CA FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK

Farm to School Sales

INTRODUCTORY GUIDE FOR FARMERS

1 School Food Market is Growing!

Lots of recent investments & enhancements

- CA universal meals (free meals for all students)
- Local Food for Schools (LFS)
- Kitchen Infrastructure & Training (KIT)
- School Food Best Practices (SFBP)

2 School Food Buyers/ School Food Authorities (SFAs)

Different types of buyers

- Public school districts (enrollments from 150 - 500,000+)
- Charter Schools
- Early Childhood Education Centers (ECEs)

3 Child Nutrition Programs (Federal and State Funding)

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Summer Food Service Program

4 Quick Facts

- Public districts coordinate & purchase foods district wide (not by individual schools)
- Charters and ECEs still participate in federal meal programs
- SFAs have different capacities for minimally processed items (varied levels/types of equipment, storage, staff, training, etc.)

5 How schools incorporate products in meals

- entree ingredients
- seasonings/spices & sauces/dressings
- salad bars
- harvest of the month
- snacks
- taste tests & educational activities
- special events (community meals, fundraisers, food distribution)
- Culturally relevant meals

6 Procurement Processes

- Micropurchases (up to $50k in sales)
  - non-competitive simple vendor
- Small Purchase/Informal Purchase (up to $250k)
  - vendor rotation, price quotes from multiple vendors
- Formal Procurement (above $250k)
  - competitive, SFA develops and publishes invitation to bid (IFB) for fixed quotes or Request for Proposals (RFP) to award fixed price contracts

*could vary depending on district

7 Types of minimally processed items

- Fresh produce
- Herbs
- Honey
- Grains
- Flours
- Meat & Poultry
- Eggs
- Dairy
- Dried fruit
- Oils
- Fish
- Juices
- lightly processed items (cut carrots, broccoli stems, etc)

8 School Buying Sources

Schools buy from multiple sources:

- Direct from producers
- Distributors
- Food Service Management Companies
- Local Retailers
- Farmers Markets
- Food hubs/aggregators
- Gardens
- USDA Foods

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FARMER CONSIDERATIONS

1 What to grow

- What do you grow that would be of interest to schools based on how they typically incorporate products into meals?
- What do you grow well and at high enough volumes with consistency?

2 Size and Scale

- What size of program do you feel comfortable working with? (small, medium, large)
- What is the estimated production volume for what you want to sell and what is the availability period (ie. Jan - July)?

3 Level of Processing

- Make sure to understand the expectations around processing and packaging? (standard sizing, types of packing, packaging, etc)

4 Marketing/Sales

- How do you plan to keep schools informed about availability? (lists, emails, flyers with quantities, pack size, season dates, and pricing)
- Who will be responsible for communication and ordering?
- What else can I offer to help distinguish myself? (ie. field trips, classroom visits, harvest of the month programs, taste tests, culturally relevant products)

5 Food Safety

- Not all schools require specific certifications, but be ready and able to share how you are ensuring food safety:
  - existing food safety protocols
    - pre, during, and post harvest
  - soil and water testing
  - food safety certifications
  - record keeping practices
  - worker safety

6 Distribution

- Some districts have central delivery areas, some require multiple drop off locations
- How far and how frequently are you willing to drive to deliver products?
- Are you already delivering to clients? Or have consistent travels in an area(s)? Think about targeting school clients on your existing travel routes

7 Contingencies

- Have a plan ready for the unexpected and communicate those proceedures
  - missed/delayed deliveries
  - product quality issues
  - price changes
  - availability

8 Communication & Trust

- Avoid judgement and shaming in school food - everyone has the same goals to feed kids and support the community
- Recognize that trust takes time. Best to start building slow and intentionally and scale up over time to ensure strong and sustained relationship
- Don't show up unannounced - always call ahead, make appointments, avoid lunch periods (10a-1p)

SCAN ME

Interested to dig deeper? Check out the Bringing the Farm to School Program by NCAT and NFSN using the QR link

If you'd like to connect to get further support for entering into farm to school, please contact me directly – Tracey Kimura – Greater LA Farm to School Producer Specialist – (916)-539-4794 – tracey.kimura@cdfa.ca.gov