

Illinois Farm to School Network MIGHTY MINI VIDEO ADDING LOCAL TO THE MENU



Slide One: Welcome to the next installment of the Illinois Farm to School Networks' Mighty Mini Video series...Sourcing Locally. My name is Diane Chapeta, and I'll be your host today. I am the former school food service director of Chilton Public Schools in Wisconsin. My district, along with many others, successfully sourced a variety of local and regional foods for five years. At the same time, we developed scratch cooked menus for all grade levels. Along the way, our producers and local processors became an important part of our school family. In this instalment, we will explain the various ways Illinois schools can source local and regional foods.

Slide Two: Don't give up...local food is right next door!

Schools come in many shapes and sizes, and so do local producers and food processors. Finding that perfect fit can be a bit daunting. But don't give up yet! We can help!

Slide Three: Regional-Local Food Sourcing Options

There are many ways to source local and regional foods. From a direct relationship with a local farm, to utilizing your "local" selections in the DOD Fruit and Vegetable program, there are many opportunities to buy locally. Finding that "perfect fit" involves a little leg-work, but once you discover the options and the choices you have in your community and region, it's fast work. Looking for advantageous partnerships, and utilizing best practices while procuring local foods, will help to build a strong base for all your local purchasing.

- Direct Sales on the Farm
- Farmer's Markets
- Produce Auctions
- Producer Co-ops and Food Hubs
- Produce Distributors
- DOD Fruit and Vegetable Program
- Broadline Distributors w/ local programs
- School Farms and Gardens



Slide Four: Direct from the Farm

The first two methods of sourcing locally we will share are a good fit for small districts and individual schools. For those of us who are lucky enough to live and work in an agricultural area of our state, direct relationships with local farms can be very rewarding. Illinois has many small, specialty crop producers and artisan food processors. Whether you are buying fresh produce, or value-added products such as yogurt, cheese or frozen vegetables developing a one-on-one relationship with a local producer or supplier can benefit your program. Showcasing where your food comes from is a great tool for learning. Connecting the dots between a local farm and the produce on your salad bar, or in your menus, is a vital part of the Farm to School experience for students, parents and staff, alike.

Don't forget to follow procurement regulations, and be sure to understand the thresholds for small and large purchases. Be sure to review the USDA Checklist for Purchasing Local Products. The link is listed in this slide.

ADVANTAGES

- great option for small districts and individual schools
- supply and demand are well matched
- solid relationships lead to deeper program participation
- community recognition
- student & staff acceptance



- flexible and expandable
- utilize the growing “off season” for promotions
- preserving the harvest opportunities in late summer

WORK REQUIRED AND RESTRICTIONS

- food safety review – Checklist for Purchasing Local Products
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/implementing-farm-school-activities-food-safety#onfarm>
- incorporating “new” veggies into the menus
- small purchase bidding process
- delivery, quality and billing agreements
- learning the lingo
- adapting when faced with seasonal losses- plan B ready
- develop open or seasonal menus
- use what is grown- little leverage for requesting specific vegetables

Slide Five: Farmer’s Markets and Auctions

Locating a farmer’s market or a produce auction in your area is a good first step in locating local food. A good way to discover where these markets are located is through an internet search, and then connecting via email or via phone to your areas auction or market manager. Contact information for managers are online on the farmer’s market or produce auction webpage. The auction, or market manager, will have all the information you need concerning the producers associated with their operation. Rules and procedures for produce auctions vary with each individual business. Visiting the auction during regular business hours will give you an idea of what they have to offer, and an in-person visit will supply the information you will need to participate. Strolling through a farmer’s market will give you an idea of products and fresh vegetables available in your city or town. Developing a firm relationship with these producers may lead to education opportunities for your students. Farm, orchard and auction tours are a great way to show students how food is produced and sold. Inviting farmers to visit your school in the off-season can connect your customers, the students and staff, to the foods they eat.

Buying from an auction or farmer’s market is allowable through the USDA farm to school program regulations, though you should double check with your local, county food sanitarian. Be sure to review the USDA rules on buying local. The link is listed in this slide.

ADVANTAGES

- great option for small and mid-sized districts
- supply increases with sales
- solid relationships lead to deeper program participation
- educational opportunities for students
- buying seasonally leads to seasonal menus and salad bar options
- shopping for the best pricing- seconds pricing
- opportunities for “off season” farmer involvement
- preserving the harvest opportunities in late summer



WORK REQUIRED AND RESTRICTONS

- food safety review may become complicated with multiple farms
- use what is grown
- delivery and billing agreements
- learning the correct questions to ask
- incorporating “different” veggies into the menus
- adapting when faced with seasonal shortages- plan B ready
- develop open or seasonal menus
- Be sure to follow the rules- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/procuring-local-foods>

Slide Six: Producer Co-ops and Hubs

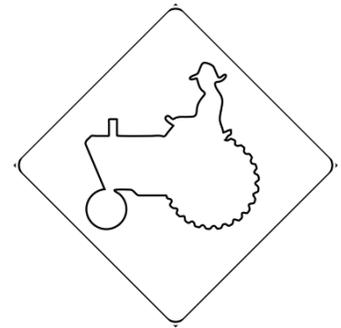
These next three options are perfect for mid-sized and larger districts, and school buying groups.

When producers band together to form hubs or groups such as producer co-ops, it's a win/win for both the farms and the buyers. When producers consolidate what they grow quantities increase and quality becomes more uniform. Set quality standards and uniform sizing for the pack, or case quantity, become the norm. Many co-ops and hubs run a version of the GAP program with all their farms, insuring food safety.

When it comes to next season's planning, these groups of growers will work with institutional customers to provide quantities of needed vegetables. Setting growing plans with groups of producers insures your school will get the vegetables your students enjoy and love. Signing a purchasing agreement to insure the types and quantities of produce needed is a good way to give each party, the buyer and the grower, peace of mind. Crops do fail, so be prepared to use a plan B utilizing your primary distributor or your DOD dollars, if the situation arises. Look for producer groups, hubs and co-ops online, or call your local farm bureau, or the Illinois Specialty Crop Association for information on groups in your area.

ADVANTAGES

- great option for mid-sized to large districts and buying groups
- aggregated supply = larger quantities of product
- more than just produce- dry goods, dairy and more
- traceability
- community recognition
- student & staff acceptance
- flexible and expandable
- utilizing the growing "off season" for promotions
- with advanced planning supply and demand are well matched
- buying seasonally leads to seasonal menus and salad bar options



WORK REQUIRED AND RESTRICTONS

- bidding process
- GAP or food safety review? Checklist for Purchasing Local Products
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/implementing-farm-school-activities-food-safety#onfarm>
- delivery and billing agreements
- learning the correct questions to ask
- incorporating "different" veggies into the menus
- adapting when faced with seasonal shortages- plan B ready
- develop open or seasonal menus
- preplanning

Slide Seven: Too big for a small farm? No problem!

Larger districts know they have power when purchasing for their programs. However, when sourcing locally, larger districts may have difficulty finding large quantities of product. Well, we have solutions for that!

Slide Eight: Produce Distributors & DOD Fruit & Veg

One of the easiest ways to source local and regional vegetables and fruits is through the Department of Defense, or the DOD, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program. This is one-stop shopping for all types of produce for participating school districts. These programs are set up regionally, so there is a very good chance you will find "local selection" listed on several produce items throughout the school year. What could be easier?

Produce houses, or distributors, are located in every region of Illinois from northern, down to the southern counties. Utilizing a fresh produce distributor as a secondary vendor can provide you will year-long regional

selections. If you search online, you will find many produce companies across the state. We have a quick list of Illinois produce vendors on the PDF version of this video.

Here's a quick list:

Northern Illinois and Chicagoland- Get Fresh Produce, Midwest Produce, Jack Tuchten Wholesale Produce, Premier Produce, General Produce, Testa Produce, FarmLogix, Chicago International Produce Market, Rousonelos Farms Inc.

Central Illinois- Central IL Produce, Vermillion Valley, B&B Produce, Big M Berry Patch, Old Kings Orchard, John Strack Produce, Arthur Produce Auction, Browns Produce, Tomato Enterprises, Roy M Petersen Produce

Southern Illinois- Tom Lange, Co, Minton Produce, Lipe Orchards, All Seasons Farm, Ware Market

ADVANTAGES

- great option for any size school
- small orders not an issue
- larger orders not an issue
- online ordering
- wide variety of products
- year-long regional options- varieties set in advance of the season
- GAP certified

WORK REQUIRED AND RESTRICTONS

- bidding process/establish a DOD account
- establish ordering cycles
- delivery and billing agreements
- researching options and companies
- request for farm identification
- balance DOD spending throughout the year

Slide Nine: Broadline Distributors w/ Local Programs

Schools, especially large districts, can influence the purchasing habits of their primary, broadline distributor. When local foods are requested by their restaurant customers, and their larger institutional customers, broadline distributors pay attention. Remember, the more hospitals and large schools request local, the more these distributors will notice requests for local products, and accept it as a need, beyond a customer trend. Customer service is one of the primary advantages of doing business with a broadline distributor. Distributors do pay attention to the requests of their larger accounts.

Smaller schools should also request local from their primary/broadline distributors. When a distributor hears this request over and over, they will revisit the issue of local food placement within their skus.

Placing a percentage of locally sourced items on your primary bid will also make an impression on broadline distributors. Be sure to check the USDA regulations for primary supplier bids. There are avenues to request well defined local items in bids. The link for this information is on this slide.

Large distributors are just beginning to recognize the need for local selections. Buying programs for local and regional items are beginning to appear on order guides within broadline distributors in the U.S. Requesting trace-back, or producer identification may be difficult, but that obstacle can be overcome with a little effort from the distributor. In Wisconsin, and in other states, broadline distributors are developing connections with food hubs and aggregators to bring in local foods for their progressive institutional customers.

ADVANTAGES

- great option for any size school
- convenient ordering and delivery
- primary or secondary vendor
- GAP certified
- affordable pricing
- "one stop" shopping



WORK REQUIRED AND RESTRICTONS

- request for farm identification
- understanding product availability and sourcing
- making the most out of the program- understanding what is offered
- finding a broadline distributor with a local program
- Bidding for local-

http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/F2S_Procuring_Local_Foods_Child_Nutrition_Prog_Guide_BW.pdf

Slide Ten: Growing a garden? Then you have local produce!

Gardens a wonderful teaching tools for students. Gardens can also be great funding tools, and they can supply food for the cafeteria!

Slide Eleven: School Gardens and Farms

School districts with active FFA programs, science labs or sustainability classes can provide support and student interest for school gardens, indoor growing labs and farm projects. If your school has a garden, greenhouse or farm, working cooperatively to grow what can be utilized on the lunch line can provide instant access to local veggies.

When students participate in the production of vegetables, they are more likely to promote and encourage other students to try something new or different at lunch. Putting a student face to the food works when educating about nutrition and variety, and when exposing students to new vegetables. Promoting that connection and encouraging participation can make a positive impact on your students.

There are several grant programs which promote school gardens and other methods of growing plants in school. Creating an online search for school gardening grants will provide you with these organizations and their information.

Be sure to review the USDA guidelines for utilizing garden produce in school lunches. The link is listed in this slide. Also, connect with your county food sanitarian to be sure local ordinances do not prohibit this practice.

ADVANTAGES

- great option for individual schools and small districts
- built-in food source
- educational opportunities
- able to grow specific vegetables
- student & staff support and acceptance
- community & parent recognition
- can be flexible and expandable
- can garden indoors; hydroponics, vertical growing, tower gardening, greenhouse.



Work Required and Restrictions

- food safety plan with SOP's- Garden Food Safety.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/implementing-farm-school-activities-food-safety#foodsafety>
- permission from county inspector
- buy in from administration, staff and parents
- year-long planning
- managing costs, excess product in summer and summer maintenance

Slide Twelve: Where to find local farms, food hubs, auctions, producer distributors and help.

These are just a few of the websites to help you with your search for local foods in Illinois. A PDF copy of this presentation is available on our website. Good luck!

- Eat Wild, IL <http://www.eatwild.com/products/illinois.html>
- State of IL Farmer's Market List <https://www.agr.state.il.us/markets/farmers/>
- USDA Food Hub Resource <http://www.ngfn.org/resources/food-hubs>
- IL Produce Auction Map <http://seeyouinthegarden.com/?p=10375>
- IL Wholesale Produce Companies <http://www.careersingrocery.com/wholesale-produce-illinois.cfm>
- IL Produce Companies- Manta Search http://www.manta.com/mb_45_C2094000_14/fresh_fruits_and_vegetables/illinois
- IL Local Food Educators U of IL Extension Agents <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/smallfarm/downloads/65062.pdf>
- Gardening Grants for Schools Google Search <https://www.google.com/?ion=1&espv=2#q=gardening%20grants%20for%20schools>
- USDA Food Safety – Buying Local Foods- [http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources#Food Safety](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources#Food%20Safety)

End Slide: Need assistance?

Thank you for watching this instalment of the Illinois Farm to School Networks' Mighty Mini Video series. If you have questions, please connect with us online at:

<http://illinoisfarmtoschool.org/>

Have a wonderful, local day!

Illinois Farm to School Network

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