

BID LOCAL

Local Farm Products Allowed in School Bids

Background

Since the 2002 Farm Bill, the Secretary of Agriculture has been required to encourage schools to purchase from local farmers. However, while schools could purchase from local producers, they could not specify “local”, or a geographic preference, in their bid. For example, the bid could not specify “apples grown in New York.”

With the passage of the 2008 Farm Bill, schools can now use a local preference in the bid language.

Specifically, “The Secretary shall allow schools to use a geographic preference for the procurement of unprocessed agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised.”

The 2008 Farm Bill also requires the Secretary to encourage schools to purchase unprocessed agricultural products “to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate.”

What are the “unprocessed agricultural products”?

In the conference report, where legislators write the explanation of the bill, it states: “unprocessed” items **include:** items requiring some handling and preparation, such as, washed vegetables, bagged greens, butchered livestock and poultry, pasteurized milk, and eggs. **These items may be included in the bid.**

What legislators intend to **exclude** are agricultural products that include additional non-local items. Only preservatives may be added to the local product. The Farm Bill language also allows for states to pass legislation encouraging the purchase of local products. States cannot mandate local purchasing.

The National Farm to School Network is a collaborative program of the Center for Food & Justice (CFJ), a division of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College and the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC).

www.farmtoschool.org

For more information, or a copy of bill language, please contact Marion Kalb at marion@foodsecurity.org, or 505-474-5782.

