

# FARM TO SCHOOL

## Toolkit for School Nutrition Programs



Farm to School allows schools to purchase farm-fresh 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.

North Dakota Department of Agriculture  
600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 602  
Bismarck, N.D. 58505  
701-328-2231  
<https://www.nd.gov/ndda>



Agriculture Commissioner  
Doug Goehring

# CONTENTS

## **Introduction**

- What is Farm to School
- Who Makes it Possible

## **Buying Local is Possible**

- Benefits of Farm to School

## **Tips for Buying from Local Producers**

- North Dakota's Local Foods Map
- USDA's Guide to Procuring Local Foods

## **Farm to School Contract Suggestions**

- Contact Recommendations Breakdown
- Vendor Response - Produce
- Procurement
- Price Guide

## **Buying Local Beef for School Lunch**

- Processors List
- Vendor Response - Beef

## **Food Safety Guide**

- Food Safety Plan Builder
- Storing Produce
- Produce Safety Rule - Food Safety Moderation Act (FSMA)

## **School Garden**

- Starting and Maintaining
- Best Practices

# 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 the USDA, these activities began taking root all across the country.

Today, North Dakota schools actively work to incorporate the Farm to School program 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 the North Dakota State University Extension,, may work to connect producers with the the information they need to participate in the program.



# Buying Local for Schools is Possible!

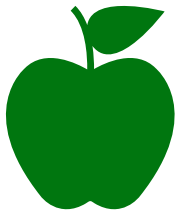
Produce for procurement may be purchased and used by licensed food-service establishments and other institutions in North Dakota without the produce seller having a license from the North Dakota Department of Health or other local health unit. This rule also applies to educational institutions using produce grown through a school or 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. Don't be shy. 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?



### Kids 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.



### 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.



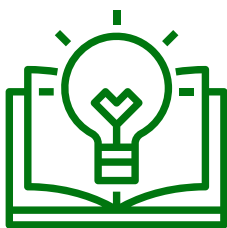
### Communities Win

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

## Benefits of Farm to School



Economic



Education



Public Health



Environment



Community

# Economic Benefits

## Job Creation and Economic Activity

- Create and maintenance of jobs in the community and in the state.
- Add economic activity in the local community and in the state.
- Strengthen connections within the state's food economy.
- Increase in money kept in the local economy, as Farm to School producers purchase more inputs locally.

## Producer and District Economic Benefits

- Increase income from farm to school sales and establishment of long-term revenue stream for individual farmers.
- Raise the number of vendor and producer relationships and diversity of methods of procurement used by schools.
- Create market diversification and economic growth opportunities for farmers, including forward contracting, and exploration of processing and value-added product creation for institutional markets.
- Enhance social capital and positive relationships for farmers with school districts, families and community members.

# Education Benefits

## Student Engagement and Child Development

- Grow engagement and positive attitudes about school and learning.
- Provide children with opportunities for social and emotional growth; improve life skills, self-esteem and sense of self, social skills and behavior.
- Allow a greater opportunity for necessary experiential and hands-on learning
- Support school readiness in young children.
- Encourage low-income students and students of color to engage in food and environmental issues in their communities.

## Academic Achievement

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

## Family, Educator and Staff Engagement

- Help change educators' diets and lifestyles.
- Enhance educator and caregiver attitudes about integrating Farm to School related information in curriculum and intention to implement farm to school activities in the classroom.
- Increase parent engagement in educational opportunities.
- Improve food service staff motivation and morale; increase knowledge and interest in local food preparation; increase interactions with teachers to strengthen classroom and cafeteria connections.
- Foster the opportunity to align purchasing practices with values.

## Environment

- Reduce food waste overall both on the production side as well as plate waste.
- Decrease transportation-related environmental impacts.
- Support environmentally sound, sustainable agriculture practices, including food production, processing, packaging, transportation and marketing.

## Community Engagement

- Influence neighboring communities to start or expand Farm to School initiatives.
- Improve support and acceptance of healthier school meals among parents and the community.
- Promote a positive link between schools and communities, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color.
- Increase student appreciation for and knowledge of diverse cultures and customs as well as engagement of diverse families in school activities.
- Provide opportunities to combat racial and economic inequities in the school food system.
- Reduce racial and social inequities in educational opportunities through access to experiential learning, resulting in higher student test scores.
- Promote environmental equity and link concepts of sustainability to social justice.



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 education into schools, early child care and other education settings.

Follow the network's updates on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).



# HOW TO BUY LOCAL?

In this section you will learn how to find local producers in your area to purchase local foods for Farm to School procurement using information from the USDA and an online database created by the North Dakota Department of Agriculture.



# USDA'S GUIDE TO PROCURING LOCAL FOODS

## Local Foods Webinar Series and Fact Sheets

In 2014, 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/cfs/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 it.

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 it 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 your goals are. This will help you decide what items your school can purchase from local producers.

## Set Up Appointments

Contact farmers to set up a business appointment to see if they are the right fit to sell to your school. Address your needs and discuss whether a contract is right for your partnership. DO NOT be afraid to request additional items or subjects to be addressed in the contract.

## Request Farm Visits or Product Samples

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

## Be Aware of Your School's 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.

North Dakota Department of Agriculture's

# LOCAL FOODS MAP

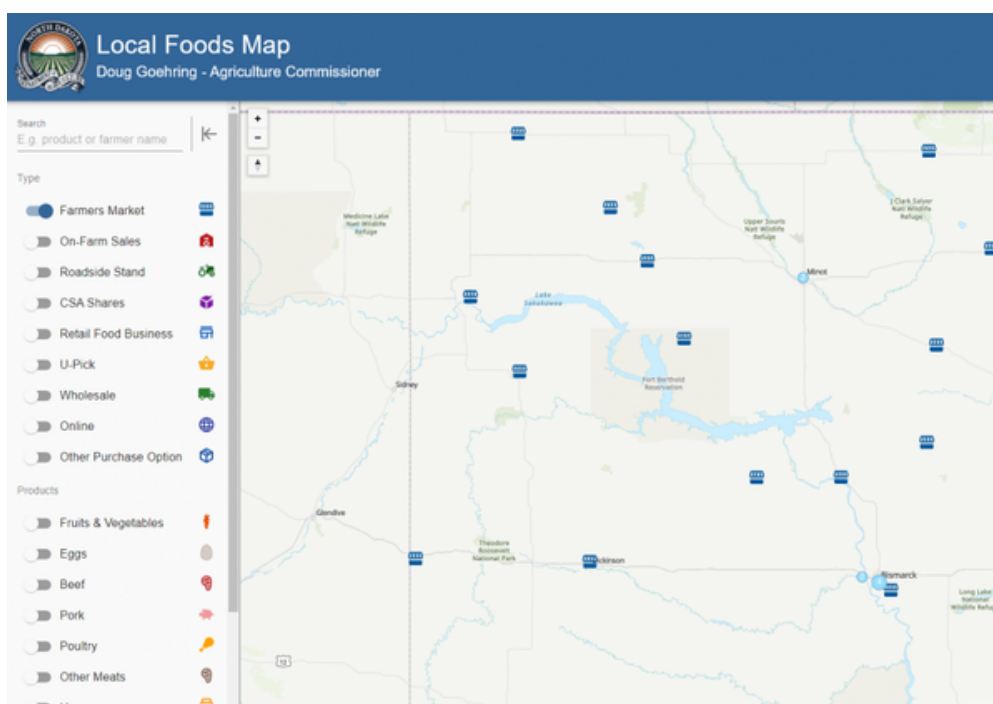
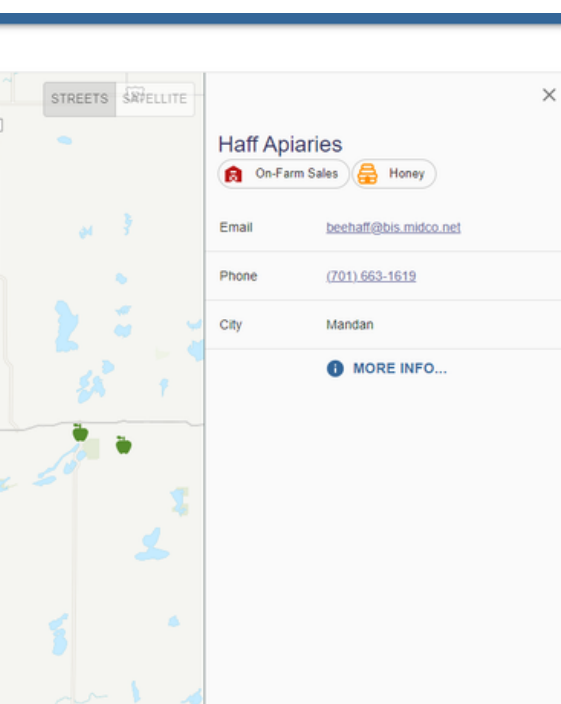
## FIND FARM TO SCHOOL PRODUCERS

The Local Foods Map is an online search 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.

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 @ 701-328-2659.





# FARM TO SCHOOL 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 producer 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 have to address any of their concerns. Having open dialogue about expectations, needs and goals is the first steps 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. If the producer can offer a substitution or not 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 through the informal bidding process is right for your school. Often times, your district will 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 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

## Purchasing Requirements

Public institutions or organizations must follow the most restrictive of state, local, or federal procurement standards.

All SFAs must have their procurement guidelines in writing. SFAs must also maintain a written standard of conduct following 2 CFR 200.318(c)(1) and have written protest procedures in place to handle and resolve any disputes relating to their procurement processes.

All procurements in the School Nutrition Programs must be competitive and when made with non-profit school food service account funds, must also meet all standards set forth in program regulations and applicable OMB Cost Circulars.

## Procurement Methods

The non-Federal entity must use one of the following methods of procurement.

### Micro-Purchase

Federal regulation for a micro-purchase (2 CFR 200.320(a)) Micro-purchase means a purchase of products or services where the total amount does not exceed \$10,000 per transaction.

To the extent practicable, purchases must be distributed equitably among qualified suppliers with reasonable prices.

You can identify if a price is reasonable by comparing prices from previous purchases, using personal knowledge of the item being purchased, or comparing prices to similar items being purchased.

## RECORDS

- Receipts documenting total amount purchased falls below \$10,000.
- Documentation showing how purchases are being distributed equitably among qualified suppliers.
- If only one qualified supplier, must document why there is only one qualified supplier. Include reasons, such as labor and mileage cost for driving to another location.

## **INFORMAL PROCUREMENT**

Federal regulation for a small purchase (2 CFR 200.320(b)). Federal regulatory definition for simplified acquisition threshold (2 CFR 200.88).

### **INFORMAL PROCUREMENT METHOD**

Commonly referred to as procurement under the small purchase threshold or simplified acquisitions. Although this method is permitted when the amount of a purchase falls at or below the most restrictive small purchase threshold (\$50,000 in North Dakota), a school food authority could choose to use the formal procurement method rather than the informal procurement method.

The following steps are typically involved in an informal procurement:

1. Develop specifications in writing.
2. Describe the goods or services that are needed.
3. Any due dates or other requirements.
4. Identify sources eligible, able, and willing to provide products.
5. Contact at least two sources.
6. Evaluate quotes and response to your written specifications.
7. Determine most responsive and responsible bidder at lowest price. Keep procurement documentation.

### **RECORDS**

- Specifications.
- Receipts, invoices.
- Documentation of price quotes from adequate number of sources (2 or more).
- If only one qualified supplier, must document why there is only one qualified supplier. Include reasons, such as labor and mileage cost for driving to another location.

## **FORMAL PROCUREMENT**

Federal regulation for sealed bids (2 CFR 200.320(c)).

For purchases greater than the small purchase threshold (\$50,000) follow the formal procurement process, using either a request for proposals (RFP) or invitation for bid (IFB).

Formal procurement occurs when a school food authority's purchases exceed the federal, state, or local small purchase threshold (whichever is more restrictive).

North Dakota's small purchase threshold is \$50,000, which is more restrictive than the federal threshold of \$250,000.



## **Within formal procurement there are two methods available:**

**Competitive Sealed Bid/Invitation for Bid (IFB)** = Formal type of procurement where sealed bids are publicly advertised and result in a firm fixed price contract. Price is the determining factor. Choose vendor with lowest price that meets specifications.

- Used for food products that require detailed specifications- such as whole fresh apples detailing size, variety, quantities, delivery, other conditions.
- Determine if a vendor is responsive and responsible by whether or not they meet the requirements.

The following steps are typically involved in a formal procurement using an IFB:

1. Develop solicitation specifications;
2. Publicly announce/advertise the solicitation;
3. Open sealed bids at a pre-determined time, date, and location stated in the solicitation; and
4. Determine the lowest bid from a responsive and responsible bidder, and award the contract.

**Competitive Proposal/Request for Proposal (RFP)** = Price is a factor and can be negotiated. Price should be the primary factor (for example, not necessarily 51%, it just must be the greatest number of all factors so could be 25% if everything else listed in the scoring is lower).

This allows for consideration of factors other than price. Other factors include: Technical expertise, past experience, quality of proposed staffing. Awarded to vendor who can provide best overall value. Can use geographic preference (by awarding additional points).

- RFP must be publicized and include specs and evaluation factors.
- Can negotiate with one or more vendors submitting offers.

## **The response to the proposal has two main elements - technical proposal and cost proposal.**

The following steps are typically involved in a formal procurement using a RFP:

1. Develop solicitation specifications;
2. Publicly announce/advertise the solicitation;
3. Evaluate proposals using established scoring criteria included in the solicitation;
4. Enter negotiations with responders who meet or exceed cut-off score; and
5. Award the contract to the most responsive and responsible vendor whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered.

## PROCUREMENT POLICY FOR \_\_\_\_\_ School District Food Service

\_\_\_\_\_ will adhere to the following policy requirements for any procurement related to food service:

### **PURCHASES:**

#### **Purchases greater than \$25,000:**

- If the aggregate amount exceeds twenty five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per school year, it is considered a formal purchase. The contract must be awarded through a formal bid process and a call for bids or request for proposals shall be published at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in the district, as well as published in a newspaper generally circulated state-wide and posted on the district's website. The call for bids or proposals may also be published in a regional newspaper. No contract shall be divided for the purpose of avoiding the formal procurement process.

#### **Purchases greater than \$10,000 and less than \$25,000:**

- Any purchase greater than \$10,000.00 and less than \$25,000 is considered a small purchase and does not require a bid process; however, the small purchase shall be made on a competitive basis. \_\_\_\_\_ will obtain two or more price quotes when any purchase will cost more than 10,000 and less than \$25,000.

Identical bid specifications will be provided to all potential vendors. Any Q&As will be given to all vendors.

#### **Purchases less than \$10,000:**

- Any purchase below \$10,000.00 is considered a micro-purchase. Micro-purchases may be awarded without soliciting competitive quotes if the price is considered reasonable. To the extent feasible, however, micro-purchases must be distributed equitably among qualified suppliers. If there is a major price difference between vendors, follow small purchase procedures.

#### **Bid Specifications:**

\_\_\_\_\_ contracts will not be awarded to any potential vendors who write any of the bid specifications, the solicitation documents, or any of the contract language.

Identical bid specifications and/or request for proposals will be provided to all potential vendors.

#### **Geographic Preference:**

No Geographic Preference (advantage based on location) is allowed with federal funds except for documented Farm to School (Farm to Plate) efforts. Therefore, as part of Farm to School \_\_\_\_\_ may choose to apply a geographic preference when procuring unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products only.

#### **Buy American:**

\_\_\_\_\_ will adhere to "Buy American" for the food service program. Therefore Food Service is required to purchase, to the maximum extent possible, domestic products for use in meals served in our Child Nutrition Program. However, exceptions are allowed when:

- Food preferences can only be met with foreign goods such as bananas.
- Insufficient quantity and/or quality is available in the USA.
- Domestic cost is significantly higher.



# Price Guide

**Carrots**      **\$1.14 / Pound**

**Cucumbers**      **\$1.52 / Pound**

**Peas**      **\$2.91 / Pound**

**Peppers**      **\$2.19 / Each**

**Romaine**      **\$0.94 / Pound**

**Spinach**      **\$1.88 / Pound**

**Tomatoes**      **\$3.48 / Pound**

**Beef**

**\$3.50 / Pound**

**Eggs**

**\$1.89 / Dozen**

**Honey**

**\$1.54 / Ounce**

Prices included in this guide are suggested prices determined by NDDPI and NDDA. Schools can set their own set of prices based on an agreement with producer.



# 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, can not be served across state lines.

## North Dakota Meat Processors

### STATE SLAUGHTER

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.

COMPANY	ADDRESS	CONTACT
BOWDON MEAT PROCESSING	BOWDON, N.D.	701-962-3539
BARTON MEATS INC.	CARRINGTON, N.D.	701-652-3636
MAPLE VALLEY LOCKERS INC.	ENDERLIN, N.D.	701-437-3311
MYERS MEATS & SPECIALTIES, INC.	GARRISON, N.D.	701-337-5498
SCHWEITZER'S GOURMET MEATS	MOFFIT, N.D.	701-387-4588
MEMA'S MEATS	BERTHOLD, N.D.	701-453-3401
CUSTOM KUT MEAT INC.	CARRINGTON, N.D.	701-652-3656

### 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.

COMPANY	ADDRESS	CONTACT
REISTER MEATS & CATERING	STREETER, N.D.	701-424-3426

# North Dakota Meat Processors

## FEDERAL SLAUGHTER

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.

<b>COMPANY</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b>	<b>CONTACT</b>
CASSELTON COLD STORAGE	CASSELTON, N.D.	701-347-4781
FAIRMOUNT LOCKERS	FAIRMOUNT, N.D.	701-474-5869
NDSU, ANIMAL SCIENCE DEPT.	FARGO, N.D.	701-231-7641
J & J HAZEN MEATS.	HAZEN, N.D.	701-748-5600
LANGDON LOCKERS	LANGDON, N.D.	701-256-2496
NORTH AMERICAN BISON, LLC	NEW ROCKFORD, N.D.	701-947-2505
6 IN 1 MEATS, LLC	NEW SALEM, N.D.	701-843-8723
VALLEY MEAT SUPPLY	VALLEY CITY, N.D.	701-845-4705
YELLOWSTONE RIVER BEEF	WILLISTON, N.D.	701-577-6328
SOUTH FORTY BEEF	MOTT, N.D.	701-209-0204

## FEDERAL PROCESSING

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

<b>COMPANY</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b>	<b>CONTACT</b>
JOHN'S MEAT MARKET	BISMARCK, N.D.	701-255-4534
AMERISTAR MEATS INC	FARGO, N.D.	206-575-2361
GOLDEN PLAINS FROZEN FOODS	LEEDS, N.D.	701-466-2100
CLOVERDALE FOODS CO.	HAZEN, N.D.	800-669-9511
M & W BEEF PACKERS	MANDAN, N.D.	701-663-2333
MYERS MEATS & SPECIALTIES	PARSHALL, N.D.	701-337-5498
BONITA'S PIZZA	PORTLAND, N.D.	701-543-3604
FARGO PACKING & SAUSAGE CO.	WEST FARGO, N.D.	701-282-3211
QUALITY BONELESS BEEF LLC	WEST FARGO, N.D.	701-282-0202
GREEN VALLEY FOODS	DEVILS LAKE, N.D.	701-662-3300

# Vendor Response Form - Beef 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 - Beef

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 classroom visits.

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\_\_\_

The award will go to the 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



## ADDITIONAL CONTENT

### [FIGHT BAC! SAFE HANDLING OF FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES](#)

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

### [BEST PRACTICES FOR HANDLING FRESH PRODUCE IN SCHOOLS](#)

There are a number of steps that foodservice employees can take to minimize contamination in the fruits and vegetables they handle. 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.

## FSMA 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.



Forms for food safety guide can be found as separate attachments on drive.

# PRODUCE SAFETY RULE

FOOD SAFETY MODERATION ACT

## 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, and sanitation.
- Production of sprouts.
- Worker health, hygiene and training.

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.



## 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.



---

# FOOD SAFETY PLAN BUILDER

---



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 of the Current Good Manufacturing Practice, Hazard Analysis, and Risk-Based Preventive 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, preventive controls, good manufacturing practices and other food safety procedures are approved by FDA or comply with FDA requirements.

Start creating your plan at [Food Safety Plan Builder | FDA](#)

# STORING PRODUCE

## SAFE STORAGE TIPS

---



### 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

### RIPENING:

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
- Peppers
- Cucumbers
- Spinach
- Lettuce



# 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/or 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 location 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.