

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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**Contact: Lisa Damon**  
**Mass. Farm to School**  
**413-253-3844**  
**[lisa@massfarmtoschool.org](mailto:lisa@massfarmtoschool.org)**

## **Governor Baker Proclaims October Massachusetts Farm to School Month**

(Amherst, MA) School districts across the Commonwealth have been celebrating the bounty of Massachusetts agriculture in their cafeterias and classrooms-- And now it's official. Governor Baker joins a nationwide movement led by the National Farm to School Network to celebrate October as Farm to School Month. Farm to school programs strengthen the connections that communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools.

The Governor's proclamation recognizes the incredible programs across the Commonwealth making schools key supporters of local farms. Over 130 school districts are participating in the Harvest of the Month program led by Massachusetts Farm to School. Harvest of the Month encourages schools to highlight a different locally grown crop in the cafeteria each month and represents one of the initiatives Mass. Farm to School has developed to strengthen relationships between farms and schools in Massachusetts.

In Martha's Vineyard students are harvesting tomatoes from their school "salsa" gardens and mixing up healthy snacks. In Gloucester they are honoring the town history and serving locally caught seafood each month. In Springfield's many school gardens they are harvesting collards for school meals and planting pear trees in the schoolyard. And in the agriculturally rich Berkshires, the Berkshire Hills Regional School committee has endorsed a Farm to School Action Plan to bring local foods to the cafeteria and food education to the classroom and great school community.

Lisa Damon, Program Director at Massachusetts Farm to School, said, "Farm to school is a win-win. Children eat healthy local foods and learn about where their food is grown, and farmers gain steady, loyal customers." Farm to School programs in Massachusetts are expanding rapidly. What began with just a handful of districts in 2004 when Massachusetts Farm to School was launched has grown to over 75% of districts indicating that they engage in farm to school activity including local food in school meals, school gardens, and food and agriculture education. The USDA estimates that approximately 16% of Massachusetts school food budgets are spent on local purchases, representing nearly \$9 million for local farms and food businesses.

For ideas and information about celebrating Massachusetts Farm to School Month, including assistance in finding sources for local foods, free recipes, promotional materials and other fun items for celebrating Farm to School Month, visit [www.massfarmtoschool.org](http://www.massfarmtoschool.org)

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**Massachusetts Farm to School** facilitates sustainable purchasing relationships between local institutions and local farms, promotes local food and agriculture education for students, and supports state, regional and national networking of farm to school practitioners. Since 2004, Mass Farm to School has been promoting the consumption of locally grown foods in schools and other institutions, for the good of our children, our communities, and our economy.