Helping Schools Buy Local

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Objectives
At the end of this session, participants will be able to:
1. Identify state and federal purchasing regulations regarding Farm to School programs
2. Identify food safety best practices for procurement and handling of fresh produce
3. Explain rationale of fresh produce food safety best practices
4. Provide input to district decision-makers about school gardens.

State Guidance for Food Services
• Food Code 2005 - Term of “Approved Suppliers”
• Attention to potentially hazardous foods/TCS
• Recognition all foods potential concern
• Which ingredients are concern?

Specified Regulations
Restrictions for some products (most PHF) that require license and inspection at state level:
- fresh shell eggs
- processed foods
- meats and poultry
- dairy
- some fresh produce

Reported FBI Outbreaks*
- E. coli 0157:H7: Spinach, hamburgers, apple cider, alfalfa sprouts, lettuce, coleslaw
- Salmonella: bean sprouts, cantaloupes, tomatoes, poultry, eggs
- Hepatitis A: lettuce, green onions
- Cryptosporidium: water, apple cider, onions

Iowa Procurement Regulations*
• Food purchased from an approved supplier
  – Sellers’ implied warranty that food is safe.
• Packaging must protect integrity of food and be approved food contact material.
• Most fresh produce is NOT considered a Potentially Hazardous Food Item
• No license is required by the vendor to sell most whole, unprocessed or minimally trimmed fresh produce
  – Distinction between food service and food processing

* Source: CDC
* Food Code 2005
Local Procurement in Child Nutrition Programs---Basics

Why regulations are in place

• Regulations require SFAs to comply with a host of requirements, many of which pertain to purchasing goods or services with Federal funds received in the School Nutrition Programs.

• Procurement regulations are in place to ensure that Federal Funds, when used to purchase products or services, result in the best and most responsive product at the lowest possible price.

Why is it so important?

• Many stakeholders have an interest in how procurements with Federal Funds are made.

• Ongoing public and congressional interest in effective use of Federal funds.

• Congress wants to achieve two goals:
  • Make sure that Program benefits are widely available to eligible schools and children.
  • Make sure that benefits are used effectively and efficiently without waste or abuse.

Importance cont’d.

• USDA requires that all purchases made by local school officials, whether funded wholly or in part with School Nutrition Program funds, are conducted in accordance with all Federal procurement requirements.

Where to begin

• Establish sound competitive practices:
  • A good procurement is a competitive procurement.
  • Free and open competition means that all suppliers are “playing on a level playing field and have the same opportunity to compete.
  • Procurement procedures may never unduly restrict or eliminate competition.
Why is competition important?

- Price
- Quality

Appropriate methods for Procuring goods and services

- Informal Procurement - below threshold
  - Small Purchase

- Formal Procurement - above threshold
  - Competitive Sealed Bidding
  - Competitive Negotiation

When to Use Informal

- According to Federal regulation, when the value is under $100,000, informal procurement can be used
- If there is a local threshold which has been established that is lower, then there is a lower threshold for formal purchasing
- What is your threshold?

How does Informal process work?

- Must still be conducted in a manner that maximizes full and open competition
- Recommended that SFAs put the number, quality and type of product in writing and an appropriate specification
- Recommended that at least three sources be contacted
  - Eligible
  - Able
  - Willing to provide product

What procedures must be followed?

- Specifications encourage written
  - Clarifies what you want
  - Provides consistency from supplier to supplier
  - When you expect delivery
  - Pack size
- Sources
  - Fruits and Vegetables Galore
  - Choice Plus
  - First Choice
- May be done by using the weekly case price from the Chicago produce market and then bidding on delivery charges

Procedures cont.

- Suppliers must bid on the same thing so that you can evaluate
- May be done by phone
- Document the process and the award, for example:
  - Hagerty Apple Orchard bid $25 per 120 case of Jonathans
  - Mobley Orchard bid $24.50 per 120 case of Jonathans
  - Crispy Orchard bid $24.50 per 120 case of Jonathans
What else to consider?

- Geographic Preference
- Even if there are state or local laws for geographic preference, they are prohibited in Federal procurements (procurements using Federal funds)
- 2008 Farm Bill amended the National School Lunch Act to allow institutions receiving funds through the CNP to apply a geographic preference when procuring unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products

What if Procurement exceeds the threshold?

Formal procurement must be conducted!

What do I need to do next?

- Find out if there is a local procurement threshold and what it is
- Determine what local products you might want to purchase
- Prepare specifications
- Locate potential suppliers
- Stay current with memos

Food Safety Concerns Fresh Produce

- Recent outbreaks fresh produce – not all PHF
- Need to wash whole product prior to service
- Presence of pathogens is likely
- Fresh produce won’t get heat treated - no kill step
- Lower risk due to acidity and lack of protein
- Pathogens from environmental or human sources can contaminate
- Ex: Norovirus, E. Coli 0157:H7 & Hepatitis A
- GAPS are important!

http://www.gaps.cornell.edu
http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu

DECA, October 2007
Contamination from Microbial Pathogens Can Occur ...

- In fields or orchards
- During harvesting and transport
- During processing or packing
- In distribution and marketing
- In restaurants and food service facilities
- In the home

FARM to FORK

Direct/Indirect Contamination From Environmental factors

Wild and Domestic Animals
- Livestock (cattle, swine, poultry, horse, & sheep
- Dogs and Cats
- Birds
- Rodents
- Deer
- Flies/insects
- Humans

Environmental Sources of Pathogenic Microorganisms

- Soil and water
- Plants and plant products
- Air and dust
- Insects and birds
- Compost
- Containers for harvesting produce
- Packing materials

Human Sources Contamination

Workers’
- Health - ill with transferable disease
- Practices – poor handwashing, cleaning
- Training – do they know?
- Tools – proper tools and supplies provided

Hand Drying Supplies?

Fingers after touching apron

The Apron

Fresh Produce Growers and Packers ARE Food Handlers!!
**Best Practice: Purchasing & Receiving**

Conduct due diligence, ask about:
- GAPs
- Water supply (stealth ingredient)
- Irrigation practices
- Testing program for water
- Packing procedures and materials,
- Health and hygiene of your employees
- Transportation practices
- Insurance Liability

* From GAPs PP on www.iastatelocalfoods.org

**PM 2046 A - Checklist**

**Best Practice: Handling**

- Product is yours once it is received
- Need to protect from:
  - Poor personal hygiene practices
  - Contamination
  - Cross contamination
  - Time and temperature abuse

*Remember, no kill step*

**Best Practice: Handling Steps**

1. Wash hands and don new gloves - bare-hand contact is prohibited RTE foods
2. Wash product under cool running water, use some abrasion if appropriate
   - clean vegetable brush
   - produce rinses are not necessary
3. Let product drain well - *excess moisture may provide water source for bacterial growth*
4. Keep cool, but not too cool - *watch location in refrigerator*

**Guidance: PM 2046**

**Foodservice Issues**

*(NE FFI F2S survey and past ISU research)*

- Clarification of regulations - inspectors, buyers, administrators
- Sources of product
- Quality and Quantity
- Producer awareness of needs
- Trust product delivered when/amounts ordered.
- Product is safe - often at risk groups served
- Costs - adjustments needed to maintain food cost %

*Strohbehn and Gregoire*
# Farm to Foodservice: Making Connections

- Challenge is communicate via supply chain.
- Fewer links in food chain with local foods
- Foodservices provide some education/direction to producers of needs
- Schools specify local and added value
- Producers/suppliers need to know their market and understand how product will be used
  - List of products when in season
  - Summary of location and production practices
  - Promotion materials

# Understanding Added Value of F2S

- Known source
- Production practices
- Education
- Promotion

# Resources - ISUE

- [www.iastatelocalfoods.org](http://www.iastatelocalfoods.org)
- Extension Publications
  - Local Food Connections Series (PM 1853 a-e)
  - On Farm Food Safety Series (PM 1974 a-c)
- Presentations SafeFood® Handling on Farm
- Online Calculator
- Market Maker (search tool Value Added Ag)
- Extension Publications available at
  - Enter PM number in search box
  - Downloadable copies available

# An Educational Tool: School Gardens

- A district-sponsored learning environment
- Typically on school property
- Involvement of students, staff, and community
- Usually project-driven for curriculum unit
- Products can include flowers, shrubs, trees, fruits and/or vegetables

The Edible Schoolyard is a non-profit program located MLK Jr. Middle School in Berkeley, California

# School Gardens

- Gardens are integrated into educational curriculum to teach children science, history, environment, economics, nutrition, food safety, geography, and math.
- Some grow food for meals program with separate production garden.
- Edible Schoolyard Kitchen Lessons - 90-minute class in which students prepare and taste products made from garden ingredients
School Garden Considerations

- Composting if Organic
- Organizing People
- Garden design
- Use of Fertilizers and Pesticides - conventional
- Garden Care
- Theft and Vandalism
- Liability
- Resources
- Produce or Harvest

Internet Resources

- California School Garden Network – http://www.csgn.org
- KidsGardening! – http://www.kidsgardening.com
- School Garden Network – http://www.schoolgardens.org
- School Garden Wizard – http://schoolgardenwizard.org