South Carolina Farm to School Program: Empowering Schools to Change the Food Environment

Presenter: Yenory Hernandez-Garbanzo, PhD
Background: Why Farm to School in SC?

Public Health Challenge: Childhood Obesity, Consumption Patterns, Farmers Viability.

- Almost 1 in every 3 (31.7 percent) SC high school students are overweight or obese. (2009).

- Only 14.7% of SC high school students eat 5 or more F&V/per day.

- 96% of all SC farms are small farms.

Background: Why Farm to School in SC?

Knowledge gap:

*Identify and modify environmental influences and develop policies and strategies targeting food systems to improve population-level nutrition and health.*
Farm to School across the Nation

- State has at least one Farm to School Program
- No information about a Farm to School Program in this state.
Overall Goal of SC Farm to School Pilot Project

- To develop, implement and evaluate a farm to school program in South Carolina to promote benefits for the students, farmers, schools and communities.

- **Primary target audience**: School-aged children (grades K-12).
Our Mission

- Connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of:
  - Serving healthy meals in school cafeterias,
  - Improving student nutrition,
  - Providing agriculture, health & nutrition education opportunities,
  - and supporting local & regional farmers.
HOW?
OUR F2S PROGRAM

• 2 year-project funded by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2010-2012)

 uniqueness model at the national level
52 schools award recipients
($3000+ garden supplies)
Program Requirements

- Purchase SC grown fruits and vegetables from local sources

- School menus must feature at least 2 locally grown fruits and vegetables per month

- Integrate Farm to School into the school curriculum

- Establish or revitalize a school garden
Program
Theoretical Framework

Community
School
Family
Children
PALMETTO PICK IN THE CLASSROOM

Houston Elementary
PALMETTO PICK = COOKING & TASTING ACTIVITIES

John de la Howe School
Developed by CU nutrition graduate students and creative inquiry students
Parents at School Gardens
SCHOOL FARMERS’ MARKET

Cherrydale Elementary
In the Community
Farm Field trips
Program Evaluation

Data collection: October 2011-May 2012

- **Farm to School Lessons**: Classroom Observations
- **Teachers**: Online surveys
- **Cafeteria**: Observation checklists, food production records, receipts, menus.
- **Garden**: Garden checklists.
- **Students**: Pre-post surveys.

**Focus groups**
Results: Food Service

- 92% served SC Grown produce at least twice a month
- 43% served SC Grown produce more than the requested 2x month
- 93% of Food Service Staff encouraged students to select fruits or vegetables
Results: Agriculture

- **46** Farmers participating in the SC Farm to School Program in some capacity
- GAP certifications have increased
Results: Classroom

- Approximately **95%** of schools are implementing F2S lessons
- Observations show students are eager to learn about F/V and Agriculture
- Hands-on activities (gardening and taste tests)
SC Farm to School

- Successfully pass the SC Farm to School Bill
  *Unanimously passed the House Sub-Committee on 3/7/12
- Increase number of schools participating in the SC Farm to School Program
- Expand the program to Farm to Child Care, Farm to After-School, Farm to Hospital, Farm to Business
CONCLUSION

- Preliminary results suggest successful changes toward a healthier school environment.

- This systems-level approach utilizing statewide collaboration and multi-level strategies may serve as model program framework for the implementation of Farm to School in SC and other states.
Thank you!