

Purchasing

Regardless of whom you decide to purchase from and how it will be delivered, there are some things you need to consider before beginning to buy and take delivery.

A. Determine your ability to purchase locally grown products for your school meal program:

Questions to Consider:

- What are your procurement procedures?
- Does the school/district have contracted food distributors?
- What percentage of food is required to be purchased through contracts?
- Do you also use independent produce distributors?
- To how many locations do you have produce delivered?
- How many deliveries are made per week per location and at what times?
- How do you prefer to place orders? Phone, fax, e-mail?
- How often do you place orders? Monthly, weekly, specific day of the week?
- What are your payment procedures? For instance, how long will it take for your payment to be received?
- What is district policy on insurance and liability policies?



B. If you plan to purchase direct from a producer, discuss the following with the producer PRIOR to purchasing.

1. Ordering procedures:

- a. How far in advance will producer be able to inform you of available product?
- b. How can orders be placed? (By phone, FAX, online?)
- c. What is the communication process if producer is unable to complete order (amount or quality) and what is the timeframe for this notice?
- d. What is the price and unit of costing?

2. Delivery procedures:

- a. When is the best time for orders to be received?
- b. What is the frequency of deliveries?
- c. How many locations is the producer willing to deliver to?
- d. What type of delivery vehicle does the producer have – climate controlled?

3. Payment procedures:

- a. What is the lead time required by school district accounting office to add vendors?
- b. What is the number of additional vendors that can be added?
- c. What is the timing for the payment of invoices?

4. Specifications:

- a. What is the desired quality, size, package unit and other specific information about the product that the producer needs to know?
- b. What substitutes are acceptable?
- c. What type of packaging can you expect? Note that package must protect integrity of food items.

C. You may want to prepare a vendor information questionnaire. This questionnaire will help you identify if and how closely a farmer meets your criteria for selecting vendors. See sample questionnaire in appendix.

D. Talk with local farmers to identify a mutually beneficial timeline for the bid process. Some farmers would like to begin this process early in the spring so they can plan their crops and plantings accordingly, but others may not want to submit bids until the summer when they are more certain of market prices and product availability.

E. Mail bid documents to interested farmers. Include your letter or notice of intent, vendor information questionnaire, and product availability and pricing forms as well as instructions for farmers on completing the forms and returning them to you for evaluation. Check the Idaho Preferred® website at www.idahopreferred.com for a list of possible vendors.

