

# Feed Our Future and Cleveland Department of Public Health

## Cleveland Grower Listening Sessions



# Summary

## Overview:

In partnership with the Cleveland Department of Public Health (CDPH), Feed Our Future (FOF) held listening sessions with Cleveland growers to better understand their lived perspectives and experiences on urban farming for farm to school.

## Goal:

To inform two strategic areas:

1

The “Why” of Local Food

2

Opportunities for Farm to School in Cleveland

## Key Take -Aways:

- ✓ There is a lack of transparency of the farm to school resources available to Cleveland growers.
- ✓ Technical assistance with the bidding process and grant writing is needed to support growers access to institutional markets.
- ✓ Develop structured programs steps and milestones.
- ✓ Clarification with what is needed (certifications, product specifications, etc.) for the school supply chain.
- ✓ Clear and concise instruction on what schools are looking for to build a relationship with a producer.

# Background for Listening Sessions

FOF and CDPH conducted listening sessions to collect qualitative data to better understand the perspectives of Cleveland growers. The insights gained from these sessions will be used to inform and adapt current farm to school strategies and inform strategic growth for urban growers for farm to school.

## The Goal:

The goal of our listening sessions was to inform 2 strategic areas of our farm to school work:

- 1 The Why of Local Foods:** Why are you interested in selling your food to school districts?
- 2 Opportunities for Farm to School:** What challenges and barriers continue to exist that make it difficult to join this space?

## The Process:

### STEP ONE:

Online survey to gauge the perspective of farm to school from urban growers in Cleveland.

### STEP TWO:

In-person conversations to discuss the 2 strategic areas and to create space that allows urban growers to share their perspective of farm to school with FOF and CDPH.

### STEP THREE:

Virtual meeting space to create an opportunity for those growers that were unable to attend in-person sessions.

### STEP FOUR:

Report out findings and recommendations to Cleveland growers.

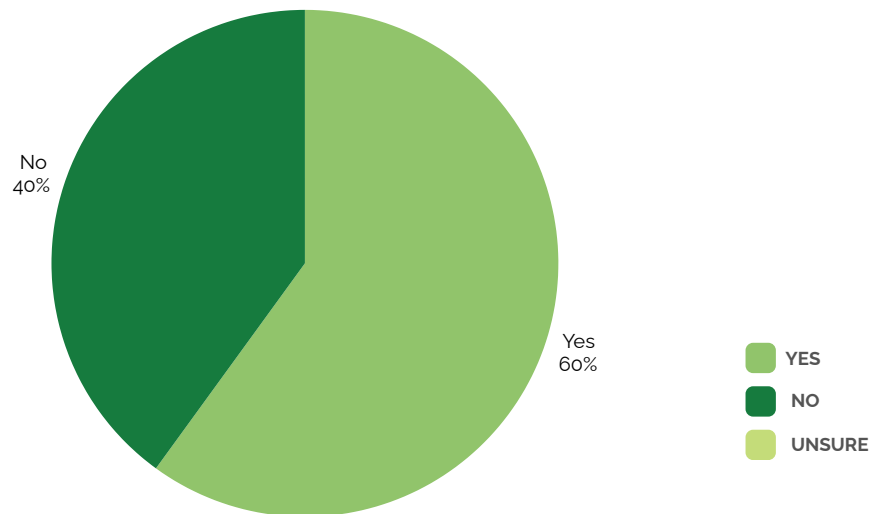


# The “Why” of Local Food

FOF and CDPH understand how important it is to know why Cleveland growers want to sell their food to schools in their community. By asking this question, we want to know what drives Cleveland growers to sell their food to schools and what impact growers hope to make with these partnerships.

## What We Learned from the Survey:

When asked if growers have tried to sell their food to schools, **2 respondents answered no and 3 respondents answered yes.**



When asked why growers want to sell their food to schools the top three answers include: **5 Cleveland-growers want to support families in their community; 4 want to provide healthy food to kids in schools; and 4 want to create a more sustainable food system in their community.**

“Support families in my community”

“Provide healthy food to kids in schools”

“To create a more sustainable food system in my community”

# The “Why” of Local Food

## What We Learned When We Dove Deeper:

According to growers, where is urban growing in Cleveland headed in the next five years?

### GROWING PRACTICES

Shift toward organic growing, pesticides, avoiding pesticides and animal byproducts.

### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Increased workforce development.

Opportunity to connect with the youth, get them involved in math and science, and healthy lifestyles.

### FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMMING




Expansion farm to school products.

Greater understanding of the full farm to school process: production, cooking, and composting.

Cooking classes and demonstrations.

Encourage self-sufficiency in food and medicine production.

## Recommendations:

	Create a Standard Operating Procedure for general farm to school processes.
	Create resources to connect schools to farms and farmers for field trips, onsite visits or cooking demos.
	Connect the work of the Food Leaders Alliance in Cleveland Metropolitan School District to Cleveland-growers to increase farm to school programming in Cleveland.

The Food Leaders Alliance is Feed Our Future's youth ambassador program for students in 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade at Marion C. Seltzer. Food Leaders will make positive food changes in their school and inspire classmates to make changes.

# Opportunities for Farm to School

FOF and CDPH recognize that there are barriers that keep Cleveland growers from selling their food to schools in their community.

***The barrier that is most experienced by Cleveland-growers is obtaining necessary certifications to enter the school supply chain.***



## **What We Learned When We Dove Deeper:**

- Certification requirements are the biggest barrier.
- There needs to be increased visibility of farm to school programming and Feed Our Future.
- Engage the Food Leaders Alliance to spread awareness of farm to school.
- Utilize flyers, social media, and testimonials to spread awareness
- Not only providing produce but sharing the story and experience.
- There are concerns with balancing feeding the neighborhood and also feeding the schools, there has to be a diverse revenue stream for urban growers.

## **How would you want to build partnerships with local governmental agencies?**

- Introductions to farm to school team

## **How would you want to build partnerships with school districts?**

- There are growers that work on the education aspect of farm to school, but don't work with them on sourcing food. Outreach to school administration to understand who these growers are.
- Clarification on if schools can purchase from school gardens to produce revenue for school programming.
- There needs to be more transparency about what schools are looking for and what requirements are needed to enter the school supply chain.
- Publicize information to spread awareness





# Opportunities for Farm to School

## What We Learned When We Dove Deeper:

### What kind of support or resources would make it easier for you to sell to schools?

- Technical assistance with bidding process
- Help with funding opportunities (grants, scaling resources)
- Develop structured programs with steps and milestones
- Access to food safety-certified kitchens to prevent cross-contamination
- Adding the Farm to School Readiness Plan survey to the Feed Our Future website.
- Share information regarding how to price their products for the supply chain.
- Understanding minimum amount of product that needs to be grown for school supply chain

## Recommendations:

	Connect growers with Food Safety Consultant and Food Safety Information.
	Increase visibility of local governmental resources and farm to school programs at community events.
	Develop bid technical assistance documents and training.
	Connect Cleveland Growers to Feed Our Future's <u>Producer Cost Share Program</u> .

# More Information

## **Feed Our Future:**

Feed Our Future, Local Foods for Growing Minds, believes that every child, regardless of their school district, deserves access to fresh, healthy, and local foods (when available). Since 2015, FOF has been working to increase the number of school districts purchasing local foods for their school meal programs. For more, visit [feedourfuture.org](http://feedourfuture.org).

## **Cleveland Department of Public Health:**

Cleveland Department of Public Health (CDPH) is the local public health agency for the City of Cleveland. As a department, CDPH provides a range of services aimed at promoting healthy behaviors; preventing diseases and injuries; ensuring access to safe food, clean air, and life-saving immunizations; and preparing for and responding to public health emergencies. Our mission is to promote and protect the well-being of residents, communities, and partners in the City of Cleveland.

## **Our Partnership:**

Each organization recognizes there are opportunities to increase farm to school programming in Cleveland, Ohio. In addition, there are opportunities for local governmental agencies to increase visibility in the community, share resources and provide technical assistance with growers to increase knowledge of farm to school in Cleveland.