
One Health @ Cornell

ABOUT

@ CORNELL

IN THE NEWS

PEOPLE

PARTNERS

CORNELL VET MED

 > [One Health @ Cornell](#) > NYS Farm to School Grant Awarded to Tompkins County with Cornell MPH Program as a lead partner

NYS Farm to School Grant Awarded to Tompkins County with Cornell MPH Program as a lead partner

 [jeb527](#)  [January 2, 2019](#)  [One Health @ Cornell](#)

This article was written by Audrey Baker (Cornell BS '09, MPH '14), Cornell MPH Program's Assessment and Evaluation Specialist, and Educator with the Food Systems for Health Concentration. Audrey worked as a School Garden Coordinator and a Farm to School Coordinator before joining the MPH Program.

As we pointed out in the [One Health blog about Farm to School](#) back in November 2016, [Farm to school programs](#) have rapidly been gaining popularity as public health [nutrition](#) interventions in the United States. These programs provide fresh, whole food choices for cafeterias, classroom snacks, before- and after-school programs, early childhood centers, and summer meal sites. There are clear benefits to providing healthy, nutritious food options to students in schools, where many students eat between [35-50 percent of their daily calories](#). Childhood obesity and correlating chronic disease outcomes, representing the U.S. medical industry's most costly public health concerns, can be mitigated by improving [food and nutrition security](#) among our nation's youth and families.

In Fall of 2018, the Cornell MPH Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, [Headwater Food Hub](#), and all nine (9) School Food Authorities in Tompkins County, including 32 schools, joined forces to submit a proposal to the New York State Farm-to-School Grant program for \$92,829 over two (2) years.

Then, on December 19, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced \$1.5 million in awards to support Farm-to-School programs across New York State, including the Tompkins County Farm to School Project. The nine (9) School Food Authorities supported by the grant in Tompkins are Ithaca, Groton, Newfield, Trumansburg, Lansing, New Roots, TST BOCES, and George Junior Republic.



First-grade students at Belle Sherman Elementary School in Ithaca, NY make lettuce veggie wraps with the Fresh Snack Program to [learn about](#) Rainbow Nutrition.

In Tompkins County, the funding will support coordination of a local buying strategy to connect over 100 NYS farms with the 32 schools and 11,174 students in Tompkins County. In addition, with support from the Park Foundation, the grant will support training of food service workers in the preparation and effective use of local produce, as well as building upon existing efforts to raise student awareness of and consumption of local foods in schools through field trips, school gardens, and classroom based nutrition education.



Over 600 students visit the Youth Farm Project in Danby, NY each year to [learn about](#) farming, nutrient cycles, and food justice.

Farm-to-School programs are a key component of the Governor's recent **No Student Goes Hungry Initiative**, which also provides funding to high poverty schools to support "**Breakfast After the Bell**" in an effort to address food insecurity in New York State schools. Breakfast After the Bell improves access to and participation in school breakfast by alleviating barriers such as tight morning schedules and stigmas around poverty.

The poverty rate among households with children under 18 is 26.3% in Ithaca, 16.1% in Newfield and 15.7% in Groton, according to the U.S. Census 2012-2016. Feeding America reported 14,060 residents in Tompkins County were food insecure in 2016, 2,740 of whom were children under the age of 18. Nearly half of Groton students and 70% of Newfield students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, and have access to free breakfast and lunch every day.

Of the 11,175 students in Tompkins County, 4,951 are eligible for free or reduced-price meals (44%). Ithaca is the largest district in the county, with 5,216 students, of which 38% are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Two (2) Ithaca schools, BJM and Enfield elementary schools, have greater than 75% eligibility and, as of 2018-2019, offer universal school breakfasts. Three (3) MPH students have worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension this past year to

help roll out Universal Free Breakfasts at BJM and Enfield, including development of an evaluation plan for monitoring and measuring successes.



Students make fresh salads during Wellness Night at Enfield Elementary school, where over 75% of students qualify for free or reduced meals.

The MPH Program’s main role in the Tompkins County Farm to School Project is also monitoring and evaluation. Faculty and students will work with partners to create and implement a framework for measuring Farm-to-School activities across Tompkins County, beginning with benchmarking existing procurement and student awareness indicators. Audrey Baker, Evaluation and Assessment Specialist with the MPH Program and educator with the Food Systems and Health Concentration, has been working with Tompkins County school food and Farm-to-School projects in Tompkins County since 2009.

This project will appreciably benefit students in Tompkins County. According to the [National Farm to School Network](#), exposure to local foods and nutrition education can increase children’s willingness to try new fruits and vegetables, which can lead to improvements in diet quality, behavior, and educational performance.

Regional farmers will also experience notable benefits. This project is expected to move an additional 110,371 annual pounds of NYS produce into school meals and upwards of \$100,720 more school food dollars spent on NYS produce each year, according to Silas Conroy, Supply Chain Director for Headwater Food Hub.

In the [long term](#), the Project aims to contribute to improved student health and learning outcomes, build lasting institutional markets in Tompkins County for NYS farmers, support capacity growth for local food procurement, preparation and promotion with food service workers, increase school food budgets, and ensure continuous quality improvement for Farm-to-School activities and school food in the region for years to come.

📌 [Bookmark.](#)

◀ [Local Food Systems Panel Discussion](#)

[Master of Public Health student works with local non-profit to boost equity in the human health system](#) ▶

*This text can be changed from the Miscellaneous section of the settings page.
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, **consectetur adipiscing** elit, cras ut imperdiet augue.*

Powered by [Nirvana](#) & [WordPress](#).

Hosted by [CampusPress](#)