

# FARM TO SCHOOL

## Guide for Schools and Producers



*Farm to school allows schools, pre-schools and daycares to purchase local fruits and vegetables, eggs, meat, honey, dairy products and more from local producers for their school lunch menus. When implementing the program, schools also have a chance to incorporate nutrition-based curriculum into their school meals and to provide students with experiential learning opportunities.*

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NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**



Agriculture Commissioner  
Doug Goehring

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# INTRODUCTION

## What is Farm to School?

In the early 90s, schools began incorporating local foods into school meals, planting school gardens and teaching their students about where their food comes from.

With the help of USDA, these activities began taking root all across the country.

Today, North Dakota schools actively work to incorporate Farm to School programming by providing locally-grown foods to lunchrooms and helping students understand the benefits of eating local food through agriculture education.

## Who is involved in making the program possible?

Several national, state and local organizations come together to make the Farm to School program possible.

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) provides state representation for the program in the National Farm to School Network, and partners with the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) to provide resources and connections to producers, while staying up to date with all federal regulations for the program.

Other organizations, like North Dakota State University Extension, may work to connect producers with the information they need to participate in the program.

# BUYING LOCAL FOR SCHOOLS IS POSSIBLE!

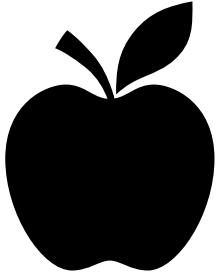


Produce for procurement may be purchased and used by licensed food service establishments and other institutions in North Dakota without the produce seller having a license from the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services or other local health units. This rule also applies to educational institutions using produce grown through a school, community garden or orchard in their food service establishment. Meat, dairy products, honey and eggs can also be purchased for Farm to School procurement, but are required to be inspected before purchase.

If you are unsure if your district is already purchasing local food, contact your district's Child Nutrition Director. Inform parents, students and community members when you are serving local produce. Students love to know when cafeteria meals incorporate local products. The word local is yours to define as a school district.

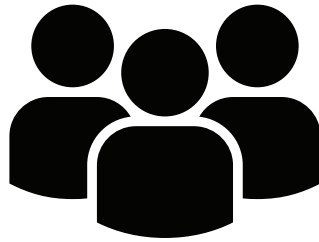
# BENEFITS OF FARM TO SCHOOL

## Why Farm to School?



### Students Win

Farm to School provides all kids access to nutritious, high-quality local food so they are ready to learn and grow. Farm to School activities enhance classroom education through hands-on learning related to food, health, agriculture and nutrition.



### Community Wins

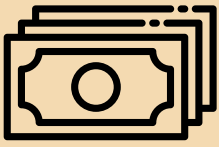
Farm to School benefits everyone from teachers, parents, administrators, farmers and of course students! By providing educational opportunities and buying from local producers, schools help contribute to the local economy and create new jobs within their region.



### Farmers Win

Farm to School can serve as a significant financial opportunity for farmers, ranchers and food manufacturers by opening doors to an institutional market worth billions of dollars.

# BENEFITS OF FARM TO SCHOOL



Economic



Education



Public Health



Environment



Community

## ECONOMIC

### Job Creation and Economic Activity

- Creates and maintains jobs in the community and in the state.
- Adds economic activity in the local community and in the state.
- Strengthens connections within the state's food economy.
- Increases money in the local economy, as Farm to School producers purchase more inputs locally

### Producer and District Economic Benefits

- Increases income from Farm to School sales and establishes long-term revenue streams for individual farmers.
- Raises the number of vendor/producer relationships and diversity of procurement methods used by schools.
- Creates market diversification and economic growth opportunities for farmers, including forward contracting, exploration of processing and value-added product for institutional markets.
- Enhances social capital and positive relationships for farmers, school districts, families and community members.

# EDUCATION

## Student Engagement and Child Development

- Grows engagement and positive attitudes about school and learning.
- Provides children with opportunities for social and emotional growth; improves their life skills, self-esteem, sense of self, social skills and behavior.
- Allows a greater opportunity for necessary experiential and hands on learning.
- Supports school readiness in young children.
- Encourages low-income students and students of color to engage in food and environmental issues in their communities.

## Academic Achievement

- Increases knowledge in science and STEM concepts in early childhood and K-12 settings.
- Provides children with an understanding of gardening, agriculture, local foods and the environment.
- Enhances overall academic achievement, including grades and test scores.
- Increases opportunity for innovative teaching platforms for core subjects, such as science, math and language arts.

## Family, Educator and Staff Engagement

- Helps change educators' diets and lifestyles.
- Enhances educator and caregiver attitudes about integrating farm to school related information in curriculum and intention to implement farm to school activities in the classroom.
- Increases parent engagement in educational opportunities.
- Improves food service staff motivation and morale; increases knowledge and interest in local food preparation; increases interaction with teachers to strengthen classroom and cafeteria connections.
- Fosters the opportunity to align purchasing practices with values.

# ENVIRONMENT

- Reduces food waste overall both on the production side as well as plate waste.
- Decreases transportation-related environmental impacts, such as emissions of air pollutants.
- Supports environmentally-sound, sustainable agriculture practices, including food production, processing, packaging, transportation and marketing.

# COMMUNITY

- Influences neighboring communities to start or expand farm to school initiatives.
- Improves support and acceptance of healthier school meals with parents and community.
- Promotes a positive link between schools and communities, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color.
- Increases student appreciation for and knowledge of diverse cultures and customs as well as engagement.



Information on the benefits of Farm to School was provided by the National Farm to School Network, a hub for information, advocacy and networking with the common goal of working to bring local food sourcing, school gardens and agriculture into schools, early child care and other education settings.

Follow the network updates on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.





# HOW TO BUY LOCAL?

This section outlines how to use the North Dakota Department of Agriculture's online database and USDA information to find local producers in your area.



# USDA'S GUIDE TO PROCURING LOCAL FOODS



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

## Local Foods Webinar Series and Fact Sheets

The USDA Farm to School Program hosted webinars to showcase the variety of ways school districts can purchase local foods. The series starts with an introduction to basic procurement principles, and then walks participants through strategies and tactics for buying local foods.

A full webinar series and multiple fact sheets for school meal cafeterias and local producers participating in the Farm to School program can be found at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/procuring-local-foods>

# TIPS FOR BUYING FROM LOCAL FARMERS

Partnering with farmers or producers for Farm to School can seem like a lot of work, but the educational benefits for students make it worth the effort.

Farm to School helps students develop a deeper understanding of where their food comes from and why it is important to eat fresh, local food. It supports the community and helps reduce our environmental impact.

## Do a Little Research

Using the North Dakota Department of Agriculture's Local Foods Map is a great way to learn who is growing local food in your community and who is interested in participating in Farm to School sales and activities.

## Prepare a Product List

Take a look at your school's kitchen. What equipment do you have that will allow you to prepare certain types of food? Then analyze your time. How many students do you prepare food for and what are your goals? This will help you decide what items your school can purchase from local producers.



## Request Farm Visits or Product Samples

Check out the quality of the products the producer will be supplying to your school by requesting free samples or a visit to their farm. Observing the business in these ways gives you a better idea of farmers' food safety

## Be Aware of Your Schools Insurance Coverage Requirements

Most farmers carry liability insurance, and it is recommended to ask them if they do before entering into a contract with them if your school requires it. Having a section of your producer contract devoted to insurance is encouraged.

# LOCAL FOODS MAP

## REGISTER OR FIND FARM TO SCHOOL PRODUCERS

The Local Foods Map is an online tool that connects consumers with local farmers, ranchers and businesses that grow, produce and sell their own products in North Dakota.

Schools can search for producers interested in participating in the program by using the search bar and typing in Farm to School or by looking for a specific product, market or business name. To view a specific type of sale option or product click the button next to it moving it from grey to blue.

Producers can easily register their business and choose Farm to School as a selling option. If already registered in the system, farm to school can easily be added as a distribution option.

To get more detailed information about a specific location click on any icon on the map and a window will pop up with more details.

For questions about connecting with local producers for Farm to School using the map, contact NDDA at 701-328-2659.

The screenshot displays the 'Local Foods Map' interface. On the left, a sidebar for 'Skyline Ranch Produce' includes contact information: Email (pduke@westriv.com), Phone ((701) 794-3686), and City (Hensler). Below this is a 'MORE INFO...' button. The main interface features a search bar with the placeholder 'E.g. product or farmer name'. A filter panel on the left allows users to toggle various options: Type (Farmers Market, On-Farm Sales, Roadside Stand, CSA Shares, Retail Food Business, U-Pick, Wholesale, Online, Farm to School, Other Purchase Option) and Products (Fruits & Vegetables, Eggs, Beef, Pork, SNAP Benefits Payment Option, Poultry). The map area shows a geographical view of North Dakota with numerous blue icons representing producers. The map is titled 'Local Foods Map' and 'Doug Goehring - Agriculture Commissioner'.

## CONTRACT SUGGESTIONS

A contract established for Farm to School purposes is designed to protect both the producer and school against possible lawsuits and business misconceptions.



## DISCUSS THE DETAILS

Don't forget these details in your contract:

- \* Ordering and billing processes
- \* Contact info
- \* Packing requirements
- \* Seasonal availability of products for purchase
- \* Estimated volume of products the farmer can offer
- \* Delivery schedule (day, frequency and location)

# CONTRACT RECOMMENDATIONS

In developing a contract that works for farmers and schools, both sides will need to address any of concerns. Having an open dialogue about expectations, needs and goals is the first step to building a successful contract.

## Create a Schedule

Design a schedule based around the producer's availability to plan for pick-up/drop-off times. Develop a what if plan if the producer is unable to deliver to the school.

## Prepare a Product List

Create a set list of products you would like to purchase from the producer and acknowledge how much the school will need.

## Weather Concerns

Drought, fire or any extreme weather condition can cause a producer's crop not to produce. Discuss what will happen under these circumstances and if the producer can offer a substitution and what the expectation is on payment.

## Payment Schedule

Before signing a formal contract with a producer, make sure they understand your district's procurement expectations. Use your developed pricing guide to establish the amount you'll be paying the producer for the items they are selling and when they will receive payment.



## Micro-Purchase or Informal Bids

Decide if the micro-purchase or informal bidding process is right for your school. Your district may have a procurement process for these types of one-time purchases.

## Acknowledge Communication Expectations

Spell out communication needs for a successful partnership through scenarios, such as how long of notice is required if a product is not available.

# VENDOR RESPONSE FORM - PRODUCE TEMPLATE

NOTE TO SCHOOL: Make this form your own by only including the evaluation criteria you are interested in and send with the informal solicitation.

## VENDOR RESPONSE FORM - PRODUCE

Vendors please fill out this form.

Farm/Vendor \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Vendors will be good candidates for our program and the bidding process if they meet ALL the requirements listed below. Bids will be evaluated based on meeting ALL the criteria below and the lowest prices.

Please check YES or NO to the questions below. (These are examples)

Vendor is willing to host student farm visits or participate in school taste tests.	Yes _____	No _____
Vendor has liability insurance	Yes _____	No _____
Vendor can indicate farm of origin produce on box and invoice.	Yes _____	No _____
Vendor can provide a food safety plan.	Yes _____	No _____
Vendor can deliver products on a weekly basis to each school.	Yes _____	No _____
Vendor has an online ordering system.	Yes _____	No _____
Vendor is willing to take orders over the phone.	Yes _____	No _____
Vendor has policies in place for returns of products.	Yes _____	No _____

The award will go to the most responsive and responsible vendor with the lowest prices.

Timeline:

Quote Submissions are due: \_\_\_\_\_

Decisions made by and communicated by: \_\_\_\_\_

Orders may be placed as early as: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to: \_\_\_\_\_

# PROCUREMENT

**"Procurement" means buying goods and services.**

Procurement rules ensure that program benefits are received by eligible schools and children, and that taxpayer dollars are used effectively and efficiently, with no waste or abuse.

Regulations require that all purchases made by schools, daycares or other institutions, whether funded wholly or in part with child nutrition program funds, comply with all federal, state and local procurement requirements.

## PROCUREMENT RESOURCES

- "Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs", specifically titled "Procurement Principles and Regulations"
- "Informal and Formal Procurement Methods" at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/procuring-local-foods>
- North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Child Nutrition and Food Distribution website under the link SNP Procurement (School Nutrition Program).

If you have more questions about procurement requirements please contact North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Office at [dpicnfd@nd.gov](mailto:dpicnfd@nd.gov) or 701-328-2294.

It is important to understand that federal rules do have a purpose. They may seem rigid but do allow for some flexibility and innovation. This ensures schools and other institutions are receiving goods and services that meet their needs at the best price.





# BUYING LOCAL BEEF

## for School Lunch



All beef supplied for school meals must be state or federally inspected. Please note that anything processed under North Dakota state inspection cannot be served across state lines.

### State Facilities

These establishments slaughter livestock and may process meat products under regulated inspection. Products contain the state mark of inspection and are eligible to be wholesaled within North Dakota. Some state slaughter plants also provide custom exempt slaughter and/or processing services.

### State Processing

These establishments process only under regulated inspection. Products contain the state mark of inspection and are eligible to be wholesaled within North Dakota.

### Federal Facilities

These establishments slaughter livestock and may process meat products under regulated inspection. Products contain the USDA mark of inspection and are eligible to be wholesaled in all states within the United States. Some federal slaughter plants also provide custom exempt slaughter and/or processing services.

# VENDOR RESPONSE FORM - BEEF TEMPLATE

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Contact \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Vendors will be good candidates for our program and the bidding process if they meet ALL the requirements listed below. Bids will be evaluated based on meeting ALL the criteria below and the lowest prices.

Please check YES or NO to the questions below. (These are examples)

Vendor is willing to host student farm visits or participate in school taste tests. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor has liability insurance? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Ground beef is 100% beef with no additives? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Beef is slaughtered and processed in a state or USDA inspected facility? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Is the price inclusive of all fees, tests, transportation and processing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor has an online ordering system. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor is willing to take orders over the phone. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor has policies in place for returns of products. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

The award will go to the most responsive and responsible vendor with the lowest prices.

Timeline:

Quote Submissions are due: \_\_\_\_\_

Decisions made by and communicated by: \_\_\_\_\_

Orders may be placed as early as: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to: \_\_\_\_\_

# FOOD SAFETY GUIDE



## FSMA (FOOD SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT) PRODUCE SAFETY RULE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture is dedicated to educating and providing technical assistance to fruit and vegetable growers throughout North Dakota through the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. Learn more on the Produce Safety Rule Page at the link below. <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/fsma-final-rule-produce-safety>



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### FIGHT BAC! SAFE HANDLING OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Handling fruits and vegetables safely is easy. Information provided by Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist of NDSU Extension.

<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition/fight-bac-safe-handling-of-fresh-fruits-and-vegetables>

### BEST PRACTICES FOR HANDLING FRESH PRODUCE IN SCHOOLS

There are a number of steps that food service employees can take to minimize the chances for fruits and vegetables they handle to become contaminated. Best practices for handling all types of produce are described in this fact sheet, along with practices specific to leafy greens, tomatoes, melons and sprouts.

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/best-practice-handling-fresh-produce-schools.pdf>



# PRODUCE SAFETY RULE

## WHAT IS IT?

In an effort to stop foodborne illnesses, a set of federal regulatory standards for the production, harvest and handling of fruits and vegetables were developed under the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The Produce Safety Rule established science-based standards for safe agriculture practices.

The rule is composed of several parts, including standards for:

- Agriculture water, both for production and post harvest.
- Biological soil amendments (compost, manure)
- Domesticated and wild animals
- Equipment, tools, buildings, sanitation
- Production of sprouts
- Worker health, hygiene, and training

## Producer Certification

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture offers FSMA grower trainings through the Produce Safety Alliance. These courses satisfy the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement.

After the training, producers are eligible to receive a certificate of completion. If you are interested in hiring a producer for Farm to School procurement, schools can request a copy of the producer's certification for contract purposes.

**The FDA regularly conducts on-site inspections to farms that grow, pack, process or sell fresh produce across the country, including North Dakota. However, not all farms are subject to inspection. Ask your Farm to School producer if they have been inspected during the contract negotiation process.**

# FOOD SAFETY PLAN BUILDER



Start creating your plan @ <https://www.cfsanappsexternal.fda.gov/scripts/foodSafetyPlanBuilder/>

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Food Safety Plan Builder (FSPB) is a tool designed to assist owners/operators of food facilities with the development of food safety plans that are specific to their facilities and meet the requirements for the Current Good Manufacturing Practice, Hazard Analysis, and Risk-Based Preventative Controls for Human Food regulation.



Although the content of the Food Safety Plan Builder is consistent with the FDA's existing guidance and regulations, use of the Food Safety Plan Builder by owners and operators of food facilities does not mean that their food safety plan, preventative controls, good manufacturing practices and other food safety procedures are approved by FDA or comply with FDA requirements.

# STORING PRODUCE

## Safe Storing Tips



### RIPENING:

### TEMPERATURE:

Coolers need to be set to maintain food temperatures of 41° or cooler.

Store produce that needs to be kept at a lower temperature in the back

Store produce above raw meats, poultry and eggs

Ethylene is an odorless, colorless gas that speeds up ripening and can lead to premature decay of produce. It is important to store ethylene producers in a separate area than ethylene sensitive products to keep food safe and fresh longer.

#### ETHYLENE PRODUCERS

- APPLES
- PEACHES
- GRAPEFRUIT
- ORANGES

#### ETHYLENE SENSITIVE

- CARROTS
- CUCUMBERS
- LETTUCE
- PEPPERS
- SPINACH

# SCHOOL GARDENS

## STARTING AND MAINTAINING GUIDE

### GET STARTED TODAY

School gardens are a key piece of the Farm to School program. They offer a wide variety of hands-on learning opportunities for not only school children, but your community.

These gardens serve not only as on-site food production, but as a space to explore agriculture curriculum options.

### DESIGNING YOUR GARDEN

There are several options for building a school garden. These include: Container gardens, orchards, herb gardens, hydroponic gardens, high tunnels and more.

Consider what size garden would fit your Farm to School goals. Take into account these factors when selecting a location: Sunlight, soil, water, drainage and security.



### BENEFITS OF SCHOOL GARDENS

- Creates hand-on learning environment for teachers and kids.
- Increases consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Enhances understanding of agriculture.
- Engages students and the community with educational opportunities.



## **BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL GARDENS**

- 1. LOCATION** - Find a location that will provide plenty of sunlight, is well drained, has access to water and has minimal soil compaction. Contact your local extension office to test the soil.
- 2. BUILD A FENCE** - Protect your new learning space with a fence.
- 3. TEACH SUSTAINABILITY** - Consider sustainable practices for the health of your garden and community. Increase soil fertility through crop rotation, cover crops and compost.
- 4. CROP DIVERSITY** - Plant a variety of vegetables and flowers to support a wide range of beneficial insects and soil microorganisms. Learn which plants are most successful in your state's growing season.
- 5. CURRICULUM INTEGRATION** - Work with administrators, teachers, and community partners to integrate the garden into Farm to School, Ag in the Classroom, nutrition programs and other subjects.
- 6. ORGANIZATION** - A skilled coordinator and steering committee, effective communications, shared planning and decision making and youth engagement are essential to a sustainable school community garden.
- 7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BOARD SUPPORT** - Raise awareness and get support for your Farm to School project by making a presentation or hosting an event that your school board and administrative staff is invited to.
- 8. COMMITMENT** - Work for continuous improvement in your garden and educational program. Seek feedback.
- 9. COMMUNITY ACCESS** - Involve the community in your garden, especially during the summer. Consider individual garden beds or plots for interested families and weekly summer gathering times.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **What foods can be sold to schools?**

Federal guidelines allow local farmers, gardeners and market vendors to sell fruits and vegetables, meat and honey to schools.

## **What foods require inspection?**

All preserved goods, meats, eggs and dairy products must be made/packaged in a licensed food establishment and prepared under the supervision of someone trained in food safety.

## **How much food needs to be grown/made to participate?**

Each school may set their own requirements for how much they would like to purchase from producers. Many schools accept small donations for their salad bar, while others would like to be assured of an adequate supply throughout the month.

Most food service directors will have different levels of staffing and menu items that will affect how much and what type of locally sourced products they are willing to use in their kitchen.

## **Can product be donated rather than committing to a contract?**

If producers are interested in participating on a small scale, they can donate extra or unsold products. The producer will need to work this out with the school. It is recommended to keep records of all donated products. These records should include quantity and date received to ensure traceability for food safety.



# FAQ

## **Can a producer participate in the program only one or two months out of the year?**

In most cases, purchasing local for a few months and then sourcing the rest of the food needed to support the school meal program through a national distributor, should be no problem.

This is an agreement that will need to be arranged between the producer and the school's food service director.

## **Do all producers need to be under contract with the school(s) they are providing for?**

NDDPI recommends all producers and schools use a formal or informal contract that states the following:

- \* What the school will be purchasing from the producer
- \* How much the school plans to purchase
- \* When the school plans to purchase the items
- \* Who provides what for storage for the food items
- \* Delivery expectations
- \* Payment information
- \* Details about terminating the agreement if needed

## **How much food needs to be grown/made to participate?**

Communication between the school and producer is key. The sooner you can let the school know the better in any delivery delay or non-delivery situation. It is also recommended to discuss this possibility with the school food service director or administration before signing any contract.

## How do schools know how much to pay for my product?

There is no price guideline for the Farm to School program. This allows each educational institution to set their own price for local food.

## How do I get paid for my product?

Once under contract or an agreement has been made between producer and the school, the administration will enter the producer as a vendor in the school accounting system.

The food service director will receive an invoice for the food items and must sign off that the food has arrived in usable condition. From here, the invoice will be routed to the business office where it will be coded and recorded properly before being brought to the school board for approval.

Depending on the terms of the agreement, the producer could receive payment immediately or after 30 days when the school board approves the payment.

## Are producers required to take special food safety trainings to participate in the Farm to School program?

All local producers are encouraged to meet the Produce Safety Rule, which is satisfied through taking the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) trainings. These trainings are offered when the North Dakota Department of Agriculture, the North Dakota State University Extension or a private organization brings in a federal instructor to facilitate the training.

Additional information on FSMA trainings can be found at <https://www.ndda.nd.gov/divisions/business-marketing-information/local-foods/local-food-training-and-tours>

The NDDPI also recommends producers receive their Good Agricultural Practices certification. This will verify on-farm food safety for the school food service director.

The school's food service director may receive training from the Produce University available on the Institute of Child Nutrition website. Producers may want to spend time checking out how the school's food service director has been trained to better serve the school they are looking at providing food for.

Visit the NDDPI website <https://bit.ly/2YaBV1B> for more information.

# RESOURCES

<https://www.farmentoschool.org/>

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-school-census>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/selling-local-food-schools>

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/usda-foods>

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/districtschools/child-nutrition-and-food-distribution>

<https://www.ndda.nd.gov/farm-school>

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