



USDA DoD FRESH PROGRAM: A Source for Locally Grown Produce

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The USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (USDA DoD Fresh) is a program available to schools to help increase access to fresh produce for schoolchildren. More than 42,000 schools place orders for weekly deliveries of American-grown fresh fruits and vegetables through USDA DoD Fresh to serve as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Schools interested in participating in USDA DoD Fresh should contact their State Distributing Agency.

How Does USDA DoD Fresh Work?

Schools participating in the NSLP receive two types of support from the USDA. The bulk of USDA's support comes in the form of cash reimbursements which are provided to schools for the meals they serve. Schools also receive USDA Foods entitlement or pre-determined allocations that can be used to order food procured by the USDA for use in school meals. Schools may elect to spend a portion of their USDA Foods entitlement to receive produce through USDA DoD Fresh.

USDA DoD Fresh operates through a partnership between the USDA and the Department of Defense (DoD) Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), as well as the State Distributing Agencies in each participating State. State Distributing Agencies vary from State to State, but can be State Departments of Agriculture, Departments of Education, Departments of Human Services, or other agencies. State Distributing Agencies communicate with schools to determine how much of their USDA Foods entitlement they choose to spend on fresh produce through the USDA DoD Fresh Program.

How Is Local Produce Available in USDA DoD Fresh?

USDA DoD Fresh leverages DoD's procurement system to provide a variety of nutritious U.S.-grown fresh fruits and vegetables to schools. The DLA serves as the procurement agent that contracts with produce distributors to purchase and deliver produce to participating schools. Schools place orders directly in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Order/Receipt System (FFAVORS), an online catalog of domestically grown produce that is updated weekly by the vendors. FFAVORS tracks schools' entitlement balances and provides the actual cost at the time of order. DLA manages vendor payment and reconciliation.

The USDA and DLA support the purchase of locally grown produce to the maximum extent practicable because many participating school districts value local food and have local procurement goals. USDA DoD Fresh vendors are encouraged to source local produce, taking into consideration price, quality, availability, and other factors. Local produce for the purposes of USDA DoD Fresh is defined as produce from within the State or adjacent States, even though schools may establish their own definitions of local. Vendors selected to supply produce through USDA DoD Fresh must submit a local purchasing plan to DLA that includes:

- A list of products that the vendor currently purchases locally;
- A list of local growers from which the vendor sources products;
- Plans to expand the purchase of local items; and
- A list of resources that might assist in efforts to source more local products.

Vendors are required to report the State(s) where each fruit or vegetable is grown in FFAVORS, where schools can review available produce and place their orders. Local produce must meet the same contract requirements for quality, food safety, and reasonable pricing as non-local produce in the USDA DoD Fresh Program.

What Should States and School Districts Do If They Want To Source Local Foods Through USDA DoD Fresh?

States and schools that want to order local produce through USDA DoD Fresh should start by looking for the State of Origin information or look for produce indicated as locally grown in the FFAVORS catalog, and compare this information to the school's own definition of local. This can be done by accessing the State of Origin report in FFAVORS.¹ If States or schools would like to request local products not listed in the FFAVORS catalog, they should contact their USDA DoD produce vendor and DLA Service Representatives (www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/usda-dod-fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-program) to ask if the product is available and can be added to the catalog.

Producers interested in selling to the USDA DoD Fresh Program should contact the DLA contracted vendor in their State. USDA and DLA have specific requirements for USDA DoD Fresh vendors and producers, such as the requirement that all producers supplying fruits and vegetables for the program be Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified. GAP certification is a requirement for USDA DoD Fresh, but is not required for all produce served by schools.

USDA DoD Fresh vendors are required to include State of Origin information for all products in the FFAVORS catalog. Products marked as "Local Grown" are grown within the State the customer is located or an adjacent State. Note that vendors may choose up to three States when inputting State of Origin information.

¹ Contact your DLA representative if you need assistance running the State of Origin report in FFAVORS.

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For more information and to sign up for The Dirt, the e-letter from the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program, visit www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/e-letter-archive

Questions? Email us at SM.FN.FarmToSchool@usda.gov

What are the advantages of sourcing local produce through the USDA DoD Fresh Program?

Convenience and Value: USDA DoD Fresh provides an option for school districts to use their USDA Foods entitlement to source a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables grown locally and in-State through a vendor that schools may already be using.

Availability: USDA DoD Fresh encourages vendors to supply local products, especially in-season. USDA DoD Fresh offers a variety of U.S.-grown whole and pre-cut fresh fruits and vegetables.

High-Quality Produce: Locally grown produce, like all produce available through the USDA DoD Fresh Program, must meet specific quality and food safety requirements such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP). All produce must meet requirements for U.S. No.1 or better.

Variety: USDA DoD Fresh offers different types and varieties of locally grown produce. Produce may be available in different package sizes and whole or pre-cut options.

Trackability: States and schools may use FFAVORS usage reports to track local products ordered through the USDA DoD Fresh program, making it easy to see if local procurement goals are met.

Learn More

For more general information on USDA DoD Fresh, a list of DLA contacts, and a list of USDA DoD Fresh vendors, visit www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/usda-dod-fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-program.

Contact information for State Distributing Agencies is available on the [Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\) website](http://www.fns.usda.gov) (www.fns.usda.gov/contacts) (Select your State on the map and then select "USDA Foods in Schools"). Feedback or inquiries about USDA DoD Fresh should be directed to USDADoDFresh@usda.gov.