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Get Smart, Eat Local Is The Theme Of NH Farm To School Program Event Oct. 3-9

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Get Smart, Eat Local is the theme of the New Hampshire Farm to School Harvest Celebration October 3-9, 2004, as freshly harvested local produce takes center stage in school cafeterias, classrooms and communities in celebration of healthy foods and farms.

In formally proclaiming "Farm to School Harvest Celebration Week," Governor Craig Benson called on farms, schools and communities to "celebrate the benefits of local agriculture in their schools and communities." Materials including posters and recipes are available on the program's web site, www.nhfarmtoschool.org, to assist schools in creating a unique celebration for their students.

"What better way to teach kids to eat their fruits and vegetables than by serving food from local farms in their school," says NH Farm to School program coordinator El Farrell, of the University of New Hampshire's Office of Sustainability Programs, one of the sponsoring organizations. "That is what New Hampshire's Farm to School program is all about," Farrell adds "getting local agricultural products into our school system."

The NH Farm to School Program began last fall with the integration of state grown apples and cider into the school cafeteria. By the end of May, school children in more that 70 schools had been enjoying locally grown Macs and freshly pressed apple cider.

One of the program objectives is linked to enhancing healthy nutrition efforts in schools. By offering fresh, healthy products, the program seeks to help reduce the alarming obesity and diet-related disease rates.

A related and equally important objective of the NH Farm to School Program is the development of local markets for local foods.

"When schools procure foods from New Hampshire farms, they support local economic development and community stability by retaining and multiplying dollars in the state," says Farrell.

Besides direct purchasing, the program aims to make schools, students and their families more aware of local farms and their contribution to the heritage, environment and economy of the community. Profitable, productive farms are the basis of a local food system that maintains New Hampshire's agricultural land, expertise and infrastructure and that strengthens food security for

all its citizens.

The NH Farm to School Program is a collaboration of the UNH Office of Sustainability Programs and the NH Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture, funded by USDA Sustainable Research.

For more information, contact 603-862-4088.