



State of New Jersey

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To: School Business Administrators
Food Service Directors
Charter School Leads
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Food Service Management Companies

From: Janet Hawk, Coordinator
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Date: August 22, 2011

Subject: ***Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week***, September 26 – 30, 2011

The State of New Jersey has declared that the last week in September each year shall be known as “Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week”, to promote the value and importance of fresh farm foods for children, their general health, and their success in school (N.J.S.A 4.10-25). A flyer promoting this event is included with this memo. All schools are strongly encouraged to purchase Jersey Fresh produce during this special week!

It is important to understand that an amendment made to the National School Lunch Act by the 2008 Farm Bill, allows Local Education Agencies (LEA) to apply a geographic preference when procuring “unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products.”(7CFR 210.21(g)). This means products that retain their inherent character. The following food handling and preservation techniques are allowable for products that can be procured using geographic preference:

- Cooling, refrigerating, freezing
- Peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting, chopping, shucking, grinding
- Forming ground products into patties without additives or fillers
- Drying/dehydration; washing
- Vacuum packing and bagging
- Addition of ascorbic acid or other preservatives to prevent oxidation of produce
- Butchering of livestock and poultry; cleaning of fish
- Pasteurization of milk

NOTE: *Geographic preference cannot be applied to canned local vegetables or fruits.*

When choosing to apply geographic preference, the LEA determines the local area to which the preference applies (the area within which the agricultural product originates). However, the

local area must not be defined in a manner that unnecessarily restricts free and open competition. There must be an appropriate number of qualified firms to compete for the contract. If small purchase procedures are used because the procurement amount is less than the bid threshold, USDA recommends that at least three sources be contacted, who are eligible, able and willing to provide the product. The LEA cannot **restrict** procurement of these products to locally grown, but rather can only apply a **preference** for it (i.e. extra points when scoring proposals or bids). The Invitation for Bid (IFB) or Request for Proposal (RFP) must clearly describe the scoring criteria and how they will be evaluated.

A Q & A document developed by USDA has been placed in Resources on the SNEARS system, under the category “Financial Management”. Please refer to this document for further information on the federal procurement requirements for applying geographic preference.