

Implementing Farm to School Activities

Distribution and Processing

Distribution Models: Advantages and Disadvantages

The following table provides examples of eight common distribution methods and the advantages and disadvantages of each. This list is not all-inclusive.

Purchasing Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
Purchasing from Individual Farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to request specific products in the form the school district needs • Work out details and issues without a middle man • Become familiar with what the farmer grows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School district may need to purchase from more than one farmer due to volume needs – this increases administration and paperwork (e.g., multiple invoices, deliveries, etc.) • Farmer only able to sell their own products, when in season • Individual farmer may not be able to deliver to the school district
Purchasing from a Farmer Cooperative (Co-op) (Group distribution strategy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps school district reduce time on administrative tasks (e.g., ordering, receiving orders, invoicing, and making payments) • Ordering is done through one entity representing multiple farmers • In some cases, one delivery is made for multiple farmers • Can generally offer a wider variety of produce and a more consistent supply • Allows farmers to efficiently plan delivery routes for servicing multiple destinations • Co-op may be able to minimally process food items for school district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits contact with the individual farmers • Cooperatives do not exist everywhere
Purchasing using a Buying Cooperative (Co-op)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers increased purchasing power and volume requests • Has the potential to allow school districts to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential time commitment needed to work with other school food service directors to insure that each individual school districts'

	<p>obtain better pricing and volume purchasing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for farmer to deliver to one central location if the buying co-op distributes food 	needs are being met
Purchasing Local and Regional Products at Farmers' Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows famers and school districts to work face-to-face • Allows school district the opportunity to inspect the product quality and see first-hand what other products are available from farmers • Farmers can make delivery for two buyers in the same location (i.e., one for the farmer's market customers and one for the school district) • One delivery has the possibility to lower the price of the product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School districts would need a truck and driver to pick up pre-ordered product at the farmers' market • Only feasible when the farmers' market season and school calendar coincide
Ordering Local Products through a Traditional Wholesaler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows school district to maintain existing relationships with distributors, while also purchasing other items that local farmers may not able to provide • Allows for centralized billing, delivery and payment • Reduces time spent ordering from multiple parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to know how diligent the distributor is in attempting to source local product • Buying from local farmers may or may not be a top priority for a distributor • School food service personnel must familiarize themselves with availability and seasonality of the products in their region <p>Note: To help ensure local purchases are made, the school food service personnel can request access to the buying records of the distributor, showing the origins of the product. This can also be a requirement written into the solicitation and contract with the distributor.</p>
Purchasing through Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DoD Fresh relies on existing regional distribution systems to transport the food items to school districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to know how diligent the distributor is in attempting to source local product • Buying from local farmers may or may not be a top priority for a distributor