

TOOLKIT FOR FARM-TO-YOU TOURS

A collaboration of Dairy Council of California and California Beef Council



Reviewed by California Department of Food and Agriculture's Office of Farm to Fork

Toolkit for Farm-to-You Tours



With the growing momentum of the Farm-to-School movement and increased access to grant funding, school districts have exciting opportunities to take students and staff on field trips to farms, ranches, dairies, dairy processing facilities, and local food hubs. These experiences connect participants to the origins of their food, showcasing how it is grown and raised while emphasizing sustainable agricultural practices. Such hands-on learning is invaluable in fostering a deeper understanding of agriculture's essential role in nutrition security.

In support of planning impactful trips, this comprehensive "how-to" guide will make organizing and coordinating farm visits easier. This resource will streamline the process and provide practical tips and tools to ensure each experience is meaningful, educational and enjoyable for students and staff alike, while ensuring a positive visit for the hosting farm or ranch.

The Toolkit for Farm-to-You Tours is designed to guide you through the process of planning an engaging, educational tour that highlights California's sustainable agricultural practices, fostering an appreciation for the dedication and effort it takes to provide nutritious foods from farm to you.



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
Food and Agriculture



✓ Tour Planning Steps

1. Location Considerations

a. Identify Location

Search online to connect with your local University of California Cooperative Extension office, CDFA Farm to School Network Regional Lead, Dairy Council of California, California Beef Council or other [Agricultural Marketing Orders, Agreements, Councils, and Commissions](#) to locate local farms, ranches or dairies that offer tours.



b. Confirm Tour Capacity

Check with your site contact about the maximum number of participants that can be accommodated on a tour.

c. Timing Considerations

California's diverse agricultural calendar means the ideal timing for a farm tour depends on the region and type of agriculture. For example:

- **Watsonville (Monterey Bay Area):** Strawberries grow year-round, allowing tours in any season.
- **Humboldt County:** Summer is ideal due to heavy rainfall during other months.
- **Central Valley:** Winter is perfect for visiting hothouses producing tomatoes.
- **Rainy conditions:** When visiting farms with dirt surfaces, such as dairies or vegetable farms, consider the impact of wet weather, especially during the rainy season.

Tailoring tours to the local agricultural calendar ensures a richer and more relevant experience.

d. Travel Distance

Determine the distance from your location to the farm. Aim for a location that minimizes travel time while maximizing the experience.

e. Define Key Experiences

Decide on the experiences or specific sights you want your group to see. For example, a dairy farm might include a cow milking demonstration, or a vegetable farm may feature harvesting activities.

Consider your educational goals and coordinate with the tour guide or farmers to ensure they discuss their sustainable farming practices that support a healthy economy, ecosystems and communities.



f. Time Availability

Collaborate with producers to set a tour length that works well for both your schedule and theirs. While most farm tours typically run one to two hours, the duration can be adjusted based on planned activities, the group's interests, and the producer's availability.

g. Accessibility

Is the venue accessible to all attendees, including individuals with mobility challenges, sensory sensitivities or other disabilities? Discuss specific disability accommodations with the facility, such as wheelchair accessibility, transportation needs, restroom access, visual or auditory aids, and shaded rest areas. Clarify what is available, identify any limitations, and inquire about possible alternative solutions to ensure inclusivity.

2. Additional Considerations

a. Budget

Ensure your budget covers all aspects of the trip, including transportation, lunch (if applicable) and any materials or fees required by the farm.

b. Guest Parking and Transportation

- Confirm with the host whether group transportation (e.g., buses or vans) or individual drivers are preferred, as this may depend on layout, parking, or biosecurity needs. Carpooling or group transport reduces environmental impact.
- Coordinate parking based on the chosen transportation method, ensuring availability, capacity, and appropriate location.
- Remind attendees that the site is a working farm—observe posted speed limits and follow any specific driving instructions from the host.

c. Facilities

- **Bathroom Facilities:** For shorter tours lasting an hour or less, restroom facilities may not be necessary, depending on the group's needs. However, for tours that are half a day or longer, it's important to ensure restroom availability for the comfort of participants. If facilities are not available at the location, portable restrooms and hand-washing stations can be rented to maintain hygiene and provide a positive experience for all attendees.
- **Shaded Areas:** Check for shaded areas where participants can rest or take cover in case of rain.
- **Seating:** Consider renting chairs and tables depending on the activities you have planned.



d. Meals

- Consider having lunch at the farm after the tour, especially if you're visiting a working farm with fresh produce or local foods available. If tasting foods during or after the tour, please be mindful of potential food allergies.
- Ensure water is available, especially if participants will be outdoors for an extended period.
- Ask about hand-washing facilities. If not available, provide hand sanitizer or, even better, rent hand-washing stations.
- Work with your host ahead of time to determine how to dispose of garbage. You may need to bring your own garbage bags to take the garbage with you.

e. Photography and Social Media

- **Get Permission First:** Always ask the farm host if photography is allowed—some areas or activities may be off-limits.
- **Set Expectations Early:** If photos are okay, share clear guidelines with participants at the start of the tour.
- **Share Respectfully:** Tag the farm (with their consent) and use captions that reflect the tour's educational purpose and respect the farm's values.

f. Biosecurity

- Organizers should check with producers in advance to confirm any specific biosecurity protocols and ensure that no attendees have traveled internationally within the past 14 days.
- CFDA biosecurity [link](#)



g. Release of Liability and Media Release Forms

- To ensure a seamless planning process, check with both the farm and the school in advance to determine if they already have liability waivers or media release forms in place. Aligning with existing policies can streamline preparations and save time by reducing the need for new documentation. If a liability waiver is not available, you can find templates online or request one from your organization's legal department.
- Releases help ensure that all necessary precautions are taken to create a smooth and enjoyable experience for everyone involved. Open communication between parties supports adherence to preferences and policies, fostering a safe and respectful environment for students, staff and farm hosts alike.

[**Dairy Tour Media
Release Form**](#)



3. Items to Bring

On the day of the tour, consider bringing the following items:

Organizer/Teacher

- ✓ Bottled Water: Ensure water is available so attendees can stay hydrated throughout the tour, especially if participants will be outdoors for an extended period.
- ✓ Coolers and Ice: Keep water/ lunches cool during warmer months.
- ✓ Trash Bags: Maintain a leave-no-trace mentality by cleaning up after yourselves.
- ✓ Hand Sanitizer: Clean hands before and after farm activities.

Attendees/Students

- ✓ Comfortable Closed-Toe Shoes: Depending on the farm/location, walking shoes may be required for navigating muddy or uneven terrain. Most farms require closed-toe shoes.
- ✓ Weather-Appropriate Gear: Check the forecast and plan for rain gear, hats or jackets as necessary.
- ✓ Sunscreen: Protect yourself and others from sun exposure.
- ✓ Hand Sanitizer: Clean hands before and after farm activities.



Photo credit to: Melissa Bandli (@melbellphotography)



4. Post-Event

a. Thank You Note

After the tour, be sure to send a thank-you note to the farmer or ranch owner for hosting your group. A personal note is always appreciated and helps to build lasting relationships for future tours.

b. Share Your Experience

If you found this toolkit helpful, share your success with us! We'd love to hear about your tour experience, receive any feedback and see pictures from the day. Don't forget to include quotes from attendees or other highlights from the tour.

c. Continue Supporting the Facility

Consider classroom discussions where students share their experiences, meet with school leaders to advocate for increased local farm purchasing, and explore how the new connection with the farm can grow into a procurement



For feedback or questions, reach out to:

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Tour Media Release Form

For Adults and/or Minor Children

I hereby authorize _____ and partner organizations to publish photographs, videos and/or names of myself and the listed minor children (if applicable) for use in _____ and partners' printed publications, website, blog, social media and marketing materials, as well as for external use by media outlets in perpetuity.

I release _____ and its partners from any expectation of confidentiality for the undersigned minor children and myself; I attest that I am the parent or legal guardian of the children listed below and that I have the authority to authorize _____ and other media to use their photographs and names.

I acknowledge that since participation in publications and websites produced by _____ and other media is voluntary, neither the minor children nor I will receive financial compensation.

I further agree that participation in any publication and website produced by _____ and other media confers no rights of ownership whatsoever. I release _____, its contractors and its volunteers from liability for any claims by me or any third party in connection with my participation or the participation of the undersigned minor children.

Adult Printed Name: _____

Adult Signature: _____ Date: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Names and Ages of Minor Children:

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____