



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

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

December 22, 2022

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

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

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

For your information and consideration, I am transmitting a copy of the annual report, Farm to School Meals, pursuant to Act 175, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021. In accordance with Section 93-16, Hawaii Revised Statutes, I am also informing you that the report may be viewed electronically at: <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/VisionForSuccess/SchoolDataAndReports/StateReports/Pages/Legislative-reports.aspx>.

Sincerely,

Keith T. Hayashi
Superintendent

KTH:jk

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

December 2022

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.

**Department of Education
Farm to School Meals**

Introduction

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) continues to work towards providing a minimum of 30 percent locally sourced foods to Hawaii’s public schools. This report outlines the factors and steps necessary for the School Food Services Branch (SFSB) in the Office of Facilities and Operations to meet the 30 percent goal.

The Department continues to build on its foundational systems to support meeting this goal, as well as identifying opportunities to increase local procurement on its school menus.

Current and Planned Activities for Local Procurement

As of October 31, 2022, the percentage of fresh local agricultural products and local value-added, processed, agricultural, or food products purchased was 6.2 percent.

The table below provides a breakdown of the total percentage of local fresh and processed food served by county as measured by the percentage of the total cost of food.

For calendar year January 1, 2022 to October 31, 2022	Oahu	Hawaii	Maui	Molokai	Lanai	Kauai
Percentage of Fresh Food Purchase Amount (Local)	0.97%	0.57%	0.26%	0.01%	0.01%	0.10%
Percentage of Processed Food Purchase Amount (Local Beef)	2.85%	0.68%	0.46%	0.05%	0.02%	0.24%

The SFSB procures 100 percent local ground beef, and is therefore represented as the largest single food commodity procured locally. The Department purchases ground beef from Y. Hata & Co., Maui Cattle Company, and Palama Meat Company.

The Department purchases produce through its federal and Department contracts from Manson Products, Hilo Products, Watanabe Produce, Ham’s Produce, and Esaki’s Produce.

In April 2022, the SFSB began procuring local lettuce through its federal contract, first piloting the Honolulu and Windward district totaling 83 schools. The pilot districts averaged 1,000 pounds a week for various tossed green salads served on the school menu. This school year, the rollout expanded to Leeward and Central districts, adding on another 86 schools. However, due to the extended heat wave which slowed lettuce growth, there was a pause in serving this item for the first semester of the 2022-2023 school year. The SFSB anticipates resuming reception of local lettuce for Oahu districts in January 2023.

As referenced above, the SFSB’s school meal program continues to serve 100 percent local ground beef which is served on the menu in the following dishes: Beef Chili Nachos, Hamburger Curry, Creole Mac, Spaghetti w/ Meat Sauce, and at select schools, Hamburger Steak w/ Gravy, Italian Meatballs w/ Marinara Sauce, School-made Hamburger, Cheeseburger, or Teri Burger, and Sloppy Joe.

The SFSB continues to work with local vendors regarding what local products can be served in a processed product or as an ingredient in a school-made recipe. Examples include, but are not limited to, local farmed fish, taro, ulu, sweet potato, and papaya. The SFSB is also inquiring with producers on the prospect of using a cooked local beef patty as a replacement to what's currently procured.

Also, overall food costs substantially increased for school year 2022-2023, including 80 percent of the food purchased for this school year increased in price by 42 percent.

Foundational Systems

The Department realizes the success in meeting 30 percent local lies in having a solid foundation to measure its progress.

The Department has procured a user-friendly and intuitive enterprise system which has begun to help the SFSB with establishing internal controls and processes that will centralize food service data for reporting on meeting the 30 percent goal. The SFSB is currently importing all of its inventory data, differentiating local vs. non-local. SFSB is also building its menus in the system, which will generate real-time meal cost data. As training with cafeteria staff is conducted, and they begin to use the system for daily operations, the SFSB will be able to report the percentage of locally sourced food served at any given time. Increasing accessibility of this data will reduce the arduous manual processes needed for reporting, and will aid the Department in identifying the lacking meal components for each district. This data will help bring greater attention to what regions need more support to increase local foods.

The SFSB is launching a digital dining menu software which will be used as the enterprise system's web-interface for schools and families. The menus will identify local foods on the menu, and will allow the students to rate their meals by individual item or entree. This will provide real-time feedback that will inform decisions on menu application for any food, including local foods. For example, an entree or menu side item prepared one way may not be well-received by students in a particular district or complex area, but it might in another. The state-wide, real-time feedback will help SFSB begin to build regional menu options.

To complement these systems, the Department's Office of Facilities and Operations is launching a request for information (RFI) to determine the feasibility of working with food hubs. It looks forward to learning the capacity of food hubs and how they may help the Department to increase local food procurement with information on what is available in what areas around the state and in what quantities.

Lastly, as the software systems and menu systems evolve to support farm to school efforts, physical infrastructure, such as the central kitchen concept, will enhance the overall meal program including its alignment with farm to school. This space will provide a farm to school venue for local farmers and producers and increase opportunities for community engagement. It will also provide a delivery point for farmers and producers to deliver products for that area, and may allow the Department to pick-up products from farmers and producers.

Challenging Opportunities

The Department has identified several challenges including: consistency of supply, price point, food safety, and cafeteria staff training and attrition.

As mentioned earlier, the SFSB is experiencing an extended pause on receiving local lettuce this year, due to the extended heat wave and slower growth. It expects to see this type of situation occur, but believes the RFI, which will determine the feasibility of working with food hubs, will be the start of a coordinated effort to see if food hubs can provide the back-up support for local farms and the Department in those situations.

The Department has observed that local farmers have challenges competing against mainland farmers as mainland farmers have competitive advantages and lower operating costs. In addition, the federal Food and Drug Administration school food rules generally require more tedious documentation. As compliance costs rise, local farmers often prefer to sell to other markets besides the school system.

The Department is aware of the need to continually invest in cafeteria staff to carry out the school meal program to feed and nourish Hawaii's keiki. In addition to utilizing the enterprise system for menu planning, production records, and inventory for cafeteria managers, the SFSB will focus on examining other key areas around skill building, including culinary math, cooking technique (e.g. knife skills, baking and cooking methods, etc.), kitchen workflow management, as well as standardized recipe training. These are large-scale efforts and the SFSB does not have the capacity to focus on them all simultaneously, but will build on each of them.

Conclusion

The Department's continued efforts to increase locally sourced foods on its menus have informed strategic decisions and considerations for local procurement moving forward. The Department understands the strides made to build its enterprise systems along with continued local procurement efforts, such as the RFI, investing in physical infrastructure and staff training will aid in successful implementation of increasing local procurement in the school meal program.