

North Carolina school students definitely have a soft spot in their hearts when it comes to local strawberries.

For the second year in a row, the N.C. Farm to School program has seen record sales of strawberries to participating schools, with this year's total shattering the previous record by 4,421 flats.

“School nutrition directors purchased 26,035 flats of strawberries this year from N.C. farmers, which was a healthy jump over the 2015-2016 school year,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “We appreciate the support from the 79 participating school systems, and I am pleased that North Carolina school children get to taste the freshness that local farms produce.”

The Farm to School program started in 1997, with NCDA&CS' Food Distribution and Marketing divisions collaborating to secure orders from school systems and sourcing and delivering locally grown fruits and vegetables. The program has generated more than \$1.3 million in sales for the 2016-2017 school year, with more than \$390,000 in strawberry sales alone.

The Farm to School program will wrap up the 2016-2017 year with blueberries, followed by apple slices, cantaloupes, grape tomatoes and cucumbers for schools doing summer feeding.