



Resource Guide

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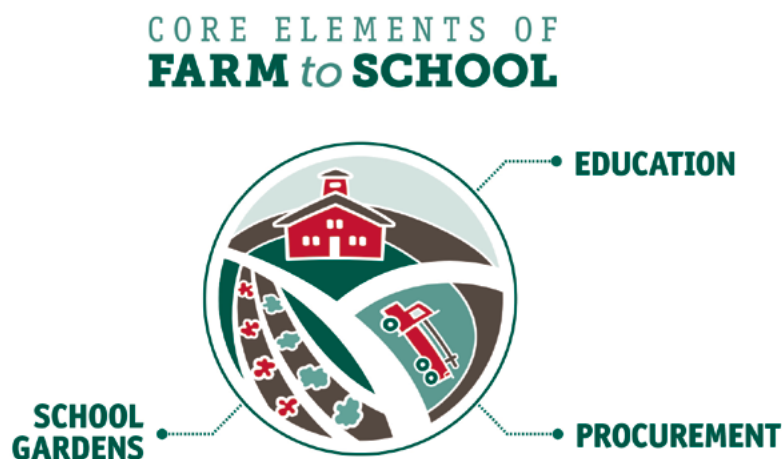
Getting to Know Farm to School

General Information

This section will discuss basic farm to school information including defining what farm to school means, identifying the components of farm to school, exploring the benefits of farm to school activities, and items to consider when starting a farm to school effort.

Defining Farm to School

Farm to school can enrich the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and education settings. Farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following three core elements: (1) Local Foods Procurement; (2) In-Class Education; and (3) School/Youth Gardens. Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities (National Farm to School Network, 2018).



Local Food Procurement

Farm to school occurs through local food procurement when a school purchases local food items to be served in the cafeteria, in the classroom, or as a snack, or sample, to students. This can happen on a regular basis, or for special events.

School/Youth Gardens

Farm to school can occur through school or youth gardens where students can participate in hands-on learning in a garden setting. This can be done through a garden housed on school property, in partnership with a community garden, or in collaboration with a nearby farm.

In-Class Education

Farm to school can occur through in-class education when lesson plans provide learning opportunities pertaining to agriculture and/or food production, healthy eating, and nutrition. This can be incorporated into any school subject such as science, health/wellness, or even math. These efforts can include a variety of learning opportunities, hands on experiences, and more.

South Dakota Highlight

The Huron School District has partnered with Plain View Foods to source fresh produce snacks through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program throughout the school year. This is a great example of a school working with a producer to create an innovative way to incorporate farm to school efforts.

WHY farm to school?

Kids Win

Farm to school provides all kids access to nutritious, high quality, local food so they are ready to learn and grow. Farm to school activities enhance classroom education through hands-on learning related to food, health, agriculture and nutrition.

Farmers Win

Farm to school can serve as a significant financial opportunity for farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors and food manufacturers by opening the doors to an institutional market worth billions of dollars.

Communities Win

Farm to school benefits everyone from students and teachers, to parents and farmers, providing opportunities to build family and community engagement. Buying from local producers and processors creates new jobs and strengthens the local economy.

What is "local"?

One commonly asked question regarding farm to school is "what is the definition of 'local'?". According to the USDA, communities can define "local" or "regional" however they like: within a certain number of miles from your school or within the state. Farm to school can be defined as your state or neighboring states. You might also choose to define the terms differently for different types of products. To help find a definition that suits your needs, involve your food service staff, local producers, food distributors, and others in creating your definition. (Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/community-food-systems>)

The image below shows three possible definitions for local for a district in Pierre, SD. The image on the far left shows the district taking a regional approach to the definition, the center picture shows the district defining the entire state as the radius in which they consider food to be "local", and the final image shows the district using a smaller radius as its definition of local. The district may use one of the definitions for all of their purchases, or they might choose to use each of these definitions for different purchases, or at different times of the year.



Benefits of Farm to School

As noted by the *National Farm to School Network Benefits to Farm to School Fact Sheet*, there are many benefits that farm to school efforts can bring to stakeholders involved including:

- **Benefits to Farmers** – Farm to school efforts benefit farmers by increasing the demand for locally produced items, diversifying their markets, and increasing their revenue streams.
- **Benefits to Students** – Farm to school activities bring great benefits to students by providing them with access to nutritious foods, teaching them healthy food habits, and providing them with hands-on learning around healthy living and agriculture.
- **Benefits to School Food Service Programs** – Schools engaging in farm to school may see an average increase of 9% in student meal participation, and see a decrease in student food waste.
- **Benefits to the Environment** – Farm to school efforts help to preserve open space in farmland and by reducing food waste for both the production side and consumers (plate waste).
- **Benefits to Local Economies** – Each dollar invested in farm to school stimulates an additional \$0.60-\$2.16 of local economic activity. Farm to school activities also have the potential to create jobs within school systems and in the agriculture sector.

South Dakota Highlight

The Deubrook School System has partnered with Deuel Area Development, Inc. to certify the school kitchen as a commercial kitchen for producers to use when it is not being used by the school district. Producers who meet certain qualifications are able to use the kitchen to process their foods. Processing items in certain ways, such as dehydrating or freezing, can extend their shelf life so schools can use them during the school year rather than during the production season. Innovative partnerships such as this overcome many challenges that face farm to school.

Things to Consider in South Dakota

There are many things to take into consideration when developing farm to school activities in South Dakota. Taking note of these will help you to design a successful farm to school program from the start.

- **Seasonality/Choice of Products** – While much of the South Dakota growing season is opposite of the school year, there are still many items that can be purchased during the school year. For example, some items like winter squash can be stored longer in the season; some producers are able to produce year-round due to the use of greenhouses and other season extensions; and some foods such as meat, eggs, honey, and frozen produce are available all year. It is important to consider these seasonality opportunities when getting started with farm to school.
- **Where to Start** – When first engaging with farm to school efforts it is good to plan on starting small. Focus on the areas that might be most convenient for your school. This may be sourcing just one locally produced item as a feature during the school year, inviting a food producer to give a presentation to the students, planting seeds in a science class, or developing classroom lessons around agriculture.
- **Staffing, Equipment, and Capacity** – Both schools and producers must consider what changes or additions need to be made in their operations in order to adequately accommodate farm to school. For schools this may mean additional training on how to use certain local items, or investments in new kitchen equipment. For producers this may mean increasing harvesting capacity.

- **Flexibility** – It is important to be flexible and creative when engaging in farm to school. For every challenge facing farm to school there is an innovative way to overcome that challenge. This might include using Family and Consumer Sciences classrooms for lessons pertaining to agriculture and cooking, or using a licensed school kitchen to process foods when it is not being used by the school. Above all else, communication between schools, producers, and farm to school teams is extremely important.

Building Your Farm to School Team

Putting Together a Team for Lasting Success

One of the first things to consider when getting started with farm to school is how to develop your farm to school team. The core group you develop will be the key to lasting success for your efforts. The group should reflect an array of individuals invested in your farm to school goals which could include food producers, school staff, teachers, parents, students, experts, and more. This chapter will explore things to think of when building your farm to school group.

Why is building a farm to school team important?

Putting together a core working group of individuals and agencies dedicated to a farm to school mission is one of the keys to success. One common challenge with farm to school projects is finding a way to continue the work if only one person champions the efforts and is then no longer available. For example, if one teacher starts a garden project at a school and then moves, who will take over that role?

It is also important to have input from people across many sectors in order to build the most comprehensive and robust farm to school efforts possible for a community. There are many types of interested parties and experts who can be tapped to bring ideas and resources to this work, and it is extremely valuable to have their input in the planning process.

Who will be on your team?

When first building a farm to school team there are many people to consider bringing into the group and many questions to ask. The list on the right gives you a starting point for potential team members. The easiest place to start is with anyone who is already committed to making farm to school a reality for your community. This could include teachers, parents, farmers, food service employees, school board members, or anyone else with an interest in the topic. You may initially

Potential Farm to School Team Members

- School Food Service Employees
- Teachers
- Students
- School Administrators
- School Board Members
- Parents/Grandparents
- Food Producers
- School Nurses
- Staff at Non-Profits
- Master Gardeners
- Researchers
- School Maintenance Staff
- Local Chefs
- State Agency Farm to School Coordinators
- National Farm to School Network Partners
- Health Care Professionals
- Extension Agents
- PTA/PTO Representatives
- Members of the Local Media
- School District Communications Director
- School District Curriculum Director
- Other School Districts with Established Programs
- Social Media Groups

(Source: USDA FNS Building Your Farm to School Team)

identify just one or two people, or you may find several who want to get involved right away. When developing this group be sure to list their names, job description/committee role, and contact information. This list should be comprised of specific individuals, not just general ideas.

Questions to ask

Once you have identified the individuals who are already committed, here are some questions to help identify who else may need to be involved and how the group might work. These questions might include:

- What is the goal of our farm to school project?
- Have any farm to school activities already taken place? If so, what were they, and who was involved?
- What resources or expertise do we need available to our team to accomplish our goal?
- What individuals should be on our team? Who else should be included that is missing from our team?
- What kind of structure do we want our team to take? Will there be a lead member of the group?
- Who will be responsible for which tasks/roles within our group?
- When and how often will our team meet?
- Will our group participate in any advocacy or actions around farm to school?
- How will our group communicate with other teams or organizations?

These are just some of the questions you can ask as you develop your farm to school team. As you answer these questions others may arise which will help guide your process.

Positions to consider

These are just some positions you may want to consider incorporating into your farm to school team, which can help ensure success. Other positions may also be needed to make your goals come to fruition.

- **Team Lead:** This is a person who helps to keep the group organized, keeps meetings on schedule, keeps communication open between all members, and takes on other general leader roles. This role can be shared by more than one person or rotate to different members.
- **Youth Garden Coordinator:** Incorporating a Garden Coordinator can be very valuable for teams identifying hosting a school garden as a goal. A Garden Coordinator can be a volunteer or paid position. This person is the point person for the garden, arranging garden volunteers, seeing to the day to day needs of the garden, and making sure all garden supplies are available and maintained. Youth gardens with designated coordinators tend to be much more successful than those without them.



- **School Wellness Policy Team Members:** Many schools working on farm to school efforts incorporate their work within school wellness policies or committees. If this is the direction your team goes, it is good to work with a representative knowledgeable about the wellness policy. This may be one or more people who can help inform your farm to school team about the goals of the wellness policy, and work to incorporate farm to school goals into the policy itself.

Building Your Structure and Vision

When putting together your team, it is important to be clear and thoughtful about the structure and planned vision. This helps all members of the team to work toward the same goals and better understand their roles.

- **Outline your structure** – Once you have identified who the initial members of your team will be, it will be important to collectively decide what the structure of your group will look like. Decide who will help organize meetings. Identify the number of members. Be clear about who will make decisions for the committee. Going through this process will help you to identify not only who will be ideal for each role, but also who may be missing from your team.
- **Decide when and how often to meet** – Together the group should make plans for when and how often to meet to discuss the planning and progress of farm to school efforts. Setting a regularly occurring meeting time can help keep planning on task and keep participation high.
- **Clearly identify your goals, values, and mission statement** – Having a concise message around these big picture ideas can help everyone on the team stay focused, and can help inform people who are not on the team about the work being accomplished. **Goals** should focus on achievable tasks and activities that you wish to complete. **Values** are the principles and qualities that the group agrees are important in guiding the farm to school work. A **mission** statement is a formal definition or summary that explains the purpose of the group. These statements are usually kept to one or two sentences and can be used to explain the team's purpose to others. Remember that these do not have to be perfect and can evolve over time.

There are specific resources available that go into more detail to help you to establish your team and to identify goals, values, and a mission statement. For example, the *USDA Farm to School Planning Toolkit* can be found at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-school-planning-toolkit> and has specific chapters on planning and building a team.

School Purchasing Guide & Menu Planning

How to Start with Farm to School in Your Cafeteria

One of the best ways to implement farm to school activities in a school is to serve locally produced foods to students. However, there are a lot of questions schools often have about how to get started with this effort. In this section, we will discuss how to get started with serving locally produced foods, review the rules and regulations around local food procurement, and identify some best practices for serving local foods in a school.

Questions to Ask When Getting Started

One of the first things a school might consider when deciding to procure locally produced foods is how to set a purchasing goal. Questions to consider may include:

- **What products are available locally?** – A great place to start might be to check out the local farmers market for ideas, or see if any local foods are being sold at the local store, or at other local businesses. Ask around the community to see what other options might be available. The next step would be to compile a local food inventory of what you have found to be available. Keep in mind that fruits and vegetables are not the only foods schools can source locally, and might not even be the most convenient given the South Dakota growing season. It is important to consider what kinds of foods might be easily accessible. This might include meat, eggs, cheese, honey, value added goods, and more. Be sure to consider all of your options when picking which items to add to your list.
- **How much should be spent on local foods?** – It is important to examine your food budget and think about how much your school can spend on locally produced items. Knowing your budget can help identify which items a local producer can provide at the right price point. Keep in mind that some local items may be comparable in price or even cheaper than the same item bought from a non-local source, especially when schools and local producers get creative! Communication with a producer/source of the local foods is absolutely key when figuring out how much to spend, so be sure to reach out to the food producer early and discuss your desires and options. These types of creative ideas can stretch a school food budget and open doors for farm to school partnerships!

Why Local?

Local products are often fresher, last longer, provide less waste, and have more vibrant colors and flavors.

South Dakota Highlight

Some schools have partnered with area Parent Teacher Associations to bulk purchase meats. The parents might buy the prime cuts of meat at a price which would offset the cost of the ground meat for the school to use.

- **How frequently should local foods be served?** – It can be helpful to remember that not all food served in the school must be local for farm to school programs to be successful. Local foods may only be served once a week, once a month, or maybe even once a year as a special event. Start out small and work toward more local food incorporation as you desire.

Menu Planning

There are many ways schools can incorporate local foods into menus. The important thing to keep in mind is that a school does not need to serve all local foods everyday in order to have a vibrant farm to school program.

- **Salad Bars** – Many South Dakota schools offer a daily salad bar as an option for students. This is a great place to start with local food procurement. When possible, consider stocking the salad bar with local greens, cherry tomatoes, or other items. Several schools in South Dakota have found salad bars to be a simple way to ease into a farm to school program since the quantities are small and the salad bar options can be flexible.
- **Incorporating Local Foods into Current Recipes** – Sometimes it can be as easy as taking a current recipe a school is using and substituting a local item in for something that is usually purchased elsewhere. For example, if spaghetti with meat sauce is regularly served consider switching the usual ground beef with locally sourced meat.
- **New Recipes** – Many schools will get creative and develop new recipes to feature a local item they have access to. There are also several resources available when it comes to local food recipes. *The Lunch Box* (<http://www.thelunchbox.org/recipes-menus/>) is a great website to explore when looking for school recipes and inspiration.
- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)** – The FFVP is a snack program specifically for schools with high rates of free or reduced price meal eligibility rates. Schools who utilize the FFVP can use it for local purchases. Since this funding is available in addition to the school's funding for school meals, this can often be a nice first step for farm to school. Utilizing farm to school/education may fit the soft requirement for FFVP to include education. Please note that the FFVP program is not available to all South Dakota schools.

Where to Source Local Foods

There are many purchasing options available to schools that are interested in buying local food for school meals. Some options include:

- **Direct from a Producer** – Schools can buy items directly from a producer and develop wonderful relationships with the growers of their food. If you are not sure who the producers are in your area start by checking in the *South Dakota Local Foods Directory* (<https://www.dakotarural.org/eatlocalfoods/local-foods-directory/>).
- **Farmers Markets and Farm Stands** – Schools may also serve processed goods from farmers markets and farm stands as long as they are processed in licensed food service establishments and follow all applicable food processing standards. An example of processed may be turning local tomatoes and onions into fresh or frozen salsa at a licensed food service establishment. Canned goods must be commercially processed (under their respective food regulatory agency), this is not the same as processing the food in a licensed food service establishment.
- **Food Hubs** – A food hub is a facility or business that facilitates the procurement of locally produced foods by aggregating local food from many producers. These organized buying structures help to streamline the process of buying local for institutions, so they can access many

farmers' products through one organization. Producers will often pool their growing power together to help fulfill larger orders by using this business model, making them a great tool for school districts. There are currently two food hubs in South Dakota, the *Dakota Fresh Food Hub* (www.dakotafreshllc.com) which serves Sioux Falls and the surrounding south eastern SD region and the *Black Hills Food Hub* (<http://www.bhsu.edu/Student-Life/Go-Green/Current-Initiatives/Food-Hub>) which serves the Black Hills region.

- **Food Distributors** – Sometimes sourcing locally can be as easy as asking your existing distributor. In many cases, distributors may already have local products available. A good place to start might be to ask your distributor which products are currently available that are local. You may also ask your distributor for a report of what the district may have purchased locally in the past - school districts may be surprised to learn that some of the products they already serve are locally grown!
- **DoD Fresh** – Schools utilizing the DoD Fresh program can request local produce if available in season. In FFAVORS, the DOD Fresh ordering system, South Dakota grown products will be indicated as "local" on the order guide. For more information on how to utilize local foods through this program refer to "*Using USDA DoD Fresh to Purchase Local Produce*" (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/using-dod-fresh-buy-local>).
- **Food Grown at the School** – If your school is growing produce in a school garden you are allowed to purchase the food or accept it as donations to be served in the school lunchroom. These items should be purchased as unprocessed fresh fruits and vegetables unless processed in a licensed food service establishment. It is best to check with the garden coordinator to learn about the food safety plan and regular safety practices used in the garden, such as policies around hand washing, growing practices, use of pesticides and herbicides, and more. (Source: www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/school-gardens)
- **Donated Foods** – Much like the foods coming from a school garden, schools can utilize local goods donated by supporting individuals, groups, and organizations as long as the items donated follow all rules and regulations. When accepting donated meat, the meat must be slaughtered under inspection (with inspectors present). Processing is best done under inspection, but can also be processed under the retail exemption. Donors are protected from a liability standpoint by the Good Samaritan Act; however, a good practice to implement is a tracking system for donations, and for the school to incorporate a process or policy for donations in their HACCP plan. More information about rules and regulations for various types of foods are discussed later in this section.
- **Value-Added Vendors** – Value-added foods, or foods that have gone through some kind of processing to be ready for use, are another local option for schools. This includes items such as cheese, processed meats, milled ancient grains, and more. Schools may purchase value-added products directly from local vendors.

While these are many of the options to purchase locally from, they are not the only ones. If you are interested in procuring local foods from a source not listed please reach out to the *SD Department of Education, Child and Adult Nutrition Services* (<https://doe.sd.gov/cans/>).

Working with Food Vendors to Buy Local Foods

Procuring local goods is exactly the same as purchasing other food for school meals in terms of the federal, state, and local regulations. In this section we will review those guidelines.

- **What is an “approved source”?** – An approved source has different definitions based on the type of food in question. South Dakota Department of Health guidelines state that foods served in institutions like schools must come from an “approved source.” The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers the following as “approved sources” of food:
 - » Fresh, whole, and unprocessed foods are automatically considered an approved source. Examples of fresh, whole, and unprocessed foods include whole apples, watermelons, tomatoes, and whole stalks of broccoli.
 - » Most processed foods are required by law to be graded or manufactured under an inspection program to ensure that safe food processing, manufacturing, and packaging conditions are met. Examples include pasteurized milk, ground beef purchased from an inspected meat processing facility, graded shelled eggs, and commercially processed foods like chicken nuggets.

Common sources of unapproved food can include food processed and packed in a private home or an unlicensed food service establishment, meat that is labeled “not for sale,” and raw milk and milk products.

For fresh, whole, and unprocessed foods, schools can set their own requirements to define what is required of vendors that provide food for the school meal program. Additionally, schools must only purchase and award contracts to buyers that can meet those requirements, and keep documents of the procurement transactions. In order to achieve this, clear communication between the school and food vendor is a must.

- **When is the best time to contact a farmer?** – Since many farm to school procurement relationships are established as direct sales from a farmer to a cafeteria, school food service employees often wonder when the best time to reach out to a farmer is. The easiest answer is “now”. The sooner a school can start talking with a producer the better the planning around the program will be. The ideal time to talk with a producer, especially those growing produce, is early to late winter. This is the time when they are ordering seeds, planning what they will grow for the coming spring, and have the most flexibility to plan for any specific items a school might want to buy in the coming year. However, if you get started later in the year do not hesitate to contact a food producer. Many will still be able to work with you any time during the season and provide you with products, especially if they are using season extension methods. That being said, the peak of the harvest season (July-September) are the busiest times for produce farmers. Remember that even meat has a “seasonality” to it so if you are interested in local meats, it makes sense to contact ranchers and processors early in the planning process.
- **Identifying Proximity** – When choosing your local food producer it will be important to consider their proximity to the school. Things to consider include the definition the school district has identified as “local” for the food item being sourced and the delivery distance for the product. If you are not sure what producers are located within your area, start by looking into the *SD Local Foods Directory* (<http://www.sdlocalfood.org>) or ask others who live in your area if they know of local food producers. It can also be very helpful to visit local farmers markets to find producers within your proximity.
- **Seasonality of Products and Season Extension Usage** – One of the biggest barriers people often identify for farm to school in South Dakota is seasonality of products. While the typical growing

season is not the same as our school year, this can be greatly overcome by choosing the right items in season or taking advantage of producers using season extension methods.

- » **Products in Season** – Taking product seasonality into consideration when planning local menus is very important. Many locally grown products including squash, melons, greens and more can be found in South Dakota at the beginning and end of the school year. Some products, such as honey, meats, dairy, and eggs can be sourced year-round when traditional produce crops are not available. It is important to talk with local food sources about their seasonal availability when planning the items to serve during certain months of the year.
 - » **Season Extension** – Many South Dakota producers are now taking advantage of season extension methods in order to make more local items available all year. Some examples of these methods include: using greenhouses and high-tunnels, processing goods to make them shelf stable by dehydrating or freezing them, making value-added products with their goods to expand their usage and shelf-life, and utilizing root crops and other winter storage crops such as potatoes, beets, winter squash, carrots, etc.. When talking with producers it is a good idea to ask them if they are utilizing any season extension methods, and if they are consider using those products in the colder months of the year.
- **Discussing Expectations** – When talking with a local food vendor it is important to discuss your expectations and their expectations regarding delivery, quality, packaging, grading, and more. If your farm to school program requires deliveries take place on a certain day, packaging be provided in a specific way, or if a certain size or grade is required then be sure to make those needs clear. It may also be helpful to explain to the producer what your end use for the product will be. If you plan on slicing or dicing an item, a different standard may be used then if you were to serve the item whole. For example, if you are buying zucchini to shred for zucchini bread, large or misshapen zucchinis may be acceptable (and therefore a lower price point might be possible).
 - **Discussing Price Points, Budgets, and Quantity** – It is important to talk to a local food vendor early in the planning stages about pricing, school budgets, and needed quantities. Planning out these kinds of details will not only help the producer plan for their growing season, but it may help identify which products they will even be able to provide within the budget. Some products do not grow so well in South Dakota, or might fetch a high price for a farmer in another market. Others may be conducive to cost-effective growing for schools, such that they might be priced more competitively from a local farm than from a food distributor. However, some items may end up being more cost effective than those purchased from a food distributor. Start by asking the producer for a product and price list for items that they can grow which meet your quantity needs. If their price list does not reflect anything within your budget discuss this with them, and see if there may be some additional options or flexibility for multiple purchases.

Procurement Rules

Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program must follow certain federal rules when purchasing goods and services using federal funds, as well as any applicable state and local rules or regulations. These same rules apply when buying local food. Schools use different procurement methods based on the value of the purchase. Under \$10,000, schools may use the micro purchase method, which means they may directly purchase a product from a vendor as long as they equitably distribute purchases among different vendors. Under \$250,000, schools may use the small purchase method, which involves getting three price quotes for the goods or services they are looking for and selecting the lowest quote. Purchases above \$250,000 require the use of a formal procurement method, which can be a Request for Proposals or Invitation for Bids. For more in-depth information and guidance on the RFP process, geographic preference, and other procurement questions, see the USDA's *Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs handbook* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/procuring-local-foods>).



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

Food Safety Requirements and Best Practices

USDA requires schools to assure that the suppliers they use follow all applicable federal, state and local laws surrounding food safety. There are no additional or special rules pertaining to food safety and local food, and therefore schools have the jurisdiction to define any food safety requirements they may have. Typically local health departments inspect school districts annually to assure that they follow applicable federal, local and state food safety rules. Food safety requirements and best practices are often a top concern for school food service employees when getting started with farm to school efforts. Knowing these rules can be very helpful when identifying which local food producers you will source from.

- **Raw, unprocessed foods** – These foods are typically whole, fresh produce items. They have not been cooked, processed or cut in any way (with the exception of any cutting that is required to harvest the product). Schools can purchase raw, unprocessed foods from any vendor that they have identified as an “approved source”, so long as that vendor appropriately follows applicable state, federal and local laws governing their business.
- **Processed Foods** – These are foods that have been cut, cooked, preserved, or prepared in some way. Any processed foods that are purchased for the purpose of being served in an institution such as a school must be prepared in a licensed food serve establishment under the observation of a person who has been certified in food safety. Foods processed in a home kitchen cannot be served in a school or institution. When purchasing locally produced processed foods be sure to ask the seller if they utilize a licensed food serve establishment and if they were prepared under the supervision of someone trained in food safety. One example of acceptable food safety training is the ServSafe® certification course; however, that is not the only acceptable training. Please contact the *SD Department of Health* (<https://doh.sd.gov/food/>) if you have questions about what other acceptable trainings are available.
- **Meats** – In South Dakota meat, such as beef, pork, or bison can be a great option for farm to school programs since it is a food item that can be sourced year-round. Meats purchased by a school in South Dakota must be slaughtered and processed under inspection in an USDA or SD State inspected establishment. Any items marked “not for sale” cannot be served in a school. All meats served in school meal programs must be labeled in accordance with USDA FSIS regulations. This is also the case for donated meat. The *SD Animal Industry Board List of State Inspected Establishments* website: <https://aib.sd.gov/meatinspection.html>.

There is an exception for donated traditional foods served to primarily Native American students. (https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP42_CACFP19_SFSP21-2015os.pdf).

Another exception to this rule is poultry. Schools may serve poultry products from producers who fall under the Poultry Products Exemption Act, which exempts the meat products from needing to be processed in a USDA or state inspected facility. This only applies to poultry raised and slaughtered in South Dakota, not from other states. For more information about the *Poultry Products Exemption Act* refer to the *USDA FSIS Directive 5930.1* (<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/84727a9f-cc80-482a-8725-0956524353e8/5930.1Rev4.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>) and the *USDA Memo on Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game, and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/procuring-local-meat-poultry-game-and-eggs-child-nutrition-programs>).

- **Fish** – Local fish is an option that is gaining popularity for schools. All fish served in South Dakota schools must be commercially harvested and processed. According to the USDA “local meat and seafood can be cut, pre-cooked, dehydrated, crumbled, and filleted before it makes its way to the

cafeteria". Please speak to the *SD Department of Health* if you have additional questions on this topic, by contacting (<https://doh.sd.gov/food/>)

- **Eggs** – Locally sourced shelled eggs served in South Dakota schools must come from producers who hold an Egg Candler/Grader License and Egg Dealer License. Shelled eggs do not need to be pasteurized to be served in schools. Egg products other than shelled eggs, such as liquid, frozen, or dried eggs, must be produced under USDA inspection. For more information on procuring eggs see the *USDA Memo on Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game, and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs*. The *SD Animal Industry Board List of State Inspected Establishments* website: <https://aib.sd.gov/meatinspection.html>.
- **Milk** – All locally produced fluid milk served in schools must be pasteurized, grade A, and meet the FDA's standards for Vitamins A and D. (Source: USDA 7 CFR Section 210.10) In many cases, schools already serve local milk through their regular distributors, due to the perishable nature of milk and the existing local supply chain infrastructure.
- **Game Animals** – Schools can buy wild and domesticated game meat with Federal funds as long as the animals are slaughtered under inspection in an USDA or SD State inspected establishment. Game animals that are slaughtered in the wild are not eligible for school use. For more information on rules around game animal procurement see the *USDA Memo on Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game, and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs*. The *SD Animal Industry Board List of State Inspected Establishments* website: <https://aib.sd.gov/meatinspection.html>.

On Farm Safety

Schools often wonder what to look for when it comes to on-farm safety practices and procedures when getting started with farm to school. It is important to keep in mind that locally produced foods are not inherently any riskier than foods purchased off the truck from a vendor. Producers in your community have a vested interest in keeping the food safe - often times their children or grandchildren will be eating the food! This section will discuss some of the best practices to watch for to ensure the food being purchased is as safe as possible.

- **Farm Safety Plans** – Many producers have written farm safety plans in place to describe their regular practices on the farm. If you are starting to work with a producer ask them to see their farm safety plans and look at things like practices around hand washing, harvesting, water testing, traceability/record keeping, and other points you are interested in knowing.
- **Liability Insurance** – Most producers interested in selling their goods to institutions such as schools will have product liability insurance already in place. When talking with the producer ask them about their product liability insurance policy. It is recommended that a food producer carry a \$1 million policy when selling to institutions. If you typically use a particular standard for product liability insurance when purchasing from your primary vendor then consider using the same standard for local purchases.
- **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification** – Good Agricultural Practices are voluntary, science-based practices and protocols that farmers can follow to assure that they reduce the risk of food-borne illness on their farms as much as possible. Some farmers choose to receive a third-party audit to assure that they are following GAPs on their farms. Since schools may choose the food safety standards they require for their food sources, GAP certification is not required for a farmer to sell to a school. In fact, most South Dakota farmers follow Good Agriculture Practices on their farms but have not participated in a third-party GAP audit.
- **Traceability and Record Keeping** – It is always good to ask a producer about their method of

traceability and record keeping. Having these systems in place, which track the foods being purchased from the time they are harvested to the time they arrive at the school, can be helpful in many situations.

- **Food Allergens** – Food allergens are a growing food safety and public health concern, with an estimated 4 to 6 percent of children in the United States (CDC, 2018). There is no cure for food allergies and reactions can be life-threatening. Strict avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction, that is why it is so important for schools to develop plans for preventing allergic reactions. If a certain food allergen is a concern for your school district, be sure to discuss this with the producers you are working with. Ask producers about their harvesting, packaging, and washing practices and discuss whether there is potential for cross-contamination with a known allergen.

Marketing Farm to School

One key to a successful farm to school program is to market the efforts that are being taken. Be sure to highlight local items on the menu, in the cafeteria, and in bulletins to parents. It can also be great to incorporate the local products you are serving into school lesson plans when possible. The better the program is marketed and communicated, the better it will be received by parents, teachers, students, and others. More ideas on marketing can be found in the Additional Resources section of this guidebook.

Producer Farm to School Guide

How to Start Selling Products to Schools

Local schools are great markets for producers looking to sell their products. Schools provide a steady customer base, they plan for large orders in bulk, and they are reliable buyers. In South Dakota 70% of schools have reported they are interested in buying locally produced products to serve to students (Source: Dakota Rural Action Farm to School Survey, 2017). However, producers often have several questions about how to get started with these efforts. In this section, we will discuss how to get started with selling locally produced foods, review the rules and regulations around local food sales to schools, and identify some best practices for selling local foods to school districts.

How to Find a School

Many schools in South Dakota are interested in buying locally produced items, however, producers often do not know where to start when trying to identify schools they could work with. Luckily, there are resources available to help producers learn which schools to contact.

- **South Dakota Department of Education, Child And Adult Nutrition Services (CANS) Office** – The CANS Office administers the USDA Child Nutrition Programs that include the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. They keep a list of schools and local agencies that participate in one or more of the Child Nutrition Programs each school year on the CANS website (<https://doe.sd.gov/cans>). Local producers may request a list of school food service contact information through the department data request process at <https://doe.sd.gov/ofm/datarequest.aspx>.
- **Dakota Rural Action (DRA)** – DRA serves as the South Dakota Core Partner with the National Farm to School Network. As part of this work, DRA sends an annual survey to all schools in South Dakota asking them about any current or desired farm to school activities. Producers interested in selling to schools can contact DRA staff for information about which schools in their area show an interest in procuring local foods. Additionally, DRA publishes the *South Dakota Local Foods Directory* (<http://www.sdlocalfood.org/>), which not only lists local food producers in the state, but also highlights which producers are interested in selling foods to schools. This printed publication is distributed to schools interested in farm to school. It is free for producers to list their business in the Directory, and it is a great way to advertise to schools.
- **SDSU Extension** – SDSU Extension serves as the South Dakota Supporting Partner with the National Farm to School Network. As part of the land-grant mission of South Dakota State University, Extension provides outreach to schools across the state on many topics, such as smarter lunchrooms, nutrition education, gardening, and along with farm to school. Their staff can be reached at <https://extension.sdstate.edu>.
- **Farm to School Census** – The USDA periodically conducts the National Farm to School Census.

This census surveys all public, private, and charter schools in the United States about their farm to school activities. Details from the data are available online at <https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov>. Producers can visit this website to see what schools in their area may be interested in buying food locally.

Where Schools Source Local Food

There are many purchasing options available to schools that are interested in buying local food for school meals. Some options include:

- **Direct from a Producer** – Schools can buy items directly from a producer and develop wonderful relationships with the growers of their food.
- **Farmers Markets and Farm Stands** – Schools may also serve processed goods from farmers markets and farm stands as long as they are processed in licensed food service establishments and follow all applicable food processing standards. An example of processed may be turning local tomatoes and onions into fresh or frozen salsa at a licensed food service establishment. Canned goods must be commercially processed (under their respective food regulatory agency), this is not the same as processing the food in a licensed food service establishment.
- **Food Hubs** – A food hub is a facility or business that facilitates the procurement of locally produced foods by aggregating local food from many producers. These organized buying structures help to streamline the process of buying local for institutions, so they can access many farmers' products through one organization.
- **Food Distributors** – Schools may start with their distributor, as they may already have local products available.
- **DoD Fresh** – Schools utilizing the DoD Fresh program can request local produce if available in season. In FFAVORS, the DOD Fresh ordering system, South Dakota grown products will be indicated as "local" on the order guide. For more information on how to utilize local foods through this program refer to *"Using USDA DoD Fresh to Purchase Local Produce"* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/using-dod-fresh-buy-local>).
- **Food Grown at the School** – If a school is growing produce in a school garden, they are allowed to purchase the food or accept it as donations to be served in the school lunchroom. These items should be purchased as unprocessed fresh fruits and vegetables unless processed in a licensed food service establishment. It is best to check with the garden coordinator to learn about the food safety plan and regular safety practices used in the garden, such as policies around hand washing, growing practices, use of pesticides and herbicides, and more. (Source: www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/school-gardens)
- **Donated Foods** – Much like the foods coming from a school garden, schools can utilize local goods donated by supporting individuals, groups, and organizations as long as the items donated follow all rules and regulations. When accepting donated meat, the meat must be slaughtered under inspection (with inspectors present). Processing is best done under inspection, but can also be processed under the retail exemption. Donors are protected from a liability standpoint by the Good Samaritan Act; however, a good practice to implement is a tracking system for donations, and for the school to incorporate a process or policy for donations in their HACCP plan. More information about rules and regulations for various types of foods are discussed later in this section.
- **Value-Added Vendors** – Value-added foods, or foods that have gone through some kind of

processing to be ready for use, are another local option for schools. This includes items such as cheese, processed meats, milled ancient grains, and more. Schools may purchase value-added products directly from local vendors.

How to Market and Sell Local Foods to Schools

In order to sell local food products to schools, producers need to understand the federal, state, and local regulations that school districts must follow.

- **What is an “approved source”?** – Schools are required to serve food that comes from “approved sources,” but the definition of “approved source” is up to the school district itself. An approved source has different definitions based on the type of food in question. South Dakota Department of Health guidelines state that foods served in institutions like schools must come from an “approved source.”

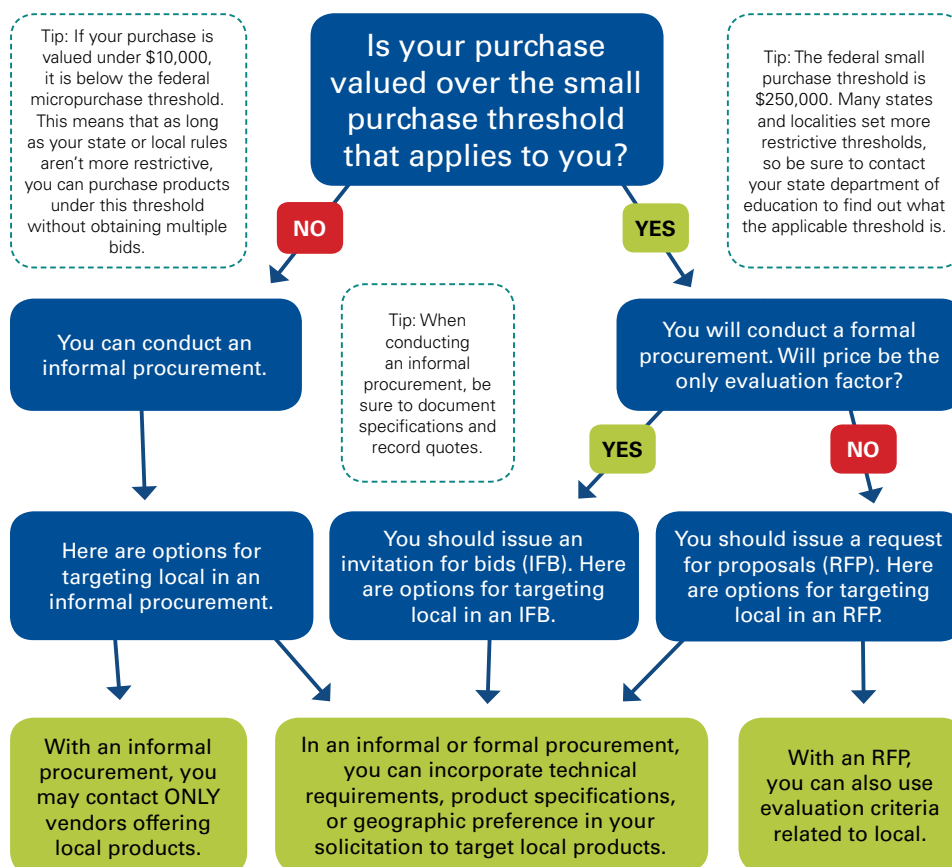
For fresh, whole, and unprocessed foods, schools can set their own requirements to define what is required of vendors that provide food for the school meal program. Additionally, schools must only purchase and award contracts to buyers that can meet those requirements, and keep documents of the procurement transactions. In order to achieve this, clear communication between the school and food vendor is a must.

- **Discussing Expectations** – When talking with your local school district, it is important to discuss their expectations regarding delivery, quality, packaging, grading, and more. It may be helpful to ask the school what their end use for the product will be. If they plan on slicing or dicing an item, then a different standard may be used than if they were to use the item whole. For example, if they are buying zucchini to shred for zucchini bread, large or misshapen zucchinis may be acceptable (and therefore a lower price point might be possible).
- **Marketing with Other Producers** – Sometimes it can be beneficial to market products with other producers in order to provide a wide variety of products and high volumes of food for school districts. This strategy also reduces the amount of producers a school has to work with directly, eliminating administrative burden and reducing the number of deliveries for the school. This can be especially helpful when working with large school districts. This could be done privately one-on-one between you and another producer, or it can be done through a venue such as a food hub. There are currently two food hubs in South Dakota, the *Dakota Fresh Food Hub* (www.dakotafreshllc.com) which serves Sioux Falls and the surrounding south eastern SD region and the *Black Hills Food Hub* (<http://www.bhsu.edu/Student-Life/Go-Green/Current-Initiatives/Food-Hub>) which serves the Black Hills region.

Procurement Rules

Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program must follow certain federal rules when purchasing goods and services using federal funds, as well as any applicable state and local rules or regulations. These same rules apply when buying local food. Schools use different procurement methods based on the value of the purchase. Under \$10,000, schools may use the micro purchase method, which means they may directly purchase a product from a vendor as long as they equitably distribute purchases among different vendors. Under \$250,000, schools may use the small purchase method, which involves getting three price quotes for the goods or services they are looking for and selecting the lowest quote. Purchases above \$250,000 require the use of a formal procurement method, which can be a Request for Proposals or Invitation for Bids. For more in-depth information and guidance on the RFP process, geographic preference, and other procurement questions, see the USDA's *Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs handbook* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/procuring-local-foods>). As a producer, you may want to ask what type of purchasing method the

school district typically uses to buy the products you sell. That way you'll know how to respond to their solicitations or inquiries. Remember, the thresholds in this section are the federal thresholds, and schools may have more restrictive procedures.



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

Food Safety Requirements and Best Practices

USDA requires schools to assure that the suppliers they use follow all applicable federal, state and local laws surrounding food safety. There are no additional or special rules pertaining to food safety and local food, and therefore schools have the jurisdiction to define any food safety requirements they may have. Local health departments inspect school districts annually to assure that they follow applicable federal, local and state food safety rules. Food safety requirements and best practices are often a top concern for school food service employees when getting starting with farm to school efforts. Knowing these rules can be very helpful in working with schools to provide them with local food products that meet these guidelines. Here are some categories of foods typically served in school meals and some of the federal and state laws governing food safety that schools must follow. Remember that schools may have additional food safety requirements that they themselves define.

- **Raw, unprocessed foods** – These foods are typically whole, fresh produce items. They have not been cooked, processed or cut in any way (with the exception of any cutting that is required to harvest the product). Schools can purchase raw, unprocessed foods from any vendor that they have identified as an “approved source”, so long as that vendor appropriately follows applicable state, federal and local laws governing their business.
- **Processed Foods** – These are foods that have been cut, cooked, preserved, or prepared in some way. Any processed foods that are purchased for the purpose of being served in an institution such as a school must be prepared in a licensed food service establishment under the observation

of a person who has been certified in food safety. Foods processed in a home kitchen cannot be served in a school or institution. Be prepared to inform schools about how locally produced processed foods were prepared.

- **Meats** – In South Dakota meat, such as beef, pork, or bison can be a great option for farm to school programs since it is a food item that can be sourced year-round. Meats purchased by a school in South Dakota must be slaughtered and processed under inspection in an USDA or SD State inspected establishment. Any items marked “not for sale” cannot be served in a school. All meats served in school meal programs must be labeled in accordance with USDA FSIS regulations. This is also the case for donated meat. The *SD Animal Industry Board List of State Inspected Establishments* website: [https://aib.sd.gov/MI%20Forms/List%20of%20inspected%20establishments%20\(website\)%20-%20Mar%202018.pdf](https://aib.sd.gov/MI%20Forms/List%20of%20inspected%20establishments%20(website)%20-%20Mar%202018.pdf).

There is an exception for donated traditional foods served to primarily Native American students. This is the only instance when meats are not subject to federal inspection requirements. (https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP42_CACFP19_SFSP21-2015os.pdf).

Another exception to this rule is poultry. Schools may serve poultry products from producers who fall under the Poultry Products Exemption Act, which exempts the meat from federal processing requirements. This only applies to poultry raised and slaughtered in South Dakota, not from other states. For more information about the *Poultry Products Exemption Act refer to the USDA FSIS Directive 5930.1* (<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/84727a9f-cc80-482a-8725-0956524353e8/5930.1Rev4.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>) and the *USDA Memo on Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game, and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/procuring-local-meat-poultry-game-and-eggs-child-nutrition-programs>).

- **Fish** – Local fish is an option that is gaining popularity for schools. All fish served in South Dakota schools must be commercially harvested and processed. Please speak to the *SD Department of Health* if you have additional questions on this topic by contacting them at: (<https://doh.sd.gov/food/>)
- **Eggs** – Locally sourced shelled eggs served in South Dakota schools must come from producers who hold an Egg Candler/Grader License and Egg Dealer License. Shelled eggs do not need to be pasteurized to be served in schools. Egg products other than shelled eggs, such as liquid, frozen, or dried eggs, must be produced under USDA inspection. For more information on procuring eggs see the *USDA Memo on Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game, and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs*.
- **Milk** – All locally produced fluid milk served in schools must be pasteurized, grade A, and meet the FDA’s standards for Vitamins A and D. (Source: *USDA 7 CFR Section 210.10*) In many cases, schools already serve local milk through their regular distributors, due to the perishable nature of milk and the existing local supply chain infrastructure.
- **Game Animals** – Schools can buy wild and domesticated game meat with Federal funds as long as the animals are slaughtered and processed under inspection in an USDA or SD State inspected establishment. Game animals that are slaughtered in the wild are not eligible for school use. For more information on rules around game animal procurement see the *USDA Memo on Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game, and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs*. The *SD Animal Industry Board List of State Inspected Establishments* website: [https://aib.sd.gov/MI%20Forms/List%20of%20inspected%20establishments%20\(website\)%20-%20Mar%202018.pdf](https://aib.sd.gov/MI%20Forms/List%20of%20inspected%20establishments%20(website)%20-%20Mar%202018.pdf).

On Farm Safety

As a producer, you might often wonder what schools require when it comes to on-farm safety practices and procedures when getting started with farm to school. This section will discuss some best practices to implement to ensure the food being sold to the school is as safe as possible. Again, it is up to the school to determine the specific food safety practices required by vendors.

- **Farm Safety Plans** – As a producer, you should have a written farm safety plan in place to describe your regular practices on the farm. It should include things like practices around hand washing, harvesting, water testing, traceability/record keeping, and other points schools will be interested in knowing. If you do not have a written Farm Safety Plan then developing one should be a first step when starting to sell to schools. There are many online resources available to assist in writing a Farm Safety Plan such as the *University of Minnesota's Food Safety Plan Template* (<https://extension.umn.edu/safety/growing-safe-food>), or there are several resources compiled by the *Produce Safety Alliance* (<https://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/resources/farm-food-safety-plan-writing-resources>). These resources cover checklists that producers can use when developing their plans and outline the type of information that should be covered such as water testing, soil tests, harvesting practices, and more. You are welcome to contact Dr. Rhoda Burrows with SDSU Extension for assistance with produce safety concerns (<https://extension.sdstate.edu>)
- **Liability Insurance** – Many schools require that a producer have a produce liability insurance policy covering \$1 million or more for each product the producer plans to sell to the school. This is a best practice, and is oftentimes required for sales at farmers' markets or other outlets.
- **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification** – Good Agricultural Practices are voluntary, science-based practices and protocols that producers can follow to assure that they reduce the risk of food-borne illness on their farms as much as possible. Some producers choose to receive a third-party audit to ensure that they are following GAPs on their farms. Since schools may choose the food safety standards they require for their food sources, GAP certification is not required. In fact, most South Dakota producers follow Good Agriculture Practices on their farms, but have not participated in a third-party GAP audit.
- **Traceability and Record Keeping** – Many schools are interested in knowing where their food comes from, and want to assure that it can be traced back to the source if there is a food safety concern. Therefore, schools may have traceability and record keeping requirements, and it is a best practice for farmers to have these procedures in place.
- **Food Allergens** – Food allergens are a growing food safety and public health concern, with food allergies impacting an estimated 4 to 6% of children in the United States (CDC, 2018). There is no cure for food allergies and reactions can be life-threatening. Strict avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction, that is why it is so important for schools to develop plans for preventing allergic reactions. Be prepared to speak with schools about food allergens. Schools will ask you about your harvesting, packaging, and washing practices, and will want to discuss with you whether there is potential for cross contamination with a known allergen.

Inventory Planning with Schools

One of the first things to start with is an initial conversation about what your farm has to offer, and to explore trial runs or pilot projects that could help a school to incorporate local foods. Some questions to ask might be - What might be an easy item to swap out a non-local item for a local item without making drastic changes to labor, equipment or food costs. Perhaps an apple? Could we start with a taste test of a local item that the farm could provide? It's always good for the producer to get an idea of the school's capacity. Do they have a full kitchen? Do they have a salad bar? Are their staff familiar with preparing raw meat or fresh vegetables? Other items to consider include:

- **What products are you able to provide?** – It can be helpful to take a look at the school's existing menu to see where there might be overlap with the products you are able to provide. School menus are usually available online on the school's website. Create a local food inventory of what you are able to provide to the school. This might include produce, meat, eggs, cheese, honey, value added goods, and more. Be sure to consider all of your options when picking which items to add to your list. If you have not yet planted for the year it can be beneficial to ask the school what items they would like to purchase so you can customize your growing season to their needs.
- **How much will the school spend on local foods?** – Ask the school if they are willing to share their current price list so that you can understand the prices they are currently paying, and to see where you might be close. Keep in mind that some local items may be comparable in price or even cheaper than the same item bought from a non-local source especially when schools and local producers get creative! Communication with a school is absolutely key when figuring out how the purchases will work, so be sure to reach out to the school early and discuss your desires and options.
- **Are there funding options?** – Some schools utilize grants, donations, programs, and other means to help pay for the local foods they serve at their schools. Creativity in funding and serving options can be the key when it comes to serving local foods, in addition to the National School Lunch Program reimbursements and student payments. For example, some schools have partnered with area Parent Teacher Associations to bulk purchase meats. The parents might buy the prime cuts of meat at a price which would offset the cost of the ground meat for the school to use. This is just one example of how schools and producers can creatively incorporate local food procurement.
- **How frequently will local foods be served?** – It can be helpful to remember that not all food served in the school must be local for farm to school programs to be successful. Local foods may only be served once a week, once a month, or maybe even once a year as a special event. Work with schools to start out small and add more local foods as they get comfortable with you as their



A visit by a group of tribal educators and wellness coalition members to a geothermal greenhouse growing and selling citrus fruits in cold Northern Nebraska in January surprises and inspires the group

producer, and the overall process.

- **Grow items in their price point** – When planning for your season it can be helpful to identify which items you can grow within the school's price point and plant accordingly. Schools often calculate the cost per serving when they are purchasing products, so you may want to know what that price is when you are pitching a new product to a school.
 - » The Oklahoma farm to school website offers a wonderful publication called *Tips, Tools and Guidelines for Food Distribution and Food Safety* (<http://okfarmtoschool.com/growers-tools/tips-tools-and-guidelines-for-food-distribution-and-food-safety/>). In it they provide an interactive Excel Spreadsheet that acts as a produce calculator and helps producers identify the price per serving. This tool can be found online at <http://okfarmtoschool.com/wp-content/uploads/produce-calculator-excel03.xls>.

Other Ways for Producers to Get Involved in Farm to School

Selling products to the school meal program is not the only way for producers to get involved in farm to school efforts. Here are just a few ways producers can participate in farm to school efforts other than sales.

- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)** – The FFVP is a snack program specifically for schools with high rates of free or reduced price meal eligibility rates. While this is still a food sale to the school, it is one that is facilitated through a special program rather than the National School Lunch Program. It is a grant program that some schools are able to utilize for younger students to help introduce them to different types of fresh produce. These grant dollars can purchase single taste servings for each student, and local food purchases are allowed. Be sure to ask if the school system you are working with participates in the FFVP, and find out if that may be an option for local foods.
- **Farm Tours** – Even if the school is not able to purchase foods at the onset it can be very beneficial to host a farm tour for either the school staff or for students to learn about your operation and local food production. This is a great way to begin developing a relationship with a school, and to introduce students to farming.
- **School Presentations** – If bringing the students out to the farm for a tour is not feasible then you can always bring the farm to them by giving a school presentation. It can be helpful to coordinate with teachers to identify a time when learning about food production might fit well into their lesson plans. Producers can show students photos of the farm operation, explain the process of food production, and answer questions about what it is like to be a local food producer.
- **Mentor School Gardens** – Schools interested in starting a school garden are often in need of skilled experts who understand how to plant a garden and care for the produce being grown. This is a great way to share farming skills with students and lay the groundwork for a farm to school relationship.
- **Farmer Pen Pals** – One way to inspire the students and get involved with the school is to participate in a farmer pen pal program. Local food producers can coordinate with the school district to write letters back and forth with a class during the school year. This will give students the opportunity to ask questions about what a food producer does and allows the producer to share information about their work.

Additional Resources

Additional Farm to School and School Garden Resources:

Youth Educator Program

North Central Region SARE recognizes that youth programs are a way to introduce new and exciting farming and ranching options to youth, parents, and community members.

The program supports opportunities for youth educators to research, demonstrate, and learn more about sustainable agriculture.

Program proposals open in Mid-August and due in early November.

Agency: North Central SARE Office

Contact: Joan Benjamin, (573) 681-5545

Website: <https://www.northcentralsare.org/>

Farm to School Program

Farm to school program assists eligible entities, (schools, school districts, agricultural producers, Indian tribal organizations, nonprofit organizations, state agencies and local agencies), through grants and technical assistance, in implementing farm to school programs that improve access to local foods.

There are three types of grants: Planning, Implementation, and Training Grants.

Agency: Food and Nutrition Services

Contact: Andrea Alma, (303) 844-4417

Website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-grant-program>

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns and for opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, and related resources on Tribal land, agricultural land, and non-industrial private forestland, i.e. piping water, building ponds/dams, drilling wells, putting in solar pumps, changing irrigation techniques.

Cost-share program available for purchasing seasonal high-tunnel kits. In order to receive a high-tunnel kit you must have already tilled the land for which the kit would be used for or produced on the land previously. Applications are always open and are typically reviewed yearly in October.

Agency: National Resources Conservation Service

Contacts: Oglala Lakota and Bennett Counties: (605) 685-1239

Jackson County: (605) 837-2166

Website: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>

Whole Kids Foundation School Programs

Gardens Grant Program

This provides funding to support a new or existing edible garden at K-12 schools, non-profits working in partnership with a K-12 or a non-profit organization. The Application opens in September of each year and close by Mid-October. Funding, if selected, will be received in February. Visit website for more information.

Contact: grants@wholekidsfoundation.org for questions.

Website: <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/programs/school-gardens-grant>

Bee Grant Program

This allows for a K-12 school or non-profit organization to receive support for an educational bee hive. There are four options for hives.

1. Monetay grant of \$1,500 to support the success of a bee hive educational program.
2. Observation hive: equipment grant of a custom made indoor observation hive from The Bee Cause Project
3. Traditional Langstroth Hive: equipment grant of an outdoor hive with Starter Kit
4. Top Bar hive: equipment grant of an outdoor top bar hive with Starter Kit

Website: <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/programs/honey-bee-hive-grant>

Get schools Cooking Grant

Get Schools Cooking will work with the selected districts through a technical assistance program that includes a workshop for food service directors, on-site assessment and on-site assessment debrief and strategic planning, along with peer-to-peer collaboration and access to a food service program Assistance Grant. The program has a value of nearly \$200,000 per participating district (depending on district size). It opens middle of January and is due the first of March.

Website: <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/programs/get-schools-cooking-grant>

Healthy Teachers Programs

Whole Kids Foundation's Healthy Teachers Program empowers educators to improve their personal health and wellness so they can be the healthiest possible role models for students.

Website: <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/healthy-teachers>

Kids Gardening Foundation

Youth Garden Grant

Since 1982, the Youth Garden Grant has supported school and youth educational garden projects that enhance the quality of life for students and their communities.

Eligibility: Any nonprofit organization, public or private school, or youth program in the United States or US Territories planning a new garden program or expanding an established one that serves at least 15 youth between the ages of 3 and 18 is eligible to apply.

There are multiple grant awards. This includes money and supplies. In addition to the grant award packages, YGG recipients will become members of the KidsGardening Fellows Program receiving opportunities to promote their programs, network with other grant winners, seek personalized guidance from KidsGardening education specialists, and a special quarterly newsletter.

Website: <https://kidsgardening.org/2019-youth-garden-grant/>

Carton 2 Garden Contest

Open to public and private schools, contest winners will be selected based on their implementation of an innovative garden creation featuring creative and sustainable uses for repurposed milk and juice

cartons. Carton 2 Garden is open to all K-12 public and private schools in the United States. Your school does not need a garden to participate.

Website: <http://carton2garden.com/>

More Resources

National Farm to School Network

- **NFSN Programs and Policy Racial & Social Equity Assessment Tool:** This resource can be used to assess implications of specific programming and policy advocacy in advancing racial and social equity and making sure that these opportunities are maximized.
Website: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/nfsn-programs-and-policy-racial-and-social-equity-assessment-tool>
- **Supporting Farm to School with Non-Profit Hospital Community Benefit Dollars:** This is an opportunity to create a partnership with local hospitals to look at what resources they can offer us, what we can give to them, and how you can work together to offer farm to school in our areas.
Website: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/supporting-farm-to-school-with-non-profit-hospital-community-benefit-dollars>
- **City & School District Farm to School Policy Opportunities:** This specifically discusses the work with local school wellness policies and good food purchasing policies for cities/towns.
Website: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/city-school-district-farm-to-school-policy-opportunities>
- **SaladBars2Schools:** This organization provides the resources and tools to make sure all schools have salad bars. The application cycle is rolling.
Website: <http://www.saladbars2schools.org/>
- **Farm Credit Services of America: Working Here Fund:** The Working Here Fund provides two grant options.

The short-term grant project provides up to \$2,000 in grant funds is available for projects that address short-term goals, and could include projects such as, but not limited to, community gardens, 4-H and FFA chapter projects, foodbank needs, backpack summer programs, grain bin rescue equipment, CASE curricula, and drone technology for the classroom.

The Long-term grants of up to \$10,000 each are available for larger community projects focused in smaller rural communities (population 5,000 or less). This includes projects such as, but not limited to, start-up FFA chapters, campaigns for a new fire hall or community building, geodesic domes, larger community greenhouses or high tunnels, or other capital campaign fundraising for community projects. A documented long-term plan is required in the application process for this grant.

Website: <https://www.fcsamerica.com/contact/grant-program/grant-program-information>

Other inspirational videos:

- **Minneapolis Farm to School:** This video depicts the value chain and all of the jobs that are created by incorporating local foods into farm to school.
Website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfKVUEvPUbo#action=share>

Resources for Schools and Institutions

Recipes for School Food Service Programs

- **Chop! Chop! Culinary Skills Training series** has culinary skills videos and a recipe guide
<https://cias.wisc.edu/chop-chop-veggie-videos-support-wisconsin-farm-to-school-efforts/>
- **Home Grown: Farm to School Recipes of Wisconsin**
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/team-nutrition/pdf/homegrown-f2s-recipes.pdf>
- **Home Grown: Menus of Wisconsin**
https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/recipe_index_3.pdf
- **Vermont FEED developed a cookbook for school nutrition professionals**
<https://vtfeed.org/resources/new-school-cuisine-nutritious-and-seasonal-recipes-school-cooks-school-cooks>
- **Chef Ann: Searchable Database of Recipes and Cycle menus**
<http://www.thelunchbox.org/recipes-menus/recipes/>

Procurement Resources

- **United States Department of Ag (USDA)**
Farm to School Procuring Local Foods
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/procuring-local-foods>
- **Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems**
Local Food for Little Eaters: A Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Guide to Local Food Purchasing
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/local-food-for-little-eaters-a-migrant-seasonal-head-start-guide-to-local-food-purchasing>
- **Local Food for Little Eaters: A Purchasing Toolbox for the Child and Adult Care Food Program**
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/local-food-for-little-eaters>
- **University of Minnesota**
Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture
Food from Farms: Toolkit for Direct Purchasing of Local Food
<https://www.misa.umn.edu/publications/directpurchasingtoolkit>
- **Montana State University: Beef to School Program**
Resources: Getting Started, Procurement Templates, Presentations and Stories
<http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/beeftoschool.html>

Resources for Producers

- **Michigan State University: Center for Regional Food Systems**
Hoophouse Production and Marketing Guide
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/hoophouse-production-and-marketing-guide>
- **Center for Rural Affiars**
Rural Food Business Toolkit
<https://www.cfra.org/rural-food-business-toolkit>
- **Wisconsin Farm to School Guide for Producers: Tools and Templates**
Tool: Pounds to servings calculator
<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/farmertools14/4-connect-with-schools/pounds-to-servings-calculator.xls>

Tool: Pecks to pounds
<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/farmertools14/4-connect-with-schools/pecks-to-pounds.pdf>

Tool: Sample purchasing agreement
<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/farmertools14/4-connect-with-schools/sample-purchasing-agreement-2.doc>

Tool: Sample invoice
<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/farmertools14/4-connect-with-schools/sample-invoice.xlsx>

Food Safety

- **USDA, Office of Community Food Systems**
Implementing Farm to School Activities: Food Safety
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/implementing-farm-school-activities-food-safety>

Resources in this document by category
 - » Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)
 - » Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP)
 - » On-Farm Food Safety Checklist Tools
 - » Product Liability Insurance
 - » Food Safety in School Gardens
 - » Food Safety and Salad Bars
 - » Food Safety with Local Meat, Eggs and Dairy
 - » General Food Safety Resources
- **The Institute for Child Nutrition**
Produce Safety University Graduate Training Resources
<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/produce-safety-university-graduate-training-resources/>
- **Produce Safety Resources**
<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/produce-safety/>
- **University of Minnesota Extension: Farm to School**
Farm Food Safety Planning
<https://extension.umn.edu/safety/growing-safe-food>
- **Wholesale Success: A Farmer's Guide to Food Safety, Postharvest Handling, Packing and Selling Produce.**
<https://www.misa.umn.edu/publications/cropsandsoils/wholesalesuccess>

- Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry: Tips, Tools and Guidelines for Food Distribution and Food Safety
<http://okfarmtoschool.com/wp-content/uploads/cover-TOC.pdf>

Resources for Students

- Real Food Challenge
Resources for college students who want to bring real food to their campuses.
<https://www.realfoodchallenge.org/>
- Georgia Organics Farm to School Resources for Students
<https://georgiaorganics.org/for-schools/the-farm-to-school-resources-for-students/>
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Curriculum resources for high school farm to school programs.
<https://www.iatp.org/documents/farm-to-school-youth-leadership-curriculum-all-lessons-and-worksheets>

Organizations to Follow

- National Farm to School Network Resources
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources>
- South Dakota Beef Industry Council: Educational Resources for food service, educators, producers and retail
<https://www.sdbeef.org/resource-room>
- South Dakota Specialty Producers Association
<https://sdspecialtyproducers.org/>
- South Dakota Pork Producers
<https://www.sdppc.org/>
- Dakota Rural Action
<https://www.dakotarural.org/>
- Midwest Dairy
<https://www.midwestdairy.com/>
- Dakota Fresh Food Hub
<https://dakotafreshllc.com/>
- Black Hills Food Hub
<http://www.bhsu.edu/Student-Life/Go-Green/Current-Initiatives/Food-Hub>
- SDSU Extension
<https://extension.sdstate.edu>
- SD Department of Education, Child & Adult Nutrition Services (CANS) Office
<https://doe.sd.gov/cans/>
- SD Department of Agriculture
<https://sdda.sd.gov/>
- USDA Office of Community Food Systems
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/community-food-systems>

Farm to Breakfast

- **Washington State – Breakfast After the Bell Implementation Guide**
Includes a “Farm to Breakfast” section.
Breakfast after the Bell Implementation Guide
<http://k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/pubdocs/WABABImplementationGuide.pdf>
- **National Farm to School Network Blog – Celebrating Local Foods at Breakfast**
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/news-and-articles/bringing-farm-to-school-into-breakfast>
- **Massachusetts Farm and Sea School Conference – Make Farm to Breakfast a Reality in Your School**
<https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/C4-Restaurant-2018-MA-Farm-Sea-to-School-Conference.pdf>
- **Food Research & Action Center - Breakfast Blueprint: Breakfast After the Bell Programs Support Learning**
Pages 19 – 20 provide recommendations on incorporating farm to school in breakfast after the bell programs
<http://frac.org/research/resource-library/breakfast-blueprint-breakfast-bell-programs-support-learning>
- **Oregon Harvest for Schools – Recipes for Breakfast Items**
<https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/childnutrition/F2S/Pages/OregonHarvestforSchools.aspx>