

# Local Foods Procurement

## Farm to School Geographic Preference Updates

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**October 2024**

## Overview

- What is Farm to School
- Local Procurement
- Defining local and where to find local foods
- Solicitations to target local
- Geographic Preference updates to the Final Rule
- Resources and questions

## What is Farm to School?

Integrating locally sourced products into school meals

Educating about where food comes from.

- Improve child nutrition
- Agricultural education opportunities
- Help students establish a positive relationship with food.

# What's Local?

Vegetables



Fruit



Eggs



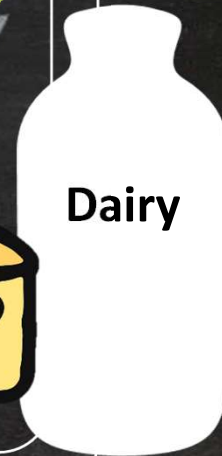
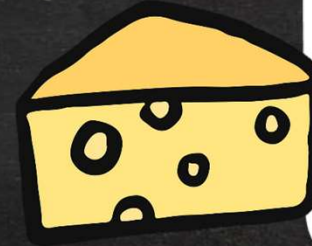
Beans, Grain & Flour



Fish, Poultry & Meat



Dairy

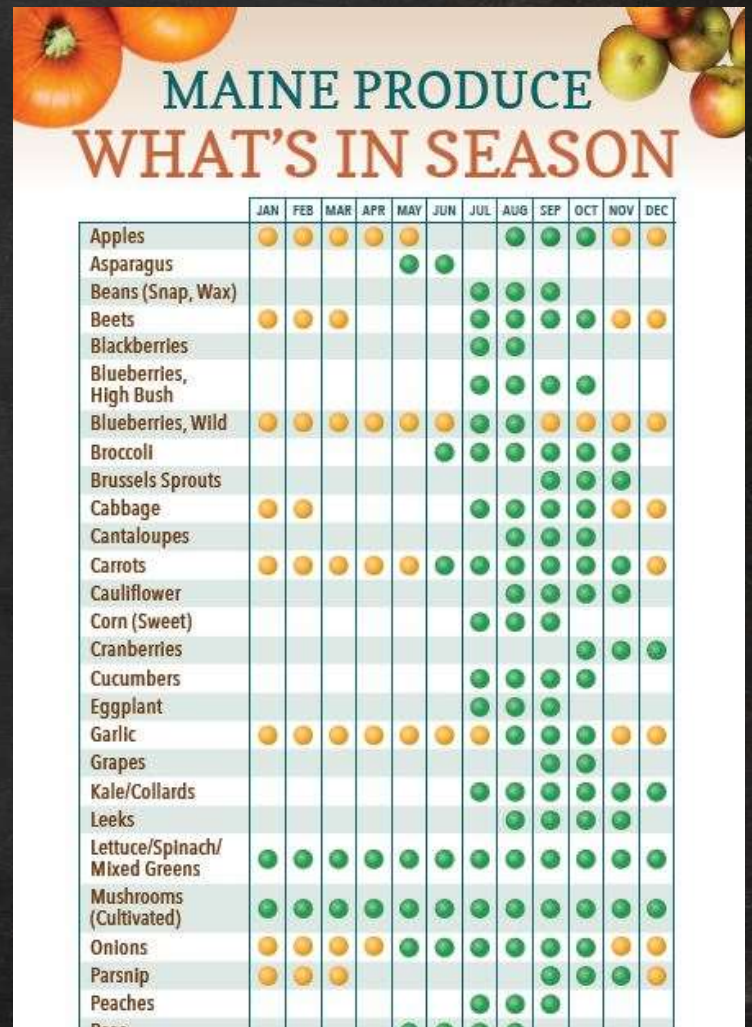


## What's Local?

- What items are grown, harvested, produced or processed in Maine?
- What might be local on the menu during different times of the school year?
- What local products have you seen on menus thus far this school year?



- Conversations with farmers, growers, producers, fishers, vendors, distributors & salespeople
- Visits to the farmer's market **“Pecks to Pounds”**
- Cooperative Ext. (extension.umaine.edu)
  - » Maine Farm and Seafood Products Directory
  - » <https://extension.umaine.edu/agriculture/farm-product-and-pickup-directory/>
- USDA NASS Census of Agriculture
  - » [nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://nass.usda.gov/AgCensus) **Census Results are in!**
- USDA Farm to School Census
  - [Farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov](http://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov)
- Seasonality charts





# LOCAL PROCUREMENT

# What Does Local Mean?

## Who defines local?

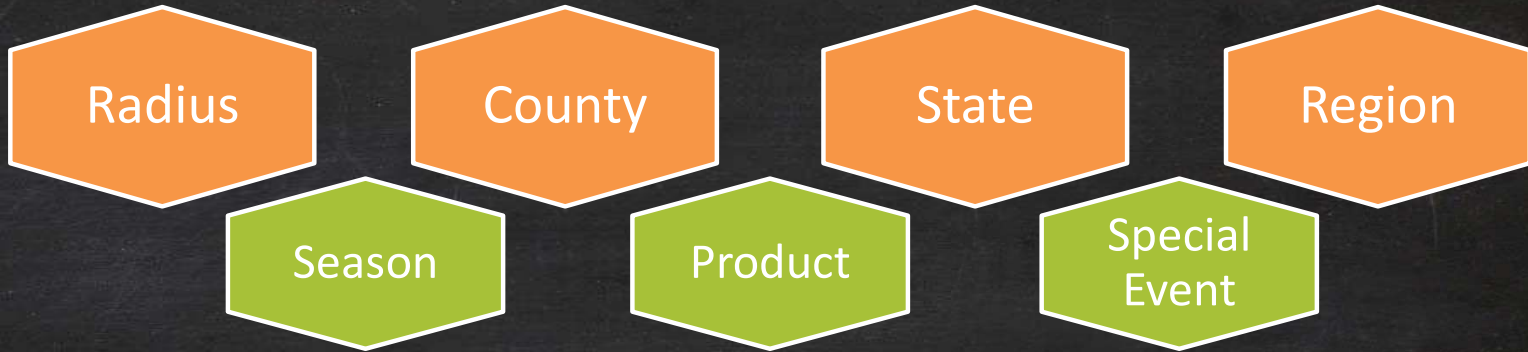
- School food authorities

## What are you trying to accomplish (objectives)?

- Meet local purchasing incentives defined by State based legislation?
- Bring as many local product as possible onto the menu quickly?
- Compliment local purchases with farm visits and vendor relationships?



# Defining Local



## Defining Local: Questions to Consider

1. What goals do you hope to achieve with your definition of local?
2. How would you define local for fruits and vegetables in your area to achieve this goal?
3. Would your definition need to change for animal (or marine) based proteins?
4. Would your definition need to change if you primarily wanted to source from intermediaries versus direct from farmers?

## Where to Get Local Foods

- Through distributors
- Through food service management companies (FSMCs)
- From food processors
- DoD Fresh
- From individual producers
- From producer co-ops /food hubs
- From school gardens



## Requests for Information

- Survey the market to understand:
  - » Quantity available
  - » Price point
  - » Seasonal availability
  - » Willingness to work with schools
  - » Whether geographic preference is necessary
  - » Who the producers are!
- Collaborate with surrounding districts
- Work with a community partner



## What's *Already* Local on Your Menu?

- Review records
- Ask vendors /distributors whether they purchase local products.

## What *Could* Be Local?

- Conduct a menu audit.
  - >> Are there items that could easily be replaced with local products?
- Think about ways to integrate.
  - >> Harvest of the Month program
  - >> New recipes
  - >> Salad Bar
  - >> Seasonal Cycle Menu
- Include tracking of local in future contracts.



# Targeting Local in Solicitations



## Potential Specifications, Requirements, and Evaluation Criteria to Target Local Products

- » Varieties unique to the region
- » Freshness (e.g., delivered within 48 hours)
- » Size of farm
- » Harvest techniques
- » Crop diversity
- » Origin labeling
- » Able to provide farm visits or class visits





## Other Things to Consider When Writing Solicitations to Target Local Products

- Be flexible
- Don't include unnecessary requirements
- Consider what a vendor new to the school food market might not know
  - » Condition upon receipt of product
  - » Food safety needs
  - » Size uniformity





## Example: Use Product Specifications

### Product Specification

- Granny Smith or local variety grown /harvested within 50 miles of District Office,
- US. Fancy or No. 1,
- Prefer five 185 count boxes per week but willing to consider other pack sizes for September – December
- Delivered within 48 hours of harvest


# Procurement Methods





## Splitting Procurements

- SFAs cannot arbitrarily divide purchases to fall below the small purchase threshold.
- In some instances, however, characteristics of a product or market justify the need to separate it from the overall food procurement.
  - » Harvest of the Month
  - » Taste tests
  - » Farm to School promotional events.



# Geographic Preference Expansion

# Geographic Preference EXPANSION!

- Updated by the *Final Rule - Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, April 25, 2024
- Eases challenges with buying local foods
- Increases procurement of local foods
- Adds “local as a specification” as a strategy
- Applies to all CNPs
- Implementation began July 1, 2024

## Geographic Preference Option

- A method CNP operators can use to increase their procurement of local, unprocessed agricultural products for program meals.
- Includes specific strategies for building specifications
  - » “Local as a specification” (\*NEW\*)
  - » “Defined Scoring Advantage

## Key Principals

- Applies to all Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs)
- CNP operators define “local”
- CNP operators may only apply to unprocessed, locally grown, raised, and caught agricultural products
- Must not interfere with full and open competition

## Unprocessed Agricultural Products

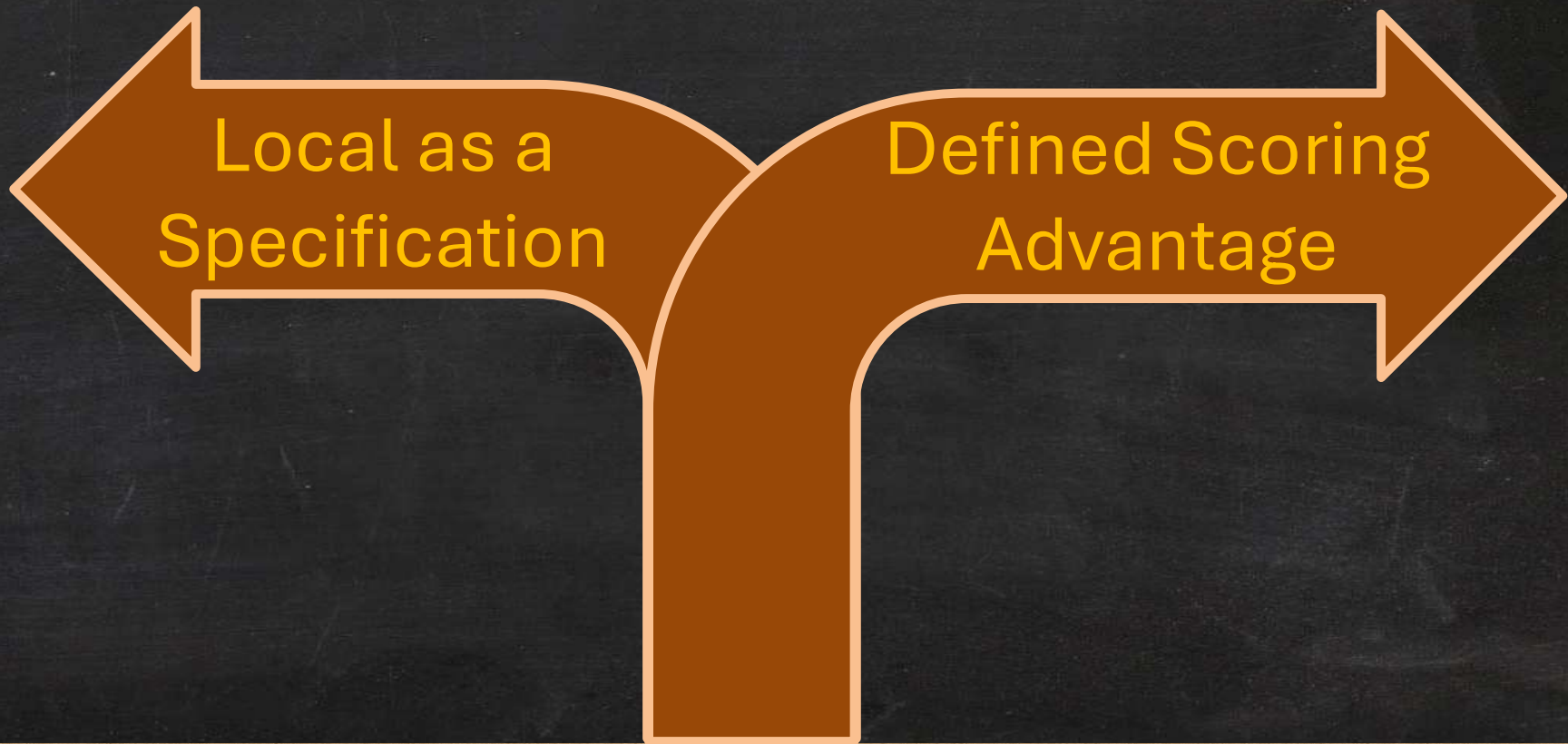
- Products grown, raised or caught locally
- Products that still retain their inherent character

## Food Preservation that Retains Character

- Refrigerating
- Freezing
- Shucking
- Grinding
- Chopping
- Slicing
- Dicing
- Freeze-drying
- Dehydrating
- Washing
- Packaging
- Forming into Patties (w/out additives)
- Butchering
- Vacuum packaging
- Adding acids
- Peeling
- Cleaning fish
- Pasteurizing Milk



## Two Paths of Geographic Preference



## Option Strategy 1: Local as a Specification

- When *only* locally unprocessed agricultural products are acceptable
- Includes a definition of “local” (within a specific geographic area)
- Vendors products must meet criteria for award
- Do market research to avoid limiting competition

## Strategy 1: Local as a Specification Example



- A school usually buys whole apples for lunch service.
- They'd like to begin sourcing only local apples.
- Definition of Local: Must be grown within 200 miles of Augusta ME

### Original specification reads:

Apples, fresh, 125-138 count, whole and free from decay, injury, or disease.



### Revised specification would read:

Local apples, fresh, 125-138 count, whole free from decay, injury, or disease.



## Strategy 2: Defined Scoring Advantage

- Awards extra points to products meeting “local” definition.
- When locally produced products are preferred, but not required.
- Solicitation defines bid evaluation methods
- Market research helps avoid limiting competition

## Strategy 2: Defined Scoring Advantage Example



Mayberry ISD is purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables

Local preferred, but not required

In this scenario, vendors may receive additional points based on a sliding scale for offering local unprocessed agricultural products:

- 75% or more = 20 points
- 50% or more = 10 points
- 25% or more = 5 points

Grown within the State included along other evaluation factors

# Defined Scoring Advantage Example



Mayberry ISD is purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables through a Request for Proposal

	Chefs' Distributor	Fresh Time Distributor	Acme Food Hub
Price	15	20	15
Product Quality	20	15	20
<b>Grown within the State</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>
Food Safety	20	20	20
Customer Service	15	15	15
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>90</b>

Local preferred, but not required

In this scenario, vendors may receive additional points based on a sliding scale for offering local unprocessed agricultural products. Points are awarded as follows:

- 75% or more = 20 points
- 50% or more = 10 points
- 25% or more = 5 points

Grown within the State included along other evaluation factors

# Mix of Both Strategies

Might use when buying more than one product at once

When buying a mixed order of fruits and vegetables:

Use local as a specification for products for which local is a requirement

Use a defined scoring advantage for products for where local is a preference

Solicitation for Unprocessed Fruits and Vegetables Happy Place Child Care Centers Maine	
Blueberries	<b>Locally grown</b> , within a 150-mile radius of Sunny Town
Avocados	<b>Locally grown</b> , within a 120-mile radius of Sunny Town
Green beans	<b>10-point preference</b> for locally grown, within a 200-mile radius of Sunny Town

## Summary: Using Geographic Preference Option Flexibility

- Use local as a specification for local unprocessed agricultural products
- Use a defined scoring advantage for local unprocessed agricultural products
- Adopt a mix of both Strategies
- Elect not to use any of these approaches

Geographic Preference  
Implementation Memo:

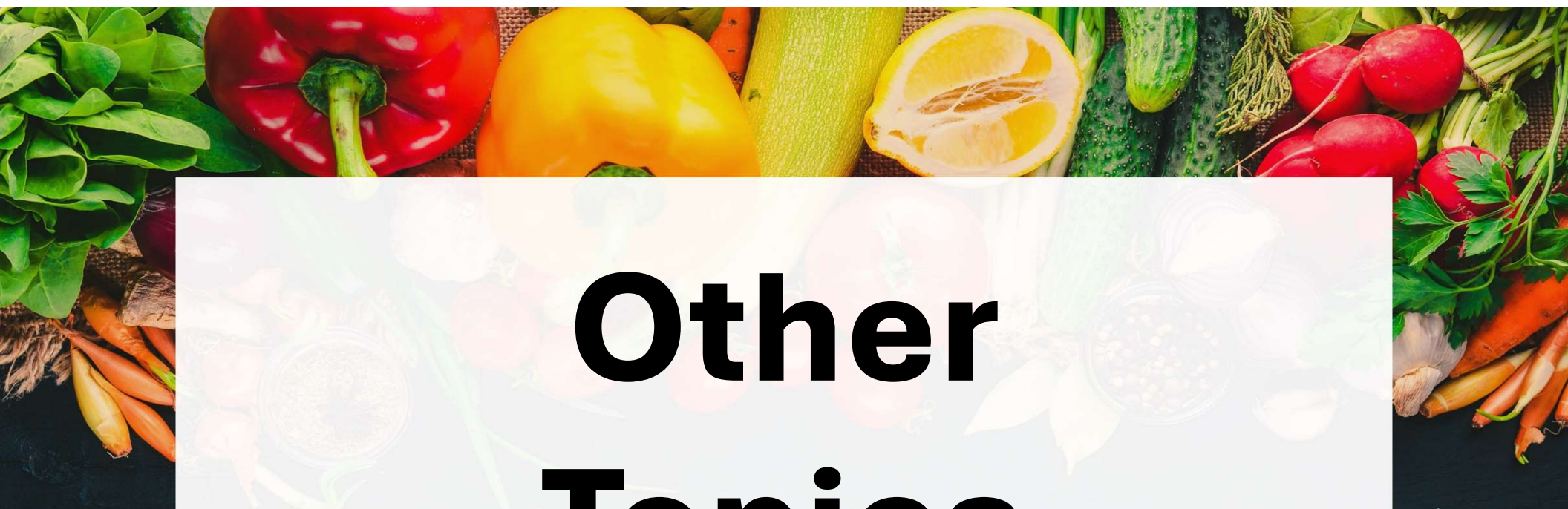


Geographic Preference  
Questions & Answers Memo:



<https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/geographic-preference-expansion>





# Other Topics



## Forward Contracts

- Technically, a forward contract is any contract established in advance of when the product is delivered.
- In the context of farm to school, it often refers to a contract or agreement established with a farmer in advance of the growing season.





## Example: Using a Forward Contract

### Oregon and Oklahoma

- Farm to school coordinators work to connect and facilitate commitments between distributors and local growers.





## Donated Foods

- Procurement regulations do not apply to donated foods
- Consider food safety issues and menus before accepting foods
- Always document receipt of goods



# Procuring and Using School Garden Produce





# Resources

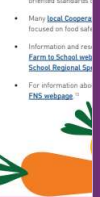


THE  
**FARM to SCHOOL**  
PROGRAM

## FOOD SAFETY INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR THE FARM TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) works with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to ensure the Nation's food supply is safe. The FDA is the Federal agency responsible for the safety and security of many foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables. Many farms comply with the [Food Safety Modernization Act \(FSMA\)](#) and [Produce Safety Rule \(PSR\)](#) commercial food operations that manufacture, process, pack, or hold human food as well as the [Preventive Controls for Human Food \(PCHF\)](#).<sup>1</sup>

- The FDA's [Technical Assistance Network \(TAN\)](#) is a central source of information for questions related to the FSMA rules, programs, and implementation strategies. Answers have been provided in response to [frequently asked questions on the FSMA](#) and the [FSMA Rules and Guidance for Industry](#) can also be used to find answers to questions.<sup>2</sup>
- The FDA has a [Cooperative Agreement Program](#) with many States to implement the PSR. Your State agency may offer assistance and more information, and if this does not apply to your State or territory, you can visit the [FDA Produce Safety Network](#) for more information.<sup>3</sup>
- The [Produce Safety Alliance \(PSA\)](#) is a collaboration between Cornell University, the FDA, and the USDA which offers approved trainings to prepare fresh produce growers to meet the regulatory requirements included in the FSMA Produce Safety Rule.
- The [Food Safety Practice Standards](#) are a set of standards for stakeholders that are oriented standards.
- Many [local Co-ops](#) focused on food lab.
- Information and resources for [Farm to School and School Regional Set](#).
- For information about [FNS message](#).



## AN OVERVIEW OF GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAPs)

In the food supply chain, there can be contamination risks at every step from farm to fork. Preventing microbial contamination is particularly important for fresh produce because there is no heat treatment or "kill step" before it is consumed. When purchasing fresh produce, child nutrition professionals should be aware of key food safety practices that all fruit and vegetable producers should follow. Producers should be aware of key food safety practices that all produce growers should follow.

### What are Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs)?

**Good Agricultural Practices, or GAPs,** are voluntary science-based guidelines that help to reduce the risk of microbial contamination during growing, harvesting, and packing of fresh fruits and vegetables. The guidelines are based on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s [Guide to Minimizing Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Produce](#). GAPs help to identify and control potential risks that affect the safety of produce on the farm and in the packinghouse.<sup>1</sup>

The main principles of GAPs focus on **water, manure and municipal biosolids, worker health and hygiene, sanitary facilities, field sanitation, packing facility sanitation, transportation, and traceback and recordkeeping.** On a farm, the main sources of contamination are humans, animals, water, and soil. GAPs address how to control these contamination risks. For example, GAPs identify how to:

- Reduce the potential transfer of microbial contamination from the soil to the crop.
- Ensure water used in various phases of crop production is not a source of contamination.
- Help workers to practice good personal hygiene and ensure that clean facilities are provided for workers in visitors.
- Ensure that there is good sanitation, including surface storage areas, equipment, and transportation vehicles that are properly cleaned and maintained on a regular basis.

There is no Federal requirement for schools to purchase food from farms that have a GAP certification or other third-party food safety certification.

It is recommended that a farm implement GAPs in its food safety plan to ensure the safety of produce grown and harvested during each phase of production. Keep in mind that farms can follow GAPs and have a food safety plan in place.



## GARDENS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES are growing gardens of all forms from medicinal gardens and small community gardens to larger food production gardens to school gardens. This fact sheet will primarily focus on tribal school gardens. Tribal Nations are increasingly leveraging school gardens as tools to preserve tribal language, a connection to the land, culture and a source of food for child nutrition programs.

Introducing whole, traditional foods into student diets can help children form life-long, healthy eating habits. Research indicates that children are more likely to taste, consume, and have positive opinions of fresh produce when they are given hands-on opportunities to plant and harvest. School gardens offer an interactive, outdoor classroom for engaging both elders and students in linking their past and future, and a broader educational and cultural history.

schools who use school gardens for a variety of purposes and as a source of nutrition programs.

The following are examples of how school gardens connect children to their hands-on, interdisciplinary learning.

**Arizona: Rooting Three Sisters**  
Service to All Relations program that includes greenhouse gardens.

where students prepare a feast for the community using the garden's bounty. The "three sisters" (corn, beans, and squash) play a prominent role in traditional Native American agriculture and sustainable growing strategies.

**New York: Kaneshio & Akwesasne Freedom School**  
The Akwesasne Freedom School conducts language immersion classes for students in the APS on a 10.5 acre site where Kaneshio of community farmers, educators, and entrepreneurs has developed a community garden, greenhouse, and catenary. In addition, school staff and parents are partnering with Kaneshio members to involve students in the growing and production of food.

**Colorado: Montezuma School to Farm Program**



## SCHOOL GARDENS Using Gardens To Grow Healthy Habits In Cafeterias, Classrooms, and Communities

**TEACHING GARDENS** in Tennessee, equine systems in Montana, salad bars in New Mexico, garden-based curriculum in Guam, across the Nation schools are growing gardens to provide food for child nutrition programs, connect children to the source of their food, and create hands-on interdisciplinary classrooms.

School gardens pre-date the National School Lunch Program; the Federal Government has been encouraging school gardening since the early 1900s, even building a "School Garden Army" during World War I and supporting victory gardens at schools during World War II. USDA encourages school gardens by providing grant funding, guidance and resources, and support for food service personnel who are interested in purchasing products from a school garden. For additional information on school gardens across the Nation, check out the latest findings from the USDA Farm to School Census (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/census/>).

### Space for Gardens in All Seasons

School gardens come in all shapes and sizes, and districts with varying amounts of land are finding ways to establish gardens both within and outside of school grounds. Gardens can be as simple as a few containers on a windowsill or can cover many acres, and gardens can thrive in all climates. Program operators find that even small gardens help children gain familiarity and comfort with the fruits and vegetables they are eating more of at meal times.

Districts are also overcoming growing season challenges in creative and innovative ways. Even in Montana, where the traditional growing season just barely overlaps with the school year, season extension techniques make it possible for students to garden all year long.

In rural Montana, the growing season is short, but that doesn't stop the Spine Farm to School of Park County in Livingston, MT from growing food year-round. High school students manage an aquaponics greenhouse, growing a nutrient ecosystem that combines fish and plants. The students learn rich lessons in chemistry and biology as well as the business skills needed to sell the fish to local restaurants.

### Using School Garden Produce in the Cafeteria

Food service staff can use school garden produce in many ways. Some schools use it in the cafeteria, while others use it in the school store or as a menu item. Some schools use it in the school store or as a menu item.



# Fact Sheets & Guides



## Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs



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