INTRODUCTION

FARM TO WORK

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GUIDE
Welcome to Farm to Work, a project of Sustainable Food Center

Farm to Work is an innovative employee wellness program that regularly delivers baskets of farm-fresh, local produce directly to the worksite. The program offers employees increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and addresses some key barriers many employees face when trying to add more fruits and vegetables to their diets. Farmers are given the opportunity to establish new customer relationships, diversify their farm operations, and sell more food to the local market.

Farm to Work is a project of Sustainable Food Center (SFC). From seed to table, SFC creates opportunities for individuals to make healthy food choices and to participate in a vibrant local food system. Through organic food gardening, relationships with area farmers, interactive cooking classes and nutrition education, children and adults have increased access to locally grown food and are empowered to improve the long-term health of Central Texans and our environment.

This guide is an introduction to the Farm to Work program. SFC staff will support you through the entire set-up process, from accessing and using the website, to launching the program and developing marketing and promotional activities.

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Farm to Work Overview

Farm to Work is a modified Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in which employers (worksites) are matched with small family farms that deliver baskets of fresh, local produce directly to employees at the workplace. This easily-implemented program benefits worksites, employees, and the local farmer.

1. Employees sign up to receive order reminders. Order reminders are automatically sent two to three days before the scheduled delivery and contain the order deadline, pickup day, basket contents and price, a message from the farmer, and featured recipes using that week’s produce.

2. Employees order through the secure Farm to Work website.

3. The farmer brings the ordered baskets to your worksite at a regularly scheduled day and time.

4. Employees who purchased a basket receive an automated e-mail pickup reminder on the day of delivery. Coordinators and/or volunteers assist the farmer to set up the pickup area and distribute the baskets. Employees who purchased a basket check in with the Coordinator and pickup their produce.

Most steps are automated by the Farm to Work website. Worksite Coordinators are encouraged to set up additional incentive programs and events to increase awareness and garner excitement in the workplace.
Benefits of Farm to Work

Most of us know that eating a variety of fruits and vegetables leads to positive health outcomes, but the healthy choice isn’t always the easy choice. Studies show that convenience is a primary factor in food purchasing decisions and marketplace trends are increasingly favoring direct-to-consumer food delivery models.

Sustainable Food Center, in partnership with the Department of State Health Services and Web Chronic LLC, developed Farm to Work in 2007 to enhance access to local produce through a farm direct to consumer delivery model, thus making local fruits and vegetables an easy choice for employees. The program has proven to be a win-win-win situation for all parties involved: employees, the worksite, and the local farmer.

Benefits to Employees

• **Time and Convenience** – Fresh fruits and vegetables delivered directly to the worksite means fewer trips to the grocery store and less hassle in selecting produce. Employees can skip the parking, crowds, and long checkout lines. Additionally, Farm to Work offers flexibility by being an alternative to shopping at the farmers’ market or participating in a traditional CSA.

• **Exceptional Taste and Freshness** – Food transported across the globe, country, or state may spend multiple days in transit before reaching the home. Many varieties of grocery store produce are chosen for their ability to withstand industrial equipment and extended travel, not for freshness or flavor. For these reasons, food grown locally is much fresher than food shipped long distances. Local food is picked at the height of ripeness, offering the best of what is in season and often reaches consumers within one day of being harvested.

• **Environmental Stewards** – In the U.S., food travels an average of 1,500 to 2,500 miles before reaching consumers’ plates. Locally grown food purchases significantly shorten the distance from farm to plate and can reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Sustainable farms also conserve soil, keep water sources in our communities clean, and provide wildlife habitat.

• **Local Economy Impacts** – Employees who purchase locally grown food directly support small family farms, have a multiplier effect on the local economy, and contribute to vibrant rural communities.
Benefits to the Worksite

• **A Healthier Workforce** – Healthy employees means happy employees who are productive and take fewer sick days. Providing your employees with an environment that makes it easy to eat more local fruits and vegetables is a great first step to improve the health of your workforce. Farm to Work is an excellent component to any Worksite Wellness initiatives at your worksite.

• **Employee Satisfaction** – Farm to Work is an added benefit to employees. Many employers strive to increase employee satisfaction and reduce turnover. By bringing Farm to Work to your worksite, you are sending the message that you care about the health of your employees and the health of their families.

• **Public Relations** – When you offer Farm to Work at your worksite, you position your company in a positive light in the community. You have made a decision that promotes employee wellness, supports local farmers, protects the environment, and strengthens the local economy. SFC encourages you to spotlight the Farm to Work program on any internal or external media accounts.

Benefits for Farmers

• **Economic Stability** – Locally grown food that is purchased directly from the farmer leads to greater economic stability. This direct business model allows the farmer to realize higher profit margins and re-invest in the local economy. In addition, this model keeps the majority of food dollars in the local economy and creates greater economic opportunity within the local food system.

• **Market Diversity** – This additional direct sales outlet allows the farmer to spread their risk among many potential markets. Additionally, because the customer purchases in advance, the Farm to Work model allows farmers to only harvest product that already has a market.

• **Community Engagement** – In the Farm to Work model, farmers get a chance to interact directly with consumers. This encourages both farmer and consumer to build relationships and community around our local food system.
The Produce

Farm to Work Baskets

Farm to Work baskets include seasonal produce selected by the farmer. Baskets are not customizable.

**Farm Fresh Facts**

- Prices are usually $20 to $25.
- Baskets contain five to eight different seasonal produce items.
- The quantity of produce changes seasonally, with different crops’ growing conditions.
- The majority of produce will be from the partner farm. Occasionally farmers provide produce from another local farm. For example, a neighboring farm may have fresh fruit like strawberries that your partner farm doesn’t grow.
- The Farm to Work website has resources to help customers learn more about their local produce.
- Local produce may look different than produce found in the grocery store. For example, carrots come with greens attached and may be different sized than the typical grocery store carrot.
- The program upholds the highest quality standards for freshness and safety.

**Sample Baskets**
Worksite Coordinator Responsibilities

The Worksite Coordinator is the main point of contact and champion of the Farm to Work program. Their dedication to Farm to Work is essential to create a successful and dynamic program.

The Farm to Work Coordinator sets the program in motion and serves as the main contact throughout set up and implementation.

Additionally, the coordinator will:

• Be a point of contact for project partners.
• Become familiar with relevant agency policies and obtain all approvals.
• Identify drop off location and other delivery logistics.
• Send out communication to employees to solicit feedback on program, and promote the program to all employees on an ongoing basis.
• Field questions from employees regarding the program.
• Be the main advocate for the program at the worksite.
• Organize and facilitate all volunteers needed to distribute deliveries each week.

This coordination may take significant staff time during the initial planning and start-up phase. Once the program is in place, the time required is at least one to two hours per week. Someone will coordinate weekly distribution. This does not have to be the coordinator; we recommend finding help from other staff members and/or volunteers.
Launching Farm to Work

The process of starting the Farm to Work program can take anywhere between 2 – 12 months. This largely depends on the worksite’s ability to review and sign agreements and the availability and capacity of current farmers.

Steps to launch Farm to Work:
1. Initiate Request
2. Survey Employees
3. Review and Sign Agreements
4. Match a Farmer to Worksite
5. Complete Training on Admin Site with SFC
6. Determine Delivery Logistics
7. Develop a Promotion Plan
**Farm to Work Feasibility Check List**

Is Farm to Work right for your office? Address the items listed here to determine whether launching Farm to Work at your worksite is feasible. If your worksite does not have an employee wellness program, Farm to Work is a great way to get one started.

- **Staff Time**
  
  Do you have an employee who is able and willing to be a Worksite Coordinator? Farm to Work requires one or two Worksite Coordinators with some approved time to serve as the primary organizers. This is usually a great fit for someone with worksite wellness in their job description. Alternatively, this can be a core group of employees who are able to assist with the feasibility, planning, promotion, and implementation of the program. Consider how much time employees are able to put into setting up and maintaining Farm to Work.

- **Leadership support and approval**
  
  Do you have leadership support within your organization or business to implement this program? SFC will provide you with the necessary agreement templates to get Farm to Work started. Occasionally, questions regarding insurance and liability arise. SFC will work with individual sites to address any legal concerns.

- **Employee Interest/Demand**
  
  How many employees are interested in participating and how often will they order? SFC will supply you with a template to conduct an interest survey among your employees to predict program participation. SFC requires worksites to have a minimum of 200 employees and 80+ positive responses to the survey in order to implement the program. Reaching out to other organizations in your building or in nearby buildings is a great way to increase the reach of your program.

- **Distribution site**
  
  Where will employees pick up their produce? A distribution site needs to be easily accessible by both the farmer and employees and non-obstructive to traffic or normal business operations, and preferably covered to protect from sun and rain.

- **Communication channels**
  
  How will you communicate with your employees? There needs to be clear and easily accessible communication channels for the Worksite Coordinator to contact staff about the program. Are you able to email all employees across your organization? Will your IT department allow all interested employees to provide their work email and receive auto-generated Farm to Work emails?

- **Budget and resources**
  
  Does your workplace have existing funds for wellness activities? Resources are useful for purchasing advertising materials and promotional incentives.