



Wisconsin Farm to Early Care and Education



What is Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE)?

Farm to ECE is an extension of Farm to School that offers **increased access to healthy, local foods**, **gardening opportunities**, **food-based activities**, and **family engagement opportunities**. It enhances the quality of the educational experience in all sizes and types of ECE settings (i.e. child care centers, family day care homes, Head Start/Early Head Start, and early education programs based in schools).

How to Participate in Farm to ECE

Purchase fresh, local products to be served at meals/snacks

Enhance the learning environment with field trips to a farm/farmer's market, cooking lessons, and/or taste tests of local products

Share info with parents by hosting a garden event, sending home recipes, or posting pictures of Farm to ECE activities on social media

Establish a garden

Why Participate in Farm to ECE?

- 🌱 Encourages a healthy lifestyle at a time when children are developing taste preferences and eating habits that can last a lifetime
- 🌱 Expands fresh and local food access
- 🌱 Encourages family engagement
- 🌱 Supports local farmers
- 🌱 Builds community connections

Wisconsin Grown Foods

Farm to ECE can be incorporated into the new CACFP Meal Pattern.

- Apples
- Berries
- Plums
- Melons

Fruit



- Asparagus
- Broccoli
- Beans
- Spinach
- Sweet Potato
- And many more!

Vegetable



- Whole, 1%, or skim milk¹

Milk



- Flour
- Oats
- Whole wheat bread or rolls from local bakery

Bread/grain



- Eggs²
- Cheese
- Yogurt
- Meat³

Meat/meat alternate



Local Purchasing Options

CACFP Funds can be used to purchase local foods.

Local farmer's market or farm stand

*Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share

On-site garden

Purchase directly from a farmer

Find local, seasonal produce from a broad line distributor

*To find a CSA near you, visit:

<http://www.csacoalition.org/our-farms/full-list/>

Tips to Grow Your Farm to ECE Program

1) Dig into menu planning

- 🌱 Start with one or two local item(s) each month and increase as you become more comfortable.
- 🌱 Learn about what you can purchase in Wisconsin and when produce is in season.
- 🌱 Highlight your local items in a monthly newsletter and on the menu.

2) Form a team

- 🌱 Collaborate with teachers and administrators, parents, local farmers, and community organizations such as universities or your local cooperative extension agency.

3) Create excitement

- 🌱 Plan a field trip to a farm or farmer's market.
- 🌱 Start a small garden or plant veggies in pots in the classroom and allow children to help in the care.
- 🌱 Find curricula, activities or books relating to gardening, preparing and eating local foods and learning more about where food comes from.

Grow It, Try It, Like It! Preschool Fun with Fruits and Vegetables

is a garden-themed nutrition education kit for child care center staff that introduces children to fruits and vegetables: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-try-it-it>

Resources

- **WI Department of Instruction- Farm to Early Care and Education** <https://dpi.wi.gov/community-nutrition/cacfp/farm-2-ece>
- **USDA Local Foods and Related Activities in the CACFP** <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-preschool>
- **National Farm to School Network- Farm to Early Care and Education** <http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/early-care-and-education>
- **Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems- Seasonal Availability of WI Fruits and Vegetables** <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/foodservtools/2-Get-started/wisconsin-produce-calendar.pdf>

¹Milk purchased from a local source must be pasteurized and fortified with Vitamins A & D.

²Licensed providers must obtain written permission from parents/guardians for farm eggs.

³Local meat must be slaughtered and processed in Federal or State inspected facilities.