



COUNTY OF YOLO

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Yolo County Receives USDA Grant to Increase Local Foods in School Cafeterias

(Woodland, CA) – The Yolo County Agriculture Department’s farm to school program is one of 74 projects, spanning 39 states, receiving support this year from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Farm to School Program to better connect school cafeterias and students with local farmers and ranchers. Yolo County’s project received a \$93,500 grant which will impact 35,000 students in five Yolo County School districts, including Woodland, Esparto, Davis, West Sacramento and River Delta.

“Farm to school programs work – for schools, for producers and for communities,” said USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. “By serving nutritious and locally grown foods, engaging students in hands-on lessons, and involving parents and community members, these programs provide children with a holistic experience that sets them up for a lifetime of healthy eating. With early results from our Farm to School Census indicating schools across the nation invested nearly \$600 million in local products, farm to school also provides a significant and reliable market for local farmers and ranchers.”

The Yolo County Agriculture Department has a three year history of farm to school activities focusing on making the connection between local farms and school cafeterias. With this grant, Yolo County will continue to work jointly with each school district, as well as the UC Davis Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program, with the four major goals of: helping farmers acquire the required third party food safety Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification; providing funding directly to school districts; analyzing crop usage in school cafeterias; and providing schools and farmers with a ‘forager’ to make the personal connection between the two.

“Schools and farms don’t always speak the same language,” said Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner John Young. “Having a ‘forager’ available as a ‘translator’ for schools and institutional buyers makes all the difference in terms of local procurement for schools.”

Additionally, this grant will help a number of local farms get their 3rd party Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) food safety certification.

“Food safety standards are becoming stricter and farms frequently struggle to keep up with the requirements,” said Yolo County Agriculture Department Project Director Kristy Lyn Levings. “This grant provides training and writing services directly to farms seeking their GAP certification which makes them eligible to do business with schools and other institutional buyers.”

The project will run from December 2015 to December 2016. To find out more about Farm to School efforts in Yolo County, email kristy.levinngs@yolocounty.org.

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