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New Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station

2011 NEW JERSEY FARM
TO SCHOOL SURVEY REPORT

farm to school



2011 New Jersey Farm to School Survey Report

INTRODUCTION

A stronger connection between the farm and school communities has long been sought after in New Jersey, and the Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) department of Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) is working to achieve this connection as one of its primary goals. To that end, in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the New Jersey Farm to School Network and the New Jersey School Nutrition Association, FCHS developed and distributed a Farm to School (FTS) survey for New Jersey schools in early 2011.

The 2011 New Jersey FTS Survey, developed as part of the USDA Team Nutrition grant Grow Healthy New Jersey: A Team Nutrition Initiative, received by FCHS from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture in September 2010, was adapted from the Minnesota Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy's annual FTS survey and was approved by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board. The survey sought to determine the readiness of, and extent to which, FTS has already been implemented in New Jersey, as well as possible barriers to, and suggestions for, improving this process. The results of the survey follow.

Every effort was made to distribute the online survey to all New Jersey K-12 school foodservice directors and managers in early 2011. Responses from 222 individuals, representing 193 school districts or charter schools, were received, providing a 28.5% response rate. Respondents were representative of all grades, K-12, and there was an equal distribution of responses from throughout the state of New Jersey, with 72 respondents from the northern region (32.7%), 73 from the central region (33.2%), and 75 from the southern region (34.1%).



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Key Findings

- Over 80% of schools indicated that they are already participating in, or have an interest in participating in, FTS;
- Over 70% of schools are purchasing New Jersey grown food;
- The top 3 produce items purchased by schools in the 2009-2010 school year were apples, tomatoes, and peppers;
- Schools indicated that the types of tools and support that would assist them in FTS implementation included e-newsletters, nutrition information and foodservice trainings;
- The highest rated topics for foodservice trainings to help schools implement FTS included:
 - Food safety issues;
 - Farm to School promotion and student nutrition education;
 - “Farm to School 101”;
 - Procurement – working with farmers and distributors.
- When asked about barriers to implementing FTS in New Jersey, schools indicated these top issues:
 - Liability/concerns about food safety and food handling standards;
 - Pricing and fitting local food into the budget;
 - Poor product quality;
 - Difficulty finding farmers for direct purchase.
- To prioritize efforts, schools indicated that the school administrators/ school board, farmers and distributors and teachers should be the key stakeholders with whom to engage and communicate with as FTS gains momentum in New Jersey.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Please note:

The percentage figures in this report are based on the number of respondents of each specific question and all percentages may not sum to 100 where respondents were able to choose more than one response.

Respondent's Demographics

- 67.0% were 41-60 years of age;
- 77.7% were female;
- 62.2% have completed an advanced degree of an Associate's degree or higher;
- 76.3% were either a foodservice director or manager.

Respondent's Foodservice Operations

- 67.6% were operated by a Foodservice Management Company;
- 69.3% had on-site kitchens;
- 67.0% served 1-5 lunch sites; 21.1% served 6-10 lunch sites;
- 55.6% served 101-1000 student lunches per day; 37.6% served 1000 or more lunches per day.



Produce Distributor Used

Option	Percent
Balmour	0.0
Riviera Produce	0.6
Ambrogi	13.1
US Foods	37.1
Other	67.4

General Distributor Used

Option	Percent
Balmour	0.6
Riviera Produce	0.6
Ambrogi	9.4
US Foods	52.5
Other	52.5

Foodservice Management Company Used

Option	Percent
Aramark	3.9
Pomtonian	12.3
Maschio's	12.3
Chartwells	12.9
NutriServe	16.8
Other	16.8
Sodexo	25.2

Schools purchased produce from a wide variety of distributors, with some purchasing from more than one distributor/vendor. Almost all respondents, 91.3%, reported that they did not buy produce outside of an approved vendor list of suppliers. A majority felt that their FSMC was either highly (39.6%) or somewhat (22.3%) responsive to partnering with them to obtain local produce, but some (20.3%) had not asked for this assistance.

Purchasing of New Jersey Grown Food

When asked if their main produce distributor offered New Jersey grown produce in season, 57.9% responded *yes*, 4.3% responded *no*, and 37.8% were *unsure*.

The following responses are specific to the 2009-2010 school year:

- 72.7% purchased New Jersey grown food directly through a distributor with more than half (55.2%) reporting it as a “trouble-free” experience;
- 11.3% purchased New Jersey grown food directly from a farmer with more than half (60.0%) reporting it as a “trouble-free” experience.

Respondents noted the top 12 types of New Jersey grown produce used during the 2009-2010 school year and rated the overall level of success they experienced with each item as follows:

Food Item	Percent Used	Very Successful	Somewhat Successful	Not Successful	Percent N/A
Apples	65.6	74.3%	16.2%	0.0%	9.5
Tomatoes	63.9	70.9%	14.9%	1.4%	12.8
Peppers	45.0	57.9%	21.1%	5.3%	15.8
Cantaloupe	32.2	55.7%	15.5%	0.0%	28.9
Watermelon	30.6	59.6%	12.1%	1.0%	27.3
Blueberries	29.4	39.8%	17.2%	3.2%	39.8
Salad Greens	26.1	47.3%	22.6%	0.0%	30.1
Carrots	25.6	51.5%	20.6%	1.0%	26.8
Broccoli	25.0	47.8%	25.6%	0.0%	26.7
Peaches/Nectarines	25.0	43.8%	19.1%	1.1%	36.0
Strawberries	23.3	48.8%	14.6%	0.0%	36.6
Zucchini	20.0	34.6%	17.9%	2.6%	44.9

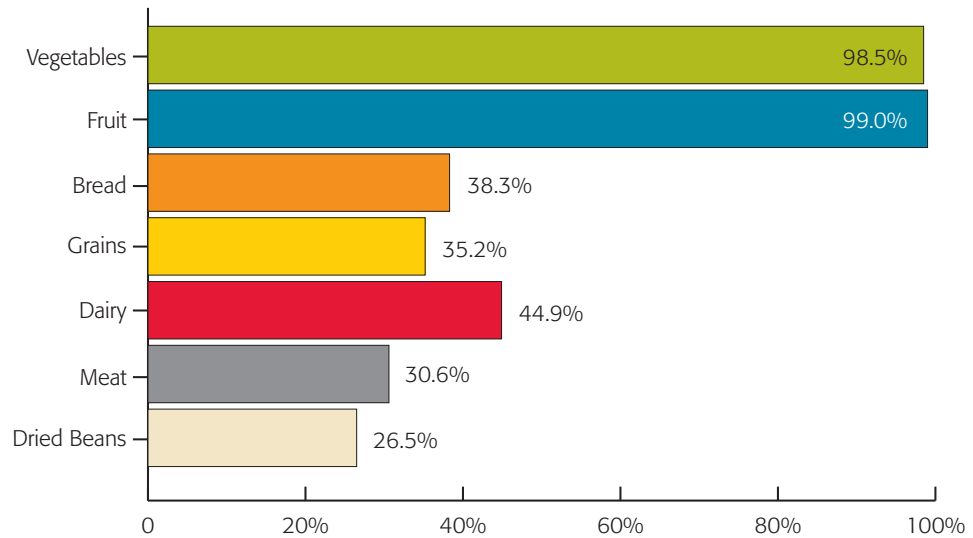


The majority of respondents (54.4%) reported spending from \$1 to \$10,000 on New Jersey grown produce with 30.5% unsure of the amount spent in the 2009-2010 school year.

The importance of having fresh produce delivered in “ready-to-use” form (e.g. cleaned and chopped) was assessed. Respondents were asked to select one of the following:

Option	Percent
Can only work with ‘ready-to-use’ produce	7.0
Have a strong preference for ‘ready-to-use’	37.5
Can work with uncut produce on an occasional basis	26.5
Are very comfortable handling uncut produce	29.0

Respondents rated their interest in purchasing New Jersey grown foods in the future as follows:



Barriers to Using Local Foods

Respondents rated the biggest barriers to using more local foods as follows:

Option	Most Important	Somewhat Important	Least Important
Extra labor/prep time for local product	38.2%	41.8%	20.0%
Pricing/fitting local food into budget	76.8%	19.9%	3.3%
Difficulty finding farmers to purchase from directly	64.6%	29.1%	6.3%
Liability/concerns about food safety and food handling standards	78.9%	17.1%	4.0%
Timing and frequency of backdoor deliveries	59.6%	31.0%	9.4%
Prime produce distributor doesn't offer the local products wanted	45.2%	42.2%	12.7%
Don't have the equipment, facilities or staff skills needed	25.5%	41.6%	32.9%
Multiple orders and invoices	23.9%	30.8%	45.3%
Poor product quality	69.5%	24.0%	6.6%
Not enough storage space to accommodate quantities needed to order	30.2%	41.5%	28.3%

Prevalence of and Interest in Farm to School Projects

Approximately 6% of respondents reported that they currently have a FTS project in their district and approximately 11% reported including a nutrition or health component in their FTS project. Twenty percent reported having a school garden program.

Types of FTS activities that were reported as happening or anticipated in respondent's districts include the following:

Option	Currently Happening	Anticipated for 2010/2011 School Year	Number of Respondents
FTS promotions (e.g. info in foodservice newsletter, signage in cafeteria)	26.9%	41.8%	78
FTS education (e.g. smart board videos, farm visits, classroom activities)	16.9%	19.9%	59
Food production (e.g. school gardens, greenhouses, growing in the classroom)	42.9%	29.1%	77



For the 2010-2011 school year, respondents reported the following plans for FTS:

Option	Percent
Will expand our existing FTS effort	19.7
Will keep our FTS effort about the same level as last year	7.7
Will reduce FTS activities	0.0
Will pursue FTS for the first time	13.1
Haven't engaged in FTS so far and don't expect to start	18.6
Would like to pursue FTS but don't know where to start	41.0

New Jersey FTS Website

Questions were asked of respondents regarding the New Jersey FTS website. Of 200 respondents, 61 (30.5%) reported being familiar with the website. Respondents rated the website as follows:

Option	Respondents
Extremely useful	18
Somewhat useful	110
Not at all useful	23

Suggestions to improve the website included adding menu costing information (60.9%), listing more farmers and recipes (each 47.8%), including more FTS promotional and communication tools (41.3%), and more tools for educating students on FTS (37.0%).

FTS Support and Training

Tools and support that would be helpful to respondents included the following:

Option	Percent
E-Newsletter	65.1
List Serve	25.8
Blog	9.7
Foodservice Trainings	55.4
Classroom education to work with students	39.2
Nutrition Information	63.4

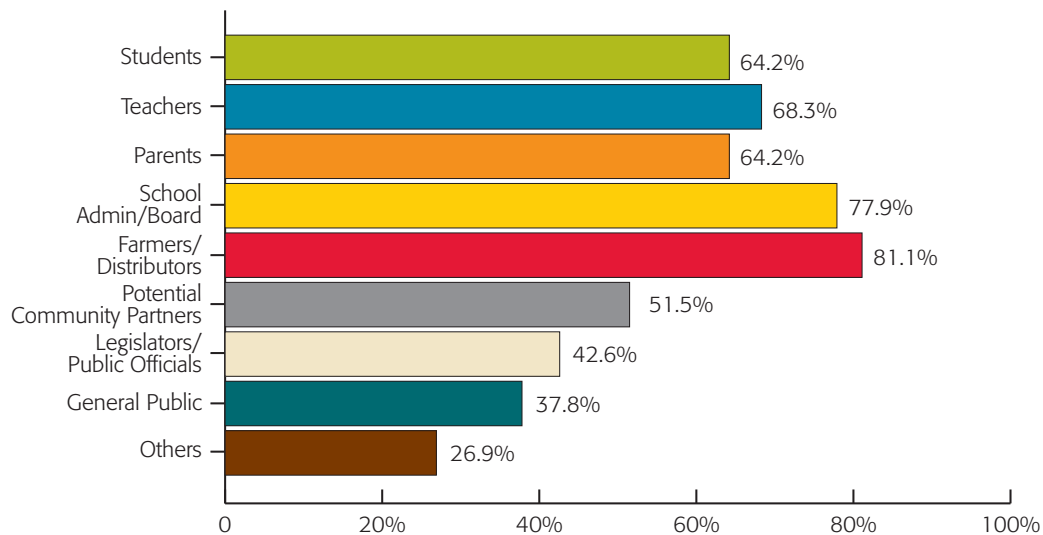


Types of staff training that would help schools do more with FTS were rated as follows:

Option	Most Important	Somewhat Important	Least Important
Hands-on training for cooks and foodservice staff	58.8%	29.4%	11.8%
Engaging teachers, students, administrators, parents, community	59.1%	35.8%	5.1%
Introductory "Farm to School 101"	64.3%	33.3%	2.4%
Procurement (working with farmers and distributors)	61.3%	34.1%	4.6%
FTS promotion and student nutrition education	70.2%	29.2%	0.6%
Food safety issues	78.9%	18.1%	2.9%
Menu planning (e.g. selecting recipes, menu costing)	49.1%	38.8%	12.1%
Other	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
No training needed	37.5%	40.6%	21.9%

Prioritizing Efforts in FTS

New Jersey's FTS efforts so far have focused on engaging foodservice staff, farmers and instituting school garden programs. As FTS gains momentum, the following is how respondents thought efforts should be prioritized to engage and communicate with other stakeholders:



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This report is a representation of one aspect of *Grow Healthy New Jersey: A Team Nutrition Initiative*, a USDA grant received from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, and has been prepared through the efforts of the four Principle Investigators of this project. The Co-PI's are faculty members of the Family & Community Health Sciences (FCHS) Department as follows: Alexandria Greci, FCHS of Hunterdon County, Sherri Cirignano, FCHS of Warren County, Luanne Hughes, FCHS of Gloucester County, and Kathleen Morgan, Chair of FCHS.

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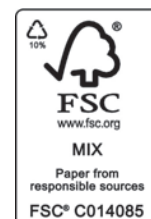


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