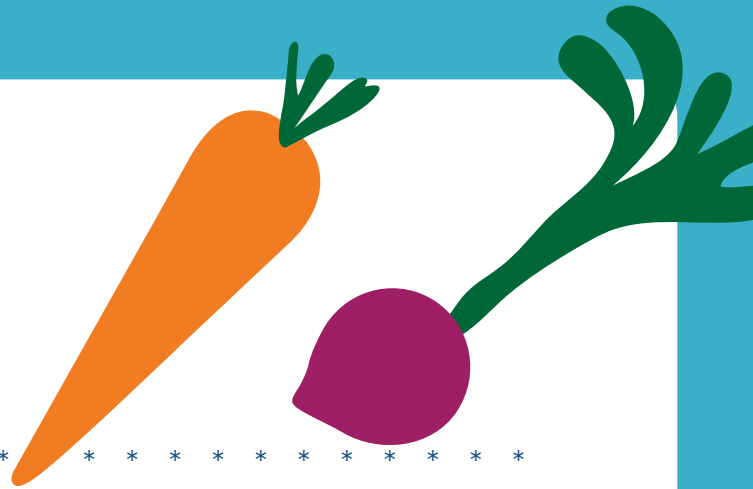


USDA FOODS: A Resource for Maximizing Food Budgets To Buy Local



* * * * *

USDA Foods in Child Nutrition Programs has a dual mission to support domestic agriculture and provide healthy food for schools and institutions participating in USDA’s Child Nutrition Programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Through the program, schools and institutions¹ may order a wide variety of high-quality fruits, vegetables, dairy products, whole grains, lean meats, and other protein options to serve to students as part of healthy meals and snacks.

How Do USDA Foods Work?

Schools participating in one of the USDA’s Child Nutrition Programs receive two types of support from USDA to serve nutritionally balanced meals and snacks. The bulk of the USDA’s support comes in the form of cash reimbursements which are provided to schools for the eligible meals and snacks they serve. In addition, schools also receive USDA Foods entitlement – each school receives a pre-determined allocation to order food procured by the USDA. USDA Foods make up about 15-20 percent of the food served in the NSLP. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) at the USDA procures USDA Foods to fulfill requests from participating schools, leveraging the large volumes of food served in Child Nutrition Programs to get competitive pricing and then passing those savings on to schools when they use their USDA Foods entitlement.

“USDA is a partner in meeting my local purchasing goals. I often shift my [USDA Foods] entitlement to products that

are not available locally and to products like the roast chicken that USDA Foods is able to offer at a lower price point than I could get as an individual school district.”

- Andrea Early, Director of School Nutrition,
Harrisonburg City Public Schools

How Do USDA Foods Support A School’s Local Purchasing Efforts?

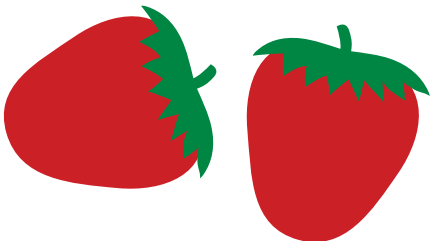
USDA Foods support local purchasing in several ways:

Maximizing Funds For Local Purchases

Whether in your home kitchen or a school cafeteria, every food dollar counts. By using USDA Foods in meals and snacks, particularly USDA Foods products that may not be available on the open market locally, schools can free up funds to spend on local purchases. Since the value of USDA Foods is often very competitive due to the high volumes of food procured by the USDA, fully utilizing USDA Foods ensures that a school district will get the most bang for its buck when buying local using its reimbursement dollars.

Championing American Agriculture

USDA Foods are all produced in the United States, so every USDA Food is local to someone! For example, Mississippi is the only State that produces significant commercial quantities of farmed catfish. If a school is located in the Southeast, USDA Foods catfish may be local, depending on the school’s definition of local. However, product origin labeling is not currently available for USDA Foods to school food authorities (SFAs) at the time of product selection. To identify USDA Foods that have been historically sourced in your area, review the **USDA Foods State of Origin Reports** (www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/state-origin-usda-foods). These reports indicate the State in which each USDA Foods product was produced by year.



¹ The term “schools” is referenced throughout this document, but please note this refers to schools and other Child Nutrition Program sponsors.

Supporting Local Processors

Many States allocate a portion of their USDA Foods entitlement to processors to further process USDA Foods. For example, they may send entitlement beans to a processor to make baked beans or burritos, or send apples to a processor to be sliced. In this way, local processors can benefit from the program. Check with your State Distributing Agency to see if there are approved USDA Foods processors in your area.

Promoting Local Fruit and Vegetable Producers

One of the ways that schools may choose to use their USDA Foods entitlement funds is through the USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (USDA DoD Fresh). This program provides schools with many different types and varieties of fresh produce grown in the United States, including a variety of package sizes, whole and pre-cut options, and locally grown produce when in season. The USDA DoD Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Order Receipt System (FFAVORS) includes State of Origin information for all products. FFAVORS provides reporting capabilities so schools can run reports to see how much local produce they have ordered. To learn more, check out our **USDA DoD Fresh Program Fact Sheet** (www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/using-dod-fresh-buy-local).

Learn More

Refer to the **USDA Foods in Schools page** (www.fns.usda.gov/usda-fis) of the FNS website for a complete list of USDA Foods available and information sheets for each product.

Contact information for State Distributing Agencies is available on the **Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) website** (www.fns.usda.gov/contacts).

For more information on USDA Foods processing, visit **USDA Foods Processing webpage** (www.fns.usda.gov/usda-fis/processor).

For more information about the USDA DoD Fresh Program, please refer to the **USDA DoD Fresh Program webpage** (www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/usda-dod-fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-program).



* * * * *

For more information and to sign up for The Dirt, the e-letter from the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program, visit

www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/e-letter-archive

Questions? Email us at SM.FN.FarmToSchool@usda.gov