

UTAH FARM TO FORK TASK FORCE
STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT
JANUARY 2022- JUNE 2022

SERVING
UTAH'S CHILDREN
LOCAL FOODS

SUMMARY

The Utah Farm to Fork Task Force conducted a strategic planning process in 2022 designed to revitalize the Task Force and set it on a course to spark transformation in the Utah farm to fork landscape. The process began with an effort in January 2022 to pinpoint a vision for where Utah stakeholders want to see farm to fork in the next decade. The vision drafted and refined by the group is:

The Utah Farm to Fork Task Force envisions a future where access to fresh, local food, school gardens, and agriculture education are part of our way of life. We collaborate to build a strong local food economy for all Utahns, resulting in healthy children and residents, interconnected communities, and viable farms.

Then in March 2022, stakeholders conducted a root cause analysis, aiming to understand the underlying barriers and challenges in the way of achieving that vision. The root causes identified include:

- Utahns embrace an independent, pioneer mindset, which results in hesitance to cooperate and aggregate farm products, and hesitance to access government support (such as grants for school gardens).
- Convenience, cheapness, and fast food are part of the Utah culture, rooted in the pinch of low wages, high housing prices, and inflation.
- There is a lack of arable land in Utah due to the desert climate, development pressure, and public lands in the state.
- Small farming is not valued, visible, appreciated, or viewed as profitable/viable in Utah. As a result, kids don't want to stay on the farm, and small farmers' needs are not represented in the Utah legislature or valued generally in Utah society.
- School nutrition programs are not valued as highly as test scores in the Utah education system. School nutrition staff feel left out of their school communities, under appreciated for their contributions to education, and unmotivated to invest their time and energy into things like farm to school.
- The Utah education system centers on preparing Utahns for specific career pathways, which deprioritizes farm to school. Garden educators especially feel like their work does not fit into the current educational paradigm, since garden education is interdisciplinary and focuses on developing lifelong habits, rather than focusing on specific career readiness.

A note or theme to consider is that while it wasn't explicitly explored during this process, it was mentioned that the LDS Church determines priorities for a large proportion of Utahns, and farm to school may not be an explicit priority.

The next phases of the process include a series of regional listening sessions in July 2022 designed to validate the findings from the process thus far, hear any additional input on the vision and root causes that may not have been captured thus far, generate and prioritize solutions to farm to school challenges, and understand the skills and assets present in Utah communities. Regional feedback will contribute to the development of a set of prioritized goals and activities. The process will wrap up in the fall of 2022 with the creation of a revised structure for the Task Force designed to carry out those goals and activities.

If you have questions or would like to be more involved in Utah's farm to fork efforts, contact Kate Wheeler.

Email: kate.wheeler@schools.utah.gov

Phone: 801-538-7659