

# Geographic Preference When Purchasing Local

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**Regulatory Authority:** [SP 22-2024](#), [SP 24-2024](#); 7 CFR 210.21(g)(1), 220.16(f)(1)

**Response Required:** No

**Attention:** Superintendents, Child Nutrition Directors and Managers

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The purpose of this memo is to provide information regarding Geographic Preference. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published final rule titled, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). The final rule expands the geographic preference option to allow schools food authorities (SFAs) to use “local” as a procurement specification for unprocessed agricultural products.

SFAs may now use local (e.g., “locally grown”, “locally raised”, or “locally caught”) as a specification for local unprocessed agricultural products purchased for school program meals, snacks, and milk.

SFAs can require that an unprocessed agricultural product be locally grown, raised, or caught to meet the solicitation requirements and remove products or bids that do not meet this standard from consideration. SFAs may also continue to apply a geographic preference through additional points or credit during evaluation for local unprocessed agricultural products. This is called a “defined scoring advantage,” to help differentiate between the geographic preference implementation strategies. When conducting procurement SFAs may use geographic preference as a specification, as a defined scoring advantage, or a combination of both if they choose.

As a reminder, in accordance with Federal procurement regulations at 2 CFR 200.319, SFAs must ensure full and open competition when procuring goods by planning solicitations that ensure an appropriate number of qualified vendors are eligible to compete for the contract. Market research can help determine whether an adequate supply of local products exists in the marketplace before applying local as a specification and/or applying a defined scoring advantage to one or more local unprocessed agricultural products. Market research on unprocessed local agricultural products may include a range of activities such as visiting local farmers’ markets, participating in local food vendor fairs, or issuing Requests for Information (RFIs), which are requests made by institutions for vendors to share information about the products and services they provide. Whether or not competition is adequately full and open is determined by the SFA and reviewed by the child nutrition unit and legislative audit.

Additional information and resources surrounding local can be found [The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program website](#) and [The Arkansas Farm to School website](#).

If you have any questions, please contact your Area Specialist at 501-324-9502.