



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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## **WSDA Farm-to-School workshop will improve kids' access to healthy Washington foods**

**OLYMPIA** – Washington State Department of Agriculture's (WSDA) new Farm-to-School Program launches this week with a free, all-day workshop on building successful farm-to-school connections in local communities.

The workshop will provide the tools and resources for agriculture professionals to facilitate new business relationships between farms and schools. Participants will also receive materials that teach kids about the links between food, farming, health, culture and the environment.

WSDA's new Farm to School coordinator, Tricia Sexton Kovacs, organized the workshop and will provide information on food safety, certification and liability issues for farms seeking to sell to schools. Kovacs joined the agency last week from Washington State University King County Extension, where she worked on farm-to-school issues.

"Schools want to provide fresh and healthy lunches and snacks, while giving kids opportunities to learn where their food comes from," said Kovacs. "They are enthusiastic about building relationships with Washington farms, but they need support to identify potential partners. We will also offer market development assistance to help farms create new economic opportunities by expanding their sales to schools."

According to nutritionists, a low-fat diet that includes several servings of fruits and vegetables, combined with regular exercise, is the best way to combat obesity in children and adults. Washington is the nation's third-leading producer of fruits and vegetables.

The seminar will be held on Thursday, Dec. 11 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center. Videoconferencing will be available from the WSU Extension offices in Kennewick, Spokane and Mount Vernon. For more information and to register, contact Maura Walsh at [mwalsh@agr.wa.gov](mailto:mwalsh@agr.wa.gov) or call 360-902-1935.

WSDA's Farm-to-School Program was approved as one component of the Local Farms, Healthy Kids Act proposed by a coalition of environmental, education and agriculture advocates and adopted last legislative session. The program will help Washington farms and processors sell to schools, help schools source Washington foods, and share resources to teach students about the nutritional, environmental and economic benefits of eating Washington foods.

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WSDA continues to work in partnership with the other state agencies with responsibilities under the act, including: Washington State University, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the state departments of Health and General Administration.

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