



Background on Oregon's Farm to School Program

Oregon Department of Education established its farm to school program in 2009. At the heart of this work is fostering a space for students and staff to engage in garden-based education while building curiosity and shared awareness of healthy food choices. The program supports purchases of Oregon foods for meal programs which supports the local food system, connects students with their communities, and provides nourishing meals that also serve as educational opportunities.

How Many Programs Exist?

Oregon currently has 788 school gardens, and approximately 400 Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program and the Child & Adult Care Food Program that are reimbursed for Oregon grown and processed food through the ODE Child Nutrition Program Farm to School Grant. We are proud to support this work!

Key Points:

The Oregon Farm to CNP Grant Program is funded for the 2025-2027 biennium. North Wasco County SD 21 has been automatically opted in to receive a Farm to CNP Noncompetitive Reimbursement Grant (NCRG) in the amount of **\$13,184.08**

The grant period covers the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years, running from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2027. Grant funds reimburse qualifying purchases of Oregon-grown, produced, and processed foods served through NSLP, CACFP, and/or SFSP meal programs.

There are actions to take to access and utilize the award.

We are happy to report that the Oregon Legislature approved funding for the Oregon Farm to Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) Grant Program!

A portion of the total Farm to CNP Grant Program allocation funds the Noncompetitive Reimbursement Grant (NCRG), which reimburses eligible CNP Sponsors for Oregon-grown or processed foods served through their meal programs.

For the 2025–2027 biennium, \$3 million is allocated to the NCRG. This noncompetitive funding opportunity is available to all public Oregon School Food Authorities participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), center-based Sponsors of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Sponsors of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

No application is required to receive a grant award. North Wasco County SD 21 has been automatically opted in to receive a Farm to CNP Noncompetitive Reimbursement Grant in the amount of \$13,184.08 for the 2025–2027 biennium (July 1, 2025– June 30, 2027), with the opportunity to apply for additional funds through the Farm to CNP Competitive Reimbursement Grant (CRG) once the initial \$13,184.08 award is fully expended.

Award amounts for the 2025-2027 biennium were calculated using total meal counts (lunches, breakfasts, snacks, and suppers) from July 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025

There are rules that need to be followed when purchasing and product must come Oregon only.

Farm and Production Practices

1. Is water tested annually?
2. Are test records on file?
3. Are wells protected from contamination?
4. If raw manure is incorporated into the soil, is it added at least 2 weeks prior to planting or 120 days prior to harvest?
5. Are baskets, totes, or other containers used to collect or transport food products cleaned and sanitized before each use?
6. Are packing materials used for food products clean?
7. Are packing containers appropriate for food contact?
8. Are food products kept at appropriate temperatures?
9. Is the source of wash water used on food products and storage containers protected from cross contamination (e.g. manure, livestock, pets)?
10. Are food products washed, rinsed and sanitized?
11. Are food product contact surfaces washed, rinsed and sanitized at the end of each day?
12. Is there a pest control program in place?
13. Is the food product packing facility enclosed?

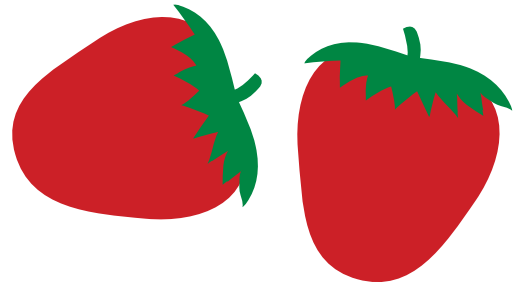
Worker Sanitation and Safety

1. Are workers trained about proper sanitation and hygiene practices?
2. Are handwashing facilities available to workers?
3. Do workers wash hands at appropriate times – after eating, smoking and using restroom?
4. Do workers limit bare hand contact with foods?
5. Are workers excluded from handling food products if they are ill?
6. Do workers put on clean aprons or clothes prior to washing and packing product?
7. Are different gloves worn for harvesting and packing?



SELLING LOCAL FOOD TO SCHOOLS

A Resource for Producers



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ACROSS THE COUNTRY, an increasing number of schools are sourcing locally grown foods for their school meals and snacks and providing complementary educational activities that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition. As a farmer, rancher, fisherman, or other food producer, large or small, this means that there are market opportunities in your own backyard and a chance for your farm's bounty to nourish children in your community. You can play a role in supplying local products to schools to serve during breakfast, lunch, snack times, and supper, as well as educating students about food and agriculture.

School food service programs often work with tight budgets, but this means they know how to be creative in order to serve a variety of high-quality fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, fish and seafood, and meats to schoolchildren. For example, schools may be interested in competitively priced products that can be included in recipes where the cosmetic appearance does not need to be standard, like products with superficial imperfections or products in need of a market. Since schools have loyal, repeat-customers and often serve meals nearly year-round, they can provide reliable sources of revenue for local farms.

Creating Market Opportunities: A Fish Tale

Real Good Fish, a Fiscal Year 2017 USDA Farm to School Grantee and a community-supported fishery in California, launched the Bay2Tray program to increase access to locally caught fish in school meals, while also supporting the local fishing community. The program purchases seafood from fishers that is often discarded, not due to taste or quality issues, but lack of existing markets, and processes it at a price point that meets school food budgets. Schools get a lower price on high-quality product, and fishers get paid for the delicious fish they catch. It's a win-win!

Selling to Schools: Four Paths

Schools buy local products through a variety of different channels. Some receive direct deliveries from farmers or pick up orders at the farmers' market. Others purchase local products through distributors or acquire them through the USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (USDA DoD Fresh) produce vendors. Some purchase local foods that have already been turned into ready-to-eat items by food processors, while others seek raw ingredients that they can serve fresh or use for scratch cooking.

Here are four paths you can explore to partner with schools or districts near you:

1. Selling directly to schools.

Some schools buy items directly from local producers. This is often the case if a producer can meet a school's needs when it comes to volume, packaging, delivery, or other requirements. If you aim to sell directly to a school district, you'll want to make sure that your capacity and its needs are aligned. While you might initially think a school's demand might be too much for your farm, you might be surprised—depending on where (salad bar versus serving line) or how often (once per week versus daily) items are served, schools may have vastly different volume needs for different products. For example, a very large school district will only need a few cases of jalapeño peppers per week for its taco bar!



Local products might be served in meal programs and snacks, but your food can also be offered as part of educational activities and at special events. Some schools host Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) pick-up sites. Others conduct fundraisers, where a portion of local produce sales go back to the school or an affiliated organization. And others host farm stands, farmers' markets, or family engagement nights. The lunchroom isn't the only place where local food can be found at a school. If selling to the cafeteria seems like too much at the start, focus first on opportunities that are right-sized for your farm. Sales of local food that support educational activities or events can help you build good relationships with schools and provide you flexibility to grow your capacity to sell to other programs over time.

Sun Produce Cooperative (Sun Produce Co-op) is a multi-stakeholder agricultural and marketing organization that serves the Phoenix metropolitan area in Arizona. In an effort to build connections with schools, it developed a program modeled off the traditional Community Support Agriculture program, but with a fundraising twist. The FarmRaiser program reserves a portion of the profits from every box sold to the district hosting the program.

"Offering FarmRaiser bags in schools is important to Sun Produce Co-op farmers because the program not only helps them sell more produce but also raises money for school projects. And it is a gateway to strengthening farm to school programs. The farmers often get to meet the students, parents, and staff in the process and always receive a warm welcome! The FarmRaiser bags help reinforce hands-on learning and nutrition education."

- Cindy Gentry,
President of Sun Produce Cooperative

2. Selling to intermediated markets that provide food to schools

Did you know schools most commonly purchase local product through intermediaries, such as distributors, food hubs, and agricultural cooperatives? School districts often contract with these types of organizations-most frequently distributors-to provide and deliver specific foods for school meal and snack programs, such as produce. During the competitive procurement process, districts may ask these organizations to provide local products when available, putting some of the responsibility on the intermediaries to find and purchase local items for the district. This can simplify the purchasing process for the school, and it can also assist producers who may not have the capacity to meet a school's delivery or other requirements directly. If a producer is interested in working with an intermediary, the school's nutrition director or State agency can connect you with its vendor, which may choose to purchase directly from you. You'll want to learn about its vendor requirements, such as specific food safety certifications, that you would need to comply with in order to become a supplier. There is no Federal requirement that producers have Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification in order to sell to school meal programs, although some schools or intermediators may choose to require it.

3. Working with the USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (USDA DoD Fresh)

Schools may elect to spend a portion of their USDA Foods entitlement to receive fresh fruits and vegetables through USDA DoD Fresh. This program is a partnership between USDA and the Department of Defense (DoD) Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), which contracts with commercial produce distributors, to purchase and deliver produce to participating schools. Producers wishing to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to schools through the USDA DoD Fresh program are encouraged to work directly with the USDA DoD vendor(s) in their State. Producers can find the USDA DoD Fresh vendor in their State by looking at the "**Market Fresh**" **contract for that State** (www.dla.mil/TroopSupport/Subsistence/FoodServices/Contract-Search/). Produce distributors and producers must meet the produce quality and food safety requirements defined in the contract.





4. Becoming a USDA Foods vendor

USDA Foods provides about 15-20 percent of the food served in the National School Lunch Program. USDA purchases American-grown fruits, vegetables, livestock, poultry, eggs, fish, grains, dairy, nuts/seeds, and oil for USDA Foods in Schools. Procurement is managed by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) using competitive solicitation and award processes. Businesses (including farmers, fishers, ranchers, growers, and processors) must become approved USDA vendors in order to submit bids to supply USDA Foods. Producers can learn more about the AMS procurement process and how to become approved vendors at the [AMS Become a Food Vendor webpage](http://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved) (www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved).

Making the Connection

School nutrition directors typically coordinate food purchases and menu plans for the schools within their districts. Since they have a pulse on the district's food needs, purchasing schedules, and menus, they can help you determine whether your products are a good fit, and they can give you a sense of how best to get involved. You can typically find contact information for school nutrition departments by visiting the districts' websites.

You will be most effective in marketing your products if you learn as much as possible about the schools you hope to work with. Do they serve breakfast, lunch, snacks, and/or dinner, or just lunch? How many students do they serve each day? Do they serve meals in the summer? How do they currently source food? Which distributors do they currently work with? Consider eating a meal at the school or checking out the school's monthly menus online to get a sense of what types of items are served. Information about schools, what local items they purchase, and which products they'd like to buy in the future is also available via their responses to the [USDA Farm to School Census](http://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/) (farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/).

Understanding the kitchens and preparation environments of your prospective school customers is also key, specifically in the areas of staff skills, equipment available, time to prepare food, and storage space. Some schools have large walk-in freezers, and some have minimal cold or freezer storage space. Some schools are equipped with highly trained staff and state-of-the-art equipment to process fresh food, while others don't have much more than convection ovens to heat and serve pre-prepared meals. By working with the school nutrition director, you will learn about the school's capacity to handle local products.

Here are some topics to cover in a conversation between a producer and a school nutrition director to discuss local purchasing:

- (1) Desired products & varieties
- (2) Quality standards & sizing
- (3) Quantities
- (4) Pack sizes
- (5) Food safety
- (6) Insurance and licenses
- (7) Delivery sites & distribution logistics
- (8) Procurement process & payment
- (9) Contingencies

How Do Schools Buy Food?

School food authorities that participate in Child Nutrition Programs, such as the National School Lunch Program, receive cash reimbursements for the eligible meals they serve. They use these funds to purchase food and cover other expenses, like labor and supplies. In accordance with Federal regulations, schools are required to follow competitive procurement guidelines. In short, schools must either compare simple price quotes or conduct more formal solicitation processes, depending on the volume of the sale. For purchases of less than \$10,000, an informal direct purchase called a "micro-purchase" may be allowable. The updated Federal procurement regulations allow for State agencies and program operators to self-certify an increased micro-purchase threshold of up to \$50,000, and even over \$50,000 in some situations, as long as regulatory requirements are followed. For more information, see [Updates to the Federal Micro-Purchase Threshold in 2 CFR 200.320 \(a\)\(1\)](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/updates-federal-micro-purchase-threshold) (www.fns.usda.gov/cn/updates-federal-micro-purchase-threshold).



Schools use solicitations to communicate what they're looking for and how you may contend for that sale. Solicitations can be as simple as a product description in a phone call, or as complex as a formal Request for Proposals. Regardless of the procurement process, schools can use a number of tactics to target local producers and products, such as specifying farm size, freshness, and/or native varieties. They can also use a geographic preference in the selection process to give certain local products a competitive boost when compared to non-local products.

Educating Students

In addition to selling products to schools, producers can play important roles in exposing children to agriculture and teaching them about food and nutrition. Educational opportunities such as farm tours or classroom/cafeteria visits might be a good fit. Sometimes schools can pay for these services through grants or other funding streams, but even if they can't the relationships are mutually beneficial. You might benefit from a chance to teach students about the food system and healthy eating, creating future customers while getting to build relationships in a new potential market space. We all know that students who feel a connection to the local food served in their meals and snacks are more likely to actually eat it!

Learn More

For more information about supplying local foods to USDA Child Nutrition Programs, see the Bringing the Farm to School Producer Resources at www.farmtoschool.org/bringingf2s.

For more information and resources about local procurement regulations and serving local food in school meals, see www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/procuring-local-foods.



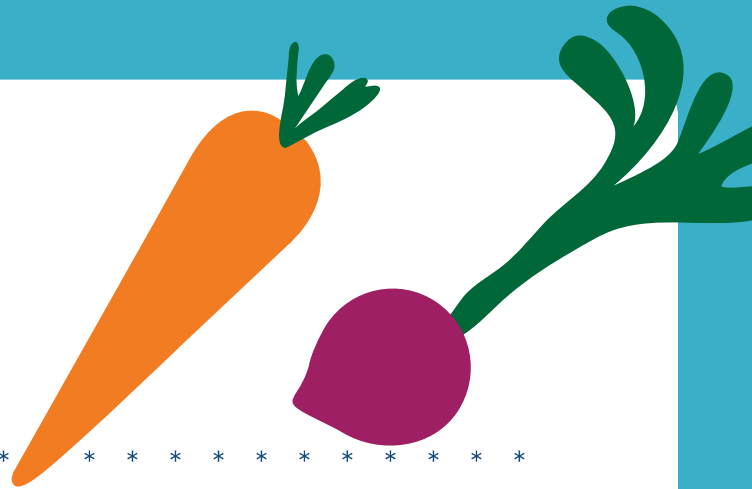
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For more information and to sign up for The Dirt, the e-letter from the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program, visit www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/e-letter-archive.

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



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 (SFP). 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?

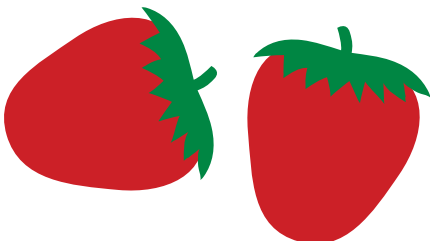
USDA Foods support local purchasing in several ways:

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](http://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/using-dod-fresh-buy-local) (www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/using-dod-fresh-buy-local).

Learn More

Refer to the [USDA Foods in Schools page](http://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-fis) (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](http://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts) (www.fns.usda.gov/contacts).

For more information on USDA Foods processing, visit [USDA Foods Processing webpage](http://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-fis/processor) (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](http://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/usda-dod-fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-program) (www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/usda-dod-fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-program).



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

PEARL'S PLACE
HOOD RIVER, OR

Walter Wells & Sons, LLC

Hood River, OR

Glacier-fed Fruit that Speaks for Itself!



Walter Wells & Sons/Viewmont Orchards, is a 5th Generation Family Farm operated by the Wells Family in Hood River, OR. We grow Pears, Apples, Cherries, Peaches, Plums, and numerous other types of fruits and vegetables on our acreage on the east side of the lush Hood River Valley.



We are a conventional farming operation that prides itself on using Integrated Pest Management – meaning, we do our best to increase the BENEFICIAL insect population by adopting a soft spray program. We firmly believe this creates more sustainability while providing top quality fruit to our customers.



Our farming operation includes a cold storage facility, packing house, processing operation, and a direct sales fruit stand named **Pearl's Place**.

This diversity of operations allows our farming business to seek out different opportunities like direct sales to customers, distribution of product into Portland, OR and other regional markets, supporting school lunch and FFA fundraising programs, and distribution of fruit into the world marketplace including across the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

To learn more, go to PearlsPlaceFruit.com and follow us on Instagram and Facebook @pearlsplacefruit. Pearl's Place Fruit Stand hours vary throughout the year. Call (541) 386-3888 or look online for our current hours.

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Red D'Anjou
Bartlett
Bosc
Comice
Forelle
Starkrimson

Peach Varieties
Flamin' Fury
Red Haven
O'Henry
Diamond Princess
Snow Princess
Bright Princess
Suncrest
Elberta
Candy Red

Apple Varieties
Gala
Honeycrisp
Gold Delicious
Red Delicious
Granny Smith
Sonata
Fuji

Cherry Varieties
Bing
Rainier
Montmorency
Lapin
Regina
Sweethart