

# Connecting Farms and Schools in Virginia

## Farm to School Produce Safety Pathway



*VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE AND  
CONSUMER SERVICES*



# Project Overview

The Virginia Farm to School Produce Safety Pathway establishes a coordinated, statewide approach that leverages existing **On-Farm Readiness Review (OFRR)** tools, **FDA's FSMA Produce Safety Rule (PSR)** inspection approach, and **Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)** training network to help farmers meet school food safety standards and access school markets that do not require full GAP certification.



## Current Barriers

- School procurement policies and food safety requirements create uncertainty for growers seeking to sell locally.
- Associated costs and administrative requirements with GAP certifications present a significant hurdle for smaller-scale growers.



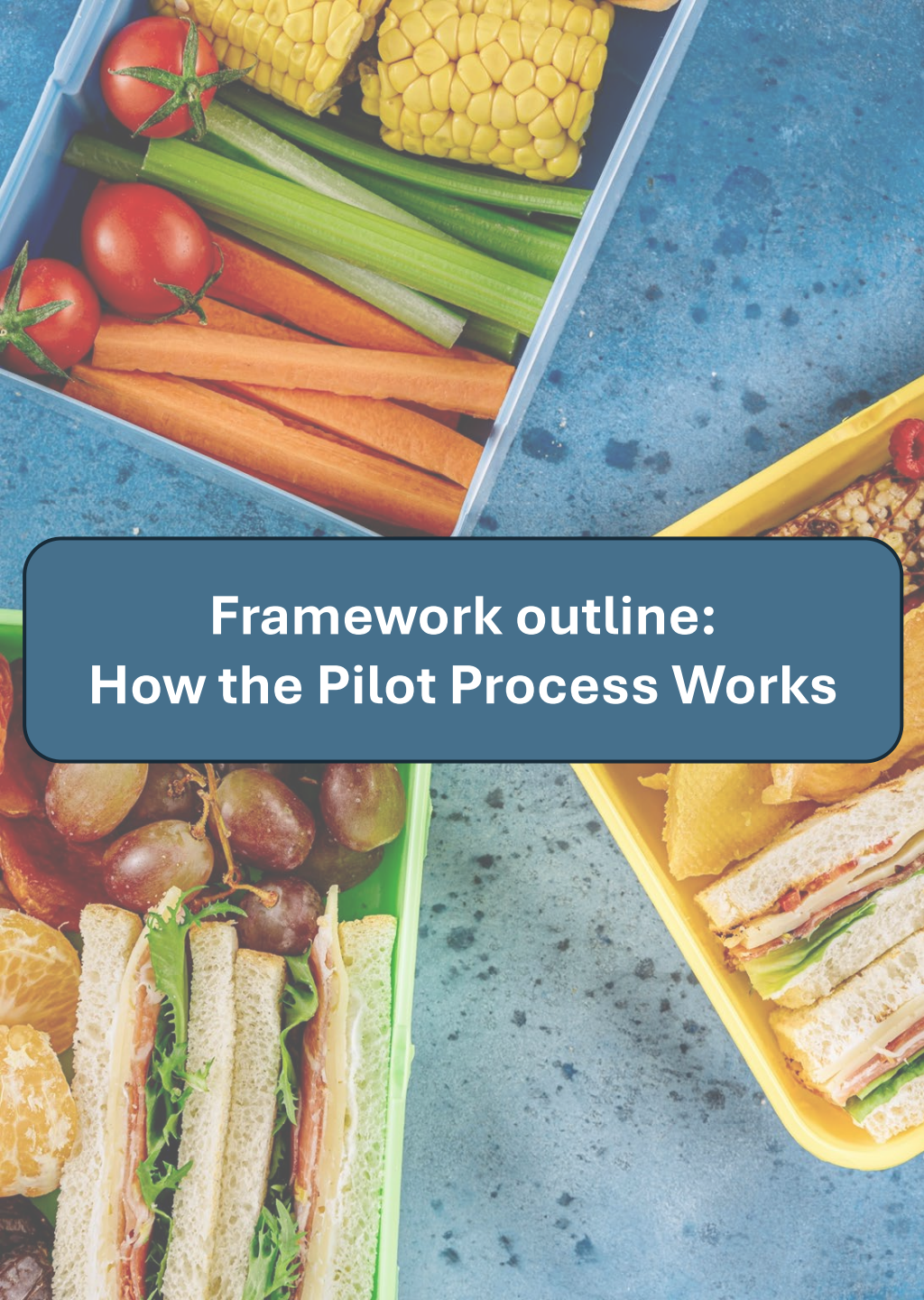
## Pilot Approach

- Sustainable and streamlined pathway for small produce farms.
- Provide training, technical assistance, and on-farm inspections to strengthen produce safety practices.
- Support farms seeking to enter school markets.

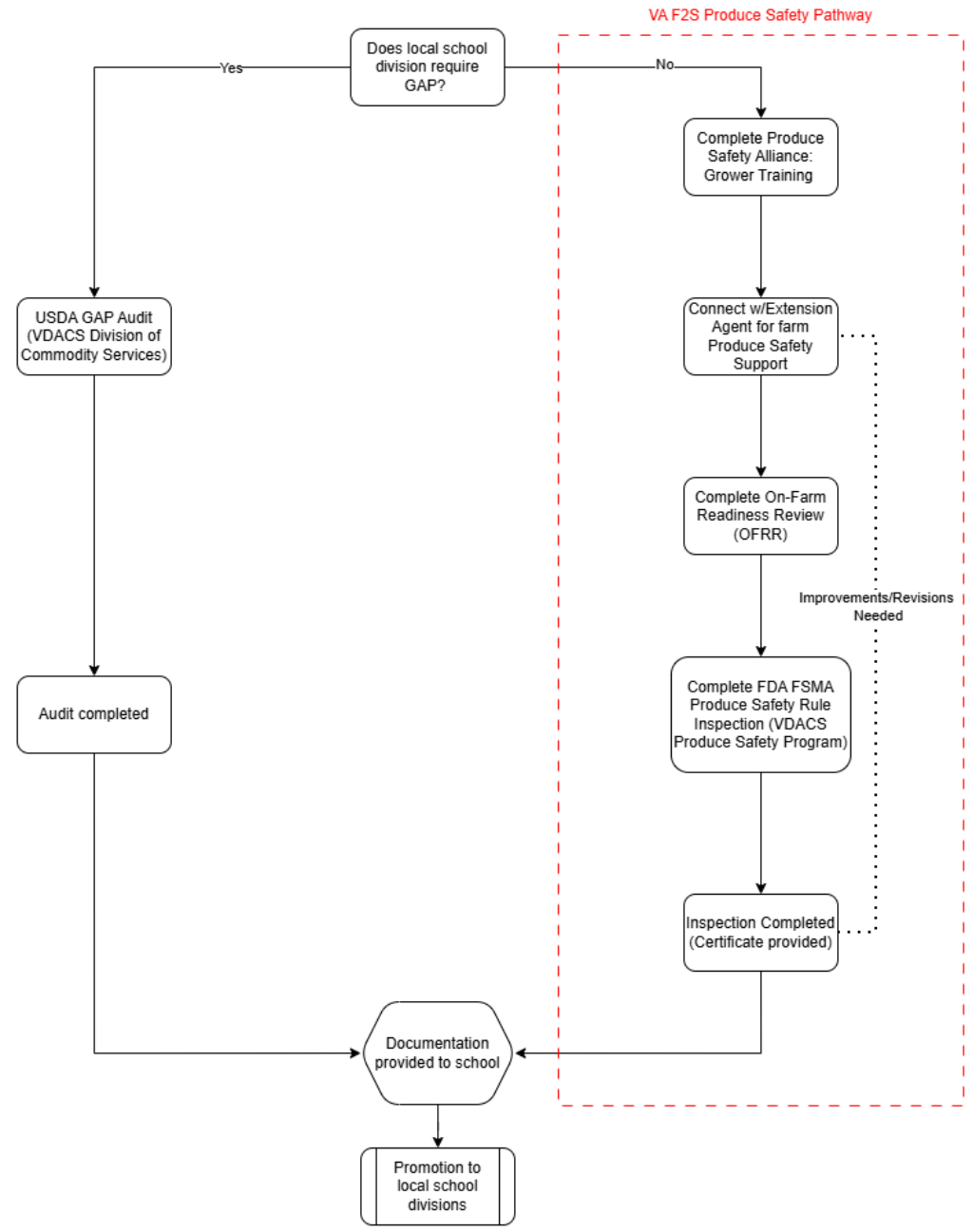


## Expected Outcomes

- Expanded market opportunities for small farms.
- Increased connections between farms and local school nutrition programs.
- Replicable framework and best practices for broader state adoption.



# Framework outline: How the Pilot Process Works



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**CERTIFICATE OF INSPECTION**

Jane Doe

Sunny Farm

1234 Produce Lane  
Richmond, VA 23222

Farm ID: VA1234

This produce farm was inspected on 6/7/26 by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Produce Safety Program in accordance with the Virginia Produce Safety Law, Title 3.2, Chapter 51.1, Sections §3.2-5146 through §3.2-5156 of the Code of Virginia.

Issued By:

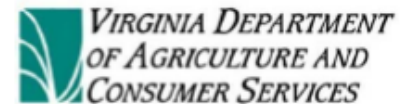


Issued Date: 6/7/26

Expiration Date: 9/6/26

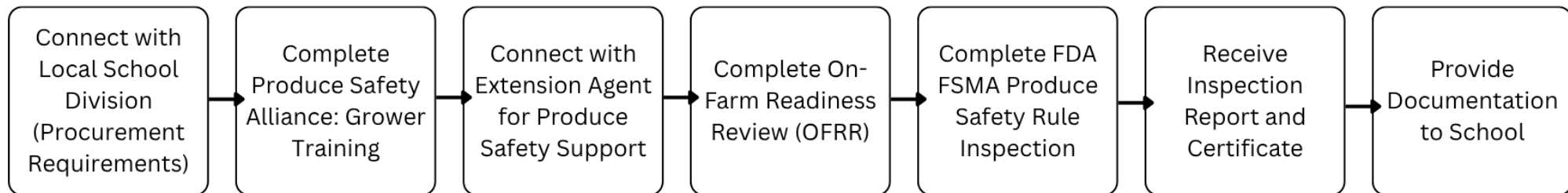
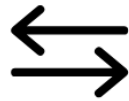


Erik Bungo  
Program Supervisor  
Produce Safety Program  
Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services



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# Virginia Farm to School Produce Safety Pathway



# Pathway Milestones



**INFORMATIONAL  
WEBINARS**

VCE and VDACS



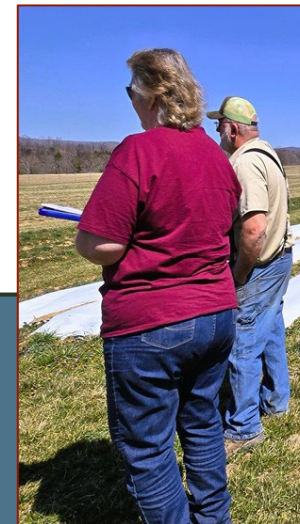
**PRODUCE SAFETY  
ALLIANCE  
GROWER  
TRAININGS**

Virginia Tech PSR  
Zoom Training



**ON-FARM  
PRODUCE  
SAFETY  
ASSISTANCE**

VCE In-person farm  
visit



**ON-FARM  
READINESS  
REVIEW**

VCE On-farm visit  
and follow-up  
meeting



**FDA FSMA  
PSR  
INSPECTION**

VDACS Produce  
Safety Program

# PROMOTION OF MARKET OPPORTUNITIES



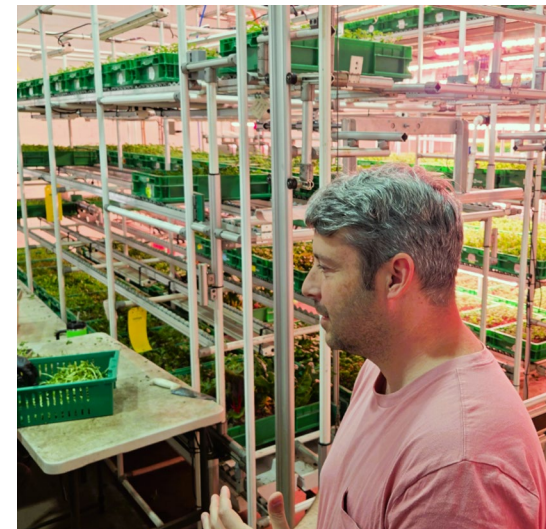
Pairing trained and inspected F2S Farms with local procurement programs.



Hosting meet-and greet events between farms and School Nutrition Professionals



Growing farm to school partnerships through webinars, meetings, and conferences





### Virginia Farm to School (F2S) GAP Alternate Pathway

Many small and mid-size Virginia farms are eager to sell to schools, but struggle to communicate their food safety practices or overcome the cost barrier to obtaining Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. While GAP certification is not required at the federal or state level, some school divisions still require it as documentation that a farm adheres to strong food safety protocols.

To help address this challenge, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Tech/Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the Virginia Department of Education have teamed up to develop an alternative approach to demonstrating on-farm food safety standards. The **Virginia Farm to School GAP Alternate Pathway Program** supports small and mid-sized farms with meeting school division's food safety needs by:

- providing one-on-one mentorship and technical assistance to farms;
- conducting on-farm risk assessments and guiding the development of farm food safety plans;
- performing On Farm Readiness Reviews (OFRR) using the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) framework, in partnership with Extension agents, to help farmers prepare for Produce Safety Rule (PSR) inspections;
- ensuring compliance with FDA's PSR; and
- connecting farms with local school divisions and facilitating food safety conversations.

This program aims to bolster on-farm food safety for small and mid-sized farms and connect them with the resources and opportunities to increase their sales to schools.

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#### We want to hear from you!

Your insight as a Virginia school nutrition professional is essential to shaping a program that truly supports your local purchasing.

By completing this short survey, you will help us gauge your interest in providing program feedback and connecting with participating producers.

#### Questions?

Contact Amber Vallotton [avallott@vt.edu](mailto:avallott@vt.edu) or Nicole Salinas [nicole.salinas@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:nicole.salinas@vdacs.virginia.gov).



# Additional Goals and Targets

## 1. Farm growth and economic opportunity

- ✓ Key mission of the Agency
- ✓ Expand domestic market growth and access for very small farms and expand Virginia agriculture

## 2. Advancing Farm to School Initiatives

- ✓ Farm to School initiatives continue to receive support from multiple state agencies and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA).
- ✓ The General Assembly established the Farm to School Program Task Force in 2026 to advance multiple strategic objectives.

## 3. Increase school food access and alignment with Federal Nutrition Initiatives

- ✓ Embraces MAHA initiative
- ✓ Reducing Chronic Disease Through Better Nutrition
  - The MAHA Strategy relies heavily upon FDA's nutrition program to help Americans build better diets and reduce the toll of diet-related diseases such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and certain cancers.

# Questions?



*VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT  
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**Nicole Salinas**

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*Produce Safety Program*

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