



BEST PRACTICES:
**GROWING LOCAL
PROCUREMENT IN SCHOOLS**



NATIONAL
FARM to SCHOOL
NETWORK

URBAN SCHOOL
FORK **FOOD**
ALLIANCE

Procuring food from local sources is a powerful way for school food authorities to leverage their collective voice to transform school food and our broader food system. Thus, the Urban School Food Alliance (USFA) is committed to tracking and increasing local and values-based purchasing, and the National Farm to School Network (NFSN) advances policy, systems, and root cause change strategies that connect children and communities to where their food comes from and bolster a more equitable food system. By the 2023 school year, each district in USFA will determine the percentage of its current purchasing that is local and set a goal to increase it. USFA knows that its collective purchasing power is large and therefore has significant potential to shift our food system to be more rooted in the values that [USFA](#) and [NFSN](#) seek to promote.

OUR SHARED VALUES



Prioritize health

We are dedicated to keeping the wellbeing of our students at the forefront of every decision and giving them the tools for childhood nourishment and lifelong health.



Promote racial and economic equity

Ensuring that all students have access to the food they need in a just food system requires us to dismantle the historic and ongoing structural racism in this system, and actively consider food sovereignty and racial equity in school food decision-making.



Elevate environmental justice and stewardship

Strive to keep environmental impact at the forefront of decision-making, recognizing the purchasing power of meal programs can shift our food system away from practices that contribute to climate change and pollute communities of color, and towards a more equitable, sustainable use of our soil and water.

WHY LOCAL?

Although local procurement may look different in every state and place, it provides the opportunity to actively choose the food system values that you want to support through your procurement process. Local products, especially those that are minimally processed, can be fresher, more nutrient-dense and appealing, and offer students a healthy, high-quality meal experience. Local purchases have a powerful ripple effect along the supply chain to support the community's economy and create jobs.

In addition to products that are geographically local (within your state or within a certain mile radius), constructing standards for local items within RFPs and engaging with producers can leverage school food purchasing power to support small- and medium-sized family farmers, environmentally responsible production methods, humane treatment for animals, and promote racial equity through support for businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). Through innovative strategies that increase local purchasing, school nutrition professionals can ensure that small businesses and small farms have the opportunity to succeed, and that all children can engage with fresh and healthy food that is familiar to them.

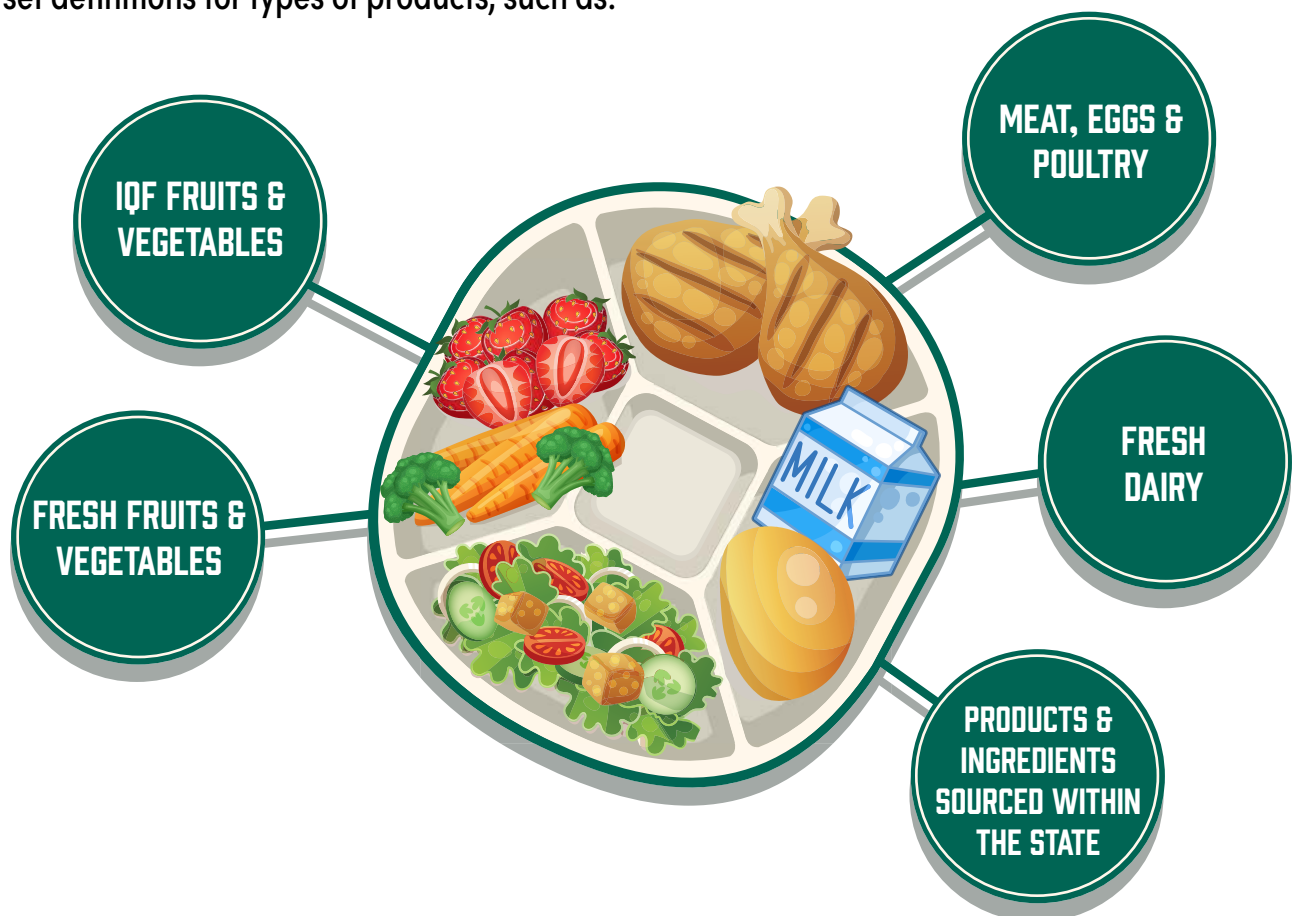


DEFINITIONS OF LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Federal: USDA does not require schools to adopt a particular definition of “local;” it simply encourages schools to use geographic preference when possible.

State: Some states have their own policies to promote products grown or processed within the state, or within a certain mile radius. Other states leave it up to the school food authority to follow USDA guidance and set their own criteria. [See this spreadsheet](#) for information specific to your state.

Types of Products: If your state has no set definition for local purchases, such as an increased reimbursement for produce grown within the state, school food authorities may decide for themselves to set definitions for types of products, such as:



Setting your criteria: Many of the benefits of local procurement can come from considering factors in addition to geographic distance, such as community engagement and racial equity, producer size, ownership, sustainable production methods, and labor practices. School food authorities can structure their bidding process to prioritize vendors who demonstrate these values, as well as those who are geographically local.

Scale: Local procurement can happen at any scale, depending on the current needs and capabilities of your district, and the availability of local products in a region. Currently, only one state (New York) has a threshold of local. Whatever the current procurement landscape, there are tools and resources that can help school nutrition professionals increase local purchasing in the way that is the right fit for their individual districts.

BENEFITS OF LOCAL PROCUREMENT

To kids: Engaging with their local food system, and increasing their consumption of whole, fresh, unprocessed or minimally processed foods has lifelong positive health effects.¹

To the local economy: Each dollar invested in local purchases creates up to \$2.16 in additional economic activity to the region.^{2,3,4}

To the local community: Working with local distributors and producers gives communities the opportunity to shape agricultural and economic practices with school food purchases.

To support for school meal service: Engaging in local procurement can significantly increase school meal participation rates by students and teachers.^{5,6,7,8,9}

1. See more research-backed benefits of local procurement in National Farm to School Network's "Benefits of Farm to School resource: https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/the-benefits-of-farm-to-school&sa=D&ust=1610658725355000&usg=AOvVaw1QV58wz73Y7Unt4q8i2_pq
2. Becot F, Kolodinsky JM, Roche E, et al. Do farm-to-school programs create local economic impacts? *Choices*. 2017;32(1):1–8.
3. Christensen L, Jablonski BBR, Stephens L, Joshi A. Economic Impact of Farm to School: Case Studies and Assessment Tools. National Farm to School Network; 2017. <http://www.farmtoschool.org/Resources/EconomicImpactReport.pdf>.
4. Henderson T. Health Impact Assessment - HB 2800: Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Policy. Upstream Public Health; 2011. http://www.upstreampublichealth.org/sites/default/files/F2SHIA_FINALlow-res_0.pdf.
5. Roche E, Becot F, Kolodinsky J, Conner D. Economic Contribution and Potential Impact of Schools Purchase of Local Foods in Vermont. Center for Rural Studies, University of Vermont; 2016. https://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/agriculture/files/documents/Farm_to_School_Institution/Economic%20Contribution%20of%20Farm%20to%20School%20in%20Vermont%20.pdf.
6. Vallianatos M, Gottlieb R, Haase MA. Farm-to-School: Strategies for urban health, combating sprawl, and establishing a community food systems approach. *J Plan Educ Res*. 2004;23(4):414–423. doi:10.1177/0739456X04264765
7. United States Department of Agriculture. Farm to School Programs Invest Nearly \$800 Million in Local Economies. 2016. <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2016/03/15/farm-school-programs-invest-nearly800-million-local-economies>.
8. Joshi A, Kalb M, Beery M. Going Local: Paths to Success for Farm to School Programs. Center for Food & Justice, Occidental College and Community Food Security Coalition; 2006. <http://www.nhfarmtoschool.org/uploads/5/9/6/5/5965715/goinglocal.pdf>.
9. Abernethy Elementary, Portland Public Schools Nutrition Services, Injury Free Coalition for Kids, Ecotrust. New on the Menu: District Wide Changes to School Food Start in the Kitchen at Portland's Abernethy Elementary. 2006. http://archive.ecotrust.org/farmtoschool/downloads/Abernethy_report.pdf.