



Maine Harvest of the Month Info for Farmers, Producers & Distributors

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Harvest of the Month (HOM) is a nationwide marketing campaign promoting the use of seasonally available, local products in schools, institutions, and communities. Maine's pilot HOM program will begin in April 2019 and focus on working with schools. One of the major goals of the Maine HOM program is to support Maine farmers and producers, and therefore Maine's local economy. Each month, schools pledge to serve the highlighted local product at least twice, and use provided materials to promote the product. A list and map of Maine producers, farmers, and distributors has been created to help Food Service Directors successfully source each month's product. Businesses that provide HOM products to schools have the chance to be highlighted on the DOE website, HOM social media, etc.

MAINE HOM CALENDAR

Month	Product
January	Maine Potatoes
February	Maine Root Vegetables
March	Maine Protein*
April	Maine Dairy**
May	Maine Wild Blueberries
June	Maine Leafy Greens
July	Maine Summer Squash
August	Maine Cucumbers
September	Maine Tomatoes
October	Maine Apples
November	Maine Brassicas
December	Maine Winter Squash

MAINE HOM PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS

- All HOM products listed above must be grown or caught in Maine.
- All meat and poultry must be State or Federally (USDA) inspected*
- Dairy must be pasteurized**

Please note: GAP certification is not a requirement to sell directly to schools; however, you may receive questions from schools on farm food safety practices.

USEFUL FACTS ABOUT SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE

Key Issues for School Food Service Programs:

- Budget – In School Year 2018, Maine schools had an average food cost of \$1.60 per lunch meal. This includes grains, protein, fruits, vegetables and fluid milk.
- Facilities – Many programs have a limited number of employees and many have kitchens with limited equipment and storage space

Procurement – School food service programs are required to procure food items through a bidding process because they are spending federal dollars on the purchase. For local products, Food Service Directors will likely conduct an ‘informal bid,’ where they would provide product specifications (geographic preference, variety, quantity, delivery, etc.) and then ask for a quote on those products. Quotes are collected from at least three sources to allow for sufficient ‘competition’ and awarded to the least expensive vendor that meets all specifications.

Menu Planning & Lead Time - Food Service Directors plan menus at least 6 weeks out, so they will need to know if you will have the HOM product more than a month before it is delivered. Once the menu is set and sent to students and their families, Food Service Directors make every effort to follow the menu—so being able to deliver product as promised is very important. Some schools with established relationships with their farmers may choose to communicate with their farmers regarding crop planning.

TIPS FOR SELLING TO SCHOOLS

Price - Schools are generally buying products at low prices. Consider selling items that you wouldn’t otherwise be able to sell, for example small apples or “ugly” produce, at a lower price. Schools are also a great outlet for surplus crops.

Delivery and processing- Schools may request that food be delivered, washed and boxed, processed, or bagged. These details would be worked out directly between the school and business.

Connection – Having a web presence and reliable communication channels is very helpful. If producers can post up-to-date product availability and pricing, that aids in the bidding and buying process. Many schools have expressed interest in getting to know their farmers! Connect with your district or school about doing a visit, taste test, or planning a field trip.