



# USDA FOODS: A Resource for Buying Local

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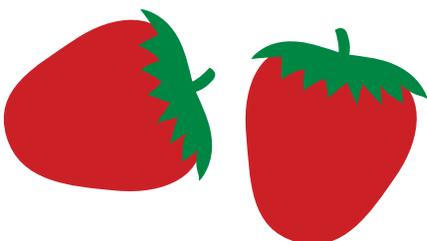
USDA FOODS has a dual mission of supporting domestic agriculture and providing healthy foods to schools. Offerings include a wide variety of high quality fruits, vegetables, dairy products, whole grains, lean meats, and other protein options. USDA Foods support the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the school meal pattern requirements to make it easier for schools to prepare healthy meals.

Schools receive two types of support from USDA. The majority of the support is provided in the form of cash reimbursement for the meals served, and the second form of support is the ability to order foods that USDA purchases ("USDA Foods") which can make up about 15-20% of the value of the food served in the National School Lunch Program.

USDA Foods supports local purchasing in several ways:

## Maximize Funds for Local Purchases

In a time of tightening budgets, every dollar of USDA Foods delivered to a school frees up money that a school would otherwise have to spend commercially. By using USDA Foods products, schools can save cash reimbursement dollars for local purchases.



**"Menuing USDA Foods = More \$ for Local Foods:** USDA Foods are purchased by the federal government in bulk and offered to schools at a lower cost than commercially available foods. Smart menu planning to fully utilize USDA Foods allows Vermont School Meals programs a little extra room in their budget to purchase things like local beef, eggs and produce."

*- Vermont Agency of Education*

"USDA is a partner in meeting my local purchasing goals. I often shift my 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 School*

## Champion American Agriculture

USDA Foods are all produced in the United States; thus it is possible to order foods through the USDA Foods catalog that are produced in your region. For example, Mississippi is the only state that produces significant, commercial quantities of catfish. If a school is located in the Southeast, USDA Foods catfish could be local to that school. Likewise, pears usually originate from the Pacific Northwest and could be local to schools in this area.



## Support Local Processors

Many States allocate a portion of their USDA Foods entitlement to processors who further process bulk USDA Foods into desired end products such as burritos, burgers, rice bowls, or sliced apples. Check with your State to see if there are approved local processors in your area.

## Promote Local Fruit and Vegetable Producers

The USDA DoD Fresh Program is another choice in a request-driven system to help States manage and utilize USDA Foods entitlement more effectively. This program offers many different types and varieties of produce grown in the United States, including a variety of package sizes, whole and pre-cut options, and locally grown produce when in season.



### Learn More

Refer to the [Food Distribution page](#) of the FNS website for a complete list of the foods available and information sheets for each product.

To identify USDA Foods that may be local to you, check out the [state of origin reports](#). For more information on USDA Foods processing, visit the [USDA Foods Processing webpage](#).

For more information about the USDA DoD Fresh Program, please refer to the [USDA DoD Fresh Program webpage](#).

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For more information, and to sign up for the bi-weekly e-letter from the Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Community Food Systems, please visit [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool).  
Questions? Email us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).

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