

# An Introduction to Farm to School

For New Food Service Directors



## Instructor's Manual

Time: 1 Hour

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# Background Information

*Note to Instructor: The purpose of the background information section is to help you become familiar with the context of the lesson. It is not a part of the lesson detail.*

## INTRODUCTION

Across the country, an increasing number of schools and districts have begun to source more foods locally and to provide complementary educational activities to students that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition. This nationwide movement to enrich children’s bodies and minds while supporting local economies is often referred to as “farm to school.” The term encompasses efforts that bring local or regionally produced foods into school cafeterias; hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits, and culinary classes; and the integration of food-related education into the regular, standards-based classroom curriculum. This presentation serves as an introduction to farm to school for new food service directors.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the training participants will:

- » Understand the term “farm to school” and all that it encompasses
- » Know the proven benefits of farm to school programs
- » Be familiar with the types of farm to school program support provided by the federal government, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations
- » Understand that there are many mechanisms by which to source local products
- » Have a basic understanding of how the geographic preference option can be applied
- » Know where to go for additional farm to school information and guidance

## DELIVERY OF THE PRESENTATION

While the script below might seem rigid, the tone of the presentation should be fun and conversational, and it will be difficult to achieve such a tone if you read the script word for word. Feel free to give examples from your own experience, ask questions that seem relevant, and explain something differently if what the script says does not seem clear or if you find it awkward to say. Most importantly, *have fun!*

## LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE

Time Allowed	Topic
2 minutes	Section I: Introduction and Overview
5 minutes	Section II: What is Farm to School and what are its benefits?
10 minutes	Section III: State, Federal, and Nonprofit Support
25 minutes	Section IV: Sourcing Locally, and Correctly!
5 minutes	Section V: Incorporating Local Foods into School Meals: An Example

5 minutes	Section VI: Farm to School Resources
8 minutes	Questions

## PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Before giving this lesson, you will need to perform the following tasks:

- » Think about your experiences with farm to school programs, local foods, and food, nutrition, and agricultural education.
- » Print handouts
  - Make a copy of each of the following handouts for each of the orientation participants, and distribute them in a packet (in the order you'll refer to them) at the beginning of your presentation:
    - ***Handout #1 – Results from the 2011-2012 Farm to School Snapshot Survey***
    - ***Handout #2 – The USDA Farm to School Program***
    - ***Handout #3 – Fact Sheet: Using DoD Fresh to purchase local produce***
    - ***Handout #4 – Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As***
    - ***Handout #5 – Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As – Part II***
  - Make 2 to 3 copies of each of the following handouts, to be passed around the room during your presentation.
    - ***Handout #6 – Kidchen Expedition Introduction***
    - ***Handout #7 – Kidchen Expedition – Roasted Radishes and Root Vegetables Recipe***
    - ***Handout #8 – States with Farm to School Legislation***
    - ***Handout #9 – My Oregon Grown Plate***
    - ***Handout #10 – January Menu from Minneapolis Public Schools***
- » Visit the USDA Farm to School website to determine the current status of the grant program. If the application period is open, print out any relevant documents, such as a press release or FAQ sheet.

# Lesson Plan

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## SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

### Show Slide: An Introduction to Farm to School

*\*Instructor's Note: Be sure this slide is showing as participants enter.*

**DO:** After distributing a packet of handouts to each participant, warmly greet the group and introduce yourself, letting them know a bit about your background, and especially any experience you have that might be relevant to this presentation. For example, have you worked as or with a food service director that has sourced local food? Are you an avid gardener or from a farming family? Do you love going to the farmers' market?

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### Show Slide: Overview

**SAY:** During this presentation, I will:

- define the term “farm to school” and talk about the benefits of farm to school programs;
- discuss some of the support that is available to schools and districts from state agencies, the federal government, and non-profit organizations.
- discuss the potential sources of local foods and talk about how local foods can be procured in accordance with regulations;
- show you how a school lunch menu might evolve over time to incorporate local produce;
- introduce you to some farm to school resources;
- and, time allowing, answer your questions.

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## SECTION II: WHAT IS FARM TO SCHOOL AND WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

### Show Slide: What is farm to school and what are its benefits?

**ASK:** What do you think of when you hear the term “farm to school”?

*Note: If the group is large enough, they will almost certainly touch upon the two most important components of farm to school: procuring local foods for school meals, and providing food education.*

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### Show Slide: Farm to school defined

**SAY:** You were all on exactly the right track! Farm to School is about serving local food to kids and teaching them, through hands-on experiences, about where their food comes from, how it's grown, and how to eat healthfully. Let's look at these two different components – the procurement piece and the education piece – in a little more depth.

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### Show Slide: Local sourcing

**SAY:** Farm to school isn't just about fresh fruits and vegetables, and it's not just about farmers. Local and regional foods can also include beans, grains and flour, meat, poultry, fish, condiments, herbs, eggs, and dairy; these products can come from local farmers, ranchers, fisherpeople, food processors, and distributors of all sizes.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are a common and a logical starting place for local procurement. Fresh fruits are especially easy because many can be served with little to no preparation beyond washing. But the most comprehensive farm to school programs incorporate local products in all of the food categories. Some of the more developed programs adjust existing recipes and menus to accommodate local products (e.g. using bison in place of beef, or barley in place of rice); develop entirely new recipes and menus based on local products and local food traditions; use the summer months to preserve the local abundance (e.g. cutting corn off the cob and freezing it for later use).

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### Show Slide: Food, nutrition, and ag education

**SAY:** In addition to local food procurement, farm to school programs can include experiential learning opportunities such as farm visits, school gardening, and cooking classes. Oftentimes, these lessons about food, agriculture, and nutrition can be integrated into normal math, science, and health curricula.

Farm to school procurement activities can enhance educational activities, and vice versa. A procurement relationship established with, for example, a local farmer, might lead to a farm field trip or a farmer classroom visit. Food and nutrition education in the cafeteria, including taste tests and posters, might lead to more clean plates as kids begin accepting new and different foods.

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### Show Slide: Farm to school is growing!

**SAY:** The first farm to school pilot projects were started in California and Florida in the late 1990s. Since then, farm to school has grown like a zucchini in the summer! Today, the National Farm to School Network estimates that more than 2,000 districts and 12,000 schools in all 50 states are doing some type of farm to school activity, and that nearly 6 million students are reached through those efforts. Additionally, around 13 million is spent on local food for school meals annually!

**DO:** Refer to *Handout #1 – Results from the 2011-2012 Farm to School Snapshot Survey*, in their packets.

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### Show Slide: Why farm to school?

**SAY:** So, why has farm to school become so popular? The reasons are innumerable; this slide lists the benefits that are supported by research:

Farm to school programs:

- » strengthen children's and communities' knowledge about, agriculture, food, nutrition and the environment;

- » increase children’s consumption of fruits and vegetables;
- » increase market opportunities for farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors and food manufacturers, and
- » support economic development across numerous sectors.

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### SECTION III: STATE, FEDERAL, AND NONPROFIT SUPPORT

#### Show Slide: State, federal, and nonprofit support

**SAY:** Part of the reason that farm to school programs have flourished in recent years is because of institutional support from the federal governments, state governments, and nonprofit organizations. Let’s take a look at what kind of support is being provided.

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#### Show Slide: F2S Coordinators, depts of ag

**SAY:** Many states have created positions for farm to school coordinators who are responsible for supporting farm to school efforts statewide. This slide shows states that have a designated a farm to school coordinator, or even multiple coordinators, in their department of agriculture.

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#### Show Slide: F2S coordinators, depts of ed

**SAY:** And this slide shows states that have a dedicated farm to school coordinator at their state department of education.

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#### Show Slide: F2S coordinators, depts of ag & ed

**SAY:** When you combine these, you see that most states now have a farm to school coordinator, and quite a few (pictured in orange) have coordinators at both the state department of agriculture and education.

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#### Show Slide: State spotlight: Oklahoma

**SAY:** The support that all of these state coordinators are providing is diverse. They are doing everything from connecting producers to schools by hosting statewide meetings to developing farm to school curriculum to working to create local center-of-the-plate menu items that will be served throughout the state. As an example, I’m going to share with you just *one* of these state agency developed resources.

**ASK:** Is anyone here from Oklahoma? Did you know that your state has passed farm to school legislation and has an amazing farm to school program?

**SAY:** In 2006, the Oklahoma State legislature passed the Oklahoma Farm to School Program Act, which recognized the benefits of farm to school programs, established a statewide program with staff housed in the

department of agriculture, outlined the duties of the farm to school program director, and established the Oklahoma farm to school website.

Today, the Oklahoma farm to school website is home to a host of resources, including the one I have highlighted on this slide, which is particularly relevant to food service directors:

Kidchen Expedition is a packet of educational materials that promotes healthful eating and simple and creative ways to use Oklahoma-grown produce. It includes a cookbook with recipes featuring local foods in servings of 50 or 100; factsheets for school food service staff on purchasing fresh produce from local growers, selecting and storing local produce; assembling a kitchen cart for classroom demonstrations; and an Oklahoma harvest calendar.

**DO:** Pass around *Handouts #6 and #7 – Oklahoma Kidchen Expedition Materials*.

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### **Show Slide: States with F2S legislation**

**SAY:** Oklahoma isn't the first state to have passed farm to school related legislation. In recent years, many states have passed laws that support, authorize, or fund farm to school activities. In addition to establishing statewide programs and funding farm to school coordinators, state-level farm to school legislation has established state task forces, workgroups, or inter-agency councils, established pilot programs, allocated funding to farm to school grant programs, created promotional programs, and encouraged schools to purchase state-grown products.

For example, the Oregon State Legislature passed the Farm to School and School Garden Act in June 2011, which funded a grant program that will provide additional reimbursements for Oregon-produced food. In the District of Columbia, the Healthy Schools Act provides an additional five cents reimbursement per day if one component of the meal is locally grown and unprocessed. Colorado passed a law that created the 13-member interagency Farm to School Coordination Task Force. (Its members include food service director and agricultural representatives as well as staff from the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Public Health and Environment.)

**DO:** Pass around *Handout #8 – States with Farm to School Legislation*.

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### **Show Slide: Nonprofit organizations**

**SAY:** There are also numerous nonprofit organizations, from community-based to national groups, as well colleges and universities that support farm to school efforts in all sorts of ways.

If you're already pretty familiar with farm to school, then one of the organizations you might know about is the National Farm to School Network. The Network has a farm to school coordinator in every state as well as farm to school regional leads. They conduct surveys, compile resources, organize conference calls, hold a national Farm to Cafeteria Conference, and host a monthly webinar series. There are lots of other organizations that support farm to school as well (only a handful of which are represented on this slide), working on all aspects of farm to school.



Many universities are also involved in farm to school efforts through their extension programs. The University of Minnesota Extension has produced a Farm to School Toolkit for foodservice staff that includes videos, online trainings, resources for getting started, and food safety information. There are also great state-level Agriculture in the Classroom programs operated by extension, non-profit organizations, or state agencies. Oregon's agriculture in the classroom program produces materials that educate kids about local agriculture, and then go even further to tie local foods to nutrition guidelines.

**DO:** Pass around *Handout #9 – My Oregon Grown Plate*.

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### Show Slide: How is USDA involved?

**SAY:** The federal government also supports farm to school initiatives in a variety of ways. Local purchasing, along with educational programs to get kids excited about healthy choices, can be integrated into all of the programs listed on this slide, which USDA's Food and Nutrition Service administers.

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### Show Slide: USDA's legislative mandate

**SAY:** USDA had been supporting initiatives to grow local food systems for many years, but the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) (the same law that reformed school meals) tasked the Secretary of Agriculture with creating a dedicated farm to school program that would provide grants, training, and technical assistance.

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### Show Slide: Farm to School Grants

**SAY:** The HHFKA allocated \$5 million annually, through fiscal year 2015, to provide those services. In fiscal year 2013, USDA awarded the first round of farm to school grants to schools in the planning and implementation stages of farm to school program development, and to entities working with schools to support their farm to school efforts.

This slide shows the three different types of grants that will be awarded in FY 2014. (Read the slide.)

*Note: Do some research beforehand on the current status of the grant program to determine whether the application period is currently open. If it is, say so. You might even print out a copy of the press release or RFA if the application period is just beginning.*

The Farm to School Team is also working on a lot of training and technical assistance materials to help schools all over the country to start and implement farm to school programs, regardless of whether they receive farm to school grants, including a manual on local purchasing, fact sheets, and a farm to school planning toolkit and webinar series. They are also conducting a nationwide farm to school census in the spring of 2013.

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### Show Slide: FNS staffing & offices

**SAY:** FNS is the lead agency for the USDA Farm to School Team. In each of the 7 FNS regional offices, one staff member has been designated as the "Farm to School Coordinator." Farm to School Coordinators are available

to provide farm to school-related policy guidance and interpretation, and to help State and local agencies in their region integrate farm to school into the child nutrition programs that they already operate. They might also be available to speak at conferences and attend ribbon-cuttings or other media events.

At the National Level, the USDA farm to school program is supported by a F2S National Director and small staff as well as an F2S Management Team that includes high level USDA officials from FNS, AMS, and ERS.

**DO:** Refer attendees to *Handout #2 – The USDA Farm to School Program*, in their packets.

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## SECTION IV: SOURCING LOCALLY, AND CORRECTLY!

**Show Slide:** Group discussion: What's *your* experience with local food?

**SAY:** In just a moment, we're going to discuss the mechanisms you can use to procure local foods, but first, I want to find out about *your* experiences with farm to school and local agriculture.

**ASK:** Does your school have a farm to school program? What about a school garden? What grows locally where you live?

*Note: Take 5 to 10 minutes for participants to volunteer answers to these questions. If the audience is shy, talk about what grows locally in your region.*

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**Show Slide:** Sourcing locally, and correctly!

**SAY:** Now, we're going to get into some of the nitty gritty details of how to procure local foods.

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**Show Slide:** The procurement process

**SAY:** As you learned earlier in this orientation, these are the steps of the procurement process.

- » It begins with planning – Which goods or services do you need? How much do you need? When do you need them?
- » Once you've determined your needs, you document them in detail.
- » Then, you make these specifications known to those who might be able to fulfill them.
- » You award a contract for one of the responders to provide the needed goods and services.
- » And, finally, you manage the contract to ensure that everything is being provided according to your specifications.

If you're spending Federal funds, then at the heart of this process [advance slide for heart to appear] are the Federal procurement principles. The government requires all of its grantees to abide by these principles to ensure that taxpayer money, when used to purchase products or services, is spent only on the best and most responsive products at the lowest possible prices.

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### Show Slide: Federal procurement principles

**SAY:** The most important principle of a sound procurement is that it is competitive. The regulations use the term “open and free competition,” which essentially means that all potential suppliers are on a level playing field. Ensuring open and free competition means that procurers can’t:

- » Place unreasonable requirements on firms in order for them to qualify to do business,
- » Have organizational conflicts of interest,
- » Specify only a brand name product instead of allowing an equal product to be offered and describing the performance of other relevant requirements of the procurement
- » Or make any arbitrary decisions in the procurement process

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### Show Slide: Where to get local foods

**SAY:** There are many models for getting local foods into school cafeterias, and they are not necessarily exclusive of each other.

Through distributors: Many schools work with their distributors to source local products, specifying a preference for local foods when the contract is established. This is a very easy way to bring local products into schools without creating separate distribution channels.

DoD Fresh: Many DoD Fresh vendors offer local products through the FFAVORS catalog. Locally sourced produce is marked with a “locally grown” tag in the online catalog.

Through food service management companies: Similarly, schools can request that their food service management company procure local foods.

From food processors: SFAs may opt to buy local ingredients and then procure the processing services of a processor to convert the locally grown product to a finished product, such as salsa, carrot chips, ready-to-serve chicken legs, or hamburger patties.

From individual producers: Some schools choose to purchase foods directly from local farmers, ranchers, and fishermen. Even when you’re getting food straight from the source, though, there are many ways to go about it. Some schools set up contracts with producers well in advance of the growing season, establishing a specific volume of product they intend to buy at a specific price. Other schools buy month-to-month based on what’s affordable and available. Sometimes farmers deliver straight to schools, and other times schools pick up produce at the farm or at a farmers’ market. Some schools even harvest the produce themselves at U-picks!

From producer co-ops and food hubs: In some areas, producers have organized into cooperatives, aggregating their products and combining their marketing efforts. These groups are more likely than a single producer to be able to fulfill large orders, deliver directly to schools, and to provide some minimal processing.

From school gardens: And, finally, while school gardens don’t usually produce enough food to make up a significant portion of a school meal, fruit, vegetables, eggs, and other products grown on-site at school can supplement salad bars and be served as snacks.

*Note: Instead of reading through this slide, you can begin by asking your audience what are some sources of local food that they use or sources they are interested in learning more about. You may want to write each source down on a white board or post-it note in order for the audience to see the variety of local sources.*

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### **Show Slide: Sourcing locally, and correctly!**

**SAY:** There are a variety of ways to source local products and stay in compliance with procurement regulations. These mechanisms include:

- » By including geographic preference points in specifications.
- » By including characteristics related to fresh/local in specifications (e.g. “must have been harvested within 2 days of delivery.”)
- » By approaching only local sources under an informal procurement.
- » Unintentionally, because local products (like milk, or produce in peak season) happen to be cheaper.
- » Through a procurement agent (such as a food service management company)
- » Purchasing directly from a producer (like through a forward contract).
- » Through DoD Fresh

I’m going to discuss geographic preference in depth, but first I’ll touch on the other methods.

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### **Show Slide: Procuring local foods without even trying**

**SAY:** Some products, because of their characteristics, are more likely to be local than others. For example, fluid milk is produced in almost every State, and since fluids cost a lot to transport, local milk is likely to be cheaper, so most milk is pretty local.

Some States, like California and Florida, are major producers of fruits and vegetables. If an SFA in Southern California chooses to purchase avocados, chances are they’ll be from Southern California. If a Florida school chooses to purchase US-grown oranges in winter, chances are they’ll be from Florida. California and Florida are unique, but the same principle holds for when you procure products that are unique to any region—we’ll talk more about that when I get to the next slide.

The point is that oftentimes, schools are buying local foods through distributors without even knowing it. Working with your distributors to find out where your food is coming from will allow you to include these “unintentionally local” foods in your tally of local purchases, and might enable you to reach out to those local suppliers to learn more about their operations, invite them into the classroom for a talk, or even arrange a field trip.

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### **Show Slide: Specifications related to local food**

**SAY:** Including a specification that foods be fresh (harvested within a day or two of delivery) is one way to increase the likelihood that a local vendor will win the contract. Another way is choose to purchase a type of seafood that’s only caught in waters off the coast of your State (or a freshwater fish that’s only available in

local lakes and rivers), or a variety that's only grown by farmers in your region. Offering unique varieties often makes for great learning opportunities as well!

In addition to specifying a variety or harvest time, you can include other standards in your specifications to ensure you are receiving the exact product you need. Remember, when writing your specifications you must ensure that you are not unreasonably limiting competition, so if there is only one supplier who can provide no-spray apples, than you probably need to revise your specification.

*Handout and/or Activity Option: Sample Specifications; Fill-in-the-blank Specifications; Spot What's Wrong Specifications*

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### **Show Slide: Approaching only local vendors**

**SAY:** If you're making a purchase that falls under your small purchase threshold, you can choose 3 (or more) local farms or vendors to get quotes from. You can do this by calling local farms, going to the farmers' market and talking to them, or posting your specifications on some sort of local listerv or on a flier somewhere that farmers will see it.

Just remember, you can't intentionally split purchases in order to fall below the federal small purchase threshold, but there are a lot of legitimate reasons to split bids. It's typical for an SFA to split purchases based on inherent differences in foods such as shelf life, delivery methods, seasonality, and other characteristics, and if your F2S Program includes a "Harvest of the Month" or "Seasonal Menu" that you want to use a separate bid for in order to get the best product at the best price, that's fine too. This type of purchasing practice might improve the quality and hopefully economic feasibility of a program and would not be considered as an intentional or arbitrary action to split purchases.

As with any informal procurement, be sure that you've written down your specifications and that even if you don't receive bids in writing, you document them. Of the bids you receive that are responsive to your solicitation, you must choose the offeror with the lowest price.

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### **Show Slide: Including your desire for local in solicitations**

**SAY:** Schools working to source local foods through a distributor or food service management company should include their desire for local products in the solicitation. That way, the FSMC's or distributor's responsiveness to the request for local products can be considered in the SFA's selection. SFAs must be specific about how and when they wish to have local food purchased and how local foods are to be used in the meals provided throughout the year. Oftentimes, these entities are happy to source local foods but don't know where to start; SFAs can help by connecting them with local growers or growers' associations, or state, local, and non-profit partners who might be able to assist in identifying local producers.

For example, the District of Columbia contracts with Revolution Foods to supply meals to several schools. Revolution Foods manages the procurement of all food for specific schools and is asked to provide regionally produced products when available. The DC Farm to School Network hosts a Strawberries and Salad Greens Day every spring and Revolution Foods provides mixed greens with strawberries, both from area farms.

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### Show Slide: Working with DoD Fresh

**SAY:** States and SFAs can elect to spend any portion of their USDA Foods entitlement money on fresh fruits and vegetables through the DoD Fresh Program, operated by the Department of Defense. To supply fresh fruits and vegetables, DoD contracts with over 45 produce vendors across the country. Although DoD Fresh vendors are not required to purchase local produce, they are strongly encouraged to do so.

In school year 2011-2012, states spent more than \$80 million through DoD Fresh and about 17% of those purchases were considered local. In addition to spending commodity entitlement funds through DoD Fresh, states can also elect to use section 4 and 11 funds on DoD Fresh purchases.

Each DoD Fresh prime vendor updates the online FFAVORS catalog for their region of service on a weekly basis and marks locally procured products as such. “Local” in DoD Fresh has three definitions: 1) the product is from within 400 miles, 2) the product is from within the state, and 3) the product is from within or adjacent to the contract award zone. If an SFA is looking to purchase additional local products through DoD Fresh, it should work with the prime vendor to discuss opportunities and even to suggest specific producers or producer groups that the prime vendor might work with.

**DO:** Refer participants to *Handout #3 – Fact Sheet: Using DoD Fresh to purchase local produce*, in their packets.

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### Show Slide: The geographic preference option

**SAY:** Now, let’s talk about Geographic Preference....

The 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (AKA the Farm Bill) directed the Secretary of Agriculture to “encourage institutions receiving funds under this Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to purchase unprocessed agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised, to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate,” and to “allow institutions receiving funds under this Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, including the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, to use a geographic preference for the procurement of unprocessed agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised.” This provision applies to operators of all of the Child Nutrition Programs.

The final geographic preference rule clarifies that “the school food authority making the purchase or the State agency making purchases on behalf of such school food authorities have the discretion to determine the local area to which the geographic preference option will be applied.” This means that School Food Authorities or State Agencies can define these terms for themselves based on their unique needs and their proximity to agricultural areas. It also means that any intervention that restricts, by rule or law, an SFA or SA’s ability to make decisions regarding how to define local is unallowable.

As for how it is defined, there are a lot of options! “Local” for one school might mean within the county, while “local” for another might include the entire state and even adjacent states. Images on slide illustrate 3 possible definitions of local for Pierre, SD.

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### Show Slide: What is unprocessed?

**SAY:** The regulations clearly define what qualifies as an unprocessed agricultural product. Specifically, it says “unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products” means only those agricultural products that retain their inherent character. The effects of the following food handling and preservation techniques shall not be considered as changing an agricultural product into a product of a different kind or character: Cooling; refrigerating; freezing; size adjustment made by peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting, chopping, shucking, and grinding; forming ground products into patties without any additives or fillers; drying/ dehydration; washing; packaging (such as placing eggs in cartons), vacuum packing and bagging (such as placing vegetables in bags or combining two or more types of vegetables or fruits in a single package); the addition of ascorbic acid or other preservatives to prevent oxidation of produce; butchering livestock and poultry; cleaning fish; and the pasteurization of milk.

Unallowable food handling and preservation techniques include heating and canning -- the inherent character of the product is not retained because the heating process involved in canning changes the agricultural product into a product of a different kind or character.

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### Show Slide: Incorporating geographic preference

**SAY:** To incorporate a geographic preference into your procurement process, you need first to settle on a definition of local. This is important because the statute only applies to local agricultural products.

You also need to determine how much preference to apply to these products. Will local products receive a fixed preference or a percentage? You can also consider using a tiered approach wherein vendors with products grown within the state are awarded 5 extra points, while vendors with products grown within 150 miles of your district are given 8 extra points. Furthermore, you could indicate that vendors who are able to supply 80% or greater local products will receive a 5% advantage while vendors who can supply 50 – 79% local products will receive a 3% advantage. There are many ways to structure a tiered approach depending on what you hope to accomplish.

Remember an RFP or IFB should not contain language stating that “We will only accept locally grown agricultural products from a State.” This would be overly restrictive because it is stated as a requirement, not a preference.

It’s also not okay to indicate a preference for products grown within 5 miles of your school district when only one farm exists within 5 miles of your district. This would be considered an unreasonable limit on competition. (If 100 farms existed within 5 miles of your school district, it would not be considered an unreasonable limit on competition.) You have to use your best judgment.

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### Show Slide: Geographic preference example

**SAY:** Here’s an example of how to incorporate preference points in an IFB:

SFA issued solicitation clearly indicates that 10 preference points will be given to bidders who provide locally raised and grown agricultural products. 1 point would equal 1 cent; in other words, 10 points would translate into 10 cents. Solicitation requires each bidder to:

- » Determine if geographic preference applies; and
- » If so, deduct 10 cents from its bid price before submitting bid

Deducting ten cents from the prices of responsive bidders that met the geographic preference only applies to determining the winning bidder and would not affect the actual price paid to a bidder.

In this case, Bidder number wins the bid, and is paid \$2.05 per pound.

DO: Refer to **Handouts #4 and #5 – Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As**, in their packets.

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### **Show Slide 42: Bringing local into the cafeteria**

**SAY:** Let's look at where Geographic preference comes into play, and talk about how other school food buying programs can be used to get local and nutritious products into schools.

We'll take school lunch as an example:

Around 15 to 20% of food served through the National School Lunch Program comes from USDA Foods, formerly the commodity program. These foods are sourced by USDA and for the majority of these purchases it is not possible to indicate a local preference. In FY 2011, \$1.25 billion in USDA foods went to schools.

A small portion of that commodity entitlement money is available for States to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables through the DoD Fresh Program, operated by the Department of Defense. In FY 2011, States spent \$75 million, roughly 6%, of their total entitlement, through DoD Fresh. States also used their Sec. 4 & 11 reimbursement funds to buy an additional \$10 million in fresh produce through DoD (these purchases are part of the "Cash Assistance" wedge). In FY11, an average of 12 percent of DoD produce was sourced locally, and States are working successfully with DoD to help bring more local vendors into the program.

The rest, around 80%, of foods are sourced with cash assistance, including federal reimbursement, student payments, and in some cases, State and/or local funding. A geographic preference can be applied to procurement of unprocessed agricultural products made with reimbursement funds. The decision to apply a geographic preference rests with school food authority.

I also want to stress that the USDA Foods catalog includes a lot of whole, healthful foods: brown rice, whole wheat flour and pasta, whole and sliced apples and pears, dry beans and lentils, frozen blueberries, baby carrots, dried figs, whole muscle meats, peanut butter, the list goes on. USDA Foods can absolutely be a part of nutritious, school meals! And since every dollar's worth of USDA Foods used to procure school food frees up money that a school would otherwise have to spend commercially, USDA Foods are essential in a time of tightening budgets!

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### **Show Slide: Farm to school and food safety**

**SAY:** School food service directors operating farm to school programs must make certain that, as their programs grow, all of the foods they serve are safe to eat. This means ensuring that proper food safety protocol are being used in the school garden (especially if garden foods are being served in the cafeteria); in the kitchen; and on the farms, ranches and other places where food is being grown.

While we don't have time to discuss food safety in depth, new directors tend to have the most questions about on-farm food safety practices. In a nutshell, there are three basic methods for ensuring that local producers you work with (or are thinking of working with) have good food safety practices: 1) require producers to acquire a formal food safety certification (such as USDA's GAP/GAP certification); 2) ask producers to conduct self-audits; and 3) visit the production or packing site yourself to observe and discuss food safety practices. You can use any combination of these methods, and there are lots of resources out there to help you.

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## **SECTION V: INCORPORATING LOCAL FOODS INTO SCHOOL MEALS: AN EXAMPLE**

### **Show Slide: Incorporating local foods into school meals: an example**

**SAY:** Let's take a look at how all of this, over time, can coming together to create a school lunch menu that's full of local foods.

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### **Show Slide: Evolution of a local menu (1)**

**SAY:** This menu illustrates what a typical week of lunches might look like under the new meal pattern. In itself, this is an historic accomplishment – look at all of those fruits, vegetables, and whole grains! So, how might a school start incorporating local foods into a menu like this?

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### **Show Slide: Evolution of a local menu (2)**

**SAY:** Harvest of the Month programs are a great starting place for schools and districts that want to start sourcing locally. In this scenario, the school buys three types of strawberries from a local farmer; students get to try two of each variety, and then vote on the one they like the best. In the classroom, kids learn about how strawberries are grown and harvested, and Harvest of the Month materials produced by the State department of agriculture or education is given to parents, teachers, and the community.

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### **Show Slide: Evolution of a local menu (3)**

**SAY:** The strawberries served through the Harvest of the Month program are so well received that the schools starts sourcing strawberries from two different local farmers through their main produce distributor, and adds them to the menu for the two months that they are in season.

The school also realizes that all of their milk and cheese is sourced locally. They contact the local dairy and ask if they are open to field trips. The dairy is thrilled, and accepts all fourth-graders for a half-day tour of their operations.

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#### **Show Slide: Evolution of a local menu (4)**

**SAY:** Then, the school realizes that they can source local foods through the DoD Fresh Program, and that all local fruits and vegetables are labeled as such in the online DoD Fresh catalog, FFAVORS. They start replacing some non-local items with some local items.

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#### **Show Slide: Evolution of a local menu (5)**

**SAY:** Food service staff start working with local agricultural extension agents and a cooperative of beef producers to figure out how they can source local beef.

As you can see local procurement can start small and grow as your district is ready. I'm going to pass around a real example of a farm to school menu, which demonstrates that you can keep local foods on your menu throughout the year, even in winter, even in the Upper Midwest.

DO: Pass around **Handout #10 – January Menu from Minneapolis Public Schools.**

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## **SECTION VI: FARM TO SCHOOL RESOURCES**

### **Show Slide: Marketing and Promotion**

**SAY:** Marketing is an important piece of running a farm to school program that is often neglected. There are many different audiences that you may want to reach out to get support for or promote your efforts.

- **Students:** Students are probably your most important audience. It's essential to get them excited about and involved in your program from the start and to let them know when local items are being featured. Offering taste tests and letting students vote on which local foods and dishes they like best; using colorful signage and menus that highlight local products; and generally getting students involved in planning, cooking, serving, and even growing local foods are all great strategies.
- **Teachers:** Getting teacher buy-in is essential because teachers can offer lessons that complement what's happening in the cafeteria. They are also models for students. Letting teachers know what you're serving and what messages you're trying to send to students so they can connect it to what's happening in the classroom is crucial, as is getting teachers to eat school meals! Try inviting teachers to the cafeteria for a free lunch when you unveil your salad bar or add another local item to the menu.
- **Parents and community members:** Letting parents know about changes to school meals and complementary educational initiatives will help them reinforce the messages they are getting at school. Try sending letters home, including articles about your efforts in a school or PTA newsletter, featuring your efforts on the school's website or blog, and even inviting parents and community members for a local lunch or dinner, or to join a farm tour or volunteer at a taste test.

- **Farmers:** Reaching out and promoting your program to farmers and other local food producers can spark a new procurement relationship, field trip idea, or even a donation of local produce. Try contacting your local agricultural extension agent to learn about publications, meetings, and other places where you might be able to spread the word about what you're doing to the agricultural community.
- **The media:** Trumpeting your efforts to the broader community and beyond will likely involve some media outreach. Your school or district might already be reaching out to local newspapers, weeklies, blogs, magazines, and news programs on a regular basis, so be sure you connect with the communications director, or whomever handles communications for your school.

October is a great time to ramp up your promotional efforts because October is National Farm to School Month. Each year leading up to October, the National Farm to School Network offers a whole host of resources and ideas and templates for holding Farm to School Month events at your school, and promoting them to various stakeholders.

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### Show Slide: Resources

**SAY:** This slide lists just a few of the resources available to those just getting started on farm to school program. The USDA Farm to School website contains a list of farm to school resources and grants, an option to sign up for the USDA farm to school e-letter, profiles of farm to school programs, links to USDA procurement regulations, and guidance on food safety and applying the geographic preference option.

The National Farm to School Network, School Food Focus, and the Center for Ecoliteracy are also great starting places.

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### Show Slide: Farm to school Myths, Busted

**SAY:** Over the course of this presentation, I hope I've busted some common farm to school myths. [Read each of the myths and ask your audience to come up with the truth.]

**MYTH:** Farm to school is mainly for farmers.

**TRUTH:** It's for farmers AND ranchers, fishermen, dairies, food processors, manufacturers, aggregators and other (broad line) distributors.

**MYTH:** Farm to school is mainly about fresh produce.

**TRUTH:** Farm to school programs sometime focus on fresh produce, but it's also about getting frozen, dried, and otherwise minimally processed local and regional produce into schools.

And in regard to all other types of products, farm to school is inclusive of all types of food products, including poultry, dairy, meat products, fruits and vegetables, wheat and grains, condiments, etc.

**MYTH:** There is a set definition for local.

**TRUTH:** There is NO set definition for local. Schools should define local for themselves.

MYTH: Farm to school is dependent on direct deliveries from farmers.

TRUTH: While some schools do likely enjoy direct deliveries from farmers for some of the local and regional products they are buying, farm to school initiatives are equally, if not more, dependent on the participation of mainline distributors, local fruit and vegetable distributors and other aggregators.

MYTH: Farm to school is just about organic or sustainable products.

TRUTH: While some farm to school programs cite a preference for certain production practices, as a general rule, farm to school is focused on local and regional products, not products produced via a certain production method.

MYTH: USDA requires local farmers to be GAP/GHP certified before they sell to schools.

TRUTH: Farmers are not required by USDA to be GAP/GHP certified. However, school districts or distributors may have food safety requirements that include GAP/GHP certification.

*Note: Advance the slide for the animated “no” symbol to appear.*

**Show Slide: Thank You! Questions?**

**DO:** Conclude, thank the audience, and take questions if you have time.