Ontario students will receive more milk through local school nutrition programs, thanks to a new partnership between Student Nutrition Ontario (SNO) and Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO), which launched Nov. 1, 2019.

To give back to local communities, DFO rebates 10 cents per serving of milk to local nutrition programs to help ensure children have access to the nutrition they need.

“DFO’s goal with the rebate program is to make more milk available to children in need, focusing on nutritious meals to combat child hunger across Ontario,” says Audrie Bouwmeester, DFO’s school programs manager.

SNO acts as a liaison: reporting milk purchases in each region, and receiving and distributing DFO’s milk rebate locally.

“The nutritional content of milk is phenomenal. It ensures students receive ideal nutrients and calories they need to grow and learn,” says Catherine Parsonage, co-chair of SNO, as well as executive director and chief executive officer of the Toronto Foundation for Student Success. “SNO is grateful to DFO and excited (about) the program. We couldn’t have better advocates.”

This new partnership grew from a pilot project conducted from January to April 2019 in four test locations in Ontario—Ottawa, Toronto, North Bay and Guelph.

“(The pilot) was a tremendous success,” Bouwmeester says. “SNO has a wide reach across Ontario, and DFO is appreciative of its connections. It’s a beneficial and philanthropic partnership.”

Through SNO’s partner groups, 31,918 additional litres of milk were served in the four test areas.

“During the pilot, DFO donated $105,033 to nutrition programs through the rebate,” she says. As well, DFO saw a 14.4 per cent increase in litres of milk consumed.

DFO’s board has given the milk rebate program the green light to run for one year until the end of October 2020.

Bouwmeester says she hopes the program will continue growing past the one-year mark. Based on the pilot’s projections, DFO could significantly increase its return on investment in the new year, and expects an increase in all areas over the first year of the program.

DFO’S MILK rebate helps fund local nutrition programs across Ontario that serve milk at no cost to schools so children can start their days ready to learn and grow. During the pilot, DFO saw a 14.4 per cent increase in litres of milk consumed.

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