



# Farm to Cafeteria Manual for Montana



How-to guide for producers, food service professionals, and local leaders



NATIONAL CENTER  
FOR APPROPRIATE  
TECHNOLOGY



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# **Farm to Cafeteria Manual for Montana**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
About This Manual .....	4
Goals and Benefits.....	4
Montana-Specific Considerations.....	5
<b>Section I: For Farmers and Ranchers</b> .....	7
Why Should I Get Involved in Farm to Cafeteria?.....	7
Institutional Markets: Types and Considerations .....	7
Strategies for Selling to Institutions .....	11
Food Safety Considerations .....	16
<b>Section II: For Food service Professionals</b> .....	19
Why Create a Farm to Cafeteria Program?.....	19
Models of Farm to Cafeteria .....	21
Finding Local Products .....	22
Serving Local Food Year-Round .....	23
Tips for Working with Producers.....	24
Purchasing Agreements.....	25
Marketing Your Farm to Cafeteria Program.....	27
Garnering Support from Administration and Food service Staff.....	28
Food Safety Considerations .....	29
Policy Support.....	31
<b>Section III: For Parents, Community Organizers, and Educators</b> .....	36
Getting Started: Bringing the Right People to the Table .....	36
Institutional Food 101: What to Expect .....	37
Education and Outreach.....	39
Policy Considerations .....	41
Interview: Kris Thomas of Gallatin Valley Farm to School .....	43
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	45
<b>Appendices</b> .....	46
A Seasonal Foods Chart .....	46
B Montana Beef to School .....	47
C Checklist for Retail Purchasing of Local Produce.....	48
D Tips for Working with the Press and Sample Press Release .....	51
E Montana Harvest of the Month Program .....	52
F Curriculum and Cookbooks.....	53
G Finding Funding.....	56
H Additional Farm to Cafeteria Resources.....	56
<b>Profiles</b>	
I. FoodCorps Grows Farm to School Programs.....	6
II. Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center and Western Montana Growers' Cooperative Lead the Way.....	15
III. UM Farm to College Program.....	18
IV. Food as Part of Reform in Montana State Prison .....	33
V. Livingston HealthCare .....	34
VI. FoodCorps and Red Lodge Area Food Partnership Council Spur Change .....	42

# Introduction

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## About This Manual

**T**his manual was developed in 2013 by Farm to Cafeteria Network, a program of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT). In 2018, the manual underwent revision and updating by members of the Montana Farm to School Leadership Team. For more information on this team visit [www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/leadership-team/](http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/leadership-team/).

Farm to Cafeteria Network is a group of Montana food producers, processors, food service professionals, and community members who collaborate to share best practices and develop resources about Farm to Cafeteria programs with the goal of increasing local food in institutions. In this manual the term Farm to Cafeteria refers to programs in public and private institutions such as schools, colleges, hospitals, correctional facilities, and senior living centers that serve healthy, local food while engaging the broader community in that effort. You can learn more about our projects and how to get involved at [www.farmtocafeteria.ncat.org](http://www.farmtocafeteria.ncat.org)

We have designed this manual to be comprehensive, relevant to Montana, and easy to follow. It offers insight and information about how to integrate local foods into your cafeteria and provides examples of the various models that have been successful. If you have questions or would like more information beyond what is presented here, please get in touch with us by emailing [info@ncat.org](mailto:info@ncat.org) or by calling (406) 494-4572.

## Goals and Benefits

Though each Farm to Cafeteria program is unique, they generally share similar values and goals. Farm to Cafeteria programs often seek to accomplish the following:

- Provide nutritious, locally-sourced food in cafeterias
- Support local economies by purchasing from regional food producers and processors
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the distance from farm to table
- Educate communities about the value of eating and growing healthy, local food

***For Farmers, Ranchers, and Food Processors***, building a relationship with an institution can:

1. Diversify your customer base
2. Create a stable market for your products
3. Provide opportunities to engage the community in your agricultural operation
4. Provide a stepping stone into the broader \$3 billion food market in Montana

***For Food Service Professionals***, buying fresh food from local producers can:

1. Increase participation in meal programs
2. Improve the taste and quality of your institution's meals
3. Earn your institution recognition and bring in new customers
4. Provide more information about the safety and origins of your food

**For Parents, Community Organizers, and Educators,** helping build a Farm to Cafeteria program in your community can:

1. Increase community awareness of local farming and food systems
2. Encourage healthy lifestyles and improve access to fresh, nutritious food
3. Engage the community in collaborative, hands-on learning experiences
4. Strengthen local economies and food-based livelihoods

## Montana-Specific Considerations

Montana's predominant food system, much like elsewhere in the United States, relies on exporting commodities produced in-state while importing processed foods from out of state. There is a strong case to be made that this centralized food system is exacerbating health problems and struggling rural communities in Montana. In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control reported that 64% of Montana residents were either overweight (37%) or obese (26%), meaning more than half of Montanans are at increased risk for heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and cancer. Meanwhile, the state's agricultural sector, capable of providing residents with fresh, healthy foods, is in decline. According to a 2011 study conducted by Ken Meter and funded by the Grow Montana coalition, over half of Montana farmers and ranchers report net losses annually.<sup>1</sup>

Local food purchasing is one way to improve the health of individuals as well as revitalize our agricultural economy. Montana's public institutions spend approximately \$33 million annually on food purchases.<sup>2</sup> Diverting just 20% of that market to local products would contribute an additional \$6.6 million to Montana's agricultural economy, a significant amount of money for small and medium-sized producers looking to enter Montana's larger \$3 billion annual food market.

Despite economic struggles, agriculture is still Montana's largest industry. Beef and wheat generally account for three-fourths of all agricultural sales, though farmers and ranchers are increasingly diversifying their crops and operations.<sup>3</sup> Other goods commonly produced in Montana include lentils, barley, peas, beets, honey, potatoes, cherries, apples, lamb, oilseeds, dairy products, squash, carrots, onions, cabbage, peppers, and tomatoes. This list is far from exhaustive and new food products are being grown and developed every year. See Appendix A for a seasonal food chart.

Although Montana boasts an abundance of raw food products, the state currently lacks adequate food processing infrastructure and facilities. This wasn't always the case, as historically Montana had a very robust processing infrastructure that helped provide 70% of Montanan's diet with local food.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the vast majority of Montana's agricultural commodities are exported, while grocery stores, restaurants, and institutions rely on imported foods, often of a lesser quality than what we could grow in-state. As demand for local products is increasing, Montana's ability to process locally is improving, providing yet another opportunity for community-based food systems to support the state's economy.

<sup>1</sup> *Western Montana Local Food and Farm Economy*, Meter, Ken, 2011

<sup>2</sup> *Unlocking the Food Buying Potential of Montana's Public Institutions*, Grow Montana, 2007

<sup>3</sup> Montana Department of Agriculture, 2010

<sup>4</sup> *The Montana Food System, First Lessons in Sustainability*; Palmer, Warren: 1983

## Profile I: FoodCorps Grows Farm to School Programs

One of the biggest challenges schools face in sourcing local food is the amount of time and energy it requires. Locating products, coordinating orders and deliveries, and integrating information about those local healthy foods into school curricula—it all takes time.

Enter FoodCorps. Launched in 2006 by Grow Montana and the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), FoodCorps began by dispatching AmeriCorps members to Montana towns to help schools buy local food. Since then, the Montana program has grown and served as a model for a national FoodCorps program that took root in 2011.

In 2017-2018, service members in fourteen Montana communities joined a national team of two hundred and fifteen FoodCorps members in eighteen states. FoodCorps AmeriCorps service members engage in three areas of service: delivering hands-on lessons in the classroom and garden, promoting healthy school meals by supporting local procurement efforts and making the cafeteria an inviting space for students to try new foods, and developing a schoolwide culture of health that engages school and community members and celebrates healthy food.

The impact has been tremendous. During the 2016-2017 school year, Montana FoodCorps service members taught 8,485 students, harvested 807 pounds of produce from school gardens, and served 1,284 pounds of locally sourced produce in the cafeteria.

FoodCorps service sites can be schools or nonprofit organizations, though all service members serve directly in K-8 schools.

To learn more about FoodCorps, visit <https://foodcorps.org/montana>.



Montana's 2012-2013 FoodCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA members at a September 2012 Training. Photo courtesy of Lea Howe

## Section I: For Farmers and Ranchers

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### Why Should I Get Involved in Farm to Cafeteria?

**M**ontana’s public institutions spend an estimated \$33 million on food per year, representing a significant and largely un-tapped market for Montana’s farmers and ranchers. These institutions can provide a direct market that would expand local food and agriculture businesses, creating economic as well as social effects that help revitalize rural communities. When farmers and ranchers develop the capacity to sell to local institutions, they may find that they can better access the broader \$3 billion that Montanans spend on food each year, such as in restaurants and grocery stores. In that way, public institutions can provide sales opportunities as well as a great learning opportunity for helping farmers access additional local markets.

For farmers and ranchers, building a relationship with an institution can help you create a new and stable market for your business and also provide opportunities for you to engage community members in your agricultural operation. Institutions can act as an ideal market for “second quality” products (misshapen or miscolored, for example) that are just as tasty as first quality items but more affordable for the institution. The institutional market can also help producers leverage unexpected surplus in a given season or harvest period.



Photo courtesy of NCAT

In addition to second quality and surplus items, many institutions involved in Farm to Cafeteria also purchase normally-priced local food; they have worked hard to rearrange their budget so that they can help support farmers like you.

### Institutional Markets: Types and Considerations

Montana has a variety of institutions that serve food such as K-12 schools, public and private universities, correctional facilities, healthcare institutions, senior living centers, veterans’ services facilities, preschools, and much more. While there are broad commonalities in the purchasing needs of institutional food services, there is also great variation and it is important to understand their different characteristics when considering this market for your products.

Institutions generally purchase large volumes of food from a few broadline vendors, such as Sysco or Food Services of America. Long-term contracts with these vendors or distributors often require a majority of purchasing through that company. In return, institutions are assured frequent deliveries, fast and convenient ordering, access to nearly any food product all year-round, and confidence that each product meets all food safety regulations. They also often get rock-bottom prices and rebates from manufacturers that are negotiated by the broadline vendor. Of course, what they don't necessarily provide—and where you have an advantage—is food grown nearby, for maximum nutritional density, freshness and quality. As a farmer or rancher, you should understand that every institutional buyer is different; some will expect consistent, high-volume sales while others may be more flexible and willing to accept different items and quantities each week. Regardless of which model you're working with, the institutional market will likely form only one part of your diverse marketing strategy.

### Universities

Student interest in local food was an initial driver for what are now broadly supported Farm to College programs at the University of Montana (UM) and Montana State University (MSU). The university market is perhaps the most flexible of institutional markets; different food venues on campus offer student meal plans as well as cash-sales, a feature that allows the consumer to absorb increased costs associated with local food if any exist. Universities often have catering departments that seek higher-quality food for banquets and events. Both UM and MSU facilitate group purchasing among their branch campuses in the state and are leaders in purchasing large volumes of processed and fresh Montana food products through their broadline vendor contracts as well as directly from area food producers. Several private and community colleges in Montana are also beginning to source local food and are worth contacting about potential business.

### K-12 Schools

A school district's size and available kitchen equipment can greatly affect food purchasing decisions. In Montana's rural communities, individual schools often purchase and prepare food in their respective kitchens. In urban areas, school districts usually prepare food in a central kitchen and distribute it among elementary, middle, and high schools. When making large purchases, public schools are required to hold a bidding process. The geographic preference option can help food service directors prioritize local sources in that process (see page 32 for more details). For smaller purchases, food service directors must use their best discretion and consider full and open competition in the purchasing process. Most schools receive food from a variety of sources, including the USDA Foods Program (formerly known as the USDA Commodity Food Program), broadline distributors, local vendors, and other sources. Farm to School programs are increasing in Montana. Check with your local school district to see if it is already purchasing from local farmers and businesses.

## Correctional Facilities

Montana has seven correctional facilities that collectively spend around \$4 million on food per year. Most of these are public institutions that purchase food through a competitive bidding process. The largest correctional facility—Montana State Prison (MSP) in Deer Lodge—is home to the *Food Factory*, which prepares food served on-site as well for other institutions. MSP is unique for having an inmate-run beef and dairy ranch. Prisons are a market for some competitively priced Montana food products, most likely channeled through MSP's *Food Factory*.

## Healthcare Facilities

Farm to Hospital programs are gaining ground nationwide as fresh, local food plays an increasingly vital role in hospitals' missions to improve the health of their patients. In addition to purchasing and serving local foods, a few Montana hospitals have introduced other innovative models for incorporating local food in their institutions. One model is to host farmers' markets on hospital campuses, while another is to provide employees with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares. Unlike schools and universities, hospitals— as well as nursing homes and senior living facilities—consistently serve food year-round, including during the peak growing season, making them a great market for local producers. Healthcare facilities tend to be price-sensitive and purchase the majority of their food through broadline vendors, though they have the ability to buy Montana food products through those contracts as well as directly from area producers.



Food service staff prepares the banquet line at Livingston Healthcare Center. Photo courtesy of Jessica Wilcox.

## All in One

If you're interested in selling to all institutions (and restaurants and grocery stores), your best bet is to work through a broadline distributor like Sysco Foodservices of America (FSA), or a smaller independent distributor. These companies make regular deliveries and already carry products from Montana businesses such as Wheat Montana Bakery, Daily's Premium Meats, Cream of the West, Baush Potatoes, Quality Meats of Montana, and more. Many distributors also help with marketing products, and meeting food safety and insurance requirements for selling to institutions. See page 14 to learn more about distributing options in Montana and how to begin working with distributors.

## Types of Institutions and Considerations

Institution Type	How They May Use Local Food	Seasonality	Other Considerations
Healthcare Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient meals</li> <li>• Cafeterias or cafes for guests, staff</li> <li>• May host on-site farmers markets or employee Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs</li> </ul>	Year-round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgets for in-house cafeterias or cafes may have more flexibility than patient meals.</li> </ul>
K-12 Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National School Lunch Program</li> </ul> <p>Some schools also have additional programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program (FFVSP)</li> <li>• Backpack Program</li> <li>• Summer Foodservice Program</li> <li>• School Breakfast Program</li> <li>• DOD Fresh</li> </ul>	August-May, though some schools have a Summer Foodservice Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District size is important in determining food purchases and processing capacity. All large school districts use a “central kitchen” model, meaning the meals are prepared in a single facility and distributed each day to the school lunchrooms.</li> <li>• When making large purchases, public schools are required to hold a bidding process.</li> <li>• The geographic preference option can help food service directors prioritize local sources in that process. See page 32 for details.</li> <li>• For smaller purchases, food service directors use discretion and consider full and open competition when purchasing.</li> <li>• October is National Farm to School Month. Many schools get started buying local food or host Montana-grown events as part of the celebration. Montana Crunch Time is an annual event usually held on October 24 during which all Montanans are encouraged to crunch into locally or regionally grown apples at 2:00pm. Schools have participated since 2014.</li> </ul>
Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cafeterias for students with meal plans</li> <li>• Campus restaurants</li> <li>• Catering services</li> <li>• Concessions at sporting events</li> </ul>	August-May, though most campuses operate a limited version of foodservices year-round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Somewhat flexible budget because they offer student meal plans as well as cash-only sales that allows the consumer to absorb any increased costs</li> <li>• UM and MSU facilitate group purchasing among their branch campuses in the state and are leaders in purchasing large volumes of processed and fresh Montana food products.</li> </ul>
Correctional Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plated meals</li> <li>• Buffet meals</li> </ul>	Year-round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seven in the state; most food produced at the Montana State Prison’s Food Factory in Deer Lodge</li> <li>• On-site gardens and farms most common form of “Farm to Prison”</li> </ul>
Early Care and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfast, Snacks, and Lunch</li> </ul>	August-May and some year-round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farm to Preschool is growing, though Montana has few formal programs so far.</li> <li>• Public and private preschools use different funds to purchase food.</li> </ul>
Senior Living Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident cafeteria</li> </ul>	Year-round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively untapped market in Montana, price point is comparable to other institutions</li> </ul>

## Strategies for Selling to Institutions

Successful Farm to Cafeteria programs are built over time, and are always based on strong relationships among the parties involved. When first inquiring about selling to an institution, contact the Food Service Director or Manager to set up a time to introduce yourself and your products. Keep in mind that food service directors are extremely busy so a well-prepared, professional introduction delivered in-person will be key in beginning a positive business relationship.

The Montana Harvest of the Month program features a different Montana grown or raised food each month in schools, early care and education sites, hospitals, and other food businesses. The program provides a framework, resources, and marketing materials like posters, and is being used by producers as an entry point into these expanded markets. See Appendix E to learn more about Montana Harvest of the Month.

To locate an institution near you that is already interested in purchasing local foods, search the Farm to Cafeteria Network's database of Montana Farm to Cafeteria programs at <https://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org>. Then try approaching other institutions in your area that may not yet be procuring food locally but may be interested in your product.

The following are considerations to address when approaching an institution:

### **Distribution Channels**

Several factors will determine the best method for you to market and sell to an institution. These include the scale of your operation, the size of the institution, the availability of a cooperative near you, delivery options, and more. There are three common ways local producers sell to institutions. You'll want to discuss these options with the institution's Food Service Director to decide which method will best suit both of your needs.

- **Direct Marketing** – In this scenario, the producer sells directly to the institution. Because there's no "middle man," producers receive a slightly higher price with direct marketing. In turn, they must be able to provide in-house all the services of that "middle man," such as delivery, invoicing, and price negotiations. This method is more common among smaller institutions due to their low purchase volumes and relative flexibility. Still, some larger institutions will consider working directly with producers if purchases will be significant and consistent. Every institution has different requirements for vendor contracts and purchasing agreements. If you are designing a new contract, or simply making a handshake agreement with a local vendor, review the section on purchasing agreements on page 25.
- **Cooperatives** – Producer cooperatives have been highly successful in serving the institutional market as they are able to aggregate products from multiple small-scale producers to meet the volume requirements of institutions. This one-stop-shop makes it convenient and easy for institutional buyers to go local. If you are a producer that is interested in forming or joining a co-op, contact the Montana Cooperative Development Center at (406) 727-1517.

*“Not only do we produce a wholesome, quality product for our kids to eat but we are also employing their parents by doing so.”*

—Brian Engle of Pioneer Meats, Big Timber, Montana

- **Wholesale Distributor** – Most institutions already work with broadline distributors like Sysco and Food Services of America (FSA), and many also order from smaller local distributors like Charlie’s Produce, Butte Produce, Quality Foods Distributing, and Summit Distribution. You can contact any distributor about carrying your product, though keep in mind that larger companies generally require a minimum product volume, liability insurance, and a commitment to consistency that best suits medium to large scale producers. To find a map of distributors that carry Montana grown products, visit <https://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org/producers> and sort the map by the category “distributor.”

## **Product Details**

When you visit with a food service director be sure to provide clear information, both verbally and in print, regarding the services and products you can provide:

- Volume, quality, and prices of your products
- Invoicing/payment details
- Packaging, processing, and delivery capacities
- Insurance coverage
- Relevant certifications and licenses
- Food safety measures and production practices
- Names of your other customers (wholesale)

**Liability Insurance.** If you sell fresh fruits, vegetables, or other farm products such as meat, cheese, or value-added goods, you should carry a type of insurance called product liability insurance. Product liability insurance protects farmers against people who may claim to suffer illness, injury, or loss due to the product the farmer sold them. This kind of insurance protects you from being sued if someone says they became ill from consuming your produce. Product liability insurance is generally required for all farmers who sell to grocery stores, retailers, farmers’ markets, and institutions such as schools, colleges, and hospitals. Different buyers require different amounts of insurance coverage. Check with your buyers to determine what type of coverage and how much coverage you need. Institutions generally require between \$1 million and \$5 million in product liability insurance coverage. Working with a co-operative or distributor can make obtaining services like liability insurance and food safety certifications easier.

Presenting this information will demonstrate your level of professionalism as well as provide the institution with the resources necessary to purchase from you in the future.

## **Mode of Communication**

From a food service professional’s perspective, one of the challenges of buying locally can be maintaining clear and consistent communication with vendors. You’ll want to address this issue upfront by discussing the best mode of communication (phone, email, fax, etc.) and by making a commitment to a communication schedule. This may be as simple as agreeing to email weekly product availability every Thursday, or calling the first Monday of the month to plan a larger sale. Some buyers may be interested in drafting a purchasing agreement with you, for more information, see page 25. Decide what works best for you and the institution you’re working with.

## Selling Points

The reasons institutions should adopt Farm to Cafeteria programs are generally known, while the reasons they should carry your product in particular are far more specific and less obvious. Tell YOUR story; the local food movement identifies deeply with the stories of producers, so finding a way to help institutions connect with you and your farm/ranch will help them connect your product with their customers. When making a pitch for your product, make sure you mention the big picture benefits of Farm to Cafeteria while also highlighting benefits surrounding your product: what sets it apart from the competition? Why is it better for consumers' wellbeing? The community's economy? The environment's health? Use concrete examples to appeal to potential buyers.

## Processing

Many institutions lack the kitchen equipment or labor required to prepare food from scratch, making processed food products a near necessity for the institutional market. Minimal processing, such as cutting and bagging vegetables or pureeing and freezing squash, may be the difference between whether a food service director buys a local item or sources it from a larger national vendor.

In Montana, this can be challenging as food processing centers are few and far between. In Western Montana, producers have access to the Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center (MMFEC), a processing facility that offers food safety training and affordable kitchen and equipment rental (see profile II). Additional Montana processors include Root Cellar Foods in Belgrade and the Livingston Food Resource Center. State government agencies and food and agriculture interest groups are working to develop processing capacity in other parts of the state. To learn more, visit Montana's Food and Ag Development Center Network website: <http://agr.mt.gov/Topics/Development/FADC>

Some institutions are modifying food service practices to be able to work with whole food products. This includes training staff in culinary skills, rearranging budget expenditures, and even investing in new equipment. These changes require innovation and a motivated food service director; talk with your local institution to see if it is pioneering such efforts. Let them know if you are willing to take on additional processing yourself. Something as simple as washing and chopping your carrots in a certified commercial kitchen may cinch your sale.

*“Sysco actively seeks to source product locally as a part of our guiding principles because it is the right thing to do for our customers, our suppliers, and our environment. We are proud of our progress but are far from finished as we strive to improve our understanding of our environmental and social footprint and generate more ideas to make our company more sustainable.”*

—Valerie Carl, Healthcare & Education Account Executive, Sysco Montana

## ***Distributing***

Given Montana's vast distances and relatively small populations, it is often difficult for individual producers to distribute products to institutions and businesses outside their geographic area. The current solution to this challenge is for producers to connect with a cooperative or wholesale distributor that can market, sell, and distribute their items.

### **Independent Distributors**

A successful example of the producer cooperative model is the Western Montana Growers Cooperative based in Missoula. This Co-op serves Western Montana and is working to expand their distribution network farther east. Other independent distributors carrying Montana products include Quality Foods Distributing, Valley Distributing and Summit Distribution. When making a decision to work with an independent distributor, it is important to consider the services they can offer you. Some may be strictly carriers, requiring you to make all of your own sales, while others may offer both marketing and distribution. Additionally, a distributor may have a liability insurance policy that covers the products they carry, lessening the insurance burden that your operation must carry. It is also possible that your operation can receive food safety certification while working with a distributor through programs like group Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

### **Broadline Distributors**

Broadline distributors (also called broadline vendors) such as Sysco and FSA service a wide variety of accounts with a multitude of products. They serve most of Montana's institutions and have expressed interest in carrying more Montana products. To stock your product with one of these companies, they recommend that you use a broker to represent your product, though this isn't essential if you have a plan (e.g., flyers, ride with sales people, sample program, representation at shows). The first step is to contact the distributor and set up an appointment to show the product at a meeting in the test kitchen. Based on this initial meeting, the company will decide if they think the product will sell. For this reason, it is essential that the 'showing' go well and that producers are prepared with information such as who your target customers are, why your product is better than the competitors', and what your business plan looks like.

In addition to having a quality product, you'll need to show you can provide a relatively consistent supply of your product to larger distributors. These companies often sell in the hundreds of cases and they usually demand a steady product volume.

If the broadline distributor declines to carry the product after the initial meeting, there's still another option. Because the broadline distributors' primary goal is customer service, they will go out of their way to meet the requests of their customers, particularly larger ones such as colleges, hospitals, or big school districts. If a food producer gets an institution excited about the product, that institution can request that their broadline vendor stock the product. With the additional incentive of keeping their customers happy, distributors will likely try to make it work. It may be a long process to begin working with a large distributor, but it can pay off due to their large customer base.

## Profile II: Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center and the Western Montana Growers Cooperative Lead the Way

Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center (MMFEC) is a food processing and business development facility in Ronan that helps entrepreneurs with specialty food product development, packaging, and marketing. MMFEC is one of the four centers of Lake County Community Development Corporation. In addition to being a local food hub, Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center is one of the two cooperative development centers in Montana. Opened in 2000, MMFEC also assists Farm to Cafeteria programs by processing local food products that institutions don't have the capacity to process.

MMFEC's partnership with the Western Montana Growers Cooperative has been crucial in reaching the institutional market. The cooperative, founded in 2003, provides wholesale marketing and product distribution for its almost fifty member farmers. The Co-op alleviates the need for institutional buyers to work with multiple growers by aggregating members' products at a central warehouse and by acting as the point person for sales transactions. If the buyer is interested in a local product but needs it processed— such as coined carrots, shredded cabbage, or precooked beef, lentil, and mushroom meatballs— the Co-op arranges for MMFEC to get it done.

In addition to providing processed fresh products, MMFEC also prepares frozen items like cherries, pureed squash, and their signature Montana Lentil Burger, which is a lentil patty, made with all Montana ingredients. Though stored at MMFEC, the Co-op is responsible for the sale of these products. Other products available year-round through the Co-op include dairy and meat products and some dry goods such as barley and lentils.

The partnership between MMFEC and the Western Montana Growers Cooperative has helped Farm to Cafeteria programs in Montana grow by leaps and bounds. Schools in Kalispell, Polson, Ronan, St. Ignatius, Missoula, and beyond regularly utilize their products, along with other institutions like UM and Kalispell Regional Medical Center. The Co-op and MMFEC are rising to the challenge of increasing demand and are exploring ways to increase supply.

To learn more about Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center, visit [www.mmfec.org](http://www.mmfec.org) or call (406) 676-5901.



The Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center's lentil patty is made with all Montana ingredients (lentils, oats, barley, organic eggs, flax seed, bell peppers, onions and carrots) and fulfills protein requirements for Child Nutrition Programs. Photo courtesy of MMFEC

## Food Safety Considerations

Food safety requirements pertaining to production and handling practices, packaging specifications, and transportation conditions vary among institutions as well as among food type. In 2011, the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) was passed with the goal of creating a safer food supply and more stable food industry. It represents a shift from reacting to foodborne illness outbreaks, to preventing them before they occur.

To learn more and get current updates on the Food Safety Modernization Act, check the FDA website here: [www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA](http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA) or [www.foodsafety.mt.gov](http://www.foodsafety.mt.gov). You can also contact your county health officer or sanitarian, or Food Safety Program Coordinator at the Montana Department of Agriculture at [foodsafety@mt.gov](mailto:foodsafety@mt.gov) or (406) 444-0131 if you have additional questions.

### Produce

One major part of FSMA, is the Produce Safety Rule which was finalized in 2015. The Produce Safety Rule establishes minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, handling and holding of fresh produce. These minimum standards focus on preventing microbial contamination and are fairly consistent with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standards. Practices include worker training, monitoring for animal intrusion, post-harvest water use, soil amendments and other common routes of contamination.

In Montana, a majority of produce farms will be eligible for an exemption from FSMA, so institutions and distributors are increasingly looking to the USDA's **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP)** for safety guidelines asked of farmers to minimize health risks associated with growing and transporting produce. Some institutions and food buyers may require GAP certification though most in Montana don't. They may, however, require an on-farm food safety plan or simply give preference



Staff at Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center prepare Flathead cherries to be frozen. Photo courtesy of MMFEC

### Local Food Procurement Checklist

Iowa State University has developed a thorough *Checklist for Retail Purchasing of Local Produce* (Appendix C) that can give you a sense of what types of food safety standards institutions may be looking for. It is a good idea to complete the checklist and bring a copy to prospective institutional buyers to give them a better idea about your production practices (and show off your professionalism!). Expectations will vary by institution, and not meeting one of the standards listed is by no means reason not to inquire about doing business with an institution.

to producers who follow GAP guidelines even if they aren't GAP certified. In addition, as insurance companies become more aware of changes in food safety, they are increasingly asking buyers they insure to have a system for verifying the food safety practices of their suppliers.

For more information about GAP/GHP guidelines and to access an audit checklist, you can visit the USDA's GAP/GHP website here: [www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp)

For information on produce safety trainings in Montana, please contact the Food Safety Program Coordinator at the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-0131 or [foodsafety@mt.gov](mailto:foodsafety@mt.gov)

## **Meat**

Montana institutions can purchase beef directly from any meat plant that is state or federally-inspected, or from a licensed producer who has animals slaughtered and processed in one of these establishments. Animals slaughtered and processed in a "custom-exempt" plant may not be sold to institutions. Montana has 18 state Department of Livestock-inspected establishments and 5 USDA-inspected establishments that slaughter and process meat. To locate a meat processor near you visit: (State-Inspected) <http://liv.mt.gov/Meat-Milk-Inspection/Meat-and-Poultry-Inspection> or (USDA-Inspected) [www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/mpi-directory](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/mpi-directory)

## **Poultry**

Local chicken, turkey, and other poultry sold to institutions must be processed by a grower licensed by the Montana Department of Livestock or the USDA under the federal 1,000 or 20,000 bird poultry grower exemptions. These exemptions mean they are exempt from an on-site, bird-by-bird inspection but that they have met licensing and sanitation requirements. Institutions may also buy from state-inspected poultry establishments. At the time of this writing, the New Rockport Hutterite Colony near Choteau and the Montana Poultry Growers CO-OP in Hamilton are the only such facilities in Montana.

## **Dairy Products**

The Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) requires that dairy products be pasteurized at a processing facility licensed by the Milk and Egg Bureau.

## **Eggs**

DPHHS requires egg vendors to be licensed by the Milk and Egg Bureau. However, according to food safety law MCA 81-20-201, producers that sell fewer than 25 cases (about 750 dozen eggs) a month over a year are exempt from grading requirements, though they must have a vendor's license and the eggs must be reasonably clean.

Grade B or better eggs are required by most food service establishments, including schools.

For additional questions about meat and poultry, contact the Meat and Poultry Bureau at (406) 444-5202. For questions about eggs and dairy, contact the Milk and Egg Bureau at (406) 444-9761.

## Profile III: UM Farm to College Program

UM Dining started the Farm to College Program (FTC) in the spring of 2003 in partnership with UM's Environmental Studies Program. At the time, it was the first such Farm to Institution program in Montana, and one of the first collegiate programs in the nation. The program came into being amidst a growing national movement to promote local and regional ingredients in schools, while educating students about food, farming, and sustainability. As the food movement has grown, so has UM's FTC Program. What started as a few special events in 2003 has blossomed into a leading model for institutional procurement programs. UM Dining currently purchases close to one-third of all their food from Montana farmers and ranchers, working with over one hundred unique vendors within the state. In total, the Farm to College Program has directed more than \$8 million into the state's agricultural economy since its inception.

The success of the Farm to College Program is a result of a willingness to think more creatively about institutional food procurement, and to challenge the idea that the industrial food system is the only viable model for large scale food businesses. The primary barrier is often the assumption that sourcing locally and supporting producers who use sustainable agricultural practices will cause a business's food cost to skyrocket. UM Dining has shown just the opposite. Since the FTC Program began in 2003, UM Dining's purchases of Montana food products have steadily increased, while food costs have gone down.

Relationships are at the core of UM's program. Sourcing food outside of the traditional business model takes a commitment to working with farmers, ranchers and other food producers who often are not accustomed to dealing with large-volume food businesses. Helping these food producers better understand and navigate these markets is one of the most important impacts of the program.

In addition to helping grow Montana's local food economy, the UM FTC Program is helping educate students and community members about the importance of supporting local food systems. UM Dining serves thousands of guests every year, and through delicious food and a variety of outreach and education campaigns, these guests are exposed to the faces and personalities of their local food economy. This exposure helps create better educated food consumers who are more likely to support sustainable food systems through their own consumer behavior.

UM Dining understands that in order to create a better food system we need to invest in our local agricultural economy and support those producers committed to sustainable practices. The Farm to College program not only means better food for guests, it also means a better future for agriculture here in Montana. Many people in the food movement have called on consumers to "vote with their forks." UM Dining believes that this is especially good advice for those of us with the largest forks.



Local beef at UM's annual "Fall Feastival" that features local food. Photo courtesy of UM University Dining Services

## Section II: For Food Service Professionals

### Why Create a Farm to Cafeteria Program?

**M**any Farm to Cafeteria initiatives start with motivated food service professionals interested in serving fresher, healthier food that helps supports the local economy. While many of the challenges will fall under your purview as a food service professional, so too will the accolades and many of the benefits of Farm to Cafeteria. The number one reason to purchase local food is because of the high quality and tastiness of such products. In addition, purchasing local food can increase meal participation and foster positive community relations. Farm to Cafeteria programs also create a new market opportunity for food producers and businesses within their own communities. Food producers can plan their upcoming production season and volume knowing that they have a committed buyer for their products, creating more security for local producers, allowing them to continue farming on their land, and preserving the agricultural heritage of our communities. Finally, many food service professionals feel that it provides them the opportunity to better know the growing and handling practices of their supplies to ensure food safety.

#### Farm to School

Research shows that students who participate in farm to school programs show an increased willingness to try new foods. Kids that have easy access to a variety of high quality foods, including fruits and vegetables, eat more of them. By combining increased access to local, healthy foods with farm to school educational activities, children demonstrate healthier nutrition behaviors. Farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following core elements:

- Procurement: Local foods are purchased, promoted and served in the cafeteria or as a snack or taste-test.
- Education: Students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health and nutrition.
- School gardens: Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening.

#### CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM to SCHOOL



## Support

As the number of Farm to Cafeteria programs in Montana has increased in recent years, government and non-profit organizations have also increased support of such programs. The Montana Department of Agriculture actively promotes the use of Montana agricultural products in institutions while the Office of Public Instruction trains food service directors and teachers around local procurement and nutrition education. Farm to school practices enrich the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and preschools. Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as education opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons and farm field trips. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. The National Farm to School Network, a non-profit organization established in 2007, offers valuable resources and support for schools involved in farm to school as does FoodCorps, a rapidly growing national program affiliated with AmeriCorps that places young professionals in schools to promote

*“I like knowing that our food service model helps put federal dollars into our state’s economy when we make local sourcing a priority. It also bridges the lunchroom with the classroom and starts a dialogue with kids about where food comes from, providing an excellent opportunity to discuss science, biology, math, and practical culinary arts—exactly what a 21st century school district should be doing with kids.”*

—Ed Christenson, Assistant Supervisor  
of Missoula County Public Schools  
Food and Nutrition Services

farm to school activities. For more information on farm to school visit:

- Montana Farm to School:  
[www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool](http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool)
- National Farm to School Network:  
[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)

The Montana Hospital Association (MHA) showed its strong support of Farm to Hospital in 2012 by giving the annual *Innovation in Healthcare Award* to Livingston HealthCare Center for its work incorporating local, healthy food in its cafeteria and menu options. In corrections, the Montana State Prison has been recognized by the National Institute of Corrections for their cutting-edge agriculture programs that aim to reduce recidivism. The University of Montana was the first university in the Pacific and Inland Northwest to sign the Real Food Campus Commitment (RFCC). The RFCC is supported by the Real Food

Challenge, a national student organization that helps mobilize student food activists to shift university food purchases toward local, fair, and humanely produced foods. After surpassing its initial commitment, UM Dining has continued as a leader in the Real Food Challenge purchasing over 25% of their food from within the state.

In the non-profit world, countless community groups and statewide organizations exist primarily to support local food and Farm to Cafeteria. These include NCAT’s Farm to Cafeteria Network, Montana Farm to School Leadership Team, Mission Mountain Food

Enterprise Center, Western Sustainability Exchange, Garden City Harvest and Community Food and Agriculture Coalition in Missoula, Gallatin Valley Farm to School in Bozeman, Community GATE in Glendive, Madison Valley Farm to Fork in Ennis, Red Lodge Area Food Partnership Council, and many more.

These examples show that widespread support of Farm to Cafeteria is growing, making it increasingly easy for food service professionals like you to galvanize community and administrative support behind your efforts to procure local, healthy food.

## Models of Farm to Cafeteria

There are a variety of different ways to bring local food into an institution. Below are a few of the most common models institutions are using in their Farm to Cafeteria programs:

### *Special Events*

A special event such as a “locally grown lunch” that features multiple local items is a great way to get a Farm to Cafeteria program started. Special events help showcase efforts around local food while allowing food service professionals to ease into the challenges of local food procurement and preparation.

### *Salad Bar*

Offering and labeling fresh, local items on a salad bar is likely to increase your cafeteria’s sales as well as provide healthy options for consumers. In Montana, the best months to do this are April – November when fresh produce is in season.

### *Incorporation into Regular Meals*

Once your Farm to Cafeteria program has established relationships with local vendors you can regularly incorporate local items into everyday menus. For example, you might substitute your current out-of-state bread or flour with the same products made from Montana-grown grains. And don’t forget to label these items on your menu—give eaters a chance to be as proud of the meal as you are! You might also want to feature special items on a regular basis, such as a “harvest of the month” or similar initiative that educates consumers about seasonal availability. Your special items may become so popular that you’ll want to include them in your daily menu.

### *Montana Harvest of the Month*

Montana Harvest of the Month (HOM) features a different Montana grown or raised food each month in schools, afterschool programs, early care and education sites, hospitals, and other food businesses. The program provides a framework, resources, and marketing materials like posters and provides a great way to start or grow a Farm to Cafeteria Program See Appendix E to learn more about HOM.



## Employee CSA

An innovative way to support local farmers while incentivizing employees to eat healthy, local food is to begin an employee Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. Connect with a local farmer who offers CSA shares to organize a cooperative purchase and organize weekly deliveries of fresh food!

## Farmers Market

Some larger institutions host weekly or monthly farmers' markets that make it easy for employees, visitors, patients, and others to purchase local food at their facility.

## Catering

For institutions that offer catering services, consider offering an "all-local" meal option as a way to expand your Farm to Cafeteria efforts and meet increased customer demand for Montana products.

## Gardening

The educational and therapeutic benefits of gardening are innumerable, making on-site gardens an important component of many Farm to Cafeteria programs. Your institution can utilize the garden's bounty in the cafeteria and also to host educational activities like cooking classes and nutrition workshops.

## Finding Local Products

Identifying sources of local food products can be a challenge at first but there are many ways to get started.

### Connect With Peers

There are many Farm to Cafeteria programs in Montana that have experience working with local producers and vendors; reach out to their chefs and food buyers! In addition to learning about sources for local food, you may gain new ideas about integrating local ingredients into your menu, suggestions about how to handle purchase orders and contracts with local vendors, and anything else you're curious about. For a list of Montana institutions engaged in Farm to Cafeteria, including those participating in Montana Harvest of the Month, see the Farm to Cafeteria Network database:

<https://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org>

### Visit Farmers Markets

Stroll down to one of Montana's many farmers markets and chat with the market manager and vendors to learn if there is interest in providing food to your institution.

To find a farmers market near you, check the Montana Department of Agriculture's directory:

[www.farmersmarkets.mt.gov](http://www.farmersmarkets.mt.gov)



## Refer to a Food and Agriculture Business Directory

- The Farm to Cafeteria Network Producer Database contains Montana food businesses (farms, ranches, processors, and distributors) interested in selling to institutions. You can find what you need by searching the database for a desired product, location, or business: <https://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org> or call (406) 494-4572 to connect with local food opportunities in your area.
- The Montana Department of Commerce maintains a Made in Montana Products Directory, which includes some food and agriculture businesses using the labels Grown in Montana and Native American Made in Montana: [www.madeinmontanausa.com](http://www.madeinmontanausa.com)
- The Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) has an Abundant Montana Directory that lists many Montana producers: [www.aeromt.org/abundant](http://www.aeromt.org/abundant)
- Western Sustainability Exchange maintains a list of Certified Sustainable producers that participate in their Market Connection Program: [www.westernsustainabilityexchange.org/certified-producers](http://www.westernsustainabilityexchange.org/certified-producers)
- Find a meat processor:  
State-Inspected Facilities Directory:  
<http://liv.mt.gov/Meat-Milk-Inspection/Meat-and-Poultry-Inspection>
- Federally-Inspected Facilities Directory:  
[www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/mpi-directory](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/mpi-directory)

*“I feel so much better about serving food that is grown close to home. It’s fresher, it tastes better, it’s putting money in our neighbors’ pockets instead of leaving the state, and it’s better for our patients and our environment.”*

—Jessica Williams,  
Foodservice Manager  
Livingston Healthcare Center

## Contact Distributors

Contact your sales representative from your current distributors for a list of available Montana products. There are also a few regional distributors that carry Montana food products, for a complete list navigate to <https://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org/producers> and sort the database by the category “Distributor.”

## Serving Local Food Year-Round

One of the obvious challenges of growing local food in Montana is the harsh and long winter. Despite the short growing season, there are many strategies you can employ to ensure that your Farm to Cafeteria program serves local food throughout the year.

### Many local foods are available year-round

A common misperception is that local food is synonymous with fresh produce, when in reality most Montana-grown foods are not fruits and vegetables and are available all year long. These include oils, beef, lentils, barley, dairy products, wheat products, and more.

## Freezing

Many institutions rely on frozen local products in the winter such as pureed squash, cherries, and carrots. These frozen items are as nutritious and delicious as their fresh counterparts, and work great in a variety of recipes. You can explore packaging and freezing foods with staff at your institution, or buy frozen items through a local processor. To learn about a great example of creating frozen year round availability of Montana grown products, read Profile II on page 15.

## Long-storage vegetables

Another option is to stock up in the fall on long-storage vegetables such as onions, squash, carrots, garlic, and cabbage. While these unprocessed items will require additional staff labor to prepare, the money you'll save on these affordable raw products can offset labor costs. Check with vendors for their capacity to store crops if your facility is short on storage space.

*“The primary challenge for us as producers and for institutions is price. I think we have to ask ourselves what it’s worth to have healthy communities, nutritious food that won’t make us sick, and clean water. If we put a value on those things, then the price of local food begins to look reasonable.”*

—Dean Williamson, Three Hearts Farm in Bozeman

## Tips for Working with Producers

### 1. Be aware of producers’ schedules when you set up appointments and meetings

During the growing season, try contacting farmers and ranchers early or late in the day when they are less likely to be outside working. Use farmers’ markets as an opportunity to make contacts and establish relationships. Hold winter meetings when farmers are less busy, giving them lead time to plant what you want.

### 2. Make time for in-person visits

Demonstrate your commitment and interest by visiting farms and ranches to learn first-hand about growing practices, availability and pricing issues. Invite producers to dine in your facility or to participate in special events so they can learn about your operation and get more involved.

### 3. Request samples

When first meeting an interested farmer or rancher, request product samples that will allow him or her to showcase product quality and give you the opportunity to see if it will meet your needs.

### 4. Be specific

Be sure to clearly communicate (preferably in writing) product specifications and vendor requirements so both parties are on the same page. See the Purchasing Agreements section on the next page for more information.

5. **Develop a purchasing plan that allows you to start small**  
Communicate with producers about your purchasing needs and work together to develop a purchasing plan that will allow you to increase purchases in the future if you are satisfied with the product.
6. **Develop a list of when and how much product you order**  
This allows producers to integrate your ordering needs into their annual operation plans.
7. **Allow for some flexibility in your menus**  
Putting “local fresh seasonal vegetable” on your menu allows you leeway in adapting to inevitable fluctuations in sourcing local products.
8. **Develop a pay schedule that works for both parties**  
Many institutions are unable to provide payment immediately upon delivery, something producers may be unaccustomed to. Remember to communicate your pay schedule up front.
9. **Look for producers who go the extra step in working with you, and also go the extra step for them**  
You’re both busy, making the “extra step” hard, but small gestures go a long way in building lasting partnerships.
10. **Ask producers for a weekly product availability sheet during the growing season**  
This current information, including quantity, variety, and price lists, will help you make the best purchasing decisions.
11. **Keep open communication with producers**  
As you build relationships with local producers, communicate clear expectations as well as honest feedback. Producers will be happy to hear positive reactions to their products as well as suggestions for how they can better meet your needs. You can also update producers on how you are using their products, share press coverage or community outreach activities, and invite their participation in relevant events.

*Adapted from: “Vermont Farm to School: A Guide for Using Local Foods in Schools.” Developed by Vermont FEED: Food Education Every Day, a partnership of Food Works, Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT), and Sherburne Farms. January 2007.*

## Purchasing Agreements

Keep in mind local producers will not know exactly what your food service program needs from them unless you tell them. Every institution has different requirements for vendor contracts and purchasing agreements. If you are designing a new written contract, or simply making a handshake agreement with a local vendor, you should take some time to think about and develop specifications for what you need, considering the categories listed here:

- The total estimated volume of each item to be delivered and pricing
  - It is very important to communicate this information early in your conversations with local food producers so that appropriate expectations are set and budgets can be established.
- Item specifications and packing requirements: grade (if applicable), variety, size, standard box, loose pack, bulk, etc.
  - Post-harvest handling practices: is the product pre-cooled? How clean should the product be?
  - You may end up with carrots that have the greens still attached to them if you don't indicate that you would like the greens removed.
  - Do you require specific packaging for your product (cardboard boxes or sanitized re-useable totes)? Be specific.
- Vendor specifications
  - Do you require specific certifications, food safety practices, level of insurance coverage, or other criteria for vendors?
- Delivery schedule: time of day, frequency, and location
  - The last thing a food service manager needs is for a delivery truck to show up in the middle of lunch. Be specific about what days/times work for you in terms of delivery.
- Cost per unit, payment terms, payment process
  - Do you need school board or central office approval in order to make payment for goods received? If so, plan for this process and timeline and communicate this to your vendors.
- Names and phone numbers of the contact people for ordering and billing
  - Ask your local farmers, food businesses, co-ops, distributors, and other vendors to send you regular communication on what they have available for sale, including:
    - Products
    - Size of items
    - Quality
    - Quantity
    - Prices



Dixon Melon owner Harley Hedrick and his grandson provide melons for several institutions in Western Montana. Photo courtesy of UM University Dining Services

**Adapted from:** “Vermont Farm to School: A Guide for Using Local Foods in Schools.” Developed by Vermont FEED: Food Education Every Day, a partnership of Food Works, Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT), and Sherburne Farms. January 2007.

## Marketing Your Farm to Cafeteria Program

Farm to Cafeteria is a challenging endeavor, and it is important to have your institution's customers, administration, and broader community recognize your work and the benefits that come from purchasing locally. There are many ways to feature the local food aspects of your food service program as a means of marketing your overall program.

### *Special Events*

A *Montana Meal* day, local food taste tests, and other food-centered events are not only a great way to get a Farm to Cafeteria program started, they also attract attention that will help you build support for the program. Consider joining statewide or national celebrations like Montana Crunch Time, National Kale Day, or National Farm to School Month in October to showcase your efforts and get more people involved. For more information, visit [www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool](http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool) and [www.farmtoschoolmonth.org](http://www.farmtoschoolmonth.org)

### *Promotional and Educational Materials*

You can advertise your Farm to Cafeteria program and simultaneously educate customers about local food efforts via signs, pamphlets, website text, and more. Create a display in a high traffic area that is regularly updated with information about featured farms and products. Have signage at the point of service to show which items are locally sourced. Use your menu to feature “fun food and farm facts” and highlight your institution's partnerships with local farms on your institution's website. Don't be shy about showcasing your efforts; people want to know!

### **A Note on Marketing and Media**

Marketing and media attention are central in getting recognition for your efforts and can help galvanize administrative buy-in.

Refer to Appendix D for tips on working with the press and a sample press release.

### **Montana Harvest of the Month**

Montana Harvest of the Month provides resources and materials to participating sites to help them market their efforts.

See Appendix E for more information about the program.

### ***Press Releases, News Articles, and Newsletters***

Involve the media by using press releases to announce local food events or by inviting your local newspaper or radio to do a story on your Farm to Cafeteria program. To keep employees informed of your local food program, write an article for your institution's newsletter or send periodic staff emails with updates. This will spur employee support and also earn your cafeteria new customers.

## Garnering Support from Administration and Food Service Staff

There are a variety of people you'll want to involve when starting a Farm to Cafeteria program and you'll want to be as inclusive as possible in your efforts so as not to deter anyone who may be a hidden resource. It is especially important to engage administrators and food service staff members in as many aspects of the Farm to Cafeteria program as possible because without their support, the initiative won't reach its potential.

Food service staff members are critical to have on board as they'll be preparing and serving the local food items. To optimize their involvement, you'll need to invest some time on additional staff meetings and trainings. Some effective ideas used by other institutions include farm tours to connect staff with local producers, culinary training specific to working with whole raw products, and nutrition workshops that explain the benefits of incorporating healthier, local foods into meals.

*“Schools are at the heart of many Montana communities, and it only seems right that students should be fed the high quality food that Montanans work so hard to produce. By supporting local agriculture and ranching, we may be helping to preserve the pastoral beauty and satisfying lifestyle that makes Montana such a great place to live.”*

—Jenny Montague, School Foodservice Director, Kalispell Public Schools

### Price of Local Foods

Many food service managers have noticed less waste in the kitchen and on the trays due to the quality and flavor of local, farm-fresh food. A higher price may not correspond to a higher overall cost. In some schools food costs have actually gone down. A truly higher cost item can also be served less frequently or in smaller portions. For example, some schools have successfully reduced cooking and plate waste by using high quality Montana beef. Since they waste less, they are able to justify or offset the potentially higher cost. Learn more about successful Montana Beef to School projects at [www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/beeftoschool.html](http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/beeftoschool.html).

To galvanize support from your institution's administration, start by presenting your idea to the principal, board of directors, president or executive director and by asking who else might be important to involve. Next, hold an informational meeting about the goals and potential plans for the Farm to Cafeteria program. Build in opportunities for co-workers and community members to help shape the program. The more people you can get involved, the more people you'll ultimately reach.

### Informational Meeting Ideas

Here are some key points you may want to address in an informational meeting when seeking support from your institution:

1. Outline the proposed program by describing short term and long-term goals and expected outcomes. Is there a specific local purchasing percentage you'd like to reach within a set time frame? Do you expect meal participation to increase? How will education and outreach strengthen the program?
2. Bring a success story about a program at an institution that is similar to your own, and/or share your own successes with purchasing locally thus far.
3. Persuade with numbers by doing local research. How many acres of farmland are in your area? What is the obesity rate? How many local jobs depend on agriculture? If you are working with decision-makers who are also responsible for the overall fiscal health of your organization, you will want to be well-prepared to talk about how much additional cost, if any, you might incur as a result of the program. Highlighting examples where the program may generate extra revenue or savings will be one of the most convincing points you can make. A little bit of research can go a long way in educating about the importance of healthy, local food.
4. Highlight current support for your and similar programs. Administrators are more likely to buy into an idea that already has support from other individuals and groups. Bring a few co-workers, community members, or government officials to the meeting who are passionate about the benefits of Farm to Cafeteria, or simply mention examples of national and state support (see brief listing on page 20 for ideas). This can help get the buy-in you want.

## Food Safety Considerations

As a food service professional, you already know the tremendous importance of proper food safety and handling practices. Still, when buying food from a new source it can be helpful to brush up on food safety requirements, especially as the foundational rules of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), reach their dates for compliance. To get current updates on FSMA, check the FDA website here: [www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/default.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/default.htm) or at [www.foodsafety.mt.gov](http://www.foodsafety.mt.gov). You can also contact your county health officer or sanitarian, or Food Safety Program Coordinator for the Montana Department of Agriculture at [foodsafety@mt.gov](mailto:foodsafety@mt.gov) or (406) 444-0131 if you have additional questions.

For schools, the USDA Farm to School Food Safety FAQ's is another great resource, available here: [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/faqs\\_safety.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/faqs_safety.htm)

## Produce

At the time of this writing, Montana institutions are not required to purchase fresh produce from formally inspected farms. However, some large produce growers will need to comply with FSMA Produce Safety Rule standards in coming years and institutions may ask farms if they will be covered by FSMA or not. To mitigate potential food safety issues, however, you should ask producers if they have an on-farm food safety plan or practices. While your institution may not require producers to have such a plan, this can help guide your local purchasing. You may also ask producers if they follow **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)**

and **Good Handling Practices (GHP)** guidelines. While your institution likely doesn't require farmers to be GAP/GHP certified, knowing that they have a GAP plan will add to their food safety credibility. If you'd like to learn more about GAP/GHP criteria, visit Section I of this guide: *Producer Food Safety Considerations* on page 16.

We also recommend using *Checklist for Retail Purchasing of Local Produce* (Appendix C), or a similar buyer's checklist that addresses on-farm food safety like irrigation sources and types of manure utilized.

## **Processed Foods**

Processed food items, including minimally processed such as sliced, chopped or peeled, must follow food safety and licensure requirements established by the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS). As a result, **when buying processed products you must ensure the local vendor is a licensed food business.** The final Preventive Controls for Human Food Rule, which is an additional rule under FSMA, will also apply to some food facilities and buyers must understand their own requirements as well as requirements for their suppliers to meet standards set out in this rule. Additional information on the Preventive Controls for Human Food Rule can be found on the FDA website ([www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/ucm334115.htm](http://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/ucm334115.htm)).

## **Meat**

Montana institutions can purchase beef directly from any licensed meat depot (facility licensed to sell inspected product) as well as from meat plants that are state or federally-inspected. When buying from a processor, ask where the meat is from to verify that it was raised and finished in Montana (this isn't always the case). Animals slaughtered and processed in a "custom-exempt" plant may not be sold to institutions. Montana has 18 state Department of Livestock-inspected establishments and 5 USDA-inspected establishments. To locate a meat processor near you visit: (State-Inspected) <http://liv.mt.gov/Meat-Milk-Inspection/Meat-and-Poultry-Inspection> or (USDA-Inspected) [www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/mpi-directory)

## **Poultry**

Institutions can purchase local chicken, turkey, and other poultry from growers that are licensed by the Montana Department of Livestock or the USDA. This includes growers licensed by the state under USDA's federal 1,000 or 20,000-bird poultry grower exemption (meaning they are exempt from an on-site, bird-by-bird inspection but that they have met licensing and sanitation requirements). Institutions may also buy from state-inspected poultry plants. At the time of this writing, the New Rockport Hutterite Colony near Choteau and the Montana Poultry Growers CO-OP in Hamilton are the only such facilities in Montana.

## **Dairy Products**

As with any dairy items served in institutions, local dairy products also must be pasteurized at a dairy processing facility.

## **Eggs**

DPHHS requires egg vendors to be licensed by the Milk and Egg Bureau. However, according to food safety law MCA 81-20-201, producers that sell fewer than 25 cases (about 750

dozen eggs) a month over a year are exempt from grading requirements, though they must have a vendor's license and the eggs must be reasonably clean.

For additional questions about meat and poultry, contact the Meat and Poultry Bureau at (406) 444-5202. For questions about eggs and dairy, contact the Milk and Egg Bureau at (406) 444-9761.

## Policy Support

There are a variety of types of policies to consider when developing your Farm to Cafeteria program, most of them put in place to support local food purchasing. Knowing and understanding any local, state or federal policies/regulations regarding local food purchases is essential, as is developing your institution's own policies to promote Farm to Cafeteria.



## State and Federal Policy

### Montana Food to Institutions

In 2007 the Montana State Legislature passed the Montana Food to Institutions bill that provides institutions an optional exemption to the Montana Procurement Law when purchasing local food. According to this law, institutional food buyers can purchase local food products even when they don't represent the lowest bid in the bidding process, thereby giving buyers the opportunity to take other factors, like where and how food products were produced, into consideration instead of being limited by price points. For a summary of the law visit Grow Montana's website: [www.growmontana.ncat.org/policies.php](http://www.growmontana.ncat.org/policies.php)

Clarification regarding Montana rules and procedures can be found within the General Division Services Policy Manual: <http://gsd.mt.gov/ProcurementServices/montanaprocurementlaw.mcp>

### Procurement Process for Child Nutrition Programs

It is important to be aware of procurement regulations that are required by law. This list provides a snapshot of the procurement considerations.

- Purchases under the micro purchase threshold (Federal threshold is \$10,000 as of June 20, 2018) do not require a specific process, however it is highly recommended to gather price quotes for equivalent products to determine the best price.
- For purchases under the small purchase threshold (Montana's threshold is \$80,000 as of February 2015) follow informal procurement process. Gather and document price quotes for equivalent products and select the best price. You may gather quotes from all local vendors for price comparison.
- For purchases greater than the small purchase threshold (\$80,000) follow the formal procurement process, using either a request for proposals (RFP) or invitation for bid (IFB).

- Geographic Preference may be applied in the bidding process. For more information about geographic preference, review the USDA fact sheet at [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/geographic-preference](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/geographic-preference)
- For local beef purchases, use the Beef to School Procurement Templates to simplify the procurement process: [www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/beeftoschool.html](http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/beeftoschool.html)

For comprehensive guidance on procurement rules and procedures, strategies for buying local foods, information on how to develop a forward contract, and helpful tools, review the USDA's Procuring Local Food Guide: [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods)

## Federal Geographic Preference for Child Nutrition Programs

The 2008 Farm Bill revisions granted institutions operating Child Nutrition Programs the option to utilize geographic preference when purchasing locally-produced unprocessed or minimally processed agricultural products. This allows school food service directors to grant preference to local vendors in formal procurements. The USDA published a Geographic Preference fact sheet describing the law and how to use it properly. This fact sheet can be downloaded at: [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/fact-sheets](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/fact-sheets)

## Institutional Policies

### Local Food Purchasing Policy

Developing a Local Food Purchasing Policy for your institution is an effective way to determine short-term and long-term local purchasing goals and guiding principles for your Farm to Cafeteria program. A well-developed Local or Sustainable Food Purchasing Policy will increase awareness and support of the program among various stakeholders and define the institutional values that will guide local and responsible purchasing.

There are many examples and resources for developing a local food purchasing policy so there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Our favorite resource is "A Guide to Developing a Sustainable Food Purchasing Policy," a Food Alliance publication that walks you through the various questions to consider when developing your institution's own purchasing policy. The guide is available at: <http://food-hub.org/files/resources/SustainableFoodPolicyGuide.pdf>



### Wellness Policy

A Wellness Policy outlines nutrition and exercise goals for the staff, students, residents, or others at an institution. When developing a new wellness policy or modifying an old one, you can include Farm to Cafeteria priorities by highlighting goals around school/community gardens and access to healthy, local food.

Your wellness policy might include:

1. Goals for *nutrition education, physical activity and other institution-based activities* that are designed to promote patient/inmate/student/customer wellness.

2. *Nutrition guidelines* defined by the institution for all foods served, with the objective of promoting patient/inmate/student/customer health as well as local purchasing.
3. A plan for *measuring implementation* of the local wellness policy, including designation of one or more persons within the local agency to ensure that the institution fulfills the wellness policy.
4. *Community involvement* goals, including local organizations, parents, students, and other representatives, in the development of the wellness policy.

**Adapted from:** “Five Required Components of School Wellness Policy” as designated by Public Law 108-265, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004.

Montana Team Nutrition developed a “School Wellness Policy In Action Guide” that contains useful information for other types of institutions as well. The resource is available at: [www.montana.edu/teamnutrition/wellness](http://www.montana.edu/teamnutrition/wellness)

### **Profile IV: Food as Part of Reform in Montana State Prison**

Located on 37,000 acres of rolling foothills, the remarkably scenic Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge holds more than just inmates serving time; it’s also home to a sizeable cattle ranch, dairy operation, and food processing center, all run with inmates’ skills and labor.

**The Ranch** – Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) raises 1,600 beef cattle and grows barley, alfalfa, oats, and grass hay on the state prison property. To avoid competing with local ranchers, MCE sells the beef cattle from its cow-calf operation out of state. Ross Wagner, the Agriculture Director of MCE, says they used to have even more food-related projects—gardens, a slaughterhouse, and a cannery—but the combination of aging infrastructure and a quickly growing inmate population has made it difficult to keep those operations going. In 1991, the state prison housed approximately 700 offenders; by the end of 2012, that number had reached approximately 1,500.

The prison’s agriculture operations are self-funded and rely heavily on inmate labor. Of the prison’s total population, 192 inmates are classified as “low custody” and are therefore eligible to live in a dormitory outside the fence and work on the prison’s ranch and dairy. Inmates apply for these jobs, are interviewed by site supervisors, and if hired they must stay in a position four months before they’re allowed to switch. The work program has a strong focus on training inmates in technical skills that may be valuable after they finish their sentence.

**Dairy** – The prison’s 310 dairy cows are milked three times a day: at 1 a.m., 9 a.m., and 5 p.m., with each cow producing an average of 100 lbs of milk per day. The relatively new milking parlor was built in 2005 and contains extensive systems set up to monitor milk flow and the animals’ health. A computerized chip on each cow’s leg monitor her body temperature, number of steps taken, and other factors that help detect potential health problems early on.

The prison also has a dairy processing center that pasteurizes milk and processes and packages yogurt, cream, and ice cream to be served in the eight state facilities the

— Continued on next page —

prison helps feed. Despite the impressive scale of its in-house operation, the prison processes and serves only 30% of the milk its cows produce; the remaining 70% is sold raw to Darigold, a farmer-owned dairy company.

**The Food Factory** – The Food Factory is a large food processing and cooking facility located at the state prison outside the security fence. In addition to the Montana State Prison, the Food Factory provides food for seven other state operations. The Food Factory produces around 12,000 meals per production day.

The Food Factory prepares everything almost entirely from scratch, including baked goods prepared in its own bakery. The facility sources some of its raw products from within Montana though the majority still arrives from elsewhere via wholesale distributors.

**Leading by Example** – The food and agriculture operations at the Montana State Prison are not only extensive, they're also models for similar reform programs in prisons across the nation. "We've been recognized by the National Institute of Corrections for having cutting-edge programs in agriculture in our prison," Joe Mihelic, Director of the Food Factory, says. "The work experience and values these inmates gain while they're here will help them lead productive lives once they're released."



The Montana State prison has 310 dairy cows and a state-of-the-art milking parlor. Photo courtesy of NCAT

## Profile V: Livingston HealthCare

"It's no secret that some of Livingston's best food is served at the hospital," a local resident said when asked about the local Farm to Hospital program. The institution's cafeteria and meal program are recognized for their delicious food, yet they're also gaining recognition for supporting local agriculture and boosting community health.

Big changes started at Livingston Healthcare (LHC) in 2007 when Jessica Wilcox became the Food and Nutrition Services Manager and made it a priority to transition the institution's menu from pre-prepared processed foods to healthier meals made from scratch. While the institution was rearranging the kitchen set-up to accommodate this switch, Jessica began establishing business relationships with local producers through the Western Sustainability Exchange's (WSE) Farm to Restaurant Connections program. The program helps connect food buyers with local farmers and ranchers in a variety of ways, including via an annual Commerce Day that gathers interested parties to meet and share resources about selling and purchasing local foods.

Another key resource in getting Livingston's Farm to Hospital program underway was the institution's relationship with the county sanitarian. In 2007, Doris Morgan provided considerable knowledge about available local products and helped build

trust and transparency between LHC and the county health department. One of the greatest obstacles was getting staff on board with the new menu and food preparation needs. To increase buy-in, Jessie works to provide educational opportunities for staff around the benefits of local, healthy food and requests that staff members contribute to the ever-changing menu with a personal or family recipe.

While LHC was relatively small in 2012, serving between 70-120 meals a day, 19% of their food was purchased from in-state producers generating a sizeable impact on the local agricultural economy and earning them the Innovation in Healthcare Award from the Montana Hospital Association (MHA). “We have developed some wonderful relationships with our local farmers and producers,” Jessica says of LHC’s Farm to Hospital program. “We continue to strive for improvement in our culinary capabilities, creating flavorful comfort food without compromising nutrition. Using local products makes this so much easier!”

In 2015, LHC built a new facility. The new healthcare campus remains a critical access hospital with 25 beds, but with an expanding service line. The cafeteria has taken on a new image and a new brand; Café Fresh aims to become one of the most sought after destination eateries in SW Montana. “As a manager at LHC, I had a lot of input in to the design of Café Fresh. I had a secret mission in mind. To feature the culinary arts



A kitchen staff member prepares a local meal at Livingston Healthcare Center. Photo courtesy of Jessica Wilcox.

and get patrons excited about watching my chefs work. I wanted patrons to choose foods they may not typically order from a restaurant menu or make for themselves at home. As a dietitian, I am always trying to encourage people to try new foods especially fruits, vegetables and whole grains” says Wilcox. The design of Café Fresh is unique in the hospital setting. The idea is that people eat with their eyes, therefore the majority of the food choices are on display. Entrees, sides, soups, the salad bar and the parfait bar are all self-serve and sold by weight. There is also a grab and go cooler that displays homemade confections, pies, cakes, bars and cheesecake. Café Fresh also offers some convenience foods such as chips, trail mix and snacks. Each has been chosen with healthy ingredients in mind. The Café does not offer soda, instead they offer flavored soda water or sparkling water, 100% juice and an Espresso bar with coffee being purchased from a local coffee roaster. Café Fresh is trying to lead by example, offering tasty choices without compromising nutrition or quality. Wilcox also hired culinary trained chefs to lead the charge, “the combination of a culinary trained chef and a registered dietitian is the perfect match for the institutional food setting, the dietitian provides input on healthier variations of a recipe and the chef can execute this with amazing flavor!” In 2017, Café Fresh served an average of 300 meals during the week and spent close to 40% of their food budget from local sources.

## Section III: For Parents, Community Organizers, and Educators

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### Getting Started: Bringing the Right People to the Table

#### *Get Connected with Farm to Cafeteria Network*

**F**arm to Cafeteria Network has compiled multiple online resources to make it easier for you to get a Farm to Cafeteria Program started in your community. Check out the “Resources” tab on our website that includes various fact sheets, tips, and templates for Farm to Cafeteria in Montana: <http://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org/resources>

#### *Find the Right People*

Farm to Cafeteria succeeds when the whole community is involved. In the beginning, you may want to invite strategically-identified people to participate while still leaving opportunities for all interested community members to pitch in. Inviting representatives from different sectors, including kitchen staff, administration, community members, and students or residents will illuminate the different ideas, skills, and resources each can contribute and will also set the tone for a broadly collaborative project. For help locating the right people, ask about the local wellness committee, or consult the Abundant Montana Directory to discover the organizations in the area that are invested in their local economies at: <http://aeromt.org/abundant>

#### *Listen and Learn*

Learn about the current program and staff. Ask them what challenges they face and ideas or goals they have. Take a tour of the facility.

#### *Get Them Excited!*

People have to be passionate about Farm to Cafeteria to make it happen, and you can help get them there by knowing which benefits might particularly resonate with them. Teachers often enjoy the opportunity to incorporate nutrition or garden education into their curriculum standards. Food service professionals may be looking for ways to increase meal participation, meet USDA nutrition standards (in schools), serve higher quality, tasty foods, and support Montana farmers. Interested community members may know of a local farmer looking for a new market, or may just want to help schoolchildren or seniors enjoy healthier meals.

To inspire collaboration, try hosting a fun event like a farm tour or “dig day” and invite community members to participate. Take time to ask participants to identify aspects of Farm to Cafeteria that interest them most, and engage partners based on those specific interests. For additional ideas, check out the National Farm to School Network’s tips for getting everyone involved in the planning process: [www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications\\_350.pdf](http://www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications_350.pdf)

#### *Enlist Help*

##### **AmeriCorps or FoodCorps**

Many successful Farm to Cafeteria Programs in Montana, including UM Farm to College and Red Lodge Farm to School, got off the ground with the help of an AmeriCorps VISTA, No Kid Hungry or FoodCorps member. During their terms of service, which vary from several

months to two years, these service members can dedicate the valuable time needed in the early stages of a Farm to Cafeteria program to build strong institution-producer relationships and begin educational efforts and outreach. To be eligible to host an AmeriCorps or FoodCorps member, an organization must be a government office, non-profit, or school. Even if you don't host a service member, you might find AmeriCorps members in your town that could help with garden projects or volunteer days.

AmeriCorps has several branches in Montana that could be useful:

FoodCorps members serve in K-12 schools: <https://foodcorps.org/montana>

Montana Campus Compact AmeriCorps members serve in college communities: <http://www.mtcompact.org>

Montana Conservation Corps members focus on land stewardship, and have tools and experience with building and expanding school gardens: <http://mtcorps.org>

Montana No Kid Hungry AmeriCorps members work to eliminate childhood hunger in Montana by serving in schools and communities: <https://mt.nokidhungry.org>

AmeriCorps VISTA members serve in communities to reduce poverty, and may be able to help build the capacity of your organization to work on Farm to Cafeteria long-term: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ Americorps/Americorpsvista>

### ***Hire an Intern or Farm to Cafeteria Coordinator***

Another way to build capacity for local food purchasing and related educational activities is by hiring someone to help. While funding is an obvious challenge for most institutions, you could develop an internship program or apply for grant funding to help cover the new position. Some institutions work with outside organizations to hire Farm to Cafeteria coordinators such as Red Lodge Area Food Partnership Council in partnership with the Red Lodge Public School District.

### ***Involve Young People***

There are many young people across the state who are motivated about transforming the current food system— involve them in your program! Farm to Cafeteria Network has organized the Growing Leaders youth program for high school students and these youth can provide tremendous support in procuring and educating about local food in your institution. Additional places to look for young people are in high school leadership programs like Future Farmers of America (FFA), Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and other Vo-Ag or Family and Consumer Sciences programs.

## **Institutional Food 101: What to Expect**

When approaching a food service operation with the idea of sourcing local products it is important to remember that they already have a busy workload and incorporating local foods into their schedule may be a challenge.

### ***Understanding Institutional Food Service Basics***

- *Economy of Scale* - Institutional food costs are often based on economies of scale.

Because their market has such a high demand for food products, centralized suppliers can meet those needs at relatively lower prices. In Farm to Cafeteria programs, the ability to source local products in large quantities is important and may require working with a growers' cooperative, local distributor, or a dedicated staff member who works on product sourcing and aggregating.

- *Consumer Demands* - Customer demand and satisfaction drives food service operations, even in institutions. To increase customer demand for a local food menu, educational activities (in the cafeteria, classroom, outside, anywhere!) and marketing campaigns are essential.
- *Kitchen Facilities* - Over the years, most institutional food services have transitioned away from scratch cooking to heat-and-serve systems that deal mostly with prepared, processed foods. As a result, many kitchen facilities now lack the equipment and staff needed to prepare meals from whole, raw products. You may want to discuss equipment limitations or ask for a tour so you can see first-hand an institution's kitchen capacity (e.g., how much prepping can they do? Can they cook raw meat? Do they have freezer capacity?) before considering what local foods would work best in your Farm to Cafeteria program.
- *Streamlined Ordering* - Ordering from multiple local food sources can be a logistical challenge for food service professionals. Encourage them to start small by working with their existing distribution channels to identify and source local products, and then slowly begin scaling up. Food service professionals might conduct a trial period of purchasing from just one local farmer. As a community member, you can play an important role in identifying potential producer partners and even researching what products they have to offer.

### **Imagine working all day**

in an office organizing menus, making food orders, arranging deliveries, checking nutrition guidelines, double-checking prices, and ensuring HACCP food safety guidelines are met in your facility's kitchen. You stayed overtime to fill in for a sick employee, and after the long workday you stop at the grocery store, cook dinner, put your kids to bed, and finally sit down to relax when a neighbor stops by and asks why you didn't attend the community meeting that night. We're all busy, and it's important to keep in mind that food service directors are already working hard to serve hundreds—or thousands—of meals every day.

### ***Points to Remember when Working from Outside an Institution***

- If you are planning your first Farm to Cafeteria meeting, don't be disappointed if only a few people show up; always be sure to thank those who did come!
- Start any meeting by thanking the food service staff for all the hard work that they already put into their program.
- Ask questions! Before asking food service staff to do anything new, ask them what they're already doing. Maybe they've been serving local beef for years! If so, applaud them for their vision and commitment. Also ask about any barriers they have experienced or foresee in buying local.

- Once you've begun a relationship with the food service staff, offer to help them start small with local purchases. Help them identify local products they are already buying and encourage them to scale-up those orders, or identify one seasonally available food that they can integrate into their menu.
- Work with your local institution to set achievable Farm to Cafeteria goals, and take the time to understand the challenges that institutions face in buying local food.
- Start small, one local item in one meal is a tremendous accomplishment. Make sure to celebrate it!
- Help your local institutions promote their Farm to Cafeteria activities and become a voice of support from the community.

## Education and Outreach

Because Americans have grown accustomed to having access to any food, any time, many have lost an appreciation for the delicious taste of seasonally-harvested food, not to mention awareness of where and how that food was grown and the nutritional benefits it holds. Farm to Cafeteria programs have the potential to reignite appreciation of and demand for local foods. For that to happen, local procurement needs to be coupled with educational and outreach activities that community members like you can be instrumental in organizing.

For specific resources and examples of the activities below, see Appendix F, “Curriculum and Cookbooks.”

### School and Community Gardens

Starting a school or community garden is a fun way to engage patients, students, staff, neighbors— all sorts of Farm to Cafeteria stakeholders— in local foods. Whether you want to build a community garden on an institution's campus (or rooftop!) or a school garden to integrate into K-12 education, there are many resources to help you get started and to incorporate your gardens into educational activities.

Check out the Montana Farm to School website to see the variety of school gardens that exist and to find valuable curriculum resources: [www.montana.edu/mtfarmto/school/resources/school-garden.html](http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmto/school/resources/school-garden.html)

### Nutrition and Local Foods Education

There are many places in a cafeteria where you can strategically exhibit educational tidbits about the importance of eating healthy food and why local food is preferable.



Materials can be placed along the serving line, next to the cash register, or on cafeteria walls. You could also try a community-level campaign that educates others about efforts around local, healthy food and why it's so important. Montana Harvest of the Month provides accessible educational materials for all ages, for more information see Appendix E.

In schools, starting nutrition education at a young age will build a strong foundation and positive relationship with food, and it is the perfect opportunity to connect students with their food sources. Nutrition education can easily be coupled with farm field trips or visiting farmers, school garden or orchard activities, cooking classes and meals served in or outside of the classroom.

### Cooking Classes

Cooking classes are a fun and educational way to get community members excited about using local food in their diets. Cooking classes can impart fundamental food and nutrition values to school children, patients, inmates, and college students as well as other community members.

### Taste Tests

Taste tests are a means of introducing cafeteria consumers to new tastes, textures and flavors of local products. They are also a great method of getting food service staff exposed to local products and of giving them the opportunity to see consumer reaction without a huge investment. Montana Harvest of the Month provides resources that include a taste test guide, see Appendix E for more information.

### Montana Meals

Highlighting specific meals or days when local products will be featured in the cafeteria is an easy way to celebrate and increase awareness of local products. While it's up to the food service director to set the menu, community members can help by creating educational materials to promote the event and also arrange a farmer visit to accompany his or her local food. This is a great way to support food service staff so they can focus on purchasing and serving local food.

### Events

You may want to suggest that your institution plan a special event such as an all-local meal or farmer visit for National Food Day on October 24 or participate in Montana Crunch Time (usually held on October 24). For schools, the entire month of October is National Farm to School Month. Visit the National Farm to School Network website for a list of resources and ideas of how to celebrate (many of which are relevant for other institutions as well) here: [www.farmtoschoolmonth.org/resources](http://www.farmtoschoolmonth.org/resources)

### Press Releases and Social Media

Help get the word out about an upcoming Farm to Cafeteria event by getting in touch with local media and making announcements via social media. See Appendix D for tips on working with the press and a sample press release.

# Policy Considerations

## *Institution-Specific Food Safety Regulations*

When working with institutional food services, there are quite a few things to know about food safety and food service regulations. Reach out to the local county sanitarian or the staff member at the food service operation to discuss your ideas/plans for a Farm to Cafeteria program. They should be able to clarify any regulations and requirements around sourcing and serving local foods.

**Refer to “Policy Support” in Section II for more information about**

- Federal and State Local Food Purchasing Policies
- Institutional Policies

## *Getting Involved with Policy*

There are a variety of ways to get involved with policy change as it relates to Farm to Cafeteria and local food education. Here are a few ideas:

### 1. Know About Legislation

- Stay abreast of bills during the Montana legislative session by checking Grow Montana’s website or by subscribing to the Montana Food and Agriculture Listserv at: [www.growmontana.ncat.org](http://www.growmontana.ncat.org)
- Use Grow Montana’s updates and action alerts to contact your representatives and tell them how important Farm to Cafeteria is to you.
- Stay current on other states policies and national legislation: [www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/statelegisativesurvey](http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/statelegisativesurvey)

### 2. Write Letters to the Editor

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper expressing the significance of local foods and Farm to Cafeteria programs to your regional economy. Congratulate specific individuals or organizations on their efforts and highlight the need to create policies that support local foods. This is an especially important role for community members who are not directly affiliated with an institution.

### 3. Propose a School Board Resolution

- Work with your local school board to pass a resolution around starting or supporting farm to school efforts. Gallatin Valley Farm to School has provided a model resolution, available on their website: [gvfarmtoschool.org](http://gvfarmtoschool.org)
- Or check out Change Lab Solution’s toolkit for developing a Farm to School Resolution: <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/establishing-farm-school-program>



A student helps harvest an armload of carrots in Red Lodge. Photo courtesy of Alyssa Charney

## Profile VI: FoodCorps and Red Lodge Area Food Partnership Council Spur Change

Farm to School in Red Lodge, Montana began with one purchasing trial. The School Wellness Committee helped one local rancher supply beef to the school district, and from those humble beginnings a community-wide initiative was born. The citizen's group Red Lodge Area Food Partnership Council was formed and hosted a community forum to spur dialogue about local foods.

In 2011 the Red Lodge Area Food Partnership helped bring FoodCorps member Alyssa Charney to Red Lodge, and has played a critical role in helping the School Wellness Committee, Boys & Girls Club, and school food service staff work together to buy local food and educate students about the benefits of healthy eating and local agriculture. "Students have enjoyed local beef, greens, squash, zucchini, cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots, beets, and potatoes," Alyssa says. "Some were able to visit the farms where their food is grown, and others got to chat with farmers in the cafeteria during lunch."

In addition to farm field trips and farmer visits to the classroom, Alyssa has taken the lead on building the Community Youth Garden. Through school visits, afterschool activities, and summer programming, the garden is designed to be an outdoor classroom for students, teachers, and community members alike. A major challenge in establishing the Youth Garden was finding available land. Eventually the school board secured a plot of school-owned land that was not in use. Throughout this process Alyssa was a driving force in working with stakeholders from the Food Partnership Council, the school district, Boys & Girls Club, the Children's Center, and others across town to ensure that the garden was collaboratively built.

In addition to spending all summer planning and tending the garden, Alyssa built strong relationships with teachers in order to incorporate garden and nutrition curriculum into their lessons. Special events for National Farm to School Month, Earth Day, and other occasions have helped get teachers excited about using garden and nutrition curriculum developed by the Montana Department of Agriculture and Life Lab.

Alyssa has also helped further community-based food activities in Red Lodge. Community members have hosted a local food film series, offered an afterschool cooking class, and continue to support the local Farmers Market. While there was certainly broad interest in local foods among the Red Lodge community before Alyssa arrived, she energized and organized stakeholders into action, a valid need in many Montana communities. When Alyssa is not in the garden, classroom, or kitchen, she is dreaming up a new youth camp out on a local farm, plotting summer evening activities for the garden, or seeking new partners in town for future projects. Talk about patience, commitment, and vision.

To learn more, visit:  
[www.foodpartnership.org](http://www.foodpartnership.org)

Red Lodge Area  
Food Partnership Council



# Interview: Kris Thomas of Gallatin Valley Farm to School

*Interview from 2012*

## **How did GV Farm to School get started?**

It was started by interested parents and community folks. Some early inspiration came from reading about Alice Waters' efforts in the Bay Area and the local food movement in general. The annual October Bioneers event in Bozeman also helped bring some of these ideas into our community. And Missoula was a few steps ahead of us – some of their ideas and activities were trickling down our way.



## **Who was involved in that process?**

It was a combined effort of active parents of school aged children, a couple of nutritionists, staff from MSU and Montana Team Nutrition, and a representative from the Bozeman Community Food Co-op.

## **What year did it get going?**

It started about 6 years ago with the Gallatin Valley Farm to School group... but there were earlier efforts with some of the elementary schools through parent groups at those schools. Irving and Hawthorne Elementary and some of the Montessori schools were among the first.

## **What resources were useful in that start-up process?**

The Bozeman Community Food Co-op was important in many ways. They provide grants (known as the 4% Day Grants) to quite a few of the Bozeman schools that were building gardens or orchards and other farm related activities. They have given our Farm to School group a 4% Day Grant almost every year since we organized. This year they have expanded the scope of their grant program to include schools in surrounding areas. The Bozeman Food Co-op allowed salaried staff time to help with the initial organization of the group, and have supported our FoodCorps volunteer with a working member discount at the Co-op to help with their living expenses. They also regularly promoted our efforts through their newsletter, e-newsletter and website.

FoodCorps members have also been central to getting us established. Though we have had plenty of



Hands-on education is a priority of the Gallatin Valley Farm to School group. Photo courtesy of Gallatin Valley Farm to School

interested volunteers, having a regular working person helped us establish ourselves. The Rural Landscape Institute in Bozeman helped us gain non-profit status, and we worked a lot with the Montana Team Nutrition Program at MSU and used the National Farm to School Network website.

### ***What other resources could you have used to get started?***

Fiscal sponsorships are hugely important to launching a non-profit. We had a difficult time finding a non-profit to sponsor us. Hopa Mountain graciously did so for a number of years even though it was somewhat out of their purview. Some Farm to School groups may function under the non-profit status of their school or PTA equivalent. But if this is not an option, a fiscal sponsor relationship must be established in order to pursue grants and contributions. I think this could be one of the greatest hurdles for establishing new farm to school groups in the state. It would be immensely helpful if an established non-profit with similar goals could fiscally sponsor new Farm to School groups. Also, the Montana Non-Profit Association has also been very helpful to us and I would recommend that any new group join them and take advantage of their resources.

### ***How did you approach the school district with the farm to school concept and get them excited or involved with it?***

It initially came out of the parent groups at the schools. We had some great school principals get behind the idea immediately. Teachers were generally hesitant at first as they often looked at it as something that increased their work load. But there is a broader understanding now of how easily it can be fit into the curriculum—especially at the elementary school level.

A school garden is a great way to get a Farm to School program going. It provides a focus and is a very visible reminder of the movement. Other related educational activities such as field trips, cooking, and nutrition education seem to follow. If a school is worried about the manpower required to start a school garden, one of the best places is to start with an orchard on the campus. Many schools desperately need landscaping, so orchards are a great way to make an initial presence on a school campus. There are lots of grants available to get them going and once established take minimal maintenance.

Getting buy-in from the food service personnel can be a slower and more challenging process that will depend on the staff and policy or encouragement of school board and superintendent. National Farm to School Month in October can be a good starting place to garner support.



A student shows off her harvest.  
Photo courtesy of Gallatin  
Valley Farm to School

## ***What advice would you offer a parent or community group interested in starting a farm to school program?***

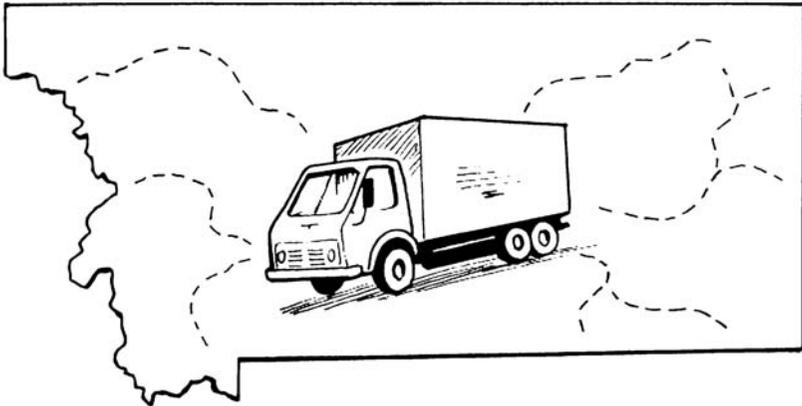
A greater number of folks are familiar with the concept now than six years ago so it should be easier to get a group going. There is also more information online and more grants available. When we first started a great deal of time was just spent explaining the concept and what the far reaching implications could be to our community. We spent a lot of time at the farmers markets and other venues trying to get the ideas out there. I think it should be a lot easier now for new groups. The main thing that has kept us going was our Food-Corps members and then a paid staff person. We would not have been able to keep the level of projects going without that ongoing staff person. It seems to be an important part of maintaining our effort.

## **Conclusion**

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**A**s we've seen, there's a lot happening with Farm to Cafeteria programs in Montana, but there remains much to be done! An active Farm to Cafeteria movement is taking place in Montana and we are happy to help connect you to the people and resources associated with that movement. For more information and to stay connected, please visit Farm to Cafeteria Network's website at [www.farmtocafeteria.ncat.org](http://www.farmtocafeteria.ncat.org) or contact us at (406) 494-4572.

Remember, the more institutions demonstrate demand for healthy, local food products, the more Montana's food producers and processors will step up supply. We can improve our state's agricultural economy, our stewardship of the land, and the health of our communities, one institution at a time.



# Appendix A: Seasonal Foods Chart

The Montana Seasonal Food Chart shows many of the food items grown or raised in this state that are available throughout the four seasons. For produce, the chart indicates when fresh items may be available and doesn't take into account fruits or vegetables that are available after the harvest season due to canning, freezing, or dehydrating.

Winter (Dec. –April)	Spring (May–June)	Summer (July–August)	Fall (Sept.-Nov.)
Barley	Barley	Apricots	Apples
Beef	Beef	Barley	Barley
Beets	Broccoli	Basil	Basil
Buffalo	Buffalo	Beans	Beans
Carrots	Cabbage	Beef	Beef
Cheese	Cauliflower	Beets	Beets
Chicken	Chard	Broccoli	Broccoli
Eggs	Cheese	Buffalo	Buffalo
Garbanzo Beans	Chicken	Carrots	Carrots
Garlic	Collards	Cabbage	Cabbage
Kamut	Eggs	Cantaloupe	Cantaloupe
Lentils	Garbanzo Beans	Cauliflower	Cauliflower
Milk	Kamut	Chard	Chard
Mushrooms	Herbs	Cheese	Cheese
Onions	Kale	Cherries	Cherries
Parsnips	Lentils	Chicken	Chicken
Pasta	Lettuce	Collards	Collards
Pinto beans	Milk	Corn	Corn
Pork	Morels	Cucumbers	Eggs
Potatoes	Mushrooms	Eggs	Garbanzo Beans
Shallots	Mustard Greens	Garbanzo Beans	Garlic
Sprouts	Pasta	Garlic	Kamut
Sunflower Seed	Peas	Kamut	Herbs
Tortillas	Pinto beans	Herbs	Kale
Turkey	Pork	Kale	Leeks
Wheat	Spinach	Lentils	Lentils
Winter Squash	Sprouts	Lettuce	Lettuce
Yogurt	Sunflower Seed	Milk	Milk
	Tortillas	Mushrooms	Mushrooms
	Turkey	Mustard Greens	Mustard Greens
	Wheat	Pasta	Onions
	Yogurt	Peas	Pasta
		Peppers	Peas
		Pinto beans	Pears
		Pork	Peppers
		Raspberries	Pinto beans
		Scallions	Pork
		Shallots	Potatoes
		Spinach	Pumpkins
		Sprouts	Raspberries
		Strawberries	Scallions
		Summer Squash	Shallots
		Sunflower Seed	Spinach
		Tomatillos	Sprouts
		Tomatoes	Strawberries
		Tortillas	Summer Squash
		Turkey	Sunflower Seed
		Wheat	Tomatillos
		Yogurt	Tomatoes
			Tortillas
			Turkey
			Wheat
			Winter Squash
			Yogurt

Courtesy of Community Food and Agriculture Coalition (CFAC)

## Appendix B: Montana Beef to School

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In Montana, and across the country, producers and consumers report social, environmental, and economic benefits from local procurement efforts that link local beef producers and processors with schools in their communities and the region.

Beef to School efforts can increase the sustainability and viability of local and regional food systems as they have the potential to:

- Enhance community food literacy and connections to local agriculture
- Keep money circulating in local economies
- Reduce the need for transportation, packaging, and other inputs
- Increase access to local food
- Provide producers an additional market for their beef
- Utilize cattle that are fed and finished on locally available feeds like barley, wheat, alfalfa, oats, and grass as opposed to importing feeds into the state

The Montana Beef to School Project is a collaborative project between beef producers and processors, schools, researchers at Montana State University, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana Department of Agriculture, and various community partners whose goal it is to increase the use of local beef in every Montana school. For more information visit: <http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/beeftoschool.html>

Included on this webpage are number of Montana-specific resources including fact sheets, case studies, and procurement templates. Be sure to read the case study report *Mooving Forward Together: Strategies for Montana Beef to School* to learn about the strategies that are making Beef to School work around Montana.

### Sourcing Montana Beef

Did you know that Montana schools are able to purchase beef from both State and Federally inspected meat plants? Montana beef processors can help you with sourcing Montana beef and with coordinating distribution back to your school. This means that while you can purchase, or accept donations directly from a rancher, you can also leave this work up to the beef processors, saving you time and energy. Find a processing facility near you:

- State Inspected Facilities: <http://liv.mt.gov/Meat-Milk-Inspection/Meat-and-Poultry-Inspection>
- Federally Inspected Facilities: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/mpi-directory>

Many Montana schools are already serving local beef! Learn about successful beef to school programs in Montana at: <http://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org/beef-to-school>

# Appendix C: Checklist for Retail Purchasing of Local Produce

The list below has been adapted from the Checklist for Retail Purchasing of Local Produce, developed by Iowa State University available at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM2046A.pdf>

Name of Producer/Farm \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Total acres farmed \_\_\_\_\_ Availability of promotional materials YES NO

Products to be purchased \_\_\_\_\_

Is liability insurance required YES (Dollar amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ ) NO

Production Practices	Yes	No	N/A
What is irrigation source? Well Stream Pond Municipal Other			
What types of manures are used? Raw manure Composted Aged No manure is used			
Was the produce grown without addition of chemical pesticides and fertilizers?			
Are you USDA Certified Organic?			
If well water is used, is well protected from contamination?			
Is manure applied at least 120 days prior to harvest? If compost produced according to USDA standards is used, is it applied at least 90 days prior to harvest? <i>These are the USDA National Organic Program rules, which have been recently adopted in the new GAP standards. Compost that wasn't made according to these standards is considered "manure."</i>			
Is the manure application schedule documented with a copy submitted to the retail operation?			
Is land use history available to determine risk of product contamination?			
Is the field protected from potential run-off from animal confinement or grazing areas?			
Is land that is frequently flooded used to grow food crops?			
Are coliform tests conducted on soil in frequently flooded land?			
Are farm livestock and wild animals restricted from growing areas?			
If portable toilets are used for workers, are they situated in a way that prevents field contamination from waste-water?			
Product Handling	Yes	No	N/A
Are storage and packaging facilities located away from growing areas?			
Is there risk of contamination with manure?			
Are harvesting baskets, totes, or other containers kept covered and cleaned (with potable water) and sanitized before use?			
Is harvesting equipment/machinery that comes into contact with the products kept as clean as possible?			

Are product and non-product containers available and clearly marked?			
Is dirt, mud, or other debris removed from product before packing?			
Are food grade packaging materials clean and stored in areas protected from pets, livestock, wild animals, and other contaminants?			
Is storage facility well maintained and clean, with designated areas for food products and non-food items?			
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Is product loaded and stored to minimize physical damage and risk of contamination?			
Is transport vehicle well maintained and clean, with designated areas for food products and non-food items?			
Are products kept cool during storage and transport? If ice is used is it from a potable water source?			
<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Is the facility licensed and inspected to process products?			
Are food product contact surfaces washed, rinsed and sanitized before using?			
Is rinse (potable) water source tested at least once a year and results kept on file?			
Is product protected as it travels from field to packing facility?			
Is a product packing area in use with space for culling and storage?			
Are packing areas kept enclosed?			
Are food contact surfaces regularly washed and rinsed with potable water and then sanitized?			
Are food grade packaging materials used?			
Do workers have access to toilets and hand washing stations with proper supplies?			
Are toilets and hand washing stations clean and regularly serviced?			
Is a pest control program in place?			
<b>Worker Health and Hygiene</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Are workers trained in safe food handling practices?			
Are workers trained about hygiene practices and sanitation with signs posted to reinforce messages?			
Are workers and visitors following good hygiene and sanitation practices?			
Are smoking and eating confined to designated areas separate from product handling?			
Are workers instructed not to work if they exhibit signs of infection (e.g., fever, diarrhea, etc.)?			
Do workers practice good hygiene by:			
wearing clean clothing and shoes			
changing aprons and gloves as needed?			
keeping hair covered or restrained?			
washing hands as required?			
limiting bare hand contact with fresh products?			
covering open wounds with clean bandages?			

<b>Ordering Procedures</b>
How far in advance will producer inform you of product availability?
How should orders be placed? (phone, fax, or e-mail)
What are procedures if producer cannot fulfill requested order – (due to lack of volume or quality of product)?
Has the price and unit of costing been negotiated?
Are there acceptable substitutes available if an order cannot be filled?
<b>Delivery Procedures</b>
Timing of delivery
Volume of delivery
Frequency of delivery
<b>Product Specifications</b>
Desired quality or size?
Other desired specifications?
What substitutes are acceptable?
What is inappropriate in terms of packaging and/or product condition?
<b>Payment Procedures</b>
Amount of lead time required by accounting office in order to add vendor?
What is the timing for payment of invoices?

*I confirm that the information provided above is accurate to the best of my knowledge.*

Signature of Seller: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix D: Tips for Working with the Press and Sample Press Release

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1. **Have a message.** Come up with a simple, clear message about your organization or event. This could be your mission statement or a simple catch phrase. Remember to stick with it!
2. **Know your audience.** The media does not necessarily care about your cause. If you show them that their audience will care they will be more inclined to cover it.
3. **Follow journalists and bloggers.** Knowing the right person to talk to about your story is important. Find a writer, journalist or blogger who covers the topics of food justice, local food, community, health, or education and familiarize yourself with their writing style and interest.
4. **Building a relationship.** Once you're familiar with a writer, journalist or blogger keep them abreast of any new developments. A simple email with an update can go a long way and who knows maybe they will turn it into a story.
5. **Be timely.** Don't assume the media knows of your event, inform them well ahead of the event that you would like covered and they will make time for it. Don't be shy about sending a reminder or asking if they plan to attend.
6. **Share through other outlets.** Utilize social networking to post events or share a relevant news story.
7. **Be informed.** Be aware of what other similar groups/organizations are doing in your area, state or country. It's important to know your local allies and this will give you an arsenal of examples from similar projects and how they benefitted their community.
8. **Share images.** Be willing to share photos with the media either from past events or the event they are covering. Be sure to inform your media contacts if the event provides a good photo opportunity. Make sure you have participants' or guardians' permission (extremely important when working with kids) before photos are taken or released. If working at a school, make sure you and the journalist follow the school's media policy. The principal should be able to provide guidance regarding this policy.

## Press Release Template

### For Immediate Release

August 3, 2012 [DATE PRESS RELEASE GOES TO MEDIA]

**Press Release Template Goes Viral** [GRABBER HEADLINE]

Media Contact:

Your Name

Your Contact Phone

Your Email Address

Bozeman, MT [SITE OF YOUR BUSINESS OR WHERE ACTION/EVENT WILL TAKE PLACE]

In this opening sentence, explain the reason you're contacting the media—to get them psyched about your terrific program, farm or product.

In the second sentence or paragraph, provide additional information, the details of your event or program. When possible include in this section: (*Example*) Taking Root [**who**], Montana Farm to School Conference [**What**], August 16-17 2012 [**when**], Montana State University [**where**], part of an ongoing effort to increase awareness and accessibility of locally grown foods in schools, a triple win for farmers, children and communities [**why**]. In this final section, include any additional pertinent information, such as you organization's mission statement, website, Facebook, and Twitter address.

ATTACH LOGO, IMAGE AND/OR INFO SHEET.

# Appendix E: Montana Harvest of the Month Program

## About Montana Harvest of the Month

The Montana Harvest of the Month (HOM) program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools, institutions, and communities. Each month, participating programs focus on promoting one locally grown item (e.g., winter squash) by serving it in at least one meal or snack and displaying and distributing HOM materials. Additionally, schools participate by offering taste tests to students and conducting educational activities. This program is a perfect way to launch or grow a Farm to School or Farm to Cafeteria program as it provides an easy framework to follow and ready-to-use materials. Participating sites will receive a free packet of materials (includes posters and cafeteria, classroom, and home handouts) as well as guides, additional resources, and training.



## How to Participate

- **Gather your team and register for HOM today!**

Your team should include at least a food service staff member, administrator, and educator or provider.

- **Find and integrate the HOM foods in at least one meal, snack or a la carte option per month.**

The Cafeteria and Kitchen Bites handouts include standardized recipes, cooking tips and menu templates that make it easy to showcase HOM foods. You can also incorporate the HOM foods into your existing recipes or feature on the salad bar.

- **Involve families and community members.** HOM is a perfect way for parents or other community members (such as Master Gardeners, MSU Extension Agents, college students, non-profit organizations, ranchers, farmers, food businesses, grocery stores, etc.) to be involved. Distribute recipes and Harvest at Home handouts with your community. Share stories and HOM information on your website or social media pages. Use #MTHarvestoftheMonth on social media!



- **Display the posters in the cafeteria or on a bulletin board.**

Additional posters are available for purchase.

- **Promote the Harvest!**

The Harvest at Home handouts and newsletter content includes recipes, fun facts, shopping tips, cooking tips, and children's book ideas. Share this information with staff and patrons of your institution and coordinate with food service staff so HOM information goes out near the time that the item is served in a meal. HOM activities engage people in learning about the HOM item so that they are more interested in trying and eating new foods.



Get more information, register, or download resources: [www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemoth](http://www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemoth)

## Appendix F: Curriculum and Cookbooks

### Curriculum

Having a lesson plan and curriculum in place can make your educational activities more effective. Below is a list of some of the best known curriculum models for sustainability, nutrition education, and local agriculture from a variety of organizations and online sources.

- **Agriculture in the Classroom** is a program coordinated by the USDA that offers resources for students and teachers including lesson plans, funding opportunities, and more. (Grades Pre-K – 12) [www.agclassroom.org](http://www.agclassroom.org)
- **The Center for Ecoliteracy** website offers some philosophical background on ecological concepts and systems thinking. [www.ecoliteracy.org/teach](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/teach)
- **The Edible Schoolyard Project** has a wealth of tools for teachers, parents, and advocates of healthy lunches and school gardens, and you can share your resources here as well. [edibleschoolyard.org](http://edibleschoolyard.org)
- **Facing the Future** offers global issues and sustainability curricula some free and others for purchase. [www.facingthefuture.org/Curriculum/PreviewandBuyCurriculum/tabid/550/List/1/CategoryID/16/Level/a/Default.aspx](http://www.facingthefuture.org/Curriculum/PreviewandBuyCurriculum/tabid/550/List/1/CategoryID/16/Level/a/Default.aspx)
- **Gallatin Valley Food Bank Hunger 101 Curriculum** is a flexible curriculum that offers a broad range of lessons, stand-alone interactive sessions, and diverse small group activities that explore the issues of hunger and poverty in Gallatin County/Montana, the US, and the World. (All Ages) [www.gallatinvalleyfoodbank.org/hunger-awareness/hunger-101](http://www.gallatinvalleyfoodbank.org/hunger-awareness/hunger-101)

- **Green Education Foundation** has lesson plans around sustainability with a focus on science, health, social studies, language arts, math and creativity. (Grades PreK-12) [www.greeneducationfoundation.org/institute/lesson-clearinghouse.html](http://www.greeneducationfoundation.org/institute/lesson-clearinghouse.html)
- **How to Teach Nutrition to Kids**. 2006. Evers, Connie. A comprehensive resource for teaching mostly younger ages. Available for purchase at: <http://nutritionforkids.com>
- **Life Lab** is a national leader in farm and garden-based education. Their website includes resources for standards-based school garden curriculum and teacher training. (Grades: PreK-8) [www.lifelab.org](http://www.lifelab.org)
- **Montana Harvest of the Month** is a program that features a different Montana grown food each month. Participating sites receive materials and resources including posters, lessons, recipes, guides, and more. Register and get more information at: [www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemoth](http://www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemoth)
- **Montana Team Nutrition** has developed several Montana-specific lesson plans and educational posters, available on their website under “Resources.” [www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool](http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool)
- **Northeast Beginning Farmer’s Field Journal: A Beginner’s Guide for Young Farmers** 2012. Greenhorns and Cornell University Cooperative Extension. A step-by-step guide to sustainable farming, geared toward middle school and high school students. [www.thegreenhorns.net/wp-content/files\\_mf/1352147650GreenhornsFieldGuid2012lowres3.pdf](http://www.thegreenhorns.net/wp-content/files_mf/1352147650GreenhornsFieldGuid2012lowres3.pdf)
- **Nutrition Fun With Broc and Roll**. 2007. Evers, Connie. The follow-up to Evers’s popular title listed above. Available for purchase at <http://nutritionforkids.com>
- **Toward a Sustainable Agriculture**, developed by the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems in Wisconsin, is a great resource for lesson plans on sustainable agriculture. (Grades High School) [www.cias.wisc.edu/curriculum/index.htm](http://www.cias.wisc.edu/curriculum/index.htm)
- **FoodSpan** is a project of the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future and is a free, downloadable high school curriculum that highlights critical issues in the food system and empowers students to be food citizens. It is aligned to national education standards in science, social studies, health, and family and consumer sciences. (Grades High School) [www.foodspanlearning.org](http://www.foodspanlearning.org)
- **USDA Team Nutrition** has a variety of nutrition education resources, including helpful lessons like “Serving Up MyPlate” and “Grow It, Try It, Like It”. (Grades PreK-8) <http://teamn nutrition.usda.gov/library.html>

## Recipes

Incorporating local food in institutional meals, offering cooking lessons, and organizing taste tests are a great way to engage students and community members in hands-on activities. Below are some great resources with local food recipes and taste test lesson plans.

- **Montana's Healthy School Recipe Roundup** was compiled by Montana Team Nutrition and contains 31 colorful, tasty, eye-appealing and kid-friendly recipes made with Montana products. Large serving sizes (50-100) are geared toward food service directors. <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Management-Operations/School-Nutrition/School-Meal-Programs/Menu-Planning>
- **Fresh from the Farm: The Massachusetts Farm to School Cookbook** is a comprehensive guide for food service professionals that is more applicable to Montana than you might expect. The cookbook contains standardized recipes, organized by vegetable and season, as well as lesson plans and additional tips for preparing local foods. [www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications\\_134.pdf](http://www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications_134.pdf)
- **New School Cuisine** is a cookbook for school cooks, by school cooks. Developed by Vermont school nutrition professionals with support from the New England Culinary Institute, this cookbook includes 78 kid-tested and approved recipes that meet the new USDA dietary guidelines and feature local, seasonal foods. <https://vtfeed.org/resources/new-school-cuisine-nutritious-and-seasonal-recipes-school-cooks-school-cooks>
- **Cooking with California Foods in K-12 Schools** was developed by the Center for Ecoliteracy in partnership with the TomKat Charitable Trust and offers many ideas for adding fresh, local, and healthy foods to school lunches. The downloadable resource introduces the concept of the dynamic 6-5-4 School Lunch Matrix, based on six dishes students know and love, five ethnic flavor profiles, and four seasons. [www.ecoliteracy.org/cooking-with-california-food](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/cooking-with-california-food)
- **The Lunch Box** is a database of kitchen and kid-tested recipes that includes the USDA meal component information. [www.thelunchbox.org/recipes-menus/recipes](http://www.thelunchbox.org/recipes-menus/recipes)
- **The Food Trust Preschool Initiative Lesson Plans** has 35 lesson plans for preschoolers, many of which can be adapted for elementary students as well, and includes taste test activities and healthy, delicious recipes. [www.thefoodtrust.org/pdf/Preschool%20Initiative%20Toolkit/The%20Food%20Trust%20Preschool%20Initiative%20lesson%20plans.pdf](http://www.thefoodtrust.org/pdf/Preschool%20Initiative%20Toolkit/The%20Food%20Trust%20Preschool%20Initiative%20lesson%20plans.pdf)

## Appendix G: Finding Funding

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You can start locally to raise funds for your local foods program or event by asking local businesses and organizations to support you. Your local bank, community foundation, Rotary Club, PTA or other such group might be happy to get involved in your efforts.

- USDA Food and Nutrition Services Grants: Farm to School Grants, Equipment Grants, etc. [www.fns.usda.gov/grant-opportunities](http://www.fns.usda.gov/grant-opportunities)
- School Nutrition Association Equipment Grants. <https://schoolnutrition.org/EquipmentGrants>
- HealthierUS School Challenge: Smarter Lunchrooms. <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/HUSSC>
- Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools. [www.saladbars2schools.org](http://www.saladbars2schools.org)
- Fuel Up to Play 60 School Nutrition and Physical Activity Grants. [www.fueluptoplay60.com/funding/general-information](http://www.fueluptoplay60.com/funding/general-information)
- Chef Ann Foundation: Fruit and Veggie Grants for Schools. [www.chefannfoundation.org/get-involved/our-grants](http://www.chefannfoundation.org/get-involved/our-grants)
- National Farm to School Network: Funding Farm to School Fact Sheet. [www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/funding-farm-to-school](http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/funding-farm-to-school)
- National Farm to School Network Publishes Funding Ideas in their News Section. [www.farmtoschool.org/news-and-articles](http://www.farmtoschool.org/news-and-articles)
- Collective School Garden Network: Grants List. [www.csgn.org/grants](http://www.csgn.org/grants)

## Appendix H: Additional Farm to Cafeteria Resources

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For specific questions about Farm to Cafeteria opportunities in your area of Montana, contact Farm to Cafeteria Network at NCAT at [info@ncat.org](mailto:info@ncat.org) or by calling (406) 494-4572. You can also visit our website at <https://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org>, which has additional Montana resources for each of the stakeholder groups listed below.

### General

**Bringing Local Food to Local Institutions.** 2003; updated 2013. ATTRA. This publication gives an overview of models of Farm to Cafeteria, considerations for producers and food buyers, and provides several case studies of successful Farm to Cafeteria programs across the country. [www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org)

**Farm to Cafeteria Connections: Marketing Opportunities for Small Farms in Washington.** Kelli Sanger and Leslie Zenz. 2004. An in-depth manual broken down by producer, food service and parent/community organization. <http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/docs/102-FarmToCafeteriaConnections-Web.pdf>

**Food Hub Knowledge Base.** This website has links to videos, publications, and other tools relevant for institutions involved in Farm to Hospital and Farm to School.

<http://food-hub.org/knowledgebase>

**A Guide to Developing a Sustainable Food Purchasing Policy.** Developed by the Food Alliance, this guide is geared toward colleges/universities, hospitals, and other institutions and gives step-by-step instructions and considerations for creating a food purchasing policy around local foods. <http://food-hub.org/files/resources/SustainableFoodPolicyGuide.pdf>

**National Good Food Network Webinars.** This archive of webinars covers a host of topics, many of which are relevant for producers, food buyers, and community members alike.

<http://ngfn.org/resources/ngfn-cluster-calls>

**Produce Safety Alliance.** <https://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu>

**USDA GAP/GHP.** [www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp)

## Schools

**Montana Farm to School** provides guidance and resources for farm to school programs. See the “Resources” tab for information on purchasing local food, conducting farm to school educational activities, school garden information, and more.

[www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool](http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool)

**National Farm to School Network** offers a wealth of resources and information.

[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)

**Farm to School Benefits Fact Sheet,** National Farm to School Network

[www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/the-benefits-of-farm-to-school](http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/the-benefits-of-farm-to-school)

**USDA Farm to School** program features grant information, the USDA Farm to School Census, fact sheets, and other resources. [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school)

**Building Community Gardens.** Developed by Alternative Energy Resources Organization.

[http://aeromt.org/PDFs/AERO\\_Garden\\_Manual.pdf](http://aeromt.org/PDFs/AERO_Garden_Manual.pdf)

## Colleges

**Yale’s Sustainable Food Purchasing Guide,** First Edition. Provides facts on specific food groups, clarification of certifications/titles, and general first steps to getting started.

[www.yale.edu/sustainablefood/purchasing\\_guide\\_002.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/sustainablefood/purchasing_guide_002.pdf)

**Real Food Challenge Resources.** This national organization and campaign focuses on getting colleges on board with “real food” that is locally grown and/or fair trade. Real Food Challenge provides tools such as trainings, a “real food calculator” app, and a campus commitment that university presidents can sign. [www.realfoodchallenge.org](http://www.realfoodchallenge.org)

## Healthcare

**Healthy Food in HealthCare** is a program of Healthcare Without Harm that harnesses the purchasing power and expertise of the health care sector to advance the development of a sustainable food system. HFHC coordinates the Healthier Food Challenge of the Healthier Hospitals Initiative (HHI). [www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org](http://www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org)

**Business Alliance for Local Living Economies** offers a guide called *The Future of Health is Local*, giving health care providers actionable tools and examples on how to align the non-clinical assets of their organizations with local economic development strategies to improve human health and revitalize local communities.

<https://bealocalist.org/field-guide-future-health-local>

**Farm to Cafeteria Network** offers resources on our Farm to Healthcare page.

<https://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org/farm-to-healthcare>

## Producers

**ATTRA's Local & Regional Food Systems Resources.** ATTRA, the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, has several publications and resources available for producers interested in diversifying their market. [https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/local\\_food](https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/local_food)

**Selling to Institutions: An Iowa Farmer's Guide.** Robert Luedeman and Neil D. Hamilton. 2003. A comprehensive "how to" for producers in Iowa and beyond.

[www.statefoodpolicy.org/docs/selling.pdf](http://www.statefoodpolicy.org/docs/selling.pdf)

**National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.** NSAC and our members work with farmers and farm and food enterprises of many shapes and sizes that are committed to providing the safest food possible in a manner that is economically viable, environmentally sound, and equitably accessed. <http://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/issues/food-safety>





Since 1976, the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) has been helping people by championing small-scale, local and sustainable solutions to reduce poverty, promote healthy communities and protect natural resources. Headquartered in Butte, Montana since 1976, NCAT has offices in seven states and operates dozens of programs that promote sustainable agriculture and renewable energy. More information about its programs and services is available at [www.ncat.org](http://www.ncat.org) or call 1-800-ASKNCAT.



Farm to Cafeteria Network is a group of Montana food producers, processors, food service professionals, and community members who collaborate to share best practices and develop resources about Farm to Cafeteria programs with the goal of increasing local food in institutions. A program of NCAT, Farm to Cafeteria Network was created in 2009 as the result of ideas and expertise from the statewide food policy coalition, Grow Montana. Learn more at [www.farmtocafeteria.ncat.org](http://www.farmtocafeteria.ncat.org)



Montana Team Nutrition Program works in close collaboration with Montana Office of Public Instruction's School Nutrition Programs and is housed at Montana State University. [www.montana.edu/teamnutrition](http://www.montana.edu/teamnutrition)



The Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) is a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to solutions that promote resource conservation and local economic vitality in Montana. Since 1974 AERO's programming has been nurturing individual and community self-reliance through programs that support sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and environmental quality. [www.aeromt.org](http://www.aeromt.org)