



December 15, 2022

Re: ESDC Consultation - Building a pan-Canadian school food policy

Sent to EDSC.ALIMENTATION_SCOLAIRE-SCHOOL_FOOD.ESDC@hrsdcc.gc.ca

Dear Ministers Gould and Bibeau:

Farm to Cafeteria Canada (F2CC) is a non-profit charitable organization that works to transform how food is experienced, learned and celebrated in all schools across Canada.

We work with partners to grow the capacity of diverse school communities across the country to foster vibrant school food systems by connecting students to food and the local systems that produce it. We focus on what we refer to as the “farm to school” approach, or, to better reflect the diversity of local and traditional foods that can be enjoyed in schools from coast to coast to coast, the “local food to school” approach. This comprehensive approach is described in more detail below and has been shown to be effective at getting students excited about healthy eating and developing knowledge and skills that will last a lifetime.

F2CC is a member of the Coalition for Healthy School Food and we advocate for the Coalition’s 8 Guiding Principles to be a key component of the National School Food Policy.

In addition to policy measures to ensure healthy food, universal access and no marketing to children and youth, as well as setting strong evaluation and accountability measures, F2CC would like to see the policy emphasize:

- For children and youth to be involved in hands-on food literacy including preparing, growing, harvesting and preserving food at school. This could be included as a key component of a broader school food vision to work towards in collaboration with Provinces and Territories.
- A commitment to increasing the amount of local foods procured and served in schools. This could be achieved through encouraging progressively increasing Provincial and Territorial purchasing targets.
- A recognition of the critical need for food preparation, preservation, growing, and harvesting infrastructure and equipment within the schools (or in community spaces that schools can access) to prepare and serve scratch-made, healthy meals using whole foods.
- That school food programs can best succeed when they are rooted in place and bring the broader school community together. This may include educators, students, families, food

providers, growers, chefs, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, public health professionals and many others who can help build program capacity and help students experience belonging as a part of their broader community.

- The need for food programs to be culturally responsive and support food traditions and sovereignty among diverse peoples and populations across the country.

Regarding how some of these measures might be implemented:

- We encourage investment from all levels of government in school food infrastructure, including physical infrastructure as well as personnel and capacity building supports. At the federal level, this could be supported through a dedicated school food infrastructure fund or by renewing and expanding the local food infrastructure fund to include schools.
- We encourage the creation of a government-supported farm to school grant program similar to the [grant program](#) in the United States that has supported school food programs to initiate and advance food literacy and local procurement.

About the Farm to School Approach:

Farm to school brings healthy, local food into schools and provides students with hands-on learning opportunities that foster food literacy while strengthening the local food system and enhancing school and community connectedness. Farm to school empowers students and school communities to make informed food choices while contributing to vibrant, sustainable, economically viable regional food systems that support the health of people and the planet. Farm to school looks different in each school and new models are continually emerging based on the creativity and innovation happening in school communities across the country.



The farm to school approach includes the following elements:

Healthy, Local Food: Schools procure local food in many ways, including directly from farms or schoolyard farms, through local food distributors, or by harvesting wild or traditional foods. How food is served can take a variety of forms depending on individual school community needs and context.

Hands-On Learning: Food literacy is a critically important component of farm to school. Students learn about food, food systems, and food skills in the school garden, greenhouse, food forest, kitchen, classroom or other relevant school or community spaces. They connect with nature and the environment. They may take field trips to local farms, forests, and shores.

School and Community Connectedness: Farm to school is built upon strong relationships. Schools establish relationships with farmers and other local food providers, community members, and supportive organizations, tapping into local knowledge, passion, skills, and resources. Students connect deeply with their school and the wider community and learn how their own health and wellbeing is connected to that of their community, and the planet.

Through our work at F2CC we have witnessed how the farm to school approach benefits education and learning, public health, community economic development and the environment. In designing a National School Food Policy and school nutritious meal program, a choice does not need to be made between factors like local procurement and hands-on food literacy, rather they are complementary and should be included as part of a comprehensive policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this consultation. We look forward to continued conversations about developing a National School Food Policy and school nutritious meal program.

Yours sincerely,



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