



## **“New Mexico Grown Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for School Meals”**

**Senate Bill 80:** Sponsor: Senator Pete Campos & Co-Sponsor: Representative Lucky Varela

**House Bill 338:** Sponsor: Representative Jimmie Hall

### **Healthy Kids – Healthy Economy**

**Funding Request:** \$1.44 million

A funding investment to:

- 1) Purchase New Mexico-grown, fresh from the farm, fruits and vegetables to provide students with school meals that will encourage them to eat fresh produce for the rest of their lives.
- 2) Augment school nutrition programs by providing more New Mexico-grown fruits and vegetables assisting schools in meeting new federal rules.
- 3) Strengthen New Mexico’s farming economy and agricultural legacy by increasing market opportunities for small and mid-scale producers across the state.

### **What Legislative Funding Can Do:**

#### For our Children

- The purchase of New Mexico-grown fruits and vegetables will enhance the diets of school children, promoting healthier lifestyles and increasing academic achievement. Studies show healthy nutrition improves child well-being and learning ability.<sup>1</sup>
- Stem the rise in childhood obesity in New Mexico and help to save the state an additional \$ 324 million in obesity related health care expenses and an additional 1.2 billion for diabetes<sup>2</sup>.

#### For our Schools

- School meal programs will have the budget to purchase local produce from New Mexico farmers.
- School food service directors will be in a better position to comply with recent federal rules requiring more servings of fruits and vegetables in the school meals.

#### For our Farmers and the Economy

- An emerging agricultural sector in New Mexico—small and medium size fruit and vegetable farmers—will gain a new market and increase their chances to stay on the land.
- The new federal school meal rules—and their emphasis on fruits and vegetables—will help develop a strong market for New Mexico farmers as well as enhance rural economies.

#### For our State

- Increasing economic farming opportunities will help to maintain family farming and conserve the unique heritage and cultural traditions of New Mexico.

### **Without Legislative Funding:**

- There will be fewer opportunities to curb childhood obesity and other illnesses through an improved diet for children, rich in New Mexico-grown, fresh fruits and vegetables.
- School meal programs may not have the budget to purchase locally grown produce from New Mexico farmers.
- New Mexico will lose a critical opportunity to improve the rural sector and give a boost to the state’s economy.

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## Important Facts:

- More than 1 in 4 children in New Mexico are considered food insecure and many depend on school meals for their main meal of their day.<sup>3</sup>
- There are close to 338,000 New Mexico children who have the potential to benefit from participating in the school lunch program. 234,067 New Mexico children have been served New Mexico grown produce in 2012.<sup>4</sup>
- 82 percent of New Mexico's school students are eligible for USDA Free or Reduced Cost Lunch.<sup>10</sup>
- The new USDA federal rule, based on legislation, and requiring more servings of fruits and vegetables, is estimated to cost an additional 10 cents for each reimbursable lunch, and 27 cents for each reimbursable breakfast. Yet, the anticipated Federal share for this food cost is \$.06 per meal.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, NM food service directors maintain that USDA has grossly underestimated the costs.
- The school meal programs will comply with the new rules but they will need funds if they are to purchase local New Mexico fruit and vegetables.
- This is a win-win for New Mexico—as the market develops for New Mexico-grown produce in schools, fruit and vegetable growers' incomes will rise and our children's overall health and academic performance will improve.
- Currently, 60 schools and school districts purchase New Mexico-grown produce. This number has more than quadrupled in 2012.<sup>6</sup>
- Since last year, the number of New Mexico fruit and vegetable producers selling to schools has increased from 20 to 50. This is a significant and expanding market for New Mexico farmers.<sup>7</sup>
- If every student in New Mexican schools ate two servings of New Mexico-grown produce per week, about six million dollars would go to New Mexico producers. (338,000 students x 74 servings [2 per week x 37 weeks] x .25 cents per serving)<sup>8</sup>
- If every NM consumer purchased only 15 percent of their food from the state's farmers and ranchers, it would increase annual farm income by \$392 million.<sup>9</sup>
- This year, Congress enacted the Farm to School Competitive Grants Program, providing over \$3 million annually to Farm to School Programs nationwide. New Mexico was awarded two grants through this program. [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/f2\\_2012\\_grant\\_program.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/f2_2012_grant_program.htm)
- In the 2008 Farm Bill, food service directors were given the ability to apply a geographic preference, allowing them to prioritize buying from local and regional farmers. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/pressreleases/2011/0180.htm>

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### Footnotes:

1. "Eating for Health and Academic Achievement," *Wisconsin School News*, Julie Allington, 2001, and "Diet Quality and Academic Performance", *Journal of School Health*, Florence, Asbridge and Veugelers, 2008
2. New Mexico Dept. of Health, 2006 and 2012
3. Food & Resource and Action Center, *Food Hardship in America*, August, 2011
4. New Mexico Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs, *Approved Free and Reduced Percentages, Program Year, 2012*; and *Farm to Table Statistics*, November, 2012
5. *Federal Register*/Vol. 77, No. 17/Thursday, January 26, 2012/Rules and Regulations
6. Shauna Woodworth, *Farm to Table, Marketing Specialist*, November, 2012
7. Shauna Woodworth, *Farm to Table, Marketing Specialist*, November, 2012
8. See Footnote #4 and New Mexico School Nutrition Association
9. Meter, Ken. "Food and Farm Economy for N. NM.", 2007. Accessible at [www.crcworks.org](http://www.crcworks.org).
10. Food Research Action Center, 2012. Accessible at [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)