



FLORIDA FARM TO SCHOOL VIRTUAL PRODUCER TRAINING

Module 2



DIVISION OF FOOD,
NUTRITION AND WELLNESS



Module Two: Getting to Know School Markets

Module 2 of the Florida Farm to School Virtual Producer Training will provide you with an overview of:

- What programs are available in Florida for viability of school markets
- Menu planning process for schools and how you can meet their menu needs throughout the school year
- Types of school meal programs
- Ways of cooking and distributing meals



CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

School Meal Programs

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)

Additional Child Nutrition Programs

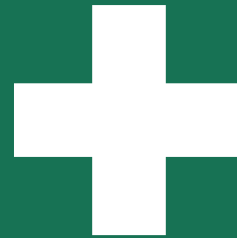
- Child and Adult Care Food Program/ At Risk After School (CACFP)
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP/SSO)
- After School Snack Program (ASSP)



WHAT INFLUENCES SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM PURCHASING?

Meal Pattern and Nutrition Requirements

These determine the types of food that programs serve



Meal Costs

What schools spend on food, labor, etc., and what are they reimbursed



A LOOK AT SCHOOL MEALS

- **Meal Components of school meals:** Here you see photos of a typical meal from different school meal programs.
 - In the **National School Lunch Program**, the five food components include: dairy or dairy alternative, grain, protein (meat or meat alternate), fruit, and vegetable.
 - In the **School Breakfast Program**, the three food components include: dairy or dairy alternative, grain or protein (meat or meat alternate), and fruit or vegetable.
 - The **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable** Program is focused on providing eligible elementary school students with an extra serving of fresh fruit and vegetables outside of meal times.
- There are slight differences across the programs in the food components they serve, but we are still working with the same five required food components: **Grain, Protein (meat or meat alternative), Fruit, Vegetable, and Dairy or Dairy Alternative**
- **Local foods can span the whole tray. Any or all of the meal components could be local.**



SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM

MEAL COMPONENTS

Within those key meal components are additional nutritional standards schools must abide by.

For example:

- Grains must be whole grain-rich
- Fruits must limit the use of juice
- Vegetables must meet a specific balance of the following subgroups:
 - Dark Green
 - Red/orange
 - Beans and peas
 - Starchy
 - Other

Key leverage points to remember when selling to schools:

- **Color and variety:** Program operators look for a diversity of vegetables to meet meal requirements.
- **Overcoming seasonal barriers:** Cold-weather crops and storage crops can help meet the vegetable sub-group meal pattern requirements (greens, winter squash, sweet potatoes).
 - Meat, dairy items, grains, and more may be available for sale year-round.
- **Other nutrition standards:** Sodium, saturated fat, trans fat, and calories must be limited; whole, less-processed foods, like those that you are offering, can help meet nutrition standards



THE COST OF SCHOOL MEALS

Federal Reimbursement Rates

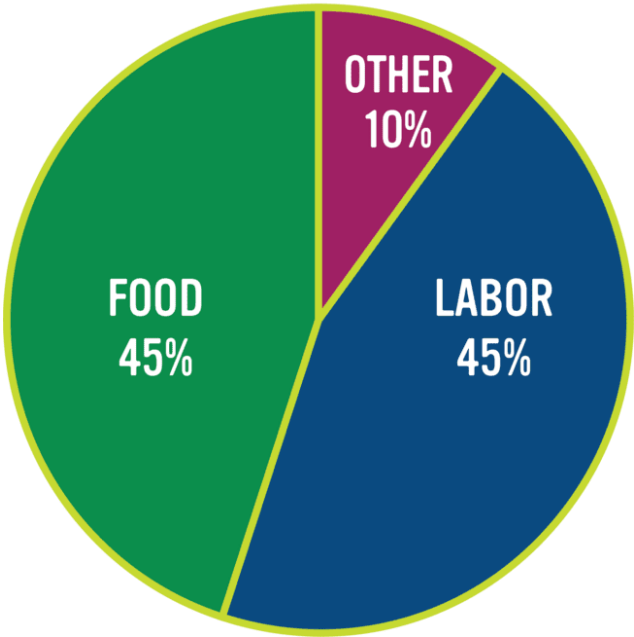
National School Lunch Program (SY 2026-2027)

Federal reimbursement rates are effective July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. The performance-based cash reimbursement is \$.09 (9 cents) per lunch meal for the 2026–2027 school year.

Lunch Category	60% or More (High Lunch)	Less Than 60% (Low Lunch)
Paid	0.56	0.54
Reduced-Price	4.47	4.45
Free	4.87	4.85

School Breakfast Program (SY 2026-2027)

Breakfast Category	Severe Need	Non-Severe Need
Paid	0.42	0.42
Reduced-Price	2.75	2.24
Free	3.05	2.54



School Lunch: Average production cost is **\$4.87**

With over 28 million meals made a day, those small numbers add up to **BIG** dollars spent acquiring nutritious foods for schools.



THE VARIETY OF SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

- Even within the different school meal programs, individual School Food Authorities/school districts are very different in size, scale, and capacity to prepare foods.
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- This creates great opportunity for you as a producer to connect with the school meal program, size and scale of program, and market pathway that can work best for you.



DIVISION OF FOOD,
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PRODUCT NEED: ONE SIZE DOES *NOT* FIT ALL

- **Here we see a comparison of the amount of broccoli needed for:**
 - A very large K-12 school district that is serving $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup servings in 350,000 lunches (very large school district) = **108,150 pounds of broccoli**
 - A medium K-12 school district that is serving $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup servings in 5,000 lunches = **1,545 pounds of broccoli**
 - A small K-12 school district serving $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup of broccoli for fresh fruit and vegetable program snack for 500 children = **102 pounds of broccoli**
 - A medium K-12 school district serving broccoli as one of several vegetable options on their salad bar = 50 pounds of broccoli
- You can see these influences on volume requirements:
 - Type of child nutrition program (e.g., National School Lunch Program vs. Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program)
 - Age of students served
 - Mode of serving (plated meals versus salad bar)
- **When exploring potential school meal program markets, it is important to know these factors and what volume the program needs.**

CNP Setting	Serving Size	Number of Meals	Pounds Needed
Large K-12 District – Plated Lunch	$\frac{3}{4}$ Cup	350,000	108,150
Medium K-12 District – Plated Lunch	$\frac{3}{4}$ Cup	5,000	1,545
Small K-12 District – Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack	$\frac{1}{2}$ Cup	500	102
Medium K-12 District – Salad Bar	Variable	Variable	50



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- **When exploring potential school meal program markets, it is important to know these factors and what volume the program needs.**

SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM KITCHENS

"If you've seen one school meal program kitchen, you've seen one school meal program kitchen."

- As with farms, school meal program kitchens vary from kitchen to kitchen. The equipment, space, storage, and staffing vary greatly across school meal programs.
- From well-equipped, industrial kitchens that have capacity for scratch cooking to what we call a "heat and serve" kitchen where pre-prepared food is reheated for service, school kitchens come with different capabilities.
- Some school meal programs do not have the equipment or staff capacity to process fresh, whole foods themselves. **These programs may need minimally processed product (e.g., cleaned, peeled, chopped) or fully prepared products to use in their programs.**



SCHOOL COOKING INFRASTRUCTURE

Scratch or Speed-Scratch Cooking



Heat and Serve kitchen



Catered or Vended Meals



SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM MODELS

Based on their size, scale, equipment, and infrastructure, school meal programs have different production models. These models will influence who you need to connect with to get your product into the system.

On-site Food Preparation

- Meals are prepared on-site at the school.
- This model may be operated by the Local School Food Authority or contracted to a **food service management company** by the Local School Food Authority to operate any aspect of the school meal program.

Central Kitchen Model

- One large central kitchen (or satellite production kitchen) prepares food and delivers the prepared meals to “satellite” locations.
- This model may be operated by a local School Food Authority or contracted to a food service management company.

Vended Meal Sponsors

- A third-party meal supplier is contracted by the Local School Food Authority to prepare and deliver meals.

