrition and/or local foods.
  - Post about farm to school activities on social media using the hashtags, #NCFarmtoSummer and #NCSummerMeals, and handles, @NCSchoolMeals, @Ray4NCKids, and @F2SCoalitionNC.
  - Sign up for the NC Crunch to celebrate farm to school in October.
• Local foods can span the meal tray and may include fruit, vegetables, beans, grains and flour, meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, and many more.

• Local products can come from local farmers, ranchers, dairies, fishers, food processors, and distributors.

• Fresh fruits and vegetables are a starting point for local procurement for many school districts and Community Organization Sponsors.

• Look at what is already local on your menus and then think about what could be local.

• Can certain items be replaced for a local variety (for example, white potatoes grown in Idaho vs a Sweet potato grown in North Carolina)?
• Do not feel like the entire meal has to be from local sources to participate in Farm to Summer week. Anything counts!

• You can choose for one item to be from a local source if that is what works best for your program.

• You can only focus on simply the plate and offering local foods or you can choose to focus on the educational activities that complement farm to summer. We encourage you to try to do both, but it is up to you! We will talk about more about educational activities in later slides.
• The first step to incorporating local foods into your summer meals program is finding out what is local and in season. We will talk about ways to find out what is local and in season in the state of North Carolina next.

• After determining what local products you can incorporate into your procurement process, the next step is to actually purchase these items. Again, we will go more in depth on this in the next slides.

• The last step is to serve these yummy local foods during NC Farm to Summer Week or anytime during the summer and celebrate your success!
Defining local is one of the first steps in procuring local foods as the definition will help you understand market availability.

There is no federal definition of local, and therefore the definition is up to you to define.

Local can be defined as within a certain number of miles, such as a radius and this may cross into another state. Local can also be defined as within the county or within the state.

The definition of local may change depending on the seasons, the type of product, or special events.

Having specific goals for local purchasing efforts will help schools craft a definition for local that works in service to the School Food Authority or Community Organization Sponsor’s goals.

For example, goals can include supporting small farmers or having food delivered within 48 hours of harvest.
• Now to talk about what local products are available....

• One way to check for availability of local products is to check out the USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service. This is a survey that collects information every 5 years about U.S. farmers. It keeps an online searchable database with detailed information about agricultural production in each state and county.

• You may also choose to look at the Farm to School Census. USDA surveyed school districts across the country about their farm to school efforts and local procurement. The census can be a resource to determine which nearby districts are purchasing local foods and what they are buying.

• Speaking with a Cooperative Extension agent is a great place to start. These agents are experts in many agricultural topics, including local food systems.
• USDA maintains a database of GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certified companies or farms. The list is searchable by farm or company, location or product.
This two page, front and back, seasonality chart from the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, NCDA&CS, can help you gauge what products will be in-season during the summer months. Some common locally available items during the summer include tomatoes, squash, eggplant, okra, peppers, corn, watermelon, honeydew, cantaloupe, peaches, blueberries, blackberries, and raspberries.
• There are various different ways to procure local foods. The different options fall into two different buckets: direct and indirect.

• Direct options would include getting foods from a school or community garden and also purchasing directly from farmers, farmers markets or farm co-ops or hubs.

• With on-site gardens or farms, we must point out that these must be GAP certified in order to be used as part of the meal standards. Gardens are not likely to produce enough for all your meals or snacks; however, they may be used as a supplement to the menu or for taste testing

• With the indirect options, you are not purchasing directly from the source but you are still procuring local foods. This can be done through food retailers (such as grocery stores), food banks, distributors or your summer meal vendor or a food service management company if you contract with one of these to provide your summer meals.

• Local foods can be purchased through each of these options, the key is to contact sources early to help with planning.

• For smaller sponsors, it can be helpful to connect with a local school district that participates in farm to school to help identify sources for local foods. Information on school districts who participate can be found using the Farm to School Census.

• The USDA Capacity Builder can also be a useful tool. In addition to demonstrating summer meal sites it also identifies nearby farmers’ markets, Turnip the Beet winners, and previous Farm to School grantees.
• Here is a sample of a summer menu that incorporates local foods.

• Incorporating local foods into your summer menu doesn’t have to be complicated. Try swapping in a local fruit or vegetable as a simple way to get started.

• Sometimes you might already be procuring local foods and you just don’t know it. Talking with your suppliers or meal vendor about the sources of your foods is another way to identify local items you are already serving. Many sponsors are already serving local milk but aren’t aware.
• If it isn’t possible to incorporate local foods into the menu this year, don’t worry. You can still celebrate NC Farm to Summer.

• These are just a few ways you can celebrate farm to summer through agricultural enrichment projects.
  
  − Nutrition education can be provided as children are eating certain local fruits and/or vegetables.
  
  − Cooking demonstrations can be used as a way to teach children how some fruits or vegetables they may have never had the chance to try are cooked or they can learn new ways to eat some of their favorite fruits or vegetables.
  
  − You can decide to take a trip to a local farm or farmers market and talk to farmers about how they grow crops and learn more about local produce.
  
  − Or if transportation is an issue, you may opt to have a local farmer come to your site and talk about what it is like to grow agricultural products and the benefits of buying local products. You can also take a virtual tour of a farm, garden, or farmers market.
  
  − If there is a garden on site, you may decide to give a tour of the garden and allow children to participate in garden activities such as picking produce, taste testing, and learning about gardening.
Keep bringing the farm all summer long. How to promote Farm to Summer monthly:
- Designate days in which at least one local food is served.
- Plan cooking demo and/or taste test days using local ingredients.
- Decorate and/or dress up.
- Share info with kids and families.
- Post on social media promoting #NCFarmtoSummer.
The NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) has developed a NC Farm to School Cookbook. Their NC Farm to School Toolkit highlights a different fruit or vegetable each month with tips for preparing and serving, sample social media messages, and more.

Recipes from the NC Farm to School Cookbook are also included in the database of recipes from the NC K-12 Culinary Institute. Over 200 recipes were created for the institute. Some are designated as Farm to School but most of the recipes could utilize local North Carolina foods. The institute Teach It Forward Resources can be used to teach culinary techniques to use more fresh, locally grown foods in meals.

NCDPI has worked with partners to host a NC Jr. Chef Competition, challenging high school students to work with their teachers and local School Nutrition Programs to develop school lunch entrée recipes featuring NC-grown foods. If you have had a Jr. Chef team from your area, this could be a great way to promote their recipes and your programs.
• School and community gardens have sprouted across the state. Gardens provide opportunities for hands-on, dynamic learning integrating multiple academic content areas. NCDPI worked with NCSU to create a Growing Safer Gardens Guide for school and community gardens that offers safety best practices for gardeners. The School Gardens in North Carolina: Planting Seeds for Life-long Learning brochure provides guidance for items schools need to think about in starting or maintaining a garden.

• NC Cooperative Extension/4-H offers planting guides by region for the state and a variety of fun curricula for kids to learn about soil, pollinators, and more.
- ASAP has a Field Trip Guide that offers tips and resources for how to plan and implement a field trip to a local farm. Given that conducting a field trip is not always easy or feasible, they have a Meet Your Farmer video series and Jr. Meet Your Farmer video series that introduces you to some of the local farmers in the western part of the state.

- Got To Be NC has an online directory of local products, farmers, roadside stands, and farmers markets.

- NC Cooperative Extension has also put together virtual farm tours.

- NCSU worked with NC Cooperative Extension to create Dairy NC 360 videos. One you can view online. With funding from The Dairy Alliance, they were able to purchase VR goggles and provide training to regionally based Extension agents across the state. The agents can show the VR dairy virtual farm tour. They also now have access to a VR tour from the NC Pork Council.

- The Dairy Alliance has been doing live dairy farm tours. You can register in advance or view the tours live on Facebook. Kids can ask questions live to the farmers. They also have an Adopt a Cow program.

- The NC State Farmers Market in Raleigh has a virtual tour available on their website.
• The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition offers menu templates that School and Summer Nutrition Programs can use to share about they meals and snacks they offer. Each month an article is included on a variety of topics.

• NCDPI worked with partners to develop fact sheets on fruits and vegetables grown in North Carolina and served through School and Summer Nutrition Programs. The fact sheets provide information on how these fruits and veggies are grown and can be selected, stored, served and taught about, along with nutrients they offer.

• NCDA&CS created 7 sets of storybooks, activity guides and posters on produce grown in North Carolina and offered through the NC Farm to School Program. NCDPI worked with NCDA&CS to align the educational activities with the state academic standards.

• The NC Farm to School Program publishes an annual calendar featuring student artwork from across the state. Ag and nutrition facts are shared for each month.

• NCDA&CS worked with the NC Ag in the Classroom and the NC Sweet Potato Commission and teachers to develop strawberry and sweet potato lessons.
• The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), Growing Minds Program has a number of resources that can help with farm to summer enrichment – lesson plans, reading guides with book recommendations, Day by Day activities, and more.

• NC Ag in the Classroom has a Book of the Month program. You can order a book for $5 and receive the accompanying lesson plan. NC Ag in the Classroom also produces Ag Mags with articles and trivia about agriculture and crops grown in North Carolina. You can access the Ag Mags online or order sets of 25.

• The NC Cooperative Extension 10% Campaign encourage individuals, families, organizations, and businesses to spend 10% of their food dollars on local food. To encourage this, Extension has developed a number of educational and promotional resources available for free on their 10% Campaign website.

• The Carolina Hunger Initiative has developed Harvest of the Month fact sheets on produce. They have also offered a series of Cooking Matters at Home virtual lessons.

• USDA Team Nutrition offers a variety of free nutrition education lessons, posters and more. The Summer Food Summer Moves toolkit offers a variety of educational and promotional resources for Sponsors and Sites.
Thanks for listening and learning! We can’t wait to see how you bring the farm to summer.
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