A Connecticut Farm to School (FTS) study was conducted to determine how CT School Food Authorities (SFA) procure local food products and what challenges they face. 149 SFA directors completed a survey on their experiences buying and serving local food. 19 directors also participated in one-hour interviews.

What we found

- 101 SFAs have procured local food in the last year
- The primary motivation of SFA directors implementing local procurement is to provide fresh, high-quality produce that students enjoy
- Districts with access to supplemental produce funding or organizations such as Put Local on Your Tray are more likely to procure directly from producers
- Primary challenges to local procurement included expense, availability, and staff time
- 83% of SFAs that bought local had purchased from CT sources
- Only 30% of those that buy local spend more than 10% of their local funding on CT Grown

READ THE FULL REPORT HERE!
Interest in Purchasing Local Products

- 97% of directors intend to maintain or increase their procurement levels in the next year.
- 30% of directors indicated farmers were a top source of local food.

Connecticut Grown

The CT Department of Agriculture’s CT Grown program highlights agricultural products grown in Connecticut.

Here’s what SFA directors said about this program:
- 92% are familiar with the CT Grown label.
- 97% are willing to incorporate new CT Grown menu items.
- 55% currently request products grown in CT from their vendor.
- 100% are willing to request CT Grown products.

Top 3 CT Grown Products SFAs Want to Buy

- 48.4% would purchase berries.
- 40.7% would purchase fresh herbs.
- 39.5% would purchase snap/green beans.

Top 3 CT Grown Products SFAs Currently Buy

- 91.7% purchase apples.
- 62.5% purchase summer squash.
- 56.3% purchase lettuce.

Over 40% of SFAs also purchased CT Grown green beans, sweet corn, winter squash, and berries.

Grades Where Local Served

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades where local served</th>
<th>In 2019</th>
<th>Currently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K and younger</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten-5th grade</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade-8th grade</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th grade-12th grade</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Is Considered Local?

- Produced within 50 miles: 13.7%
- Produced within 100 miles: 6.9%
- Produced within 200 miles: 5.9%
- Produced within Connecticut: 17.6%
- Produced within region: 15.7%
- Other/ Don’t know/ No definition: 40.2%

Local food is being served to an increasing number of grades.
SFA directors across Connecticut expressed enthusiasm for serving local food. However, they face significant barriers. Top Challenges Include

For local procurement:
- Cost
- Lack of availability from primary vendors
- Lack of staff

For buying directly from farmers:
- Identifying producers
- Delivery
- Confusion about correct procurement processes

DIRECTORS SAID THE FOLLOWING WOULD FACILITATE LOCAL PROCUREMENT

- Contact information and price lists of farms interested in selling to schools
- Improved information from current food distributors on which of their products are local
- Delivery to their sites
- Funding for local food purchases

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on study findings, the following recommendations could help grow local food procurement in Connecticut K-12 schools:

- Improve informational resources regarding local food
- Expand the number of districts receiving logistical support
- Conduct outreach to current broadline and produce distributors
- Provide equipment aid
- Continue universal meals for all
- Implement local food incentives

Approximately half of SFAs participated in Farm to School networks or had policies supporting Farm to School