

GRATEFUL GRAZING: A JOURNEY THROUGH CALIFORNIA'S HARVEST

CONNECTING SCHOOL NUTRITION AND AGRICULTURE

In November 2024, the *Grateful Grazing a Journey through California's Harvest* event brought together over **120** school nutrition champions for an immersive educational experience aimed to deepen connections between school nutrition leaders and California's agricultural community. This event was hosted in partnership with Dairy Council of California (DCC), California Beef Council and California Grown.



CA Beef Council & Live Oak USD



Rumiano Cheese



Rialto USD



Lodi USD & CSUS Professor

The evening kicked off with a welcome from Karen Ross, Secretary of California at the Department of Food and Agriculture and Kim Frinzell, Director of the Nutrition Services Division at the California Department of Education. They each spoke about the important connection between California's agriculture and farm-to-school initiatives in supporting student health. Through personal stories and dynamic conversations, attendees were inspired to explore the rich offerings of California's agricultural producers, fostering stronger connections between farms and schools to nourish students.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS AND OUTCOMES

ELEVATING THE PERCEPTION OF MILK AND DAIRY FOODS

Attendees left the event with a stronger recognition of the importance of milk and dairy foods in supporting a healthy eating pattern.

POST-EVENT SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATED:

AFTER THE EVENT,

77%

of attendees ranked milk and dairy products as a valuable food group.

AFTER THE EVENT,

100%

of attendees found value in healthy eating patterns, including milk and dairy foods.



All attendees completed a pre-survey, and following the event, they were invited to participate in an optional post-event survey. While the post-survey sample size (n=39) was considerably smaller than the pre-survey (n=113), a review of the results indicates a general trend toward respondents shifting their beliefs about the value of milk, dairy foods and dairy farmers, although the limitations of the reduced sample size should be considered when interpreting these results.

BUILDING TRUST IN FARMERS

Grateful Grazing significantly improved trust in California's agricultural stewards:

Most attendees believe farmers are effective stewards of the environment and natural resources. Specifically,

80% trust fruit, vegetable and tree nut farmers;

77% have confidence in dairy farmers; and nearly

72% trust beef farmers and ranchers



AN INCREASE OF

12 percentage points

by attendees who agreed that dairy farmers effectively care for the environment and natural resources.

STRENGTHENING CA AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Popular topics of interest included learning about family farms, the types of products grown in California and their seasonal availability.



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF NUTRITION AND AGRICULTURE

The *Grateful Grazing* event exemplifies the importance of connecting agricultural and educational leaders. By promoting awareness of locally sourced, nutritious foods and emphasizing sustainability, the event strengthened the relationship between California's agriculture and school nutrition programs. Although the sample size was smaller, the post-survey results demonstrate a strong positive shift in perceptions and trust, highlighting a promising trend for the future.

As a model for future convenings, *Grateful Grazing* demonstrates the power of collaboration and offers a compelling case for continuing to align the efforts of school nutrition and agriculture leaders.



"The *Grateful Grazing* event united school nutrition professionals and agriculture leaders for more than just introductions—by coming together, we are building strong farm-to-school programs, centered on the diverse foods grown, raised and farmed in California, that nourishes all students and provides schools, farms and communities the opportunity to thrive."

- Shannan Young, Officer, Initiatives, Education and Engagement
Dairy Council of California



Left to right: Alyssa McClelland, Kori Dover, Kim Frinzell, Sec. Karen Ross, Cherie Watt, Amy Myrdal Miller and Shannan Young

"We are fortunate to live in a state with such diverse farming. Each season has an array of delicacies! Fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains, legumes, dairy, eggs, meats, seafood... almost EVERYTHING!"

-Chef Coordinator, San Jacinto USD

"I think of how lucky we are to live in the Central Valley where so much is grown that we can call CA GROWN. I think of everything that we eat daily."

-Director of Food Services, Tulare Joint USD