



Media Advisory

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Report on 10 Cents a Meal Released to Michigan Legislature

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March 30, 2017: The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has submitted its 10 Cents a Meal For School Kids & Farms mid-year report to the state Legislature, with data that shows the program helped schools serve 49 different Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and legumes to students so far this school year.

The 10 Cents a Meal pilot program is providing schools with match incentive funding up to 10 cents per meal to purchase and serve Michigan-grown produce to an estimated 48,000 students in 16 grant-winning school districts.

Legislators required the report when it created the pilot last year. Legislators are in the budget process now and considering whether to continue and expand the program. An online version of the 18-page report is available at GroundworkCenter.org/10CentsReport.

On Wednesday, March 29, the Senate Appropriations K-12, School Aid, and Education Subcommittee, chaired by Sen. Goeff Hansen, R-Hart, took the first step and included \$250,000 to continue the pilot for the 2017-2018 school year. There still are many steps before budget finalization in the Senate and House, and legislators are heading into spring break, which often means more time set aside to talk with constituents in their districts.

“We believe the timing was right for this pilot, and for potential expansion next year, because schools are serving a greater variety of fruits and vegetables and that is exactly what Michigan farmers grow,” State Superintendent Brian J. Whiston said in the report. “Additionally, surveys show that school food service directors want to purchase more local produce, and Michigan farmers are interested in selling it to schools.”

According to the MDE report, the incentive program catalyzed sales for 86 different farms in 28 counties and 16 additional businesses such as processors and distributors.

The pilot includes \$210,000 in match incentive reimbursements to the schools, which ultimately will mean at least \$420,000 injected into the state’s economy, doubling the state investment.

The report also shows that many children are being introduced to new fruits and vegetables as a result of this funding.

Here are some additional highlights of the report:

- The top three outcomes achieved for Food Service were: The variety of produce served in school meals has increased. Purchasing power can be planned with greater certainty. Purchasing power is enhanced.
- Food service directors named 30 new foods that they tried in meals. New foods tried by the largest number of districts were cherries, multicolored carrots, peaches, blueberries, strawberries, asparagus, squash, navy beans, and Romanesco.
- Businesses large and small—from 20-acre to 1,800-acre farms, along with processors and distribution companies—reported growing business because of 10 Cents.

“The kids are now asking, ‘Any new fruits or veggies to try?’ They keep me on my toes,” one food service director said in an MSU survey for the project.

The MDE report is filled with stories and quotes from food service directors, educators, agricultural and local food business people and others impacted by 10 Cents a Meal.

Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities was one of the key partners on the report, including conducting stakeholder interviews and writing the profiles that are in the report. Other partners include Networks Northwest, the Prosperity Region office in Region 2, which inputted and analyzed invoice data with the collaboration of the Grand Valley Metro Council in Prosperity Region 4; the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, which administered monthly food service director surveys and provided trainings; and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, which assisted in food service director trainings and resources.

Groundwork also created the three-year local pilot project that inspired the Legislature to launch its pilot and test the idea further.

The following 16 school districts are part of the state pilot project: Boyne Falls Public, Frankfort-Elberta Area, Glen Lake Community, Leland Public, Manistee Area Public, Northport Public and Traverse City Area Public schools in northwest lower Michigan; and Coopersville Area Public, Forest Hills Public, Grand Haven Area Public, Montague Area Public, Muskegon Heights Public School Academy System, Muskegon Public, Oakridge Public, Ravenna Public and Whitehall District schools in west Michigan.

“Bottom-line is that Michigan enjoys a positive return on investment with the 10 Cents a Meal Program, benefiting farmers, schools, and kids ... locally grown food tastes even better with this program.”

—Matt McCauley, chief operating officer of Networks Northwest