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Aloha OIRA,

The USDA Farm to School Census provides the only nationally representative data available on farm to school participation and activities in the United States, to help understand how states and school food authorities (SFA) engage with farm to school efforts from local food purchasing, to gardening to food education.

It is important to understand these activities because:

1. It can provide farmers, ranchers and fishermen with important insight into schools that are interested in local purchasing, and what they may want to buy. This kind of local market information is a useful resource to help producers reach appropriately scaled market opportunities.

2. It can help state and federal policymakers understand the type, reach, and scale of innovative farm to school programs taking place, and how policies can best support this work. Here in Hawaii it is critical for our Legislators to have this kind of data, to make funding decisions for our school meal and ag education programs.

Child nutrition programs have the opportunity to maximize the impact of government funds by including farm to school activities, and this data helps understand how child nutrition program operators are doing so.

Thank You,

Nancy Redfeather - Hawai'i Seed Growers Network LLC