# SNP Memo #2019-2020-12


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: August 30, 2019

TO: Directors, Supervisors, and Contact Persons Addressed

FROM: Sandra C. Curwood, PhD, RDN, ***Sandy***

## SUBJECT: USDA Farm to School Census

The purpose of this memo is to provide information on U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) third Farm to School Census. The Census captures information about Farm to School efforts and assesses the nationwide impact of farm to school activities over time. The Census will survey all public and private School Food Authorities (SFAs) operating the National School Lunch Program in all 50 states and territories. The USDA is working with ABT Associates to conduct the Census and analyze collected data. ABT Associates will contact SFAs directly regarding the Census. Each SFA will receive an email with a unique link to the individual survey form. SFAs should expect an email from ABT Associates in late summer 2019.

### Why participate in the Farm to School Census?

* The VDOE Office of School Nutrition expects a 100 percent response rate in Virginia. Even if a SFA did not conduct any Farm to School activities during the 2018-2019 school year, completion of the Census is still important.
* The USDA uses Census data to inform decisions regarding Farm to School Grant programs, training and technical assistance strategies, and resource development. The Census data also helps USDA and state agencies gain a better understanding of the level of Farm to School activities, best practices, and challenges across the country.
* The Census allows SFAs to report on the challenges and benefits regarding their Farm to School programs.

### How should SFAs prepare for the Census?

* The Census will assess the SFA’s Farm to School activities during the 2018-2019 school year. Similar to previous versions, the 2019 Census will ask questions regarding:
	+ The SFA’s definition of local;
	+ The amount of money spent on local purchases;
	+ The most common products purchased locally;
	+ The sources of local products;
	+ Benefits and challenges of participating in Farm to School;
	+ The number and use of school gardens within the SFA; and;
	+ The number of salad bars within the SFA.

Please complete Attachment A, the Farm to School Census Preparation Worksheet. This will help you prepare for completing the Census. USDA designed the worksheet to help SFAs gather information included in the Census. Completing the Worksheet will expedite completion of the Census and will enable you to identify the number of schools participating in Farm to School activities, total expenditures for Farm to School products and activities, and staff time dedicated to Farm to School. Use the Farm to School Tracking Tool, Attachment B, to gather information from schools, other departments, staff, and/or vendors. You are encouraged to begin gathering this information upon receipt of this memo.

### What is the Farm to School Tracking Tool?

* The Farm to School Tracking Tool is specific to Virginia. The Tool was developed to track local purchases, trainings, and special events throughout the year. VDOE recommends using the Tool to provide accurate data to state and federal agencies when local food information is requested. While recommended by VDOE, SFAs are not required to use the Tool. The Tool and instructions are available in the *Download Documents* section of SNPWeb.
* SFAs should train procurement staff and site managers to record local food purchases at the time of invoicing and on menu production worksheets.

For more information about Farm to School, contact Trista Grigsby, SNP Farm to School Specialist at (804) 225-2331 or Trista.grigsby@doe.virginia.gov.

SCC/BDB/cc

Attachments A & B