



PATRICK LEAHY
FARM *to*
SCHOOL
PROGRAM

Increasing Local Foods to Support Resiliency in School Meal Supply Chains

USDA

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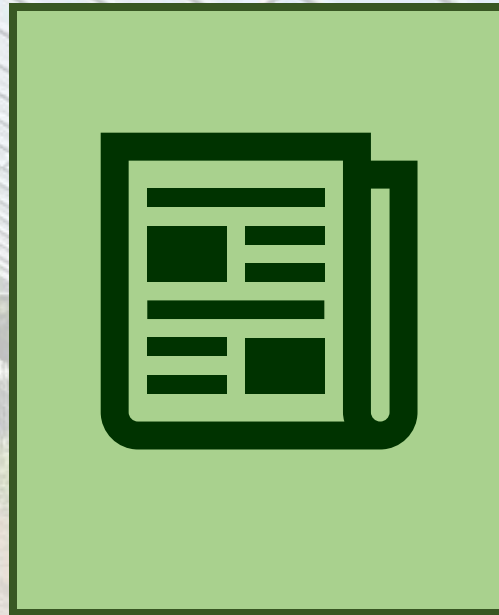


Minnesota
Department of
Agriculture

Kate Seybold



Resources



Fact Sheets

USDA Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOOD SAFETY INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR THE FARM TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) works with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure the Nation's food supply is safe. The FDA is the Federal agency responsible for ensuring the security and safety of many foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables. Many farms are required to comply with the [Food Safety Modernization Act \(FSMA\)](#) and [Produce Safety Rule \(PSR\)](#) and many commercial food operations that manufacture, process, pack, or hold human food are required to comply with the [Preventive Controls for Human Food Rule \(PCHFR\)](#).^{1,2,3}

- The FDA [Technical Assistance Network \(TAN\)](#) is a central source of information for questions related to the FSMA rules, programs, and implementation strategies. Answers have been provided in response to [frequently asked questions on the FSMA](#) and the [FSMA Rules and Guidance for Industry](#) can also be used to find answers to questions.⁴
- The FDA has a [Cooperative Agreement Program](#) with many States to implement the PSR. Your [State agency](#) may offer assistance and more information, and if this does not apply to your State or territory, you can visit the [FDA Produce Safety Network](#) for more information.^{5,6}
- The [Produce Safety Alliance \(PSA\)](#) is a collaboration between Cornell University, the FDA, and the USDA which offers approved trainings to prepare fresh produce growers to meet the regulatory requirements included in the FSMA Produce Safety Rule.⁷
- The [Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance \(FSPCA\)](#) is an alliance consisting of industry, academic and government stakeholders that develops curricula, and training and outreach programs to support compliance with the prevention-oriented standards of the FSMA.⁸
- Many [local Cooperative Extension](#) offices provide information and resources about farm-to-school. For information and resources about farm-to-school, visit the [Farm to School webpage](#).⁹ For information about your local [School Regional Specialist](#) or email us at [f2s@usda.gov](#).
- For information about food safety in the home, visit the [FNS webpage](#).¹⁰



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AN OVERVIEW OF GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAPs)



In the food supply chain, there can be contamination risks at every step from farm to fork. Preventing microbial contamination is particularly important for fresh produce because there is no heat treatment or "kill step" before it is consumed. When purchasing fresh produce, child nutrition professionals should be aware of key food safety practices that all fruit and vegetable producers should follow. Producers should be aware of key food safety practices that all produce growers should follow.

What are Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs)?

Good Agricultural Practices, or GAPs, are voluntary science-based guidelines that help to reduce the risk of microbial contamination during growing, harvesting, and packing of fresh fruits and vegetables. The guidelines are based on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s [Guide to Minimizing Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Produce](#). GAPs help to identify and control potential risks that affect the safety of produce on the farm and in the packinghouse.¹

The main principles of GAPs focus on **water, manure and municipal biosolids, worker health and hygiene, sanitary facilities, field sanitation, packing facility sanitation, transportation, and traceback and recordkeeping**. On a farm, the main sources of contamination are humans, animals, water, and soil. GAPs address how to control these contamination risks. For example, GAPs identify how to:

- Reduce the potential transfer of microbial from the soil to the crop.
- Ensure water used in various phases of production is not a source of contamination.
- Help workers to practice good personal hygiene and ensure that clean facilities are provided for visitors.
- Ensure that there is good sanitation, including storage areas, equipment, and transport vehicles that are properly cleaned and maintained on a regular basis.

There is no Federal requirement for schools to purchase food from farms that have a GAP certification or other third-party food safety certification.

It is recommended that a farm implement GAPs in its food safety plan to ensure the safety of produce grown and harvested during each phase of production. Keep in mind that farms can follow GAPs and have a food safety plan in place without having a formal GAP certification. Schools may purchase food directly from any farm that meets the applicable food safety requirements defined by the school and any existing Federal, State, Tribal, and local regulations. Review the [Verifying On-Farm Food Safety](#) fact sheet for more information on how to address and verify on-farm food safety.



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SCHOOL GARDENS Using Gardens To Grow Healthy Habits In Cafeterias, Classrooms, and Communities



TEACHING GARDENS in Tennessee, aquaponics systems in Montana, salad bars in New Mexico, garden-based curriculum in Guam...across the Nation schools are growing gardens to provide food for child nutrition programs, connect children to the source of their food, and create hands-on interdisciplinary classrooms.

School gardens pre-date the National School Lunch Program; the Federal Government has been encouraging school gardening since the early 1930s, even building a "School Garden Army" during World War I and supporting victory gardens at schools during World War II. USDA encourages school gardens by providing grant funding, guidance and resources, and support for food service personnel who are interested in purchasing products from a school garden. For additional information on school gardens across the Nation, check out the latest findings from the USDA Farm to School Census ([farmtoschoolcensus.usda.gov](#)).

Space for Gardens in All Seasons

School gardens come in all shapes and sizes, and with varying amounts of land are finding ways to grow gardens both within and outside of school grounds. A garden can be as simple as a few containers on a wall or cover many acres, and gardens can thrive in Program operators find that even small gardens can help children gain familiarity and comfort with the vegetables they are seeing more of at meal time. Districts are also overcoming growing season challenges in creative and innovative ways. Even in Montana, the traditional growing season just barely overlaps with school year, season extension techniques make it possible for students to garden all year long.

In rural Montana, the growing season is short, but that doesn't stop the team from Farm to School of Park County in Livingston, MT, from growing food year-round. High school students manage an aquaponics greenhouse, growing a nutrient ecosystem that combines fish and plants. The students learn rich lessons in chemistry and biology, as well as the business skills needed to sell the fish to local restaurants.

Using School Garden Produce in the Cafeteria

Food service directors use school garden products in the cafeteria every day, from herbs to spice up a pizza, to serving garden-grown lettuce on the salad bar, to creating vegetables as part of a comforting meal. Food



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USDA United States Department of Agriculture

GARDENS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES



TRIBAL COMMUNITIES are growing gardens of all forms from medicinal gardens and small community gardens to larger food production gardens to school gardens. This fact sheet will primarily focus on tribal school gardens. Tribal Nations are increasingly leveraging school gardens as tools to preserve tribal language, a connection to the land, culture and a source of food for child nutrition programs.

Introducing whole, traditional foods into student diets can help children form life-long, healthy eating habits. Research indicates that children are more likely to taste, consume, and have positive opinions of fresh produce when they are given hands-on opportunities to plant and harvest. School gardens offer an interactive, outdoor classroom for engaging both elders and students in linking their past and future, and a broader educational and cultural history. USDA supports tribal communities and schools who use school gardens for educational purposes and as a source of produce for child nutrition programs.

The following are examples of tribal schools growing gardens to provide food for child nutrition programs and connect children to the source of their food through hands-on interdisciplinary learning experiences.

Arizona: Rooting Traditions to Today with Three Sisters

Service to All Relations (STAR) School has a program that includes outdoor, hydroponic, and greenhouse gardens. The greenhouses, certified by the Arizona Department of Health Services, provide the school's salad bars. STAR also hosts a hands-on learning program for students.

where students prepare a feast for the community using the garden's bounty. The "three sisters" – blue corn, beans, and squash – play a prominent role in the gardens, teaching students about their heritage, health, and sustainable growing strategies.

New York: Kanenhiio & Akwesane Freedom School (AFS)

The Akwesane Freedom School conducts full-day Mohawk language immersion classes for pre-K to grade 8. The AFS owns a 10.5 acre site where Kanenhiio, a collective of community farmers, educators, and entrepreneurs, has developed a community garden, greenhouse, and cannery. In addition, school staff and parents are partnering with Kanenhiio members to involve students in the growing and production of food.

Colorado: Montezuma School to Farm Program

Since 2009, Montezuma School to Farm program has used their Seed to Table curriculum to teach students how to grow, harvest, and cook local foods. Students receive experiential education related to water and soil conservation practices. The school garden products are used in the cafeteria.



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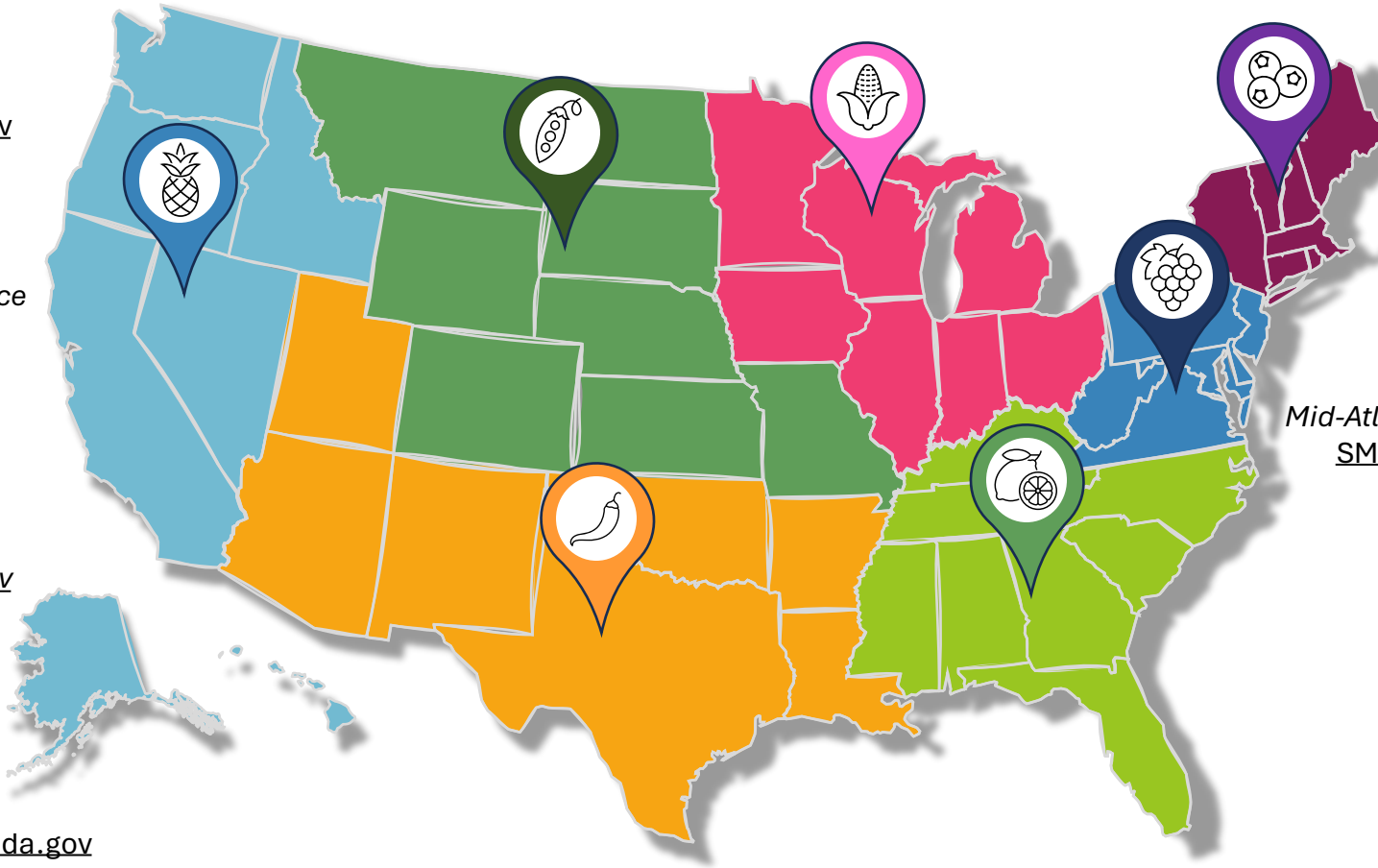
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