



NEW MEXICO HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
P.O. Box 2348  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-2348

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

**Pamela S. Hyde, J.D.**  
*Secretary*

*For further information contact Betina Gonzales McCracken,  
Communications Director, 505-827-6245*

**For Immediate Release**

## **Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde announces New Mexico Kids and Farmers will continue to benefit from the Farm to School Program**

*Santa Fe, June 13, 2003* – The Farm to School program is gearing up for the fall school year with watermelons. Luna County farmer Mike Miller recently began planting seeds for seedless watermelons, which will produce approximately 11,800 melons to be part of many school lunch menus across the state. “There is no substitute for fresh food when it comes to growing kids,” said Human Services Department (HSD) Secretary Pamela Hyde.

New Mexico was the first state in the southwest to participate in the Farm to School program, which began as a pilot last September. HSD’s Community Development and Commodities Bureau (CDCB) administers it in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Defense (DOD). The idea behind the program is to benefit school children and local farmers. “The students will be eating healthy, locally-grown fruits and vegetables while the farmers benefit economically,” said Pauline Raia, Farm to School program administrator.

For school year 2003-2004, New Mexico received \$200,000 from the USDA for the Farm to School program. “The watermelons are just the beginning, as fresh produce for our children will continue throughout the school year,” said Secretary Hyde. The Commodities Bureau delivers about 20 percent of all the food used by school districts for breakfasts and lunches.

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