

**News Release**  
**9-11-13**

**WVDA TO KICK OFF STATEWIDE FARM TO SCHOOL  
INITIATIVE AT PRESTON HIGH LUNCH EVENT**

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) and the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) will kick off a statewide Farm to School initiative during a “West Virginia Grown” luncheon at Preston High, Friday, September 13. Activities will begin at 10:30 a.m.

Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick – along with numerous state, county and education officials – will be on hand to take part in the celebration. Cafeteria lunches Friday will include “West Virginia Grown” hamburger, broccoli, potatoes and hamburger buns made from locally grown and ground wheat.

The school plans to have West Virginia Grown items on the menu every day in the coming school year. WVDA officials are working with local farmers to produce cold-weather crops and to ensure adequate meat production to meet school needs. About half of the 1,600 students at Preston High eat hot lunch.

“We have worked hard with Preston County to get this program moving and it’s the type of system we would like to see imitated throughout West Virginia,” said Commissioner Helmick.

“West Virginia farmers have a receptive, but untapped, market in county school systems. Feeding West Virginia students West Virginia food is a win-win. Students eat fresher food, farmers receive more income, and we grow the state’s economy in the process,” he added.

County school systems spend approximately \$100 million each year feeding students. The vast majority of those dollars buy goods that were produced outside of West Virginia.

Given that West Virginia produces just under \$500 million in agricultural goods each year, sales to school systems could represent a major windfall for farmers.

*The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs, as mandated by state law. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials in West Virginia. For more information, visit [www.wvagriculture.org](http://www.wvagriculture.org).*