

## Farm to School Summit Summary, Jan. 12, 2011

Attendees: (please check site for a specific list of attendees)




In person – 28 people








Webinar – 35 registered, 24 attended

We would like to thank everyone for their interest and participation in attending the first Farm to School Summit in Alaska. State-wide representation and accessibility are extremely important to the program so we will continue to utilize the available technology. We hope to be better prepared for the next conference through the lessons we learned from this one. One thing we found out was that we had to record the webinar to get the dialogue that went with the presentation, unfortunately we did not record. We have made the slides available on our web page, but the discussion is missing. One more thing we learned is to have someone there to take notes and write questions from those attending in person. Unfortunately, the question list is limited to the questions that came through the webinar and no questions or comments from people that attended in person are represented here.

Please feel free to contact Johanna Herron at [Johanna.herron@alaska.gov](mailto:Johanna.herron@alaska.gov), 907-374-3714 or Amy Pettit at [amy.pettit@alaska.gov](mailto:amy.pettit@alaska.gov), if you would like more follow up from the Summit. Thank you!

Questions:

1. It seems as though the larger school districts will wipe out the availability of fresh produce, how will smaller rural districts be able to compete or even get in on the process of getting the produce distributed to the outlying areas?  
 Including all size districts is a priority to the farm to school program. The first step will be to figure out how to get available produce and then look into distribution options. Sharing information and ideas is going to be essential to solving some of these problems. Please pass along anything you think will be of help to Johanna Herron, the farm to school program coordinator, [johanna.herron@alaska.edu](mailto:johanna.herron@alaska.edu) (907-374-3714).
2. Are offshore resources such as shellfish farms considered as farm to school sources?  
 Jo Dawson, program coordinator, USDA commodity food program answered: shellfish can be part of farm-to-school such at least at Child Nutrition we encourage all Alaska agriculture products to be part of farm-to-school but we affectionately call fish-to-school, however shellfish must be from an approved processor per DEC requirements. Please see our web site for local and traditional resources at <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/cns/TFDFG.html>
3. The Alaska CHARR and Safeserve exam includes in the exam that uninspected, uncertified, unlabeled products can not be used in ANY food service. Do you have any knowledge of this Safeserv program and what is required to comply?  
 We are familiar with the Safeserve program and will be looking into this question. We will also be working in collaboration with Department of Environmental Conservation, USDA, and Child Nutrition Services, before procedures and recommendations go out.

4. We are low fat, low sodium, and have many whole grains and provided over the max for vit A-C and D. Are we missing something?  
 There are more reasons for using local foods than just meeting nutritional recommendations (i.e. supporting local economy, decreasing food miles, and increasing student's knowledge about food systems). In addition to this there is some research to support the fact that nutrient levels of foods are higher the faster they are served from harvest, another motivator for using local foods when possible.
5. Can growers visit schools and see the foods and portioning offered – and see the \$.25 per carrot portion challenge?  
 We think it is a great idea to plan some school food service tours with food producers, likewise I think it is important to plan for interested food service professionals and farm tours.
6. Can we see a list of participants?  
 We will make a list of the Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> farm to school summit participants available on our web page, please keep checking back for more & updated information.
7. (Question about poll) What if I don't represent a particular region of AK?  
 There was only the ability to offer 5 answers to the polls so if you were not in a region of AK, an email to let us know would be great. I will then add it to our contact database as "Outside Alaska".
8. Will you send out the presentation?  
 The presentation is available for viewing on our web page. Unfortunately, we did not record the webinar so the audio and discussion are not available. Next time we will be sure to record the session, our apologies.
9. Can you make her contact information available so that we can follow up later?  
 Of course 😊 Johanna Herron, farm to school program coordinator, [johanna.herron@alaska.edu](mailto:johanna.herron@alaska.edu) (907-374-3714).
10. Given the USDA requirements for competitive bidding (formal and informal) how does a local producer comply?  
 The answer to this question was provided by Kathryn A. Quanbeck, Child Nutrition Programs, USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Western Regional Office.

The three most important things here are:

- Local level small purchase threshold (this is usually determined by the State. Ask AK DEED, they'll know what the dollar amount is)
  - Free and open competition
  - Written specifications
- To use the informal method a school needs to be purchasing below the local level small purchase threshold. The process should always allow for free and open competition, and they need to be sure to have written specifications for what they are seeking. So, for example, if the local level small purchase threshold is \$10,000, a school **cannot** call up their favorite farmer (no competition), verbal explain what they want (no written specs) and order \$11,000 of leafy greens (over the threshold). They can fax or mail several different farmers their specs and then call them for a price quote, as long as the purchase is under the threshold. So, a good example of this is a school I visited in Wisconsin. In the winter, when farmers are less busy, she holds an annual "Farmer Meeting". She advertises it in several local papers, everyone gets together at the school one afternoon, coffee and donuts, etc., etc. and they talk shop. The food service director tells the farmers what she buys, hands out spec sheets, talks about payment terms, etc. The farmers tell her how much they think they can supply, at what

price, delivery options, etc. Everyone signs the sign-in sheet and includes what they grow and where their farm is. Then, when she needs something she has a list of farmers that she knows are interested in working with the schools, they already have her written specs (or she can send them at the time) and she just starts calling the farmers on the list.

At the FNS Farm to School website under policy there is a Q&A section with very helpful resources:

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/procurement\\_policy\\_qa.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/procurement_policy_qa.htm)


Question 9 of the Q&A above really sums this up nicely:

The most important principle to a good procurement is that it is competitive and allows for free and open competition. When using a geographic preference to procure locally unprocessed agricultural products, competition still must occur. However, the way in which a geographic preference is applied depends on whether the procurement method is informal or formal.


If using the informal method, i.e. when procuring items which fall under the small purchase threshold, an institution must still develop a written specification document outlining the products they are seeking. The institution should get price quotes from at least three sources/farmers when procuring unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products, so that competitors have an opportunity to compete for the bid. Competition is maintained by comparing the price quotes from the sources to the SFA's developed specification, to determine which bidder is the most responsive and responsible.

If the procurement exceeds the small purchase threshold, a formal procurement method must be used. This involves the sealed bidding process (i.e. IFB) or the competitive negotiation process (i.e. RFP). This would entail public notification of the solicitation developed by the SFA. In the scoring criteria contained in the solicitation, the SFA can incorporate the use of geographic preference points into the criteria. This indicates to bidders that—upon the SFA's scoring of their solicitation for locally unprocessed agricultural products—preference points may be granted to the local sources/farmers who respond to the solicitation and are able to provide the requested unprocessed agricultural products.


11. What food safety and sanitation standards would be in place for local producers who sell direct to school districts?

 Food safety and liability are two extremely important priorities to the farm to school program. Until we have specific state procedures that meet all the regulatory agencies approval, we will post materials that already exist from national organizations and other states to be used as general guides.

12. Are locally produced products considered Alaska products even if the raw materials came from outside Alaska?

 Amy Pettit, Division of Agriculture, Marketing answered: to my knowledge there isn't a definition of 'Alaska produced' as far as percentage of the value of product that was created in the State. Other states do have this defined. For Alaska Grown - their is a definition, so – for example, Taco Loco - they qualify for made in Alaska - but not Alaska grown.

13. Are there presentations already developed that teach kids where their food comes from, i.e. which food they eat is local? In Anchorage I can plug Master Gardener (MG) volunteers into the education piece of this. Each year MGs go into over 50 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms to give presentations and reach 1,500 kids. This could be extended to include Master Gardeners in other communities.

 There is Ag in the class that will be very helpful for specifically Alaskan education and agriculture. We will also post a document, compiled by Stacey Sobell at Ecotrust, which lists many other resources to check out in regards to Farm to School curricula.

Additional comments:

1. To add to the standards side for the garden and farm to school, it is important that certain standards are met to assure that food safety practices are followed and if problems may develop that a solid recall system is in place. Recent food safety issues show that produce is more and more involved in food recalls. Training is key to teaching the students and teachers involved in the program.
2. As the discussion can stir a perspective that school meals are somehow lacking in nutrient content- and are in need of different foods- from Alaska sources, do we know what specific nutrient is missing in current school meal planning. My responsibility to meet USDA nutrient criteria is successfully meeting all USDA criteria for nutrient provision to our Alaska students.
3. Districts do very carefully put out public bids with exact specifications – and have done so for a very long time.
4. Our menus have been forever very public.
5. Alaska ag day is May 3 this year.
6. My thought is that the burden of activity or effort for the deal is on the part of the AK foods providers.  
School meal program operators in Alaska operate in a very public and easy to understand sourcing and delivery format.  
Our menus are public, our bids & specifications for need are public, and our service sites are all open to the public. Invoices for past payments of foods are all public accessible.  
Only 3 times, in my 8 years here on the Kenai, have I been contacted directly by an AK provider.  
Again- I really want to include AK providers, but when they make the customer do the heavy lifting work in educating the seller,- it just gets easier -safer- and cheaper to go with a lower 48 provider.  
The kids really do not care if the carrot is from Matsu or the central valley California -- really.
8. One thing I would have loved was a chat window on the side for those of us who weren't in Palmer, so we could have talked to each other, and to have someone who *\*was\** in Palmer at the presentation to join in the chat. That way, when we couldn't hear what was going on, someone who heard it or the moderator could have told us, etc. And those of us out here could have asked questions. That part didn't work well. I know you guys can fix that. I'm very encouraged to see you using the new technology that's available to do outreach.
9. I watch AFN (Alaska Federation of Natives) online every year. The chat screen is invaluable for people who aren't there know what's going on, to talk to each other and for the moderator to clarify things.

10. Thank you for holding this. It clarified where the state was in the process of trying to implement this program. It also has given a few of us that were watching here how to proceed to build possible relationship with schools and distributors in the future.

Technical Comments:

1. Can not hear when others off the microphone talk.
2. Can not hear when you move around and very loud when you brush against the microphone.
3. Questions not getting answered on webinar.
4. Would be nice to see other webinar participants.
5. Would help if someone was monitoring the webinar questions, comments, and hand raising.
6. Would like to know who is in the room too.
7. Cannot get audio working from webinar.
8. Would be helpful to know who is asking or answering questions audience.
9. Johanna sounds quiet, lots of background noise.
10. Please repeat the comments from the audience.