



### Championing local

The **Food for Life Partnership's** award scheme encourages the provision of seasonal, local produce. Schools enrolled on the programme are growing their own food; organising trips to farms; sourcing food from local bakers, butchers and farmers; setting up school farmers' markets; holding community food events; providing cooking and growing clubs for pupils and their families; and serving freshly prepared, locally sourced meals that follow the Soil Association's rigorous Food for Life Catering Mark criteria.

Food for Life Catering Mark holders champion local produce and local producers. This is an investment in the local community and local economy and it is a way to reconnect people with where their food comes from and how it is produced. Support is also given to commercial and Local Authority caterers who have an interest in providing good, local, sustainable food to schools.

Our evidence-based Good Food for All report shows that FFLP schools are **Good for local enterprise and sustainability** – “Over £3 in social, economic and environmental value was created for every £1 spent on Food for Life menu's, mostly in the form of new jobs in the local economy’.

### Top tips

- Buy directly from local suppliers and plan menus well, as schools can often save money on ingredients and invest more in the local economy.
- Caterers and cooks should work with local suppliers to build up a good relationship and to discuss how they can better work together, as this can be mutually beneficial and result in cost savings. For example, one of our local caterers met up with a local grower who had a glut of broccoli, which was supplied at a reduced price.
- Eat in-season produce – means eating food at its best, which is often more affordable too. If your menus are seasonal it becomes far easier to source fresh produce locally.
- Support local suppliers and growing experts by encouraging schools to run Farmers' Markets and invite local trades people.

- Encourage schools to visit local farms and local food businesses as part of their progress towards achieving an award.
- Communicate with pupils and parents about the importance of supporting local suppliers to give them better understanding of where food comes from.
- Display the names of the farms and/ or local food businesses that supply locally produced fruit, vegetables, meat or dairy products for school meals, and feature them on menus, blackboards, flyers, website or newsletters. Highlight them as 'local' as this will help pupils and parents identify with and feel proud of their school food sourcing policy. Highlight when produce grown in the school garden is used in the school menu too.

## **Case study**

### **The Farm Kitchen – healthy school meals provide boost to local economy**

The Farm Kitchen was set up by owner Vicky Howe in 2006 as a one-person business working from a rented restaurant kitchen to provide hot lunches for four schools in Lincolnshire. Her passion for healthy, good food has been the catalyst behind the growth of the company which now employs seventy-five staff serving eighty-two schools in Lincolnshire with a head office based on a farm in Ewerby Thorpe.

In line with the Food for Life ethos, community and local links are a crucial part of their business. One of the areas where this has seen a very positive impact is in the recruitment of seventy-five employees from the surrounding area. Due to the working hours and flexible employment opportunities, many of these are working parents.