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PRESS RELEASE

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Third annual *State of Farm to School in San Diego County Report* reveals growth in farm to school School districts generate returns for San Diego County's health and economy

San Diego, CA—Farm to school activities and purchasing of local foods are on the rise in San Diego County school districts, according to the 2015 *State of Farm to School in San Diego County* (State of F2S) report released today by Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP). Forty of 42 San Diego County school districts participated in this year's survey, providing a comprehensive assessment of school food procurement and farm to school activities in San Diego County—and perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of regional farm to school activities in the nation. The report demonstrates that in the 2014-2015 school year, San Diego County districts spent \$6.9 million on local and regional foods. This represents 9.5% of total school food purchasing and is a 120% increase from last year's reported purchases of local foods.

"Farm to school is an important strategy in reducing childhood obesity," said Supervisor Ron Roberts, Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors and a longtime champion in the fight against childhood obesity. "Increasing children's access to fresh, local foods not only gets kids excited about eating healthy, but it also provides a major benefit for our growers, who produced more than \$540 million in fruits and vegetables last year. The *State of Farm to School in San Diego County* report offers an important assessment of farm to school activities and a roadmap for continued success."

The report shows that 33 San Diego County districts are engaged in at least one of 14 farm to school activities measured in the report. Highlights from the report include:

- 70% of schools have salad bars
- 24 districts operate a total of more than 200 school gardens
- Since 2013, farm to school in the cafeteria has increased by 50% and farm to school classroom education has doubled

"As a food service director, I couldn't be more excited about this report," said Johnna Jenkins, San Diego County Farm to School Taskforce co-chair and director of child nutrition at Valley Center-Pauma Unified School District. "Our schools work diligently to provide our children the very best in nutrition so they can succeed in school. This report validates our progress and shows that we've collectively built a farm to school movement throughout San Diego County."

The State of F2S report also identifies recommendations school districts, local growers, and food distributors can take to expand farm to school activities. The report also recommends that the San Diego County Farm to School Taskforce—a collaborative working to increase consumption of local, healthy, seasonal foods and to improve food literacy—continue its efforts to standardize language and knowledge among farm to school stakeholders, integrate local procurement into

contract bid solicitations, strengthen business practices to support farm to school, and to establish partnerships with farms and community organizations that can help school districts grow their farm to school programs.

"Farm to school supports child nutrition and academic achievement, while helping students have a better understanding of where their food comes from," according to Colin Cureton, food systems director at Community Health Improvement Partners. "The purchase of locally grown products supports our regional food system and contributes to community health, the local economy, and a sustainable environment," Cureton added.

Release of the *State of Farm to School in San Diego County* report coincides with California Thursdays® Collective Action Day on Thursday, March 17. California Thursdays® is a collaboration between the Center for Ecoliteracy and a statewide network of public school districts to serve freshly prepared school meals made from California-grown food. Locally, 12 districts that serve over half of all San Diego County students participate in California Thursdays® and on Collective Action Day will be serving freshly prepared meals of California-sourced ingredients.

For more information about the State of Farm to School in San Diego County report, please contact:
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About Community Health Improvement Partners

Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) is a San Diego non-profit collaboration of organizations who envision communities where everyone achieves optimal health. The mission of CHIP is to advance long-term solutions to the region's priority health needs through collaboration and community engagement.

About the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative

The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (Initiative) is a public-private partnership with the mission of reducing and preventing childhood obesity through policy, systems, and environmental change. The Initiative is facilitated by CHIP.

About the San Diego County Farm to School Taskforce

The San Diego County Farm to School Taskforce is a subcommittee of the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative. The vision of the Farm to School Taskforce is that all San Diego County school children enjoy healthy foods that maximize seasonal and local products and bolster student achievement and wellness. Its membership includes school, business, and public health leaders, who actively collaborate to increase consumption of local, healthful, seasonal foods and to improve food literacy within schools. For more information, visit <http://ourcommunityourkids.org> or contact food systems director Colin Cureton at ccureton@sdchip.org or 858-609-7962.