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Hello,

As a Farm to School Specialist working directly with school food authorities, I strongly support the continued implementation of the USDA Farm to School Census. This Census is the only nationally representative data source that captures the scope and scale of farm to school activities across the United States, providing essential insights into how schools engage with local food purchasing, gardening, and food education. The results of this census are very important for tracking purposes in my role.

The value of this data extends far beyond school cafeterias. It serves as a critical tool for farmers, ranchers, and fishermen by identifying schools that are interested in purchasing locally, helping producers target appropriately scaled markets. It also informs policymakers at both the state and federal levels about the reach and effectiveness of farm to school efforts, supporting evidence-based decisions and investments in child nutrition and local agriculture.

Moreover, the Census helps child nutrition programs maximize the impact of federal funds by shedding light on how school food operators incorporate farm to school strategies to improve student health and strengthen local economies. While it is important to consider the administrative burden of data collection, this Census is focused on school food authorities already participating in the National School Lunch Program—those most directly affected and involved in these efforts.

Collecting and analyzing this data is vital to ensuring that the NSLP continues to meet its dual mission of promoting child health and supporting American agricultural producers. I urge OMB to approve the continuation of this important data collection effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Britte Harder
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