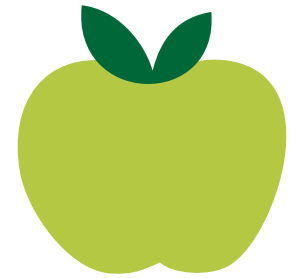




# DECISION TREE: How Will You Bring Local Foods into the Cafeteria with Your Next Food Purchase?



\* \* \* \* \*

LOCAL can't be used as a product specification in a school food solicitation, but there are many ways to buy local products.

This chart presents several options for including your desire for local foods in the procurement process.



## Informal Procurement

The primary difference between formal and informal procurement is that a formal procurement must be publicly advertised. This means that when conducting an informal procurement, you are in control of who you request quotes from and you can choose to make requests only from vendors supplying local products. If there are not three local vendors to request quotes from, you can request products from both local and nonlocal sources and target local products by using product specifications, technical requirements or geographic preference. When conducting an informal procurement, you can collect quotes over the phone, via email or even at the farmers market! Just be sure to document your requirements, specifications and quotes in writing.

## Technical Requirements and Product Specifications

In any type of procurement, you can use technical requirements and product specifications to target local products. In order for a vendor to be considered responsive and responsible, the vendor must meet the product specifications and other requirements outlined in your solicitation. Consider using requirements or specifications that target local products, such as:

- \* Freshness (e.g. "delivered within 48 hours of harvest")
- \* Harvest techniques
- \* Production practices
- \* State of origin labelling
- \* Ability to provide farm visits or visit classrooms

Specifications such as these help increase the chances of getting products that are produced nearby, but do not explicitly require that the products be local. When using specifications related to particular crop varieties and freshness factors, be sure not to overly restrict competition; do the market research necessary to ensure there are multiple vendors able to meet your specifications.

## Evaluation Criteria

In an RFP, you are not just evaluating price but the whole package of services and/or products the vendor is offering. Therefore RFPs allow you to give weight to factors in addition to price. RFPs should describe all evaluation criteria, their relative importance, and how they will be used to assess the proposals. The weight of each evaluation factor distinguishes which elements are most important, but elements included as evaluation criteria are not requirements.

You can use some of the same measures mentioned in the technical requirements and product specifications section as evaluation criteria, noting that if these factors are used as evaluation criteria, their relative importance will be evaluated when reviewing proposals and if they are used as technical requirements or product specifications, the factors *must* be met in order for the bid or proposal to be considered.

## Geographic Preference

The 2008 Farm Bill directed USDA to allow child nutrition program operators to use a geographic preference for the procurement of unprocessed, locally grown or raised agricultural products. See the resources listed below for more information.

## Learn more

FNS's **Procuring Local Foods webpage** ([www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods)) is chock full of resources to help you buy local including a comprehensive guide, **Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs**; twelve webinars that dissect each step or method for buying local; and fact sheets on a range of procurement-related topics.

\* \* \* \* \*

For more information, and to sign up for the bi-weekly e-letter from the Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community Food Systems, please visit [www.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.usda.gov/farmtoschool).

Questions? Email us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).

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# 10 FACTS ABOUT LOCAL FOOD IN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS



## 1. USDA supports and encourages the procurement of local foods.

In USDA’s vision, child nutrition programs championing U.S. agriculture and proudly promoting locally sourced foods are the norm, not the exception.

## 2. The definition of “local” is different from district to district.

Definitions for local vary widely depending on the unique geography and climate where a school is located and on the abundance of local food producers and manufacturers. Many programs define local as within a certain number of miles from the school, within the county, or within the state. Alternatively, definitions might include more than one state (i.e., Georgia, Alabama, and Florida) or discrete parts of several states (i.e., specific counties in southwest Washington, northeast Oregon, and Idaho). In addition, some operators use different definitions of local depending on the product or season.

## 3. Many local products are easy to find and source.

Some products are more likely to be local than others. For example, fluid milk is produced in almost every state. Since milk is perishable and expensive to transport, milk is often local. Similarly, programs in California serving avocado are likely using local avocados, while schools in Florida probably serve local citrus. Local products that are unique and/or abundant in a region are generally easier to find and source.

## 4. Food distributors and food service management companies can be great partners for local sourcing.

Increasingly schools are including expectations regarding local sourcing in their contracts with food service management companies and/or distributors. Even without contractual obligations regarding local, many distributors already offer local products so all an operator needs to do is find out what items on the contracted list are local and order those products. This approach is a very easy way to bring local products into schools without creating separate distribution channels.

## 5. Locally sourced fruits and vegetables are available through the DoD Fresh Program.

Schools can elect to spend a portion of their USDA Foods entitlement money on fresh fruits and vegetables through the DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, operated by the Department of Defense. To supply fresh fruits and vegetables to schools, DoD contracts with over 45 produce vendors across the country. DoD Fresh vendors often have local products and they identify them as such in the FFAVORS catalog.



**6. The small purchase threshold determines whether to use a formal or informal procurement method and is key to understanding options for buying local.**

The federal small purchase threshold is \$150,000, however, state and local regulations often set lower small purchase thresholds and programs must follow the most restrictive threshold. If the value of a procurement is over the small purchase threshold, schools must use one of the formal procurement methods (invitation for bid (IFB) or request for proposal (RFP)). If the value of the procurement falls below the small purchase threshold, schools can use the informal procurement method when buying local products.

**7. Program operators are free to choose from three or more local vendors in an informal procurement.**

When the value of a purchase falls below the small purchase threshold, schools can get quotes exclusively from local producers instead of issuing a formal IFB or RFP.

**8. Certain product specifications can help when sourcing local foods.**

Product specifications, either required or preferred, may be written for a wide variety of qualitative factors designed to complement a preference for local products. For example, including a specification that foods be fresh (harvested within a day or two of delivery) may increase the likelihood that a local vendor will win the contract. Similarly, specifications related to specific varieties can have the same effect. For example, schools can opt to purchase a type of seafood unique to the region or a variety of apple grown primarily by local farmers.

**9. In any solicitation for unprocessed agricultural products, operators can indicate a preference for local foods.**

Schools are allowed to indicate a preference for local products when procuring unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products. The federal regulations do not prescribe the precise way that geographic preference should be applied, or how much preference can be given to local products. Many schools opt to assign extra points in the selection phase to vendors offering local products, making them more competitive.

**10. Buying local foods is about more than fruits and vegetables.**

Local offerings can span the school meal tray and include everything from the salad bar and fresh fruit and vegetable servings to the wheat in the pizza crust, beans in the chili, rice in the stir fry, turkey in the sandwiches, and cheese in the quesadillas. Local buying includes all types of producers, such as farmers, ranchers, and fishermen, as well as many types of food businesses, including food processors, manufacturers, distributors and other value-added operations that enable school meals to showcase the full range of food products available in their respective regions.

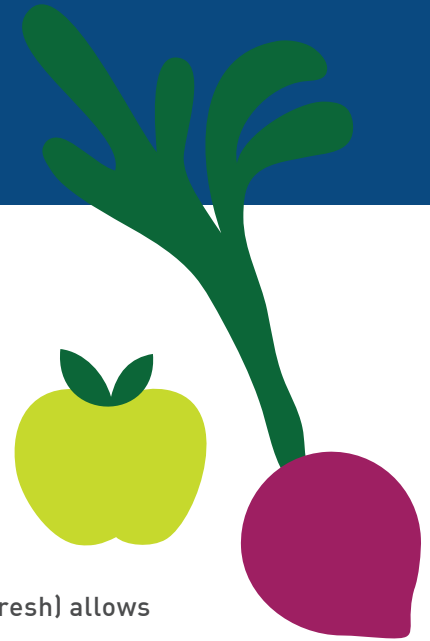


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Questions? Email us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).





# USING DOD FRESH TO PURCHASE LOCAL PRODUCE

\* \* \* \* \*

**THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE** Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD Fresh) allows schools to use their USDA Foods entitlement dollars to buy fresh produce. As of 2015, schools in 47 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam participate; schools received more than \$150 million worth of produce during SY 2014-2015.

## How Does It Work?

The Defense Logistics Agency manages more than 47 contracts with produce vendors across the country who in turn work with growers to supply their designated region. Schools can view the catalog of offerings from the produce vendor serving their area via an online ordering system. DoD analyzes the product prices and the vendor updates the catalog on a weekly basis. In addition, most vendors send a weekly newsletter with product information.

## What are the Advantages of DoD Fresh?

- \* **Flexibility:** States can change DoD Fresh allocations on a monthly basis, which allows them to utilize USDA Foods entitlement dollars more effectively. USDA does not impose a cap on the amount of entitlement dollars that a state can allocate to DoD purchases.
- \* **Consistency:** DoD Fresh vendors update the catalog weekly, and depending on the state, schools can receive deliveries every week, making orders timely, fresh, and responsive to market fluctuations.

- \* **High quality:** DoD maintains high quality standards through Produce Quality Audits, encouraging vendors to follow Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP), and requiring that pre-cut and packaged produce is sourced from approved suppliers.
- \* **Variety:** DoD Fresh vendors offer as many as 50 different types of produce, available in multiple forms (whole, pre-cut, and a variety of pack sizes) and from multiple locales (local and non-local items are routinely offered).
- \* **Easy ordering and funds tracking:** Schools place orders via the web-based Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Order/Receipt System (FFAVORS). The prices listed in the FFAVORS catalog reflect the prices that schools will be billed for the product. FFAVORS tracks schools' entitlement fund balances and total order costs. DoD manages vendor payment and reconciliation.



CASE QUANTITY	ITEM CODE	DESCRIPTION	STATE OF ORIGIN	CASE CONTENTS	CASE PRICE
	14P01	Apple Any Type USF/XF 100-113 1/40 LB CS	WA	40 LB	\$35.35
	18B41	Cauliflower Multi-Color 6-8 CT 8 LB CS	LA	8 LB	\$19.38
	15N95	Orange Cara Pink 80CT 1/35 LB	CA	35 LB	\$29.87
	15P16	Potato SWT Local 40 LB CS (Co-op)	LA	40 LB	\$14.96
	14P23	Starfruit 20-30 CT 1/8 LB CS	CA	8 LB	\$26.31

The FFAVORS catalog indicates which foods are grown locally.

### Purchasing Local Foods through DoD Fresh

DoD vendors are encouraged to purchase local products, and about 15 to 20 percent of the produce DoD provides to schools is currently considered local. Products are designated as local by the produce vendors and are marked with a local tag in the FFAVORS catalog. In addition, vendors can list the state of origin for each product. Currently, local denotes that the produce is sourced from within the state of service, the contract award zone or adjacent states. In all cases, local or regionally sourced products must meet the quantity and quality requirements necessary for the contract and be priced competitively.

### What Should States and School Districts Do if They Want to Source Local Foods Through DoD Fresh?

States and schools that want to purchase local foods through DoD Fresh should start by looking for products already marked as local in the FFAVORS catalog. States or schools can also contact their DoD Fresh produce vendor to find out which local products the vendor expects to carry throughout the year, or to make their desires for local produce known to their DoD Fresh produce vendor.



For more information, and to sign up for the bi-weekly e-letter from the Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community, please visit [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool). Questions? Email us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).

### How is the Program Funded?

The Farm Bill requires that at least \$50 million in commodity entitlement funds be used each year to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables for distribution to schools and service institutions through the DoD Fresh program. Since there is no cap, USDA accommodates all requests for additional entitlement allocations to DoD Fresh throughout the school year. States work with districts to determine how much to allocate to the program.

### Learn More

The **Defense Logistics Agency website** provides background information about DoD and links to each vendor's contract:

**Patricia Scott**; 215-737-3601

The **Food and Nutrition Service website** provides contact information for farm to school personnel in your area, and a helpful history of the DoD Fresh program.





# GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE

## What It Is and How to Use It



\* \* \* \* \*

**THE 2008 FARM BILL** directed the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage schools to purchase locally grown and locally raised products “to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate.” The Secretary was also instructed to allow child nutrition program operators to use a “geographic preference” when procuring locally grown and locally raised unprocessed agricultural products.

There are many ways for schools to buy local products for use in federal child nutrition programs (see **USDA’s 10 Facts About Local Food in School Cafeterias**). While using geographic preference is not the only option for buying local foods, it is a powerful tool and particularly useful in formal solicitations where respondents are ranked and scored.

### Types of Products

The ability to apply a preference for local products applies only to unprocessed or minimally processed items. The geographic preference rule does not apply to any products that have been cooked, heated, canned or that have any additives or fillers. It can be applied to a wide array of products that meet the definition of unprocessed or minimally processed such as various forms of fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, poultry, dairy, eggs, and grains.

### Defining Local

Definitions for local vary widely depending on the unique geography and climate where a school is located and on the abundance of local food producers and manufacturers. Many schools define local as within a certain number of miles from the school, within the county, or within the state. Alternatively, definitions might include more than one state (i.e., Georgia, Alabama, and Florida) or discrete parts of several states (i.e., specific counties in southwest Washington, northeast Oregon, and Idaho). In addition, many programs use different definitions of local depending on the product or season. Also, please note that when applying geographic preference, origin is tied to the agricultural product, not the location of the respondent.

### Who Defines Local?

Schools define what they mean by local. While many state and/or local governments have adopted definitions of local such as “within the state” or “within the county,” schools using a geographic preference when sourcing food for the federal child nutrition programs are under no obligation to adopt any definition for local that might be in existence in local areas.

# Three Examples for Using Geographic Preference

Federal regulations do not prescribe the precise way that geographic preference should be applied, or how much preference can be given to local products. Thus, there are a variety of ways to apply geographic preference and one way is not considered better or more effective than another. The key is to be sure that use of geographic preference does not restrict full and open competition. Further, regardless of which method is used, the selection criteria must be clearly described in all solicitation materials.

## EXAMPLE ONE

A school district issues an invitation for bid (IFB) for apples and states a preference for apples grown within 100 miles of the school. IFBs are generally used when a firm fixed-price contract will be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. The solicitation makes it clear that any respondent able to provide local apples will be awarded 10 points in the selection process. In this example, the 10 preference points are equivalent to a 10 cent reduction in price for the purposes of evaluating the lowest bidder.

	OWEN'S ORCHARD	APPLE LANE FARMS	ZOE'S BEST
Price	\$1.97	\$2.05	\$2.03
Apples within 100 miles of school	No	Yes (10 Points)	No
Price with preference points applied, for evaluation purposes only	\$1.97	\$1.95	\$2.03

*Apple Lane Farms meets the stated preference for local products and is awarded 10 additional points, which translates into deducting 10 cents from Apple Lane Farm's price. This makes Apple Lane Farms the "lowest bidder." The school still pays Apple Lane Farms \$2.05 for its product; deducting 10 cents from the price of responsive bidders that meet the geographic preference only applies to determining the winning respondent and would not affect the actual price paid to the respondent.*

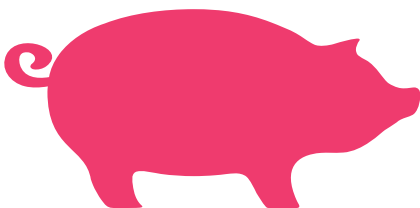
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## EXAMPLE TWO

A school district issues a request for proposals (RFP) for its produce contract and indicates a preference for fresh fruits and vegetables produced within the state. For the purposes of evaluating bids, respondents who can supply at least 60% of the requested items from within the state will receive a 10% price reduction.

	PRODUCE EXPRESS	RAY'S PRODUCE	F&V DISTRIBUTION
Contract Price	\$31,000	\$35,000	\$34,000
% F&V from within the state	20	80	50
Geographic preference points to respondent able to meet → 60% local items	No	Yes (10% pref.)	No
Price with preference points applied, for evaluation purposes only	\$31,000	\$31,500	\$34,000

*Ray's Produce is the only firm that is able to supply greater than 60% of the requested items from the state, thus, Ray's Produce receives a 10% reduction in price for the purposes of evaluating bids. Even with the reduction, Ray's Produce is not the lowest bidder. If price alone were the determining factor for this school district, Produce Express would be awarded the contract.*





### EXAMPLE THREE

A preference for local products doesn't necessarily have to be calculated with absolute values; sliding scales may be appropriate. Further, solicitations may include evaluation criteria that allow for consideration of factors other than price.

Some of the factors in addition to price that might be considered include technical expertise, past experience, years in business, marketing, etc. School districts may also include elements such as ability to host farm visits, showing the state or farm of origin on the invoice, or providing farm information for education in the lunchroom as part of their selection criteria.

A school district issues a request for proposals for beans and grains and makes it clear that bids will be evaluated using a 100 point system. Fifteen preference points will be awarded to vendors able to provide over 70% of the requested items from within the state, 7 points for 50-69% and 5 points for 25-49%. Points for local sourcing will be included along with other evaluation factors.

	LAURIE'S LEGUMES	PAULA'S PULSES	GARY'S GRAINS
Price = 60	40	50	60
Three references, past history = 20	20	20	20
Able to provide farm/facility tour or classroom visits = 5	0	5	5
Able to provide state of origin on all products = 5	0	5	5
Ability to provide products sourced within the state = 15	0	15	7
100 possible points	60	95	97

*In the example above, Paula's Pulses is able to source 75% of their products from within the state, earning them 15 points in the scoring process in the local products category. Gary's Grains can source 55%, earning them 7 points, and Laurie's Legumes is unable to guarantee any products from within the state so they receive 0 points in the local preference category. Gary's Grains wins the contract.*



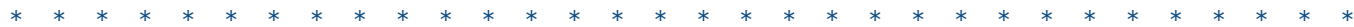


## Learn More

- \* **Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs Guide**, from USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) – This comprehensive guide showcases the many ways schools can purchase locally, and correctly. The document also provides information on procurement basics, what local means and where to find local foods.
- \* **Finding, Buying, and Serving Local Foods Webinar Series**, from FNS - This series starts with an introduction to basic procurement principles, and then walks through strategies and tactics fro buying local foods.
- \* **Program-specific procurement regulations**, from FNS – Links to regulations governing each major Child Nutrition Program from Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations.
- \* **Final Rule: Geographic Preference Option**, from FNS – The final rule, published in the Federal Register, includes a summary, background, and final regulatory language, by program, for the geographic preference option.
- \* **Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As Part I**, from FNS – A memo published in February 2011 addressing questions regarding application of the geographic preference option.
- \* **Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As Part II**, from FNS – A memo published in October 2012 addressing additional questions regarding application of the geographic preference option and other mechanisms for local procurement.
- \* **State Agency Guidance on Procurement**, from FNS in partnership with the National Food Service Management Institute – An online procurement training geared towards state agencies that focuses on federal procurement requirements.
- \* **A School’s Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food**, from the Washington State Department of Agriculture – This guide provides information on using the geographic preference option to source local foods in Washington; however, much of the content is broadly applicable.
- \* **Geographic Preference: A primer on purchasing fresh local food for schools**, from School Food FOCUS and the Harrison Institute for Public Law at Georgetown Law – This guide provides an overview of procurement regulations and several examples for how a school might apply a geographic preference.

**Learn More**

For even more resources about procuring local foods, visit USDA's Office of Community Food Systems website:  
[www.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.usda.gov/farmtoschool)



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 Questions? Email us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).





# SELLING LOCAL FOOD TO SCHOOLS

## A Resource for Producers

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**ACROSS THE COUNTRY**, an increasing number of schools and districts have begun to source more foods locally and to provide complementary educational activities to students that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition. If you are a local food producer, this means that there are more opportunities than ever to nourish the children who live in your own community. As a farmer, rancher, fisherman, food processor, baker, or other food producer, you can play a role in providing local products to schools to serve during breakfast, lunch, snack times, and supper, and in educating students about food and agriculture.

### Selling to Schools: Four Pathways

School food service operations often work with extremely tight budgets, but school districts can offer a reliable source of revenue and a market for large volumes of product. Schools buy local products through a variety of different channels. Some receive direct deliveries from farmers or pick up orders at the farmers market. Others purchase local products through distributors or acquire them through DoD Fresh vendors. Some purchase local foods that have already been turned into ready-to-eat meals by food processors, while others seek raw products that they can serve fresh or use for scratch cooking. Here are four pathways you can explore to partner with districts near you:

#### 1. Selling directly to schools

Districts receive cash reimbursements from the federal government for every meal served. They use these funds to administer and purchase food for meals served through the federal child nutrition programs. In accordance with federal

regulations, schools are required to follow competitive procurement guidelines. That means that schools cannot purchase directly from a farm or vendor without getting multiple price quotes, regardless of the dollar or volume amount to be purchased. Schools can also use a host of specifications to target local products such as farm size, freshness and native varieties.

#### 2. Selling to distributors that work with schools

Districts often competitively procure distributors and ask them to provide local products when available, putting the responsibility on the distributor to find and purchase local items. In this scenario, the child nutrition director or state agency may connect you with their distributor, who can choose to purchase directly from you.

#### 3. Working with the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD Fresh)

DoD Fresh is a program that helps schools buy fresh produce. The program is operated by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) at the Department of Defense, which contracts with produce suppliers (mostly small businesses) to distribute fresh products to schools. Producers wishing to sell fresh fruits and vegetables to schools through the DoD Fresh program are encouraged to work directly with the DoD vendor in their state.





#### 4. Becoming a USDA Foods vendor

USDA's Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) purchase about 10-15% of the food that is served through the National School Lunch Program. USDA buys products through a competitive bidding and award process, and businesses (including farmers, fishers, ranchers, growers, and processors) must become approved vendors in order to submit a bid. The Agricultural Marketing Service purchases fruits, vegetables, livestock, poultry and egg products to support USDA's nutrition programs. The Farm Service Agency purchases grains, dairy, peanut and oil products for USDA Foods.

### Making the Connection

Child nutrition directors generally coordinate food purchases and menu plans for schools within their district. Since they have their fingers on the pulse of the district's food needs, purchasing schedule, and menu, child nutrition directors can help you determine whether your products are a good fit for the school's needs, and give you a sense of how best to get involved. You can typically find contact information for school nutrition departments by visiting the district website.

You will be most effective in marketing your products if you know as much as possible about the schools you hope to work with. Do they serve breakfast, lunch and dinner, or just lunch? How many students, and therefore meals, do they serve? Which distributors do they currently work with? Consider eating a meal at the school to get a sense of what types of items are served. Information about schools, what local items they are buying now and which ones they'd like to buy in the future is also available via the [USDA Farm to School Census](#).

Understanding the kitchen and preparation environment of the schools you want to sell to is also key. Not all schools have the same meal preparation capacity, whether it is staff skills, equipment, time, or space. Some schools have large walk-in freezers and the ability to store bulk items for long periods of time, and some simply do not. Some schools are equipped with highly trained staff and state-of-the-art equipment to process, while others have minimally trained staff with not much more than convection ovens to heat and serve pre-prepared meals. By working with the director, you will learn about the products the district typically purchases, food safety and packing requirements and the school's procurement schedule.

### Educating Students

In addition to selling products to schools, producers can play an important role in exposing children to agriculture, and in teaching them about food and nutrition. Providing food to school cafeterias lends itself to a variety of educational opportunities, such as farm tours and classroom and cafeteria visits. The relationship can be mutually beneficial, where the school is opening a new market for you, and you are providing local food to kids, while also teaching them about the food system.

### Learn More

For more general information on DoD Fresh and a list of all DoD Fresh vendors, refer to the [Food Distribution page](#) of the USDA's website.

To learn how to become a USDA Foods vendor, check out the [Agricultural Marketing Service website](#).

For an overview of vendor responsibilities and product requirements, visit the [Farm Service Agency Domestic Procurement website](#).



For more information, and to sign up for the bi-weekly e-letter from the Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community Food Systems, please visit [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool). Questions? Email us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).





# USDA FOODS

## A Resource for Buying Local

USDA FOODS has a dual mission of supporting domestic agriculture and providing healthy foods to schools. Offerings include a variety of fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables, lean meats, peanut butter, whole wheat grain products, and cheeses.

In order to access these healthy options, each state in the country is allocated a certain amount of money, or "entitlement value," to spend on USDA Foods, based on the number of lunches served in the previous school year. In FY 2015, nearly \$1.5 billion in USDA Foods went to schools; in any given year, about 10-15% of the value of food served through the National School Lunch Program comes from USDA Foods.

### USDA Foods supports local purchasing in several ways:

#### Maximizes Funds for Local Purchases

In a time of tightening budgets, every dollar's worth of USDA Foods delivered to a school frees up money that a school would otherwise have to spend commercially. By using USDA Foods products, schools can save cash reimbursement dollars for local purchases.

“ USDA is a partner in meeting my local purchasing goals. I often shift my entitlement to products that are not available locally and to products, like the roast chicken, that USDA Foods is able to offer at a lower price point than I could get as an individual school district. ”

- Andrea Early, Director of School Nutrition,  
Harrisonburg City Public Schools

#### Champions American Agriculture

USDA Foods are all produced in the United States, thus it is possible to order foods through the USDA Foods catalog that are produced in your region. For example, Mississippi is the only state that produces significant, commercial quantities of catfish. If a school is located in the Southeast, USDA Foods catfish could be local to that school. Likewise, apricots offered through USDA Foods normally come from California, and pears usually originate in the Pacific Northwest.

#### Supports Local Processors

Most states send a portion of their USDA Foods to processors to be turned into end products like burritos, burgers or rice bowls. Check to see if your state has agreements with processors located close to home.

#### Promotes Local Fruit and Vegetable Producers

The DoD Fresh program allows schools to use their USDA Foods entitlement dollars to buy fresh, and often local, produce. DoD contracts with over 47 produce distributors across the country, who are encouraged to provide local produce whenever possible and identify locally-sourced items in the ordering catalog. Several states rely on DoD produce as an integral part of farm to school efforts.



## Which USDA Foods are Local to Your Region?

State of origin reports provide a good retrospective on where USDA Foods are typically from. To buy local with USDA Foods, identify which products USDA typically purchases from your state or region, keeping in mind that future procurements may not follow these trends. The lists below provide a snap shot of the state of origin data and highlight items that are typically purchased from each part of the country.

### Northeast

Flour  
Corn  
Green Beans

### Mid Atlantic

Corn  
Pasta  
Beans  
Chicken

### Mountain Plains

Beans  
Beef  
Flour  
Pasta  
Pork

### Midwest

Apples  
Cherries  
Beef  
Beans  
Carrots  
Cheese  
Green Beans

### Western

Pollock  
Cheese  
Apricots  
Peaches  
Tomatoes  
Pears  
Potatoes

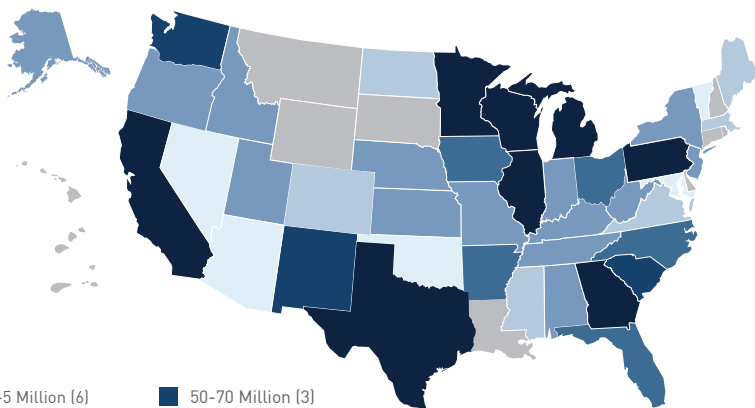
### Southwest

Rice  
Beans  
Peanut Butter  
Beef

### Southeast

Chicken  
Peanut Butter  
Catfish  
Turkey  
Rice  
Flour

## Dollar Value of Food Purchased from Each State for the USDA Foods Program in FY 2015



\*No USDA Foods were processed or packed in ten states.

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For more information, and to sign up for the bi-weekly e-letter from the Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community Food Systems, please visit [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool).

Questions? Email us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).

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### Learn More

Refer to the [Food Distribution page](#) of the USDA's website for a complete list of the foods available and factsheets for each product.

To identify USDA Foods that may be local to you, check out the [state of origin reports](#).

To find USDA Foods' vendors local to you, reference the Agricultural Marketing Service's and Farm Service Agency's [eligible vendor lists](#).

The [National Processing Agreements website](#) provides a list of eligible processors.

For more information about DoD Fresh, please refer to the [DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#).





# LOCAL MEAT IN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

## Increasing Opportunities for Small and Mid-Sized Livestock Ranchers and Fishermen



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**CHICKEN LEGS IN CALIFORNIA**, lobster rolls in Maine, Sloppy Joes in Wisconsin, and wild salmon in Alaska... local meats, poultry, and seafood are a staple on school lunch trays across the country. According to the **2015 USDA Farm to School Census**, 49 percent of school districts in Vermont serve local meat or poultry and 93 percent of school districts in Alaska serve local seafood.\* Communities across the nation are proving that getting local meat in school cafeterias is not only possible, but practical and feasible as well. This fact sheet presents examples, tips, and information for putting local meat on school menus.

### Procurement and Processing

**Partnerships make the difference.** Cooperation between school districts, vendors, and meat processors is critical to the successful integration of meat into school meals. Districts don't need to buy a whole hog, fillet a fish, or even prepare raw products to get local meat or seafood on the menu. Well-coordinated partnerships between program operators, ranchers, and processors ensure that local meats and seafood arrive at schools in the form that works best given kitchen and staff capacity and menu plans. Local meat and seafood can be cut, pre-cooked, dehydrated, crumbled, and filleted before it makes its way to the cafeteria.

**Many ways to buy local meat.** The **USDA Farm to School Census** revealed that more than 798 school districts bought local meat or poultry during the 2013-2014 school year.\* Districts buy local meat via both informal and formal procurement methods. Local meat and seafood can also be purchased through USDA Foods; for example, districts across Mississippi purchased over \$420,000 worth of Mississippi-raised catfish through USDA Foods in the 2015-2016 school

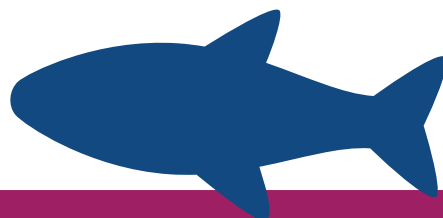
year. Local meats and seafood can also be sourced from broadline distributors or through direct relationships with producers.

### Curriculum Connections

**Seafood makes sense.** Making connections to ocean or river ecosystems through experiential learning opportunities is easy in coastal areas. For example, staff members at Cape Ann Fresh Catch in Gloucester, Massachusetts engage high school culinary students in lessons about the role that both chefs and consumers play in cooking and eating underutilized fish species to support the local fishing industry and sustain vital ocean ecosystems. Even in landlocked states like Idaho, schools serve freshwater fish and tie in lessons about local waterways.

**Buffalo reconnects students to culture and environment.** The InterTribal Buffalo Council, comprising 58 tribes in 19 states with a collective herd of over 15,000 buffalo, reintroduces bison to students in both the cafeteria and the classroom. One participating district serves buffalo meat exclusively in lieu

*\* As a percentage of respondent school districts that stated they were engaged in farm to school activities during the 2011-2012 school year.*





of beef on the menu. In another district, students participate in the raising, harvesting, and processing of buffalo, allowing them to learn about Tribal culture, the animal life cycle, and Tribal herd management practices.

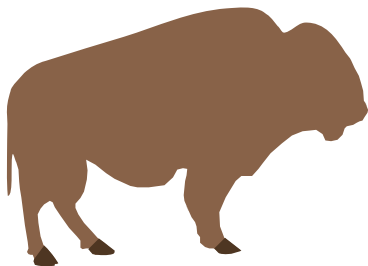
## Inter and Intra State Commerce

**Meat and poultry safety.** The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulates the nation’s commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products to ensure that it is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged.

**FSIS programs** have opened up markets for ranchers of meat and poultry, and allow for expanded regional sourcing opportunities for school districts.

**State Meat and Poultry Inspection programs.** Twenty seven states currently operate **Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) programs** that are considered “at least equal to” federal inspection programs. This means that school districts can buy and serve meat from establishments participating in an MPI program within their state, expanding school districts’ sourcing opportunities from smaller slaughter and/or processing establishments.

**USDA is expanding markets and increasing access.** The **Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program** in select states such as Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and North Dakota allows participating establishments to ship products across state lines and to nearby school districts, opening up new markets for ranchers of meat and poultry, and expanding regional sourcing opportunities for school districts.



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## Local Meat on the Menu

**Start small.** Special events are a great way to start serving local meats. An annual promotion for free range meats at San Diego Unified School district was so popular that the district began to menu free range, antibiotic free, California poultry weekly, serving more than 12,500 pounds of chicken in one school year. The chicken is purchased raw, marinated in-house, and baked on site.

**Keep menus local all year long.** During winter months, while farm fields are dormant and local fruits and vegetables are hard to find in colder climates, menus can highlight the regional bounty throughout the year by regularly featuring local meats. Even while buried under January snow, Minneapolis Public Schools keeps bringing the farm to school by serving locally raised turkey alongside local wild rice. In fact, many of the states serving the most local meat, according to the **2015 Farm to School Census** are in cold climate zones.

**Mix it up.** Careful menu and procurement planning can ensure a spot on the school menu for local meats. Districts in Montana use a blend of local lentils and grass-fed beef for their beef crumble to reduce the cost of serving a local protein patty. Serving local meat just once a week or using more economical cuts of meat in scratch-cooked entrees can also defray costs.

## Learn More

For more detailed information about buying and serving meat see this memo, **Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs** (SP 01-2016, CACFP 01-2016, SFSP 01-2016). The **Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs Guide** showcases the many ways schools can purchase local foods. If you have questions, examples, tips, or information to share on buying and serving local meats, please be in touch by emailing us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).

