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The collection of information in the Farm to School Census regarding farm to school initiatives, funding, spending, and student impact is a critical service uniquely provided by USDA FNS. It is the only national-level data on farm to school, and is widely referenced.

In Pittsburgh, and in the state of Pennsylvania, we are able to refer to the data collected to better understand broad participation, familiarity with the concept of farm to school, and areas that could benefit from additional technical assistance (gardens, education, or procurement, for example). There is significant practical utility because the information allows support organizations to provide support, identify SFAs with expertise or interest, and communicate the potential economic benefit to state growers.

Re: Ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected - we recommend additional funding and support for USDA staff/agency to be able to communicate Census findings to increase visibility of this resource and its findings.

Re: Ways to minimize the burden on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology - we recommend that USDA continue to solicit responses electronically.

The Census illustrates the scale and reach of the farm to school movement, showing how child nutrition programs are effectively supporting American farmers, ranchers, and food producers. It equips:

- Policymakers and advocates with real evidence needed to shape and sustain policy.
- Federal, state, and local governments with data to identify trends, allocate resources, and tailor local programs to local needs.
- Farmers and food producers with insight into schools that are interested in local purchasing, and what they may want to buy.
- Researchers and evaluators with data to assess outcomes of related policies and programs (examples: Connolly and Wen, 2022; Kashyap et al., 2024)
- The Census allows the farm to school and ECE movement to grow strategically, quickly, and efficiently. Census data is used to ensure financial investments are effective and reach all kids across the nation. Please take time this week to share your personal story of how you use the Census and what it means for your work.