



How to sell fruits and vegetables to Mississippi schools: *a quick guide*

Route 1: Direct to Schools

Who do I talk to? The child nutrition director at the school district. This person's contact information is easy to find on the school district website.

*See "RFI Basics for FSDs" Fact Sheet for tips on what to cover in your conversation with the child nutrition director.

What products do the schools want? This is a great question to ask the child nutrition director. Tell them what you grow and what grows well when school is in session (August-May). Schools don't have a ton of equipment and time to process food – so products like sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and salad greens are good starting suggestions.

*Child Nutrition Directors plan menus around 5 months ahead. Open the conversation *now* for a future sale.

What food safety certification do I need? Mississippi law allows child nutrition directors to determine the safety of the product they are buying. Often child nutrition directors prefer farms that have GHP/GAP certification, but many will also accept the Mississippi Food Safety Checklist. *The safety cafeteria meals is extremely important to schools just as the safety of your food is important to you. Find a way to prove how safe your food is.*

*See "Mississippi Food Safety Checklist."

Can schools afford local foods? Public schools have to be very careful with spending and have limited budgets for school meals. That being said, schools purchase thousands of dollars of fresh food for students every week. Often, there's not a huge difference between the price you set to make a profit and the price the school can afford.

Route 2: Through the state program: Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DOD)

Who do I talk to? The Department of Agriculture. Get in touch with Paige Manning, Telephone: 601.359.1163 or email Paige@mdac.ms.gov. Paige can tell you everything you need to know about selling to the DOD program (quantity, schedule, payment plan, etc).

What food safety certification do I need? To sell to the MS DOD program, you will need GAP certification.

Learn more by watching this video online! www.bit.ly/MSFarmtoschoolguide

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