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For Immediate Release

New Mexico's Children Benefit from the Farm to School Program with Nutritious, Locally Grown, Fresh Fruit

Santa Fe, August 12, 2003 – As New Mexico's children return to school, a New Mexico farmer is harvesting thousands of watermelons for school lunches across the state. It's all part of the Human Services Department's (HSD) Farm to School program. "There is no substitute for fresh food when it comes to growing kids," said HSD Secretary Pamela Hyde. "This is a great program that gets students healthy, locally-grown fruits and vegetables, and helps local farmers benefit economically."

For school year 2003-2004, New Mexico received \$200,000 from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the Farm to School program. Throughout the year, fresh produce from local farmers will be arriving at HSD's Food and Nutrition Services (FANS) warehouse, located in Albuquerque. FANS then delivers the fresh produce and other food to schools for breakfasts and lunches. FANS provides about 20 percent of all the food used by the state's public school districts.

Also new this school year, thousands of New Mexico's low-income students have already been pre-qualified for the free Breakfast and Lunch program. During the summer, HSD's Income Support Division worked with the State Department of Education's Student Nutrition section to match some 80,016 children with 75 school districts' registration lists to pre-qualify them for the program. Each day, about 80,000 breakfasts and 180,000 lunches are served in New Mexico schools.

Plantation Produce in Luna County is scheduled to harvest the watermelons on Aug. 15 and 16. They should be delivered to the FANS warehouse (located at 1425 William SE) by Aug. 19. Many Albuquerque Public Schools are scheduled to serve the watermelons to students beginning Aug. 22.

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