# Virginia Farm to School Conference Agenda

Thursday, March 14, 2019

8 a.m. ­­­­­­– 5 p.m.; Networking Social 5 p.m. ­­­­­­– 6 p.m.

Hampton Roads Convention Center

1610 Coliseum Drive

Hampton, VA 23666

Registration Information

Registration is free, but space is limited.

[**Online Registration Form**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F2Sconference)

About the event

The Farm to School Conference is designed to help Virginia’s expanding Farm to School Network increase procurement of local foods and educational opportunities in school gardens, cafeterias, classrooms, early care centers and summer feeding programs across the Commonwealth. This one-day conference is a preconference option for the Virginia School Nutrition Association’s annual conference and is sponsored by Virginia Department of Education, Virginia School Nutrition Association, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the Virginia Farm to School Network, and funded in part through a USDA Farm to School grant.

Virginia Farm to School Conference Objectives

* Present best practices in delivery, distribution, and promotion to increase procurement of local foods
* Provide ideas and resources for new and existing programs
* Convene school nutrition professionals, farmers, distributors, community organizations, and school garden coordinators for networking centered around farm to school
* Establish a two-year target for Virginia Farm to School

Conference Outcomes

* Create financially viable opportunities for Virginia farmers to sell their products to Virginia schools so all children have access to good, local, healthy Virginia-grown food
* Increase local, seasonal products sourced by farmers, used by school nutrition professionals, and taught by garden and classroom educators
* Empower school nutrition professionals to bring education and learning into cafeterias; connect nutrition programs with classrooms and school garden learning objectives

Schedule:

7:00-8:30 Registration, Coffee & Tea, Networking

8:30-8:45 Welcome to the Virginia Farm to School Conference!

Trista Grigsby, VDOE Farm to School Specialist

Sandy Curwood, VDOE Director of School Nutrition Programs

8:45-9:00 Special Address from Honored Guest, Mrs. Pamela Northam, First Lady of Virginia

9:00-10:00 Keynote: Overcoming Barriers, Showing it Works

National leaders in the F2S movement will discuss how they solve issues surrounding food safety, food access and equity, sourcing and invoicing, training staff, and connecting nutrition programs with learning opportunities in gardens, classrooms, and cafeterias.

**Moderator:** **Sandy Curwood, VDOE Director of School Nutrition Programs**

**Presenters:**

**Bertrand Weber, Director, Culinary and Wellness Services, Minneapolis Public Schools.** Bertrand Weber is a national pioneer in the Farm to School Movement. Under his leadership, Minneapolis Public Schools has built direct farm relationships and elevated sous vide scratch cooking for the district.

**Abbie Nelson, Program Director, VT FEED.** Under Abbie Nelson’s leadership, Vermont FEED has developed cafeteria staff trainings, resources, and networks to increase Farm to School in classrooms, cafeterias, and school gardens. Due in part to Vermont FEED’s efforts, Vermont schools procure approximately 17 percent of their food locally with 83 percent of schools participating in Farm to School and 71 percent of districts featuring school gardens.

10:00-10:15 Healthy Snack Break

10:15-11:30 Facilitated Conversations

Expert facilitators will lead small group discussions on a variety of topics covered during the keynote. Keynote speakers will visit tables and join conversations. Groups get back together before lunch and share back out.

Topics for Facilitated Conversations:

Understanding procurement regulations in child nutrition programs (for farmers)

Understanding procurement regulations in child nutrition programs (for child nutrition, early care centers, summer feeding sites)

Tying educational opportunities from classroom to school garden to cafeteria

Farm to early child care—curriculum, resources, and procurement

Farm to summer—expanding educational opportunities and procuring local foods

Food safety: mitigating risk with fresh produce

Incorporating farm to school into Local School Wellness Policies

Finding farms

Developing value chain partnerships to assist with distribution

Increasing food access, food equity and celebrating culture through Farm to School

Getting started selling to schools: meeting your needs, meeting schools’ needs

Other topics if desired

11:30-11:45 Share out from Facilitated Conversations

11:45-1:30 Lunch Plenary: It’s Not Farm to School Without Farmers

You will be asked to sit with others in your regional network at lunch. Look for the regional maps on the tables to help you find your regional colleagues.

These Virginia producers will discuss Farm to School from their perspective— why they are interested in working with schools, how it benefits their operations, and what would be helpful for them to develop stronger school partnerships.

**Moderator: Paige Pratt**, Co-Owner, Pratt Cattle Company, Atkins, VA

**Presenters:**

**Matthew Godfrey**, Marketing Manager, Crown Orchard, Colesville, VA

**Tyler Wegmeyer**, Owner, Wegmeyer Farms, Hamilton, VA

**Courtney Umbarger**, Co-Owner, Laurel Springs Farm, Marion, VA

1:45-2:35 First Breakout Sessions, 1:45-2:35 p.m.

Room 201: It’s Elementary, My Dear: School Gardens Bridge Classrooms & Cafeterias

Learn how these speakers use elementary school gardens to connect with school nutrition programs, standards of learning (SOL), wellness objectives, and their communities.

**Moderator: Kathy Yoder**, School Garden Coordinator and Assistant Teacher, Waterman Elementary, Harrisonburg, VA

**Presenters:**

**Marykirk Cunningham**, Garden Lab Coordinator and Kindergarten Teacher, Frederick Douglass Elementary School, Leesburg, VA

**Patrick Wildermann**, Garden Coordinator, Linwood Holton Elementary, Richmond, VA

Room 202: Food Safety from the Farm to the School

Learn how food safety plans build trust between buyer and vendor. Consider ways to mitigate risks in school gardens. See the new Virginia Food Safety checklist resource.

**Presenter:**

**Amber Vallotton**, Virginia Tech Fresh Produce Food Safety Team Coordinator, Blacksburg, VA

Room 203: It Takes a Village: Community Partnerships Strengthen Farm to School Efforts

Sourcing, marketing, and developing synergy between cafeterias, classrooms, and school gardens takes time. Learn how community partnerships can maximize the positive impact on children.

**Moderator: Pam Dannon**, Ed.M, R.D., Registered Dietitian, Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools ­– School Health Initiative Program (SHIP), Williamsburg, VA

**Presenters:**

**Jenny Thompson**, Virginia 4-H Program Coordinator, Louisa, VA

**Pam Pulver**, Supervisor, Fauquier FRESH, Warrenton, VA

Room 204: Virginia Farm to School Network 2018 Survey Results

Learn how farmers and school nutrition professionals in Virginia perceive Farm to School and how this information informs statewide network and resource development.

**Presenter:**

**Kim Niewolny**, Associate Professor, Community Education and Development, Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education, Virginia Tech and Director, Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition

Room 205: Distribution innovations and best practices

Farmers, distributors, and school nutrition directors alike recognize the challenges to making Farm to School local food deliveries profitable and feasible. How do all parties work together to make it work, and why? This session will present best practices from farmers, school nutrition professionals, and distributors who want to sell and buy local products. Panelists will discuss creative solutions for small, medium, and large divisions alike.

**Moderator:** **Kristen Suokku**, Executive Director, Local Food Hub

**Presenters:**

**Ryan Ford**, Seven Hills Food Company, Lynchburg, VA

**Rodney Taylor**, Fairfax County Public Schools, Springfield, VA

**Sean McFadden**, Business Development Manager, Parker Farms, Colonial Beach, VA

2:45-3:40 Second Breakout Session

Room 201: School farms grow leaders, education opportunities, and fresh, healthy food for their lunches.

Come hear from these speakers who have developed robust school farm programs that emphasize leadership and project-based learning that spans curriculum objectives.

**Presenters:**

**Randy Herman**, Director of Nutrition, Louisa County Public Schools, Louisa, VA

**Ben Woods**, Manager, Giles County Agricultural Land Lab, Giles County Public Schools, Pearisburg, VA

**Jordan Johnson**, Program Coordinator, City Schoolyard Gardens, Charlottesville, VA

Ballroom: Connecting farmers with schools interested in Farm to School: strategies for building vendor/buyer relationships.

The recent Virginia Farm to School Survey showed that schools do not know how to find producers who want to sell to them, but that many farmer respondents are interested in expanding into school markets. These speakers will discuss strategies for connecting growers to buyers to build ongoing vendor/buyer relationships.

**Moderator:** **Eric Bendfeldt**, Extension Specialist, Community Viability, Virginia Cooperative Extension—MarketMaker hands-on tutorial, how VCE agents help connect farms to schools

**Presenters:**

**Wilmer Stoneman**, Director of Agriculture, Development and Innovation, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, Richmond, VA

**Bill Scruggs**, Manager, Office of Domestic Sales and Market Development, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Richmond, VA

Room 203: Farm to Early Care Education

Early care sites find school gardens to be an effective tool for sparking an interest in garden-fresh foods. Some early care sites are procuring local foods and working with local farmers, while others focus on creating good eating habits through education in classrooms, at lunch tables, and in school gardens. Our speakers will discuss where Virginia stands with farm to preschool efforts and how early care sites can enhance food literacy for their students.

**Moderator: Bee Thorp,** MAFS, Special Nutrition Programs Specialist,Virginia Department of Health, Richmond, VA

**Presenters:**

**Monica Jackson,** Owner,Jackson Child Care, Springfield, VA

**Debbie Gillespie**, Director, Four Seasons Daycare, King George, VA

Room 204: Growing food for schools: what they want, how they want it, and how it has to be procured.

Three farmers will explain how their business models include sales to schools. They will discuss their reasons for including schools as buyers for their products, how they build their relationships with schools, and ways that they could envision other farmers maximizing sales to schools.

**Moderator:** **Trista Grigsby**, Farm to School Specialist, VDOE

**Presenters:**

**Michael Coombs**, Owner, Willie Mae Farms, Yorktown, VA

**Matthew Godfrey**, Marketing Manager, Crown Orchard, Covesville, VA

**Tyler Wegmeyer**, Owner, Wegmeyer Farms, Hamilton, VA

Room 205: Farm to Summer and Farm to . . . Football Games?

This session will present best practices across the state to increase access of fresh, healthy foods for children and their families through creative partnerships and project-based learning initiatives.

**Moderator: Andrea Early**, Nutrition Services Director, Harrisonburg City Schools

**Speakers:**

**Audrey Huntington,** Director, The Common Market—school-based farmers markets bring funds, connect community, and tie learning objectives into increased food access for families

**Amanda Warren**, Nutrition Services Director, Staunton City Schools—Summer Food Service Program

3:50-4:00 Healthy Snack Break & Networking

4:00-4:40 What’s happening across the country in Farm to School: procurement best practices and Q&A

**Rachel Spencer**, USDA Farm to School Regional Lead, will highlight creative nationwide examples of how school divisions are increasing their procurement of local foods and developed lasting partnerships with farms.

4:40-5:00 Closing Address by Honored Guest, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring

Next Steps: Join the Virginia Farm to School regional network! Meetings in April & May.

5:00-6:00 Social Networking Hour

Harvest of the Month viewing, networking for all, vendor/buyer meetup featuring Virginia Grown foods

