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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 districts engage with farm to school efforts ranging from local food purchasing, to gardening to food education. As a partner with our local school district on farm to school activities, we rely on this data to understand the extent and impact of the farm to school activities we are working to support, especially in comparison to other districts locally and nationally.

The USDA Farm to School Census is important to help school districts and their partners understand these activities because it:

- Provides farmers, ranchers and fishermen with important insight into schools that are interested in local purchasing, and what they may want to buy, to improve producers' market access;
- Can help local, 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;
- Supports child nutrition programs to maximize the impact of government funds they use through farm to school activities

While we always want to be mindful of the burden that data collection puts on SFAs, this information is being sought from those that already participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and regularly report on their activities. The Census directly helps understand how NSLP operation can best meet its program goals of child health and support for American producers.