

## Farm to Summer: Incorporating Local Foods into Summer Food Service Programs Webinar Transcript

Abby Harper: So welcome everybody to our webinar this afternoon. This is the fourth in our My Farm to School Spring Webinar Series, and today we'll be talking about Farm to Summer programs and how to incorporate local foods into your Summer Food Service Program. I'm really excited about the awesome presenters with me today. My name is Abby Harper. Some of you may know me. I'm the Farm to School Specialist here at the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, and I do both farm to school and farm to early care and education work throughout Michigan. On the line with me today is enie Farinas from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Midwest Region Office. She is the Farm to Summer and child care contact there. We also have Sarah Harmon from the Michigan Department of Education and then Doreen Simonds who's the food service director at Waterford Public Schools. So I'm really excited to have all of these partners on the phone to bring you our webinar today, and I think it's going to be really valuable for all of you. Before we get started, I do just want to take a quick survey of who's in the room. So you will see a poll come up on your screen there with two very brief questions. If you could answer quickly, just so that we have an idea of who all is here on the webinar with us today, and we can tailor some of the information appropriately. So we'll give you guys a couple of minutes to fill out that webinar or that poll. All right, going give just a couple more seconds to see if anyone else wants to chime in on that poll that's popped up on your screen. All right, so, it seems like most of us are fairly new to farm to school or maybe have a little bit of experience, and we've got a good, combination of summer food service providers, some schools, some supporting organizations, and other folks on, as well. So a good mix of folks. That's exciting to see so we'll definitely go into some of the introductory to Farm to Summer stuff, since there seems to be a lot of folks on who are pretty new to it. So it's great to see you all here. All right, so just to give you a quick overview of our webinar today, we'll start with a brief overview of what farm to summer is, some of those basic 101s, as well as the benefits of increasing your local purchasing in the summer. We'll then spend some time going into the how-to of implementing Farm to Summer programs, including some of the procurement regulations that relate to Farm to Summer, and then we'll end with some examples of what Farm to Summer looks like. I mentioned Doreen Simonds from Waterford Public Schools is on. She's going to take a few minutes at the end to talk about their Farm to Summer work and some of the initiatives they have going on at Waterford, which I hope will help kind of contextualize all the information that we're going to give you with how it looks on the ground, and of course, we will certainly leave plenty of time for questions at the end. A couple of logistical notes. If at any point during the webinar, you have any technical difficulties, at the top of the screen, you should see it option for opening a chat window, and you can feel free to type in any logistical questions in there, and I'd be happy to help troubleshoot them as I'm able throughout the webinar. There's also a question and answer button. You should feel



free. We're going to save plenty of time at the end for questions, but if you come up with some questions throughout, and you don't want to forget them, you can feel free to type them in that question-and-answer box, and if we aren't able to get to them throughout, we'll be sure to check back in with them at the end of the webinar, and I think that's all the logistical information. With that, I'm going to pass it off to Jenie Farinas, whose going to talk about an overview of Farm to Summer. So take it away, Jenie.

Jenie Farinas: Hi everyone. Good afternoon. I just want to thank you all for joining us on this webinar. It's really nice to talk about summer. For some reason here in Chicago, it just can't decide if it's warm or cold. So it's really great to be talking about summer. So again, my name is Jenie Farinas, and I work for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service in the Midwest Regional Office here in Chicago. So for those of you who happen to be new to USDA Summer Meal Programs, I'd like to just give a brief overview. So the USDA Summer Meal Programs are federal nutrition programs that provide free nutritious meals and snacks to children in low-income areas. So all children who are 18 years of age or younger who go to and approved summer foods service site are eligible to receive free meals. So the summer meals programs refer to all USDA meal programs that serve kids while they're out of school. So this even includes when there are unexpected school closures. So some states brand and they are summer meals programs in different ways. In Michigan, it's called Meet Up and Eat Up. So Meet Up and Eat Up is a way to help parents and caregivers identify those places where kids can gather for healthy, free summer meals. Meet Up and Eat Up sites are located all across Michigan, including schools, parks, recreation centers, and libraries. The Michigan Department of Education administers the program, and the meals are paid for by the US Department of Agriculture. The next slide please. So for those of you, again who are new to summer meals programs, these programs are really important, because they feel that nutrition gap when school is not in session, and they ensure that children who live in low-income areas continue to receive nutritious meals during those summer months. So for kids who rely on the free and reduced-price school lunches, the risk of going hungry is actually even greater in the summertime. I actually recently learned that for every child who participates in Meet Up and Eat Up in the summer, families can save an average of \$300 during those summer months. So this is money that can be used to help families with other basic needs like utilities and housing. These summer meals programs are unfortunately underutilized. Currently, only 17% of the children who participate in free and reduced-price school lunches attend Meet up and Eat up summer sites, and is mainly due to a lack of awareness. So again, the summer meals program helps children get the nutrition they need to learn, play, and grow throughout the summer months and during other long periods when they are out of school. The next slide. So you're all here to learn about Farm to Summer. So you're probably wondering what Farm to Summer, for those who have never heard of it. The Farm to Summer works to connect to summer meal providers to local food producers. In the summer, especially in Michigan, summer meal



sponsors and sites really can take advantage of the peak growing season. For those of you who may not know, Michigan is the second most agriculturally diverse state in the nation, and that's really something to be proud of. While I'm not from Michigan, I grew up in rural Indiana, and when I was a kid, we use to visit my aunt in this little town in Southwestern Michigan called Grand Junction, and there there's so many blueberry farms, and I remember seeing the blueberries growing and just eating lots and lots of blueberries, but before that, I had no idea how blueberries even grow. I have one more blueberry story. So I was in a meeting with some teachers doing Farm to School, and I remembered hearing a story about a teacher here in Chicago, and she was snacking on blueberries on her break and one of her students came up to her with this really confused look on her face, and this high school student had no idea that those little, blue, round snacks were blueberries. So I feel it's really important for all of us to learn and know where our food comes from and for all kids to have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. So now going back to what Farm to Summer is all about. So it works to serve healthy, fresh foods to children while school is out. It improves child nutrition, and it provides related educational opportunities like edible gardens and taste tests with seasonal items and farm field trips to teach children about food nutrition, where their food comes from, so this effort is working to develop lifelong healthy eating habits. Farm to Summer also contributes to USDA Food and Nutrition Service priorities. So for you summer sponsors that are on the line, Farm to Summer really helps to increase participation, and it does that by improving the quality and the appeal of both the summer meals and summer side activities. Farm to Summer also supports local and regional food systems with federal reimbursement dollars. The next slide. So I wanted to share this photo, and believe it or not, this is a summer meal, and all of it is locally sourced, and it looks really delicious, and it's making me hungry right now. So one of the focuses of USDA is improving meal quality in summer meals. So when a site is serving better quality meals, there's actually a higher retention rate of participants. So sourcing locally is one way of improving meal quality. Now I just want to let you know where this photo came from. So this is taken from a model Farm to School program in Kalispell Public Schools Montana, and here we have a local Polish hot dog on a whole-grain bun, and what the school district does is that it includes the volume of meat they need to serve for both the National School Lunch Program and the Summer Food service program into one solicitation, and Sarah Harmon, from the Department of Education, will discuss procurement a little more later on in this webinar. We also have, next to the hot dog, we've got a salad with items purchased through a CSA, that was shared with the community college. So this is also a great example of community partnerships. And the next slide. So now I'd just like to share with you some USDA Farm to Summer resources. You can really find some great resources on our USDA Farm to Summer webpage, and I have the URL down there, but in case you don't have this slide, it can be accessed through our Farm to School webpage, or just simply do a Google search for Farm to Summer, and the next page. So on this webpage, you can download our Farm to Summer Fact Sheet, and this fact sheet basically sums up how to source locally, and it includes activity ideas and information on how to increase capacity to do this kind of work, and the next slide.



So last fall, USDA put out a policy memo entitled Local Foods and Related Activities in Summer Meal Programs, and this policy memo, what it does, it clarifies that local foods can be purchased with reimbursement dollars. It also explains that reimbursement dollars can be used for inputs for your garden. So this includes items like seeds, fertilizer, watering cans, and gardening tools. Also, the food grown in the gardens at your summer site can be used in the reimbursable meals, but however, please first check with your state and local health codes. Also, just for accounting purposes, sponsors should document the weight of the produce that's been used for the reimbursable mail. This too can be found on the Farm to Summer webpage, and the next slide. So USDA has also created a comprehensive, Local Procurement Guide, and this covers everything from menu planning to evaluating bids, and there is now a new section in the procurement guide that discusses summer. So I highly recommend checking that out. And the next slide. So USDA also has a farm to school grant, and in FY 2016, the priority area for summer sites were those school-based summer sites, and there were 25 summer sites that received grants. So for 2017, these are still tentative dates, but those of you who might be interested in applying for the Farm to School Grant, requests for applications should be out in September of this year. Also, applications should be due in November, and the announcements will be made in May of 2017, and I just want to share with you some examples of Farm to School Grant recipients in Michigan. There was a school district in Pigeon, Michigan, that received a Farm to School Grant this year, and what they're doing is they're collaborating with the local hospital, local farms, and a greenhouse, and what they did, they received a planning grant. So there's different types of grants. There's ones that support service, implementation grants, planning, and training. There's also the Muskegon Public Schools. So they received a Farm to School planning grant, as well. So in addition to Farm to School Grants, there are many child nutrition and hunger relief organizations that support summer meal programs through many grants, so I highly recommend doing a search for any grants they are. You can also check with your local and state partners for potential support, and the next slide. So I know when you're first getting started, it's really helpful to connect with folks who have already been doing Farm to School work. So in 2015, USDA conducted a Farm to School Census, and on the census, you could do a search for school districts in your area, and you can locate nearby school-based summer sites, and this, you can find the Farm to School Census on our Farm to School website, as well, and this, again, might be a great way for you to find a contact in your area who can give you tips on sourcing locally and running farm-based activities, and the next slide. So in addition to all of our Farm to Summer resources, USDA also has a new activity guide for summer programs. So the USDA Team Nutrition, they've developed free educational materials designed specifically for summer meal programs. Again, these are free materials that you can get from our website, and what it's called is it's called Summer Food, Summer Moves. So Summer Food, Summer Moves, it's a free resource kit for summer meal site operators, and it includes an operator activity guide, nutritional education activities, and kid-friendly recipes. It also has posters you can hang up at your site, an activity placemat for the kids, and great educational handouts for parents. It also



includes gardening activity ideas, if you're really interested in doing a garden exercise. So the kit is designed to be used in a variety types of summer meal sites, from parks to schools and community or church-based settings, and it's available both in English and Spanish. Summer Food, Summer Moves, it's now available, and you can just order it through our Team Nutrition website, and I put the URL down there at the bottom. I also recommend checking the site out for great resources on nutrition and activities for your summer site, and the next slide. So for those of you on the line who happen to not be summer sponsors or sites, but you're interested in connecting with those summer sites, USDA has a great summer site finder tool, and you can use this to see who is nearby and if you're a producer on the line, maybe connect with them, and what you do is you just click on the find sites button on this web page and enter your address, and then blue dots will populate, and you can click on each blue dot, and it will give you contact information for the sites, and yeah, so I highly recommend checking out all of these resources. So that's all I have to share. If you have any further questions about our resources or Farm to Summer, I'll still be on the line at the end of this webinar. So thank you, and I'll turn it over to Sarah Harmon from the Michigan Department of Education.

Sarah Harmon: Take advantage of the peak growing season. It exposes children to a variety of products that may not be available during the school year. Participants can continue to utilize and enjoy school gardens while school is out. Schools can taste test new items and recipes for use during the school year for the School Practice Program for the National School Lunch Program or maybe other summer programs available. Schools can also develop consistent, year-round Farm to School programming. This initiative also provides a reliable outlet for producers. It engages the community in agriculture-based activities at the feeding sites, and the photos above were taken in elementary school that had a school garden and was also a summer feeding site. Master gardener volunteers came out to do learning lessons with the parents and their children. They also have a photo of the child on a bike blender. You can see it can spin as they pedal the pedals, and that is a great way to promote physical activity and healthy eating. Next. Additional benefits of Farm to Summer is food access. So you can get local food from the school gardens that I just mentioned, farmers markets, food [inaudible], distributors, local farmers, and you can also notice that the food access that has increase in fruits and vegetables consumption with the children. It exposes kids to a variety of products that you might not be able to do during the school year just because of our location in Michigan. When you buy local, foods are fresher, crispier, and people have the opportunity to consume food at its nutritional peak. You also can see increased participations, because you can make it year-round. Like if you participate in the local food items for the School Practice Program or the National School Lunch Program, assistant with your local economy, farmers, and other people in your community. Next. So economic development, that's a great way to keep money in your community. Based on the census by the USDA, there was an increase in 5% income to farmers. When you buy local, it creates new job opportunities. It reduces food



insecurity, and for every dollar spent, there is \$2.16 generated in the economy. You also have community engagement when people take ownership of working in community gardens and other activities that they can volunteer and participate with. Next. So how can we farm to summer? We're going to talk about a little bit of the fun topic of procurement. So, above you can see the applicable regulations for procurement, and also, as mentioned before, there is procuring local foods for child nutrition programs. I just wanted to talk about procurement for a moment. Procurement is the purchasing of goods and services. Procurement rules are important to ensure program benefits and taxpayer dollars are received by eligible children in schools and are used effectively and efficiently with no waste or abuse. There are four key concepts to procurement. One is competition. It is essential to ensure low cost and good quality of foods and services. Two, responsive and responsible. Responsive means the vendor submits a bid that conforms to all terms of the solicitation. Responsible means that the vendor is capable of performing successfully under the terms of the contract. Three, American grown. The Buy American provision in the National School Lunch Act requires schools to purchase domestically grown and processed foods to the maximum of their abilities. Four, procurement rules. You need to make sure that you are familiar with federal, state, and [inaudible] procurement requirements. So procuring local foods for the Children Nutrition Program covers the basics, and Jenie mentions. This version incorporates information about micro-purchasing, which I'll talk about in just a moment, and then also buying local foods for child care and summer meals, all with great, real-world examples. This also includes sample solicitation language, detailed geographic preference examples, and helpful resources. So informal procurement. Informal procurement occurs when a sponsor purchases [inaudible] at or below the federal, state, or local purchase threshold. The Michigan [inaudible] threshold is \$150,000, but it can be less based on the local level. The small purchase method is less rigorous than the formal procurement, and it allows the use of a vendor list that is current. Competition must still occur, and at least three quotes need to be requested. Although it's not publicly advertised, it is important to refer to written specifications when contacting vendors for quotes to ensure that consistent communication is provided to all in order to keep a level playing field. Quotes should be obtained in writing. For informal procurement, sponsors will award the contract to the lowest bidder that is both responsive and responsible. All procurement procedures require documentation of how the solicitation was conducted. The responses received, how responses were evaluated and awarded, and the monitoring of contract performance is necessary. Next. So options for purchasing summer food service meals. So you can purchase food from a local school food authority in the district. A competitive procurement is not required for this type of agreement, as long as the SFA providing the meals is self-operated. A written agreement is required with the SFA, and there's a template in the Sponsor Administrative Guide in Attachment Seven. Self-operated refers to when school district operates, manages, and administers its own food service operation and is not under a food service management company contract. School districts participating in the Summer Food Service Program are not required to use the SFSP Procurement Standards and may, instead, comply with the



procurement standards of the National School Lunch Program. In order to obtain an agreement or enter into a contract with a food service management company, as defined for the Summer Food Service Program, the sponsoring organization is required to complete a competitive procurement process. Any commercial enterprise or nonprofit organization with a Summer Food Service sponsor may contract for prepping uni-type meals, with or without milk, for use in the program. This includes public agencies, private, nonprofit organizations, private, for-profit companies. So when the food service management contract is anticipated to be less than \$150,000, the informal procurement competitive process is required. The sponsor may use their existing or usual form of contracts. The sponsor is still required to submit specifications to MDE for approval before soliciting bids. Soliciting bids from at least three qualified sources, they must submit the procurement documents to MDE to review, and it's required to select the lowest price of the responsive and responsible bidders. If the lowest price of the responsive and responsible bidders is not selected, that it requires prior written approval from MDE, and if you have any questions about contracts or the Summer Food Service Program or buying local, Catherine Fuller is that person to contact, and I'd be happy to provide that information to you. Next. So, micro-purchasing. This is something new and exciting in the procurement world. Micro-purchasing is a new method of informal procurement available now and may be used for procurement of food and nonfood items when they aggregate total amount does not exceed \$3500. This based amount or threshold of \$3500 was set back in October 2015 and will be adjusted periodically for inflation. Micro-purchases are intended to minimize the burden for very small purchases and may be awarded with soliciting competitive quotations, if the operator considers the price of a reasonable. Sponsors must distribute micro purchases equitably among qualified suppliers. Please note that the micro purchase threshold may not be used in lieu of applicable procurement methods that may achieve a more economical approach. It is important to mention that sponsors may get a better price if they use another method that allows for more competition. They are not obligated to choose the micro-purchase method. The principles of good procurement allow to micro-purchasing, as well. The use of fairness and integrity in this process is necessary to operate with transparency and use of documentation to support your decision. Micro purchasing is the perfect option to use if you want to go to a local farmers market and purchase blueberries in June, cherries in July, and beans in August. We are encouraging sponsors to use micro purchasing for specialty items or items that are not used daily or considered staple items. Staple items would be milk, bread, lunch meat, those types of things. For food service management companies or vended meal contracts, due to the nature of those services and the volume and frequency of meals in the summer food service, it would be rare that a micro-purchase situation would apply for food service management company contracts. However, if you believe it would apply to your organization, you must discuss it with MDE for verification. Next. How to incorporate local into your sponsorship. So, maybe look at what is already local. Where's your food coming from? Do you know that your milk is local? Or what your produce is coming from? Good communication is key to working with vendors and making good goals.



What could be local? Maybe you only get for food items that are local. Could you maybe make a goal for next year to have at least eight food items be local? Also, communicate your preference. You have to make sure that your solicitations going forward or current have the wording, the items that you want, and you can define that, and Abby will kind of discuss that in just a second.

Abby Harper: All right, awesome. Thank you, Sarah. Sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off there with the slide switch. So Sarah talked a lot. I know that the micro-purchasing threshold did not sound as exciting to all of you as it does to us, but I think it really is a wonderful way to initiate a lot of local food purchases. It provides a really great entry point for starting to work with local farmers without having to do the entire process of informal purchasing. So we definitely were all really excited to hear that and are excited to share more with you all and help you all in that process if it's something that you're interested in. So I'm going to go into some of the how to of what Sarah started to introduce, and when thinking about purchasing local, probably the most important first step is identifying what local means to you. Local is a word that doesn't have a very defined range. So it's really up to your school district, early childhood program, Summer Food service speeding site in how you're going to define local, and there are a variety of ways to do so. You can define it by city. You could define it by County, by state, or by region, and it kind of depends on what you're goal is for sourcing local. So if your primary goal for sourcing local food is to develop opportunities for community engagement and support the farmers in your area, you might want to have a more narrow definition of local that's the town you're in or the county that you're in, but if your goal really is to get fresher food to your kids to may be, you know, work within a different agricultural system, you might have to expand your definition a little bit to get more diverse products in or be able to get more food in at an affordable price. If your goal is to promote health and wellness, and perhaps to support alternative farming practices, your scope could vary. So you really have to think about what your goals are in purchasing local in order to figure out where you're looking for local. Typically, when we talk about stuff at the Center for Regional Food Systems, our definition of local is sort of the State of Michigan, because that's our range, but it also may vary based on just what product you're looking at. So, for example, in Michigan, we grow a lot of dried beans in the thumb. So if you're located in the farm for dry beans, your definition of local could be very narrow, but if you're located in a different part of Michigan where dry beans aren't as readily available, you may need to expand your definition a little bit in order to find something that still fits in local, and similarly, it could vary with the quantity. So if you're a very, very small summer foods service site, and you want to source local asparagus, you may be able to work with your local asparagus farmer, but if you work with multiple sites, and it's a larger quantity than you need, you may need to work with the regional distributor that looks at the state of Michigan as a whole or maybe even include other states in that local definition, as well. And then, once you define local, it's important to look at product availability in your region. So this is a chart that's



been taken from the, from one of our guides, our Purchasing Local Products Guide, which is available on our website, and you can actually print off this chart in its full form. I just showed a snapshot here, but it highlights what products are in season during what part of the year. We've also included for extended season. So as hoop houses and season extension infrastructure become more available around Michigan, we're seeing the availability of local products extend a lot. So the best example there is that first line. That's arugula. If you're just growing it in the field, it's really going to be available in early and late summer, but with hoop house and season extension, we have farmers that are growing at all throughout the winter. So January, February, and March, but what I really want to point out here in relation to Summer Food Service Sites is that you'll see a whole bunch of products there that that green bar, which is when they're able to be grown in the field the most easily in Michigan, that all line up really nicely with the months that Summer Food Service is in session, and I think that for a lot of schools and early childhood programs that operate throughout the year that may need to think more about seasonality and whether or not local product is available in the months that they need it, that's an issue that doesn't exist as much for summer food service sites, especially here in Michigan, because that's the height of our agricultural season, and as really, you know, as Sarah and Jenie both mentioned before it's such an opportunity to build those local connections, because it lines up so perfectly with the height of farming season. It's what a lot of farmers may have excess product that they are looking to sell at perhaps a discounted price, especially when bumper crops like zucchini and cucumbers that start coming in that, you know, they can't get rid of fast enough. So it's really an amazing opportunity just in terms of how our seasonality lines up for really taking advantage of the agricultural system in Michigan that's so vast. So I also want to highlight opportunities. So after you figure out, you know, what products are available to you, it's important to look at your menu to identify what areas you can incorporate in your local foods, and in thinking about that, there's really three questions that you can ask yourself. So you can look at your menu and look at what products are already using that maybe could be sourced locally. So if you're serving green beans throughout the summer, and they're not coming from Michigan, green beans are something that grow pretty prolifically in Michigan in the summer and can easily be swapped in for the green beans that you're maybe getting from California or Florida or another state. So that's really the easiest, lowest hanging fruit. I know, especially during the school year, a lot of schools and early childhood programs have success swapping apples for Michigan apples. So identifying those products that you're already using that grow locally but that you may not be sourcing locally, and after you look at those, you can look at what products you're using that could be swapped in with other local foods. So, for example, in early July, we have a lot of snap peas growing in Michigan. So are there other products that you are using that could be swapped in for those local snap peas? Perhaps, before green beans start getting prolific, you can swap them in in your menu first some snap peas. So really analyzing your menu to find out where there are opportunities for those traits, where it maybe it's the same color palette on your plate, but might just be a different local ingredient, and then the other thing to look at is what local products are



readily available that you could incorporate into your menus. So maybe right now you're not using kohlrabe, but is there a place where you could put that in your menu. So really, and that piece comes more from talking to local farmers, finding out what is available local and seeing where you could incorporate it into your menu, and that picture there on the bottom of cherry tomatoes, I think, to start with with Summer Food Service Programs, the easiest things to look at our those products that don't require heavy processing. Sometimes, if you're used to getting products in a certain form, like if there chopped and canned, it is a little bit more of a difficult switch to local food, because it requires that extra step of processing. Typically, it can be done and isn't super labor-intensive, but it does require an extra step and foresight. So if you're brand-new to the program, looking at what products are on your menu that are already in their whole form, like cherry tomatoes on a salad bar or like salad mixes that don't require that extra level of processing, those are really easy places to just start swapping local products onto your menu. I mentioned before that a lot of people have had success with getting, you know, whole fruits locally. So if you're working with apples, switching them in for Michigan apples, or during the summer switching them in for a local Michigan peach or something that's in season. I think berries, as well, going with local blueberries and raspberries and things that children in their whole form and fresh are really easy starting points to start incorporating more local products into your menu before you look at, you know, your eggplant Parmesan and getting all those cooked and processed veggies into your menu. So there are a lot of different ways you can find local products, and we've heard a couple so far, but I want to emphasize that there, you know, both Jenie and Sarah mentioned the varieties of Summer Food service programs from those who are self-operating and do all their own preparation, to those who work with food service management companies, and no matter what end of that spectrum you're on, there are opportunities to increase your local purchasing. So I think often we think of local, of Farm to Summer Programs as working with farmers directly. You can also work with your food service management company or distributor to help identify what local products are available to you and shift your purchasing that way, and it has a lot of the same benefits, just in a different form. But if you're looking to work directly with local farmers or farmer cooperatives. Some places to look to find those contacts are going to farmers markets and talking to the farmers there that might be in your area, asking them what products they have available in what quantities and at what price point. I think it helps to develop a little survey that you can take with you in order to find out what farmers might meet your needs in terms of quantity, quality, variety. Maybe ask them about their food safety practices. You can also go to your MSU Extension educators. They have all lot of the on the ground resources, and we have a really strong community food systems team that we work with throughout the state that can help identify resources on the ground to connect with local farmers. I've also known some programs that have done advertising in their local papers to connect with local firms and have had some success in finding folks that way, and then the last example I have listed here is our Hoop Houses for Health Program. That's a program that works to connect participating farmers with Summer Food Service sites, early childhood programs in schools, in partnership to provide food to their



communities to pay off loans that we provide them. That program's not available everywhere. It's in about 14 farmers markets throughout the state. If you're interested in learning more about that, you can feel free to contact me, and I'd be happy to share more information with you. And if you're working with a distributor or food service management company, you can have conversations with them about what current products they source that are local, and whether or not there are other local products that they could have access to. If you know of a farmer that provides quantity and is looking to get into institutional markets, into the summer food service programs, you can connect them with your food service management company and see if they'd be willing to purchase from that farmer, and then there are also ways, when you're soliciting food service management companies or a distributor to work with to include local criteria. As Sarah mentioned, you can't include a requirement that the distributor or food service management company source locally because that's seen as limiting competition, but you can include it as a concern of yours. That you would like to know what local products are available, including a requirement that the distributor or food service management company provide a list of what local products are available can help ensure that whatever company you end up working with is aware of your concerns about sourcing locally and kind of is working with you from the beginning to help meet your needs. And as Sarah mentioned, we did do a webinar in January on procurement rules and regulations. It's a super interactive and exciting webinar, as much as you can be talking about procurement rules and regulations, but it is available on our website. I'll have the link to that up at the end of the presentation, and it's a good way to get a review of what you're allowed to say and request in contracting with distributors and with food service management companies, so that you have the best chance of getting a distributor that favors local while abiding by all procurement rules and regulations related to ensuring fair competition. And then the last way that you can find local, if you have the flexibility to do so, is by growing your own. There are a lot of summer programs now that are increasing their sourcing from their own gardens, and we had a great webinar on that and we have developed a guide on Garden to Cafeteria. That was a great guide that came out last year and was a collaboration of some of our MSU Extension colleagues, as well as sites throughout the state that are using our gardens to source in their cafeteria, and again, that webinar is on our website, and I'll have the link to that at the end of the presentation. The last piece that I want to point out with regards to this local sourcing is Cultivate Michigan. For those of you unfamiliar with Cultivate Michigan, it's a local food purchasing campaign that's come out of our Michigan Farm to Institution Network. So every year since 2014 when they started, the Cultivate Michigan features four seasonal foods. So in 2014, they were asparagus, blueberries, tomatoes, and then apples, and then last year, we featured milk, followed by peppers, and winter squash and dry beans. This year, we just released our first suite of materials on sourcing local kale, and our summer vegetable will be carrots, and then we'll do potatoes and cherries in the winter, featuring their capacity for being stored and frozen. So these guys are really great tools for folks working in institutional food service. They provide a couple really important pieces of information. One is they provide a lot of background



information on the product. What varieties are available in Michigan. Kind of the fun facts about where they're grown in Michigan and what level of production we have, but more importantly, there's some great information on where you can find these products locally. So the goal is that by the time we've gone through this a couple years, we'll have a whole suite of materials that really cover a lot of different foods in Michigan, and we work with distributors very closely to provide information on how you can find those products. So we've done the research to find the product code that indicate Michigan products and to highlight the months that those products are available. So even if you work with a distributor, you can use this guide to find what product codes indicate Michigan and direct your purchases that way, and there's also information on how to connect with local farmers if you're interested in purchasing directly from farmers. We've also got information on regional food hubs that are offered throughout the state. Food hubs are aggregators and distributors that have an explicit focus on local food. So there are a couple throughout the state that only source Michigan products, and then there are also tips on storage and utilization of different products. We're featuring some that aren't necessarily when you purchase from a farm, may not be in the same form you're used to when you purchase from the store or from a large distributor. So for example, in our dry beans guide, we highlighted soaking and preparation techniques, and in our winter squash guide, we highlighted tips for processing and peeling. So there's a lot of great tips on how to utilize those products, as well as a lot of recipes. So we provide recipes in each guide, and those are typically acquired from institutional food service providers that we work with. So we've got some schools. Some folks who work in Summer Food. Some who work in hospitals. So all of those recipes are kind of scaled up. So it's not like you're adopting a recipe for a family of four to feeding 200 children. They're all kind of at that larger scale and easier to adapt to your program, and then additionally if you sign up for cultivate Michigan, in addition to getting these materials mailed to you on a seasonal basis, there are also opportunities to track and collect data and sort of measure your progress as you increase your local food. So there's a really nice dashboard that you have access to that will track your local purchases and show you what progress you're making in sourcing more local. So I encourage you to check out [CultivateMichigan.org](http://CultivateMichigan.org) if you're interested, and email me for more information, and then the last step in making your farm to summer program a success is developing supporting activities. So really showcasing the work that you're doing to connect with local agriculture. Some programs do nutrition and agriculture education, and that can either be through the program or through partnering with community organizations. A lot of time, community health departments that have a desire to increasing healthy food consumption as a means of preventing chronic disease will partner with summer food service sites or other educational programs to do nutrition and agriculture education. You can also do on-site gardens in order to draw more attention to local food and sort of create those connections with new foods that the kids might be exposed to. The summer is a great time to do field trips and farmer visits, taking the students out on a field trip to a local farm or bringing a farmer in to talk about their work and the products they grow. There are a lot of sites that do to the harvest events, where they have



a big dinner with the parents that come in and feature local foods or even bring in local farmers for that, and I think that for a lot of, especially small and medium-sized farmers throughout Michigan, a lot of folks are really excited about working with kids. The kind of see it as the, you know, mission side of their business and are really interested in engaging with educational programs, because it doubles for them both as a marketing opportunity, as well as an opportunity to create the next generation of consumers and do some more outreach to families. You can also do cooking demonstrations or Junior Iron Chef competitions or taste tests. So there are a lot of really great ways to integrate your farm to school programming with -- your Farm to Summer Programming with other aspects of your Summer Food Service site, and I think, earlier on, Sarah mentioned one of the benefits of increasing participation in your Summer Food Service Program, and I think by incorporating a lot of these activities in conjunction with local purchasing, there are a lot of sites throughout the country have that cited increased participation from this focus on local food. So we're going to spend just a couple of minutes highlighting some examples from Michigan. We tried to keep this really state specific, and so I'll highlight two just very briefly and then pass it over to Doreen to talk more about her program. So Kaleva Norman Dickson is a school district in Northwest Lower Michigan, and they do some local purchasing throughout the summer. That's a picture of some of the local strawberries that they served at their site. They also partner with the Health Department, which would bring in fruits and vegetables that children could purchase locally. Once, I think it was a month that they did this. So building those opportunities to collaborate with community partners that might have similar goals, and they also did seasonal taste tests throughout the summer where students have the ability to try new products before they appeared on their menu. So, you know, folks could do have kids taste test different varieties of peppers throughout the summer, and then introduce it in a menu at a later point. And so building that sort of educational component ensures that kids will try the food again when they see it on the menu, and they also do a lot of educational programming throughout the summer related to local food, and then this other example is from South Haven. This is South Haven Public Schools Farm to Summer Program, and this is their FARM bus, so the FARM bus stands for Fun, Activities, Reading, and Meals. So last summer they had a mobile library and feeding site combined in one for six weeks. So it serves three sites meals five days a week, and they have a book check out, as well, and so they're combining their summer Food service program with some educational opportunities and purchasing local food. It was a big collaboration between South Haven Public Schools, Migrant Education, the food service, and Van Buren ISD and some other programs, as well, and they had a lot of success in introducing folks to local foods through partnering with local farms. So they partnered with a couple of local farms, including Dutchman Orchards, Paul Rudd Farms, DeGrandChamps Blueberry Farm, and True-Blue Farms, and purchasing from them directly to serve in the program, and this food service director in particular noticed the difference in the apples, and the children commented on the difference in the apples, and the increase in consumption of them because they tasted better. So with that, Doreen, if you're still on the line here, I'd love to pass it over to you to talk about



your food service program.

Doreen Simonds: I am on the line. Hello, from Waterford. How are you today?

Abby Harper: Good, Doreen, there you go. Take it away. Doreen Simonds: All right, so a lot of what we've been hearing is talking about the great things we can do in the summer. Once we get our local producers that we're going to get our food from, a few ways that we have found ours is we're very fortunate that we are really close to the Oakland County Farmers Market. We are using five farmers from there now, getting a lot of our carrots, our Brussels sprouts, our broccoli, our strawberries, just anything that we can get our hands on throughout the summer that we can bring into the schools, and not only do we serve it in our meals, come up with recipes and do all kinds of good things with that, we also use the food that we get from the Oakland County Farmers Market to do a farm cart. This is our Farmich Cart. It's F-A-R-M-I-C-H. So Michigan, it's kind of a farmers cart, and what we do is once a week, we take a lot of the produce that we bring in and we have the kids set up displays. Our ladies work with them to set up displays so that people can learn the different foods that are grown locally in our area and learn about the farmers. We've had the farmers come in and talk about the foods with the families and with the children that are coming in to eat for our Summer Food Service Program, and then we end up either donating the food if can be. Sometimes, the kids sell the food so they can make a little bit of money for the summer programs. We actually have a Ready, Set, Grow Program in our summer feeding program so that the students will do the different activities like going to the farmers market. We have a garden actually on site at this campus. It's a community and school garden where the students get to go out there and plant. They get to do the weeding. They care for the garden. They harvest it. They go a little further than that. They're learning how to clean the food. How to prepare the food. You know, food safety with it and also safe cutting methods and things like that. So they get to do a lot of hands-on operations with the foods, whether it be from the Oakland County Farmers Market or whether it be from our garden here. We can go to the next slide whenever you're ready. So this is our Oakland County Farmers Market, and this is a group of kids that we took there, and the kids got to pick out the different foods they wanted to bring into our Summer Food Service Program. So they were doing little taste tests. One of the farmers came up and cut things up for them and let them try different things. They got to try a variety of different apples that we were going to bring in in the fall. It is a little bit later in the summer when this picture took place. So we had a lot of root vegetables going on. Penzion Farms shared a lot of great things with the kids that they got to vote on and decide what they wanted to use in our program. So it's a great field trip to do, and it was really good this day, too, because we actually have the Oakland County Health Division come in. They set up tables so that they could do some nutritional education with the students at the same time. So it really tied in well, learning the health benefits of the foods and how it was going to affect them in the long term, and then ready for the next slide please. Now a little while ago, you heard mention of Hoop Houses for



Health. This is our own personal farmer. We just love him. Mike from Trim Pines Farms, which is in Holly, Michigan. We visited the farm on a number of occasions. He has been amazing to work with. When MSU Extension approached us and asked us if we wanted to try this program out, we were really super excited. It was just another way to enrich our program and help it to grow, and also, it was great to help Mike get his things growing out there. This is some of the stuff he has planted outside, but he has three amazing hoop houses too that are there. So he actually works with us from the beginning to the end. We meet together. My managers and myself will meet with him, and we let him know what kind of foods that we can use. There's a lot of foods we've tried. Some obviously don't work as well as others. For instance, squash was little bit difficult, because it's very hard to process the squash. So we do try it. It's just not as frequent. We don't grow, you know, we don't have him grow as much of stuff like that, but we use tons of cabbage. He's in front of the cabbage now, and we came up with all kinds of recipes. The cabbage soup, the cole slaws. You know, all the different foods you can use cabbage for. We tried stuffed cabbage. Yeah, maybe not so much for the kids, but it was still a good thing to try something different, and a few people had asked me, "Well, how do you know how safe this is? Is he Gap Certified?" One thing that I learned a few years ago, in Michigan, the farmers do not need to be Gap Certified. We have been using local farmers for six years now, and we have never had a problem with food safety. We have taken people out with us to look at the farms to, you know, with a little checklist to make sure that things look safe. We also, because of being closely associated with the Oakland County Farmers Market, we asked the guy who was running the farmers market for recommendations for these farmers, and, you know, there's many ways to check on the food safety. We're very concerned with food safety, and Mike has worked, and all of our farmers, they work with our cook managers when they bring the food in to do, you know checking for things, testing things, and we find that, you know, it's not only safe. It tastes a whole lot better, and the kids get excited, and as you can see, these two little kids running through the fields. They definitely get excited about everything that we're doing. So I highly recommend everybody to bring in as much as they can at Farm to School. Whether you can grow a garden or not or get involved with your farmers markets, taking the kids to the farms, summer is definitely the best time to do it, although it's great all year long too. Thank you very much.

Abby Harper: Awesome, thank you so much Doreen, Jenie, and Sara for being on this. There are a couple of links up there for some additional resources. Some of the USDA Farm to Summer resources that Jenie mentioned, as well as our website [myfarmtoschool.msu.edu](http://myfarmtoschool.msu.edu). You can have access to all of the resources we have up there. There's a lot of information on how to purchase local foods, some guides on Garden to Cafeteria, and other webinars that I mentioned earlier on in the webinar, and then there a couple Farm to Summer specific sites at the bottom that I found interesting when I was learning more about Farm to Summer. That might be interesting, as well, and so with that, we will open it up for questions. If you do have



questions, please type them into the Q&A box, which you should see on the top of your screen. We did receive one question already, which is about the Produce Availability Chart that I showed a quick snapshot from, and that is available on our website, [myfarmtoschool.msu.edu](http://myfarmtoschool.msu.edu). In the Q&A, I'm sending the particular, the specific URL of that resource, but if you go to [myfarmtoschool.msu.edu](http://myfarmtoschool.msu.edu), it's titled the Michigan Produce Availability Chart, and it's available there, and you can print it out and frame it on the wall of your cubicle if you want. It makes great office art. So we did receive a question about micro-purchasing. Is it \$3500 for the summer or is it the maximum amount you could apply to multiple purchases? Sarah, do you want to take a stab at answering that question?

Sarah Harmon: Sure, yeah, that would be fine. So that \$3500 is per purchase, and there's no time limits for that. So we can't say it's for the entire summer. It's just that one specific purchase, but we don't want you to be buying, you know, I'm going to be buying strawberries the entire summer. Hopefully, you can. I'm not going to be buying strawberries the entire summer, but I'm going to buy them in these increments so it's less than \$3500. It's going to be something that you're not purchasing all the time, and it's for that one time of \$3500. So you can use micro-purchasing multiple times throughout the summer. Abby Harper: Yeah, I think that helps a lot, and if you check out our webinar on Procurement Rules and Regulations, we go into micro-purchasing in detail. I think one good example that I've seen recently is a school that I was working with in Metro Detroit Area, and they are working with a farmer to purchase cherry tomatoes for, I believe it's 12 weeks, and they're doing 50 pounds, and that's kind of their tester of Farm to School, to see if it works for them, and that quantity falls under that \$3500 threshold, so it's basically separated by either purchase of product or purchase from a farmer. So if you're going to purchase a bunch of crops from one farmer, you can't divide them up into individual purchases in order to make each one fall under that threshold, but if the total purchases falls under \$3500, then it applies for the micro-purchasing threshold, and I think that the easiest way I can describe it, if you're trying to divide up specifically for falling under that threshold, you're probably doing something not totally allowed by USDA, and if you have questions, all of the Department of Education folks are really great about answering them. I'm available for answering, you know, specific questions as they come up on a case-by-case basis, if you have more about that micro-purchase threshold, but it was really created as an opportunity to help schools and early childhood programs and summer feeding sites to really take advantage of, you know, spot by a product that's available. So if a farmer comes to you and says, "I have all of this, you know, all these tomatoes that I don't have a source for, and I'm willing to sell them to you for cheap." To help you not have to go through all of the lengthy steps of the procurement process and just be able to take advantage of opportunities like that as they come. So I hope that answered your question. Great. Glad it did. All right, are there any other questions about the webinar or even anything beyond what we talked about the webinar? I'm glad we were able to answer that question for you, Herelle [assumed spelling].



And I also want to emphasize that, and I think Doreen made this clear, there there's, I think a lot of folks get overwhelmed by Farm to Summer, because they think, "Oh, I have to change all my purchasing to local." There are a lot of ways that you can start doing it that are small and manageable, and I think starting in those small chunks, and biting off one piece a time is really the way to make it sustainable and, you know, make sure you don't bite off more than you can chew from the beginning. So starting with a couple products that you can easily swap into your menu is a really great place to begin or even just starting to make those connections with local farmers the first year. Maybe you're not ready to purchase anything local, but maybe you can start building in some of those supporting pieces. Building connections with local farmers, finding out what products they might have available for future years, and just kind of taking it one step at a time. Are there any other questions for any of our panelists? They'll all stay on here to answer any? Doreen, I have a quick question for you. Maybe you could speak to, and I know we talked about this before, but can you speak to maybe participation in the program and what response you've seen from the kids about the foods that you're bringing in?

Doreen Simonds: Absolutely. First of all, one thing that I think that it's really helped, along with increasing the participation, is lowering the food waste. When we were doing a lot of canned fruit, we were just seen a lot of it go into the garbage, and of course, you know, with the new regulations where they have to take a fruit or a veggie, it was killing us to see all that stuff go in the garbage. So we started using even more farm to school products. All of our apples now, every apple we can get a hold of, Brookwood Farm supplies our apples. They're amazing, and the kids love them. They taste good. So, you know, it's definitely increased our lunch participation, and I think my favorite part of this though is this is not just the one teacher. It's been a few teachers that have been coming up to me and saying how they're so excited to see the kids walking the halls after lunch munching on an apple or a pear or a fresh peach, and you know, it just gives that it's a fresh feeling on top of getting the kids healthier. So it's definitely increased participation and created less food waste.

Abby Harper: That's awesome, and Doreen, I know you said this to me. I don't know whose quote it was, but "It's not nutrition if they are not eating it," right? So if you can get your kids to eat more by going local and fresher importantly, then, you know, they're going to have better nutrition than if they're throwing it in the trash. So thank you.

Doreen Simonds: All right, are there any other questions before we sign off? And I'm going to put up, those are all of our contact information is up there. You can feel free to email any of us if you have future questions, and if they come up later on, that's totally fine too. So we'll hang out for a couple more minutes just to hear if anyone has questions. Again, I do want to



emphasize this was recorded, and it will be available on our website. I'll probably email it out by the end of this week with that information. So you can access it at a later point in time and share with your friends, and if there are no other questions, then I think we'll just end it here. Thanks to everybody for joining us today. It was really great having everyone on. I'm going to start a quick, little, evaluation poll, if you have two seconds to answer four questions, that pop up on your screen, I'd appreciate it, and otherwise, thanks so much to our panelists, Jenie, Sarah, and Doreen. It was great to have you guys on. Thanks for your support in this, and we will talk to you all soon. Thanks so much, folks.

