

LOCAL FOOD ECONOMICS FACT SHEET

STATE FARM TO SCHOOL POLICIES

In the last decade, the nationwide growth of Farm to School (FTS) activities has been reflected in the collective rise of Federal and state policies that have been proposed and enacted to support FTS programming. In this fact sheet, we discuss the research that examines state FTS policies in the United States.

State Legislation Introduced and Passed

Forty-six states, the District of Columbia, and one US territory introduced a total of 546 bills and resolutions supporting FTS activities between January 1, 2002, and December 31, 2020. Of these, 170 bills were enacted, and another 70 resolutions adopted. Figure 1 shows the rise in the number of FTS bills proposed and passed from 2002 to 2020. While the bills and resolutions support FTS in many ways (e.g., supporting school garden activities, creating farm guides), the most common type of legislation provides funding to facilitate additional local foods purchasing by schools (NFSN and CAFS 2021).

Examples of state-level investment include the Oregon Legislature approving \$10.2 million in 2021 to fund the state's FTS grant program (Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network 2021) and Michigan continuing to increase its allocation for its state FTS programming (10 Cents a Meal), from \$4.5 million in 2022 to \$9.3 million in 2023 (Slootmaker 2022).

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State Farm to School Bills Introduced and Passed Between 2002 and 2020

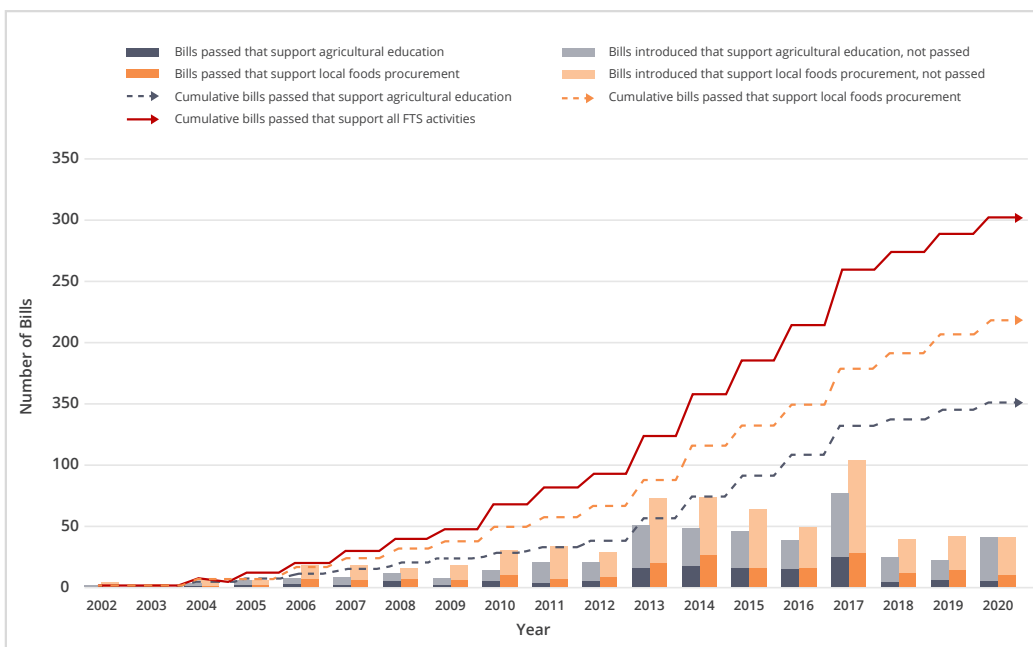


Figure 1. Trends in state FTS bills introduced and passed between 2002 and 2020..
Source: Spalding, A., Sauer, C., Yeh, D.A., Chaifetz, A., Jablonski, B., Kashyap, P., & Plakias, Z. (forthcoming). Trends in U.S. Farm to School Participation and Procurement, 2018-19. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

Key Takeaways

- » A growing number of states have enacted policies to support FTS; the most frequently enacted policies support local procurement activities.
- » While there are some studies that discuss associations between state FTS policies and program outcomes, more research is needed to understand the impacts of these policies.
- » There is reason to believe that different types of FTS policies (e.g., promotion of school gardens vs. procurement) have different impacts.



State Farm to School Policy Handbook and Dataset

The National Farm to School Network and the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems at the Vermont Law School developed the State FTS Policy Handbook (2002-2020). The Handbook summarizes FTS legislation between 2002 and 2020 from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, including whether a bill was passed and enacted, defeated, or is still pending (NFSN and CAFS 2021). It only includes bills and resolutions introduced by state legislatures, not funding or policies approved only through state budget processes or Tribal laws and policies. We leveraged the Handbook to create a unique dataset of FTS policies that summarizes bills and resolutions in each state and categorizes them based on their objectives¹. Both the Handbook and the dataset are publicly available.

Peer-reviewed Research on Impacts

Results from several studies that examine the relationship between state FTS policies and uptake of FTS activities are inconclusive; it is unclear if state policies increase FTS participation, which suggests a need for further research. Below are findings from peer-reviewed research examining the impacts of state FTS policies.

Major Findings	Source
A higher number of state-level FTS procurement policies translating into higher intensity of participation. Conversely, a higher number of state-level FTS education policies not translating into higher intensity of participation.	Kashyap, Jablonski, and Bauman (2024)
Funded state FTS policies are insufficient as facilitation mechanisms for FTS implementation.	Wen and Connolly (2022)
Mixed results for the association between state FTS policies and a school district's probability of participating and continuing in FTS.	Bonanno and Mendis (2021)
The presence of FTS-related laws associated with an increased likelihood of having FTS programs and with serving local foods at higher frequencies.	McCarthy, Steiner, and Houser (2017); Ralston et al. (2017)
No correlation between state FTS policies and proportion of districts in a state participating in FTS.	Lyson (2016)

¹United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service, Colorado State University, Vermont Law and Graduate School's Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, and National Farm to School Network. 2024. State Farm to School Policies 2002-2020 [data set and code book]. Adapted from the State Farm to School Policy Handbook 2002-2020. Available at: <https://foodsystems.colostate.edu/research-impacts/farm-to-school/outreach/>

What is Farm to School?

FTS activities take place in the cafeteria (e.g., procurement of local foods and cafeteria promotions), the classroom (e.g., integrating nutrition and/or agricultural education), and outside the classroom (e.g., school gardens, farm visits). The activities vary by school and school district.

References:

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Funding provided by:
Award number 2021-68006-34029



Document last edited 2-27-24

