



SELLING TO SCHOOLS

for Local Farmers/Producers

Interested in selling to schools? Here are some tips to assist you in initiating connections and fostering relationships with your potential buyers.

START SMALL

Spend time developing your reputation as a reliable vendor. Pick contracts based on a realistic sales volume and delivery schedule that will suit you.

SET UP APPOINTMENTS

Call the school early in the morning or after 1:00PM. Ask for the name and phone extension of the school food program. Find out if they're interested in your products, and, if so, who makes purchasing decisions. For a food service management company, it may be a regional director. For a school-run program, it may be a school-level manager or district-level director.

PRODUCT AVAILABILITY AND PRICING SHEETS

Consider the cost of farm practices (organic, hormone free), packaging, delivery, and profit in your pricing. Ensure this market will be sustainable.

MARKET YOURSELF

Present what you can offer the school nutrition director and how your products will meet their needs.

BRING SAMPLES

Your products are your best marketing tool. Taste testing is a great way to introduce your product to schools.

FARM VISITORS

Show off your farm and your products. When school staff visit, they will see how well you care for your farm and the work it takes to produce the food they want.

OBJECTIVE

The mission? Amp up the veggie game at schools, serving up farm-fresh goodness for the young foodies. School nutrition's eyeing those local farms for top-notch ingredients, and we're here to make that happen, full steam ahead!

SOLUTION

To spice up the cafeteria menu with locally grown goodies, farmers and schools must swipe right and start a trust-filled friendship. Here's the scoop to help farmers reach out to schools and build relationships for a delicious partnership!

FARMING PRACTICES

Communicate about your farm liability insurance and food safety plans, including harvesting and post-harvesting practices. Be aware that schools will have a food safety program based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles.

RESOURCES:
[GOOD FOOD FINDER](#)
[AZED.GOV](#)



CROP DIVERSITY

Highly perishable fruits, fresh meats, or unusual products can be of great interest. Cherry tomatoes and multi-colored fresh beans, for example, only require washing; they store well, and are easy to serve. Talk to schools as early as possible to plant vegetables accordingly.

FOLLOW UP

Confirm the meeting details, agreements, and next steps in writing.



THINGS TO DISCUSS AND NEGOTIATE

- Estimated volume of products the school would like
- Delivery schedule including time of day, frequency, and location
- Packing requirements: standard box, grade, loose pack, bulk, etc.
- Seasonal availability of your products
- Ordering process (direct and/or current distributors you supply to)
- Billing processes and best way to contact each other

CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

If you show consistent communication and reliability, the director will know you value the relationship. As this relationship develops, you could suggest additional products you offer.

STAY IN TOUCH

Inform the school nutrition directors what will be harvested or processed throughout the seasons. If you can let them know what products to expect one to two weeks ahead, they can plan for them in the cafeteria. Try to get a standing order through a contract. Provide Good Food Finder (<https://www.goodfoodfinderaz.com/farm-to-school>) directory link.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

School districts often have a payment cycle of 30-90 days or longer. As a farmer, however, you may be used to presenting an invoice and receiving payment upon delivery. The differences between school district and farmer operations need to be worked out before purchasing begins.

TASTE TEST AT SCHOOL

Seeing how the program operates with the staff, students, and cafeteria space will give you great insight into which foods work the best. Consider offering to conduct a taste test of your product with students.

RESOURCES:
GOOD FOOD FINDER
AZED.GOV 



PROMPTS GUIDE

for successful outreach

When reaching out to schools, tailor the following questions to match what your farm produces.

Who are you currently purchasing food from?

Let them know which distributors and/or aggregators you supply to.
Let them know they can order direct or via distributor and/or aggregators

What produce/meat/added value dairy do you purchase on a regular basis?

What items do you purchase for special events throughout the year?
What range of volume do you typically order these items in?

Do you have a preferred minimum order amount, volume and/or price? *E.g. they need 300 lbs. of carrots, If you could provide a portion of that, what would a minimum percentage be?*

Stating what your minimum order is allows efficiency on both ends for seller and buyer to know if a relationship is a good fit for either business. Matching supply and demand takes open communication up front.

Do you require or to what degree do you want product sized and/or sorted?

What unit(s) do you typically order in? What standardized packing units are you used to?

Let the Food Service Director know how you typically pack your product: bunches, pound, etc.
They need to think in ½ cups servings to order an accurate volume.

Describe your invoicing needs and payment system? What do I need to provide to set up a new Purchase Order (PO)?

Be prepared to provide a W-9, liability insurance and list the farm as additionally insured on the Certificate.

What is your preferred method of communication: phone, fax, email, other?

What is the best time to communicate?

What is the best way to share that information?

How often would you want to hear about product availability and pricing?



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[AZED.GOV](#)