FARM TO SCHOOL

Shortening the Distance

Implementation Handbook

Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

Georgia School Nutrition Program
Building Healthy Student Minds & Bodies

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Georgia Department of Education's School Nutrition Program would like to thank the Georgia Farm to School Alliance for the information, advice, materials, and support provided in the creation of this document. We also express our appreciation to all those who talked with us about their Farm to School programs and whose materials we used as resources. Many of the resources, agencies and organizations are listed in the *Learn More* section of this *Farm to School Handbook*.

Members of the Georgia Farm to School Alliance include the Georgia Department of Agriculture; the Georgia Department of Community Health, Division of Public Health; the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service; the Georgia Department of Education, School Nutrition Program and the Agriculture Education Program; Georgia Organics; and the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Southeast Regional Office.

INTRODUCTION

This *Farm to School Handbook* is designed to be a reference and informational guide to assist you in developing and implementing a Farm to School program. It contains information, resources and advice that will help you get started or expand an already existing program. Although the Handbook gives useful information and may answer many of your questions, as new information becomes available, we will provide updates.

Purchasing locally grown food is good for your students, for local farmers and communities. It is an exciting time to be a part of the Farm to School movement. Through these programs, children across the United States are reconnecting with their food, enjoying the taste and nutritional value of produce picked at peak ripeness, and learning about gardening, composting and agriculture.

We are pleased to join the national Farm to School movement so that Georgia's children will have access to additional healthful, tasty foods – grown right here in the great state of Georgia!

"Bringing Georgia fruits and vegetables into school cafeterias helps students and farmers. Students benefit from having fresh, nutritious produce on the menu. Farmers win by having a nearby market for the products they grow. Students can also learn from this collaboration between farmers and schools. They will have opportunities to learn about Georgia's geography, climate, soils, the crops we can grow here, and the importance of agriculture to our state. It is my hope they will also learn good eating habits and the importance of fruits and vegetables in our diet. Every situation is a learning opportunity, even lunch."

Gary W. Black
Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture

FARM TO SCHOOL

FARM TO SCHOOL – NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The *National Farm to School Program* was authorized by Congress in the 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act. Farm to School supplies fresh, locally grown foods to schools. The relationship between local farmers and schools enables children to have access to fresh, nutritious foods while also benefiting local farmers and communities. Farm to School offers an opportunity to educate children about nutrition and agriculture through taste tests, school gardens, composting programs, and farm tours. Children learn where their food comes from and how food choices affect their health, the environment and their communities. School nutrition directors can purchase local foods through various methods: buying directly from the farmer, through a farmers' cooperative and from wholesale distributors. Fresh locally grown food picked at the peak of flavor enhances the school nutrition program and introduces a dining experience students will not soon forget.

The *National Farm to School Network*, established in 2007, is a non-profit collaborative of the Center for Food and Justice, Occidental College and the Community Food Security Coalition. The Network began with a desire to support community-based food systems, strengthen local farms and support farm families, improve the health of school children and lower the risk of childhood obesity. With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Network promotes and supports Farm to School at the national, state and regional levels. Eight regional lead agencies and national staff provide training, technical assistance, and information on school gardens, composting, waste management programs, nutrition education, cooking demonstrations, and farm field trips. Forty-two states currently have operational Farm to School Programs with 8,943 schools participating.

FARM TO SCHOOL – GEORGIA

The Georgia Farm to School Program was initiated by Georgia Organics in 2007. A Farm to School Alliance was established in 2009 with representatives from the Georgia Department of Agriculture; the Georgia Department of Community Health, Division of Public Health; the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service; the Georgia Department of Education, School Nutrition Program and the Agriculture Education Program; Georgia Organics; and the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Southeast Regional Office. Georgia's goals for Farm to School mirror that of the National Program.

Agriculture is Georgia's largest industry, contributing more than $5.1 billion per year in cash receipts to the state's economy; however, much of what Georgia grows is sent out of state. Being a part of the Farm to School program will allow farmers to sell closer to home providing an additional marketing source for their business. The Farm to School program is reintroducing parents and

children to Georgia's rich agricultural heritage and raising awareness of the valuable contribution that local agriculture makes to the economic well-being of communities—perhaps spawning future generations of farmers in the state.

A successful Farm to School program depends on many partners: students, parents, farmers, board members, administrators, school nutrition staff, farmer organizations, teachers, members of the community, and government organizations. Each group brings with it needed resources to help implement the program. Although it would be helpful to have all of the listed groups contribute to the program, a successful program can start small with only a few interested parties.

According to Jeff Birkby, Outreach Director of the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, "People want to buy from someone who has a story to tell. They like to hear the story of their family and their operation and how they bring their products to market".

Farm to School has a great "story to tell" through offering fresh, healthy foods, lifetime learning experiences, school gardens, recycling techniques, composting, farm visits and more. By participating in these programs, Georgia's students have the opportunity to experience history and achieve a healthier future.

FARM TO SCHOOL COMPONENTS

10 REASONS TO BUY LOCAL

Consumers, whether as individuals or institutions, who value fresh, flavorful, healthful food and a working, rural landscape, should support local farmers by buying their products. Following are some reasons why.

1. **Eat fresher, better tasting, healthier foods.** Food shipped across the country must be picked prior to ripening, held for extended periods of time, and treated with chemicals to either hasten or postpone ripening. Local food has less distance to travel and will arrive at its destination crisp, flavorful, and filled with nutrients.

2. **Enjoy seasonal produce and regional varieties.** Local farmers plant according to seasonal changes providing a variety of choices throughout the year. Family farmers are known for their heirloom crop varieties giving customers unique heritage products. Local farmers are free to try small, specialty crops of various fruits and vegetables that would probably never make it in the "mass" market.

3. **Support your farming neighbors.** Fewer and fewer family owned farms are able to stay in business. Many farming families are finding it hard to make a profit. Supporting your local farmer will keep your purchasing dollar in your community and will support your neighbors.

4. **Sustain rural heritage and lifestyles.** The wholesale prices that farmers get for their products are low, often near the cost of production. Local farmers who sell direct to consumers cut out the middleman and get full retail prices for their food which helps farm families stay on their land.

5. **Locally grown is good for you.** The shorter the time between the farm and your table, the less likely it is that nutrients will be lost from fresh food.

6. **There is a benefit for the environment and wildlife.** Well-managed farms conserve fertile soil and clean water in our communities. Most produce sold in supermarkets has traveled an average of 1,500 miles from farm to shelf, which greatly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. The farm environment is a patchwork of fields, meadows, ponds, and buildings that provide habitat for wildlife.

7. **Local food builds community.** When you buy direct from a farmer, you are engaging in a time-honored connection between eater and grower. Knowing farmers gives you insight into the seasons, the land, and your food. In many cases, it gives you access to a place where your children and grandchildren can go to learn about nature and agriculture.

8. **Preserve local space.** When farmers get paid more for their products by marketing locally, they are less likely to sell farmland for development. When you buy locally grown food, you are doing something proactive to preserve our agricultural landscape.

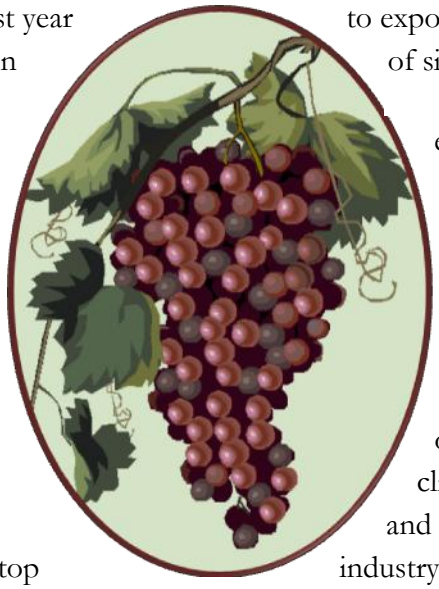
9. **Insure the future.** By supporting local farmers today, you can help make sure that there will be farms in your community tomorrow and future generations will have access to nourishing, flavorful, and abundant food.

10. **Food Safety and protection from bio-terrorism.** Food with less distance to travel from farm to plate is less susceptible to chemical, physical and biological hazards.

Adapted from: *Growing for Market*, Lawrence, Kansas: www.growingformarket.com

HISTORY OF GEORGIA AGRICULTURE

Georgia agriculture began with the English colonists in 1733. General James E. Oglethorpe, founder of the Georgia colony, studied the hunting and farming techniques of the Native Americans of Georgia to help establish strong agriculture practices. One of the major contributors of this advice was Tomochichi, leader of the Yamacraw tribe in Georgia. The colonists became skilled in the cultivation of maize (corn), beans, pumpkins, melons, and fruits of several kinds and exported commodities to England such as corn, rice, indigo, silk, and wine. They produced enough corn the first year to export approximately 1,000 bushels to England. By 1767, almost a ton of silk was exported yearly.



The Trustees of the colony established Savannah as the sight of the first agricultural experiment station in America. Botanists collected seeds, drugs, and dyestuff from other countries with similar climate and soil conditions to see if these products could be successfully grown in Georgia. The results were amazing. Mulberry trees, grapes, olives, peaches, apples, sweet potatoes, coffee, pomegranates, figs, tomatoes, and a variety of other agricultural products adapted well to Georgia's climate and soils. In 1860, there were 68,000 farms in the state and the primary product produced was cotton. Cotton remained the top industry in Georgia until the invasion of the boll weevil in 1915. With the successful eradication of the boll weevil, cotton is once again an important Georgia crop.

The battle with the boll weevil and the rapid increase in Georgia's population in urban areas in the 1900s accounted for a shift to a primarily urban society. By 2004, the number of Georgia farms declined to approximately 50,000 with less than 2 percent of Georgia's citizens living and working on farms. Eleven million acres in Georgia are classified as farmland and house approximately 32,600 farming families on small farms.

Today, Georgia's agriculture is diverse producing corn, peanuts, apples, berries, cabbage, cucumbers, grapes, hay, oats, onions, peaches, rye, sorghum grain, soybeans, tomatoes, watermelons, lettuces, and more. Many Georgia farmers raise cattle for beef and dairy, chickens for poultry and eggs, pork, and fish. Today's farmer must not only know about the land and their commodity, but also the market. Much of Georgia's agriculture is shipped across America; however, many farmers are able to provide fresh from the field products to consumers through farmers' markets, co-ops, distributors, and a working relationship with schools, restaurants, and grocery stores.

GEORGIA GROWN PRODUCTS

Georgia's soil and climate are perfect for growing a cornucopia of products year-round. Following is a list of several fruits and vegetables that Georgia produces. Use this list to stimulate your thinking about which products you might want to purchase locally. Carrots, melons, peppers, squash, cucumbers, tomatoes and a variety of specialty crops such as kiwi are also grown in Georgia. Consult the *Learn More* section of this Handbook for more product information.

APPLES

Georgia's apple industry is located primarily in North Georgia. Apples are in season from July through December and the varieties are numerous. Georgia's most popular varieties include Ozark Gold, Paulard, Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Rome Beauty, Mutzu, Crispin, Empire, Jonagold, Jonathan, Arkansas Black, Fuji, Granny Smith, Stayman, Winesap, and Yates.

Apples contain zero fat or cholesterol and only have 80 calories each. Apples are also loaded with pectin, a soluble fiber that aids in digestion. Apples contain certain phytochemicals that are associated with a reduced risk of cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

Quality apples should be firm and bruise-free. Be sure to store apples at cool temperatures to prolong shelf life. Stored apples should be checked periodically to look for damage. It is true that one bad apple can ruin the whole bunch. Also, delicious flavors can be well maintained if apples are stored in well ventilated containers or a vented poly bag.

BLUEBERRIES

Georgia ranks seventh in the nation in blueberry production. The commercial production of blueberries is primarily in South Georgia; however, there are some areas in the North Georgia Mountains that produce blueberries. Fresh blueberries are in their prime from June through August.

Blueberries are an excellent source of Vitamin A and C, iron, potassium, fiber, and antioxidants. Research shows that the antioxidants in blueberries help protect against some chronic diseases which contribute to the aging process.

Select berries that are completely blue, with no tinge of red for a more flavorful berry. To guarantee the quality of blueberries, they should be ripe when purchased because they will not continue to ripen off the vine. Avoid soft, watery, or moldy berries. Blueberries are highly perishable and should be kept refrigerated, unwashed, and covered. They can last up to two weeks when purchased fresh.

CABBAGE AND GREENS

Georgia cabbages are primarily grown in Moultrie, Georgia and are available year round. The peak times are spring and fall. Other Georgia greens are grown throughout the state and available year-round. The peak times are December to March. There are several varieties of Georgia greens: collard, mustard, turnip, and kale. Collard greens have wide leaves that have a cabbage-like flavor. Kale has leaves that are curled on the edges and are greenish-blue to green in color. Mustard greens have oval shaped leaves that are curled on the edges. Cabbage is an excellent source of Vitamins K and C and a good source of dietary fiber. The dark greens such as collards, kale and mustard greens are rich in Vitamins K, C and A. Cabbage heads should be hard and heavy. Look for bright green or red outer leaves (depending on the variety), that are fresh and blemish-free. Select greens that are crisp with good color.

CORN

Sweet corn is a warm-weather crop, well-suited for Georgia's climate. It is available from May through mid-September. There are many varieties of corn, but sweet corn is grown for human consumption. Corn is grown all over the state of Georgia; however, South Georgia counties produce the largest quantities because of their excellent climate conditions. Major counties producing corn in Georgia are Irwin, Seminole, Miller, Mitchell, and Grady. Corn is low in fat and sodium. It is cholesterol free and is a good source of Vitamin C. The versatility of corn allows it to be used right off the cob, in different dishes, popcorn, grits, and cereal.

PEACHES

Georgia's official trademark and state fruit is the peach. Georgia boasts 40 commercial varieties. There are two commercial regions in Georgia where peach production flourishes, the central and southern region, with the central region producing the majority. Georgia, *The Peach State,* comes in third behind California and South Carolina and produces peaches for only 16 weeks—mid-May through August. The two types of peaches grown in Georgia are freestone and clingstone. The freestone's fruit breaks away from the pit while the clingstone does not. Quality peaches should be soft to the touch, blemish free, and have a fragrant smell. They contain potassium, Vitamin C and A, and have diuretic and laxative properties. Nutrients are reduced with cooking. Peaches are highly perishable so they should be eaten soon after purchase. Fresh peaches can be stored at room temperature for three to four days depending on ripeness. Allow enough space between them for proper air circulation.

Refrigeration will extend their life, but not by more than a day or two. Peaches need humidity, so refrigerate in a plastic bag. When removed from refrigeration allow the peach to return to room temperature before eating (about 30 minutes). The peach will be more flavorful.

PECANS

Pecans greeted the settlers who arrived in Louisiana. Through cultivation and advancing agricultural techniques, the pecan spread throughout the Southeastern part of the United States. Georgia is the nation´s leading pecan producing state. Pecan production is centered in Dougherty County, around Albany, with orchards ranging in size from a few acres to several thousand acres. Pecans are harvested during October and November, but are available year-round.Fortunately for pecan-lovers, these favorite nuts contain an abundance of heart-healthy unsaturated fats. Pecans are also a wonderful source of potassium, thiamine, zinc, copper, magnesium, phosphorous, niacin, folic acid, iron, Vitamin B-6, and fiber. Stored at room temperature, unshelled pecans will keep up to three months. Once they are shelled, they will keep up to six months in the refrigerator in a sealed container or up to a year in the freezer. Pecans can be frozen shelled or unshelled.

STRAWBERRIES

Pick-your-own local and commercial strawberry farms are located throughout the state of Georgia. Crops ripen from March through May in the southern part of Georgia and April to June in the northern area. The harvesting season lasts from six to ten weeks. Strawberries are ready for harvest as early as February, but if picked before they are ripe will continue to turn red, but will never increase in sweetness. Strawberries are an excellent source of Vitamin C, folic acid, potassium and dietary fiber. They are fat and sodium free and an antioxidant with a punch. Strawberries should be eaten as soon as possible after picking. Do not wash until ready to eat. For storage, place strawberries on a paper towel in a tightly-covered container in the refrigerator up to 2 to 3 days. Strawberries may be frozen whole or in pieces in a tightly sealed container up to a year.

"We purchase fresh strawberries grown locally in Colquitt County and the students love them. Many younger students participate in field trips to the farm and like being able to say that they know where the strawberries came from. Our Farm to School connection is a success. I wish we had more opportunities to utilize locally gown products—delivered directly to our door."

Monika W. Griner, School Nutrition Director
Colquitt County Schools

VIDALIA ONIONS

Vidalia onions are grown and harvested in twenty South Georgia counties. The onions are known for their distinctively sweet flavor. Because of their tremendous success and popularity, the Vidalia onion was named Georgia's official state vegetable in 1990. Today with the use of controlled atmosphere storage, the length of time Vidalia onions are available to consumers has extended into the fall holiday season. Onions are low in calories, fat and cholesterol free. They are very low in sodium, and high in Vitamin C. Vidalia onions can be stored in the refrigerator, wrapped separately in a paper towel up to a year. Or, store the onions in the legs of clean, sheer pantyhose with knots tied between each onion and hang in a cool dry, well ventilated area.

WATERMELONS

The watermelons were first grown in Egypt and believed to have found their way to America during the African slave trade. Early explorers used watermelons as canteens. Florida, California, Texas, Georgia, and Arizona lead the nation in production of watermelons with Georgia ranking fourth. Cordele, Georgia claims to be the "Watermelon Capital of the World". Watermelons are approximately 90 percent water. They have no fat or cholesterol and are an excellent source of Vitamin A, B-6, C, fiber, potassium, and lycopene. By weight the watermelon is the most consumed melon of the different varieties of melons. Watermelons should be handled gently to avoid internal bruising. Always wash watermelons under running water and pat dry. Cut watermelon can be refrigerated in covered containers and be of good quality for up to 4 days.

PEANUTS

Ideal soil and climate contribute to the perfect conditions for Georgia's production of approximately 2.2 billion pounds of peanuts a year. Counties in the "Coastal Plan" of Georgia (Columbus through Macon to Augusta) produce the majority of peanuts. Despite the name, peanuts are not nuts—they belong to the legume family. Legumes are edible seeds enclosed in a pod and are a great source of protein. They are high in polyphenols (powerful antioxidants) and monounsaturated fat, the "good" fat. Roasting increases the antioxidant content of peanuts by 22 per cent. Peanuts contain magnesium, folate, vitamin E, copper, arginine, and fiber, all excellent for good cardiovascular health. Careful handling and storage of peanuts is imperative to prevent the growth of aflatoxin, a destructive mold. After washing and thoroughly drying store in paper or burlap sacks. Good air circulation is important to prevent the buildup of moisture. Peanuts can be stored up to 12 months.

ANNUAL HARVEST CALENDAR

GEORGIA ORGANICS
GOOD FOOD FOR ALL

annual harvest calendar

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Apples												
Arugula												
Asparagus												
Basil												
Beans												
Beets												
Blueberries												
Bok Choy												
Broccoli												
Brussel Sprouts												
Cabbage												
Cantaloupes												
Carrots												
Collards												
Corn-Sweet												
Cucumbers												
Cut Flowers												
Eggplant												
Figs												
Garlic-Cured												
Garlic-Green												
Grapes-Muscadine												
Kale & other greens												
Lettuce												
Mushrooms												
Okra												
Peaches												
Peas-English												
Peas-Field												
Pecans												
Peppers												
Persimmons												
Plums												
Potatoes-Irish												
Potatoes-Sweet												
Radish												
Seedlings												
Soybean- Edamame												
Spinach												
Squash-Summer												
Squash-Winter												
Strawberries												
Tomatoes												
Turnips												
Vidalia Onions												
Watermelon												

Peak Harvest
Season Extension

Eating local means eating seasonal. This harvest calendar reflects the diverse array of sustainable produce available from local farms during peak season and season extension periods.

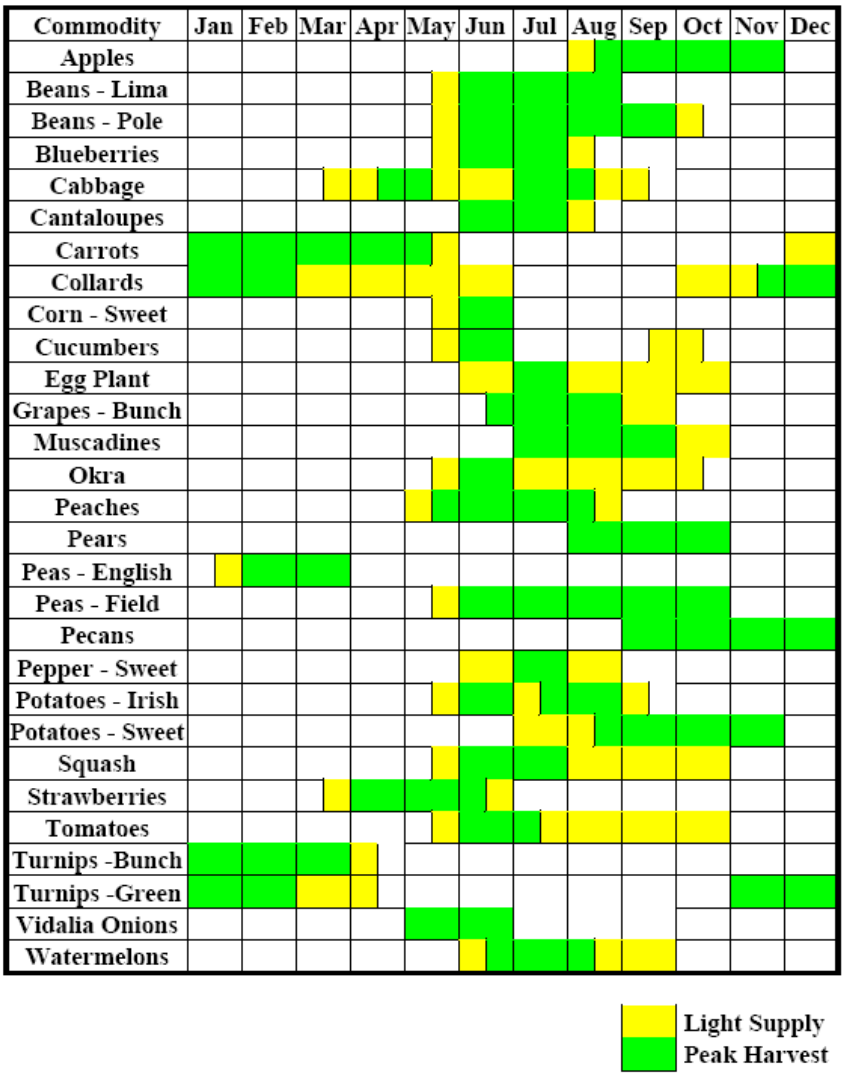
Visit us online at www.georgiaorganics.org

Courtesy of Georgia Organics

SEASONAL AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Availability Guide

HARVEST SEASON FOR GA. FRUITS AND VEGETABLES



Georgia Dept. of Agriculture, Capitol Square, Atlanta, GA. 30334 (404) 656-3680

For School Nutrition Directors

WHY DO BUSINESS WITH LOCAL FARMERS

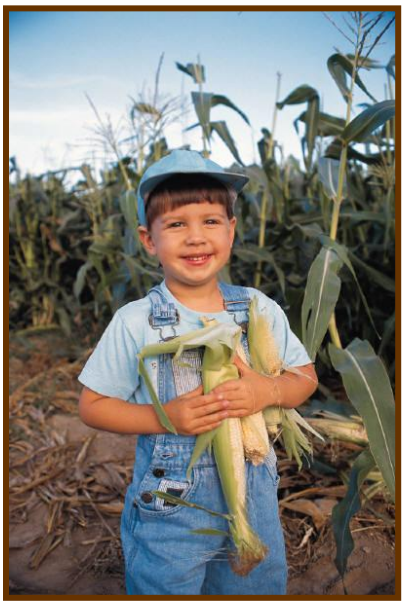
Making changes in any purchasing system can be a challenge. Building relationships and engaging in good communication are key ingredients of successful Farm to School Programs. It is important to understand the advantages of buying locally. Consider these reasons for doing business with a local farmer:

- Some products you want to use in your program may be difficult to obtain from long-distant shippers such as highly perishable fruits and/or small quantities of certain specialty products.
- Produce purchased locally is picked at its peak of ripeness and transported over shorter periods of time and is therefore fresher, better tasting and healthier. Foods grown to be shipped are picked before they are ripe and treated with chemicals. When shipped hundreds or thousands of miles, food loses crispness, flavor and nutrients along the way.
- Georgia seasonal produce featured on school menus can provide opportunities for students to taste and enjoy a greater variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Georgia seasonal produce featured on school menus can provide opportunities for students to engage in additional nutrition education activities.
- Farmers are very knowledgeable about their crops, farming techniques, market trends, and agricultural history. They can be excellent contributors to the educational experience of students.
- Buying locally supports the economic viability of communities by keeping money cycling locally. Studies indicate that a dollar spent locally re-circulates 7 to 11 times before leaving the community.
- Students can gain environmental and sustainability education through local sourcing.
- Schools can help protect the environment by reducing the distance products travel and the amount of fuel being used for transportation costs.
- Hands-on classroom learning opportunities such as school gardens, recycling, and composting programs can fit into academic requirements.
- Local farms are a great resource for field trips, taste test samples, and school garden consultation.

For Farmers

WHY DO BUSINESS WITH SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Entering into a customer-client relationship with your local school nutrition program can be a win-win proposition. It will take some thought and advance planning. By selling to your local school nutrition program, you will be helping your business and the children in your community. Consider these benefits of developing a business relationship with a school system:



- Increased visibility in the community for your farm, business and products.
- Decrease in expenses and time spent in delivering product outside of local area.
- Diversification of your market.
- Potential for an increase in income.
- Possibility of contracting to plant certain foods for the school market.
- Opportunity to add a reliable market for your business.
- A chance to "do good" by helping children gain access to nutritious foods while "doing well" and increasing your income.
- Increased positive image for your work.
- Opportunities to explore processing and preservation methods for schools and other institutional markets.
- Possibility of establishing grower collaboratives or cooperatives to supply school and other institutional markets.
- An opportunity to help create a new generation of farmers, and supporters of agriculture, by educating students through classroom presentations and farm field trips.

"I truly believe this will be great for our students and our farmers."

Donna Sapp
School Nutrition Director
Laurens County

For School Nutrition Directors

WHAT FARMERS NEED FROM THE SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

Farm to School thrives on relationships. Each partner—the farmer and the school nutrition director—has needs. In order to be successful, each partner must understand the needs of the other. Consider what farmers need from you in order to hold up their end of the business relationship:

- An understanding of the school nutrition program—its history, purpose and how it operates.
- An introduction to how you build your menus and select items to purchase.
- An explanation of the school system's bidding process.
- To be notified when bids are released.
- An estimate of what items and how much of those items will be needed throughout the school year.
- The total estimated volume of each item to be purchased.
- Delivery schedule needed: date, time of day, frequency, and location.
- Packing requirements: standard box, grade, loose pack, or bulk.
- Post-harvest handling practices: Is the product to be delivered pre-cooled? How clean should the product be? Does the product require processing prior to delivery?
- Payment terms and payment process.
- Names and phone numbers of the contact people for ordering, billing and trouble shooting.

…he [the President] wants more nutritious food in schools. In a perfect world, everything that was sold, everything that was purchased and consumed would be local so the economy would receive the benefit of that…

Tom Vilsack
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

For Farmers

WHAT FARMERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SELLING TO SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The more each partner understands the other's business, the better. School nutrition programs have a "way of doing business"—just like all other businesses. Consider this information about school nutrition purchasing when planning to sell to a school system:

- Customer service and professionalism are considered when school nutrition purchasers make business partner selections.
- Food bid contracts are created and/or renewed annually, usually in the late winter or spring. Preparation for the bid process may start as early as the fall or early winter.
- Products that do not travel well, are usually expensive, and are difficult to obtain may be perfect produce items to consider offering to the school nutrition program.
- Traditionally, school nutrition programs conduct business with a small number of vendors allowing them to handle a limited numbers of orders, delivery schedules, and invoices. A farmers' cooperative could reduce the paperwork that might discourage a school nutrition director from doing business with multiple sources.
- A product that requires minimal preparation may be easier to market to schools.
- School nutrition purchasers want safe, reliable, and sometimes ready-to-use products.
- School nutrition purchasers expect reliable, consistent, and high quality products.
- Standardized packaging and weight may be required in order to meet federal regulations.
- Some school systems require one to two deliveries a week on specific days in order to utilize their storage space and meet demanding menus.
- Because school nutrition programs are self-supporting, cost could be the major consideration when evaluating bids.
- Georgia's school nutrition programs are required to follow the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points plan (HACCP) and will expect high food safety standards from their vendors.
- As a rule there is no payment upon delivery. Terms are generally 15 to 30 days.

"We like selling to school systems; they are a reliable market for us. We enjoy being a good community member and providing a good product to children."

Virginia Hart
Ochlockonee Ridge Farms

For School Nutrition Directors

PURCHASING GUIDELINES

Sometimes the rules for purchasing and procuring food products in a Farm to School Program can be confusing. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has provided information to help clarify how you can purchase directly from local farmers and meet the federal procurement requirements. A summary of that information is included in this section.

- The School Food Authority (SFA) can purchase food directly from a farmer as long as the procurement rules that apply when purchasing food with the school foodservice account monies are followed. (All funds in the nonprofit school nutrition account are subject to federal procurement regulations and review regardless of revenue source).

- **The available procurement methods are:**
    - **Competitive Sealed Bids** – A method of procurement whereby sealed bids are publically solicited and a fixed-price contract is awarded to the responsible bidder whose bid, conforming with all the material terms and conditions of the invitation for bid, is lowest in price.
    - **Competitive Proposals** – A method of procurement whereby proposals are requested from a number of sources and the request for proposal is publicized, either a fixed-price or cost-reimbursable type contract is awarded, as appropriate. Competitive negotiation may be used if conditions are not appropriate for the use of competitive sealed bids.
    - **Small Purchase** – A relatively simple and informal procurement method that is appropriate for procurement of food, services or supplies costing not more than $100,000 (the current federal small purchase threshold), or a lesser amount – specified by State law or local requirements. Georgia follows the federal requirements for the small purchasing threshold. SFAs must check with their local officials to determine if the local small purchase threshold is less than the federal threshold, and whether the local small purchase procedure must be followed.

- The first rule of any procurement when using federal funds– allow for maximum free and open competition.

- Follow local procurement policies and procedures as long as they comply with Federal regulations.

- If a School Food Authority's (SFA) local small purchase threshold is less than $100,000 (the amount of the federal threshold) the SFA must use the local threshold.

- SFAs cannot split large purchases into smaller amounts in an effort to fall under the small purchase threshold.

- A federal statute that encourages geographic preference is the recently enacted Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), also known as the Farm Bill.

- 7 CFR Part 3016.36(c)(2) and Part 3016.60(c)specifically address geographic preference.

- Federal law now allows for a geographic preference to be applied in purchasing as long as certain requirements are met. FNS guidance memos SP 08-2010 *Geographic Preference for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in the Child Nutrition Programs* and SP 01-2010 *Applying Geographic Preferences in Procurements for Child Nutrition Programs*, outline the requirements:

    - Institutions receiving funds through the Child Nutrition Programs may apply geographic preference when procuring unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products.
    - Unprocessed products are those products that have not been cooked, seasoned, canned, or combined with any other products.
    - The following preservation techniques "shall not be considered as changing an agricultural product into a product of a different inherent character: cooling, refrigeration, freezing; size adjustment through size reduction made by peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting, chopping, shucking, and grinding; drying/dehydration; washing; the application of high water pressure or "cold pasteurization"; packaging (such as placing eggs in cartons) and vacuum packing and bagging (such as placing vegetables in bags); butchering livestock, fish and poultry; and the pasteurization of milk."

- The National School Lunch Program regulations address procurement in 7 CFR 210.21. 7 CFR 3016 for public SFAs while 7 CFR 3019 addresses procurement requirements for nonprofit SFAs. Federal procurement regulations are subject to change.

- For more information, reference SP 18-2011 "Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As". This guidance memo provides questions and answers on the application of the geographic preference option of unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products.

SUCCESS STORY

The Morgan County Board of Education approved the school system's switch in produce providers from their usual Atlanta based company to a local company, HunkerDowns, owned by Michael and Jennifer Dean. The Deans plan to buy produce from several local sources, including Morgan County farmers and other farmers within the state of Georgia, regional distributors and farmers' markets. The new local produce, according to Morgan County School Nutrition Director Phyllis Martin, should save them money because delivery will be less expensive. This year, Morgan County students will be dining on produce that is both locally grown and less expensive.

For School Nutrition Directors

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO BUYING LOCAL

Challenges may arise when trying to purchase local food. Use your commitment and creativity to turn barriers into opportunities. *Where there is a will, there is a way*. Following are a few suggestions to help you think ahead and find ways to include local food in your program:

- Consider the various distribution models that will enable you to get local food into your system for use: buying directly from individual farmers, buying from a farmers' cooperative, buying from farmers' markets with prearranged orders, and ordering through a traditional wholesaler (distributor).

- When purchasing from a distributor ask how much of the food they distribute is locally produced, and don't hesitate to ask if they can increase that amount.

- Request local food products from distributors whenever possible, and ask the names of the farms from which they purchase.

- Don't automatically assume that the cost of local food will be higher. Studies in Iowa and Wisconsin have shown local food was comparable in cost to wholesale vendors and in some cases less expensive than traditional vendors.

- Consider off-setting any additional cost of local food by instituting cost saving measures in other areas of your operation; for example reducing cost of solid waste disposal by composting all fruit and vegetable wastes. Local farmers are often happy to receive fruit and vegetable wastes for composting (not for feeding livestock).

- Establishing a delivery route to schools over a large area may be difficult for a local farmer. However, spacing out deliveries allowing the farmer to adjust your delivery around routine deliveries to farmers' markets, grocery stores, and restaurants may be the solution.

- If several local farms are delivering to a school district, those farmers could collaborate by bringing their products to one farm and having that farmer make the deliveries.

- Consider freezing items purchased at the end of the school year or in the summer months for use in recipes year-round.

- Investigate purchasing through a farmers' cooperative if one is in your area.

HOW TO FIND LOCALLY GROWN FOOD

- One of the most difficult parts of starting a Farm to School program can be finding sources for locally grown foods. Consider the following suggestions for finding locally grown foods.
- Contact local agricultural organizations, the state Department of Agriculture and the local cooperative extension office. A list of resources is provided at the end of this Handbook.
- Talk with distributors that are purchasing produce from Georgia Farmers' Markets and Georgia farmers. Ask your distributor about Georgia farmers and encourage them to purchase from farmers in your area.
- Contact other institutions such as colleges, restaurants, and other school nutrition directors who purchase some or all of their produce from local farmers and ask for references and contact information.
- Visit a local Farmers' market and meet the farmers. Ask if they are interested in selling into the school market. Ask for the names of other farmers who might be interested. Georgia Farmers' markets are listed in the brochures and resources provided with this Handbook.
- Check with food cooperatives that buy from local farmers and ask for contact information for the local farmers.
- Check out "Buy Local" campaigns that promote locally produced foods. Refer to references in this Handbook.
- Investigate food advocacy groups such as the Chefs' Collaborative and Slow Food U.S.A. that might know which local farmers throughout Georgia are selling to restaurants and institutions.

FOOD SAFETY

Food safety is an essential part of any foodservice program. State and Federal agencies have established rules to maintain a safe food supply. Farmers take food safety seriously. Their business and reputation depend on it. Farmers with appropriate licensing follow state and federal guidelines in handling and processing food products in a safe environment. The following questions and answers will help clarify food safety issues in purchasing local food.

1. **Q: Can schools buy produce directly from growers?**

   A: Yes, as long as the school nutrition system has followed local and federal procurement policies and procedures.

2. **Q: Is a farmer considered an "approved source"?**

   A: Yes, a farmer is considered an "approved source" if the product has been grown on farmland or in a garden by the farmer. However, a farmer is not considered an "approved source" if the product has been processed and/or stored at any time in a private home.

3. **Q: Is a farmer required to have a license for foods that are processed (heating, canning, freezing, drying, mixing, coating, or if ingredients have been added to the product)?**

   A: Yes, if the farmer is selling produce that has been processed or purchased for resale a license from the Georgia Department of Agriculture is required.

4. **Q: Is a farmer required to have a license for produce that is fresh or fresh-cut?**

   A: No, a license is not required if the produce is in the raw state and not processed. A farmer is allowed minimal handling such as washing vegetables and bagging greens which might be necessary to present an agricultural product to a school nutrition system in a more useable form.

5. **Q: When a farmer does not need a license, does that mean the farmer does not have to comply with good agricultural and management practices?**

   A: No, even when farmers do not need a license, they are still required to follow federal and state laws. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) monitors chemical applications to produce. State agencies regulate fertilizer and pesticide use, irrigation water, and the application of manure. The Georgia Department of Agriculture inspects roadside vegetable stands, farmers markets, and pick your own food farms.

6. **Q: Are Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) required?**

   A: GAPs are not required regulations, but were established to be guidelines on good agricultural practices and manufacturing practices for fruits and vegetables in the farm to

table process of growing, harvesting, washing, sorting, packing, and transporting produce. However, in an effort to safeguard the chain of the nation's food supply, the Federal government passed House Bill 2749, The Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009 on August 11, 2009. The bill states that because of the recent increase in food-borne illnesses in the United States, expanded authority will be given to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to monitor food safety. Also, "food companies will be required to develop and place into action elaborate food safety plans" which includes danger analysis procedures, preventive controls, corrective actions, and recall procedures. Food companies have already developed a food safety plan for melons, tomatoes, lettuces, and leafy greens. Florida's state government has adopted the tomato guidelines as law.

7. **Q: What is the difference between Hazards Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and GAP?**

   A: HACCP is required by law and covers processed fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry, seafood and juices. GAPs are not required by law, but are guidelines for handling fresh produce. The guidelines are completely voluntary.

8. **Q: How does the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 pertain to fresh produce?**

   A: Domestic and foreign facilities that manufacture, pack, or hold food for human or animal consumption in the United States must register with the FDA. In the event of a potential or actual bioterrorist incident or an outbreak of foodborne illness, the FDA can set in motion a tracking and notification process to inform affected facilities and the public.

9. **Q: What are some of the most common foodborne pathogens associated with produce?**

   A: Campylobacter: Campylobacter is a bacterium associated with poultry. Produce is affected when it is involved in cross-contamination during food preparation or from exposure to contaminated run-off surface water from animals.

   Clostridium botulinum: C botulinum is a bacterium found primarily in soil and is mostly associated with canned foods. However, it has been linked to shredded and packed cabbage, sliced onions, packaged mushrooms, and garlic packaged in oil. The only preventive method for contaminated produce is to completely discard the food.

   E. coli: E. coli is a bacterium transported through human and animal feces. Produce can carry E. coli from cross contamination and run-off surface water from contaminated animals or humans. Washing contaminated produce will not destroy the bacteria. The only preventive method for contaminated produce is to completely discard the food.

Listeria: Listeria is found in human intestines, soil, and water. The bacteria can grow on raw or fresh-cut produce during refrigeration, freezing, drying and heating. Preventive measures (thorough washing) should be taken by the grower and consumer to remove the bacteria.

Norovirus: Noroviruse is transmitted from infected people through feces or vomit. Proper hand washing methods and removing the infected person from food preparation are the best preventative measures.

Salmonella: Salmonella is a bacteria found in the intestines of humans, birds and other animals. Although Salmonella is most often associated with contaminated poultry products, it will grow rapidly on cut or damaged fruits and vegetables and on vegetables stored at temperatures between 68 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit. Contaminated produce must be discarded immediately.

Shigella: Found in water contaminated by infected human feces, Shigella can affect produce through run-off water, soil, flies that breed in contaminated feces, or contact with unwashed affected hands. Contaminated produce must be discarded immediately.

Cryptosporidium: Cryptosporidium is a protozoan intestinal parasite transmitted through infected feces. Produce is exposed to the parasite from unwashed hands and contaminated soil. Irrigation water may also be a source of contamination. The ultraviolet portion of sunlight and drying will control cryptosporidium.

Hepatitis A: Hepatitis A is a virus that is transmitted from infected human feces to food when good hygiene is not followed. Any food can be contaminated with Hepatitis A when touched by unclean infected hands. The best prevention is to practice good hand washing techniques.

Sources: *USDA Guidance for Industry: Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*. www.ncsu.edu/fvsi/ncfreshproduce/

TAKE NOTE

Fresh, whole (uncut) produce, with the exception of bean sprouts, is not potentially hazardous. However, quality is maintained longer if produce is promptly refrigerated. All melons and tomatoes, *once cut*, are potentially hazardous and must be stored at 41degrees or below. Wash all fruits and vegetables with cold running water to remove any loose debris. A vegetable brush will aid in this process. Fresh cut vegetables that have been prewashed and bagged do not need to be washed again. Whole uncut fruits can be washed again and reserved if not eaten the first time they are put out for service. However, if a whole fruit is taken by someone but not eaten it cannot be re-served. Always remember to keep hands, surfaces, utensils, fresh fruit and vegetables clean to guarantee food safety.

SCHOOL GARDENS and FARM FIELD TRIPS

The school nutrition program can be the catalyst for establishing school gardens, but don't "go it alone". Teamwork is the best approach to establishing and maintaining a school garden. The entire school, and even the community, can benefit from a school garden. Whether the garden provides tasty foods to add to school menus, educational opportunities for children or a place of peace and beauty, there are benefits for everyone.

School Garden: E. Rivers Elementary, Atlanta Public Schools

Learning comes alive for students and teachers in a school garden setting. Gardens create dynamic, ever-changing, natural environments suitable for learning on every level. From reading and language arts, to science, math, and nutrition, to cross-cultural understanding, transformation happens in the school garden. The garden laboratory is the perfect setting to teach children about healthy eating. Nothing teaches a student more effectively than a hands-on experience of planting, nurturing, harvesting and eating foods from their own school garden. The student will learn where food comes from and how important and difficult it is to cultivate delicious food. A lifelong appreciation of agriculture can be built from meeting a local farmer and learning about a different way of life.

A school garden can teach students about natural pesticides, composting, anatomy of insects, and the variety of plant species. Curriculum activities in the garden can include food growing science, plant science, cooking and nutrition, wetland habitats and restoration, and native history. A school garden can be an excellent school fundraising project and an opportunity for a garden buddy program pairing up older children with younger children to work in the gardens. An experience with a school garden can connect the student to healthy eating and food systems, fractions and measuring, definition of a whole food and parts of plants, and healthy food preparation.

"The children are so excited. They say, 'Ms. Robbins, we're going to make you a salad when our garden is done!' And, I'm also excited to see their math and science scores go up and to see them get outside. Children don't spend enough time outside, so this ties in to so many things – childhood obesity, learning, nutrition, science, they are all addressed within this one garden."

Robin Robbins, Principal
Burgess-Peterson Elementary, Atlanta Public Schools

FUNDING SCHOOL GARDENS

The development of school gardens can be financially supported by school nutrition funds if certain guidelines are followed, funds are available and are budgeted. In memo SP 32-2009 dated July 29, 2009, USDA/FNS provides clarification regarding use of school nutrition funds to support school gardens.

1. **Q: Can the school foodservice use funds from the non-profit school foodservice account to purchase seeds for a school garden?**

   A: Yes, with the understanding that the garden is used within the context of the program, i.e. selling the food or providing food in the classroom as part of an educational lesson.

2. **Q: Can the school foodservice use funds from the nonprofit school foodservice account to purchase items for the school garden such as fertilizer, watering cans, rakes, etc.?**

   A: Yes, as long as the items are used for the purpose of starting and maintaining the garden.

3. **Q: Can a school sell food grown in their school garden that was funded using the nonprofit school foodservice account?**

   A: Yes, as long as the revenue from the sale of the food accrues back to the non-profit school foodservice account. Schools can serve the produce as part of a reimbursable meal or sell it a la carte, to parents, to PTA members, at a roadside stand, etc.

4. **Q: Are there health/safety issues involved with school gardens?**

   A: Yes. SFA's need to familiarize themselves with the Federal, State, and local requirements regarding health and sanitation issues.

5. **Q: Can school foodservice purchase produce from another school organization that is maintaining and managing the garden, such as Future Farmers of America?**

A: Yes, the school food service may purchase produce from a garden run by a school organization such as FFA, which is an agricultural education program for students.

6. **Q: Can funds received through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) be used for purchase seeds/tools/equipment for a school garden?**

   A: No. FFVP funds may NOT be used for the purchase of any materials for school gardens.

7. **Q: What if there is excess produce from the garden left over at the end of the school year?**

   A: The school should first see if the excess food can be used to benefit another program such as the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). If that is not possible, they could try selling the food (as always, the profit must accrue back to the nonprofit school foodservice account) or donate it in accordance with State and local health/safety regulations.

FARM FIELD TRIPS

The school nutrition program can also be the catalyst for farm field trips. Teachers are always eager for new ideas for field trips and other educational activities. Talking with teachers about your local food purchasing efforts and engaging them in the Farm to School Program can have many positive benefits for your school nutrition program including gaining support from parents and other community members.

Farm field trips expose students to the wonders of urban and rural agricultural environments. Through hands-on activities like hayrides and corn mazes, experiments, and exploration students learn about the roots of good nutrition. Some field trip topics include composting and the living soil, plant life and plant parts, the insect environment, urban agriculture and local food systems. Students can learn about hoop houses and greenhouses while seeing crops of vegetables, fruits, herbs, and flowers. Information gained during these visits with farmers will empower students as they work in their school garden.

"The kids loved all of it! So many had not ever been around farm animals before and got a real kick out of feeding and petting them."

Dana Falleur, Teacher
New Hope Elementary School, Whitfield County

Georgia Planting Guide for School Gardens

Crop	Days to Maturity	Spring Planting Dates	Fall Planting Dates	Seed/ Plants 100 ft	Distance Between Rows	Distance Between Plants	Depth to Plant
Asparagus	2nd season	Jan 15-Mar 15	Nov & Dec	50 roots	3 to 5 ft	1 1/2 to 2 ft	6 in
Bean, bush	50-60	Apr 1-May 1	July 15-Aug 20	1/2 lb.	3 ft	2 to 4 in	1-1 1/2 in
Bean, pole	65-75	Apr 1-May 1	July 15-Aug 10	1/2 lb.	3 ft	6 to 12 in	1-1 1/2 in
Bean, lima	65-75	Apr 1-June 1	July 1- Aug 1	1 lb.	2 to 2 1/2 ft	3 to 4 in	1-1 1/2 in
Beet	55-65	Feb 15-Apr 1	Aug 1-Sept 20	1 oz.	2 to 2 1/2 ft	2 in	1 in
Broccoli	60-80	Feb 15-Mar 15	Aug 1-Sept 1	100 plants	2 1/2 ft	14 to 18 in	
Cabbage	65-80	Jan 15-Mar 15	Aug 15-Oct 1	100 plants	2 1/2 ft	12 in	
Cantaloupe	80-90	Mar 25-Apr 20	Not recommended	1 oz.	4 to 6 ft	3 1/2 to 4 ft	1 1/2 in
Carrot	70-80	Jan 15-Mar 20	Aug 20-Sept 15	1/2 oz.	2 ft	2 to 3 in	1/2 in
Cauliflower	55-60	Mar 1-Apr 1	Aug 1-Sept 1	100 plants	3 ft	12 to 18 in	
Collard	55-70	Feb 1-Mar 20	Aug 1-Oct 1	1/2 oz.	2 1/2 ft	8 to 16 in	1/2 in
Corn	80-100	Mar 15-June 1	June 1-July 20	1/4 lb.	3 to 3 1/2 ft	12 to 18 in	2 in
Cucumber	60-65	Apr 1-May 15	Aug 20-Sept 1	1 oz.	3 1/2 to 5 ft	3 to 4 ft	1 1/2 in
Eggplant	75-90	Apr 1-May 15	July 10-15	50 plants	3 ft	2 1/2 to 3 ft	
Kale	50-70	Feb 1-Mar 10	Aug 10-30	1/2 oz.	3 ft	10 in	1/2 in
Lettuce	60-85	Jan 15-Mar 15	Sept 1-Oct 1	1/2 oz.	2 to 2 1/2 ft	10 to 12 in	1/2 in
Mustard	40-50	Jan 15-Apr 1	Aug 20-Oct 1	1/2 oz.	2 ft	1 in	1/2 in
Okra	55-60	Apr 1-June 1	June 15-July 1	1 oz.	3 to 3 1/2 ft	6 in	1 in

Crop	Days to Maturity	Spring Planting Dates	Fall Planting Dates	Seed/ Plants 100 ft	Distance Between Rows	Distance Between Plants	Depth to Plant
Onion (mature)	100-120	Jan 1-Mar 15	Sept 1-Dec 31	300 plants or 1/2 gal sets	1 to 2 ft	3 to 4 in	3/4 in
Peas, garden	60-80	Jan 15-Feb 15	Not recommended	1 lb.	2 1/2 ft	1 in	1 1/2 - 2 in
Peas, southern	60-70	Apr 1-Aug 1		1/2 lb.	3 ft	4 to 6 in	1 1/2 - 2 in
Pepper	65-80	Apr 1-June 1		50 plants	2 1/2 ft	1 1/2 to 2 ft	
Potato, Irish	70-90	Jan 15-Mar 1	Aug 1-15	1 peck	2 1/2 to 3 ft	10 to 14 in	5 in
Potato, sweet	90-150	Apr 15-June 15		100 plants	3 1/2 ft	12 in	
Radish	25-30	Jan 15-Apr 1	Sept 1-Oct 15	1 oz.	1 1/2 ft	1 in	1/2 in
Spinach	40-45	Jan 15-Mar 15	Sept 1-Oct 15	1 oz.	1 1/2 to 2 ft	1 to 2 in	3/4 in
Squash, bush	50-55	Apr 1-May 15	Aug 1-20	1 oz.	3 to 4 ft	2 ft	1 1/2 - 2 in
Squash, winter	85-90	Apr 1-Aug 1		1/2 oz.	5 ft	3 ft	1 1/2 - 2 in
Tomato	70-85	Mar 25-May 1	June 1-Aug 10	50 plants	3 to 4 ft	2 1/2 to 3 ft	
Turnip	45-65	Jan 15-Apr 1	Aug 10-Sept 15	1/2 oz.	1 to 2 ft	1 to 2 in	1/2 in
Watermelon	80-90	Mar 20-May 1	Do not plant	1 oz.	10 ft	8 to 10 ft	1 1/2 in

*Note: Planting dates in this chart are for middle Georgia. North Georgia plantings should vary about two weeks later in the spring and earlier in the fall. South Georgia plantings can be made two weeks earlier in the spring and somewhat later in the fall. Information in this chart comes from Bulletin 577 of the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences.

Courtesy of Georgia Organics

10 TIPS FOR PROGRAM SUCCESS

Although Farm to School varies by region, community, and school system, many strategies are the same. Using all or a combination of these tips can help you develop a strong and sustainable foundation for Farm to School Programs.

1. **Bone up on federal and local procurement rules and regulations.** As long as proper procurement procedures are followed, USDA now allows for geographic preference for the procurement of unprocessed agricultural products which are locally grown and locally raised and that have not been cooked, seasoned, frozen, canned or combined with any other product.

2. **Commit to a cooperative approach with all interested parties.** Open lines of communication with school boards, administrators, parents, teachers, students, farmers and distributors.

3. **Start with the low-hanging fruit.** Whole fruit requires no extra processing, is easily added as a side dish or healthful dessert without having to change the main menu. The enhanced taste of locally grown will be sure to make it a success with customers.

4. **Make a shortlist of seasonal swap out options.** Pick a few items you are regularly buying and have a local farmer identify which are locally available. Swap those few items for locally grown when they are in season.

5. **Engage your distributor.** Let your distributor know of your interest in purchasing locally grown food. Ask them to identify which foods they already purchase locally. Ask them to source additional products that you want to purchase.

6. **Develop contacts.** Building a network of local farmers, farming organizations, state grower networks, cooperatives and/or distributors will expand your reach, locate sources and create support.

7. **Get to know Georgia grown products.** Learn which products are grown in Georgia, which farmers grow those products and when they are in season.

8. **Be patient and creative.** When bidding, planning menus, ordering, and partnering with local farmers take your time, use creative skills to problem solve for a better outcome.

9. **Plan for the unexpected.** A good strategic thinker always has a "Plan B" in mind. Georgia weather conditions can be unpredictable and your order could be affected.

10. **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** The best way to ensure success is to keep communication lines open and remember—communication is a two-way street.

Adapted from: *Eat Smart-Farm Fresh*, USDA/Food and Nutrition Service and *Farm to School Field Guide;* Community Alliance with Family Farmers: www.caff.org

LEARN MORE

These websites will be posted, with hyperlinks, on the GaDOE's website portal.

AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

- Ag in the Classroom – **http://www.agclassroom.org**
- Georgia Agriculture Education – **http://www.gaaged.org/**

FARM TO SCHOOL

- Know Your Farmer; Know Your Food – **http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/knowyourfarmer?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER**
- National Farm to School Program for resources and Farm to School information – **http://www.farmtoschool.org**
- School Nutrition Association Magazine Issue June/July 2009 *Sow the Seeds of Change*
- The Community Food Security Coalition's Farm to School Program **http://www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_school.html**
- The Michigan Farm to School Program - **http://www.mifarmtoschool.msu.edu/**
- North Carolina Growing Minds Farm to School Program **http://growing-minds.org/**

FARMERS MARKETS

- Certified Farm Markets website - A Georgia Farm Bureau Certified Farm Market **http://www.gfb.org/commodities/cfm/default.html**
- State Farmers' Markets – Georgia Department of Agriculture **http://agr.georgia.gov/state-farmers-market.aspx**
- USDA's National Farmers Market Directory **http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/**

FARMING IN GEORGIA

- Georgia local cooperative extension offices and agents: **http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/office.cfm**
- Picture of farmland in Georgia **http://www.farmland.org/resources/fote/states/map_georgia.asp**

Seventy-seven Georgia schools participating in USDA's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program purchased 1,765,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables during the 2010-2011 school year.

- University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences list of Georgia Agricultural products - **http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/anr/gaagres/**

FIELD TRIPS AND SCHOOL GARDENS

- Slow Food U.S.A. **http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/local_chapters/**
- Georgia Agriculture and Nature Based Tourism Directory **http://www.caed.uga.edu/agnet/**
- Pick Your Own Crop article from the Market Bulletin- **http://agr.georgia.gov/articles-of-interest.aspx**
- Georgia AgriTourism **- http://georgiagrown.com/activities/agri-tourism**

FOOD SAFETY

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention- **http://emergency.cdc.gov/agent/food/** & Food and Drug Administration- **http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/default.htm**
- Georgia Good Agricultural Practices - **http://www.gfvga.org/GAGAP/ga-gap-program/**
- Guidance for Industry: A Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables - **http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/GuidanceDocuments/ProduceandPlanProducts/ucm064574.htm**
- National Food Safety Programs – **http://www.fda.gov/Food/default.htm** and **http://www.foodsafety.gov**
- North Carolina Cooperative Extension: **http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?/page=foodsafetyprocessing** (food safety)
- Produce Safety - National Food Service Management Institute **www.nfsmi.org/producesafety**

GEORGIA AGRICULTURE

- Georgia Organics **http://www.georgiaorganics.org**
- Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association **http://www.gfvga.org/**
- Georgia Agriculture **http://agr.georgia.gov/**
- The New Georgia Encyclopedia **http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org**

GRANTS

- Farm to School - **http://www.farmtoschool.org/fundingopps.php**
- Healthier US School Challenge – **http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html**
- USDA Farm to School - **http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/f2s-grants.htm**

NUTRITION EDUCATION

- Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment, **http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/changing.html**
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service - **http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/** and **http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/eatsmartmaterials.html**
- Fruits and Veggies More Matters - **http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org**

PROCUREMENT

- Eat Smart-Farm Fresh! A guide to Buying and Serving Locally Grown Produce in School meals– **http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/farm-to-school-guidance_12-19-2005.pdf** (Procurement)

TIPS TO FARMERS

- Florida Department of Education Nutrition Services: **http://www.florida-agriculture.com/farmtoschool/tips.htm**
- Vermont Farm to School **http://www.vtfeed.org**
  WHY BUY LOCALLY Food Routes – **http://www.foodroutes.org**
- How Local Farmers and School Food Service Buyers Are Building Alliances: Lessons Learned from the USDA Small Farm/School Meals Workshop, May 1, 2000
  http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3102250

WEBSITES FOR GRANTS

Grant programs help fund various activities in support of Farm to School and other nutrition related programs. Each grant program has a particular focus and specific application requirements. Grants usually provide money, supplies, or equipment to groups and organizations. Consider your needs and consult these websites, and other resources, for more specific information including application details.

- **http://loveyourveggies.com/** Love your Veggies-Hidden Valley Dressing. Each grant award will support an elementary school in developing a program offering fresh vegetables and fruits lasting through the 2010-11 school year. Each school grant will consist of $10,000 in direct funding.
- **http://www.kidsgardening.org/grants-and-awards** List of grant and award programs for school and youth gardens presented by the National Gardening Association.
- **http://www.kidsgardening.org/grants/2012-mantis-awards-community-and-youth-gardens** 2012 Mantis Awards for Community and Youth Gardens for charitable and educational garden projects
- **http://www.herbsociety.org/resources/samull-grant.html** Small grants for indoor and outdoor herb gardens.
- **http://www.toolboxforeducation.com/** Lowe's Toolbox for Education will donate money to support a school project
- **http://sites.target.com/site/en/company/page.jsp?contentId=WCMP04-031880** Field trip grants
- **http://corporate.honda.com/america/philanthropy.aspx?id=ahf** American Honda Foundation to provide grants to worthy non-profit causes, programs, and organizations that directly benefit the people of the United States in the areas of youth education and scientific education.
- **http://www.farmtoschool.org/fundingopps.php** Farm to School various grants

DIRECTORIES OF LOCAL GROWERS

Note: The following lists provide help in finding local products and producers. These lists are not intended to be all-inclusive.

- **Apples – http://www.orangepippin.com/orchards/united-states/georgia**
- **Peaches – http://www.gapeaches.org/growers**
- **Pecans – http://www.georgiapecansfit.org/where-to-buy**
- **Strawberries – http://gastrawberries.org/growers/**
- **Vidalia Onions – http://www.vidaliaonion.org/trade/growers_and_packers**

The following directories are available for download on their respective websites:

- ## Georgia Certified Farm Markets Directory
  http://gfb.org/commodities/cfm/documents/CFM_2011.pdf

- ## 2011 Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Directory
  http://agr.georgia.gov//Data/Sites/1/media/ag_marketing/state_farmers_market/files/fruitandvegetabledirectory.pdf

- ## Georgia Organics' Local Food Guide
  http://www.georgiaorganics.org/OrganicDirectory.aspx

"We've been in business for 66 years and lately people are starting to put a greater emphasis on knowing where their food comes from. They like to put a face on their farmer. When you buy local produce you are sustaining a local economy and there is less input getting that food to your table. I like knowing that students, just a few miles away, are eating our apples."

David Lillard – Mercier Orchards
Blue Ridge, Georgia

Fall, 2012

Georgia School Nutrition Program
Building Healthy Student Minds & Bodies

Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

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