

Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) School Nutrition Division Local Food for Schools (LFS) Pilot Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Updated 03/2024

What food products qualify for Georgia's LFS Program?

Please refer to the Georgia (GA) [LFS Procurement Fact Sheet](#).

As a reminder, a food product must be locally grown (in the state of Georgia or within 400 miles of delivery destinations), unprocessed or minimally processed, and served in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Recipe-based (ready-to-eat prepared) food products are not allowed: such as pimento cheese, chow chow, or other Georgia Grown retail products.

Additional examples of allowable food products include:

- Pickled vegetables: one minimally processed food product in a preserving brine (a combination of multiple food products that creates a recipe-based product such as chow chow/relish is not allowable)
- Meats: beef, pork, poultry, seafood, etc. (not livestock, live animals, or cattle) minimally processed without additional additives, flavorings, and colorings
- Cheese: pasteurized, block, shredded, or creamed (without additional ingredients such as coloring, flavorings, or herbs)

What food safety regulations apply to Georgia farmers/producers?

Please refer to the [Georgia Food Safety Regulations for Farm to School Procurement](#). When purchasing food from local farms, the food safety regulations vary by the type of food product (dairy, eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables, and meats and poultry).

How do I find local distributors or farmers/producers and available food products?

You can issue a Request for Information (RFI) which is outlined in the [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\) Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs Guide](#) on pages 18-19. An RFI is a useful pre-procurement tool to find potential local qualifying distributors or farmers/producers and availability of food products. You can write the RFI to specify the GA LFS program qualifiers to include definitions of local, allowable food types, and food product requirements. You can also refer to the [GaDOE Harvest of the Month](#) resources for locally sourced food product ideas and to the [Georgia Department of Agriculture's Georgia Grown Database](#) of Georgia farmers/producers and their available products.

Are transactions allowed from current contracted vendors/distributors for reimbursement?

If you increase purchases for an existing contracted food product, then you can submit the amount for reimbursement that you have increased based on reasonable historical averages of current and previous purchases in place. For example, if your average weekly/monthly purchases of a particular contracted food product are 100 cases and you increased your usage to 150 cases then you can



submit a LFS claim expense for 50 cases (the difference). Please remember the contracted food product must meet the LFS program qualifiers provided above.

Does the federal micro-purchase threshold apply to a distributor who sources from multiple farmers/producers?

The \$10,000 threshold (or your local micro-purchase threshold if more restrictive) also applies to the distributor (or the invoicer). It can be compared to the same scenario as your broadline food distributor award who purchases from many manufacturers/producers of food. If you continue to do business with one distributor over \$10,000 who sources from local farmers/producers, then you would need to obtain competitive quotes or solicit according to the threshold spend and the requirements to award. The thresholds also apply to any farmer/producer if you buy directly from them.

What qualifies as a transportation cost reimbursement?

Associated transportation costs are permitted to be submitted when the SFA or a farmer/producer requires a separate delivery service to buy the local allowable LFS food products and is billed separately from the food product.

How do I determine if a distributor or farmer/producer is a small business or socially disadvantaged?

The distributor or farmer/producer should self-identify by answering the questions to both categories above. No proof of status or identification is required.

Can School Food Authorities make food purchases from school-operated entities, such as school greenhouses?

Yes. SFAs may use LFS funds to make purchases from school-operated entities, such as school greenhouses. Purchases must be limited to food items that are unprocessed or minimally processed.

Which Child Nutrition Programs may LFS funds be used to support the service of meals and snacks?

LFS funds are available only to SFAs operating the NSLP and/or SBP and may only be used by SFAs to purchase unprocessed or minimally processed, local domestic food products for those programs. This includes the NSLP Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and NSLP Afterschool Snacks, as these are components of the NSLP.

If an SFA operates other Child Nutrition Programs (i.e. the Special Milk Program, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and/or the Child and Adult Care Food Program), LFS funds may not be used in those programs.

How do I confirm the monthly status of LFS reimbursement claim and payment?

Please refer to your School Year 2024 LFS Reimbursement Claim Form Excel file via your Microsoft SharePoint access. The monthly transaction entries deadline is the 10th of the following month (example: January is due on February 10th). Each monthly worksheet will be updated with the state review status for each transaction submitted. Any unqualifying transaction will be explained on the worksheet. The remaining LFS funds balance will be updated to the next active month worksheet. You will receive an email reminder when the GaDOE School Nutrition Division has processed your payment.

What if I still need more guidance in developing our plan for LFS?

Please contact **Angela Reynolds**, *Farm to School Procurement Specialist*, to schedule a time to discuss further: Angela.Reynolds@doe.k12.ga.us.