

GROWING FARM TO SCHOOL

RESULTS FROM THE IDAHO FARM TO SCHOOL PILOT





FARM TO SCHOOL PILOT

The Idaho Farm to School Program was developed in 2005 through a partnership between the Idaho Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Idaho Preferred Program®. Results from a 2011 survey show that 77% of Idaho School Districts serve local food at least seasonally, but many of these school districts do not have a comprehensive Farm to School Program that includes serving locally grown foods throughout the school year, a food/agriculture education program, school gardens, or marketing efforts supporting the Farm to School Program.

A year-long Farm to School Pilot Program was developed to closely examine the procedural workings of a comprehensive Farm to School Program. Three successful pilot schools were followed throughout the school year as they developed and grew their Farm to School Programs. These three districts represented a small, a medium, and a large-sized district in both urban and rural settings.

Pilot districts were asked to commit to the following goals during the year-long pilot:

- Serve a local food twice a week during the month of September*
- Serve a local food every month during the rest of the school year*
- Use marketing materials provided to promote the Farm to School Program each time a local food is served
- Provide food/agriculture education to teachers and students
- Incorporate a school garden program, if possible

*Most of the pilot programs exceeded the minimum frequency in these goals.

PILOT SCHOOL # 1: BOISE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Boise School District is an urban district located in the capital city of Idaho. The district includes 46 schools with a student enrollment of 22,825 students. On average, 3,623 breakfasts and 13,634 lunches are served on a daily basis in the district.

Boise is located in southwestern Idaho near fruit and vegetable growing regions, providing easy access to produce growers as well as meat, dairy, and processed food producers. The district procured local food primarily through its regular foodservice distributors, with some deliveries by individual growers for specialty items (e.g., organic grapes). All of Boise School District's schools served two to four local foods per day during September and at least one local food each week during the rest of the school year. The district spent approximately \$1,037,292 on local food during the pilot, constituting about 30% of its total food purchases.



PILOT SCHOOL # 2: MARSING SCHOOL DISTRICT

Marsing School District is a rural district located in Southwest Idaho. The district contains three schools with a total student enrollment of 807 students. On average, 468 breakfasts and 668 lunches are served on a daily basis in the district.

Marsing is located in the heart of the produce growing region of southern Idaho, with many major fruit producers within just a few miles of the school. The district procured local food through its regular foodservice vendors by directly picking up fresh produce from nearby growers and through some deliveries by individual local growers. Marsing School District spent approximately \$50,000 on local food during the pilot, constituting about 30% of its total food purchases.

PILOT SCHOOL # 3: COEUR D'ALENE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Coeur d'Alene School District is a rural district located in Northern Idaho. The district contains 17 schools with a student enrollment of 9,207 students. On average, 636 breakfasts and 5,471 lunches are served on a daily basis in the district.

Coeur d'Alene is located in the northern panhandle of Idaho. Most "local" products are actually grown in eastern Washington, but some seasonal produce is available through small growers in the local community. The district procured local food through its regular foodservice distributors and procured a few specific products by picking up fresh produce from nearby growers. Coeur d'Alene School District spent approximately \$291,111 on local food during the pilot, constituting about 18% of its total food purchases.



The information shared throughout this booklet is based on the experiences and practices developed by these Farm to School pilot schools. The lessons shared by these pilots can be used to help other schools grow their Farm to School Program.



STAFFING: WHAT TO EXPECT

All of the pilot school sites initiated the Farm to School Program from the district office. The pilot schools learned that the first year requires a commitment from the district foodservice staff to incorporate the local food products into the menus and plan for menu changes as the food availability changes. In most cases, the program did not require a lot of additional work from managers or kitchen staff. The pilot schools learned that it works best if the district foodservice office provides the support and resources needed to the kitchens so the kitchens do not have to do extra work and can focus on preparing and serving the fresh foods.

Pilot schools found it helpful to communicate with their foodservice staff on the importance of Farm to School and the changes to expect as they implemented the program. They learned that staff buy-in is key since it is the staff at each school who will be on the front line implementing Farm to School, serving, and marketing the food items.

It is important to make Farm to School easy for your staff so they do not feel overwhelmed by the program. Make sure that your expectations of your staff are very clear. At the

beginning of the year, set expectations for marketing local foods (e.g., hanging up food posters, updating sheets on local food sign boards, etc.) so staff clearly know their role in the program. Have the district office provide the resources needed to market the program rather than leaving this up to individual kitchen managers. This will help ensure that each kitchen has the resources needed to accurately market the local foods served.

LESSON LEARNED: If you are asking kitchens to serve a new product, make sure to provide instructions on how to prepare and serve that item. For example, if you add acorn squash to

“Staff really liked our focus on the local food movement and were very supportive of the program.”

the menu, the staff need to know how to cut up the squash, how to cook it, the best way to serve it, etc. Providing recipes with step-by-step instructions works the best. Without this clear guidance, some schools may not use the fresh food products you order or may unintentionally waste large amounts of food.

DISTRICT FOODSERVICE OFFICE ROLE	INDIVIDUAL KITCHEN'S ROLE
Increase in planning and communication, primarily during the first year	Minimal change to work load, if any
Communicating expectations to staff, regularly communicating which foods are local	Preparing and serving local food products
Planning local foods on the menu and adapting recipes to include more local foods	Marketing local food products (posters, sign boards, word of mouth)
Regularly communicating with foodservice distributors	
Providing marketing materials to staff	



PROCURING LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS

There are many options for procuring local foods for your Farm to School Program. The first step is to become aware of the large variety of foods grown in Idaho and the seasons in which those foods are available. Review the list of foods available from Idaho in the *Idaho Farm to School Manual* on pages 10-11. You can also request a produce calendar from the Idaho Preferred Program®. Use these calendars as a visual reminder of which fruits and vegetables are available throughout the school year.

COMMUNICATING YOUR DESIRE FOR LOCAL FOOD WITH CURRENT DISTRIBUTOR:

One of the easiest ways to implement a Farm to School Program is to work with your current foodservice distributor. All of the pilot schools found this method to work well. A variety of locally grown food products are available through your foodservice distributor and can be delivered with your regular food order.

Some pilot schools chose to write Farm to School (geographic preference) into their bids, stating that “local products are

preferred when available” and requesting that the distributor indicate what is local on weekly product sheets. Setting these expectations of service with the foodservice distributor up

“The program really doesn’t take a lot more work when your food distributor is willing to provide you with regular lists of what is available locally.”

front during the bid process makes a big difference in schools’ ability to procure local foods on a regular basis.

The pilot schools found that frequent communication via e-mail and word of mouth seemed to be the best way to continually remind foodservice distributors that the schools

wanted to know what was available locally and that they preferred the local product. To help assure that they were constantly aware of the local food products they could order, the pilot schools also requested weekly lists of available local produce.

COMMUNICATING YOUR DESIRE FOR LOCAL FOOD DIRECTLY WITH FARMERS:

Many schools in Idaho are located in areas where food is

“Once the relationship is built with the local farmer the first year, the program is easier the following years.”

being grown. Most of the pilot schools purchased a portion of their local food items directly from farmers in their areas. The pilot foodservice directors met area farmers at Farm to School Meetings and obtained lists of local farmers from the Idaho Department of Agriculture’s Idaho Preferred Program®. If you want to purchase directly from farmers, the first step is to contact the growers in your area and find out what they grow and if they can fulfill the quantities that your school needs. In some cases, farmers may be able to deliver their food product to your school; in other cases, the foodservice department will need to pick up the food directly from the farm. To obtain a list of farmers in your area, contact the Idaho Preferred Program®.





MENU CHANGES: WHERE TO START

The best way to incorporate locally grown foods into your menus is to look at what you currently serve and determine which of those foods can be purchased locally. You may be surprised by how many of the foods you serve have a local option. Start small and increase items over time as you expand and grow your program.

Another place to start is to make some simple changes to your recipes to include more local foods. For example, you could adjust the type of fruit in fruit cups, add local veggies to pasta salads, etc. Some examples of recipes that were adapted by the pilot schools to include more local products are included on the next page.

A variety of local food products were served by the pilot schools. Below is a list of some of the local foods they offered:

VEGETABLES	FRUIT	PROTEIN
Bell Peppers	Apples	Chorizo
Cabbage	Cantaloupe	Hot Dogs
Carrots	Grapes	Sausage
Corn	Honeydew	Trout
Green Beans	Nectarines	GRAIN
Onions	Peaches	Bread
Potatoes	Pears	Tortillas
Pumpkins	Plums/Pluots	Tortilla Chips
Squash	Strawberries	DAIRY
Zucchini	Watermelons	Milk

LOCAL FOOD ENTRÉE IDEAS SHARED BY PILOT SCHOOLS:

- Baked potatoes with local vegetable toppings
- Fish sandwich made with local trout
- Trout Treasure nuggets made with local trout
- Breakfast burritos, quesadillas, fajitas, and layered enchiladas made with local tortillas
- Sandwich wraps made with local tortillas
- Cucumbers, bell peppers, onions, apples, and grapes used in specialty grain salads

“When Idaho trout is served as an entrée choice, 30% of the kids will choose the trout—this is a very popular product.”

FEATURED MEAL EXAMPLE BOISE SCHOOL DISTRICT

STUDENTS’ FAVORITE LOCAL MEAL: FISH TACOS
Clear Springs Trout patties cut in half and served on 6-inch Fresca tortillas served with fresh local tomatoes.

The fish tacos are very easy to make, incorporate a variety of local products and are extremely popular



CHILLED BARLEY SALAD WITH LOCAL VEGGIES

SERVINGS: 100 (use two 20"x12"x4" pans)

SERVING SIZE: ½ cup

INGREDIENTS

2.67 Qt Barley, raw
5.34 Qt Water
2 tsp Salt
2 cups Carrots, blanched and finely chopped
6 cups Grape Tomatoes, quartered
2 cups Red Onion, finely chopped
2 cups Black Olives, sliced
4 cups Zucchini, diced

DRESSING

6 Tbs Italian Salad Dressing Mix
3 Tbs Garlic Powder
2/3 cup Water
1 ½ cups Oil
2/3 cup Vinegar
4 Tbs Ketchup

DIRECTIONS

1. Bring water and salt to a boil in 20"x12"x4" pan(s).
2. Stir in barley, cover, and bake at 275°F, on High Fan, for 70 min. (Barley should be cooked but not mushy). Barley will triple in volume when cooked.
3. Drain any excess water then transfer to a 2" shallow metal pan and refrigerate.
4. Wash produce. Blanch and finely chop carrots. To blanch carrots, bring a pot of water to boil. Turn off heat and add sliced carrots. Water should completely cover carrots. Let sit for 3 minutes. Drain.
5. Slice tomatoes in quarters, finely chop onions, and dice zucchini.
6. Combine all dressing ingredients and mix thoroughly (by hand or with an electric mixer). Chill dressing.
7. Combine chilled barley, carrots, tomatoes, onion, olives, and zucchini in a large bowl.
8. Add the dressing mixture and stir gently until evenly mixed.
9. Let marinate in the refrigerator prior to serving.



PASTA SALAD WITH LOCAL VEGGIES

SERVINGS: 100

SERVING SIZE: ½ cup

INGREDIENTS

3 Gallons Whole Wheat Rotini Pasta, cooked al dente
8 Whole Carrots
3 Bunches Broccoli
1 ½ Red Onions
3 Zucchini
1 ½ Pints Grape Tomatoes
3 Quarts Ranch Dressing, chilled

DIRECTIONS

1. Wash all produce.
2. Peel and slice carrots into 3/8" slices.
3. Chop broccoli into ½" pieces.
4. Dice red onion into 3/8" pieces.
5. Chop zucchini in 5/8" pieces.
6. Combine prepared veggies and prepared/chilled ranch dressing.
7. Cover and refrigerate 2-3 hours before service.
8. Combine dressing and veggie mix with pasta just before service.



MEDIA COVERAGE

The media likes Farm to School stories; therefore, schools get a lot of positive media coverage for their participation in the program. This is another opportunity to market the great work you do to families and the community.

Farm-to-School Pilot under Way in Idaho

Officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently visited with students in Boise, Idaho to recognize the state's effort to make children more aware of where their food comes from.

Five school districts in the state have been selected to pilot farm-to-school initiatives through a grant from the USDA's Team Nutrition. The state's departments of education and agriculture are working as partners on the program.

"It's vital that we provide our children with nutritious meals," said...

USDA ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF FARM-TO-SCHOOL PILOT IN BOISE, IDAHO

OCT. 20, 2010

Source: USDA news release

USDA Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Deputy Under Secretary Janey Thornton saluted Idaho's efforts to support farm to school programs, a key component of USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative to help children across America get a better understanding of where their food comes from and how it is produced.

Local Foods Featured in School Lunches



The back-to-school day for Idaho's school children is also a time when many of the state's local farmers and growers are busy harvesting their crops. In Idaho, the goal is to provide all students at least one local food item per day during the month of September, which also is Idaho Preferred Month.

Idaho's First Lady to Kick-off Farm-to-School program at elementary school

ANNA WEBB - IDAHO STATESMAN

First Lady Lori Otter will visit Morley Nelson Elementary School on Thursday and have lunch with students. The menu will include several Idaho-grown products. "Farm-to-School" is a new program to connect healthy local food and agriculture with schools and students. Its goal is to support healthy children, healthy schools, healthy farms and healthy communities. In Idaho, five school districts have been selected by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and Idaho State Department of Education to serve as pilot schools to implement Farm to School

programs and help create best practices for other schools to follow who want to begin Farm to School efforts. In the Boise district, the goal of the Farm-to-School Program is to provide all students at least one local food item per day during the month of September, which also is Idaho Preferred Month.

The program will continue throughout the rest of the year, providing students with at least





INCORPORATING EDUCATION INTO FARM TO SCHOOL

Farm to School provides a new opportunity to provide nutrition and food education to students. The Idaho Farm to School Program offers several free resources to support nutrition education in connection with Farm to School.

EDUCATIONAL ITEM		DISTRIBUTION	USES
Incredible Edible Idaho Food Posters	Each month features a different local food growing in the field with nutrition and agriculture facts	Sent to every kitchen on a monthly basis and to teachers who have attended training	Excellent way to teach nutrition and market your program by easily hanging up these monthly posters
My Idaho Plate Tear Pads (30 copies per pad)	Adapted version of the USDA's My Plate food guidance system that now includes foods grown in Idaho and nutrition and agriculture facts	Available upon request for teachers and/or foodservice	Great to use for nutrition education in the classroom or the cafeteria
Farm to School Teacher Curriculum Kits	Include scripted power points and handouts on a variety of Idaho foods for both elementary and secondary students	Available upon request (limit one curriculum kit per school)	This is a great resource to help teachers implement simple thirty-minute food and nutrition lessons in the classroom that can be connected to the cafeteria

There are many other creative ways to incorporate nutrition education into your Farm to School Program. Below are a variety of ways that the pilot schools provided education in connection with their Farm to School Program.

- Feature a different local food on the bulletin board in the cafeteria each month.
- When serving a new product, send fact sheets to all the classrooms teaching about the new food item (fact sheets can be printed from the Idaho Preferred website).
- Use fruit and veggie scraps to decorate pumpkins in the fall. Sample pumpkin soup in the cafeteria on this day, as well, to connect the activity to food.
- Hold coloring contests and other contests throughout the year to promote local foods. Provide simple prizes, including free school lunch coupons for parents.
- At the end of the school year, serve green beans at lunch and provide each student a Ziploc baggie with 8 green bean seeds for them to plant at home. Students can then bring photos of their green beans back to school with them in August to share with their class.

FEATURED EXAMPLE
COEUR D'ALENE SCHOOL DISTRICT

When Coeur d'Alene School District serves a new food item, they go through a special process to help ensure that the students will be comfortable eating that new food.

- *Step One: Advertise the product through education (use fact sheets, posters, etc)*
- *Step Two: Provide taste-testing samples in the cafeteria so the students can try a small sample with no risk before the day the food is served*
- *Step Three: Add the new item to the menu*



LESSONS LEARNED

The purpose of the year-long Farm to School Pilot was to learn real life lessons that could be shared with other schools who are interested in growing a Farm to School Program. The pilot schools learned much as they implemented this program, allowing them to improve the program in future years. These lessons from the pilot schools are shared below.

Plan further ahead in the future. Talk to farmers and plan for the next school year so farmers can grow specific crops that you want.

At times, it can be difficult to get into classrooms to provide education; it may be easier to focus on working with one or two teachers at a time. Try working with those teachers who have access to the most students so you can reach as many students as possible. For example, work with the PE teachers, health teachers, computer teachers, etc.

You need to have a flexible menu—you can't plan on a crop shortage or an early freeze that may limit product availability. Be prepared to be flexible and have a backup plan. Allow flexibility on your fruit and vegetable bars and/or plan bar recipes for each season to match what fresh products are available. This is the best way to incorporate foods in season.

As you work with the produce distributors, they get better at providing local options at a good cost. Distributors know that schools are looking to include more affordable local food options in their menus, and they are working to meet that need.

When you first start the program, purchase products that your staff is already used to preparing and then expand to new products over time. If you use a brand new food, it is essential to provide information on how to prepare and use that product.

Think outside the box. There are more than just fresh fruits and vegetables available for Farm to School Programs. Consider local meats, whole grains, and dairy products. As always, make sure you market the fact that these foods are local; most people do not know.

Plan to purchase and use produce from the school gardens in the district. This is a great way to support your local school garden program. You may get excellent prices on food items, and it connects the students to the food you serve.

Realize you cannot do everything local, but every little bit that you do helps your program and supports the local farming community.

Educate staff and teachers on the program. You will find a lot of support for the Farm to School work that you are doing.

The biggest price saving is seen when food is picked up directly from a farmer, but competitive prices for local foods are also found through foodservice distributors.

The program gets easier and easier as it grows. Distributors learn that you prefer local products, and your staff gets used to featuring new local foods.



BENEFITS EXPERIENCED IN THE PILOT

All of the pilot schools reported that the Farm to School Program is beneficial, and they plan to continue Farm to School in future years. There are a variety of benefits that each school experienced. Below are some of the most common benefits experienced by the pilot schools.

<h2>INCREASED VARIETY OF PRODUCE</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pilot Schools increased the variety of produce served as a result of Farm to School • The schools tried new products that they hadn't served before • The schools increased the amount of fresh produce served
<h2>IMPROVED QUALITY OF FOOD</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the local produce was excellent, sometimes better than comparable non-local product • The students really liked the local products and frequently asked for more <p><i>"The kids and teachers are crazy about the grapes; they are always asking me when we are going to get more."</i></p>
<h2>COST SAVINGS</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The schools found that local products were offered at a competitive, sometimes cheaper, price when compared to their non-local counterparts • Money was often saved on delivery. You may have to ask about delivery cost savings; they may not change this on your pricing until you point out that the food is coming from 20 miles away
<h2>IMPROVED IMAGE OF PROGRAM</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm to School provides great PR, and it helped give a more positive image of the school meal programs • It caused the foodservice department to promote the positive aspects of the program more than they normally would • <i>"The positive image the Farm to School Program gives to parents, students and faculty will last a long time and will continue to benefit the school lunch program."</i>
<h2>HELPED SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMY</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Farm to School Program helps keep money in the local community • Schools have the ability to support multiple farmers in their area • <i>"The Farm to School Program opened our eyes to what was available in our area; there really is a lot of food grown in our region of the state."</i>

FEATURED COST SAVINGS MARSING SCHOOL DISTRICT

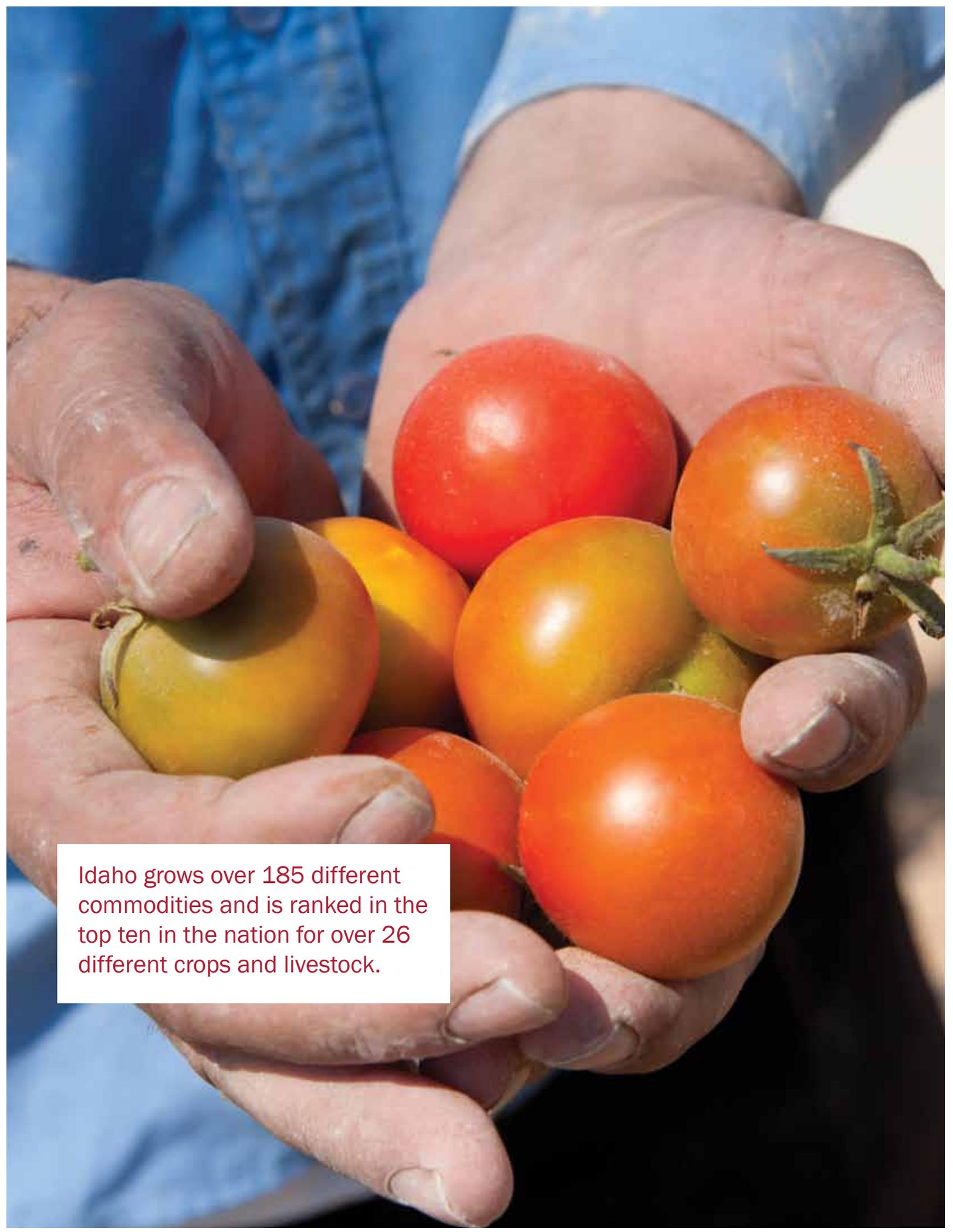
Marsing experienced great cost savings when purchasing local produce directly from the grower.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Local apples purchased directly from a grower cost \$9.00 a box, while a box cost \$33.00 from the district's regular foodservice distributor.

Local grapes were \$1.00 per pound when purchased directly from a grower versus \$2.00 per pound from district's regular foodservice distributor.

These two items were also picked up directly from the grower by the foodservice department, so the district saved additional money by not paying for shipping.



Idaho grows over 185 different commodities and is ranked in the top ten in the nation for over 26 different crops and livestock.