



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO**  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

October 11, 2024

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi, President  
and Members of the Senate  
415 South Beretania Street  
State Capitol, Room 409  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Scott K. Saiki, Speaker  
and Members of the House of Representatives  
415 South Beretania Street  
State Capitol, Room 431  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Hawaii State Department of Education Annual Report on Farm to School Meals

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Saiki, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, a copy of the annual Farm to School Meals report is being transmitted, pursuant to Section 302A-405.6, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). In accordance with Section 93-16, HRS, I am also informing you that the report may be viewed electronically at: <https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/VisionForSuccess/SchoolDataAndReports/StateReports/Pages/Legislative-reports.aspx>.

Should you have any questions, please contact Ken Kakesako, Director of the Policy, Innovation, Planning and Evaluation Branch, via email at [ken.kakesako@k12.hi.us](mailto:ken.kakesako@k12.hi.us) or by phone at (808) 282-3430.

Sincerely,

Keith T. Hayashi  
Superintendent

KTH:wy  
Attachment

c: Legislative Reference Bureau  
Hawaii State Public Library System  
University of Hawaii  
Office of Facilities and Operations



State of Hawaii  
Department of Education

# **Annual Report on Farm to School Meals**

October 2024

Section 302A-405.6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, requires the Hawaii State Department of Education to annually report on its progress toward local farm to school meals, sourcing and cost metrics for local food procurement, locally sourced meal composition, and training of cafeteria staff.

## **Hawaii State Department of Education Farm-to-School Meals**

### **Introduction**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) is dedicated to increasing the volume of locally sourced food for students to meet the 10% goal by January 1, 2025, per Hawaii Revised Statutes 27-8. This report outlines the factors and steps necessary for the School Food Services Branch (SFSB) in the Office of Facilities and Operations to meet this 10% mark, plus additional mandated goals.

The total cost of food purchased from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 was \$64,111,718.15.

- Local food cost: \$3,936,415.23 (6.14%)
- Non-Local Food cost: \$60,175,302.92 (93.86%)

The percentage of local, fresh, agricultural food products and locally processed food products purchased was 6.14% of the total food cost for the twelve months from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. To compare, in last year's 2023 Legislative Report, the percentage of local products purchased was 6.27% for the ten months from January 1, 2022 to October 31, 2022.

Fresh local agricultural products make up 2.10% of the 6.14%. Local meat, value-added, processed, agricultural, or food products combined make up the remaining 4.04%.

The decrease in the percentage of local food products compared to the prior year's report is attributed, in part, to the absence of a Farm-to-School Program Coordinator over an extended period to engage with local farmers, ranchers, processors, and distributors. The Department has remedied this workforce issue by hiring a Farm-to-School Program Coordinator in August 2023.

Limiting factors included chronic but familiar difficulties that impact availability of local agricultural products such as invasive species, theft, labor shortages, lack of capital, and climate change. The Department recognizes the impact of climate change on our farmers, where heat and decreased rainfall, or flooding surface water, have reduced yields. For example, in April 2022, the Department began procuring local lettuce and salad greens from an Oahu farm with a target of 1,000 pounds a week. However, during the summer of 2022, the crops were hampered by record-high temperatures, which slowed lettuce growth and fostered Pythium fungus in the hydroponic system. Distribution was forced to stop soon afterward.

### **Pathway to 10% Local of the Total Food Purchased by 2025**

#### Coordination with Distributors and Farmers

The most efficient and consistent pathway to purchase at least 10% of local food by 2025 is a multi-pronged strategy utilizing distributor-to-farmer partnerships augmented by increased direct procurement from farms and food hubs. The Department's menu planners have the opportunity to communicate more closely with our network of qualified distributors, who currently interface with local farmers about what crop ingredients our school meals need six to twelve months in advance. The Department, as well as distributors, share an objective to inform farmers about what ingredients the schools plan to serve. Coordination between the Department, the distributors, and the farmers should assist the farmers' capacity to plant and harvest with adequate lead time to serve in schools when needed. The distributors fulfill a critical role to aggregate volumes of produce to serve 100,000 meals per day.

The distributors' feedback regarding farmers' harvest forecasts helps the Department's menu planners adjust meals based on crop availability. The Department communicates to distributors the crucial need to support local farmers.

### Procurement

The Department is assessing more direct local procurement opportunities from farms, processors, and food hubs. The Department launched a Request for Information (RFI) solicitation in October 2023, to solicit produce and product information from interested farmers and potential vendors to inform the Department about available resources. All vendors must be registered and compliant with the State's Hawaii Compliance Express platform. The Department is proactively collaborating with agriculture trade associations, cooperatives, and food hubs, including the Hawaii Farm Hub Hui, to assess farmers' capacities to comply and supply more local food under state procurement regulations.

### Piloting Local Products

Locally sourced, 1% low-fat milk returned as a school menu item for Hawaii Island schools in August 2023. The milk is sourced from the cows at Cloverleaf Dairy in Hawi on Hawaii Island. Milk purchase data will be added to the next legislative report covering July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

Taro poi is a 100% locally produced carbohydrate that the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) credits as a vegetable and a grain. In May 2023, 58 Oahu public schools served fresh local poi. Students consumed 23,712 four-ounce servings at a purchase amount of \$24,960. The per serving cost was \$1.05 each.

### Implementing Operating Efficiencies

The Department's current information system does not allow the SFSB to complete a cost-savings analysis to compare local and non-local products.

To enhance its data collection capacity for future food purchases, the Department invested in an enterprise data system to streamline the SFSB's efforts to track local food purchases among the schools it serves. Implementation includes school food service staff training and system customization. The platform will provide transparency over the statewide supply chain and purchasing while informing the Department of its plans and actions.

Additionally, the Department holds regular menu committee meetings where representative managers from each district meet to learn about topics like menu planning, how to implement new ingredients, how to better work with distributors, and how to remedy recipes that fail. The Department provides additional training in procurement and data collection, and utilization of the enterprise system for menu planning, production records, and inventory. The Department also provides education on culinary math, cooking techniques (e.g., knife skills, baking, and cooking methods), kitchen workflow management, and standardized recipe training.

The regional centralized kitchen concept in Wahiawa is an endeavor with the potential to increase local food procurement by processing greater quantities of raw agricultural commodities into NSLP-compliant portions. The Department is still assessing timelines, neighbor island central kitchen locations, how to encumber available funds, and future designs and budgets.

By statute, the Department’s short-term target percentages of local food purchases based on Acts:

- Act 176, SLH 2021: At least 10% by January 1, 2025
- Act 144, SLH 2022. At least 10% by January 1, 2025
- Act 175, SLH 2021: 30% by 2030
- Act 176, SLH 2021: At least 18% by January 1, 2030 (Note conflicts with Act 175)
- Act 144, SLH 2022. At least 18% by January 1, 2030 (Note conflicts with Act 175)
- Act 176, SLH 2021: At least 26% by January 1, 2035
- Act 144, SLH 2022. At least 26% by January 1, 2035

**Table 1: Percentage of Locally Sourced Foods by County as Measured by the Total Cost of Food**

County	Percent of Total Cost
Honolulu	3.54%
Hawaii	1.34%
Maui	0.92%
Kauai	0.34%
<b>State</b>	<b>6.14%</b>

The Department procures 100% local papaya and 100% local ground beef. Ground beef is a processed packaged food categorized as a protein and represents the largest single food commodity procured locally at \$2,565,589.86. Some participating ranches include Kūlōlio Ranch, Haleakala Ranch, Ulupalakua Ranch, and Hāna Ranch. Poi processed from taro is categorized as a monthly special. An Oahu vendor processed the poi at a value of \$24,960.00.

Table 2 below provides the list of large purchases of locally sourced products by product line.

**Table 2: List of Distributors and their Product Lines**

Distributor	Islands Served	Product Line
Ala Moana Produce	Oahu	Produce
Ham Produce and Seafood Inc.	Oahu, Molokai, Lanai	Produce
Hilo Products, Inc.	Hawaii	Produce
Manson Products Co., Inc.	Oahu, Maui	Produce
Maui Cattle Company, LLC	Maui	Ground Beef
Palama Meat Co., Inc.	Oahu	Ground Beef
Pomai Kulolo, LLC	Oahu	Poi - Taro
T. Esaki Farm, Inc.	Kauai	Produce
Watanabe Vegetable Processing LLC	Maui	Produce
Y. Hata & Co., Ltd.	Statewide	Protein, Broadline Processed and Packaged Foods

One of the largest locally sourced products by the Department is local ground beef which is served on the menu in the following entrée items: chili and cheese nachos, chili and rice, creole macaroni, spaghetti with meat sauce, hamburger curry, hamburger stew, sloppy joe, scratch-made beef patty, and loco moco (in select schools).

The top purchased local produce is lettuce, tomato, cabbage and cucumber. They are featured as side items such as side salads and coleslaw, or in main entrees like Caesar salad (in select schools), tomato soup (in select schools), and kalua pork and cabbage.

The tables below outline the percentage of local fresh and processed food served by county. In Table 3, fresh food is defined as fresh produce. Processed and packaged foods are not included. Table 4 includes protein and a monthly special of poi made from processed taro but excludes fresh produce. In the tables below, “total cost” refers to the Department’s total expenditure of \$64,111,718.15 from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

**Table 3: Percentage of Local Fresh Food Served, by County, as Measured by the Total Expense of Food**

<b>County</b>	<b>Percent of the Total Cost</b>
Honolulu	0.94%
Hawaii	0.60%
Maui	0.44%
Kauai	0.12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.10%</b>

**Table 4: Percentage of Local Processed Food Data, by County, as Measured by the Total Expense of Food**

<b>County</b>	<b>Percent of the Total Cost</b>
Honolulu	2.59%
Hawaii	0.75%
Maui	0.47%
Kauai	0.23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.04%</b>

The tables below provide the percentage of locally sourced products by the Department’s largest distributors.

**Table 5: Percentage of Locally Sourced Ground Beef Products Purchased from the Department’s Largest Distributors, as Measured by the Total Cost of Food**

<b>Distributor</b>	<b>Percent of the Total Cost</b>
Palama Meat Co., Inc.	2.55%
Y. Hata & Co., Ltd.	1.03%
Maui Cattle Company, LLC	0.41%

**Table 6: Percentage of Locally Sourced Fresh Produce Purchased from the Department’s Largest Distributors, as Measured by the Total Cost of Food**

<b>Distributor</b>	<b>Percent of the Total Cost</b>
Ham Produce and Seafood Inc.	0.94%
Hilo Products, Inc.	0.60%
Watanabe Vegetable Processing LLC	0.44%

## **Summary**

Since the Farm-to-School Program's launch in 2015, it has developed from an entrepreneurial pilot benefiting Kohala and Mililani area students into a statewide program, incorporating local ingredients into the menus for approximately 100,000 daily meals. The goal remains to serve students flavorful, healthy, locally procured food while providing local farmers and vendors with steady revenue from a collaborative customer. The Department continues to work on simplifying the critical compliance steps inherent in procurement, data reporting, and food safety.

The Department's recent RFI and the subsequent bid solicitations are intended to identify available products, inform the public of product needs, and connect with vendors willing and able to undertake federal and state guidelines for child nutrition programs.

The SFSB aims to increase the volume of locally sourced produce and packaged foods by solidifying SFSB's identity and standards as a dependable, collaborative buyer.