

Alaska State Legislature

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Chair, House Military and Veteran Affairs Committee
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Sponsor Statement

HB 70

ALASKA GROWN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

The Farm-to-School Act is similar to programs proposed in several other states. Its intent is to strengthen links between state agriculture and state food procurement in schools, expand local markets, improve nutrition, and even benefit the environment. It improves upon current law that requires schools receiving state moneys to purchase agricultural products harvested in the state if, and only if, they are priced no more than seven percent higher than similar products imported to Alaska.

A Farm-to-School Program is created to facilitate increased procurement of Alaska grown foods by schools. The program will, in order of priority:

- Identify and develop policies and procedure, including proposed uniform procurement procedures, to implement and evaluate the program;
- Assist food producers, distributors, and brokers to market Alaska grown food to schools by informing them of opportunities and requirements;
- Assist schools in connecting with local producers by informing them of sources, availability and benefits of Alaska grown foods;
- Identify and recommend ways to increase predictability of sales and adequacy of supply;
- Make available publications allowing students to see the benefits of preparing and consuming locally-grown food;
- Support efforts to advance other farm-to-school extensions such as school gardens or farms, and farm visits; and
- Seek additional funds to leverage state expenditures.

The Division of Agriculture must, cooperating with the Department of Education & Early Development, collect data on program activities and report biennially to the Legislature their progress beginning January 2010.

HB 70 also gives schools the authorization to create a school garden or even a farm. In doing so they must allow students representing student organizations the opportunity to be involved in the garden or farm operation. Schools may teach both organic and traditional farming methods.

This bill sunsets on July 1, 2013.