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# Local Food Purchasing at Michigan Schools

2022-2023 SURVEY RESULTS



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Center for  
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# Acknowledgements

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For more information about Michigan Farm to School, visit [mifarmtoschool.msu.edu](http://mifarmtoschool.msu.edu). To learn more about 10 Cents a Meal, visit [tencentsmichigan.org](http://tencentsmichigan.org) or [canr.msu.edu/10-cents-a-meal](http://canr.msu.edu/10-cents-a-meal). Contact Megan McManus, Farm to Institution Specialist, at [mcmanu60@msu.edu](mailto:mcmanu60@msu.edu) for more information.

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## PHOTO CREDITS

All photos are from MSU Center for Regional Food Systems' photo library.

# Introduction

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**Since the 2014–2015 school year, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has been tracking local food purchasing activity through school-based child nutrition programs.**

In Michigan, MDE administers the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs, and all schools or school districts seeking to participate in School Nutrition Programs (SNP) must submit an electronic application through MDE’s online platform called NEXSYS.<sup>1</sup>

**Within the electronic application, Michigan school food service directors (FSDs) are asked the following two optional questions:**

**1** “Do you currently purchase local foods for your school meals? Local foods are foods that are grown, raised or processed in Michigan.”

↳ **2** If yes, then “please check from which sources you purchase local foods” from the options listed below (in order):

- Department of Defense (DoD), USDA Foods Program (USDA) and/or Unprocessed Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program (UFV Pilot) utilizing USDA entitlement dollars
- Broadline distributor (such as Gordon Food Service, Sysco, Van Eerden, and US Foods)
- Local grocery store
- Farmers market
- Farmer cooperative
- Food hub
- Farm direct

<sup>1</sup> In previous years, all SNP applicants used the Michigan Electronic Grant System Plus.

**This summary describes the results of these optional questions about local food purchasing from the 2022–2023 school year (SY2022–2023) SNPs application.**

Additionally, the results for all SNP applicants are compared by types of food service programs—self-operated, contracted, and vended—and to those of grantees participating in 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan’s Kids and Farms (10 Cents a Meal). 10 Cents a Meal is a state-funded program that matches what participating schools and other non-school sponsors spend on Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans with grants of up to 10 cents per meal. Since 10 Cents a Meal school/district grantees are provided with incentive funding for purchasing these foods for their food programs that serve children, this comparison has been of interest to understand if participation reveals differences in local food purchasing.

**LIMITATIONS**

Out of 765 responses, there were 33 FSDs who did not respond to the question about purchasing local foods. Of these FSDs, six did respond to the optional questions about sources for local foods, but their responses were excluded in this analysis. For reporting purposes, all 33 FSDs were categorized as responding “no,” or does not buy local food. Additionally, there were 124 FSDs that responded “no” to the first question. For this report, 157 FSDs were categorized as not purchasing local foods.

Overall, 28% (215 of 765) of schools/districts were grantees in the 10 Cents a Meal program in SY2021–2022. Among these, nine FSDs did not respond affirmatively to the first question about local food purchasing even though some responded affirmatively to following questions about sources for local foods. For consistency, the programs that provided responses about sources of local foods without answering the first question were also regarded as responding “no,” or does not buy local food.

# Reported Local Food Purchasing

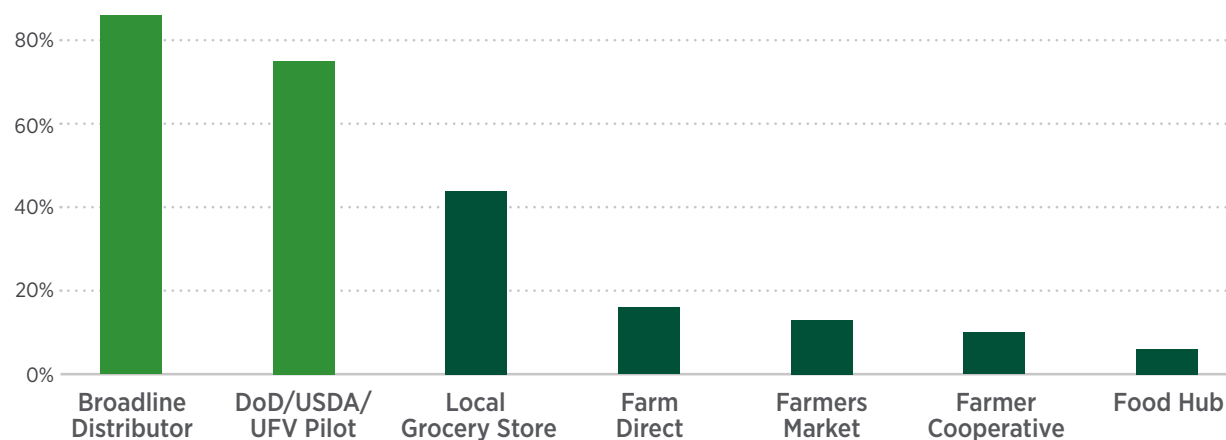


**For SY2022–2023, 765 applications for SNPs including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) were submitted through the electronic application.**

Of the FSDs representing those programs, 79% (608 of 765) responded affirmatively that they purchased local foods for their school food programs. Figure 1 shows the percentages of different sources of local foods used by these 608 FSDs, as reported through survey responses. Broadline distributors (86%) were the most common sources for local foods followed by the DoD/USDA/UFV Pilot programs (75%). The least common sources for local food were food hubs (6%) and farmer cooperatives (10%).

## Figure 1. Percentage of School FSDs Reporting Purchases from Local Food Sources

SY2022-2023



Note:  $n = 608$ ; figure represents percentage of applicants who reported purchasing local foods.

Table 1 displays the total number and percentage of FSDs who reported purchasing local food from each source, with results from SY2020-2021, SY2017-2018, and SY2014-2015 included for comparison over time. (See Appendix for a chart showing survey results from all previous years.)

### Table 1. Local Food Purchasing Survey Result

SY2014-2015, SY2017-2018, SY2020-2021, and SY2022-2023

Response	SY2022-2023		SY2020-2021		SY2017-2018		SY2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Purchase local foods</b>								
— Yes	608	79	510	60	537	60	470	54
<b>Local food source</b>								
— Broadline distributor	521	86	426	84	428	80	378	80
— DoD/USDA/UFV Pilot	453	75	350	69	340	63	272	58
— Local grocery store	259	43	145	28	170	32	161	34
— Farm direct	95	16	71	14	98	18	67	14
— Farmers market <sup>a</sup>	77	13	43	8	66	12	—	—
— Farmer cooperative	63	10	46	9	48	9	24	5
— Food hub	34	6	30	6	37	7	13	3

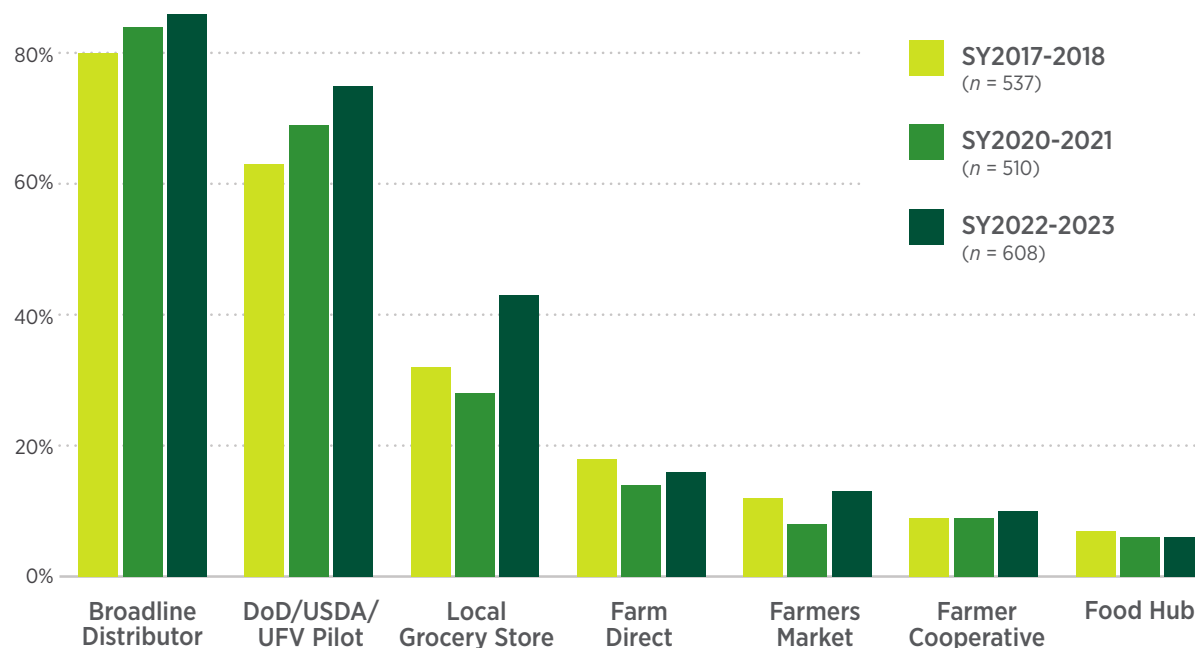
Note:  $N = 765$  for SY 2022-2023,  $N = 856$  for SY2020-2021,  $N = 888$  for SY2017-2018,  $N = 878$  for SY2014-2015

<sup>a</sup> Prior to 2017, farmers markets were included in the response with "local grocery store." Starting in 2017, farmers markets were listed as a distinct category.

Figure 2 displays results from the applicants' selections of local food sources in SY2022–2023, along with results from the previous two years (SY2020–2021 and SY2017–2018) for comparison. The percentages of different sources are only from the responses of FSDs that stated yes to purchasing local foods.

**Figure 2. Reported Sources for Local Foods**

SY2017–2018, SY2020–2021, and SY2022–2023



Note: Figure represents percentage of applicants who first responded yes to purchasing local foods.

Since these optional questions were added to the application in 2014, more than 50% of applicants reported purchasing local foods every year. Results from this year's survey (SY2022–2023) had the highest percentage ever of applicants reporting that they purchased local foods (79% of the 765 FSDs), almost 20% more than the previous survey in SY2021–2022 (60% of the 843 FSDs). It should be noted that this year was also the lowest number of applicants since 2014, with only 765 FSDs applying for SNPs and completing the optional survey questions compared to 843 in the SY2021–2022 year. One reason for this reduced number of applicants could be due to several school districts working together through alternate agreements and combined food service programs that year.



Of FSDs who reported purchasing local foods, broadline distributors remained the most frequently reported source of local foods across all years (86% for SY2022–2023). Sources of local foods that were the highest compared to any other year included DoD/USDA/UFV Pilot (75%), local grocery stores (43%), and farmers markets (13%). These results show the continued and prevalent use of broadline distributors and federal programs (DOD, USDA, and UFV Pilot) as local food sources, although other channels such as local grocery stores are becoming more commonly used.

## TYPES OF FOOD SERVICE PROGRAMS

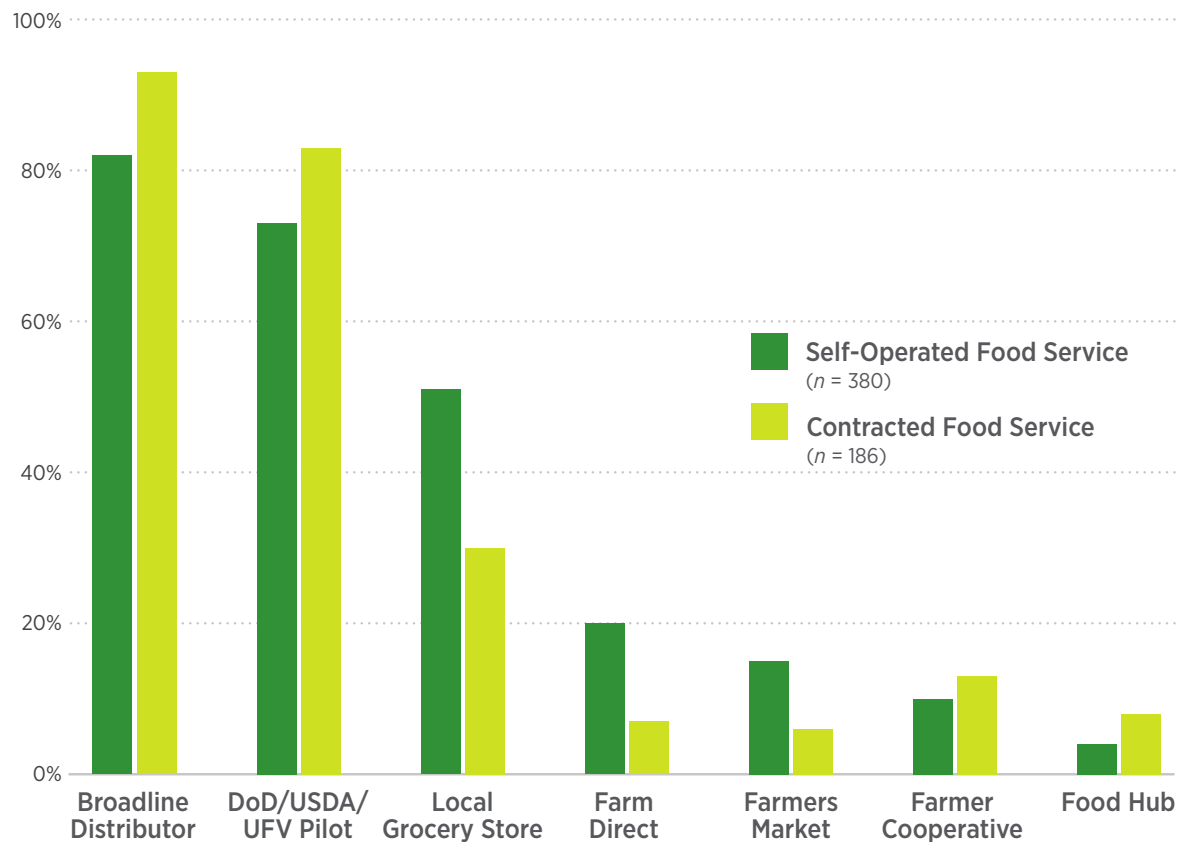
We looked at responses by three different types of food service programs: self-operated, contracted, and vended. For all FSDs who submitted applications for SNPs:



The majority of FSDs reported purchasing local foods from self-operated (80%, 380 of 477) and contracted food service programs (89%, 186 of 210). For this school year, the percentage of contracted food service programs purchasing local foods was higher compared to self-operated food service programs. Figure 3 shows the percentage of local food sources for each food service type by FSDs who reported purchasing local foods. Note that the sample size for vended meal programs was not large enough to be included in our analysis.

**Figure 3. Comparison of Reported Local Food Sources for Self-Operated Food Service and Contracted Food Service**

SY2022-2023



Note: Figures represent percentage of applicants who first responded “yes” to purchasing local foods. The sample size for vended meal programs was not large enough to be included here.

Although FSDs with contracted food service programs source from a slightly higher percentage of broadline and federal suppliers (DoD/USDA/UFV Pilot), FSDs report sourcing local foods from grocery stores (30% vs. 51%) and direct from farmers (7% vs. 20%) much less than FSDs with self-operated programs. These differences in local food sourcing among food service types could be due to limitations among FSDs from contracted food service programs to purchase food only from allowable or “approved” food vendors. Alternatively, the flexibility in potential vendors, including farmers, for self-operated programs may lead to a greater variety of sources being used by these FSDs.

## 10 CENTS A MEAL FOOD SERVICE DIRECTORS

We also compared the responses of FSDs that responded yes to purchasing local foods with all SNP applicants and the group of applicants that participated in the 10 Cents a Meal program in SY2021–2022, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Results from All Applicants (SY2022–2023) Compared to FSDs Participating in 10 Cents a Meal (SY2021–2022)**

Response	All SNP Applicants SY2022-2023		10 Cents a Meal Grantees SY2021-2022	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Purchase local foods</b>				
— Yes	<b>608</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Local food source</b>				
— Broadline distributor	521	86	188	91
— DoD/USDA/UFV Pilot	453	75	171	83
— Local grocery store	259	43	85	41
— Farm direct	95	16	60	29
— Farmers market	77	13	38	18
— Farmer cooperative	63	10	49	24
— Food hub	34	6	23	11

Note: *N* = 765 for SY 2022-2023, *N* = 215 for 10 Cents a Meal Grantees SY2021-2022

Compared to 79% of all NSLP applicants reporting that they purchased local foods, 96% of 10 Cents a Meal FSDs responded affirmatively that they purchased local food. Given that the purpose of the 10 Cents a Meal program is to provide an incentive to purchase Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans, a near 100% affirmative rate to buying local foods should be expected.<sup>2</sup>

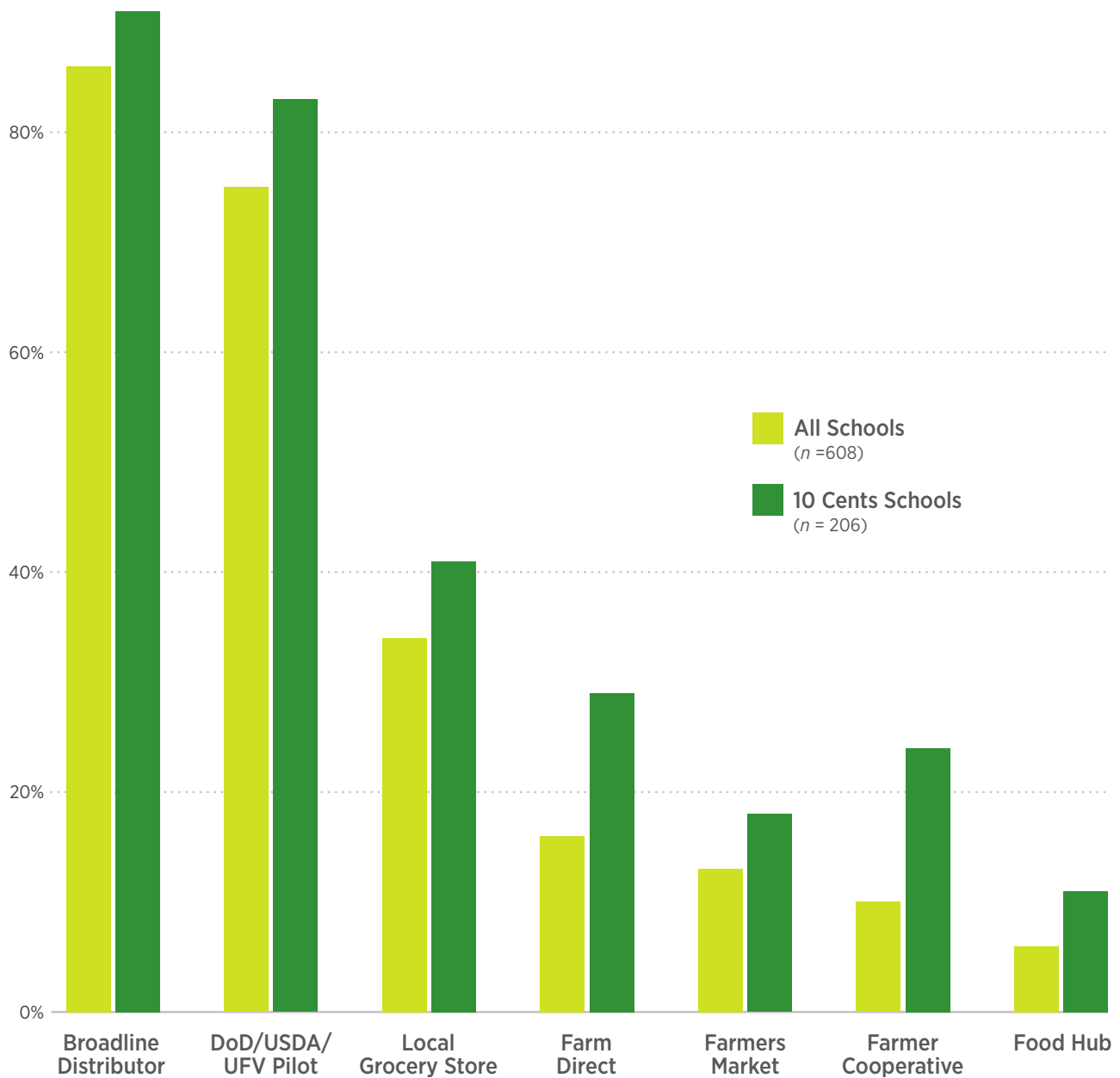
When we looked at the type of food service operations, it appears that more than half of 10 Cents a Meal FSDs (58%) have self-operated food service programs. As mentioned above, this type of food service operation could allow grantees to have more flexibility in choosing sources for local foods. 10 Cents a Meal FSDs reported sourcing local foods at a higher percentage for every local food source than the group of all FSDs. The sources with the greatest differences included farmer cooperatives (24% of 10 Cents a Meal

<sup>2</sup> See limitations section for more explanation regarding the 4% of 10 Cents FSDs who did not respond affirmatively.



grantees vs. 10% all FSDs), farm direct (29% vs. 16%), farmers markets (18% vs. 13%), and food hubs (11% vs. 6%). Figure 4 shows the comparison of reported local food purchasing from each source between all FSDs and 10 Cents a Meal FSDs that stated “yes” to purchasing local foods.

**Figure 4. Comparison of Reported Local Food Sources, All FSDs (SY2022-2023) to 10 Cents a Meal Participating Applicants (SY2021-2022)**



Note: Figure represents percentage of applicants who reported purchasing local foods.

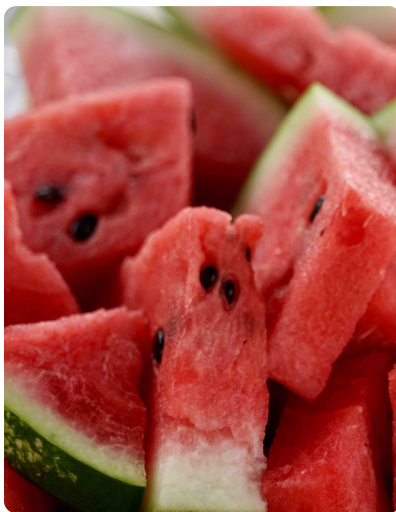
# Conclusion

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**The inclusion of optional questions in the NSLP application through the electronic application for SNPs has allowed us to observe local food purchasing trends in Michigan’s school food service programs over time.**

Despite ongoing pandemic-related disruptions to the food supply chain as well as to the labor force, reports from FSDs showed that local foods are still being purchased by food service programs across the state. The SY2022–2023 results showed that 79% of the responding FSDs reported purchasing local foods. This is the highest percentage across all years of conducting this optional survey, although there were also fewer FSDs across the state. Broadline distributors and federal food sources remain the most frequently reported sources of local foods but reports of other sources continue to increase.

Through these survey results, we can also look at these findings among different types of food service programs and within the 10 Cents a Meal program. Although the percentage of contracted food service programs purchasing local foods was higher compared to self-operated food service programs, there was a greater variety in local food sources used among self-operated programs. As expected, more 10 Cents a Meal FSDs reported purchasing local foods than all FSDs and reported using a greater variety of local food sources. These survey results, and their tracking over time, can continue to be used by farm to school practitioners and stakeholders to support local food purchasing and farm to school across the state.



# Appendix

The table displays the total number and percentage of all FSDs who reported purchasing local food from each source. These results include all previous years from SY2014–2015 through SY2022–2023 for comparison.

Response	SY2022–2023		SY2021–2022		SY2020–2021		SY2019–2020		SY2018–2019		SY2017–2018		SY2016–2017		SY2015–2016		SY2014–2015		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<b>Purchase local foods</b>																			
– Yes	608	79	508	60	510	60	505	58	487	55	537	60	457	55	446	53	470	54	
<b>Local food source</b>																			
– Broadline distributor	521	86	437	86	426	84	404	80	402	83	428	80	427	93	359	80	378	80	
– DoD/USDA/UFV Pilot	453	75	359	71	350	69	351	70	307	63	340	63	322	70	265	59	272	58	
– Local grocery store	259	43	170	33	145	28	173	34	165	34	170	32	178	39	160	36	161	34	
– Farm direct	95	16	75	15	71	14	69	14	77	16	98	18	83	1	78	17	67	14	
– Farmers market	77	13	49	10	43	8	55	11	47	10	66	12	–	–	–	–	–	–	
– Farmer cooperative	63	10	47	9	46	9	53	10	48	10	48	9	38	8	36	8	24	5	
– Food hub	34	6	29	6	30	6	29	6	39	8	37	7	28	6	22	5	13	3	

Note: *N* = 765 for SY 2022–2023, *N* = 843 for SY2021–2022, *N* = 856 for SY2020–2021, *N* = 878 for SY2019–2020, *N* = 881 for SY2018–2019, *N* = 888 for SY2017–2018, *N* = 832 for SY2016–2017, *N* = 845 for SY2015–2016, *N* = 878 for SY2014–2015

## VISION

CRFS envisions a thriving economy, equity, and sustainability for Michigan, the country, and the planet through food systems rooted in local regions and centered on Good Food: food that is healthy, green, fair, and affordable.

## MISSION

The mission of CRFS is to engage the people of Michigan, the United States, and the world in applied research, education, and outreach to develop regionally integrated, sustainable food systems.

## ABOUT

CRFS joins in Michigan State University's pioneering legacy of applied research, education, and outreach by catalyzing collaboration and fostering innovation among the diverse range of people, processes, and places involved in regional food systems. Working in local, state, national, and global spheres, CRFS' projects span from farm to fork, including production, processing, distribution, policy, and access.

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