

July 10, 2019

Word Count: 187

Attention editors
and producers:

Cascade Commentaries are provided for reprint in newspapers and other publications, with credit given to author(s) and Cascade. Contact Cascade to arrange print or broadcast interviews on this commentary topic.

Please contact:

Cascade Policy Institute
4850 SW Scholls Ferry Rd.
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

Phone: (503) 242-0900
Fax: (503) 242-3822

www.cascadepolicy.org
info@cascadepolicy.org

4850 SW Scholls Ferry Road
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

t: 503.242.0900
f: 503.242.3822
info@cascadepolicy.org
www.cascadepolicy.org

QuickPoint! – Fresh Spinach for Indifferent Students: Oregon’s Costly Farm-to-School Program

By Helen Cook

When did you last hear a child profess his love for spinach?

Oregon’s Farm-to-School program awards grants to school districts across Oregon to give them the funds needed to purchase fresh foods from local farms and vendors. Advocates hope that by using the words “fresh” and “local,” K-12 students will nurture a healthier taste for fruits and veggies. This hope prompted legislators to budget almost \$15 million for the program at the end of the 2019 session.

This is a significant increase from the program’s \$200,000 budget in 2012, largely because legislators rephrased the bill to allow entities separate from Oregon school districts to accept grants. This technical rewording allows for summer meal programs, nonprofits, and even the local vendors selling food to the districts to accept grant money.

But frozen foods benefit students more than local produce does. Frozen fruits and veggies have equal or superior nutritional value and lower costs. This is important for school districts who prepare meals by the thousands.

Since the program’s main benefit is not Oregon’s students, I suggest the state reevaluate the expensive Farm-to-School program to be more cost-effective and call this current grant program what it is: a subsidy for local vendors.

Helen Cook is a Research Associate at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon’s free market public policy research organization.