

# Expand and Advance **FARM TO SCHOOL** AND EARLY CARE in Minnesota with HF4163 & SF3528 and SF3446



Farm to School and Early Care connect Minnesota farmers and kids by including local food in kids' meals and teaching them about agriculture through hands-on activities. Local food supports local farmers, who contribute to the economic development of their farms and communities. **MDA's Farm to School and Early Care grant program** reimburses schools and centers for purchases made from local farmers and supports equipment purchases so more schools can prepare farm fresh whole foods.



**FY2023: MDA received 128 Farm to School grant applications for \$5.43 million total in requests.**

**SF3446 increases funding for the grant program to \$5 million** — the equivalent of about 5 additional cents per school meal<sup>1</sup> — to meet the consistently high demand.

- Last year, MN had a \$3.5 million dollar federal infusion of funding to support MDA's Farm to School grant program, for a total of \$4.25 million dollars currently being distributed. **There was still more demand than funding available, with \$5.43 million in requests.**
- Farmers are scaling up to take advantage of these funds, and **long-term increased funding is vital for farmers to rely on this critical market and make their own investments to scale to wholesale markets.** In the final quarter of 2023, grantees purchased from 318 producers, including meat, dairy, grain, fruit and vegetable growers around the state, with 103 self-identified as socially disadvantaged.

➔ Economic impact of FY2021 MDA Farm to School grants in Minnesota:  
**Every dollar spent on Farm to School generates an additional \$1 of economic activity.<sup>2</sup>**

“A thriving ag economy doesn't just happen. It requires thoughtful investment and support. Supporting schools in using MN Grown foods is one of many critical parts of that hopeful future. It's an easy win-win for all of us.”

— Ben Doherty, Open Hands Farm, Northfield

1. In fiscal year 2023, there were just under 90 million lunches served through the National School lunch program in MN (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>). Many districts have noted increased demand for both breakfast and lunch after the passage of Free School Meals, and increased funding is vital to meet this demand.

2. <https://www.iatp.org/documents/mda-farm-school-grant-evaluation>





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Many **rural communities** in Greater Minnesota rely heavily on **home-based providers**.

**HF4163 & SF3528** will expand grant eligibility to include **home-based family childcare providers**, ensuring that all Minnesota children, regardless of their care setting, can receive support to access fresh, healthy, local food, and opening up another market for our farmers.

- **Center-based** early cares were added as eligible applicants in 2023 — now let's expand access to include **home-based** providers!
- Many rural communities in Greater Minnesota rely heavily on home-based providers.
- Home-based early care providers are excited about Farm to Early Care: In 2022, a pilot mini grant opportunity received applications from 369 home-based providers.
- Minnesota has four “sponsoring organizations” that act as intermediaries between home-based early care providers for accessing federal reimbursement for meals and snacks. They could potentially fill the same role for these grants

→ These bills represent a crucial step in supporting local farmers and feeding local kids the very best our state has to offer. Farm to School and Early Care enhances the well-being of Minnesota, empowers local farmers and creates a positive economic impact. With increased funding and expanded eligibility, we can support our kids, farmers and communities.

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Learn more at [www.FarmToSchoolMN.org](http://www.FarmToSchoolMN.org) and  
[www.FarmToEarlyCareMN.org](http://www.FarmToEarlyCareMN.org)

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