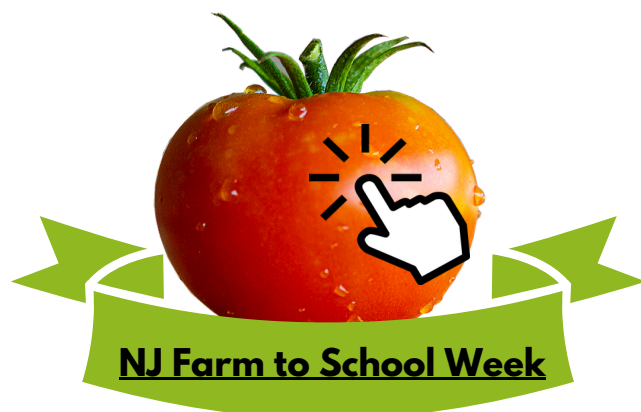




*A Quarterly Newsletter from the NJ Department of Agriculture
Farm to Everything Program*

SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER



FRESH FARM TO SCHOOL SPIRIT WEEK SEPT. 21nd - 25th, 2026

Muddy Monday

- ✓ Plant seeds and watch them grow!



Tasting Tuesday

- ✓ Feature Jersey Fresh produce in a tasting or on the menu



**TASTE TEST
STICKERS**

Wellness Wednesday

Become a "Farm to School Top Chef" use the NJ Seasonality Chart and show us the recipe you created



Traveling Thursday

- ✓ Map out how far your lunch food has traveled or plan a Farm to Table lunch using a NJ map

Farmer Friday

- ✓ Dress up as a farmer.
- ✓ Invite a farmer or food producer to eat with students in the lunchroom.



TOP TOMATO FALL 2026

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON THOSE MAKING
A DIFFERENCE IN FARM TO SCHOOL

Cindy Sue Schaller
Food Service Director,



“The first time I have ever liked beans!” That was one Monroe Township student’s enthusiastic reaction after tasting fresh local corn and bean salsa, perfectly capturing the excitement around Jersey Fresh at Monroe Township schools.

A big congratulations goes to Cindy Sue Schaller, Food Service Director, and the Monroe Township School District as our Top Tomato! Leading the team alongside Cindy are Linda Edwards, Assistant Food Service Director; Helen Calvello, Cafe Manager; Stephanie Pecorino, Nutrition Specialist; Maria Antunes, Administrative Assistant; and Chefs Paula Fernandez, Ashley Fleming, and Don McNulty. Together, they work year-round to serve delicious, nutritious meals to students in grades K–12 while connecting them with the local farms and farmers who grow their food.

The Monroe Township team has taken significant steps to introduce New Jersey farm produce into school menus and educate students about the benefits of eating locally grown foods. Heirloom tomatoes are a student favorite, especially when sourced from local Piney’s Family Farm, along with fresh-roasted turkey from Griggstown Farm.



Local Corn & Bean Salsa Tasting

Throughout the school year, the district celebrates Farm to School through seasonal menus and special events. During NJ Farm to School Spirit Week, students have the opportunity to try new local foods, while each March, in celebration of National Nutrition Month, the team offers tastings of New Jersey produce paired with lessons about nutrition, fitness, and wellness. These efforts are coordinated with the district’s Wellness Committee, bringing together administrators, faculty, food service staff, and parents.

The Monroe Township team takes great pride in connecting farmers with their communities and students with local agriculture. By purchasing, promoting, and serving local foods, they are helping strengthen New Jersey’s food system while encouraging students to eat more fruits and vegetables. With bountiful Jersey Fresh produce featured throughout the school year, it’s truly a win-win for students, farmers, and the community!



Local Cranberry Sauce Tasting

NJ FARM TO SCHOOL LOCAL PROCUREMENT INITIATIVE

LOCAL FOOD IMPACT REPORT



SALES REPORTED: APRIL 10 - JULY 28, 2026

\$1.24 MILLION

**TOTAL REPORTED LOCAL
FOOD ACTIVITY**

Generated through local school purchases
and food aggregator reported activity.

101

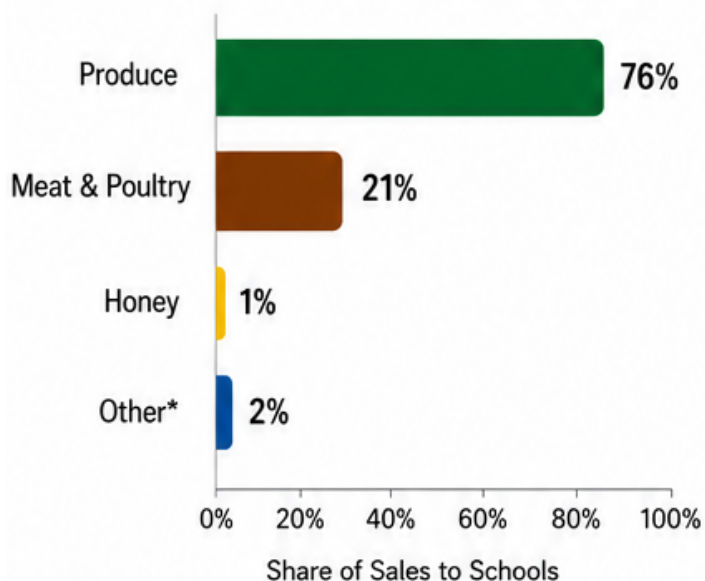
LOCAL FOOD PARTNERS

96 NJ Producers

5 Local Food Aggregators

WHERE SCHOOLS SPENT THEIR DOLLARS

Based on Sales to Schools (~\$1.12 Million)



*Other = grains, dairy, eggs, & seafood

UNDERSTANDING THE NUMBERS

\$1.12 MILLION

SALES TO SCHOOLS

All local food sales to schools during the reporting
period, not just grant-funded purchases.



\$136,000

VENDOR TO VENDOR SALES

Local food sold from one local vendor to another
before reaching a school. Separated to avoid
double-counting.



\$1.24 MILLION

TOTAL REPORTED SALES

Initiative created an additional \$240,000 in
economic activity.



REPORTING NOTE: Sales reported from April 10 - July 28, 2026.



For the NJ Farm to School Procurement Initiative a total of 343 school districts opted into the available \$1,000,000 in grants funds, of which \$957,000 has been spent.

Reported sales data combines school district grant reports with additional purchases reported by local food aggregators that exceeded individual grant awards.

ONE OF MANY STORIES MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH LOCAL PROCUREMENT

A look inside Absecon Public School

and their partnership with
Working Dog Farms



Through the NJ Farm to School Local Procurement Initiative, schools across the state connected with local farms to bring fresh, seasonal foods to students. Here's one example of how it comes to life in Absecon!

kale chips



Students sampled crispy kale chips from Working Dog Farms and the response was overwhelmingly positive.

spring mix salad



The "best tasting and organic greens ever" in a spring mix salad with strawberries, blueberries and feta.

green smoothies

Local kale, bananas, yogurt and honey came together for a bright green smoothie.



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