



FACT SHEET

Agriculture/Natural Resource Extension

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Regional and Local Economic Impacts of the Sarasota County Farm to School Program

Here is useful information to all Sarasota County residents who want to know about the options available for local economic development. As a result of the overall conditions brought on by the economic recession that began in 2007, job growth and economic development are high-priority concerns among all Florida residents, especially to those unemployed, and to Florida local and state government policy makers. Recently publications from the Food and Resource Economics Department of the University of Florida have analyzed the total agriculture economic impacts of selected counties and have concluded that food system-based commercial activities represent the greater multiplier economic impact to the local economy compared to non-agricultural economic activities (Clouser et al., 2010).

The food and agricultural system of the United States has changed in the past and is changing in the present in response to the needs of society and the economy. Today there is a trend that is consumer-driven towards local and community foodsheds that can address concerns related to issues of sustainability, health, job creation, farmland protection, etc (Garrett & Fenster, 2010; Bendfeldt, et.al., 2011). In 2006 agriculture policies adopted in the Comprehensive Plan for Sarasota County included Policy 1.3.3 which provides support for local foodshed economic development in the following areas:

- Encouraging the School Board to use locally grown foods in the daily school breakfast and lunch programs.
- Support for institutional purchasing from local agriculture.
- Support for a local food marketing strategy.

Implementation of local foodshed development is challenging due to the lack of economic data on its total benefits to justify such a development strategy. To address this need, Sarasota County agriculture Extension collaborated with the UF Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics to analyze the Sarasota County Farm to School Program which is providing locally-sourced foods for the

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school lunch program of Sarasota County School District. This fact sheet is intended to educate the Sarasota County community and local decision makers on the results of this analysis in order to report on its progress and to justify expansion of resources for the Farm to School Program as one important strategy of economic development for Sarasota County, as well as a model for the state of Florida.

What is the Farm to School Program? The Sarasota County Farm to School Program was begun in 2005 and is supported by UF/IFAS Sarasota County Extension for the purposes of supporting the efforts and accomplishments of the Food and Nutrition Services department. The goals are to provide 'Local Food for Healthy Children' in our public school lunch & snack programs and to strengthen the local agricultural economy. It is part of the National Farm to School Program which was begun in 1996 through pilot projects in Florida and California and authorized in statute in the 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act (National Farm to School Program, 2008). Its purpose is to educate and empower communities in providing locally-grown foods in school meals for the benefits of high nutrition to the children and for opportunities in direct marketing and risk management to farmers, especially producers on middle to small size family farms. In Florida many more counties now are also initiating Farm to School programs with the support of the FL Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. For information about these programs see the following websites:

National Farm to School Program – <http://www.farmentoschool.org/>

Florida Farm to School Program - http://www.freshfromflorida.com/divisions/fnw/farm_to_school.html

What is the Status of the Farm to School Program in Sarasota County? On an average day, Sarasota County schools serve 30,000 to 35,000 meals to students. Menus in Sarasota County Schools' cafeterias reflect the national goal of providing wholesome, healthy food that students like to eat with school lunches must include protein, fruits and vegetables, grains and low-fat milk, served in age-appropriate portions (Sarasota County School District, 2011). In the 2010-11 school year, approximately 50% of the produce was purchased from 9 farms within a 100 mile radius multi-county region and 100% of the dairy from 1 dairy in Hillsborough County (see Map 1).

What is a Total Economic Analysis? A total economic analysis includes the cumulative impacts of direct, indirect and induced effects on the local economy from any economic activity. In this case, the purchase of locally-grown foods is the case study. The definition of these different economic impacts is as follows:

- Direct effects represent the actual sales to the local producers which support their operations and jobs

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- Indirect effects represent changes in sales, income, or employment within the region in backward-linked industries supplying goods and services to businesses (e.g., increased sales in input supply firms resulting from more nursery industry sales).
- Induced effects represent increased activity within the region from household spending of the income earned in the direct and supporting industries. Employees in direct and supporting industries spend their incomes on housing, utilities, groceries, and other consumer goods and services, which generate sales, income, and employment throughout a regional economy.

What is the Result of the Total Economic Analysis of the Sarasota County Farm to School Program? Using the IMPLAN software, the total economic benefits to the multi-county region of the nine (9) participating farms was evaluated. In the 2010-11 school year, the direct effects of the purchases from these farms were \$107,000 for produce and \$1,079,450 for dairy foods which supported 22 jobs. Calculation of the indirect and induced effects of these purchases produced an increased total economic effect for the region to a level of \$2,306,745, as well as 9 additional jobs. This resulted from the typically higher multiplier effects from agriculture activity, e.g., 2.4 for vegetable produce and 1.84 for dairy.

What are the Conclusions of the Total Economic Analysis? The information presented in this fact sheet should be considered "relative" rather than "precise absolute" estimates of the economic activity of the Farm to School Program in Sarasota County based on the IMPLAN model. For example, the availability of locally-grown produce was severely limited by weather conditions in the 2011 winter and, therefore, could have been at a higher level with better growing conditions. In addition, additional outreach programs by Sarasota Extension are planned that should identify more farms in Sarasota County as local food vendors and increase the total impact to the local economy. Nevertheless, this information should improve the decision-making ability to allocate resources for economic development in Sarasota County with the Farm to School program.

Where can I get further information?

Please, use the websites listed in the references for further general information. For specific information about the Sarasota County Farm to School Program, you can reach Beverly Girard, Director of Food & Nutrition Services of the Sarasota County School District at beverly_girard@sarasota.k12.fl.us and (941) 486-2199. Also you can reach me by phone at (941) 232-3090 and by email at rkluson@scgov.net.

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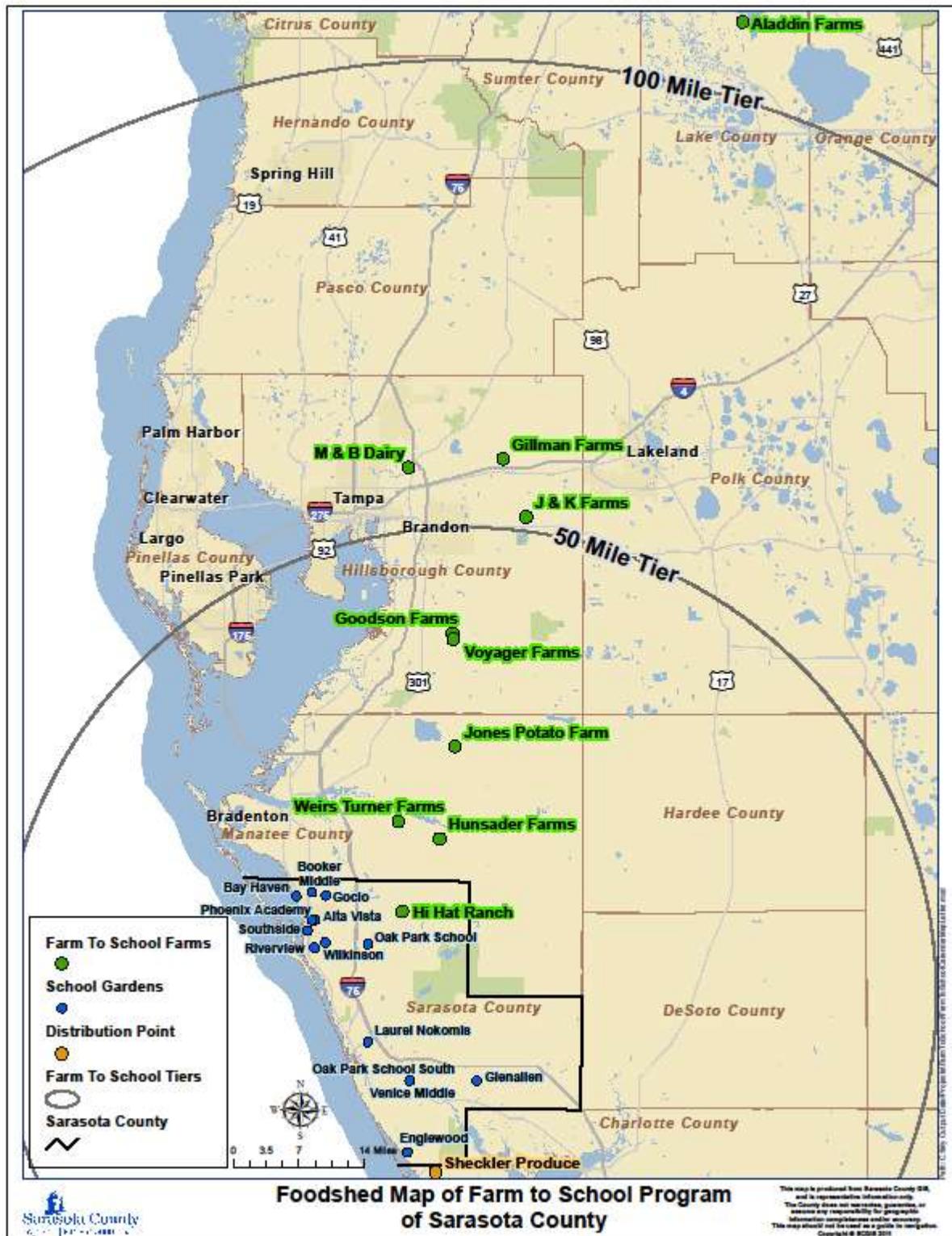
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Map 1