



**WILLAMETTE  
FARM & FOOD  
COALITION**

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Hello Farmers,

There is an opportunity to get the food you grow into the mouths of school children in Lane County! It's not easy or hugely profitable, but it can be a new market for your crops and help connect kids with the source of their food. Some of our local schools are interested in purchasing surplus crops or crops from land which is transitioning to organic.

The goals of the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition's Farm to School Program are to:

- Improve student nutrition by serving fresh, locally grown produce in school cafeterias;
- Increase children's interest in and knowledge of where their food comes from;
- Influence children's dietary habits by exposing them to a wide variety of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables;
- Create new markets for local farms and food processors; and
- Educate teachers, parents, food service staff, farmers, distributors, and other community members about the benefits of farm to school efforts.

Here is some information to help you pursue farm to school sales, if you are interested.

There are four school districts in Lane County that are actively involved with the Farm to School Program. They are: Springfield Public Schools, Bethel School District, Eugene 4J District and the Crow Applegate Lorane District. I can provide you with an overview and purchasing requirements for each of them. Pleasant Hill School District is also exploring local purchasing.

**Price:** Schools have really limited food budgets, so they are generally buying products at low prices, although there are exceptions. Schools are a great outlet for surplus crops if you've grown more than you can sell to your regular markets. If you sell to school districts at a reduced price, this can qualify as a tax deduction because schools are charitable organizations.

**Distribution:** Most school districts prefer to buy through a distributor, rather than directly from local farms, but some want to purchase directly. Springfield Public Schools wants to make most of its purchases of local products through its distributor, Emerald Fruit and Produce. Eugene 4J District and Bethel School District will also be making purchases of some of their local produce through Emerald Fruit and Produce. Eugene Local Foods and Hummingbird Wholesale are other distributors that may be selling to schools in the future.

**Delivery and Processing:** Most schools require that produce be delivered to their central warehouse by the farmer or distributor, and require that it be washed and boxed or bagged. Many schools don't have functional kitchens, so they have limited ability to prep and process products and require that certain products be prepped by the vendor. Schools also tend to have limited storage capacity, so large quantities or highly perishable crops can be difficult for them to manage for long periods of time.

**Timing:** The fall harvest season from September-November is a great time to sell to schools. Spring can be more difficult, since the school year ends in mid-June. The Bethel District and possibly also the Eugene 4J District are interested in making purchases for their summer school programs, which is a great opportunity for farms.

**Meat and Eggs:** School districts can purchase local meat when the product and cost fits into their overall budget. Schools often use their entitlement dollars for purchasing commodity meat, so meat farmers who want to sell to schools can ask what the district is paying in entitlement dollars for commodity meat currently and consider offering their meat at or below that cost. For sanitation reasons, some districts buy a lot of pre-cooked meats, especially chicken. The Crow Applegate Lorane District is interested in purchasing eggs from farms in the Lorane Valley.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture's Farm to School Program has produced an excellent manual titled "*Oregon Foods in Oregon Schools.*" Let me know if you would like a copy.

If you are interested in selling to schools, I would like to support you. I can help in the following ways:

- Connecting you with the school districts or their distributors;
- Arranging formal or informal contracts between your farm and a school district or distributor
- Securing grants for purchases of local food
- Making students aware that the food served at school came from your farm
- Providing you with information and resources as needed

Please let me know if I can help.

Sincerely,

Megan Kemple  
Farm to School Program Coordinator  
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