



LOCAL FOOD PURCHASING AT MICHIGAN SCHOOLS: 2019-2020 SURVEY RESULTS

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For more information about Michigan Farm to School, visit mifarmtoschool.msu.edu or contact Colleen Matts, Farm to Institution Specialist, at matts@msu.edu.

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INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) administers the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs in Michigan. In order to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and other School Nutrition Programs (SNP), a school or school district must submit an application through an online platform called the Michigan Electronic Grant System Plus (MEGS+).

Since the 2014-2015 school year (SY2014-2015), MDE has included two optional questions in this application to survey Michigan school food service directors (FSDs) about local food purchasing. For the 2019-2020 school year (SY2019-2020) SNP application, FSDs were asked the following optional questions:

- **Do you currently purchase local foods for your school meals?** Local foods are foods that are grown, raised, or processed in Michigan.
- If yes, then please check from which sources you purchase local foods from the options listed below:
 - 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



The summary that follows outlines results from SY2019-2020 and compares them to results from previous years to show patterns over time. Survey results for all SNP applicants are also compared to those of grantees participating in the 10 Cents a Meal for School Kids and Farms (10 Cents), a state-funded pilot program that matches what schools spend on Michigan fruits, vegetables, and legumes up to 10 cents a meal. Since 10 Cents grantees are provided with incentive funding for purchasing these foods for school meals programs, the comparison of this group to all applicants was of interest to understand if engagement in the program produced different results. The 2018-2019 school year (SY2018-2019) survey results are used for the 10 Cents comparison as the program remained unfunded by the Michigan legislature in SY2019-2020 until late summer 2020.



LIMITATIONS

FSDs who purchase local foods may be more inclined to respond to these optional survey questions, so results may not be representative of all Michigan FSDs' purchasing behavior.

Twenty-nine FSDs who did not respond affirmatively to the first question proceeded to check local food sources in the second question. In tabulating results, these responses were counted as responding "no" to the first question about purchasing local foods and were therefore excluded in the count of responses for food sources.

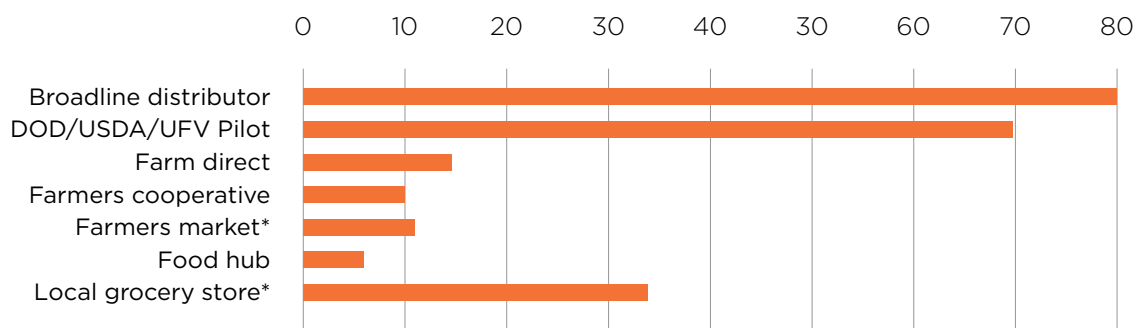
For the schools/districts participating in 10 Cents, five FSDs did not respond affirmatively to the first question and yet responded to the following question about sources for local foods. Similarly, these responses were excluded.

REPORTED LOCAL FOOD PURCHASING

For SY2019-2020, 878 SNP applications were submitted through MEGS+. **Of the FSDs who applied, 58% (505 of 878) responded affirmatively that they purchased local foods for school food programs.**

Figure 1 below shows the percentage of applicants who reported purchasing local food from each source.

Figure 1. Reported Local Food Sources, SY2019-2020



Note: N = 505; Figures represent percentage of applicants who reported purchasing local foods.

COMPARISON OF LOCAL FOOD PURCHASING TO PREVIOUS YEARS

Table 1 below displays the total number and percentage of FSDs who reported purchasing local food from each source. For comparison, the table displays results from all previous years these optional questions were asked (SY2018-2019, SY2017-2018, SY2016-2017, SY2015-2016, and SY2014-2015).

Table 1. Local Food Purchasing Survey Results, SY2014-2015 through SY2019-2020

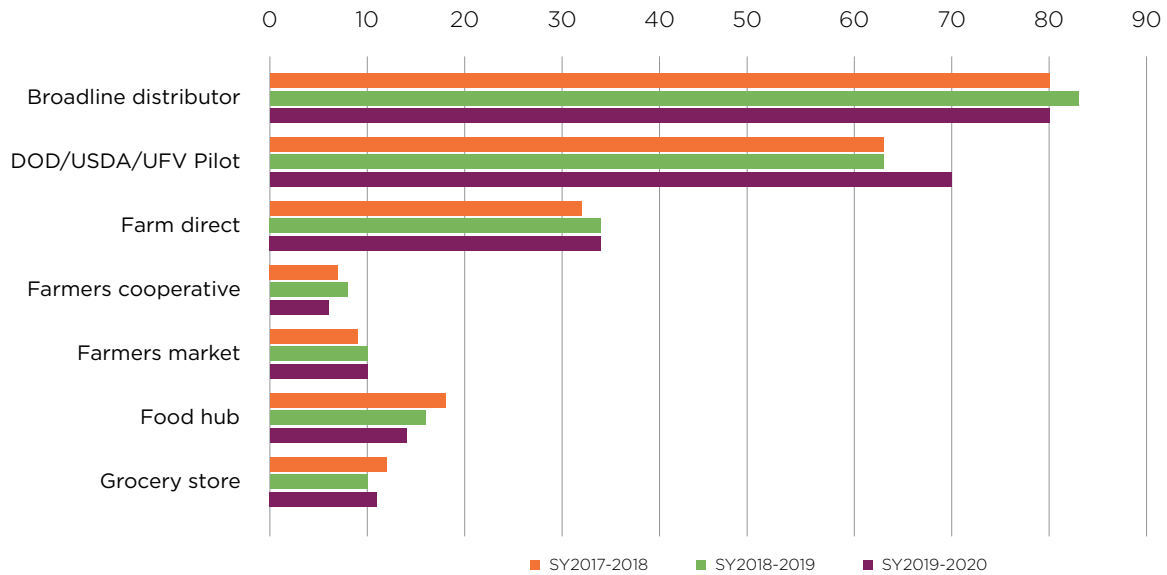
	2019-2020		2018-2019		2017-2018		2016-2017		2015-2016		2014-2015	
Total Applicants	878		881		888		832		845		878	
Yes, buy local	505	58%	487	55%	537	60%	457	55%	446	53%	470	54%
Broadline distributor	404	80%	402	83%	428	80%	427	93%	359	80%	378	80%
DOD/USDA/UFV Pilot	351	70%	307	63%	340	63%	322	70%	265	59%	272	58%
Farm direct	69	14%	77	16%	98	18%	83	18%	78	17%	67	14%
Farmer cooperative	53	10%	48	10%	48	9%	38	8%	36	8%	24	5%
Farmers market*	55	11%	47	10%	66	12%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Food hub	29	6%	39	8%	37	7%	28	6%	22	5%	13	3%
Local grocery store*	173	34%	165	34%	170	32%	178	39%	160	36%	161	34%

*Prior to 2017, farmers markets were included as part of the "local grocery store" option for local food sources. Starting In 2017, farmers markets were a distinct and separate option.

Each year since these optional questions were included in the SNP application, more than 50% of all applicants reported purchasing local foods. **The percentage of FSDs who reported purchasing local foods in SY2019-2020 — 58% — was the second highest percentage behind SY2017-2018 when 60% of FSDs reported purchasing local foods.** "Broadline distributor" has been the most frequently reported source of local foods, with at least 80% of FSDs reporting this source across all years. It is important to note that in Michigan, some food purchasing for federal programs including DOD, USDA, and UFV Pilot are routed through broadline distribution channels. Therefore, broadline distributors may be indicated more frequently as a local food source by Michigan FSDs.

Figure 2 below displays results of reported local food sources in SY2019-2020, along with results from SY2018-19 and SY2017-18 for comparison.

Figure 2. Reported Sources for Local Foods, SY2017-2018, SY2018-2019, and SY2019-2020



Note: Figures represent percentage of applicants who reported purchasing local foods.

Similar to SY2017-2018 and SY2018-2019 results, **SY2019-2020 survey responses show that broadline distributors were the most commonly reported local food source followed by the DOD/USDA/UFV Pilot programs.** Grocery stores were the third most common local food source in 2019, followed by farms, farmers markets, farmer cooperatives, and food hubs, respectively. Seven percent more FSDs indicated purchasing local food from the DOD/USDA/UFV Pilot in SY2019-2020 than in both of the previous years. Reports of sourcing direct from farms decreased by two percentage points over each of the past two survey years.



10 CENTS GRANTEES

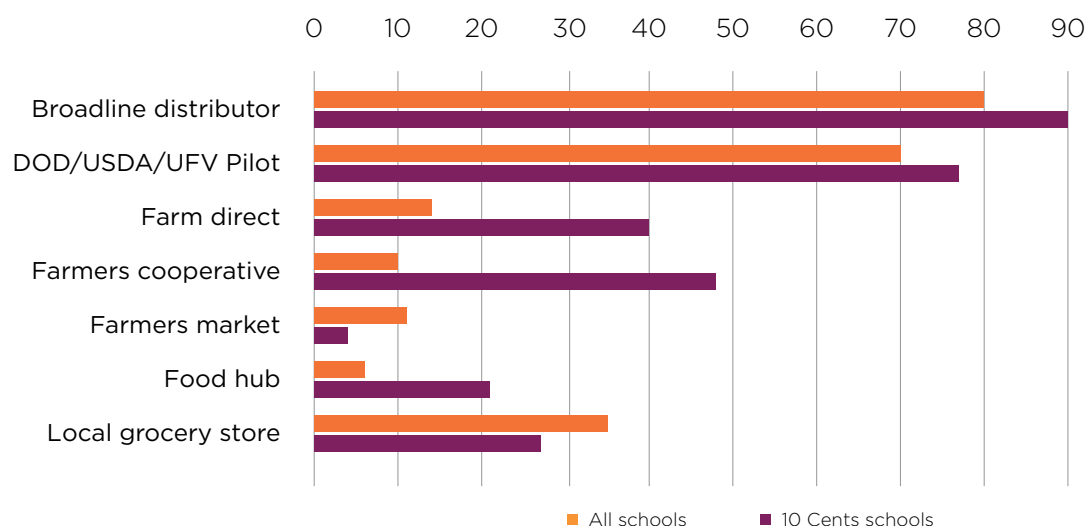
Along with comparing SY2019-2020 survey results to those of previous school years, we also compared the responses between all SNP applicants with responses of applicants who participated in the 10 Cents a Meal Pilot in SY2018-2019. Five 10 Cents participating FSDs did not respond affirmatively to the first question that they purchase local foods, so their responses were excluded from the analysis, as mentioned above. Table 2 displays the comparison of all applicants and those from 10 Cent participating schools/districts who reported that they purchase local food.

Table 2. Local Food Purchasing Survey Results, All Applicants (SY2019-2020) and 10 Cents Grantees (SY2018-2019)

	ALL SNP APPLICANTS SY2019-2020		10 CENTS GRANTEES SY2018-2019	
Total	878		57	
Yes, buy local	505	58%	52	91%
Broadline distributor	404	80%	47	90%
DOD/USDA/UFV Pilot	351	70%	40	77%
Farm direct	69	14%	22	40%
Farmer cooperative	53	10%	25	48%
Farmers market*	55	11%	2	4%
Food hub	29	6%	11	21%
Local grocery store*	173	35%	14	27%

Compared to 58% of all applicants reporting they purchased local foods in SY2019-2020, 91% of 10 Cents FSDs responded affirmatively that they purchased local foods in the previous school year. As a group, FSDs participating in 10 Cents more frequently reported purchasing from all sources except grocery stores and farmers markets. The greatest difference lies in responses about sourcing directly from farms; **40% of 10 Cents FSDs reported purchasing directly from farms, compared to only 14% of all applicants.** This indicates 10 Cents grantees are helping to meet one of the program goals of investing in Michigan agriculture. 10 Cents FSDs also may be more willing and motivated to seek out and work directly with farmers to source local foods.

Figure 3. Reported Local Food Sources, SY2019-2020



Note: Figures represent percentage of applicants who reported purchasing local foods.



CONCLUSION

In SY2019-2020, more FSDs reported purchasing local foods than in the previous year, with 58% purchasing local foods. This was the second highest percentage of FSDs reporting purchasing local foods since this optional survey began in SY2014-2015. Over that time, the three primary sources of local foods have been broadline distributors, DOD/USDA/UFV Pilot, and grocery stores. FSDs who participated in 10 Cents in SY2018-2019 more frequently reported purchasing local foods and using farms as a local food source. **Results of these optional survey questions in the SNP application allow us to explore patterns over time as well as participation within specific programs. These results can also guide local food suppliers in marketing to schools and provide stakeholders with information to continue to support the growth of farm to school in Michigan, both at local school districts and across the state.**

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CRFS recognizes that racism in the food system is historic, ongoing, and systemic. As we collaborate with partners to advance food systems rooted in local regions and centered on food that is healthy, green, fair, and affordable, we embed racial equity as a foundation of our work. Read the Racial Equity Statement of the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems to learn more. foodsystems.msu.edu/racial-equity-statement

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