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Media Relations

USDA Grant Brings Local Food To NH Schools And Institutions

February 22, 2011

DURHAM, N.H. – A new grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture will help put more locally grown food on the tables at schools, hospitals, colleges, and other institutions around the state. New Hampshire Farm to School, a program of the University of New Hampshire Sustainability Academy, will receive \$11,000 of a \$250,000 grant to farm-to-institution projects in six New England states.

The full USDA grant is to the Northeast regional steering committee of the National Farm to School Network to expand and coordinate farm-to-institution work in all six New England states. In collaboration with the New England Governors Commission on Agriculture, American Farmland Trust, and Franklin County Community Development Corporation, among other partners, the steering committee will tackle distribution, processing, and regional and state-level coordination.

With its portion of the grant, NH Farm to School will participate in regional planning and coordination and engage in state-based farm-to-school research and activities.

"This grant will enhance our capacity to connect New Hampshire farms and schools while providing us the opportunity to participate in a regional project that will be of benefit to all New England states," says Elisabeth Farrell, program coordinator in the UNH Sustainability Academy.

According to the regional steering committee, annual school food expenditures for the six New England states are at \$149.8 million. If local schools purchased only 5 percent of their food locally, New England's agriculture economy would increase by \$7.5 million.

The NH Farm to School (NHFTS) Program was established in 2003 as a pilot program to introduce local apples and cider into NH K-12 schools. Within three years, more than half the K-12 schools in the state were purchasing them for their cafeterias. In addition to continuing with this successful program integrating apples and cider, the NHFTS is working to expand local food procurement. In 2006, NHFTS initiated a new pilot program -- the Get Smart Eat Local 10 District Project -- to work with school districts and a wholesale farm in the Seacoast region to introduce new local foods in the schools. Since then, NHFTS has been working to establish new farm-to-school connections with wholesale growers and schools in other parts of the state. The NH Farm to School Program receives funding from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Share Our Strength, and the UNH Sustainability Academy. Learn more at www.nhfarmtoschool.org or www.sustainableunh.unh.edu.

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