

Why Consider Farm to School?

Farm to School enables school children to have access to nutritious food while simultaneously benefitting communities & local farmers. In addition to supplying nourishing, locally grown food in schools, the Farm to School Program encourages and supports nutrition and agricultural education through food sampling, school gardens, composting programs, and farm tours. Such experiences help children understand where their food comes from and how their food choices affect their bodies, environment, and community.

Growing Farm to School Together

The success of any Farm to School program is based on people getting involved. In an effort to support each of you, the agencies of the Iowa Department of Education (DE), Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) and the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship (IDALS) have come together to help provide clarification and understanding of some of the issues facing Farm to School.

Contact the following individuals for additional clarification within the respective agencies:

To Contact IDALS- (Tammy Stotts) at Tammy.stotts@iowaagriculture.gov

To Contact DE: (Ann Feilmann) at Ann.Feilmann@iowa.gov

To Contact DIA: (James Romer) at James.romer@dia.iowa.gov

Looking for Direction?

The Iowa Department of Education's (DE) goal for Nutrition Programs is to facilitate and promote quality USDA Child Nutrition Programs that will benefit the education, health and well-being of the citizens of Iowa. In relation to Farm to School, DE oversees the following:

- Procurement Questions
- HACCP Planning



The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS):

- Is the lead agency for the Farm to School Program (since 2007 legislation)
- Offers funding opportunities through various initiatives to allow schools and growers to come together to incorporate fresh, locally grown foods
- Creates tools such as the Farm to School directory to identify Iowa fruit and vegetable growers



The Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA): is a multifaceted regulatory agency charged with protecting the health and safety of Iowans. Their responsibilities include:

- Review of HACCP plan and variances for specialized processes
- Licensing of food processors (when required)
- Inspection of food establishments (schools)



Iowa Farm to School Program

Q & A

for School Food Authorities (SFAs) addressing some of the most common issues related to Farm to School.

This is a collaborative effort from the following Iowa Agencies:

- Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- Department of Education
- Department of Inspections and Appeals

This brochure was provided by IDALS on behalf of the Iowa Farm to School Program.

Rules and Regulations

All for one and one for all...

Within the state of Iowa, all schools are listed as food establishments and must adhere to policy within Code of Iowa Chapter 137F.

Volunteers:

Volunteers offer a great way to get the community involved and gain support for your program. In addition, they can save you time and money! There are no state policies barring the use of volunteers; however, make sure you are aware of your district's volunteer requirements before recruiting people.

When using volunteers in the kitchen, adhere to the same rules and regulations that you would for a paid employee. Volunteers need to be trained for the task which they are performing.

Donated

Schools may accept donated produce. There are NO restrictions on schools accepting/using donated fruits or vegetables. The same diligence regarding food safety should be used when accepting donated foods as when purchasing foods.

It's Worth It!

While it may be more work to serve locally grown produce, consider these factors:

- Farm fresh produce tastes better...resulting in more consumption/less waste (up to an additional serving per student per day)
- Increase in school meal participation when local foods are served (average of 3-16%)
- Less price fluctuation when sourcing from one local venue vs. multiple sources & locations

GEOGRAPHICAL PREFERENCE AND USE OF LOCAL FOOD

Procurement Notes:

- Procurement guidelines still require free and open competition.
- Threshold requirements for the buyer still apply and indicate informal or formal process.

Geographic Preference:

- If it falls under the procurement threshold, a buyer may compare prices from farmers within the area without a written or sealed bid. Be sure to maintain notes and results of emails or phone conversations.
- When evaluating bid responses and comparing with non-local products, geographical preference allows a buyer to assign extra points to an agricultural product raised within the buyer's definition of "local" as long as product is unprocessed.
- It is important to keep in mind that local preference should not be defined in a way that unnecessarily limits competition such as within a very short distance, which contains only one producer.

"What does unprocessed mean?" Different things to different agencies...

- USDA includes agricultural products that are harvested and also washed, chopped, cut, sliced, diced or shucked, bagged or pasteurized when identifying products that are "unprocessed" for geographical preference in the procurement process.
- Under Food Safety laws in Iowa, if an item is packaged and/or chopped, cut, sliced, diced, shucked (most anything beyond washed), the product is considered "processed" and requires that the vendor/supplier be licensed by DIA.

"What does this mean to school buyers?"

- If you wish to purchase local products that are packaged or cut in any way but not cooked, seasoned, frozen, canned or combined with any other products, you may apply a geographical preference in the procurement process; however, the supplier needs to be licensed by DIA.
- If you are procuring fresh, whole products that may be washed but not packaged or cut, the supplier does not need to be licensed as a processor in Iowa and you may apply a geographical preference in the procurement process.