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MINNESOTA SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO SHOWCASE LOCAL FOOD AND FARMERS DURING FARM TO SCHOOL WEEK

Minneapolis – Schools throughout Minnesota will showcase fresh, locally grown foods and their relationships with nearby farmers during the first annual Farm to School Week.

Farm to School Week, which runs from September 20–24, is designed to increase awareness about the multiple benefits of rapidly growing Farm to School initiatives throughout the state.

“Whether it’s helping kids eat well and be ready to learn, supporting local farmers or strengthening local economies, Farm to School brings wide-ranging benefits,” said JoAnne Berkenkamp of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). Farm to School Week was initiated by IATP and the Minnesota School Nutrition Association (MSNA), whose partnership has helped catalyze Minnesota’s Farm to School movement. A variety of other organizations around the state are also working on Farm to School.

Participating school districts are designing their own Farm to School Week celebrations and plans for the school year, including:

Dover-Eyota—Looking the part, food service employees will be wearing Farm to School aprons made out of bib overalls. The school district has invited local produce growers who supply their schools to join elementary students for lunch as a “thank you” on the Friday of Farm to School Week. Locally grown foods being served at the schools throughout the year include cabbage, free-range turkey, bison, sweet corn, melons, tomatoes, peppers, squash and sweet potatoes. The school district has also planted a small apple orchard on district property to use both as a food source and as an educational tool. Contact: Carrie Frank, (507) 545-2924 ext. 242 carriefrank@desch.org

Wayzata—Food service employees will wear “I Dig My Farmer” t-shirts and use IATP’s new promotional package to highlight Farm to School foods in the cafeterias. The Wayzata school district will serve locally grown food items twice a month through the end of the school year. Those items include sweet corn, squash, beets, parsnips, wild rice, apples, potatoes, pumpkins, bison, maple syrup and fresh herbs. Contact: Mary Anderson, (763) 745-5153 mary.anderson2@wayzata.k12.mn.us

Hastings—Posters of local agricultural producers will be displayed the day their produce is served in the school cafeteria. Locally grown produce to be featured during Farm to School Week and throughout the fall will include tomatoes, sweet corn, apples and

watermelon. Next year the district plans to add locally grown beans, snap peas and zucchini to the menu.

Contact: Mary Paula Deane (651) 480-7126 mdeane@hastings.k12.mn.us

Winona—The Winona school district will serve locally grown corn on the cob, apples, wild rice blend and watermelon, accompanied by posters featuring several of the growers who sell to the district and educational information. Food service employees will also be sporting “I Dig My Farmer” t-shirts to make Farm to School even more visible to students, staff and visitors. Throughout the year, the district will also serve locally produced bison, potatoes, greens, carrots and whole grains. The food service slogan of “Our fuel Your fire” is appearing on aprons and district delivery trucks.

Contact: Lyn Halvorson, (507) 494-0831 lyn.halvorson@winona.k12.mn.us

Rosemount-Apple Valley—During Farm to School Week, corn on the cob and watermelon will be featured in all schools, while three schools will also provide fresh produce grown by area Hmong farmers. The fresh produce will include green, red and yellow peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, peapods and zucchini. “I Dig My Farmer” and “locally grown” posters will be hung up in cafeterias. Various Farm to School activities will continue throughout the school year.

Contact: Wendy Knight, (651) 683-6956, wendy.knight@district196.org

IATP will also launch a new Farm to School website for students, schools, parents and farmers to be unveiled the week of September 20. The website can be accessed during Farm to School Week at www.farm2schoolmn.org.

IATP has also developed an extensive promotional package featuring the new “I Dig My Farmer” theme to help schools educate students, parents and others about Farm to School (www.iatp.org/farm2school). IATP is making the promotional package available for free to interested schools across the state.

In the coming year, MSNA and IATP will build on the growing momentum for Farm to School to reach additional farmers, train school foodservice staff, work with more students and increase public awareness.

You can learn more about Farm to School at mnsna.org and iatp.org.