

The Power of Public Procurement:

*An Action Plan for
Healthier Farms and People in New Mexico*

September 2014



Cover: Seed Art Mural, Bernalillo County Youth Detention Center

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Acronym List

AAA:	Area Agency on Aging
ACA:	Affordable Care Act
ACA:	Administration of Correctional Agencies
ALTSD:	Aging and Long-Term Services Department
CNMCF:	Central New Mexico Correctional Facility
CSA:	Community Supported Agriculture
CYFD:	Children, Youth and Families Department, NM
F2C:	Farm to Cafeteria
FANS:	Food and Nutrition Services Bureau, NM HSD
FINI:	Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive
FNS:	Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
FSD	Food Service Director (same as SFSD)
FSMC:	Food Service Management Companies
FTT:	Farm to Table (a 501(c)3 organization)
GAPs:	Good Agricultural Practices
GSD:	General Services Department
GSP:	Gross State Product
HACCP:	Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points
HHS:	US Department of Health and Human Services
HSD:	Human Services Department, NM
NMAC:	New Mexico Administrative Code
NMCD:	New Mexico Corrections Department
NMDA:	New Mexico Department of Agriculture
NM PED:	New Mexico Public Education Department
NMSA:	New Mexico Statutes Annotated
NMSU:	New Mexico State University
OAA:	Older Americans Act
PCNM:	Presbyterian Central New Mexico hospitals
PHS:	Presbyterian Healthcare Services
PRMC:	Plains Regional Medical Center
RFI:	Request for Information
SB:	Senate Bill
SCC:	Springer Correctional Center
SFA:	School Food Authority
SFSD:	School Food Service Director
SFSP:	Summer Food Service Program
SNAP:	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SPD:	State Purchasing Division
SSO:	Seamless Summer Option
USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture

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Introduction

New Mexico is one of the most expansive and least densely populated of the fifty United States. In spite of this, each year, over 60 million meals are served at state funded, public institutions that teach our children, support our elders and provide for incarcerated juveniles and adults. Abiding by federal and state nutrition guidelines dictate that over 102 million servings of fruits and vegetables are required for these meals and this does not even consider the needs of state run hospitals or the New Mexico Pre-K Initiative (outside the scope of this report). Coined “the public plate” by urban planner Kevin Morgan, these meals are the result of an intricate system of publically funded procurement, preparation, transportation, and food service across the state.

New Mexico faces a stark paradox: ranking close to the top of the list in food insecurity and child and senior hunger, while about one-quarter of our population suffers from obesity and numerous diet-related chronic diseases¹. Public meal programs are critical opportunities for addressing the health and well-being of New Mexicans and there is real promise for those fruits and vegetables to be provided by New Mexico growers. This represents a significant market that will not, because of federal funding and requirements, go or fade away

New Mexico Public Institution	Meals Served Per Year
New Mexico Public Education Department National School Lunch Program	45,000,000
New Mexico Public Education Department Seamless Summer Meal Program	61,124
Children Youth and Families Department Summer Meal Program	1,800,000
New Mexico Aging and Long Term Services Department	3,600,000
New Mexico Corrections Department	9,000,000
<i>Total Public Meals served per year</i>	59,461,124

Simultaneously, there is a growing interest in sourcing locally and regionally produced food to supply this “public plate.” Much of this momentum has been driven by the growth of small-scale agriculture in the state. In the early 1990’s, farmers markets became a place for New Mexico’s fruit and vegetable producers to begin to develop economic opportunity through these direct markets as a strategy to “save the family farm.”

Over the last two decades, farmers markets in New Mexico have tripled to more than 70 with over 1,000 mostly small-scale producers. These producers, and the expansion of markets, have benefited from the addition of public programs such as



the Women, Infant and Children Farmers Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP), Senior FMNP, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)².

These programs have added more than \$582,000 as part of the \$8.46 million of sales in 2012 (up from \$1.4 million in 1998)⁵. Moreover, the growth of farmers markets and the addition of public programs have led to an increase in farmer participation.

Significant effort has been put into developing these markets by introducing farmers to school food service directors to match supply to demand and appropriate farm products to food service budgets. In addition, through a partnership between Farm to Table and the New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service, farmers are adopting practices to meet specific quality management requirements related to food safety. Though there are minimal food safety regulations at the federal level, a significant investment is needed to support farmers in transitioning to larger markets where buyers (food service management companies and large distributors) are requiring additional food safety verification, such as third-party certification in Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) for an individual farm or Group GAPs for farmers selling collectively.

With burgeoning institutional markets and interest by farmers to supply them, there is a need for coordination of product, additional infrastructure, aggregation facilities, refrigeration, and distribution options before this potential can be realized. A decade ago a group of organizations and agencies began to anticipate this potential institutional market growth as an opportunity for small to medium scale farmers in New Mexico who were selling direct to consumers at farmers markets and roadside operations.

Through the New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council and its public and private sector members, the school setting became a major focus – both to enhance the nutritional opportunities for students and creating a new market for local farmers. This led to the inception of the Farm to Cafeteria Program and legislative initiatives to eliminate competitive foods from New Mexico schools⁴ while beginning to integrate New Mexico grown produce in school meal programs through appropriations by the New Mexico State Legislature⁵ recurring investment of \$85,000 (specific to Albuquerque region) and \$240,000 (statewide). An additional appropriation of \$100,000 was made available for one year in 2013. See Citations for specific appropriation bills.⁶

The intent of this report is to identify and understand the potential and current barriers that New Mexico farmers and New Mexico's public institutions face when trying to sell and purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables for their respective meal programs. The report recognizes that a potentially significant market exists for the sale of New Mexico grown produce to the State's public institutions. This is particularly true for the school districts' food service programs. A large, and until recently, untapped, commercial exchange may be fostered between fruit and vegetable growers and the public officials who administer the procurement systems of public institutions. Yet, practicalities and barriers currently impede the process.

This report attempts to identify the realities of farm to institution challenges and offers recommendations for their eventual removal. A mutually beneficial goal is that a feasible market can be cultivated and expanded that enables local and state commercial exchanges between public institutions and vegetable and fruit growers.

Research Methods

Between January and July 2014, Farm to Table staff, New Mexico State University faculty and Cooperative Extension agents conducted the research for this report. The information presented here was gleaned through surveys and interviews with a sample of Farm to Institution practitioners, state and local directors of procurement and food service departments, farmers and farmers marketing organizations, and other relevant state and county agencies. While this report is a summary of the current local produce procurement needs, challenges, and innovative practices learned through this short research process, the report is by no means comprehensive or generalizable to all state funded institutions.

The purpose of this information gathering was: to determine current market demand for produce, current local food purchasing practices, and potential interest of institutions in purchasing fresh produce from local farmers in the future. A hospital case study and overview of summer meal programs for children were also included in this report, topically, to illustrate current innovations in the field and potential market demand for fruits and vegetables. On the supply side, farmers of small and large acreage were interviewed to determine whether or not they currently sell to state institutions and possible future interest, capacity, and challenges in selling their produce to institutional markets. In addition to surveys and interviews, information was included from publically available documents like annual reports. Additionally, data from the 2012 Census of Agriculture were used to determine the prospect of NM farms being able to supply a greater portion of produce to institutional markets.

On the farm side of the equation, in 2012, with less than 1% of NM's total 13.3 million acres of agricultural lands growing fruits and vegetables, our farmers still produced 58.8 million pounds of apples, peaches, and pears; 52.3 million pounds of melons; and over 544 million pounds of vegetables ranging from carrots, tomatoes, and cucumbers to lettuce, potatoes, and summer squash. These are produce items requested by schools and other institutions. Some of this produce is already being sold to customers at 70+ NM farmers markets. And several school districts have already taken the lead in their communities to purchase local fruits and vegetables. The production section of the report details the untapped potential of small-scale and larger-scale growers becoming suppliers to institutions if produce orders were known before growing season, and if scale-appropriate cold storage, infrastructure, transportation, and brokering services were in place to facilitate sales and delivery of product.

Aligning support services and regulatory requirements would significantly enhance a farmer's ability to get high quality produce to an institutional market on a regular basis. Currently, 19 growers are selling produce to our public schools, demonstrating that farm to institution is not only possible, it is viable. Turning these local transactions into a resilient and dependable market connection, where farmers earn a fair price and risk is shared equitably among all participants is the logical next step articulated as a series of recommendations in this report.



Regulatory & Statutory Analysis

The goal of this report section is to identify relevant legal code and regulations guiding procurement of New Mexico grown fruits and vegetables by state funded institutions. It provides the necessary background to encourage procurement processes that facilitate and sanction purchases of New Mexico grown produce by State public bodies for their food and meal programs.

From June through July, 2014, interviews were conducted with five individuals knowledgeable about the framework and mechanics of the New Mexico state procurement system. The types of positions held by those interviewed include: general counsel to the General Services Department (GSD); lead procurement counsel at the Department of Health; general counsel to the Department of Finance and Administration; the Information Technology (IT) and Complex Procurement Bureau Chief for GSD; director of procurement for a local municipality; and, an advocate and governmental relations director for a major business organization who has been working to change the Legislative Procurement Code regarding 'preferences.'

In addition to interviews, this section was informed by document review spanning: the state Procurement Code and most recent set of procurement regulations formally issued by GSD, recent amendments, legislative bills, proposals and Fiscal Impact Reviews from the last legislative session as well as Farm to Table legislative efforts since 2008. Legislative hearings pertinent to procurement have been followed and meetings of the Procurement Reform Task Force created by the Governor (with an executive order) have been attended.

State Procurement Code and Regulations Overview

The New Mexico statute and regulations covering the procurement of goods and services by State agencies are extensive and convoluted. The Procurement Code is long (pages: 13-1-28 through 13-1-199 (New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA), 1978)) with numerous sections. The comprehensive set of regulations in the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) articulated by the State Purchasing Division (SPD) through the General Services Department (GSD) is also long and complex.

Only one section, 1.4.1 NMAC, the general Procurement Code Regulations, is relevant to the New Mexico produce farmer wanting to sell to State public bodies. Still, navigating the regulation process to enable growers to seamlessly sell to State public bodies for their food and meal programs will take effort.



The procurement statute and accompanying regulations are interpreted, monitored, and enforced by the SPD, part of the workings of the GSD of the New Mexico State Government.

The Procurement Code has recently been amended but with little attention paid to small scale produce farmers. Current focus has been on larger business interests and their associations such as the Albuquerque based Association of Commerce and Industry and the Associated General Contractors of America, New Mexico Building Branch. These larger businesses and associations meet regularly as part of the Governor's Task Force on Procurement, but there are no representatives from small and diversified NM agricultural growers.

Initially, and during early preparation of this Report, it was assumed that 'preferences' - their rules and policies - would be at the center of the process of procuring State contracts for the purchase of local produce. Most new and emerging New Mexico business enterprises ask for some early-on protection from outside competition, often times by tax policy in the form of deductions, credits, and other 'tax incentives.' Other times, protection in the form of preferences for New Mexico 'home grown' business is called for. New Mexico has had a general preference statute on the books for some time but the statute was convoluted and not easy to apply. Commenters, businesses and their advocates at legislative hearings and during the interim Sessions have generally criticized its effectiveness.

2011 Senate Bill 1: In-state preference

New Mexico Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) co-sponsored by Senator Tim Keller (D-Albuquerque) and Representative Larry Larrañaga (R-Albuquerque) closes loopholes and ensures that those businesses eligible for in-state preferences when making bids on state projects are actually based in New Mexico. Although procedural complications have made implementation of SB 1 challenging, the passage of this bill was the first time a procurement enactment specifically included in the definition of business: "the growing, producing, processing, or distributing of agricultural products." This was a significant move forward for enabling procurement of locally grown produce by public entities.

An emphasis on 'preferences' should be reconsidered and refined to identify where it fits into the effort for local produce purchasing. Several interviewees, both very knowledgeable about State procurement, stated they do not think the traditional use of preferences aids the classes of New Mexico businesses and enterprises for which the preferences are intended. This is due, in part to, the fact that they are hard to apply for, hard to demonstrate eligibility for and simply are not large enough, percentage wise, to make any real difference in the bidding outcomes.

According to one of the key business advocates for SB 1, logistical challenges caused stalling of SB 1 implementation. This interviewee indicated that he and legislative sponsors feel they have done what they could to improve the use of preferences and will let it take its own course without further corrective legislation at this time. In summary, several procurement preferences exist, are challenging to oversee, and are not accomplishing their intent: to connect in-state businesses to New Mexico institutional purchases and contracts.

Recent State Procurement Changes and the Federal Geographic Preference Option

Another segment of the procurement code of relevance to produce purchasing by state entities is specific to Small Purchases of \$20,000 or Less (1.4.1.51 New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC)). Change in this provision that occurred in August 2013 updated small purchase limitations that had previously been set at \$5,000. This code permits the public body to purchase goods under the new figure by issuing a direct purchase order based upon the ‘best obtainable price’ and not necessitating going through the official bidding process. If this were to indeed aid the process of state entities purchasing produce from local producers, it is assumed that the majority of local produce sales, at this stage of the development, would fall within the \$20,000 limitation.

Furthermore, the relevance of this small purchase provision may be even greater if it is connected to the 2008 Farm Bill inclusion of an optional ‘geographic preference’ for local school food service programs to use in purchasing local produce. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) incorporated this preference into a fairly concise rule that states that: the school food authority, as well as state agencies making purchases on behalf of school food programs, may apply a geographical preference when procuring unprocessed, or minimally processed, locally grown or locally raised agricultural products. The rule details what ‘unprocessed’ means with a number of examples and the school has discretion to determine the local area to which the geographic preference will apply.

Geographic preference utilized in conjunction with the ‘small purchase’ procurement provision is a creative way to bring local fruits and vegetables into the school meal programs throughout the state. However, during interviews for this report it was recommended that further investigation and discussion occur in order to assure that the geographic preference option is indeed working for schools.

Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and USDA Nutrition Regulation

The single most significant legislative enactment that will, in time, move State public bodies, and their procurement officials, to purchase local, New Mexico grown fruits and vegetables is the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. This Act directed the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to write healthier food and nutrition standards and update meal patterns to follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans with mandatory regulations for school food service programs participating in the federal free and reduced meals program. The Food and Nutrition Service completed its rule making process and on January 20, 2012 issued a final rule (FR/Vol. 77, No. 17) mandating, among a number of changes, the offering of fruits and vegetables as two separate meal components, providing fruit daily at breakfast and lunch and offering vegetables each lunch. These changes essentially doubled the amount of fruit and vegetables on the plate.

This legislative and regulatory mandate is in place in the public school systems’ food purchasing legal authority, and the awareness it has fostered for improvement of school meals will likely enhance the fruit and vegetable market for growers. While a firm, large commercial market will exist, a significant market ‘share’ will also grow for the smaller, New Mexico grower who also has the benefit of local geographic preferences. Still, many practical issues such as aggregation and distribution need to be determined in each locale. At the state level, it implies that significant public policy efforts need to be directed toward the development of small farms producing more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Although this act affects primarily local school districts and their feeding programs, it is very likely, with time, to become implicitly, if not explicitly, the standard for other state and local food purchasing and meal preparation by public bodies. The procurement procedures of the public schools are handled differently, usually more locally, from the procedures of the State Procurement Office and local governments; however, certain traditional procurement concepts are similar.

As pointed out earlier, 'procurement' now has a political context with an emerging state policy that views local procurement as a mode for increasing the State's economic development and jobs. While not necessarily attaching this Report's recommendations to such thinking, it does seem prudent to recognize the potential for this market and to move the discussion toward the small fruit and vegetable growers located within New Mexico producing food with distinct health and nutrition benefits. The State's interest in local procurement will hopefully be heightened by a public policy discussion and commitment to fruit and vegetable farmer development.

NM Senate Bill 63 (2011) Government Food Purchasing Requirements

Rather than rely on in-state procurement preferences, Senator Tim Keller, with help from other sources including Farm to Table as an advisor, wrote a bill that would have required (mandated) state agencies, local public bodies, and bidders in filing their competitive sealed bids for the procurement of food, to include a minimum percentage of the total dollar amount of food purchased in New Mexico from food producers or processors whose whole principal place of business is in New Mexico. This minimum percentage, over a three-year period, would rise from two percent to ten percent.

The Bill passed both houses of the Legislature as members understood the far reaching implications: support for New Mexico's food and agriculture economy and related jobs; rural economic development, maintaining farms and ranches in working production, contributing to the students' nutrition needs and school performance. The Bill went to the Governor for signature and was terminated in a pocket veto with no formal explanation provided.

The SB 63's percentage mandate, very modest in amount, did cause some concern and subtle opposition once it passed. It was not clear to those advocates who supported it what happened at the executive level. However, it is the type of Bill, with its clear design and directed policy mandate for public agencies to follow, that will resurface at some later time.



New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council (2013)

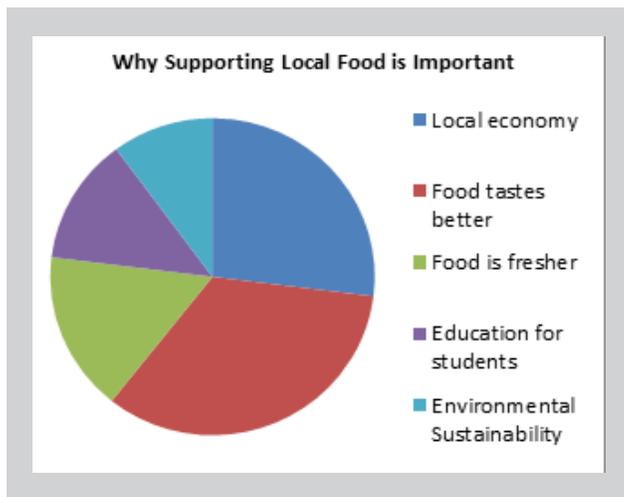
Child Nutrition School Meal Programs

The landscape of school meal programs is complex and difficult to navigate due to the numerous agencies, policies, programs, and funding streams that exist to feed children in public schools. The following pages document definitions and detailed processes related to procurement, and set the context of the world of school food before identifying barriers, innovations, and recommendations for increasing the purchase of locally produced foods for New Mexico's school meals.

The primary research highlighted in this section was obtained by Farm to Cafeteria program staff between February and May of 2014. An evaluation process was developed utilizing a written survey and in-person interviews as data collection methods, collecting both quantitative and qualitative information. Interviews and surveys were conducted with nineteen school Food Service Directors (FSDs), with attention paid to ensure this sampling represented diverse districts across the state. Those interviewed represent about 20 percent of NM Public School Districts, 40 percent of counties in NM, about half of total public school student enrollment (2013-14) and three of the four major urban centers (Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Farmington. Las Cruces was not able to participate).

Why Local?

New Mexicans and Americans alike have expressed growing interest in purchasing local foods in recent years, this trend applies not only to households and the retail sector, but to public institutions such as school meal programs. A recent survey conducted by Farm to Table (FTT) revealed motivations, perceived challenges, and opportunity for local food purchasing from a sampling of Food Service Directors (FSDs) across the state.



“Its like going out to your garden and picking fresh produce to serve for lunch that day”

– Priscilla Garcia,
FSD, Santa Rosa



Interviews provided numerous motivations and therefore, opportunity, for increasing the purchase of local foods in school environments: increased access to fresh food, support for the local economy and farmers, preservation of our agricultural heritage and cultural revitalization, higher quality foods, as well as student and family preferences.

When determining what types of locally produced fresh fruits and vegetables to purchase for school meal programs, FSDs take into consideration a number of factors, including: Federal nutrition patterns, student preferences, staff training and kitchen infrastructure for processing of fresh foods, price relative to foodservice budget, product specifications and alignment to recipes, food safety and HAACP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) concerns for storing and preparing fresh foods. Through recent years FTT has worked with FSDs to identify the following list of fresh fruits and vegetables that can be produced in NM, given our diverse growing conditions and seasonal availability, and that schools are able to purchase.

Despite finding that FSDs representing over 50% of school aged students in NM reported having purchased local foods in the past, and indicating that they would likely continue to purchase additional products in the future, the following barriers for increasing local food purchasing were identified:

- Concerns about adequate supply of local fresh fruits and vegetables
- Seasonality of NM agriculture and its relationship to menu planning and fiscal year cycles
- Mitigating food safety risks of local foods through quality management, traceability, and recall procedures
- Perceived cost of local foods and managing efficient foodservice budgets
- Coordination of reliable distribution systems to meet school needs

Why School Meals?

New Mexico has the highest percentage of food insecure children of all states in the Nation¹. For many children, school meals may be the only access to food in a given day and communities are working to ensure that the food on the plate is as nutritious as possible. Research indicates that a diet adequate in healthy foods contributes to academic achievement², which connects the quality of food, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, to a child's improved ability to learn³ having far reaching long-term benefits.

Supporting NM's farming and increasing food access through public markets such as school meals is critical to the health of New Mexico youth and our state's agricultural economy. Motivated by the passion of serving their communities and improving childhood wellbeing, school Food Service Directors across the state are committed to serving as many students healthy nutritious food as possible on what could be considered a shoe-string budget.



"I do this job because I care about the children in my community I help feed everyday."

-Paul Klein,
FSD Clovis

65%

NM school children eat
school meals

The number of students who could potentially benefit from school meals in NM exceeds 336,000 (about 25% percent of all NM youth under 18)⁴. The current student meal participation rate in the National School Lunch Program averages 65% of total district enrollment statewide. Many families choose to provide meals for their children due to concerns about the quality of school meals. New federal meal requirements and an increased focus on healthy eating and farm to school could result in increased participation moving into the future.

Student Nutrition and School Meal Programs:

The New Mexico Student Nutrition Bureau of the New Mexico Public Education Department (NM PED) facilitates many different programs that provide food to students during the school day. NM PED is responsible for allocating and managing federal reimbursements, eligibility certification processes for meal programs to School Food Authorities (SFAs), and administers state funding programs that support meal programs. They also provide assistance to SFAs with meeting dietary requirements, menu planning, equipment trainings, and conducting audits to ensure schools are complying with federal requirements.

In School Year 2013-14, 220 SFAs in NM participated in the National School Lunch Program, with an average student free and reduced rate of 71%⁵. Based on this average, federal meal reimbursement to SFAs ranges from \$0.36 for each paid meal served to \$3.01 for each free meal served⁶. In addition to monetary reimbursement SFAs receive entitlements in the form of “commodity entitlement dollars”. Other reimbursement based food programs available to SFAs (some based on demographic eligibility), are the following federal programs: National School Breakfast program, USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program, DOD Fresh, and state programs: Breakfast After the Bell, and NM Grown Produce for School Meals.

Federal Reimbursement

NM PED allocates funding for the National School Lunch Program through a three-tiered federal reimbursement system and accrual of commodity entitlement dollars. School children are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches on the basis of their families’ income level.

Income Guidelines for the 2013-14 school year, based on a family of four, were:⁷

- Paid meals: >185 percent of the poverty level (above \$43,568).
- Reduced-price meals: 130 to 185 percent of the poverty level (\$30,615 to \$43,568).
- Free meals: <130 percent of the poverty level (below \$30,615).

Schools receive federal reimbursement for each paid, reduced-price and free lunch served in the National School Lunch Program. School districts receive



Federal and State Meal Programs

NSLP: *The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.*

The School Breakfast Program: *SFAs that choose to take part in the breakfast program receive cash subsidies from the USDA for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve breakfasts that meet Federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price breakfasts to eligible children.*

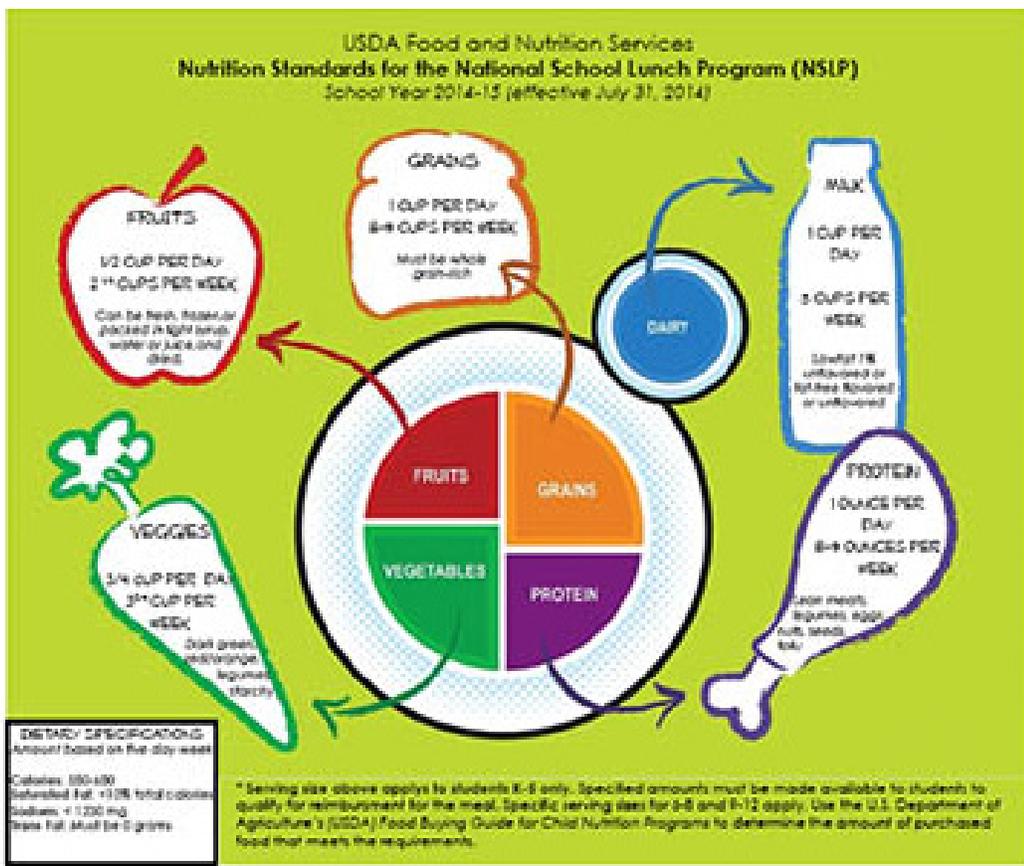
Breakfast after the Bell: *Requires that any elementary school with 85% or more of its students who qualify for free/reduced lunch to provide breakfast to all students as well. Meals are provided in the classroom setting to all students and generally consist of packed/individual portions of breakfast items aligned with nutrition standards.*



a rate of reimbursement at one of two levels; the level received is based on the total percentage of free or reduced-price lunches (less than 60 percent or greater than 60 percent) served two years ago. Schools are eligible to receive an additional 6 cents for each lunch served if 60 percent or more of the total lunches served districtwide in the second preceding year were free or reduced price. Also, an additional 6 cents is earned for meals served that comply with the new USDA school meal nutrition standards. For example, the reimbursement for a free meal, served in a district with a free and reduced rate exceeding 60%, in compliance with nutrition standards is \$3.01. In addition to federal reimbursement, school food service programs receive commodity entitlement dollars at the rate of approximately 25 cents per meal served⁸. These “dollars” are in kind and can only be used for the purchase of USDA donated foods or Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Program.

USDA donated foods account for a significant portion of food served in school lunches and nearly half of these foods are processed before delivery to schools. Additional surplus agricultural products are also offered to schools as “bonus” or free USDA foods as they become available.

64%
SFAs
surveyed use
DOD Fresh



School Food Meal Pattern Requirements

All meals provided through the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs must be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans,



food and physical activity guidelines produced jointly by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)¹⁰. Moreover, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (passed in 2010) includes several provisions aimed at improving the quality of school lunch and breakfast for children across the country. One key component called for the USDA to issue new school meal nutrition standards that are consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

In January 2012, USDA issued the new standards summarized below, that require implementation into school lunch for the 2012-2013 school year with phasing in to school breakfast over a three-year period. These new standards marked the most comprehensive changes to the school nutrition environment in more than a generation with the last update to school meals standards being more than 15 years ago. The standards in summary⁹:

- Increase the amount of fruits and vegetables served
- Emphasize whole grain-rich foods
- Require only lower fat and nonfat milk
- Limit calories, and reduce saturated fat and sodium
- Allow “offer versus serve” fruit and vegetable serving options consistent with the Institute of Medicine recommendations¹⁰
- Improve cultural food options as qualifying substitution meal components

School Foodservice Operations and Budgets

School Food Service Directors orchestrate all components of food getting from the vendor to the cafeteria: they are responsible for menu planning, food ordering, tracking and monitoring of nutritional standards to comply with federal requirements and training and management of all kitchen staff.

School FSDs also work with the district business office to oversee the procurement process: they award and manage vendors and contractors, ensure traceability and recall procedures of all products coming through the kitchen and develop and manage budgets. They do all of this while promoting healthy eating, USDA program compliance and reporting for NSLP to the NM PED.

According to interviews with School Food Service Directors conducted for this report, about 40-50% of the total district foodservice budget is spent for food costs; the remaining is expended for non-food costs including labor, training and equipment. The costs to operate school meals programs, including labor and indirect costs such as utilities, have increased at a higher rate than federal reimbursements for school meals. This means that school food authorities are often losing money on the meals they serve. Additionally, school food service programs are from school or district budgets and may be expected to be self-sufficient.



Distribution Companies

Distributors provide schools with food and non-food products on a consistent basis, many are willing to deliver to the most remote of schools on a weekly basis with very short order turn around times (24-48 hours).

These companies provide: diverse and exotic product offerings year round, menu planning and ordering software (complete with required nutritional breakdown of each individual product in a meal pattern), tracking and inventory of ordering (available upon request and broken down into categories if requested), product recall and communication procedures, free/donated products to try new foods, and distribution to individual school sites.

Examples of distributors working with NM schools include: Sysco/US Foods, Shamrock, Affiliated Foods, Ben E. Keith, etc.



Food Service Directors frequently must maintain budgets that at least break even without any assistance from the school's or district's annual budget or general fund. If a food service program turns a profit, that revenue must be put toward improving the program. Through interviews, it was also evident that food service budgets could not be broken down to isolate purchasing for fruit and vegetables, *fresh* fruits and vegetables, and/or *local* food purchasing. This is a potential barrier to the goal of increasing the purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables in school meals. A baseline of current purchasing must be established, therefore necessitating a tracking system for fresh and local produce purchasing.

Contracts with Food Management Companies and mainline distributors include support for many of the school meal processes detailed in graphic—and are contracted by SFAs to provide meals to students. Besides those meals, these companies generally provide: recipes and diverse menu options, required nutritional information, food promotion programs, staff and training, related supplies and equipment, and tracking and monitoring of food costs, labor, ordering, etc.

A growing trend among food management companies is increased attention to environmental sustainability and local food purchasing. This market potential helps to secure farm to school efforts as a mutually beneficial priority for local producers and these large companies. Many districts work with FSMCs to manage their meal programs, 29% of our survey respondents are FSDs working with FSMCs contracted by the district. Examples of FSMCs working in New Mexico schools include: Summit Foodservice, Sodexo, Compass Group, and Canteen of New Mexico, etc.

What is Local?

Definitions for local vary widely depending on the unique geography, climate, where a school is located, distribution and value chain connectivity, and on the abundance of local farmers, producers and processors. Many schools define local as within a certain number of miles from the school, within the county, within tribal boundaries, or within the state. Alternatively, definitions might include more than one state or prioritize regional foods to align with seasonality and variable growing conditions.

Opportunities to Purchase Local Produce

Although challenges exist, state and federal meal programs offer potential avenues through which schools could procure produce from New Mexico farmers. FSDs in NM are using innovative strategies to balance available state and federal funding sources, while complying with various state and federal requirements, and increasing the amount of fresh and often local fruits and vegetables available on the plate.



31%

SFAs surveyed use the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program



29%

SFAs surveyed are working with FSMC

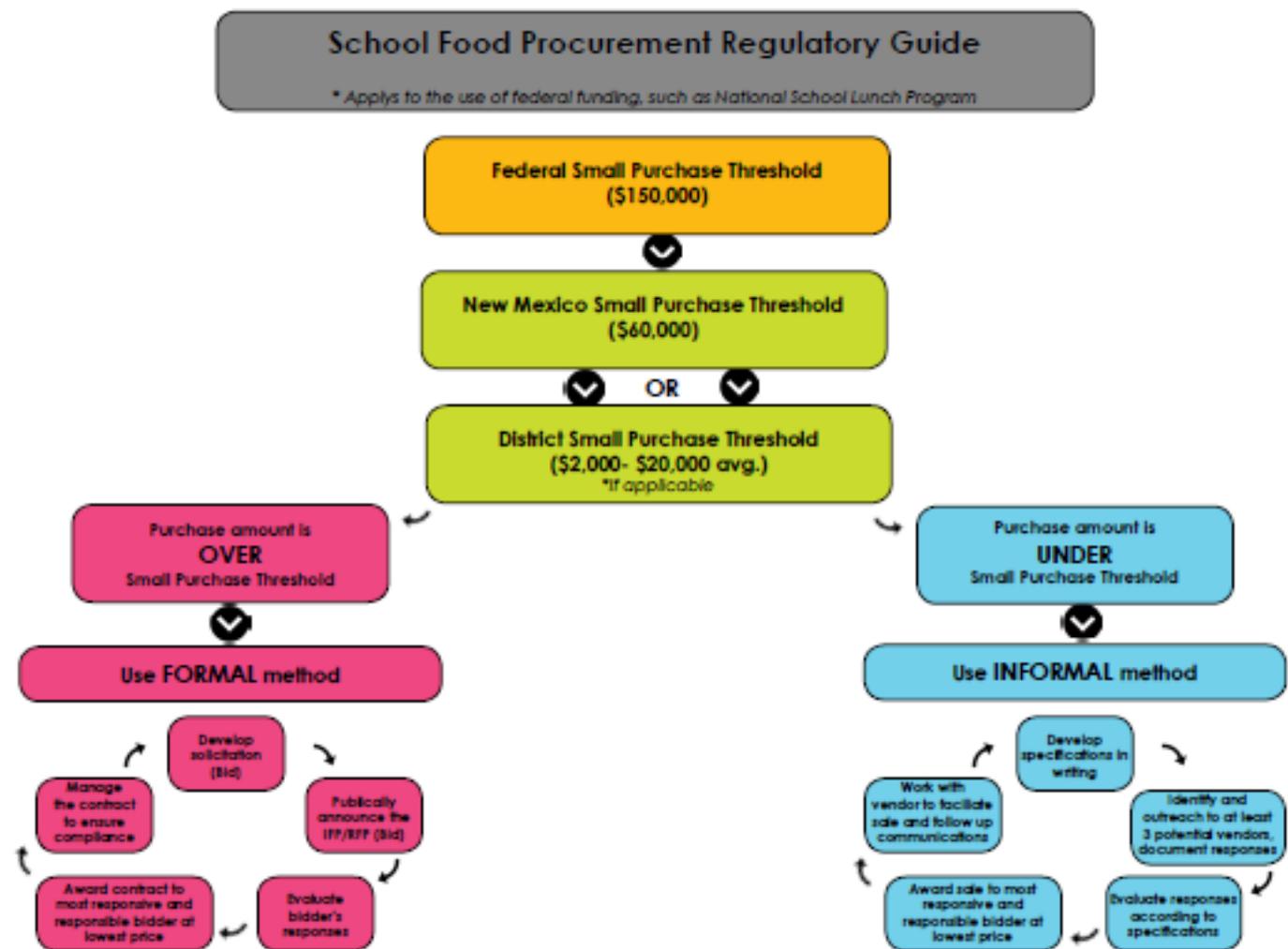
Who Defines Local?

Individual school food authorities (SFAs) are empowered to determine what they define as local. While many state and/or local governments have adopted definitions of local such as “within the state,” schools using a geographic preference when sourcing food for the federal school meal programs are under no obligation to adopt a definition for local that might be in existence in local areas.

Strategies include: Utilizing the maximum amount of programs available based on eligibility and perceived effectiveness, strategic use of commodity entitlement dollars to free up additional funding for local purchasing, “scratch” cooking of commodities in lieu of processing and subsequent fees, training kitchen staff to new cooking and promotion techniques to create more appealing menu options to increase student and adult (paid) meal participation, purchasing fresh products in season- therefore reducing overall cost.

How School Procurement Works:

Proper procurement practices for school meal programs can differ dramatically on the basis of types of funding being utilized, locale, and school board policy, internal norms or on the ground practices, attitudes and willingness to implement new systems, and time constraints. Despite these differences, all school meal programs follow fundamental procurement practices which ensure that the lowest price is being attained for the highest quality product available, foods being served meet industry standards for safety and recall procedure in order to minimize liability and mitigate risk, and that selected vendors are able to meet necessary operational and documentation requirements. Procurement is generally conducted by district student nutrition and business departments utilizing informal or formal methods; processes for documenting pricing, developing solicitations or competitive sealed bids, awarding vendors, and managing contracts.



Farm to Table, September 2014

Proper Procurement Practices

As Taken from USDA Guide for Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Program (2014)

According to the USDA, procurement rules ensure that program benefits are received by eligible schools and children, and that taxpayer dollars are used effectively and efficiently, with no waste or abuse. There are four fundamental concepts related to procuring goods and services for the Child Nutrition Programs using Federal funds: full and open competition, responsible and responsive vendors, the Buy American provision and the role of State and local regulations¹¹.

Full and Open Competition

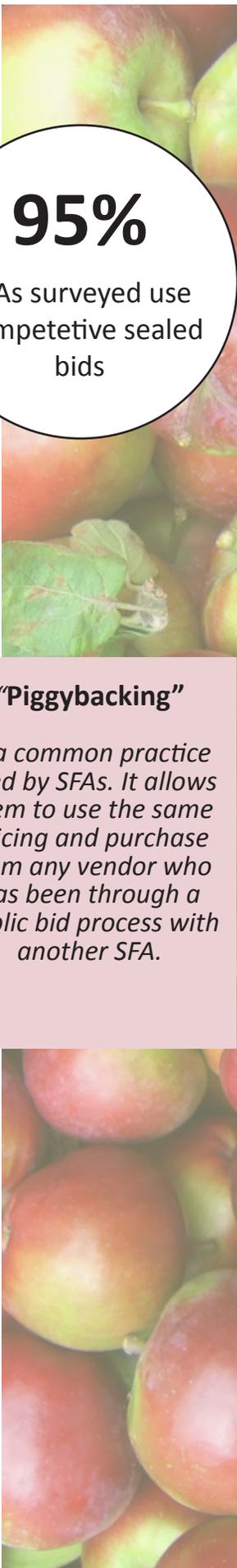
Schools must do everything possible not to restrict competition. The goal is to have as many suppliers as possible (with a minimum of three) respond to every solicitation. For example, in order to ensure full and open competition schools cannot:

- Place unreasonable requirements in order to qualify a vendor to do business (e.g., a school cannot require that a vendor distribute local foods to every school in the district on a daily basis.);
- Require unnecessary experience or excessive bonding (e.g., a school cannot require that vendors have at least 50 years of experience serving schools);
- Award contracts to, or order from, a singular vendor without competition;
- Have organizational conflicts of interest (e.g., a school cannot award a contract to a school board member);
- Make any arbitrary decisions in the procurement process (e.g., a school cannot grant a contract because they have a relationship with a vendor);
- Write bid specifications for products that are too narrow and therefore limit competition;
- Provide insufficient time for vendors to submit bids.

The Buy American Provision

The “Buy American” provision was added to the National School Lunch Act by Section 104(d) of the William F. Goodling Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-786). Regardless of where funding for school meal program originates, any funds that go into the nonprofit school food service account are subject to federal and state procurement requirements, including the “Buy American” provision. The provision outlines the following requirements:

- schools must purchase domestically grown and processed foods, to the maximum extent practicable.
- “domestic commodity or product” is defined as one that is produced and processed in the United States substantially using agricultural commodities that are produced in the United States.



95%

SFAs surveyed use competitive sealed bids

“Piggybacking”

Is a common practice used by SFAs. It allows them to use the same pricing and purchase from any vendor who has been through a public bid process with another SFA.

- “substantially” defined as over 51% of the final processed product consisting of agricultural commodities that were grown in the United States.

State and Local Regulations

Each level of government, from school boards to the U.S. Congress, can make regulations and policies about the use of school meal funds, the purchasing process and bidding requirements, and the goals and practices for using locally grown foods. All school food procurement must always abide by federal and state rules and regulations; local rules can be made more stringent than federal and state policies. Schools must also conduct procurement in accordance with school district policies, those of the municipality and state, and federal requirements if no local regulations exist.

State and local entities may provide specific support (including funding) for local sourcing. In these circumstances, schools must adhere to local and state regulations which can impose additional eligibility and procurement requirements. Additionally, local school boards, student nutrition, and procurement departments may have specific vendor requirements to be considered as eligible to bid as a vendor. Examples of vendor requirements from NM districts include: requiring that vendors hold a certain amount of product liability insurance (\$1 million minimal is standard), traceability and recall process and documentation, and even third party, market driven certifications such as GAP (Good Agricultural Practices).

Responsive and Responsible

To be considered “responsive,” vendors must conform to all of the school’s stated terms and conditions. To be considered “responsible,” vendors must be capable of performing successfully under the terms and conditions of the contract. A supplier who is responsible and submits a responsive offer is one that clearly complies with the solicitation’s terms and conditions, and that possesses, at the time of the contract award, the experience, facilities, reputation, financial resources, and other factors necessary to successfully fulfill the terms of the contract. While price is an important factor, other elements must also be considered when making an award. Schools must ensure they are working with a reputable vendor and receiving a useful product. Regardless of which procurement method is used, awards must always be made only to bidders that are both responsive and responsible.

USDA Tips for Getting Started with Local Procurement

<p>1</p> <p>Discover what is local on the current menu</p> <p>Conduct a menu audit and find out what products the school is already purchasing locally.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Substitute ingredients</p> <p>Explore what products are available locally and substitute a non-local item with a local one. For example, a school in Pennsylvania might think about replacing bananas with apples in the fall.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Serve local products on the salad bar</p> <p>Salad bars offer the perfect opportunity to serve local fruits and vegetables. The offerings can easily be modified as seasons change and most ingredients need minimal preparation.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Start a “harvest of the month” program</p> <p>Consider highlighting one local ingredient every month or each season. Schools may serve the item just once, or may prepare the food in several different ways throughout the month to highlight how it can be used.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Develop new recipes</p> <p>Perhaps the school discovered that there is a local flour mill and it has the capacity to bake fresh rolls once per week.</p>
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Potential Moving Forward: Farm to Table and Farm to Cafeteria

The Farm to Cafeteria program was developed in 2010, with the goal of facilitating sales of local fresh produce to schools across the state, in order to further strengthen the economic livelihoods of New Mexican farmers. Early strategies of the Farm to Cafeteria program were focused on addressing food distribution and district policy challenges. Work focused on improving conditions to increase schools' ability to access local produce. Over the next four years, the Farm to Table's policy and school-based programs developed successful public-private partnerships to support the purchase, distribution, and funding of New Mexico grown food in schools. Through ongoing collaboration and systems change, this innovative work resulted in 63 school food authorities (SFAs) accessing over 300,000lbs of New Mexico grown produce, accounting for over 28% of all school meal programs in the state.

Presently, the Farm to Cafeteria and Farm to School programs aim to create equity within community food systems by improving the health and wellbeing of children, and increasing access to fresh, healthy and place based foods. The Farm to Cafeteria program engages communities in capacity building by providing procurement trainings and technical assistance to school food service directors and local farmers, so that they can purchase directly from farmers in their communities. Farm to Table also supports the development of Farm to School educational programs by increasing awareness, fostering networks and relationship building, and sharing educational resources modified to align with local culture and priorities.

F2C Best Practices for Local Procurement in NM Schools:

The following information represents a compilation of best practices from the field for proper district level procurement of local food.

1. Forecasting: the SFA identifies what fresh and unprocessed fruits and vegetables are currently purchased and estimates the total amount of each product that will be sourced locally.
2. The SFA sends out a Request for Information (RFI) to identify local growers, determine what products are being grown locally, amount of produce available, and the cost of local product.
3. The farmer will determine what products to grow, how much of each product will be available on a weekly basis, the time-frame that the product will be available, and the price per pound for each product. The cost of packing and delivery of the product will be factored into the bid price. A discount price for bulk orders should be given.
4. Depending on the dollar amount of the purchase, the SFA determines whether to use a formal or informal bid process. Purchasing method should be in compliance with federal, state and school district requirements.
5. The SFA sets clear vendor conditions, for example food safety requirements, packing, labeling, and delivery. Determine product specifications with consideration for local variations such as unique product varieties, product imperfections, size variations, etc.
6. If the farmer is unable to meet any of the district vendor requirements, they can contact their local support agencies (cooperative extension, department of ag.) for assistance.
7. Once vendors have been determined, the SFA provides a product and delivery schedule for approved growers.
8. Manage procurement. Monitor local food purchases and determine if produce is meeting product specifications and that farmers are complying with vendor requirements. Keep open dialogue with farmers to determine vendor satisfaction.

Opportunities for Increasing Local Purchasing in New Mexico's Public Schools

Increasing school demand: The trend of local food purchasing by schools has been steadily increasing in recent years. Schools are modifying procurement practices to accommodate local producers, developing specifications for local produce, expanding purchase orders for local produce, and exercising new policy options such as incorporating geographic preference.

Adequate kitchen infrastructure: Many school kitchens across New Mexico are undergoing change to accommodate the federal requirement to increase the use of fruits and vegetables in school meals. Schools are working to incorporate equipment and cold storage needed to handle fresh produce by applying for private and federal support, undergoing redesign, or utilizing central kitchens where food can be processed more efficiently at high volumes.

Public private cooperative distribution systems: Local produce has reached the plate of children all over New Mexico through a successful public-private partnership between the NM Human Services Department and Farm to Table. Because of this collaboration, eligible local farmers are able to utilize the distribution system for the Food and Nutrition Services (FANS) USDA Donated Foods program administered by HSD. Boxes of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables are hitching a ride alongside USDA donated foods to school district central warehouses in all corners of the state.

Farmer coordination and collaboration: In recent years New Mexico farmers have been working together to access new markets in a variety of ways, such as attending production planning meetings, working cooperatively to fill large orders, and coordinating produce drops to school sites. Despite market shifts and ever changing growing conditions, new farmers are accessing school markets every year.

Market readiness training for farmers: A variety of farmer groups, supportive non-profit organizations, public and private partners have been working together to provide trainings for farmers on a variety of subjects, such as production methods, business planning, risk management and traceability, and meeting other school market requirements. For example, NMSU Cooperative Extension Service and Farm to Table have partnered to develop traceability and post-harvest handling trainings based on current school requirements for purchasing.

State investment: There is a history of state investment to support schools to engage in local procurement. All of these appropriations were supported by the New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council (NMFAPC)--2007 state legislation that made \$85,000 recurring for NM grown produce to Albuquerque Public Schools and 2013 state legislation that made \$240,000 available to schools statewide for the purchase of New Mexico grown fresh fruits and vegetables.



“ There’s simply nothing better than a New Mexico apple”

- Lyman Graham, FSD
Carlsbad,
Dexter, Clovis



Potential Barriers to Increasing Local Purchasing in New Mexico's Public Schools

Locus of decision-making: Over all, it must be acknowledged that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work when considering innovative strategies for increasing purchasing of local products for school meals. Although “best practices” will emerge with time, successful local strategies will come from within each school district. School food service directors across the state work in a wide range of social, economic and environmental contexts which greatly impact their strategy and capacity for shifting purchasing norms. These factors include: size of district, number of schools purchasing for, reimbursement rates and federal funding support, and community goals and needs.

School capacity for training and professional development: There is limited capacity for ongoing training and professional development for food service providers to increase the use of fresh products. With school food service budgets being small and staff overcommitted, culinary training to accommodate local purchasing is not, by-and-large, a fiscal priority in a state with “failing” academic scores.

Farm level challenges facing large and small growers: Currently, the supply of local food does not meet the demand. Large New Mexico farms are both not producing the products that schools need and are also locked into contracts with big distributors. If large farms were to produce fruits and vegetables wanted by schools, there persists the concern that farmers are not willing to fill very small orders needed for small schools. There is also a lack of distribution infrastructure to streamline transporting produce efficiently from farm to school. Simultaneously, small and diverse farmers selling direct market (eg. at farmers markets), by necessity, charge higher prices and do not produce at a large enough scale to meet school market demand. Additionally, most small and diverse farmers lack the labor force to scale up, do not have food safety programs, product liability insurance and on farm infrastructure. Given these challenges, it is conceivable that local producers have yet to realize the market potential of supplying to school food programs.

Food safety challenges, perceived and real: There is increasing public concern and publicity around food safety and food recalls. Since there is currently no unified federal food safety standard, it is up to the individual buyer to set vendor requirements. It is also at the buyer's discretion to require a food safety audit from a third party certifying agent. There are many food safety programs that exist (USDA GAPs, Harmonized GAPs, Globalized GAP) and a variety of auditing agencies. Good Agricultural Practices certification can be cost prohibitive for small producers. At times, markets can require that farms hold multiple food safety certifications.

Recognizing the true cost of food and new nutrition requirements: With local and mainstream distributor supply shortages of fresh produce and resulting rising food prices nationwide, consideration must be given to reconciling the cost of healthy food, feasibility of following the new nutrition requirements, and providing healthy food to students.

Stories From the Field... Schools

To hear some people describe it, our school cafeterias have become war zones. On one side of the battlefield are children who supposedly won't eat anything unfamiliar to their palates. On the other side are authoritative government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture dictating ever more stringent dietary regulations for school meals in response to the nation's childhood obesity crisis (35% of New Mexico's third-graders are overweight or obese).

Caught in the crossfire are school food service directors like Lyman Graham, Food and Nutrition Director for New Mexico's Roswell Independent School District. In addition to Roswell, this Director is also responsible for the school districts of Carlsbad and Dexter, communities that serve a combined 17,000 students. Mr. Graham must prepare tens of thousands of meals every school day to picky eaters, respond to cultural preferences (e.g. whole wheat tortillas now required by USDA, but not popular with the districts' Mexican families), and abide by some of the toughest nutritional guidelines in the world. And just to make it interesting, he must do all of this with the princely sum of \$2.73 a meal, less than half of which is available to purchase food.

Introducing children to fresh fruits and vegetables is never easy, even when you're parents of only two kids. But try doing it when you're feeding thousands of children everyday. As Mr. Graham will tell you, that's when it really gets tricky. As a former restaurant owner, he performs his duties with grace and no small measure of creativity. He's installed salad bars in his schools to increase the number and variety of fresh fruit and vegetable offerings, and employs a variety of marketing techniques such as tastings to entice his young charges into the world of healthy eating. And he's not above resorting to a bit of showmanship by flipping burgers and roasting chile over a park grill for 1,000 summer meal children.

All of this seriously matters to Mr. Graham because he knows how important food from the "public plate" is to his kids, 76 percent of whom qualify for the free and reduced meals. But as much as he pursues this set of challenging objectives with relative ease, the one thing he can't abide is plate waste. "I want to feed kids, not the trash barrel," referring to the disproportionate amount of uneaten fruits and vegetables that end up in the cafeteria's waste stream. After working as hard as they do to prepare tasty and nutritious meals, "it's demoralizing for the staff when too much goes uneaten."

One strategy that Mr. Graham now employs to increase healthy eating is the direct purchase of fresh produce from farmers who grow within 20 miles of Roswell. Currently, he's purchasing melons, apples, cucumbers, green chile, and onions from five farmers. The kids love the fruit, and the other items find their way into prepared dishes and salad bars.

The challenges, though, to buying locally in New Mexico are sometimes significant. Variability of supply, lack of uniformity in product quality, and competitive prices have not always worked in the farmers' favor. Lately, the state's all-pervasive drought has put a crimp in farm sales, and nationwide is responsible for a 15 percent spike in produce prices. In the meantime, Mr. Graham notes that government agencies don't increase the reimbursement rates adequately. "The politicians, who are spending five dollars for a latte, won't give schools more money, even after they tell us we must serve more servings of fruits and veg," he notes with an ironic chuckle.

While not a big part of his budget – New Mexico-grown accounts for barely two percent of his food purchases – Mr. Graham, also a former rancher, likes working with farmers. “I try to meet with the farmers in the Pecos River Valley every year,” he says, and has found that the process of “buying local” is made easier, safer, and more efficient through his association with Santa Fe-based Farm to Table. “Since the Colorado cantaloupe scare, everyone is more aware of food safety,” noting the 2011 outbreak of listeria linked to a Colorado farm that killed 33 people. “Farm to Table has been great; they’re talking to farmers about safety, how to hold their product well, and doing things that we as a school can’t.”

Unlike the Roswell School District, Santa Fe Public Schools aren’t new to the buy local trend. Betsy Cull, Assistant Director for Student Nutrition, and her colleagues in the Santa Fe district have been cultivating the fine art of farm to school for 13 years. They’ve even refined the process to the point where they have special bid procedures in place just for farmers. For the second year in a row, Ms. Cull has secured proposals from six area farmers for such items as apples, melons, and for the first time, pinto beans. “We purchased \$45,000 of local farm produce in the 2013/14 school year,” she says, “and that was without the benefit of apples (most of which were wiped out by late spring freezes in 2013). I’m confident we’ll be buying over \$50,000 in 2014/15.”

Some of the challenges that Mr. Graham cited in reference to getting kids to eat fruits and vegetables have been overcome in part by Ms. Cull’s persistence in keeping lots of fresh food on the school menu. “When planning our meals,” she notes, “we’re thinking about what’s local and seasonal. Instead of an orange in the fall we’ll put an apple or slice of melon on the tray.”

She also recognizes that the more frequently children are exposed to fruits and vegetables, the more likely they are to eat them. Since they’ve been working on the food composition of their cafeteria tray for so long now, middle school students – notoriously the most resistant to healthy food – are eating fresh fruits and vegetables because they’ve been doing so from their early days in Santa Fe elementary schools. “We had to do a little work convincing with our staff to use unprocessed produce – opening cans is easier than cutting fresh vegetables – but they’ve come around.” Ms. Cull also noted that canned fruits and vegetables often have more salt and sugar, items that USDA wants schools to use less of.

Likewise, she had to find solutions to obstacles that farmers faced in selling their goods to a large public institution. With one central warehouse, Santa Fe Public Schools give farmers the ease of delivering to a single location rather than dozens of individual schools. Making timely deliveries, given the uncertainties of harvest schedules and driving times, had been a problem for farmers. But that became part of the training process, you might say, as farmers soon learned to comply with the school’s expectations. A more serious obstacle at first was the payment schedule. Public institutions are not known for paying their vendors swiftly, sometimes stretching out a payment to 60 days. For any small business without sufficient cash flow such delays can be a hardship, but as farmers got into a pattern of regular deliveries, the payments, while slow at first became regular.

As farm to school activities expand in Santa Fe, and throughout New Mexico, the demand for local food will grow. As Ms. Cull sees it, there are not enough farmers to go around, both now and in the future. This suggests an opportunity as well as a major challenge, one that will only be resolved as schools learn the valuable lessons acquired over 13 years in Santa Fe, and as farmers recognize that institutional markets are opening up for them. This gradual coming together of supply and demand not only bodes well for this growing partnership, but should also be good news for New Mexico’s kids.

Summer Meal Programs

In addition to schools being able to purchase New Mexico Grown produce during the school year, there are other opportunities for locally grown produce to reach children through summer meal programs offered by the New Mexico Public Education Department and the NM Children, Youth, and Family Department in partnership with local agencies and organizations.

Terrie Rodriguez, Director of the Youth and Family Services Division for the City of Santa Fe noted the importance of the summer meal programs and how reducing sugary snacks and increasing fresh fruits and vegetables being served improved the behavior of summer participants.

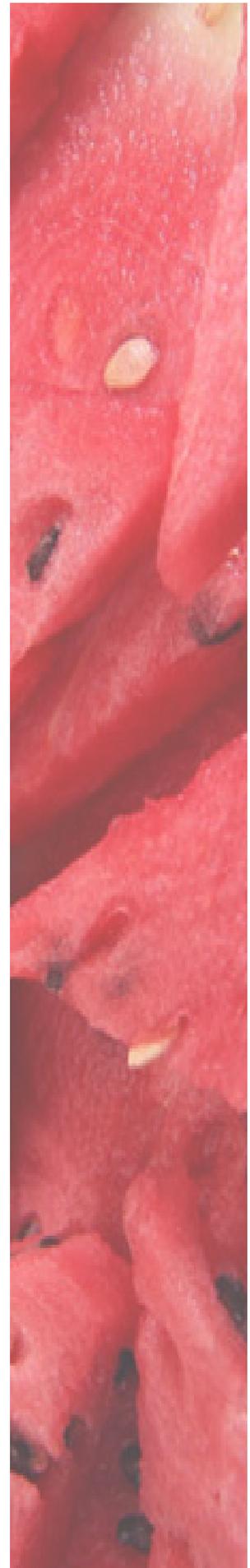
Rodriguez explained,

“The City of Santa Fe has a partnership with the Santa Fe Public Schools to provide childcare for families who cannot afford the many summer camps offered in our community. Santa Fe Public Schools provides food for our youth through the Federal Nutrition program. Every day the children and the under 18 year old staff members, receive two hot, balanced meals. A couple of years ago we began to provide fresh fruit and vegetables to the sites to prepare snacks. We thought it would be a fun activity for youth to learn about how to prepare their own snacks. It went from simple celery with ranch dressing to the big hit this summer, making guacamole with whole grain chips. In coordination with the Schools, our staff will do educational presentations on the importance of drinking water, eating five fruits and vegetables every day as well as actually preparing their fruits and vegetables in healthy ways.

The result we have seen has been a reduction in the behavioral contracts necessary each summer. The staff reported that the youth are more calm and participate more readily in activities. We feel there is a direct correlation between the reduction in sugary snacks and increase in fresh fruits and vegetables to improve the behavior of the summer participants.”

Both the NM CYFD Summer Food Service Program and the NM PED’s Seamless Summer meal program (SSO) receive federal funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). These summer meal programs provide meals to New Mexico’s children (under 18) during the summer months (June through the first week of August).

CYFD’s Summer Food Service Program provides children with over 600 meal sites. During last year’s summer food service program, 1.8 million meals were served to children throughout the state of New Mexico.



CYFD reimburses statewide sponsoring organizations (administering agencies) for the administration and service of meals at approved meal sites when school is not in session. The meals are free and no registration is required. The New Mexico Public Education Department provides a similar program usually operated by school food service directors. For the summer of 2013, 44 school districts participated in SSO covering 229 sites for this summer. The estimated daily meals statewide included 23,854 breakfasts, 34,870 lunches, and 2,400 snacks, totaling 61,124 summer meals/snacks.

Combined, CYFD and PED served 1,861,124 summer meals/snacks in 2013 that required at least one serving of fruit/vegetable. Similar to the National School Lunch Program, the fruit/vegetable requirement¹² does not have to be fresh and is usually procured as a canned or frozen product (or as juice). The convenience and price point of canned/frozen products and the availability of canned/frozen product through the USDA Commodity food program makes it challenging for food providers to incorporate fresh produce into their summer feeding programs, in general, whether it is sourced locally or not.

82%
SFAs surveyed provide
summer meals



NM PED Seamless Summer Meal Program Feeding Site,
Franklin Vista Apartments, Anthony, NM

Corrections Facility Meal Programs

In the past, some New Mexico corrections facilities have provided horticultural and livestock programs as job training and to supply their own food needs, but when facilities had to tighten their budgetary belts, these programs were among the first to go. When considering Farm to Corrections, it is worth noting the value of “horticulture therapy” as a parallel strategy to reduce recidivism while increasing the supply of locally grown produce. This could also contribute to reducing expenditures associated with repeat offenders in the penal system. Numerous New Mexico corrections facilities are currently considering developing such programs.

The information provided in this section came from document review and from a July 2014 survey of food costs coordinated by Farm to Table in collaboration with the New Mexico Association of Counties Corrections Facilities Affiliate¹. The survey was sent to the 29 adult and 12 juvenile corrections and county-run facilities in the state; the themes provided below represent the nine adult facilities and eight juvenile facilities that responded. In addition, interviews were conducted with state, county, juvenile and local facilities managers, program coordinators, and food service providers. Reviews of food and facility procurement requirements, annual reports, and strategic plans were also used to inform this report.

State-run Corrections Facilities

The New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) administers state-run facilities that are responsible for the custody, care, and rehabilitation of over 6,800 men and women incarcerated in the eleven prisons statewide (six state and five privately operated) and over 18,000 offenders in the community under supervision². The NMCD is responsible for public safety, “the maintenance of safe and secure prison environments coupled with vigorous community supervision programs that offer offenders the necessary pro-social skills, attitudes, and beliefs for successful reintegration and return to our communities” (p.1)³.

County correctional facilities fall under the jurisdiction of each New Mexico County. There are 29 adult facilities that house an average population of 8,157 with a total capacity of 8,949 beds. Counties also operate 12 juvenile facilities with a total capacity of 392 beds. In 2013-14 they averaged a daily population of 198⁴. There are also municipal facilities that are not reported on in this document.



Based on state appropriations alone, the New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) is the fifth largest agency in state government. It receives 4.7 percent of the total general fund appropriation to state agencies and universities, however, the recent economic downturn caused a reduction to the NMCD's budget of 12.6 percent, or \$40.4 million from Fiscal Year (FY) 09 to FY12.

These budget changes reduced the NMCD's ability to create or expand programs. In FY13 the budget increased by 2.8 percent from the previous year, but remained \$32.5 million below FY09 levels. Despite these cuts, the NMCD is employing creative solutions to start new programs using existing resources⁵.

Regulations Guiding New Mexico Corrections Food Service

All state operated correction facility meal programs in New Mexico must adhere to the same rules, regulations, procurement bid processes, and dietary standards required through the Standards for the Administration of Correctional Agencies, (ACA)⁶. These procedures ensure that NMCD food service programs meet the nutritional needs of inmates and are prepared in accordance with health and safety regulations.

How Corrections Facilities Procurement Works

As identified in interviews completed for this report, there are four major variations in how corrections facilities procure and prepare food:

- 1) Adult facilities contract with a corporation (eg. Aramark or Sodexo) that provides all services including: staffing, procuring food, and preparing meals.
- 2) Adult facilities staff their own kitchens and contract with a food distribution company such as Sysco for food and other related supplies for meals.
- 3) Juvenile centers follow separate federal School Nutrition standard guidelines. These centers prepare food on site and contract, on an annual basis, with a food distribution company such as Sysco, for their food requirements.
- 4) County facilities that house both juveniles and adults average overall food prices in their contracts, yet will still adhere to School Nutrition Rules for the juveniles.

Overview of Food Provisions

All correction facilities whether state, county or private, serve three meals per day. Nutrient content of food provided by each institution is reviewed at least annually by a qualified nutritionist or dietician to ensure that nationally recommended allowances for basic nutrition are met. Institution food service supervisors conduct menu evaluations at least quarterly to "verify adherence to the established basic daily servings." (p.3)⁷ According to the New Mexico Corrections Department Food Service Procedures, food expenditures are estimated by each facility in collaboration with the food service contractor. Purchase of food service supplies ("non-food" items like disposable containers, cutlery, etc) are the responsibility of the contractor and must be in compliance with the terms and conditions of the food service contract⁸.

Farming and Food Production at Correctional Facilities

Although time constraints limited this research to focus exclusively on the food needs of corrections facilities in New Mexico, there are successful horticultural programs for ex-offenders being run by local organizations (like La Plazita Institute in South Valley Albuquerque). These programs provide a more comprehensive approach to reducing recidivism and the costs associated with high rates of reoffending. In addition to improving fresh foods in the penal system, such programs also teach life skills and provide job training.

in South Valley Albuquerque). These programs could provide a more comprehensive approach to reducing recidivism and the costs associated with high rates of reoffending. In addition to improving fresh foods in the penal system, horticulture programs inside facilities could teach life skills and provide job training.

At some facilities, horticulture and food preparation have historically been optional or required work activities. In the early 2000s, the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility (CNMCF) at Los Lunas had a farm program operating in conjunction with the New Mexico State University Agriculture Science Center where men harvested crops to feed beef cattle and also milked dairy cows⁹. According to the Valencia County News Bulletin, Warden Ron Lytle reported: “there are a lot more programs here than people know about. That (the farm program) is one of the programs we like the best. Our mission is to protect the public, the economy and the environment as much as possible.”¹⁰ The farm program provided vocational skill building and grew fresh produce for the state prison system but was suspended due to costs and the difficulty in meeting meal pattern requirements.

In regard to regulations pertaining to food production, a provision in the New Mexico Correction Facilities Food Service Procedures states that: “when required by statute, food products that are grown or produced within the system are inspected and approved by the appropriate government agency (and) there is a distribution system that ensures prompt delivery of foodstuffs to institution kitchens.” (p.5)¹¹

According to interviews conducted for this report, it was learned that the Bernalillo County Juvenile Detention Center is developing a horticulture program in the fall of 2014. Additionally, the Center is working through details to purchase locally grown produce in their upcoming bid process. As long as they procure less than \$20,000, the purchase will not affect their current bid negotiations with larger distributors. Catherine Sneed, founder of the San Francisco (CA) County -based Jail Horticulture Project in 1982 and The Garden Project serving extremely high risk youth, has demonstrated that horticultural programs can reduce the chance of ex-offenders returning to jail from the average 80% recidivism to less than 25%. “When we lack the faith that these people can change, we’re really expressing our lack of faith in our own humanity,” Sneed¹² summarized.

Currently food production is not a common occurrence within correctional facilities. However, several state and county facilities have significant land holdings, and in some cases, water rights. The State Penitentiary south of Santa Fe has land and water rights that are being leased to graze cattle. In the past, the facility leased land to a rancher who raised buffalo and for several years the prison ran a rehabilitation program focused on wild horse training.

The Springer Correctional Center (SCC) in Northeastern NM had housed the New Mexico Boys’ School with approximately 4,000 acres of open land. In November 2005, the Children, Youth & Families Department closed the juvenile facility. Senator Pete Campos, in whose district the facility is located, stated that the land could be used for agricultural production for the region (personal communication with Senator Campos).

Correctional Facilities' Food Service Management

All of the private correction facilities in New Mexico are managed by outside entities (eg, The Geo Group, a national corporation that manages prison facilities) and most of the state or county facilities contract with a management company such as Trinity, Inc that provides full food service including staff, food procurement, and meal preparation¹³. Contracts are structured so that the facility agrees upon a specific price per inmate. County facilities sign new contracts annually while State facilities may choose to contract once every four years. The contracted corporation will use the most efficient methods of sourcing and preparation for cost saving. All food service providers must adhere to stringent food safety protocols; however, nutrient quality of food offered may vary considerably. While there are some requirements in adult facilities for providing adequate meals, menu options may consist of less fresh produce because rigorous nutritional standards such as those for school and senior programs do not exist across all state institutions.

Correctional Facility Spending

The average per person spending for a state or private facility in fiscal year 2012 was \$97.37 per day with a spread of \$65.41 to \$126.03¹⁴. See "Prison Cost Per Day Per Inmate in New Mexico Facilities" Table, Corrections Facilities Appendix, for specifics on each facility. While only total per day costs are available for State and private facilities, the New Mexico Association of Counties/Farm to Table survey conducted with County-operated facilities provides information specific to food and meal costs. Out of the 29 adult county facilities, nine reported their most recent annual food costs and average meal costs covering July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. An average meal cost was \$1.87 ranging from \$1.02 per meal to \$2.60 per meal.

Of the twelve juvenile facilities, eight reported their costs. Juvenile facilities spend, on average, \$1.79 per meal with a spread from \$1.43 to \$3.98. The New Mexico Public Education Department enforces and audits compliance with USDA regulations at all juvenile facilities. Six out of eight juvenile detention centers answered the question "How much of your meal program includes fresh fruits and vegetables per meal?" The average response was 47 percent of the meals include a serving of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Due to the low percentage of responses from the New Mexico Association of Counties Survey of Food Costs, the above information cannot be generalized to all County correctional facilities. Additionally, it was apparent that some facilities calculated direct food costs, while others calculated food costs and costs associated with preparing foods. Conducting a more comprehensive survey including follow up interviews with non-respondents could provide a broader perspective to aid future Farm to Corrections work.

County juvenile detention centers are required to adhere to the federal School Nutrition Standards.

\$1.79

Average cost per meal in
NM Juvenile Detention
Centers

Stories From the Field...

Food, Farming & Corrections Facilities

Anne Martinez, assistant director of administration for the Bernalillo County Youth Services Center (juvenile detention), is a master craftsperson utilizing modern psychology tools in hopes of preventing young people from one day “breaking bad.” Though some might view Ms. Martinez as just another liberal social worker, on closer inspection it becomes clear that her approach to juvenile detention is informed by the best science on human behavior. “Since the human neural cortex, which helps us control our behavior, is not fully formed in young people,” she explained to me, “delinquency, is a normal state of development for everyone. That is why we generally look at youth as a grace period.” For most of us, including this writer whose youthful indiscretions are best left concealed, a strong family and economic security buffer us from the rages that youth is heir to. But for those whose childhoods are filled with socio-economic trauma, the juvenile courts and detention system are often an early stop on a rocky life’s journey.

Under Ms. Martinez’s leadership, food and horticulture are about to become one more way to steer young people onto the right path. In partnership with Albuquerque Public Schools, the Bernalillo and Sandoval County Cooperative Extension Service, and La Plazita Institute, about 1000 square feet of the detention center’s outdoor recreation area will be covered by a brand new hoop house. The residents whose ages range from 12 to 18, will spend time during their detainment working in the greenhouse, tending plants, and even harvesting food they will later eat in the cafeteria. Moreover, the care and the feeding of this garden will be an experiential learning component of other educational activities that will include classroom teaching on food and nutrition.

While not wanting to overstate the therapeutic value of gardening, Ms. Martinez hopes that it can be one step in rebuilding empathy, a critical human control mechanism that is too often underdeveloped in the young people who end up at the detention center. Already that spirit of healing is evident in a giant seed mural that is on display in one of the center’s common areas. It’s comprised entirely of dyed pumpkin, sunflower, and beans seeds, and depicts humankind’s connection to the earth.

What Ms. Martinez is doing with food is mirrored and supported in the detention center’s kitchen. Mark Saiz, the facility’s food service manager, feeds three meals a day to an average daily population of 45 youth (the Bernalillo facility has room for 75). For breakfast and lunch, he’s required to follow the same nutritional guidelines as any public school receiving USDA reimbursements, but for dinner, which public schools generally do not serve, he is free to substitute a sweet for fresh fruit. “These kids are used to monster drinks and pizza, so we throw a lot of fruits and vegetables in the trash,” notes Mr. Saiz. “But the longer the youth are with us, the more fruits and vegetables they eat.”

Mr. Saiz, however, is proud of the changes he’s made to the menus. Citing the fact that he got rid of much of the salt and sugar that had found their way into the meals, he notes that about one-third of the \$205,000 food budget goes directly to fruits and vegetable purchases, most of

which are fresh. While initially ambivalent about sourcing more food from New Mexico farmers, he warmed up to the idea when he reminded himself that he tries to shop local when he's in his hometown of Belen.

"Anything we can get from farmers would be great," he said, even adding, "heck yeah, I want to help local farmers!" He feels that he can work with their primary food vendor, Sysco, to shift more of his purchases to local growers.

What Anne Martinez has in mind, along with what Mark Saiz is doing in the kitchen, may not sound like big steps in the direction of a more localized food system, they do represent potent seeds from which robust growth can occur. Not only could more be done in the Bernalillo facility, these ideas could migrate across all of New Mexico's 12 juvenile detention centers with the hope that young people's lives can be turned around with the help of good food in their bellies and their hands in the soil. Quoting Mother Theresa, Ms. Martinez says, "Life is not about doing great things, it's about doing small things with great love."



Seed Art Mural, Bernalillo County Youth Detention Center

*Photo Courtesy of: Jade Leyva, Curator for SEEDS: A Collective Voice Multimedia Exhibits
Community Seed Mural Projects Co-Artist & Coordinator*

Hospital Meal Programs

There are 57 hospitals and medical centers across the state of New Mexico¹ most of which are private entities and abide by their respective food procurement policies. Some hospitals are publicly funded and serve specific patient populations like Indian Health Service and the Veteran Affairs Medical Center.

Over the past four years, hospitals in New Mexico have requested assistance from Farm to Table and other organizations in developing Farm to Hospital initiatives. There are efforts in place to procure local food for hospital cafeterias, establish a weekly farmers market on site, organize a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) system for staff, and to develop a Traditional Foods garden on site to educate patients about healthy eating and gardening as part of a diabetes prevention program.

The information provided in this section came from document review and interviews with two representatives from Presbyterian Health Care Services and one representative from Plains Regional Medical Center to highlight existing efforts in place to support Farm to Hospital initiatives.

Farm to Hospital Challenges

The challenges hospitals face in procuring local fruits and vegetables are similar to those of other institutions:

1. Identifying farmers in their respective areas who have the capacity to supply their food needs and
2. Navigating hospital vendor requirements and procurement protocols to enable local purchasing. Hospitals are used to procuring from national/regional food service companies and distributors. Hence, hospital food service managers, procurement officers, and upper administrators realize their own institution's vendor requirements and procurement protocols might create barriers for qualifying a farmer as a vendor.

Despite the challenges for making a Farm to Hospital connection in the cafeteria, hospitals and clinics are developing a variety of fresh and/or local food connections through "health and wellness" programs. Below are snapshots of the Presbyterian System and the Plains Regional Medical Center in Clovis, two examples of how New Mexico hospitals are partnering with the communities they serve to connect fresh or locally grown produce to patients, families, staff, and the greater community.



Food Procurement at Presbyterian

Presbyterian Central New Mexico hospitals (PCNM) include Presbyterian Hospital, Presbyterian Kaseman Hospital, and Presbyterian Rust Medical Center serving Bernalillo, Sandoval, Tarrant, and Valencia counties. The communities served by PCNM are part of a larger health system called Presbyterian Healthcare Services (PHS) or Presbyterian. Presbyterian's overarching purpose is to improve the health of the patients, and members of the communities it serves.

Presbyterian operates eight hospitals in Albuquerque, Clovis, Española, Rio Rancho, Ruidoso, Socorro and Tucumcari; a statewide health plan; a growing multi-specialty medical group; and three community ambulance systems. Presbyterian is the second largest private employer in New Mexico with more than 9,500 employees and provides services to one in three New Mexicans.

Important dimensions to consider regarding food procurement at Presbyterian:

- Presbyterian is a private hospital, not a public institution;
- The hospital food service department uses a competitive bid, and awards one-year terms to multiple vendors;
- Vendor requirements for purveyors of fresh produce include: product-specific information to include in a Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan, traceability and recall program, and product liability insurance.

Presbyterian held community forums to understand what is preventing healthier lifestyles and what are viable ideas for improving health in the community. These forums attracted over 125 people in areas with the highest concentration of individuals utilizing Presbyterian services: Española, Clovis, Tucumcari, Ruidoso, Rio Rancho, Albuquerque and Los Lunas. A "Health Needs Assessment" and "Community Health Implementation Plan"² was developed for each of the communities.

Some key recommendations in the Health Implementation Plans for addressing healthy eating and food access in their participating counties include:

In the Community....

1. Incentivize healthy eating by providing insurance discounts
2. Cover nutritional resources through insurance
3. Organize veggies on wheels that stop by schools
4. Explore and implement strategies for systemic change. Steps include:
 - assessing the whole food system that hospitals support; analyzing the complexities of the system; assessing and selecting a focus; and, putting in place solutions that would address the complexities. Potential partners include Community Health Representatives and Food Policy Councils.
5. Create access to locally grown foods through farmers markets with potential partners being: businesses, food cooperatives, farmers markets, Women, Infants, and Children Program and the Roadrunner Food Bank

In the Cafeteria....

1. Hospitals can provide and model tasty, healthy food
2. Hospitals can prioritize use of locally grown foods

Presbyterian Central New Mexico- Improving Access to Local, Fresh Food

Leigh Caswell, Community Health Manager at Presbyterian Healthcare Services (PHS), actively participates in local and statewide agricultural collaboratives. She summarized Presbyterian's support for local food projects below and underscored PHS's commitment to identify local food sources to supply their cafeterias and develop a plan for expansion over the next three years. Presbyterian in central New Mexico serves 4,030,593 meals, annually. In Albuquerque, it hosts the Growers' Market at Presbyterian Hospital, pilots the FreshRx program (veggie prescriptions for patients to shop at farmers markets), subsidizes several La Cosecha Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) memberships for Nurse Family Partnership low income families, and supports New Mexico Food Corps service members and their school garden and food education projects in Albuquerque Public Schools and at La Plazita Institute. Presbyterian also sponsors the Rail Yards' Market, Downtown Albuquerque Growers' Market and funds the South Valley Cooking School.

Beyond the metro area, Presbyterian provides 2-for-1 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (former Food Stamps program) incentives statewide, supports Rio Puerco Alliance's mobile market at three Navajo Chapter Houses, and partners with MoGro Mobile Grocery and the Notah Begay III Foundation in San Felipe Pueblo. Additionally, Presbyterian supports Galloping Grace Youth Ranch, the Española Community Market, the development of community gardens in Torrance County, and sponsors the printing of the New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association's local food guide.

Plains Regional Medical Center: Clovis-Promoting Health Through Gardens and Active Living

According to Mitch Gray, Coordinator for Healthy Kids Curry County, the Plains Regional Medical Center (PRMC) has been very supportive of local food production and promoting healthy eating and active living projects and events in Clovis.

Most relevant to implementing Farm to Hospital initiatives: PRMC has donated a portion of land to develop the Patchwork Farms Community Garden, contributed over \$400 worth of lumber and materials to develop the raised beds and will also donate the water. The Medical Center is considering allowing more of their land to be used for growing food and for educational purposes and there are also plans to use produce from the garden in their diner as harvest allows. This is a process that will take some time to develop but one that will come to fruition soon.

Additionally, PRMC staff volunteer on the Healthy Kids Food System Team that developed the Community Garden and they help plan and implement other food system initiatives in the community.



4,030,593

Annual number of
meals served in
Presbyterian Central
New Mexico

Federal Programs Supporting Farm to Hospital Initiatives

The 2014 Farm Bill will provide support for a new umbrella initiative: the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) that will provide grants to community organizations wanting to increase access to healthy food for low-income individuals. The grants will provide additional funds to shoppers who use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and purchase fruits and vegetables. Because community based organizations require “matching funds” in order to apply for FINI, this initiative provides opportunities for local organizations to partner with hospitals interested in investing in preventative health care initiatives that connect health to food and increase demand for locally grown fruits and vegetables.

Through FINI community groups can collaborate with hospitals, health centers, and health insurers. For the community groups, financial support from the health organizations is a way to leverage resources. For the health organizations, providing this support is a way to form prevention-focused partnerships in the surrounding community. And the Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides a policy infrastructure that encourages such collaborations.



Future Site of Clovis Community Garden, Supported by Presbyterian Plains Regional Medical Center

Photo Courtesy of: Mitch Gray Healthy Kids Curry County Coordinator

Senior Meal Programs

The information presented below is a compilation of interview responses with management of senior service organizations in Grant, Luna, Valencia, and Santa Fe Counties; document review pertinent to food procurement regulations; practices for senior meals; and, site visits to Santa Fe County Senior Centers. A standardized list of questions was used to guide the interviews for this report (see Senior Food Program Appendix 1 for full list of questions). These interviews were conducted after a written questionnaire was sent to senior service organizations in eleven counties throughout the state of which few written responses were received. The interviews represent a small sampling, state-wide, of senior centers' produce needs, their interest and ability to procure local produce, and the current barriers to procuring that produce. The information provided here focuses, primarily, on the non-metro Area Agency on Aging (AAA) that serves 32 of the 33 counties.

Why Senior Meals? Addressing Senior Food Insecurity

New Mexico ranks second among all states for older adult risk of hunger: 18.05% of all seniors in New Mexico compared to the U.S. average of 15.21%¹. Individuals are considered to be “experiencing the threat of hunger” if s/he answers yes to one or more of the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) eighteen question Core Food Security Module that establishes official food insecurity rates of U.S. households.

Seniors living in non-metro areas of the U.S. have historically been at higher risk for hunger compared to those living in metro areas, despite recent evidence of possible convergence². Critically relevant in the primarily rural state of New Mexico is the differing determinants of hunger between metro and non-metro areas. For example, the risk of hunger among younger seniors is more stark in non-metro compared to metro areas³.

Similar to national trends, New Mexico individuals over 65 are the fastest-growing segment of the state’s population with an estimation that half of the state’s population will be over 65 and under 18 by 2030 setting the stage for “ ‘a double dependency’ problem because those age groups demand services such as schools for young people and health care for elderly. As New Mexico confronts the cost of those services, the state will grapple with a shrinking working age population—a major producer of tax revenue through their jobs and spending.⁴” Those concerned with New Mexico food systems face parallel fears and hope that improved Farm to Senior Meals



AARP
Learn About Hunger

<http://www.aarp.org/aarp-foundation/our-work/hunger/learn-about-hunger/>

linkages in the future will be one of several interventions able to address the growing senior population needs, especially for healthy and fresh food to support their vitality and good health.

For 30% of New Mexico seniors, government-provided congregate and/or home-delivered meals are their primary sources of nourishment⁵. More than 49,000 elders in New Mexico communities eat meals through congregate or home delivered meal programs, according to Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department, Gino Rinaldi⁶. One quarter of New Mexico's population lives in rural areas⁷ with seniors in these communities facing multiple challenges to obtaining healthy food, or any food at all, through government services.

Who provides meals to low-income seniors?

Currently, there are over 300 organizations in New Mexico that receive federal and state funds through the cabinet-level department of Aging and Long Term Services Division (ALTSD) and provide a range of services to 115,400 seniors throughout the state. According to ALTSD, "congregate and home-delivered meals are among the most critical services provided (to seniors)", adding that "more than 3.6 million meals are provided each year."⁸ Moreover, because senior meals must follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (see next section for further explanation), these 3.6 million meals require a minimum of one serving of fruit and one serving of vegetables, 7.2 million servings of produce that could potentially be sourced from New Mexico growers.

How does senior food procurement work?

The cabinet department of Aging and Long Term Services administers the federal standards set forth in the Older Americans Act (OAA). Section 339 of the OAA states that meals must meet the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans; provide to each meal recipient a minimum of one-third of the Dietary Reference Intakes (the appropriate amount of vitamins and minerals needed for healthy individuals), if one meal is served, two-thirds if two meals are served, and 100 percent if 3 meals are served; and comply with provisions of State and local food service laws⁹.

Aging and Long Term Services Department works through the Aging Network and Services Division which then provides services through four organizations: the Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging (non-metro AAA), Albuquerque AAA, Navajo AAA, and Indian AAA (see Senior Food Program Appendix 2 for diagram and further description of divisions). The non-metro AAA serves 32 of the 33 counties in New Mexico, providing benefits to 35,230 persons 60 years of age and above, without any income requirement. These services are delivered via 70 providers statewide, which then offer direct services through senior centers and home-delivery meal programs. All senior meal programs throughout the state must adhere to the same rules, regulations, procurement bid processes, and dietary standards as required through the Aging and Long-term Services Division (ALTSD) and compliant with the federal mandates in the Older Americans Act (OAA). Providers of senior services have four-year contracts after which point, a new bidding process occurs.

Implementation of the above standards varies drastically in New Mexico and primarily between the more affluent urban areas and those more rural, resource poor communities. Some senior food programs have matched county and city-level funds, or private funding to assist in addressing the issue of senior hunger in New Mexico, while others operate with much smaller budgets, and face greater distribution challenges. The congregate meals program has an annual Statewide budget of \$9,566,000 (2013) providing 1,182,659

meals which means that about eight dollars is spent on procuring, providing and offering each plate to a hungry senior in NM. The home delivered meals program operates with a budget of \$10,318,000 and provides 1,368,785 meals throughout the state spending \$7.54 per plate. Federal OAA funding provides reimbursement to senior meal programs at \$1.68 per plate for congregate meals and \$0.69 per plate for those that are home delivered meals. All sites receive federal and state funds while some local municipalities contribute additional money to their local senior meal programs (which makes up the difference between federal reimbursement and total cost of each meal).

As stated above, the 70 service providers for the non-metro AAA, (see citation for full list)¹⁰ must adhere to the strict nutrition regulations outlined in the OAA. Menus are submitted monthly to the non-metro AAA and approved by a contracted private company, Global Nutrition Services, (as there is not at this time, a registered dietitian on staff at the non-metro AAA to approve menus). Substitutions must be submitted one week in advance. See Senior Food Appendix 3 for an example of an approved monthly meal pattern with nutrient table and Appendix 4 for the substitution guide. All ingredient purchases over \$20,000 must be sourced through vendors approved through the New Mexico State Purchasing Department (NMPD) bidding process (currently vendors are: Shamrock, Sysco and Ben E. Keith) (See Senior Food Appendix 5 for a copy of NMPD bid).

Findings

Below are the two primary themes identified during interviews and document review:

Currently, few senior meal programs offer fresh produce and none source from local growers: The service providers interviewed for this report primarily source frozen or canned fruits and vegetables for senior meals. Three primary reasons for the lack of fresh ingredients include: lack of infrastructure in kitchens for processing fresh produce; insufficient staff to carry out necessary preparation, and the cost of fresh produce waste if not processed before decomposition ie: it takes more planning to use 100% of what is sourced fresh before it goes bad. Although all meal sites must follow the same federal and state nutrition guidelines for their meals, interpretation and ability to implement may vary and it was shared that some seniors rarely receive fresh produce as a part of their meal. To the best of our knowledge, no government-run senior food program in New Mexico procures local produce for their meal programs.

Innovative procurement directors and senior meal program directors with either the ability to fundraise, or with more staff and infrastructure resources, have “gone the extra mile” to source fresh ingredients (though not local). For instance, the executive director of the Luna County Senior Citizens Center



\$8.00

Average cost per congregate senior meal

\$7.54

Average cost per home delivered senior meal

shops at Walmart for fresh ingredients because she values seeing the product before she buys it. These purchases are under the \$20,000 cap for purchasing outside a given contract. However, she is afraid to buy from local farmers because she is unclear of food safety regulations.

Through interviews and an analysis of senior meal patterns, the following were identified as the five most purchased items that could ultimately be sourced fresh and locally: beans, potatoes, beets, apples, and spinach. See Senior Food Appendix 4 for AAA Food Substitution Guide.

Transportation is an overarching challenge: Transportation is a challenge in rural areas, whether it is for seniors getting to meal sites or food getting to seniors. Some seniors cannot physically get to a meal site either due to a lack of their own transportation or lack of public transportation available to the congregate meal site. Home delivery and shuttle service are only available within five miles of senior meal sites. Although specific numbers are unknown, it is likely that a large number of seniors in rural areas of the state fall into this category. Shortening the distance between where food is produced and the senior center at which it is consumed could be a win-win scenario addressing food needs and transportation challenges.

“Seniors want choices. They light up when they see the color at our salad bar.”

- Jose Campos,
Older Americans
Program Director:
Valencia County



Stories From the Field...

Senior Centers

With New Mexico slated to become one of the “oldest” states in the U.S. – as in the percentage of residents over 60 – the need for senior services will grow proportionally. And since an aging population brings a host of issues not frequently faced in one’s younger years, from living on fixed incomes to special dietary needs to limited mobility, the need for expanded and more diversified services will take on an increased urgency.

You can see the upward trend already with services like those at the Valencia County Senior Nutrition Program. According to Jose Campos, the county’s Older Americans Program Director, his meal program that served 112,000 meals in 2011 shot up to over 131,000 in 2013. Look closer at those numbers and you’ll see that over 55 percent of them, or 72,000 meals, were home delivered. The rest were served at the five congregate meal sites scattered around the county. As more people join the growing ranks of the elderly, and more of those living less mobile and often solitary lives, the need for home-delivered meals will grow as well.

The number of meal participants doesn’t just tell a demographic story. It’s also a testament to the leadership of people like Campos and his staff of cooks, bakers, and volunteers who are singularly dedicated to the task of bringing the highest quality meals to the county’s seniors. With a degree in hotel management from Northern Arizona University and culinary stints at the Grand Canyon and college dining services, Campos knows his way around the kitchen. “Seniors want healthier food and variety, and don’t want to be fed like kids,” he told me. “But they do have health issues; many doctors refer their patients to our program because they recognize our attention to nutrition in our meal preparation.”

Having been invited to join over 100 seniors for lunch one day at the Belen Senior Center, I must say that I was mildly shocked by how good the food was – attractive, tasty, and yes, healthy. A beef taco, pinto beans, macaroni salad, bag of carrots, a pear, one percent low fat milk, and a green salad from the salad bar (the addition of which Campos credits with doubling the number of participating seniors) constituted the day’s menu, which is different each weekday of the month.

Sitting across from Mary and Max, 86 and 84 respectively, and happily married for 66 years, I received what amounted to a Four-Star restaurant review. “I love it!” was the way Max expressed his appreciation for the food. “Real good food, lots of variety,” chimed in Mary, who observed as well the number of senior participants seemed to be growing all the time. Neither one of them was stingy with their praise of Campos either, lavishing him with kudos for the job he’s done in improving the meal program. “That man, Jose, he’s really doing something for this center,” said Max.

The Valencia program uses Global Nutrition, a company that reviews menus regularly to ensure that they meet health guidelines. While the program does not have the resources to prepare diverse meals for a host of special dietary needs, its meals are considered “diabetic friendly.” And as a regular observer of the super sizing of the American body, I was pleasantly surprised to not notice a single obese senior attending lunch that day at the Belen Senior Center. Whether that

was a function of the meal quality or simply the kind of people who choose to attend a congregate meal program, it's hard to say. But the evidence is mounting that easily accessible and affordable healthy food (senior meals are free, though a small donation is requested) is a positive obesity reduction strategy.

Most of the food prepared on site at the Belen Senior Center is fresh and unprocessed, but very little of it is sourced from local farmers. Campos goes to the farmers' market in the area and tries to interest farmers in selling directly to him, but so far he's had no takers. He admits he has a low price point that farmers would find hard to match, especially since he's buying most of his food from Shamrock Foods, a very competitive supplier. "My annual raw food budget (the cost of the food itself) is \$214,000 which works out to about \$1.63 per meal," Campos said, "that doesn't leave much room for local farmers, something I'd like to do."

The story and the challenges are a little different at the Deming/Luna County Senior Citizens Center. Barbara Rios, the center's executive director, is responsible for serving about 300 meals a day, but faces the additional challenge of distributing up to 190 home-delivered meals a day across a lightly settled landscape. For instance, one group of 11 home-delivered meal senior recipients requires a 150-mile round-trip delivery each weekday. As rural America's population both ages and thins out, the cost and time involved in meeting the needs of its elderly residents will only increase.

Though Rios uses the same food vendor as Campos, Shamrock Foods, she's been able to supplement those purchases with regular buys at the Deming-based Peppers Supermarket, a full-size and locally owned grocer. This is an arrangement that works well for many rural communities where the independent grocer appreciates the additional business, and meal providers like schools and senior centers enjoy the flexibility and convenience of being able to buy smaller quantities when they need them. "Peppers buys produce from local farmers," Rios tells me, "which gives us an opportunity to buy local as well, but through the grocer, not directly from the farmer." This is an arrangement that has promise across New Mexico – one that offers a synergistic benefit for everyone in the food chain – where smaller programs, limited food budgets, and large distances require as many partnerships as possible.

Senior centers are still "newbies" when it comes to the burgeoning world of local procurement. But as the population ages and Baby Boomers start looking for more services – and healthier food – both the size of the market and a generation whose palate that has acquired a taste for local food suggests that buying locally will become a growing trend .

Production of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

The purpose of this study section was to determine the current and future availability of selected New Mexico grown fresh fruits and vegetables for sale to New Mexico institutions including schools, senior centers, hospitals, and correctional facilities.

The focus of the study is on a set of specific fresh fruits and vegetables selected by Farm to Table based on their knowledge of the items that are currently being purchased by New Mexico institutional buyers: schools, senior centers, and correctional facilities. The fresh fruits and vegetables selected for the study include: fruits – apples, peaches, pears, cantaloupes, honeydews, and watermelons and vegetables – bell peppers, carrots, cucumbers, lettuce, onions, potatoes, snap beans, spinach, summer squash, and tomatoes. Based on the 2012 Census of Agriculture, the current levels of production, in pounds, of the selected fruits and vegetables were determined.

Information pertaining to future opportunities for and barriers to increasing the production of the selected fresh fruits and vegetables was obtained through personal interviews with producers (15), farmers' market vendors (14), and New Mexico State University (NMSU) (7), New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) (1), and industry (5) experts during May through July 2014. The small number of producers and farmers' market vendors interviewed is a limitation of the study and indicates that the themes presented here are not necessarily generalizable across all relevant stakeholders statewide. However, it is promising that the opportunities and challenges for increasing the production of fresh fruits and vegetables identified here, are consistent with the findings of other studies¹.

Faculty and staff at NMSU conducted the research for this report section. They are well suited to report on food production challenges given the institution's breadth of statewide work: NMSU's Agricultural Experiment Station has scientists at 12 agricultural science and research centers throughout the state and the NMSU Cooperative Extension Service has extension educators in New Mexico's 33 counties who deliver research-based training and mentorship in collaboration with other university faculty and various community-based organizations, state and federal agencies.

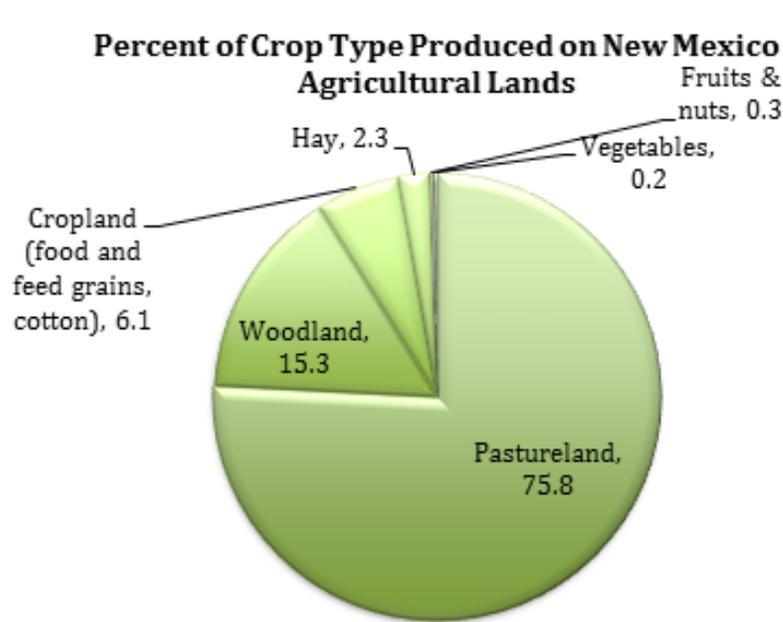
New Mexico Agriculture

The production and processing of agriculture products is an important part of the New Mexico economy. These two broad industries combined accounted for \$10.6 billion (roughly 8.7%) of New Mexico's \$122.1 billion gross state product



(GSP) in 2012. In addition, the two industries directly created 32,578 jobs and 18,308 jobs in related support activities for a total of 50,886 jobs statewide².

New Mexico's top six agriculture commodities in 2012, accounting for 89 percent of total agriculture revenues, included: cattle and calves (\$1.751 billion), dairy products (\$1.409 billion), hay (\$172.3 million), pecans (\$110.5 million), chile peppers (\$65.4 million), and onions (\$56.1 million)³. In 2012, land in agriculture in New Mexico total 13,362,070 million acres, 0.5 percent of which produces fruits, nuts and vegetables. Of the 0.3 percent with fruit and nut production, 89% of that is pecan production. Of the 0.2 percent dedicated to vegetables, 27% is in chile and onion production⁴.



United States Department of Agriculture. 2012 Census of Agriculture: New Mexico State and County Data

Production of Selected Fruits and Vegetables

Below are estimated fruit and vegetable yields that were calculated with New Mexico reported production acreage and national pounds per acre averages from the 2012 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture. Estimations must be calculated because pounds of each crop produced are not collected by the USDA Census of Agriculture and thus not reported. It is important to note that using national averages to calculate New Mexico production may overestimate actual production: New Mexico crops may yield fewer pounds per acre given our arid climate and higher altitude growing conditions.

In 2012, the production in pounds, of the selected fresh fruit and vegetables included: Fruits – apples (48.3 million pounds), peaches (4.3 million pounds), pears (6.2 million pounds), cantaloupes (5.5 million pounds), honeydews (1.6 million pounds), and watermelons (45.2 million pounds); Vegetables – bell peppers (326 thousand pounds), carrots (320 thousand pounds), cucumbers



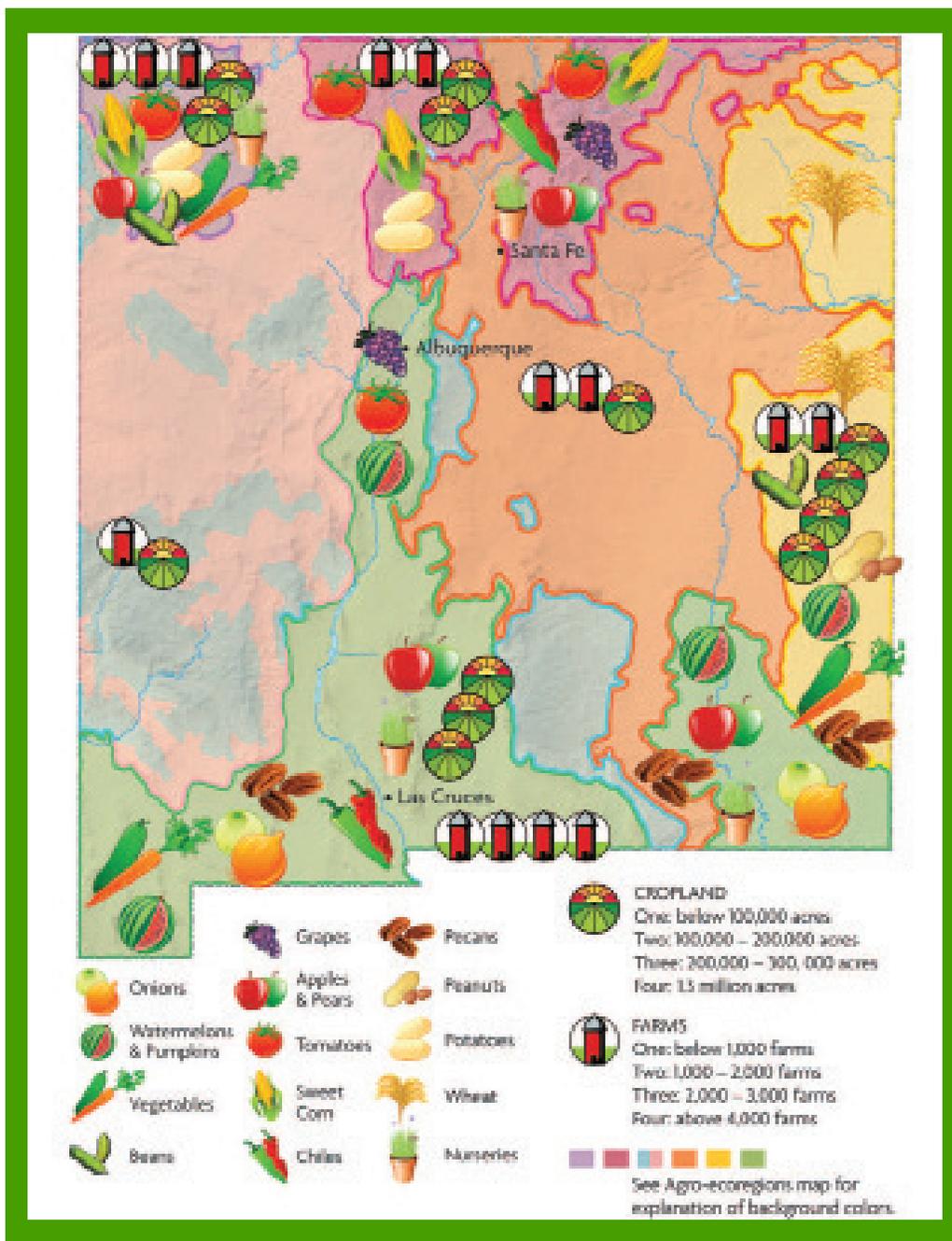
In 2012, more than 300,000 acres of hay were planted, which is nearly 20 times more than that planted for fruits and vegetables.



(2.4 million pounds), lettuce – leaf & romaine (735 thousand pounds), onions (267.4 million pounds), potatoes (261.1 million pounds), snap beans (8.8 million pounds), spinach (100.2 thousand pounds), summer squash (5.8 million pounds), and tomatoes (6.3 million pounds) (See Table 1, Production of Selected Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Appendix).

Primary Locations Growing Selected Fruits and Vegetables

In 2012, the top five producing counties for the selected fruits and vegetables included: Fruits – Rio Arriba, Otero, Santa Fe, Doña Ana, and Sandoval; Vegetables – Rio Arriba, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Bernalillo, and San Juan. (See Table 2, Production of Selected Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Appendix).



Dreaming New Mexico Project, Farm and Crop Map

Photo Courtesy of: Bioneers, <http://www.bioneers.org/>

Farm Size for Selected Fruits and Vegetables

Small farms are the primary source of the selected fresh fruits and vegetables. In 2012, the average size farm area producing the selected fresh fruits and vegetables included: Fruits – apples (2.06 acres), peaches (0.58 acre), and pears (0.66 acre), cantaloupes (0.47 acre), honeydews (0.88 acre), and watermelons (2.46 acres); Vegetables – bell peppers (0.16 acre), carrots (0.11 acre), cucumbers (0.25 acre), lettuce – head (30.94 acres), lettuce – leaf (0.11 acre), lettuce – romaine (2.43 acres), onions (40.72 acres), potatoes (19.98 acres), snap beans (0.57 acre), spinach (0.18 acre), summer squash (0.66 acre), and tomatoes (0.31 acre). (See Table 3, Production of Selected Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Appendix).

Markets for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

With the exception of onions and potatoes that are sold mostly out-of-state, the majority of the selected fruits and vegetables are currently being sold directly to consumers at farmers' markets and roadside stands, to restaurants, local grocery stores and schools. Farmers' markets across the state are an important source of fresh fruits and vegetables when in season. In 2012, there were over 70 farmers' markets in New Mexico with nearly 1,000 vendors and sales of over \$8 million dollars⁵.

Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Production: Future Opportunities and Barriers

Converting land from its current cropping patterns to the production of fruits and vegetables is an option for increasing the volume of selected fruits and vegetables available for sale to New Mexico institutions. For example, in 2012, more than 300,000 acres were planted to hay, nearly 20 times more than that planted to the selected fruits and vegetables (16,470 acres). The average return at the farm gate, the amount of money the farmer sees, to an acre of hay (\$1,545) however was 80% less than the return to an acre of the selected fruits (\$7,071) or vegetables (\$7,387). (See Table 4, Production of Selected Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Appendix).

Converting land from hay production to fruits and vegetables nevertheless may involve challenges and barriers difficult to overcome. The same may be true for small farm producers of fruits and vegetables seeking to increase their current production levels.

Institutional Buyer Requirements

There is a particular concern about meeting institutional buyer volume, quality, schedule, labeling, packaging, and insurance requirements and there is a general lack of information among the producers and farmers' market vendors interviewed regarding institutional markets – both the opportunities and challenges⁶.



\$1,545

Farm income per acre
of Hay

\$7,071

Farm income per acre
of Fruits

\$7,071

Farm income per acre
of Vegetables

When considering the diversification and/or scaling-up of their current farm operations necessary, the producers (small commercial producers as well as farmer's market vendors) expressed their concern for meeting several production, post-harvest, and regulatory challenges to producing and delivering consistently high quality produce⁷.

Production Challenges

- Water rights and on-farm water infrastructure (storage, filtration, and delivery) to insure the access to, timely delivery of, and efficient use of water.
- Access to information, training, and mentoring related to production practices that improve soil fertility and limit pest damage practices that would insure high yields and quality produce.
- Access to information, training, and mentoring related to production planning for select crops to meet institutional demand, crop specialization and diversification: small and diverse farmers wanting to narrow and focus on growing the top three to five crops requested by schools/institutions as part of their overall production plan.
- Adequate supply of seasonal/dependable labor for planting, cultivation, and harvesting.

Post-Harvest Challenges

- On-farm storage, refrigeration, sorting, and packing infrastructure.
- Product delivery to the buyer: primarily transportation and packaging.

Regulatory and other Challenges

- On-farm food safety, traceability, and environmental requirements from institutional buyers, and eventually related to the federal Food Safety Modernization Act when it is implemented.
- Bidding systems are often unknown to smaller growers accustomed to direct market sales.
- Wholesale pricing can be significantly lower than retail pricing that smaller growers are accustomed to at farmers' markets.

The NMSU, New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) and industry experts interviewed made the important point that connecting the New Mexico producers of fruits and vegetables to the institutional markets and other markets is a food system challenge not just an individual producer challenge. The continued collaborative efforts of these organizations on many fronts is key to New Mexico's fruit and vegetable producers successfully connecting with New Mexico's institutional buyers.

Food System Challenge

A food system includes producers, consumers and a set of aggregation and distribution activities that connect them. Because the aggregation and distribution activities often prove to be too costly for small producers, their access to certain markets, like institutional markets, is limited. To overcome this problem, producers and/or community organizations have developed aggregation and distribution infrastructure and services (often called food hubs) to connect small producers to the markets in a cost effective manner.

Food hubs help address the scale efficiency activities of aggregation and distribution issues faced by smaller producers seeking to link with conventional retail, institutional and service food service markets. Food hubs can also address other challenges faced by small producers including marketing services, processing infrastructure, access to financing as well as food safety compliance issues and product liability concerns by providing group certifications or group insurance policies. (Local Food Systems Markets and Supply Chains, 2013)

Stories From the Field...

And Now a Word from Our Farmer

With the hunger for “local food” on the rise, the question must be asked, “Who will produce it?” It’s probably not a safe bet to assume that if the demand is created, the farmers will come; after all, farming is a tricky proposition under the best of circumstances. The uncertainties of nature, an irregular labor supply, and the fickleness of the market often push farmers to the breaking point. And of course there’s the need for land and water, neither of which anyone is making more of these days.

But as Anthony Wagner sees it, if you want to buy New Mexico grown food, he’ll grow it. Mr. Wagner is a 55-year old farmer, who with his two brothers and their father run the Wagner Farm, founded in Corrales in 1910. On 100 acres in Corrales, 120 acres in Los Lunas, and 200 acres in Socorro, the Wagners are hard at work growing apples, sweet corn, chile, melons, and alfalfa. With the exception of the alfalfa, all of that product is sold at five farmers’ markets, the Wagner farm stand, and to several school districts including Albuquerque.

While anyone might wonder why the Wagners operate three large sites spread across that much central New Mexico geography, Anthony views it as insurance – if he loses a crop to hail in Socorro, for instance, chances are good it didn’t hail in Corrales. When I asked Anthony how he moves farm equipment like a large tractor between these distant locations, he simply responded, “Carefully.”

What’s less simple these days is selling to schools and other public institutions. The paperwork demands, labeling requirements to ensure traceability of product, and a never ending struggle to make your price point don’t sit well with farmers who are averse to institutional bureaucracies. “I fill out lots of forms,” Anthony said in an unperturbed fashion, emphasizing that it’s worth the effort. “Farm to school has expanded farming. I ask other farmers, ‘do you want to grow your business? Then try schools. I’ll put you in contact.’”

In Anthony’s case the payoff has been significant. In 2010, the first year he sold to schools, he grossed all of \$800, but that grew rapidly to \$85,000 for the 2013/14 school year. He sets a price for his goods that he thinks is fair, and could only recall one occasion when one of his bids was rejected.

Part of the process has become easier and more efficient for farmers due to the central warehouse operated by the New Mexico Food and Nutrition Services Bureau. Like the warehouse in Santa Fe that several farmers deliver to, the FANS facility receives local produce and distributes it to multiple schools and school districts. Working with Farm to Table has also made the dealings between farmers and schools a friendlier exchange. The non-profit’s training and brokerage services, to say nothing of their vigorous advocacy efforts at the New Mexico legislature, where Anthony has spoken out several times, have facilitated farmers’ dealings with schools.

The potential for growth in farm to school sales is strong. Farmers like Anthony Wagner have demonstrated that the hurdles can be cleared and profits can be made. But as this burgeoning connection is nurtured, it will of course be the children who benefit. “My kids go to the local high school and eat local food, and it’s good for them!” Anthony proclaimed unabashedly. “The apples are coming straight from my trees and not traveling more than 50 miles to a school. My melons are picked ripe and ready. Everything going to the schools is harvested the day before delivery.” And as Anthony likes to make clear, “If the schools want to buy more, I’ll grow more.”

Recomendations Moving Forward ...

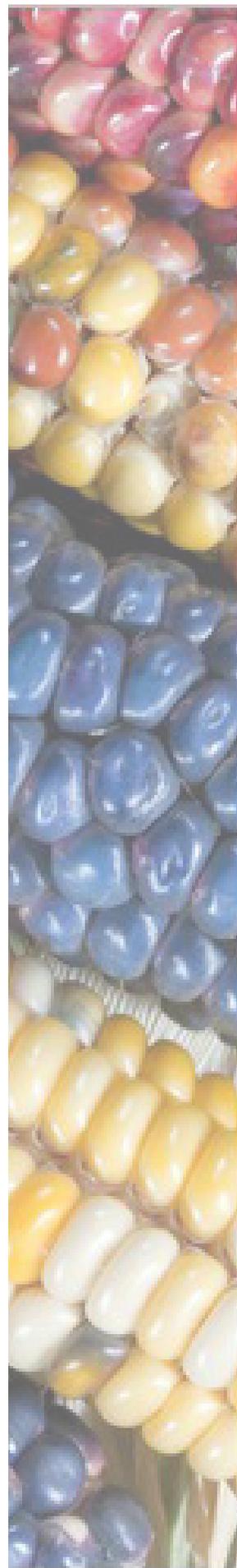
Throughout the course of researching New Mexico's farm to institution landscape, it has become obvious that there are both significant challenges and opportunities for making locally grown food a more common part of the state's public plate. Farmers, though not in sufficient numbers yet, are willing and able to produce more food than they are now for public institutions. To do so, however, requires that regulations, invoicing, and other business requirements not be overly burdensome for farmers to comply with. In addition, appropriate training and technical assistance needs to be available to farmers.

Production, packing, processing, and delivery systems need to be readapted, and in some cases new systems need to be created in order to accommodate smaller, diverse, locally-marketing farmers. Infrastructure – effectively everything that makes up the supply chain from land and water to processing and storage to handling and delivery – should be re-oriented from a highly centralized supply chain to support a more vigorous New Mexico farm to institution response.

On the buyer side of the marketplace, a variety of school cafeteria, senior center, and correctional facility personnel are either buying locally grown food now, or have demonstrated a keen interest in doing so. These “early adaptors” are developing the skills that are necessary to take them out of the box of highly standardized forms of food purchasing and preparation to more flexible and innovative forms that can draw on the quality, freshness, and nutrition of local food. To support these innovators and replicate their “lessons learned” to a much wider audience of food service practitioners, as well as interested new growers, New Mexico must develop a more robust training and technical assistance program.

Farmer and buyer trainings are needed to successfully navigate local food procurement processes and continually upgrade them. Regulations and administrative systems need to be streamlined to allow a more localized marketplace to function properly in our centralized and cumbersome procurement systems. But none of these approaches will succeed without a working partnership of engaged stakeholders. To that end, it is imperative that public and private partnerships – comprised of appropriate state agencies, non-profit, and for-profit groups – be established to coordinate an expanded public procurement effort. Some partnerships can be local and ad hoc, while others must operate at a statewide level in order to ensure that goals and methods are clearly shared, and that their implementation is well coordinated.

It is with the above fundamental components in mind that we make the following recommendations that, if implemented, will lead to an expanded and considerably strengthened farm to institution connection for New Mexico.



NM Farm to Institution: Sites for Transformative Action

Coordinate Infrastructure, Distribution, & People to serve Farm to Institution connections locally & statewide	Upgrade Procurement Processes to serve Farm to Institution connections locally & statewide	Align Farmer Development Activities, Land & Water Resources to Serve Local Public Food Needs
<p>-Establish and activate <i>Joint Use policies</i> to cooperatively use equipment and facilities (among agencies & entities) that enable Farm to Institution storage, packing, minimal processing, and deliveries, locally, regionally, statewide. Address collective risks and liabilities with equitable measures per agency/entity.</p> <p>-Identify, coordinate, and fully utilize publicly funded <i>facilities/equipment</i> for food storage, minimal processing, preparation, and distribution locally, regionally, statewide to serve Farm to Institution connections.</p> <p>-Prioritize and align publicly funded facilities' <i>food inventory tracking systems, order/fulfillment systems</i> to have adjunct capacity to efficiently store, process, move local produce from farms to institutional buyers as part of their service to public meal programs.</p> <p>-Prioritize existing and future <i>food service professional development programs</i> and funds to fully utilize equipment and infrastructure for serving local produce. Ongoing trainings by and for food service directors and staff that would enhance their ability to integrate local produce into their meal programs, topics: how to use kitchen equipment for preparing raw produce, how to expedite approval of menus & substitutions to accommodate</p>	<p>-Adjust procurement protocols from the state level to local level to be in alignment with the seasonal realities of locally grown food, production planning commitments from buyers to farmers during winter months or one year in advance, and timely reimbursements from federal and state funding sources to Food Service Directors/Meal Providers and thereby to farmers to alleviate current cash flow barriers.</p> <p>-Simplify state level procurement process for locally grown produce that is purchased by public institutions and remove bureaucratic stipulations related to bidding that are not relevant to oversight and accountability of fresh produce purchases by institutions.</p> <p>-Encourage/empower institutional FSDs to conduct production planning with local farmers per region in winter and/or develop forward contracting with local farmers, one year in advance.</p> <p>-Modify Bidding systems to be responsive and effective for FSDs' local food needs, local farmers capacity/ seasonality, and local/state procurement/budgetary accountability (qualify farm vendors for multiple years, include multiple vendors per term of award, include ability to "piggyback" on qualifying bids with other local institutions, if Bid is awarded to a FSMC, require that a minimum % of produce must be sourced locally, include timely payments to farm vendors upon delivery)</p> <p>-Activate an institution's ability to use small purchase thresholds (align state and local purchasing thresholds and requirements) to be able to make timely and repetitive purchases of local produce as it becomes available.</p>	<p>-Prioritize and invest in sustainable agriculture programs at public institutions of higher education that meet Farm to Institution's produce needs: crop diversity, produce quality, quantity and frequency.</p> <p>-Prioritize and invest in farmer professional development trainings (by private or public entities and mentors) that empower new/existing farmers to implement sustainable farming practices and meet product specifications, comply with food safety requirements, meet vendor requirements and successfully fulfill purchase orders and/or bid awards.</p> <p>-Prioritize Workforce Development funding to address the needs of farmer development programs and mentorships.</p> <p>-Acknowledge the true cost of sustainably grown produce and compensate farmers and farm workers justly for their high quality product being sold to institutions. Farmers and farm workers are entitled to livable earnings in order to be sustainable enterprises.</p> <p>- Prioritize land use and planning, locally and statewide, for sustainable farming activities that provide produce to institutional meal programs while constantly improving soil quality.</p> <p>- Prioritize water use (quality and quantity) and water planning,</p>

NM Farm to Institution: Sites for Transformative Action

Coordinate Infrastructure, Distribution, & People to serve Farm to Institution connections locally & statewide	Upgrade Procurement Processes to serve Farm to Institution connections locally & statewide	Align Farmer Development Activities, Land & Water Resources to Serve Local Public Food Needs
<p>season availability of produce via software and internal systems, how to enhance food preparation skills to incorporate local produce, how to improve ordering, fulfillment, payment systems that meet FSD and Farmer needs and current capacity.</p> <p>-Create ways for farmers to access or acquire <i>sorting, packing, minimal processing, and cold/dry storage equipment</i> that is scale-appropriate, energy efficient, and affordable to ensure product quality and food safety compliance in Farm to Institution produce sales.</p> <p>-Prioritize distributor or FSMC bid awards to meet a minimum % of locally grown produce being <i>transported</i> to institutional point of purchase as an adjunct service in their food service contract.</p>	<p>-Encourage & align <i>piggybacking</i> within and across institutions: when purchasing through POs, include ability of any local institution to piggyback on qualified farm vendors through other institutions.</p> <p>-Reimburse institutional food service providers and local food purchases in a timely way (less than 30days) from state, federal, or local funding sources.</p> <p>-Remove application/qualification barriers that food service providers face when trying to apply for federal, state, and local funding sources or programs that enhance their ability to purchase and utilize local food as integral meal components to their institutional menus. (simplify applications and web-based platforms and provide timely assistance to fill out applications, announce application openings with ample lead time, qualify and award applicants in a timely fashion.</p> <p>-Fully utilize or develop institutional cooperative purchasing strategies for local food across local or regional institutions.</p> <p>-Institutions (as localized or statewide) need to determine shared and consistent criteria and develop local capacity to verify produce is locally grown, meets quality standards & specifications, and meets minimal food safety/traceability requirements</p> <p>-Institutions need to develop simple and reliable tracking systems to verify that local produce procurement met institutional purchasing goals: ie, local produce payments went to local growers or grower groups and documents amounts of varieties of produce purchased during each week/month (informs future budgetary allocations for local produce and informs growers of desired crops, amounts, and timing of delivery for crop planning.</p>	<p>locally and statewide, for farming activities that provide produce to Institutional meal programs while constantly improving water quality.</p> <p>-Dedicate arable land and water resources to farming activities at a greater ratio than residential/commercial development, locally and statewide, to be affordable, available, and “farm-ready, in perpetuity, for new/existing growers who commit to growing produce for institutional buyers as a majority of their production & marketing plan.</p>

GET ACTIVE: contact your local Food Policy Council or partner organization!

Overarching Recommendations

1. Develop a Farm to Institution Inter-Agency and Non- Governmental Task Force to further plan, coordinate, and implement farm to institution policies and programs. The authors of *The Power of Public Procurement: An Action Plan for Healthier Farms and People in New Mexico* will provide guidance and participate on the Task Force. The Task Force should seek guidance from and provide support for non-profit organizations and agencies that currently facilitate sales and coordinate partnerships between farms and institutions.
2. Monitor, and participate in the Governor’s Task Force on Procurement Reform and the relevant Legislative Interim Committees to advocate inclusion of New Mexico grown produce procurement.
3. Further investigate and address the unique assets and needs of New Mexico’s rural, frontier and Tribal communities as they relate to food procurement. Overarching regulatory requirements do not always meet the realities of these communities – access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods that are affordable.
4. Maintain support for and expand the existing NM Grown Produce for School Meals Program (i.e., \$240,000 recurring statewide and \$85,000 recurring to Albuquerque Public Schools).
5. Support new legislation advocating for a NM Farm to School education program that links in-classroom experiential learning to core curriculum and the NM grown produce in school meal programs. Involve existing farm to school educators and school health professionals to advise and support this initiative.
6. Support existing and new fruit and vegetable growers by investing in farmer professional development for “market readiness” as institutional produce demand increases. Existing non-governmental organizations, farmer businesses, and college agriculture/horticulture training programs could adapt their trainings to serve this professional development need and provide these trainings regionally and quarterly/annually as needed.
7. Support food service professionals by developing local food preparation and menu planning and “local procurement 101” training tailored to individuals at multiple levels of institutional food procurement: food service directors, food prepares and servers, thus increasing awareness of the benefits of increasing fresh, locally grown produce offered to constituents.
8. Introduction of state legislation that instructs public bodies to purchase a required amount of local produce. This should be considered again by the State Legislature. Prior to such legislation, need the following to be in place: further development of infrastructure, coordination of product ordering/delivery systems, and strategies for engaging public markets to successfully conduct local procurement.
9. Inventory and coordinate state, non-profit, and private business infrastructure that is currently servicing public meal/emergency food programs, such as underutilized facilities that could provide minimal processing, aggregation, storage, and distribution services.
10. Support joint use policies for publicly funded infrastructure to maximize the utilization and effectiveness of state investment in equipment and infrastructure that could serve farm to institution connections.

11. Expand support for public and private processing facilities that have farmer clients using their facilities to wash, aggregate, store, and distribute fresh produce (e.g., South Valley Economic Development Center, Taos County Economic Development Center, and Socorro Community Commercial Kitchen).
12. Provide support for food banks and other food distributors who are current and potential partners to fully maximize their storage, refrigeration, and delivery capacity to connect farm product to public institutional buyers.
13. Seek private, local, state, and federal resources and other strategic investments that will assist in researching the need for and cost of operating aggregation/distribution facilities that service local farms with their produce sales to public institutions. Coordinate agency resources for such initiatives.

School Recommendations at the State and Federal Levels

Policy:

1. Maintain support for the existing NM Grown Produce for School Meals Program (\$240,000 recurring statewide and \$85,000 recurring to Albuquerque Public Schools).
2. Support new legislation advocating for a NM Farm to School education program that links in-classroom experiential learning to core curriculum and the NM grown produce in school meal programs.
3. Work with the NM Public Education Department, Human Services Department and Department of Agriculture to develop an inter-agency led position dedicated to supporting, tracing, and managing Farm to School activities across the state.
4. Develop a reporting system to track local and fresh fruit and vegetable purchasing in all public institutions to establish a baseline for future increases in local/fresh purchasing.
5. Investigate further, with assistance from the State Procurement Office and New Mexico School Nutrition Association, the professional organization for school food service programs, the dual approach of using the recently enhanced \$20,000 Small Purchase provision at the state level with the federal Geographic
6. Preference option, and identify uniform and workable policies for the schools to purchase local produce.
7. Through the NMFAPC and other organizations, continue to support current state and federal school nutrition rules as set forth by the 2010 federal Child Nutrition Reauthorization “Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act” as well as the 2008 NM Competitive Foods Nutrition Rule change.

Regulatory Recommendations:

1. Work with policymakers to modify, amend or reform procurement rules to make them clearer for State and local bodies and for farmers and organizations that are focused on local food procurement activities.

2. Amend NM Department of Defense Fresh Program contract to incorporate Geographic Preference in the bi-annual solicitation to determine a DOD vendor. It is recommended that the contract highlight that the distributor must purchase a minimal percentage of fresh products from NM producers. Many local products are being sourced through this program in other states. However, in NM, our DOD vendor has requirements which are restrictive to most NM producers.

Training and Technical Assistance:

1. Continuing education and support for school food service personnel to be able to comply with state and federal school food nutrition and dietary standards.
2. Provide training on risk mitigation and quality management standards for produce to all participating and related state agencies and farmer support organizations involved with farm to institution procurement.
3. Link Farm to School education to teacher trainings at the state level (NM PED), align with common core, and encourage agency willingness to honor experiential learning as a component of the State education system.
4. Cultivate existing expertise and resources that provide essential capacity within schools for developing and sustaining farm to school programs, such as Community Health Coordinators, school nurses, school based health clinics, local food policy councils, FoodCorps, AmeriCorps, Cooking with Kids, and Kids Cook.
5. Provide support for training and technical assistance for farmers on how to develop Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) compliant, scale-appropriate food safety programs that meet institutional requirements. Farmer trainings are currently provided by NMSU Cooperative Extension, third party certifiers, and local organizations.
6. Collaborate with the NM Public Education Department and NM School Nutrition Association to organize trainings for school kitchen managers and staff on handling fresh and local products: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) requirements, recipes, menu planning, utilizing new equipment.

Infrastructure:

1. Continue support for food distribution coordination by the NM Human Services Department, Food and Nutrition Services Bureau (FANS). Increase funding and infrastructure to support statewide distribution of fresh local foods. Encourage MOU's that facilitate "piggybacking" local produce orders to other institutions.
2. Support local SFAs across the state to increase utilization of federal and state programs which could provide funding for: kitchen equipment, training and professional development for staff, and farm to school educational programs.

School Recommendations at the Local and District levels

Policy:

1. Encourage Local School Boards to develop and institutionalize policies that facilitate local food purchasing by amending procurement contract language, bidding processes, and joint-use agreements that support local purchasing.
2. Approve local produce purchases that exceed small purchase thresholds and allocate general funds to student nutrition department for the purchase of local products approved by the School Board.
3. Assist School Food Authorities with applying “geographic preference” criteria to their bidding systems in order to procure local produce from New Mexico farmers.
4. Allow forward contracting so that farmers can plan production in advance of sales to schools.
5. Plan menus to accommodate availability of seasonal products for meals.
6. Expedite farmer invoicing and payments to allow for payment within 30 days.
7. Encourage Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs) and Distributors to pilot getting local produce into their system and/or work with the SFA to require some percentage of local produce as criteria in the Invitation to Bid (ITB)-an annual or multi-year contract that School Food Authorities (SFAs) (and Senior Providers) award to FSMCs.

Summer Meal Recommendations

Policy:

1. Establish a NM fresh fruit and vegetable procurement program that meets the needs of summer feeding programs administered through CYFD. Work with CYFD Summer meal program staff to align procurement systems, develop local food purchasing requirements, and promote educational programs.
2. Establish a pilot program for New Mexico Grow Produce within 3-5 sites for SY 2015-16.
3. PED Summer meal programs fall under the regular school food requirements and procurement regulations, therefore, all local food purchasing recommendations should apply to summer meal programs.

Training and Technical Assistance:

1. Provide a training session at appropriate statewide PED, SNA, and CYFD conferences on how to coordinate local purchasing into summer meal programs.

Corrections Facilities Recommendations

Policy:

1. To introduce procurement of New Mexico grown fruits and vegetables into Corrections Facilities, begin with a pilot program at the Bernalillo Juvenile Detention Center where a horticulture education program will begin in fall 2014. There is confirmed interest from directors of the facility and meal programs to purchase locally grown produce and incorporate that produce into the horticulture program.
2. Establish agriculture and/or horticulture programs at state and county corrections institutions that have land and water rights as a way to provide produce for the facilities' meal programs or to gift produce to emergency feeding programs.

Training and Technical Assistance:

1. Provide technical assistance to juvenile detention centers interested in purchasing local food and establishing horticulture programs by organizing a one-day convening of juvenile correction facilities directors and their food service directors to discuss possible changes and innovations in their menus to include NM grown and in related education programs.
2. Provide a presentation at the 2014 Association of Counties Corrections Facilities Affiliate Conference on the procurement report findings and discuss options for correction facilities to purchase NM grown produce.
3. In partnership with the NM Association of Counties Corrections Affiliate, provide a presentation and round table discussion to learn about and organize for future opportunities to incorporate NM grown into facilities and support programs. This may include a statewide assessment of interest and could create the potential for local, county and/or state pilot projects.

Regulatory:

1. Review current state funding available through the New Mexico Grown Produce for School Meals program to see if juvenile detention centers could apply. Since they are run as schools and adhere to the federal School Nutrition Rules, juvenile detention centers may qualify for being able to request funding through the state program.

Senior Centers Recommendations

Policy:

1. Recommend to AAA and ALTSD one strategy to prioritize serving fresh and/or local food by adding language to the Request for Proposals when providers apply for four-year contracts.
2. Menus should provide substitution options for “local” produce i.e., “California Vegetable Medley” could be made with NM produce.
3. The state should invest in a registered dietitian for non-metro AAA to expedite menu and substitution approvals related to local produce availability and seasonality.
4. Support Senior Meal providers with “piggy back” ordering fresh, local produce with other nearby institutions who are ordering larger quantities of local produce.
5. Collaborate with Aging and Long Term Services to assess the availability of and access to local level data on the number of seniors served by the congregate sites and home delivered programs. Through brief surveys of senior participants, information could be gleaned on desire to have fresh, locally produced foods offered in the senior meal programs. Knowing senior local food preferences would aid menu planning and reduce plate waste.

Training and Technical Assistance:

1. Develop and provide training to senior meal program procurement directors and other food service authorities on how to use the Small Purchases option to procure local produce. It is critical that individuals in these positions know they can legally source local ingredients, as purchases under \$20,000, from vendors outside of current food service contracts with the three FSMCs.
2. Provide training to procurement directors and other food service authorities to clarify food safety plans and/or quality management systems that are appropriate to require of vendors selling local produce. For example, there are no federal food safety regulations that prevent purchasing from local growers.

Farming Recommendations

1. Prioritize Farmer Development with new and existing farmers through non-profit organizations, farmer mentors, and two-year and four-year colleges with agriculture/horticulture training programs. Develop and conduct trainings and mentoring activities that enhance the ability of New Mexico growers to meet the produce specifications, quality management standards, and vendor requirements of New Mexico institutional buyers.
2. Utilize NM Department of Workforce Solutions funding for farmer training and mentorship programs. Currently, workforce development funding cannot be used for agricultural workforce development activities.
3. Assist small, diverse farmers with accessing equipment and supplies, scale-appropriate for production and post-harvest activities (e.g., hoop houses, drip irrigation, wash stations, cold storage, boxes/labeling, food grade plastic bags)
4. Support small farmers or new farmers with accessing more irrigated land appropriate for growing fruits and vegetables that is available but currently not in production. Connect with Mid Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) LandLink resources and other local groups (farmers' markets and non-profit organizations) who are using informal LandLink communications to assist with creating land lease terms that are mutually beneficial to owner and renter. Further develop and coordinate a statewide LandLink initiative. This will require resources, yet will be beneficial to individuals and private and public entities.
5. Coordinate LandLink initiatives with municipalities such as county planning and assessment departments to support protection of agricultural land and water resources. Prioritize agricultural land and water resources to be used for New Mexico food production to meet Institutional demand and other local market demand.
6. Through NMSU's continued research of fruits and vegetable growers in NM (autumn 2014), specific New Mexico statistics will assist in clarifying produce amounts and availability for future NM institutional purchasing.

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