

Subject: Please fund local food purchasing initiative

Thank you for your support for local food purchasing in schools. I am writing to ask you to continue funding for the Local Purchasing Incentive.

Over the past two decades i have been providing locally grown blueberries , fresh and frozen to all facets of our northeast kingdom community. Though the local schools have expressed interest in the main their ordering happens in April for the entire school year. Any and all incentives towards bringing more local food into the institutional purchasing that our schools do will benefit this farm as well as my neighbors farms which offer a relatively complete palette of meat , dairy, fruit, and vegetables.

Thank you for considering the request.

sincerely,

George McKenzie
Albany Vermont

Dear Senate Agriculture Committee,

Thank you for your support for local food purchasing in schools. I am writing to ask you to continue funding for the Local Purchasing Incentive.

When I can sell directly to a school or to schools through local distributors, it helps my farm business by having one more contact point in the community. Our maple syrup is more than an ingredient in the schools menu. It is a piece of cultural heritage that along with beef and cheese and vegetables from other local farmers helps to show the kids that there is a community of people other than their parents and teachers that care about them and there well being. In addition it shows them that there is more to food than boxed macaroni and cheese and tater tots. Many farmers in our district including myself are willing to and do go into the schools and talk about what type of agriculture they are passionate about.

Being able to continue to sell to our local schools during the pandemic has been very helpful to our farm business as it has kept the cash flow working, not to mention the good advertising. My kids friends and their parents are always telling me how good they think our syrup is. That feels good!

Thank you for considering the request.

Sincerely,
Reid Richardson
Richardson Family Farm
Hartland, VT

Dear Senate Agriculture Committee,

Thank you for your support for local food purchasing in schools! I am writing to ask you to please continue funding for the Local Purchasing Incentive.

When we can sell directly to a school or to schools through local distributors, it helps our farm business, as well our local distribution partners, increase revenue as well as gain visibility in our regional communities.

We grow highly nutritious sunflower greens that kids love to see on their plates. Starting a farm business immediately prior to the onset of COVID-19 was challenging, as many of our customers are restaurants that shut down. Institutions like schools are key customers we want to work with this year onward as the farm grows because of the important population they feed - our communities' children - as well as the quantity of product they would need. Budget constraints have proven to be the biggest hurdle for schools who desire to purchase our greens, and this Local Purchasing Incentive would enable them to serve these nutritious greens to students, creating healthier meals for our children and boosting our local economy.

Thank you for considering the request.

Well wishes,
James Mayer
Grateful Greens Vermont
Brattleboro, Vermont

Dear Senate Agriculture Committee,

Thank you for your support for local food purchasing in schools. I am writing to ask you to continue funding for the Local Purchasing Incentive.

When I can sell directly to a school or to schools through local distributors, it helps my farm business connect with our local community and build long term relationships. The school system genuinely wants to support their local farms, but oftentimes there are just too many things preventing them from making it a regular occurrence. In our experience with selling to local schools, the students get excited to know that the beef that they're eating in their sloppy joe came from the farm down the road, or the apples they're eating on the side come from an orchard that they can go visit with their parents. The younger generation is the farthest removed from the farm of any generation so far and often make very little connection between the food that they eat, where it came from and how it was grown/raised. Keeping local food in our school system will help our kids to be mindful of what food they eat, where they buy it from and will hopefully be more likely to support their local farmers in the future. This will not only help our local farms, but will also keep money in our communities to help our rural economy.

Thank you for considering the request.

Sincerely,
Guy, Beth, Matt Choiniere
Choiniere Family Farm