10 CENTS A MEAL
FOR SCHOOL KIDS & FARMS

THIS INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITY:

10 Cents a Meal is a pilot project that provides match funding for schools to buy from neighbor farms, invest in local economies, and put Michigan-grown food on children’s plates. It’s good for kids, schools, and for the agricultural economy. It:

• Creates a world in which schools can more easily buy locally grown fruits, vegetables, and legumes from neighbor farms.
• Breaks down financial barriers to this common-sense market for local agriculture.
• Helps kids know where food comes from—a farm, not a store.
• Lets kids appreciate the great flavors that their state grows.

THE TIMING IS RIGHT FOR MICHIGAN:

• Economic Opportunity: Schools are newly required under federal nutrition standards to serve more, and a greater variety, of fruits, vegetables, and legumes—precisely what Michigan farmers grow. MI’s agriculture is the 2nd most diverse in the U.S.
• Public support for nutrition: A 2015 poll from Pew Charitable Trusts shows that in Michigan nearly 98% of voting public-school parents believe that serving nutritious food in schools is important.
• Public support for farm to school: A 2015 national poll from W.K. Kellogg Foundation found 88% of Americans support increased government funding to expand farm to school programs.
• Food service interest: In 2013, 82% of Michigan school food service directors said they were interested in purchasing local foods in the future, and in 2014, 54% said they were purchasing them, according to surveys by the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS).
• Farmer interest: 50% of Michigan vegetable growers were interested in selling to institutions, according to a 2012 CRFS survey.
• Overcomes Barriers: Tight budgets were among the barriers cited by school food service directors in buying local, while low prices were a concern for growers according to CRFS surveys.

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED IN NW MI

Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities and the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District launched a pilot project in northwest Lower Michigan in the 2013 school year, with grant funds and business donations.

10 Cents clearly benefited farms. In the year prior to “10 Cents,” the three school districts that launched the project spent $30,731 on local fruits and vegetables. In the two years since the introduction of the program, those three districts have purchased nearly $150,000 in local fruits and vegetables—an average increase of 142% each year.

Four other districts have also joined the program, and the seven districts together purchased 25 different fruits and vegetables grown by 36 area farms in the 2014-15 year alone.

Learn more at groundworkcenter.org
HERE IS HOW ‘10 CENTS’ HELPS SCHOOLS:

• **Targeted budget help:** Schools have only 20-30 cents per meal to spend on produce. This provides extra funding, and funding that is dedicated to buying local.

• **Try new things:** A financial cushion can help school food service directors to try new things. Traverse City schools found kids love Romanesco—a lime green cross between broccoli and cauliflower that kids say looks like a spaceship.

• **Funding stability:** Farm to school will not get cut with a stable fund. Schools can strategically plan farm to school growth.

• **Customer satisfaction:** When children love the food they are served, they come back for more, providing even more stable revenue for food service.

HERE IS HOW IT HELPS THE ECONOMY:

• **Predictable market for farms:** Food service directors learn what their students like, what their staff can prepare, and catalyze supply through their demand. It makes sense to reduce barriers to school buying, and build on-ramps instead.

• In the NW Michigan Pilot, districts matched the 10 cents a meal investment from the 10 Cent Fund—and then some.

• The districts in 2014-2015 received $21,460 from the 10 Cent Fund, but spent a total of $75,996 on locally grown fruits and vegetables.

HERE IS HOW IT CAN WORK:

**NW Lower Michigan pilot:**

• Match from districts required (from regular school lunch dollars)

• Schools reimbursed 50% of spending per meal (up to 10 cents of 20 cents)

• Calculated seasonally: fall (Sept-Dec), winter (Jan-March) and spring (April-June), with funding expectations of a maximum of 60% of lunches in fall (local food served 3 times/week), 40% in winter, and 20% in spring

• Recommended new element: Draw down from the fund for any meal and snacks

HERE’S HOW ‘10 CENTS’ CAN HELP MICHIGAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WITH 100% FUNDING FOR ALL SCHOOL LUNCHES:</th>
<th>WITH SEASONAL FUNDING CAPS LIKE NW MICHIGAN:</th>
<th>EXPANDED STATE PILOT PROJECT:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>142 million lunches served in Michigan schools:</td>
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<td>• Include existing schools, to see how it can grow over time.</td>
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<td>• $14 million for farmers</td>
<td>• $6.64 million for farmers</td>
<td>• Add opportunities for other regions of the state.</td>
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<td>• $24 million with school district match</td>
<td>• $13.3 million with school district match</td>
<td>• Look to Oregon, other models.</td>
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“10 Cents a Meal has been a good selling point—it shows farms that not only is TCAPS interested in buying local, it also has some extra funding support to make sure we can make purchases to a greater degree than might otherwise be possible.”

~ Tom Freitas, Traverse City Area Public Schools Food Service Director

“From the local school standpoint, the local food service directors tell us the kids really like and eat the farm fresh produce we provide and it helps them meet their healthy meals goals. From our farm standpoint, it helps us market our produce locally and is a significant part of our business.”

~ Jim Bardenhagen, co-owner Bardenhagen Farms

“That was delicious and it’s my new favorite thing in the whole world.”

~ Third-grader at Traverse Heights Elementary School

“I’ve never tried a salad—this one is good!”

~ Second-grader at Platte River Elementary School

LEARN MORE

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