

Date of Hearing: April 30, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
Esmeralda Soria, Chair  
AB 675 Aguiar-Curry – As Amended April 22, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Office of Farm to Fork: California Farm to School Program

**SUMMARY:** This bill would establish the California Farm to School (CA-F2S) Program, under the administration of the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Office of Farm to Fork (OF2F), for purposes of cultivating equity, nurturing students, building climate resilience, and creating scalable and sustainable change in the school food system. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the CA-F2S Program, under the administration of OF2F, for purposes of cultivating equity, nurturing students, building climate resilience, and creating scalable and sustainable change in the school food system.
- 2) Requires The CA-F2S Program to increase procurement of foods that are grown or produced in California and are whole or minimally processed from food producers in California for school meal programs. This bill will also increase hands-on food education opportunities that engage pupils and connect the classroom with the cafeteria, such as activities in school gardens, on farms, in culinary classes, in settings that celebrate traditional foodways and cultivate food sovereignty, and through other experiential learning pathways.
- 3) Allows the OF2F, to the extent that funding is available, to implement initiatives under the CA-F2S Program, including, but not limited to, initiatives that do all of the following:
  - a) Advance the CA-F2S network.
  - b) Provide resources and facilitate relationships between local producers and school personnel and encourage opportunities to incorporate best practices such as scratch cooking, hands-on education, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), climate-smart agricultural practices, certification, and insurance.
  - c) Increase the nutritional profile of foods provided in schools.
  - d) Facilitate a CA-F2S Interagency Working Group.
- 4) The OF2F shall administer the CA-F2S Incubator Grant Program under the California Farm to School Program.
- 5) Require OF2F to develop the CA-F2S program in consultation with the State Department of Education and the State Department of Social Services
- 6) Allows CDFA to adopt regulations necessary to implement and administer the California Farm to School Program.
- 7) Creates the Farm to School (F2S) Account in the CDFA Fund, requires the F2S account to consist of funds from federal, state, industry, philanthropic, and private sources, and requires

moneys in the F2S account to be available to the CDFA upon appropriation by the Legislature, as specified.

**EXISTING LAW:** Creates the OF2F within CDFA, and requires the office, to the extent that resources are available, to work with various entities, including, among others, the agricultural industry and other organizations involved in promoting food access, to increase the amount of agricultural products available to underserved communities and schools in the state. *Food and Agriculture code 49000 - 49002*

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** About 2.3 million California children are food insecure, with limited access to nutritious foods. School lunches are crucial to ensuring children are receiving healthy meals daily. The Farm to School Program prioritizes the procurement of locally sourced, healthy and nutritious foods for school meals, therefore having a direct impact on food insecure students by increasing their access to critical quality meals. Specifically, 71% of students served by the grant program are eligible for free or reduced price meals. The CA-F2S Program is currently funded through the budget process, but it is not solidified in statute. Without a codified authority for CDFA, the biggest challenges facing the Farm to School Program are continued funding and stakeholder support. Because of this, the program could be more susceptible to cuts in future budget years.

F2S generally means a program or system that connects local food producers with schools to offer students healthy, locally sourced meals and to provide educational opportunities about agriculture and food systems. It involves schools purchasing food from local farms and integrating agriculture-related lessons into the curriculum, such as school gardens, farm visits, and cooking classes. Components of a F2S program include, but are not limited to the following:

- 1) Schools purchase locally grown fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, dairy, and seafood, supporting local farmers and reducing food miles.
- 2) Students learn about the food system, where food comes from, how it is grown, and the importance of healthy eating.
- 3) School gardens, farm visits, and cooking classes provide students with practical experience related to food and agriculture.
- 4) Food-related concepts are woven into various subjects, such as science, math, and social studies, enriching the learning experience.

The CA-F2S Program enhances the education of marginalized students by prioritizing funding for schools with diverse racial and ethnic populations and higher volumes of low income, underserved students. Nearly 60% of CA's student population is made up of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. 84% of the schools who participate in the Farm to School Program are Title 1 Schools, demonstrating that these programs have a significant impact on low-income and historically underserved students. Additionally, around 65% of Hispanic or Latino students throughout the state have been reached by Farm to School projects funding by the Incubator Grant Program, a group that makes up about 56% of the overall student population. Finally, Farm to School Programs' educational components often emphasize the value of farming, offering a meaningful connection for Hispanic and Latino youth, particularly those with parents

working in agriculture. These initiatives can help reduce the stigma that may currently exist around farm work, fostering a greater appreciation for the industry and its importance.

Structural and institutional racism has caused significant food insecurity and health disparities, with people of color, particularly Black, Hispanic, and Native American communities, facing higher rates of hunger, obesity, and diabetes. Farm-to-school programs can address these inequities by sourcing food from socially disadvantaged farmers, improving food security, and supporting racial and environmental justice in communities affected by pollution and limited resources. With regards to socially disadvantaged farmers, only 19% of CA food producers are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), but they made up 60% of the applicants and 42% of grantees. Twenty six percent of the producers and grantees were from Hispanic production owners. Overall, Farm to School programs serve as a way for small farmers, food processors and manufacturers to sell their products to and connect with local schools, producing a financial opportunity for their business and strengthening the local economy. The programs increase both farmer and producer income levels and new opportunities within the market.

According to the author, The CA-F2S Program connects students with locally sourced food while providing culinary, environmental, and agricultural education. Serving 49% of California students—prioritizing those in high-need communities—the program increases procurement of California-grown foods and promotes climate-smart practices, all while improving economic opportunities and enhancing education and nutrition in high-need communities.

This bill will codify the CA-F2S within CDFA, ensuring students receive nutritious, locally grown meals and access to hands-on food education, and supporting local farmers. Codifying this program will strengthen student development, enhance community climate resilience, and drive lasting, scalable change.

Supporters state the lack of access to fresh food is most prevalent in low-income communities and communities of color. The Farm to School Incubator Grant Program helps counter these types of disparities that exist in our food system. In addition to increasing the ability to provide local, fresh food in schools, this program also provides learning opportunities to educate students about the food system which supports lifelong healthier habits and it is also designed to target smaller-sized producers and farmers of color. Furthermore, this bill will codify the F2S Incubator Grant Program in law, ensuring the program is better positioned to receive funding in the budget and can continue to provide local, fresh food to schools and economic benefits to farmers. Supporters believe every school student deserves access to nutritious food and prioritizes programs that support California's small and mid-sized farmers.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

A Voice for Choice Advocacy  
California Health Coalition Advocacy  
Center for Ecoliteracy  
Ceres Community Project (UNREG)  
Chef Ann Foundation  
Church State Council  
County of Santa Clara  
Educate. Advocate.

National Farm to School Network (fiscal sponsor: Tides)  
Nextgen California  
Ventura County Farm to School

**Opposition**

None on file

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