

## Toombs County Schools Receives Golden Radish Award for Farm to School Accomplishments

ATLANTA, October 24, 2016

Georgia's Departments of Agriculture, Public Health, Education and Georgia Organics came together under the prestigious Gold Dome for the annual Golden Radish Awards to celebrate incredible gains made in the farm to school movement. 53 school districts—nearly one-third of all public school districts in Georgia with a reach of over 1 million students—are now participating in farm to school programs and recognized through the Golden Radish Awards.

Toombs County Schools was recognized with the Golden Radish Award at the Bronze level for their accomplishments during the 2015-2016 school year, which include:

- Local food was featured on the school menu 22 times, including locally grown sweet potatoes and Turnip Greens from Herndon Farms in Lyons, strawberries from Mathews Farms in Baxley, and Regenerate blueberry juice from Alma.
- Toombs County High School agriculture students grew hydroponic lettuce and worked with cafeteria staff to serve it in a side salad at lunch.
- The Toombs County Farm Bureau supported the district's school gardens. Students planted and harvested corn, tomatoes, basil, cabbage, turnips, kale, and broccoli.

The Golden Radish Award publicly recognizes school districts for all aspects of farm to school, from local food procurement to hosting taste tests to gardening with students, and is awarded at Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Honorary Levels. Districts were evaluated on their work in ten different activities of farm to school.

"It is incredible to see the growth of farm to school programs in the last few years," stated Alice Rolls, Georgia Organics Executive Director. "Every day, children across our state are getting the opportunity to grow and taste Georgia food in school. I'm excited to see Georgia's schools invest in Georgia farmers and in our children at the same time."

Districts of all sizes are utilizing farm to school programs to teach academic standards in school gardens, support the local economy through local food purchases for school meals, and fight childhood obesity and other preventable food-related diseases.

"Our ultimate goal here at the department is for communities to take ownership of their school cafeterias, similarly to how we all push for excellence in the classroom, the arts, and athletics," said Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary W. Black. "We are proud to have so many Georgia Grown Feed My School participants recognized here today and are excited as to what current and future Golden Radish Award winners will accomplish as we work toward our 2020 Vision for School Nutrition in Georgia."

State Superintendent Richard Woods agreed with Commissioner Black, emphasizing the benefits of connecting education to Georgia's largest industry. "Having access to fresh, farm to school meals is great for Georgia's students," said Woods. "Farm to school programs also connect students with agriculture, which is an enormously important industry for our state. We appreciate the Golden Radish Award because it recognizes those school districts that are striving every day to provide more farm to school meals."

To top it off, Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health, noted the combined educational and long-term health benefits of farm to school. "Farm to school teaches our children the importance of food that helps bodies grow healthy and strong and food that promotes learning," said Fitzgerald. "When children learn as early

as possible where their food comes from, they are more likely to eat fresh, nutritious foods that will sustain healthy choices that spread to families and communities.”

During the 2015-2016 school year, school districts collectively:

- Served 39 million school meals that included local food
- Held 8,246 taste tests of fresh, local food to students
- Taught 3,406 garden, food and nutrition lessons to students
- Tended 575 edible school gardens
- Hosted 1,935 hands-on cooking activities with students
- Incorporated farm to school into 390 staff professional development opportunities
- Championed and sustained district-wide policies or procedures into 29 schools districts

Needless to say, the 2015-16 school year was a banner year for farm to school in Georgia, and all participants were thrilled to celebrate at the Golden Radish Awards.

The 53 school systems being recognized are:

**Gold Level**

Atlanta Public Schools  
Barrow County School System  
Bibb County School District  
Bleckley County School District  
Burke County Public School System  
Carrollton City Schools  
Cherokee County School District  
City Schools of Decatur  
Clarke County School District  
Dougherty County School System  
Elbert County School District  
Fannin County School System  
Fulton County Schools  
Gwinnett County Public Schools  
Habersham County Schools  
Jackson County Schools  
Laurens County Schools  
Sumter County Schools  
Tift County Schools

**Silver Level**

Bartow County School System  
Cobb County School District  
Effingham County Schools

Fayette County Public Schools  
Forsyth County Schools  
Hart County Schools  
Newton County Schools  
Rabun County Schools  
Savannah-Chatham County Public School System  
Treutlen County Schools

**Bronze Level**

Brantley County School District  
Commerce City Schools  
Dade County Schools  
DeKalb County School District  
Gainesville City School System  
Madison County School District  
Marietta City Schools  
Paulding County School District  
Warren County Public Schools  
Toombs County Schools

**Honorary Level**

Buford City Schools  
Cartersville City School District  
Coffee County School System  
Columbia County School District  
Crisp County School System  
Dalton Public Schools  
Franklin County Schools  
Hall County Schools  
Henry County Schools  
Lee County School District  
Morgan County Charter School System  
Muscogee County School District  
Ware County Schools  
Worth County Schools