HAZARD — USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service recently awarded Perry County Schools the “One in a Melon” award for administering an exemplary farm to school program. One school district per state was selected for the award by receiving the most public nominations.

“We are both humbled and excited to receive this award. Being chosen as the “One in a Melon” for the entire state of Kentucky shows how supportive the schools and communities are of our Farm to School program in Perry County. This support is one of the key elements which make our program so successful.” Linda Campbell, Child Nutrition Director, Perry County Schools.

From March 15 — April 15, parents, teachers, community stakeholders, and students were invited to visit USDA’s Farm to School Census website and nominate their favorite farm to school program to receive the award. According to the Census, 77 Kentucky school districts have farm to school programs, and a total of 5,254 districts participate across the U.S.

Perry County Schools has been participating in farm to school since 2010, and today, approximately 4200 children are exposed to local foods in their school meals and snacks at Perry County Schools every day.

Farm to school programs help kids form healthy habits, learn where their food comes from, and develop an understanding of the importance of nutrition and agriculture. Results of the 2015 USDA Farm to School Census show that schools with robust farm to school programs report reductions in food waste, higher school meal participation rates, and increased willingness of the students to try new foods, notably fruits and vegetables. Census results also show that U.S. schools invested nearly $800 million in local food from farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and food processors and manufacturers in the 2013-2014 school year, which is money going directly back into local communities.

For more information about Perry County School’s farm to school program, please contact Liberty Campbell, Farm to School Coordinator, liberty.campbell@perry.kyschools.us.