

2015 - 2016

ANNUAL REPORT

CDFA OFFICE OF FARM TO FORK



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE



Letter from the Secretary

“Feeding
ALL
Californians
ensures a
HEALTHY,
secure future for
our state.”

As Californians, we are lucky to live in one of the most agriculturally productive places in the world, producing the variety we need for a well-balanced diet. We are constantly reminded of this, as we travel through the diverse microclimates of the state and witness everything from tomatoes to roaming cattle to almond orchards. Yet despite this bounty, many Californians remain food insecure, with hunger and proper nutrition remaining a pressing anxiety.

The Office of Farm to Fork was established to address these needs and ensure that all Californians have access to the bounty of healthy food our state produces. Our team actively works to follow its mission of serving underrepresented communities by improving access to nutritious foods statewide. Feeding all Californians ensures a healthy, secure future for our state.

This annual report chronicles the programs and tools developed by the Office over the past year. From creating the California Farmer Marketplace, an online tool making it easier for schools to procure California grown and produced foods, to exposing the next generation to agriculture, the Office strives to not only increase food access but also awareness of the state's rich agriculture.

I am proud of the work the Office of Farm to Fork accomplished over the past year and look forward to what we can do in the future.

Yours truly,

Karen Ross

Secretary of California Department of Food and Agriculture

Mission and Goals

The Office of Farm to Fork strives to lessen the impact of food insecurity by strengthening farm to consumer connections, and aims to improve health by increasing nutrition literacy and fostering healthy environments for all Californians.



INCREASE FOOD ACCESS

Lessen the impact of food insecurity through increased access points, creative land use, and expanding the availability of resources



ADVANCE FARM TO SCHOOL

Improve healthy school environments and increase market access to institutional buyers and sellers



COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Inform and guide the public of the benefits and opportunities within a dynamic food system



Programs



Farm to School

California Farmer Marketplace

The California Farmer Marketplace is a free, statewide website featuring fresh California produce, grains, meats, dairy, and other products for sale. Developed by the Office of Farm to Fork, the Marketplace strengthens local food systems by offering farmers the opportunity to post products and connect directly with school food service directors to increase the amount of healthy California grown foods on school lunch trays.

Pittsburg Unified School District

The Office of Farm to Fork worked closely with Pittsburg Unified School District's Child Nutrition Department to pilot a county-wide buying collaborative, focused on purchasing local foods for school meal programs in collaboration with nine other Contra Costa County school districts. The project was funded by USDA Local Food Promotion Program and Farm to School grants.





Programs

Food Access

Ambassador Program

Looking for a way to “Grow it Forward” and engage a new generation of farmers, the Office of Farm to Fork developed the Ambassador Program along with the Center for Land Based Learning’s California Farm Academy, which served as the inaugural host organization. The Program aims to increase awareness of available opportunities in specialty crop industries and fund student projects aimed at furthering specialty crop practices and access. During the first year, four students completed projects ranging from organizing a farm stand and CSA program run by people with mental illness to running an urban farm and farmer training program for area youth.

Central Valley Food Access Working Group

The Office of Farm to Fork facilitated a series of meetings of Central Valley stakeholders to address food insecurity in the Valley. The group, which consists of agricultural stakeholders (farmers, packers, and county agricultural commissioners), local governments, food banks, public health organizations, and community representatives, drafted recommendations to reduce food insecurity in the Central Valley.

Farm and Facilities Tours

As a means of strengthening connections between agriculture and the local community, the Office of Farm to Fork organized three tours in Northern, Central, and Southern California to increase awareness of local specialty crop availability and to increase direct farm sales to consumers and institutions. Tours highlighted alternative markets, such as food banks and schools, in addition to traditional retail markets and Certified Farmers Markets.

State Employee Food Drive

The Office of Farm to Fork led the California State Employees Food Drive, partnering with the Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services. Over 100 state agencies and departments participated resulting in the donation of over 700,000 pounds of food, including fresh produce, distributed by the Food Bank.

Programs



Coordination and Communication

Resources

The Office has created and compiled reports, program profiles, and best practices on topics ranging from farm to school to food access, available on the Farm to Fork Website, cafarmtofork.com.

Asset Map

In collaboration with USDA's Food and Nutrition Services Western Region Office, the Office assembled a group of stakeholders to strengthen state-wide collaboration across farm to fork focus areas. As a result of the convening and subsequent meetings, the Office produced a report outlining the assets and gaps in farm to fork activities in California and will continue to address these areas of need in the coming fiscal year.

Industry Conferences and Community Stakeholder Meetings

The Office continually attends stakeholder meetings and industry conferences to promote internal and external food access programs. Such opportunities give staff the chance to connect directly with stakeholders and the public to share findings statewide.

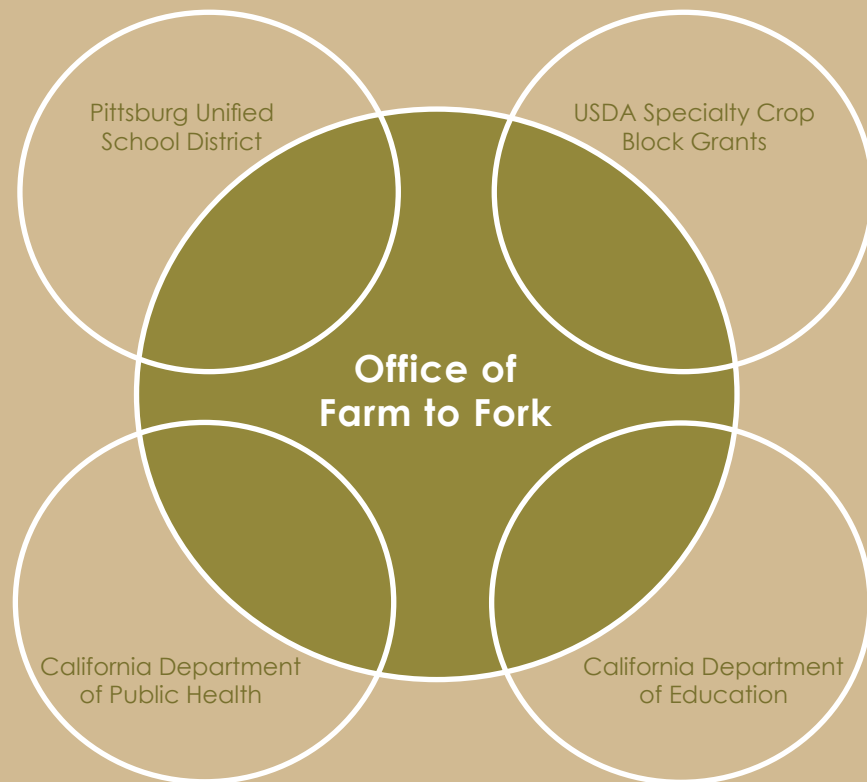


Farm to Fork Blog – *Tales from the Field*

Tales from the Field chronicles the various programs and engagements of the Office of Farm to Fork team. The blog has proven a great way for Farm to Fork Ambassadors to share their experiences working with the community and farming specialty crops.

Office Support

The Office of Farm to Fork operates solely through year to year contracts and grant funding, including contracts with Pittsburg Unified School District, California Department of Education, California Department of Public Health, and USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant funding.



Farm to Fork Reach 2015/16



- **51** school districts and **48** farmers/producers are active on the Marketplace
- **42** different products have been posted to the Marketplace
- **6** Contra Costa School Districts made their first collective purchase of over **4,000** pounds of California grown produce



- **700,000 +** pounds of food was donated during the State Employees Food Drive
- **100 +** students, policy makers, community stakeholders, farmers, and educators visited farms, institutions, markets, and processing facilities in Northern, Central, and Southern California on Office tours



- **25 +** new resources were posted on the Farm to Fork website
- **6,500 +** individuals were reached through Farm to Fork outreach and presentations at statewide conferences and events
- **30** blog posts highlighting California agriculture and food access work across the state were posted to *Tales from the Field*

FARM TO FORK TEAM

Elysia Fong

Elysia Fong has been with the CDFA Office of Farm to Fork since its inception in 2013. As Office Manager, she leads efforts to increase food access for all Californians and to promote and improve the viability of California agriculture. Elysia is a registered dietitian, holds a degree in Nutrition Science from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, and has worked in schools as a Child Nutrition Consultant for the California Department of Education for over 11 years.

Addison Ford

Addison Ford acts as the main point of contact for the Office of Farm to Fork California Farmer Marketplace, communicating directly with farmers, food service directors, and the general public. Addison is a registered dietitian and holds a Master in Public Health and a Master in Nutritional Biology from the University of California, Davis.

Sarah Hanson

Sarah Hanson manages Policy and Programs at the Office of Farm to Fork, working mainly on food insecurity and farm to school projects. Sarah previously worked with CDFA to author the report *Improving Food Access in California*, in response to Assembly Bill 581 (Pérez, 2011). Sarah holds a Bachelor of Arts from Vassar College and a Master in Public Policy and Master in Public Health from University of California, Berkeley.

Nicole Sturzenberger

Nicole Sturzenberger manages the Office of Farm to Fork Outreach and Communications efforts. She also aids in program development and management. Nicole holds a Bachelor of Arts from Dalhousie University and a Master in Food Communications from the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Italy.

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