

**Farm to Table Presents:  
How YOU Can Help Promote Healthy Food System Policies  
State Legislature 2009 Edition**

The NM State Legislature will be meeting from January 20<sup>th</sup> to March 21,<sup>st</sup> 2009 and we need your help before and during the session to make sure legislators hear our call for healthy, New Mexico-grown foods for kids and all New Mexicans. We know that everyone is busy, but we also know that you care deeply about these issues, so we're making it easy to help. The front of this sheet provides a list of options for the 'how'. The back gives you some 'what'—talking points on two of our legislative priorities. The staff of Farm to Table are on call to help with questions or concerns, call or email Farm to Table at 505-473-1004 or [info@farmtotablenm.org](mailto:info@farmtotablenm.org).

**Option 1: Call or write your Reps before and during the session.**

No matter how often state representatives hear from advocates at the legislature, it's the voices of their constituents that matter most! Because life gets really busy for the state representatives during the session, it's helpful for them to hear from you before the session starts in mid-January. Use the talking points on the back of this sheet to call or write your state senator and representative and urge them to support our two bills. Feel free to add your own experiences. Before the session, you'll be calling your representatives in their district. For contact information for your representatives, go to <http://legis.state.nm.us/lcs/legislatorsearch.asp>. During the session you can call the legislative switchboard at 505-986-4300.

**Option 2: Schedule a meeting with your Reps before the session.**

If you are a representative of an organization that supports healthy foods and local agriculture or can gather a group of friends and neighbors with similar concerns, scheduling a meeting with your representatives adds a whole new level of impact to your action. Meeting in person with your representative gives you a chance to express your ideas on the issue and to hear theirs. The information you gain about where your representatives stand on the issue is priceless for Farm to Table. It can help us to target our message and efforts. To set up a meeting, call your representative(s) as soon as possible and ask for a half-hour meeting at their office or a local coffee shop nearby.

If you're worried about what to say, we can provide you with questions, talking points and more information. Call us, email us or look on our website [www.farmtotablenm.org/policy](http://www.farmtotablenm.org/policy). Please let us know what you hear! Also, if you would like to go with a bigger group, we may be able to connect you with other people in your area.

**Option 3: Submit an Op-ed or letter to the editor to your local newspaper.**

Local opinion pieces are one of the best ways to spread awareness about these issues and make your representative publicly accountable on them. Writing an op-ed or letter to the editor allows you to help your community understand why these issues are important and can encourage them to take action. Farm to Table has drafted templates of op-eds on our priorities that you can send as is or as a starting point for your own journalistic genius. You can download them and instructions for submission on our website at [www.farmtotablenm.org/policy/category/resources-and-publications/](http://www.farmtotablenm.org/policy/category/resources-and-publications/).

## Farm to Table Presents: Talking Points—State Legislature 2009

### [NM Grown Produce in School Lunches, aka “Healthy Kids, Healthy Economy”](#)

**The ask:** \$3.3 million to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables for school meals, purchased from New Mexico farmers when available.

**Who it benefits:** all New Mexican schoolchildren AND many local family farmers.

**The need:** the growing number of children with diet-related diseases means that if we don't improve our young people's diets we are in danger of raising the first generation of American children with a lower life expectancy than their parents.

**The opportunity:** a survey of 150 NM farmers found that 64 percent would like to sell to schools. For every dollar that goes to a New Mexican farmer, \$1.80 gets re-invested in the local economy.

#### **The facts:**

- Over 220,000 New Mexico children are eligible for free and reduced lunches at school.
- School food service providers receive only \$2.57 in federal re-imbursement for each meal. After paying for labor and materials, this leaves only about \$1 to pay for all the ingredients to make a nutritious meal, making it difficult to include fresh fruits and vegetables.
- 3 out of 4 NM children do not eat the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables.
- Children now have a 35% risk of being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

### [Closing New Mexico's Food Gap—Pilot Projects for Access to Healthy Foods](#)

**The ask:** \$200,000 for pilot projects to create infrastructure and distribution solutions that make fresh, healthy foods available in rural and underserved urban areas.

#### **Who it benefits:**

**The need:** New Mexico is the second most food insecure state in the nation. More than one third of its counties are classified as low food access. Small-scale stores and other food outlets in rural and underserved communities often lack the infrastructure to offer fresh, healthy foods.

**The opportunity:** grocery stores, farmers' markets and other food outlets are a cornerstone to community health and wealth. Building the capacity for local food retail in rural and underserved communities and tying it to the local food system creates jobs and cycles money in the local economy.

#### **The facts:**

- Rural NM families travel up to **140 miles** round-trip to the closest grocery store.
- **33%** of rural stores do not carry fresh fruit.
- Only **40%** of New Mexicans meet healthy weight standards and **1 in 14** New Mexicans have type 2 diabetes. Diet-related diseases cost New Mexico **\$324 million** each year.
- By investing in food retail development, the Pennsylvania state government helped to create **one million square feet of new retail food space and 2,500 new jobs** in just two years.

## Farm to Table Presents: Tips for Talking to YOUR State Representatives

Speaking with your State Representatives can be a little intimidating. But remember, you elected them, their job is to represent you, you're their boss! **If you don't feel comfortable responding to a question or comment from a representative, it's fine to say you don't have the answer to that, but that you'll do some research and get back to them.** This sheet will try to help you avoid that situation by providing some ways to respond to comments or questions they are likely to present to you.

**They say: It's a great program, but we just don't have any money to spend this session.**

**Response:** It's true that the state may be operating in a deficit budget in the coming year (the current estimate is \$270 million). However, the amount of money we're asking for (\$3.3 million) is a drop in the bucket with respect to the state's annual operating budget (about \$6.2 billion). There are lots of creative ways to find money for projects. For example, removing sodas from the gross receipts tax exemption for food would add \$6 million back to the general fund. This would more than cover both of our proposals. Further, diet-related diseases cost New Mexico \$324 million a year. Prevention=cost-savings.

**They say: Providing infrastructure to private businesses (i.e. local stores or distributors) violates the State's anti-donation clause.**

**Response:** The pilot projects we're proposing don't require giving infrastructure to private businesses. There are existing examples of how state government funds have been used to help businesses that serve an important community need. For example, the town of Tatum in southeastern NM purchased a building and equipment with public monies that it is LEASING to the store operator. The town maintains ownership of the property, which means it doesn't violate the anti-donation clause. Further, the state has rules that allow the state to provide property at below market cost to private entities for the sake of economic development. While retail is not eligible for most economic development monies, the legislature could amend this to support food retail, a vital community resource.

**They say: The State already gives the schools lots of money.**

**Response:** While the State does provide funding for many school programs, the only funding they provide for school meals is elementary school breakfast. Currently, the only funding school food service providers receive for school lunches is the federal re-imbusement (\$2.57 for each lunch for students that qualify for free lunches) and money from paying students. School food service is required to operate like a business, paying all of its costs out of this money. The rising cost of food, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as fuel and labor costs, makes it very difficult for them to include fresh produce in the five ingredients per meal mandated by federal nutrition standards.

**They say: What people eat is their own choice.**

**Response:** While that may be true in many cases, in many schools and low food access areas, kids and adults alike often don't have the opportunity to make healthy food choices. For many low-income children, free school meals are the most nutritious and sometimes the only meals they eat all day. Providing healthy options in school lunches allows them to start making those healthy choices early on in life. For residents in many rural communities the closest full-service grocery store is as far as 70 miles away. With rising gas prices, they may not be able to afford to travel these far distances to access fresh fruits and vegetables. They need have the opportunity to make these choices in their communities.

Farm to Table asks you to:  
**TELL US WHAT YOU HEARD!**

Now that you've done your civic duty, tell us about it. What you hear from your State Representatives can help us target particular representatives and establish the most effective messaging and strategy. Use the form below to let us know what they're saying. Or, just give us a call at 505-473-1004 x12

Your Name:

Your Phone Number:

Your Email Address:

Name of the Legislator you contacted:

Method of Contact:  Phone  Email  Letter  In-person Meeting

Date of Contact:

What you said (brief summary):

What they said (brief summary):

Email this document to [info@farmtotablenm.org](mailto:info@farmtotablenm.org) or  
Send to Farm to Table • 3900 Paseo del Sol • Santa Fe, NM • 87507 or  
Fax to 505-473-3421 or  
Call us at 505-473-1004