**Figuring Out the Food System**  
Classroom visit pre-Harvest meal  
4th-8th Grade

Students describe the different components of the food system, and trace the path of one food through the system.

**Lesson Objectives:**

- Students can list the 5 steps of the food system
- Students describe the path of a food item through the food system
- Students identify differences in local vs. industrial food system

### What You Need

**Art Supplies**

**Index cards**

**Large butcher paper**

**Dry erase or chalkboard**

**Food Items:** ketchup, jam, bread, potato chips, granola bars, orange juice

### What to do

Ask students what a food system is? A food system refers to all the processes that are involved in feeding a population. Our food system can be understood by looking at these steps: food production (growing), processing, transporting, consumption, and food waste. It also includes the inputs needed and outputs generated at each of these steps. Have students brainstorm elements in our food system and write them on the board, grouping them into the above categories. It may help to have the class work together to trace a given food item through the food system. Cereal is a good one to do as a group. Now divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 and hand out a large piece of paper, index cards, art supplies, and one food product. Explain that they are to discuss the steps that are involved in producing this food item, draw them on index cards and tape them in order with arrows on their paper. Give them 15 minutes to work on this, circulate to help students who are stuck. Encourage them to think of all the steps and draw connecting arrows. Point out that ingredients are listed from greatest to least quantity on the package, and that often you can find a place where it was grown or distributed on the label. Once each group has completed their food system have them share with the class. Then have the students look at the board and at their paper and ask the class what are some of the inputs and outputs of this system? *Fossil fuels, garbage waste, chemical pollution.* Then ask the class what are some ways that we can make our food system more sustainable?
Cooking from scratch, buying local, growing a garden, buying bulk, composting.

Explain that they will be visiting a working farm that is part of our local food system! Our farms sell at Farmer’s markets, have CSA’s (you may need to explain this to the students), sell to restaurants and grocery stores in our area.

Review the expectations/guidelines, appropriate dress, what to bring and remind the teacher to make name tags!

Farm Guidelines:
- Ask before you pick
- Walk in the aisles, not the rows (ask if you can’t tell the difference)
- Do not step on black irrigation tubing, or metal pipes
- Use the compost, recycle, and trash cans (NO LITTERING)
- Be respectful to teachers, fellow students, farm plants and wildlife
- Be curious, have fun!

What to Bring:
- Snack
- Water bottle
- Clothes that can get dirty, sturdy shoes, dress for the weather

Check-in with the Teacher
- Name tags
- Collect Field Trip Forms
- Payment? Non-Title 1 schools pay $3-5/student and may give you a check if they have not already mailed it in. Title 1 schools pay sliding scale $1-3/student. Return checks to Trace with a note that includes the teacher name, school, and “donation” or “fee”.