



# Local Foods in Hawai‘i’s Schools

*A report on the challenges to local food procurement  
in Hawai‘i and the opportunities to advance beyond them*

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# INTRODUCTION

Farm to school encompasses a variety of efforts to connect communities and students to fresh, nutritious food in order to encourage healthy eating habits and strengthen local economies. Farm to school generally includes three core elements: (1) **school gardens**; (2) nutrition, agriculture, health, and food **education**; and (3) the **procurement** of local foods for school meals. The first and second elements aim to help students become “citizen eaters” who understand the connections between food, health, and agriculture. The third aims to create pathways to deliver local produce directly into school food programs, such as the National School Lunch Program and the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

Over the last decade, Hawai‘i’s farm to school initiatives have been steadily gaining momentum, prompted by grassroots groups and government agencies looking closely at the issue of children’s health and nutrition in schools. With respect to procurement, the Hawai‘i State Legislature has taken several steps to advance the development of a farm to school procurement program in Hawai‘i:

- In 2009, the Hawai‘i State Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 121, which requested that the University of Hawai‘i convene a working group to consider the feasibility of establishing a statewide farm to school program in the Hawai‘i Department of Education. The resulting report to the 2010 Legislature condensed the barriers to a statewide farm to school procurement program into three categories: high costs, procurement barriers, and inadequate supply.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2011, the Hawai‘i House of Representatives passed House Resolution 145, requesting that the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture convene a working group to examine similar issues. In the final report to the 2012 Legislature, the working group also found that costs, procurement policies, and supply issues were at the heart of the problem, and laid out additional measures for the state to examine.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2015, the state took a significant step forward with the passage of Act 218 (SB376 SD2 HD1 CD1), which appropriated funds to create a Hawai‘i Farm to School Program and Farm to School Coordinator within the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture. The Coordinator will be responsible for working in collaboration with stakeholders to address the issues of supply, demand, procurement, and consumption of Hawai‘i-grown foods in state facilities, primarily education facilities, and to take reasonable steps to incorporate more agriculture and nutrition education in schools.

This report examines the challenges to procuring local food for schools in Hawai‘i and highlights several opportunities to advance beyond those challenges.



# CHALLENGES TO LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT

## Supply

Hawai‘i has only one school district, which includes all 255 regular public schools throughout the Hawaiian Islands. The Hawai‘i Department of Education (DOE) ranks as the ninth largest school district in the nation, based on 2012-13 school year enrollment numbers, and is the only statewide school district in the country. Hawai‘i also has 34 public charter schools and over 100 independent schools, many of which offer food service to their students.

The DOE’s School Food Services Branch (SFSB) is the sole school food authority for all regular public schools in Hawai‘i. SFSB feeds approximately 100,000 students and school staff each day. To promote efficiency, the DOE has generally sought school food contractors that can supply the entire district with a given item or category of items. While efficient, this approach constrains the DOE’s ability to procure local food, as local food production levels generally cannot support procurement for the entire district.

Demand for local food in Hawai‘i exceeds supply. Hawai‘i imports approximately 85 percent of the food consumed throughout the islands, according to estimates by the Rocky Mountain Institute.<sup>3</sup> Food distributors interviewed by The Kohala Center have reported that papaya is one of the few local crops available year-round. It is unlikely that any farm in Hawai‘i could consistently supply enough of a single crop for the entire school district or that local food distributors could consistently aggregate a sufficient quantity of local crops to supply the entire district.

Increasing local food production in Hawai‘i will require a number of strategies to address the production challenges faced by farmers. For more on Hawai‘i’s food supply challenges, see *Reflections on Hawai‘i’s Food System by Food Hubs and Distributors (right)* and *Factors Impacting Local Food Production (page 5)*.

## Reflections on Hawai‘i’s Food System

*by Food Hubs and Distributors*

The Kohala Center surveyed food hubs and distributors throughout the Hawaiian Islands in order to better understand the challenges to, and opportunities for, sourcing local food for schools.

All of the respondents expressed the desire to buy more local food, both for schools and other markets. Formal contracting with local farmers was uncommon among the respondents, but most expressed an interest in contracting with farmers if the distributor had a contract to supply local schools and if the contract contained provisions to address supply issues, such as the option to fill orders with imported produce when local supplies are unavailable.

### What are the primary challenges you face in sourcing Hawai‘i-grown produce?

- *Pricing and volume. There’s not a large enough supply.*
- *Consistency.*
- *Not enough farmers. Need more supply.*
- *Farmers don’t communicate shortages on time. We need reliability.*
- *No central way to find out what’s available. The only way we know what is out there is word-of-mouth or if farmers come to us directly.*
- *For schools, seasonality is the main issue. The peak season for many crops is during the summer.*
- *Farmers could benefit from training on grading, packing, and timely communication. Some distributors shy away from buying local because of experiences with late deliveries and poor quality.*
- *Many folks like to farm, but don’t run the business side effectively.*
- *Unreliable food safety practices, such as using non-potable water to wash produce.*

### What do you think would help increase production of Hawai‘i-grown produce?

- *More markets for farmers; more places where food is aggregated.*
- *More farms, more ag land. Community-centered farms that supply food to the surrounding region.*
- *More professionalism, more emphasis on business administration in farmer training. HR, finance, and business skills are needed.*
- *Preserve access to Hawai‘i’s farmlands by preventing development.*
- *More access to affordable water and help developing a farm workforce.*
- *Helping farmers access markets and figure out what crops grow well on their land.*

## Factors Impacting Local Food Production

The following abbreviated summary touches upon some of the numerous factors that impact commercial farming and food production in Hawai‘i.

### Access to affordable, suitable agricultural land

The cost of land in Hawai‘i is the highest in the nation, with the exception of Washington, DC.<sup>4</sup> Development pressures in Hawai‘i necessitate careful land management to ensure the availability of affordable agricultural lands. Large landowners in Hawai‘i offer a variety of agricultural land leases, but there are significant variations in the cost, terms, size, suitability, and availability of the leases and their accompanying parcels. In addition, residential uses of agricultural lands by lessees and landowners have reduced the inventory of quality, affordable agricultural lands for farming. To prevent residential uses of agricultural lands, many lessors prohibit farmers from living on leased farmland, further increasing costs for commercial farmers.

Farmers would benefit from access to affordable short-term and long-term leases for various-sized parcels to accommodate beginning and experienced farmers, as well as small-scale diversified agriculture and larger operations. Landowners and policymakers should give more consideration to farmer and farmworker accommodation on and near leased farmland, given the costs of living and doing business in Hawai‘i. Commercial farmers would also benefit from the ability to purchase affordable farmland to secure their investment and access capital. Landowners interested in selling farmland can preserve the agricultural and rural character of the land through conversation easements. Limiting tax, water, and other benefits to bonafide commercial farming operations and public benefit initiatives, such as community gardens, would help preserve the availability of prime agricultural lands for food production.

### Access to affordable agricultural inputs

Importing fertilizer, feed, building materials, equipment, and energy impacts the cost of food production in Hawai‘i, including the cost of building essential infrastructure to access water and electricity. Increasing access to renewable energy sources, preserving and restoring watersheds, creating and maintaining water collection storage, distribution, and irrigation systems, and ensuring access to affordable water are essential to food production in Hawai‘i.

Agricultural cooperatives and food hubs can help farmers reduce costs and access resources by facilitating: (1) bulk purchasing to secure better prices; (2) cost-sharing for processing, transportation, and certifications, including food safety; (3) product aggregation to reach larger markets; and (4) natural resource management.

### Food safety

New food-safety laws will likely impact all farms—either directly through certification requirements or indirectly through market-driven insurance requirements—thereby increasing the cost of farming for large and small producers. Education, training, technical assistance, low-cost certification programs, and food-safety-certified food hubs will help farmers maintain financial viability while meeting new legal and industry food-safety standards.

### Expanding processing infrastructure

Expanding the availability of food-safety-certified food processing infrastructure (e.g., wash/pack/cold storage facilities, cook-chill facilities, co-packers, slaughterhouses, etc.) can help food producers access more markets, including schools which often purchase pre-cut and pre-cooked foods, such as carrot sticks and tomato sauce. Value-added processing facilities could also help create a more consistently available supply of local foods. Although Hawai‘i has a 12-month growing season, most crops have peak seasons. Value-added processing would expand the range and availability of local food products in Hawai‘i.

### Access to capital

A variety of organizations offer loans to farmers in Hawai‘i. However, many farmers are unable to qualify for loans because they: (1) lack collateral to secure loans, (2) lack sufficient cash to meet minimum equity requirements for the projects they seek to finance, and/or (3) fail to meet specific program eligibility requirements. In addition, a number of grants are available to assist agricultural businesses, but few of these provide funding directly to farms for equipment and infrastructure. Grant, investment, and loan programs tailored to address these gaps would help Hawai‘i’s farmers access funds needed to launch and grow local farms.

### Education and training

There are a number of promising farmer education programs in Hawai‘i, including The Kohala Center’s Beginning Farmer-Rancher Development Program and GoFarm Hawai‘i. However, more is needed to recruit new farmers and increase the likelihood of success. A national FarmCorps program could help develop a new generation of farmworkers and farmers. Agricultural business degrees at the undergraduate or graduate level could help aspiring farmers develop business skills essential to running a commercial farm. At the primary and secondary school levels, hands-on learning experiences in school gardens and science curricula that incorporate agriculture modules can help familiarize new generations with how food is grown.

## Costs

Food prices present an additional challenge to the procurement of local foods for school meals. Hawai‘i is an expensive place to farm. Farm inputs—including feed, fertilizer, equipment, and fossil fuels—are all imported and often priced higher than in the continental United States. Energy costs<sup>5</sup> are the highest in the nation, as are land costs (with the exception of Washington, DC).<sup>6</sup>

Higher food costs would be particularly difficult for schools to bear without additional resources. A large part of the funding for school lunch programs in Hawai‘i comes from the federal government through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). NSLP provides funding to the state as a reimbursement, at a rate of \$3.74 per lunch (for free meals; less for reduced or paid meals). For the DOE, this rate is insufficient to cover the full cost of lunch, which was \$5.51 per lunch during the 2013-14 school year. Although the DOE has requested an increase in Hawai‘i’s federal reimbursement rate, increased costs would further strain tight school budgets.

## Procurement Laws

State procurement law requires state agencies, including the DOE, to conduct a competitive procurement process to award contracts for all purchases. The various formal procurement processes can be administratively complex for state agencies and vendors. Large contracts are generally awarded to the lowest bidder. Although Hawai‘i has a 15 percent price preference available for local agricultural products, penalties associated with nonperformance discourage vendors from taking advantage of the price preference, particularly in the case of local crops that are subject to a number of production risks. Additional contracting requirements—such as vendor compliance with numerous governmental entities, registration for procurement solicitation information, projecting future prices on volatile agricultural markets, and accepting risks of potential contract default—have shown to be hurdles that local producers and distributors are often unwilling to cross to contract with the state.

# OPPORTUNITIES

## Localizing School Food Procurement and Leveraging DOE Purchasing Power

Shifting from a district-wide procurement model to a localized approach to procurement would create more manageable-sized markets for local farmers to supply, either directly or, more likely, through distributors. In addition, the use of forward contracts—with reasonable price adjustment terms and sufficient flexibility to substitute imports when local supplies are unavailable—could help stimulate local food production for school food programs. In this way, it may be possible to utilize the DOE’s tremendous buying power to stimulate local food production in Hawai‘i and over time supply an increasing number of schools with local food.

To experiment with a more localized approach to procurement, the DOE could implement a **local food procurement pilot project** in one or two clusters of schools located near agricultural centers. Starting with a pilot project would allow the DOE to phase in new processes and procedures to facilitate a **farm to school procurement cycle** to include:

- developing localized school food menus that incorporate locally grown foods and traditional foods, such as ‘ulu (breadfruit);
- conducting a “Request for Information” (i.e., a market study to evaluate the availability and price of local foods);
- writing procurement specifications with “buy local” terms that comply with state and federal law; and
- entering into forward contracts with price adjustment terms that account for market fluctuations and terms that allow backfilling with imported produce when local supply is not available.



*\*Adapted from Hawai‘i Child Nutrition Programs’ Procurement Cycle Illustration*

The state might also consider **decentralizing the DOE’s School Food Services Branch** by breaking the district into smaller food procurement units, such as counties, islands, school complex areas, school complexes, or communities.

## Developing Procurement Laws That Facilitate Local Food Procurement

To help develop a school food procurement approach that is conducive to sourcing local food, state legislators introduced in 2015 a bill to establish a **special innovative procurement process** for the procurement of goods and services in Hawai‘i. Special innovative procurement would provide state agencies with the flexibility to develop customized procurement procedures in order to address a unique need, such as developing a local food purchasing structure. Two special innovative procurement bills were introduced during the 2015 Hawai‘i legislative session, but failed to pass. Advocates plan to reintroduce a special innovative procurement bill during the 2016 Hawai‘i legislative session.



## Building Farm to School Procurement Programs at Charter Schools

Each charter school in Hawai‘i is an independent school food authority that procures food separately from the DOE. In addition, charter schools are exempt from the Hawai‘i Public Procurement Code. As a consequence, charter schools have more autonomy and flexibility in their school food purchases than regular public schools.

Charter schools can use their food procurement flexibility to develop their own farm to school procurement programs and develop the farm to school supply chain in Hawai‘i. To do so, charter school food service managers would benefit from technical assistance to develop school food menus that include local foods; conduct requests for information from suppliers; and develop procurement policies, specifications, and contracts that are conducive to sourcing local food while complying with state and federal law. The Kohala Center is currently working with a group of charter schools on Hawai‘i Island to explore options for joint administration of, and joint procurement for, charter school meal programs, including local food procurement.

## Evaluating Costs

It is commonly thought that food produced in Hawai‘i is more expensive than imports and, thus, beyond the budget for most school food programs. However, recent data suggests that for at least some crops, the price of local food may be comparable to, or even lower than, imports. Recent studies by researchers at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa examine prices of local and imported tomatoes and lettuce. The tomato study revealed a combination of price premiums and price discounts for local tomatoes and found that “prices of local tomatoes produced in Hawai‘i are on average lower than their imported counterparts.”<sup>7</sup> The lettuce study found “no demonstrable price premium for fresh packaged local lettuce in the Honolulu retail market... Instead, price variations are primarily attributable to differences in the overall quality of the products and other product characteristics.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, at least some local foods may be affordable for schools.

The DOE does not track the origin of produce purchased by schools for meal programs. However, conversations with distributors and data on the **Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD Fresh)**, all indicate that Hawai‘i’s schools are procuring some local produce. From July 1–September 22, 2015, 26 percent of the fresh produce purchased by schools with federal entitlement dollars from the DoD Fresh program was grown in Hawai‘i. DoD Fresh, operated by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), provides schools with USDA Foods entitlement dollars to purchase fresh produce. DLA contracts with produce vendors who in turn source food to supply a specific region. Hawai‘i’s DoD Fresh vendors have included Hilo Products (Hawai‘i Island), Esaki’s Produce (Kaua‘i), Watanabe Vegetable Processing (Maui), and Ham Produce and Seafood (O‘ahu), among others. DoD Fresh encourages vendors to buy local, and Hawai‘i-grown items available through DoD Fresh have included bean sprouts, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, cantaloupe, cucumber, ginger, honeydew, romaine lettuce, iceberg lettuce, green leaf lettuce, green onions, papaya, bell peppers, squash, tomatoes, watercress, and watermelon.

A DOE **data collection and analysis** project for school meal programs would help to determine the identity, cost and percentage of local foods purchased by public schools. A data project would also help determine if the local foods currently purchased by schools are priced comparably to imports or subsidized by funding programs, such as DoD Fresh.

Other tools for schools to evaluate the affordability of local foods include: (1) conducting a **Market Study / “Request for Information”** from local vendors to gauge the availability and price of local foods, and (2) issuing a **“Request for Proposals”** from local vendors to bid on supplying fresh produce to schools, including locally grown crops.

## Local Food Procurement Funding

For some crops, schools may require additional funding to buy local.

Funding from the **USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)** is helping schools serve local fruits and vegetables that are generally not included in school lunch menus, such as dragon fruit and rambutan. The FFVP provides federal funds to low-income elementary schools to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables to serve as snacks between meals during the school day. FFVP menu and budget requirements are more flexible than the school lunch program. This flexibility allows schools to purchase a wide variety of produce. Although the state does not track the origin of produce sourced for the FFVP, anecdotal evidence and a small data collection project indicate that FFVP funding is helping schools procure local foods.

Additional funding to support local food procurement could also be obtained through the **appropriation of state funds for local school food procurement**, similar to recent legislation passed by the Oregon State Legislature (SB 5507 and SB 501) resulting in the appropriation of over \$4.5 million in extra funding for Oregon schools to purchase local foods.

## FARM TO SCHOOL PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES

Schools, districts, agriculture departments, and nonprofits throughout the United States have developed a variety of farm to school procurement programs with varying goals, scopes, and degrees of success. The following section highlights some successful and promising strategies for incorporating more local food into school meal programs.

### Work with Vendors Committed to Buying Local

#### *Kona Pacific Public Charter School, Hawai‘i Island*

Working with a local food hub that is committed to sourcing local food has been a successful farm to school strategy for Kona Pacific Public Charter School (KPPCS) on Hawai‘i Island. KPPCS serves breakfast, lunch, and snacks to 230 students, and also operates a community food service program for hundreds of local residents that participate in Head Start, the Hawai‘i County Summer Fun program, and KPPCS’ summer food service program.

For the 2014-15 school year, 42 percent (by dollar value) of the food purchased by KPPCS was produced in Hawai‘i, including a 100 percent locally-sourced USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (Snack) Program. KPPCS’ success stems from a number of factors, including the relationships that school administrators have developed with local farmers and distributors. KPPCS procures food directly from farmers and also through Adaptations Inc., a food hub located near the school.

Adaptations specializes in aggregating food from local farmers. To address some of the local sourcing issues experienced by distributors, Adaptations provides local farmers with technical assistance and funding to connect with markets and comply with good agricultural practices. In addition, Adaptations creates markets for under-utilized, but widely available foods, such as local off-grade and gleaned produce. By finding a partner that shares their commitment to local food, KPPCS has built a robust farm to school procurement program.

### *Volcano School of Arts & Sciences, Hawai'i Island*

Volcano School of Arts & Sciences (VSAS), a public charter school on Hawai'i Island, has been able to procure up to 43 percent of its food from local sources by partnering with Hilo Products, a local food distributor that has built relationships with many local farmers, and by buying directly from farmers near the school. VSAS builds menus that incorporate local products that are in season, networks with local food producers, and recently began forward contracting with a local farmer. By prioritizing local food, and finding suppliers that share their commitment, VSAS has been able to build the foundation of a strong farm to school procurement program.

### *REAP's Farm to School Program in Madison, Wisconsin*

Thirteen schools in Madison, Wisconsin, partner with the REAP Food Group to receive hundreds of pounds of local food each week for the schools' USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Programs (FFVP). REAP is a non-profit organization dedicated to building a local food system that supports small family farms and locally owned businesses. REAP sources, washes, cuts, and packages FFVP snacks for participating schools, along with an educational "Snack Bite" that provides nutritional and agricultural information about the snacks for teachers to share with students. In 2014, REAP distributed over 180,000 snacks to more than 5,500 students.<sup>9</sup>

## **Start with a Pilot Project**

### *Riverside Unified School District, California – Farmers' Market Salad Bar*

Starting with and gradually expanding a pilot program helped the Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) test and revise its farm to school procurement program. RUSD is the 15<sup>th</sup> largest district in California, serving approximately 43,000 students at 47 schools, including 30 elementary schools. RUSD began its farm to school program in 2005 to offer elementary students healthy and nutritious food choices through a locally-sourced salad bar. The farm to school program started as a pilot in one elementary school and expanded over time. By 2010, the program was in 29 elementary schools.

Initially the program offered the salad bar as an alternative to a hot entrée. Based on student feedback, the district modified the program in 2012 and now offers both a hot entrée and the salad bar. Students first visit the salad bar, which offers fresh fruits, vegetables and proteins for their lunch plate. They then receive a hot entrée from the serving line. The program is revenue-neutral for the District, sources 50–100 percent local produce (depending on the time of year), and led to the formation of a farmer cooperative to supply schools throughout the district and beyond.<sup>10</sup> In 2014, the student participation rate was 70 percent, and the program currently reaches over 20,000 students.<sup>11</sup>

## **Start with One Day a Week or Month**

### *California Thursdays™*

In California, selecting one day per week or per month helped schools ease into new local food procurement programs, while gradually exposing students to new foods. With support from the Center for Ecoliteracy, the Oakland Unified School District launched in 2013 its California Thursdays farm to school program, featuring locally-sourced, freshly-prepared meals on one Thursday a month for the district's 21,000 students. Oakland Unified began offering the program weekly in 2014. As reported by the Center for Ecoliteracy, 42 California school districts—which collectively serve over 250 million school meals each year—now participate in California Thursdays, including the Los Angeles Unified School District, which has 1,270 schools.<sup>12</sup>

## Highlight Local Foods

### *Portland's Local Flavors Program*

Incorporating select ingredients into familiar recipes gave Portland Public Schools (PPS) an opportunity to highlight and introduce new foods to students, while maintaining cafeteria favorites. In 2007, PPS launched a local lunch program to serve a 100 percent locally sourced lunch once a month. Feedback from students indicated that the 100 percent locally sourced lunches were too great of a departure from their favorite menu items. As a result, the district revised its approach and developed the “Local Flavors” program, which highlights local food products throughout the district’s menus on a more regular basis. The district serves approximately 45,000 students in 86 public schools, sourcing over 30 percent of its food from local producers.<sup>13</sup>

## Hire a Farm to School Coordinator

### *Laupāhoehoe Community Public Charter School Farm to School Program*

Hiring a farm to school coordinator has helped Laupāhoehoe Community Public Charter School on Hawai‘i Island attain a 100 percent locally sourced USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). The farm to school coordinator is responsible for running the school garden program and procuring local food for the school’s FFVP. Having a dedicated staff person to build relationships with local farmers and food distributors has resulted in a consistent supply of local fruits and vegetables to serve as snacks during the school day.

### *Arizona Farm to School Program*

Hiring a farm to school specialist has helped Arizona school districts access farm to school procurement resources and build connections with local vendors. In 2011, the Arizona Department of Education hired a farm to school and school garden specialist to coordinate and foster local food procurement efforts by school districts throughout the state. The specialist works with a 15-member advisory board comprised of representatives from state agencies, school districts, the farm bureau, extension services, brokers, processors, and farmers. To help Arizona school districts source local food, the specialist has created a variety of local food procurement resources, including guidebooks and a database of local food vendors. The specialist also regularly organizes buyer/grower meetings and farm tours to connect local schools to local farmers.

### *Oklahoma Farm to School Program*

In 2006, the “Oklahoma Farm to School Program Act” was signed into law, formally establishing the Oklahoma Farm to School Program within the state’s Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. The program employs an administrator to provide farm to school program development resources, conduct workshops, and offer technical assistance to farmers, food service directors, processors, and distributors. The program also maintains a farm to school website to assist schools and farmers seeking information on fresh food procurement.

## Expand Supply Through Gleaning Networks

### *New Hampshire Gleaning Networks*

Gleaning is the process of collecting food that farmers do not plan to harvest for various reasons (e.g., excess supply or cosmetic shortcomings), and donating that food to schools, food pantries, and other community organizations. The New Hampshire Farm to School Program, housed at the Sustainability Institute at the University of New Hampshire, is overseeing the development of six gleaning networks run by regional gleaning coordinators. By tapping into an undeveloped supply source, the networks have the potential to access low-cost local food for schools and prevent waste.

## CONCLUSION

Maximizing local food procurement by Hawai‘i’s schools will require a multifaceted approach to overcome challenges and pursue opportunities. Efforts to localize DOE school food procurement will require shifts in state procurement laws and DOE policies and procedures, and most likely increases in DOE resources and staff to conduct multiple procurements, complete market studies, develop new menus, train cafeteria staff, and manage multiple contracts. Building charter school farm to school programs will require technical assistance to help schools refine their menus, train cafeteria staff, and develop new procurement procedures and contracts. Local distributors and farmers may also need assistance with responding to DOE and charter school procurement solicitations, developing forward contracts, and overcoming production and supply chain challenges.

Current food production levels in Hawai‘i mean that moving forward will require starting small, developing successful models and practices, and expanding as the market allows. The farm to school opportunities and strategies outlined in this report offer a number of starting points—from serving one local meal per month, to highlighting specific local crops, to partnering with vendors that are committed to buying local. For Hawai‘i, one of the best steps forward may be the creation of a Farm to School coordinator within the DOE to coordinate a local food procurement pilot project, collect data, develop forward contracts, and liaise with the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture’s Farm to School Coordinator.

Over time, the buying power of schools in Hawai‘i has the potential to drive increases in local food production for child nutrition programs. The benefits of doing so include increasing Hawai‘i’s food security, strengthening Hawai‘i’s economy, forging closer connections between communities and local food producers, and positively impacting community health by fostering nutritious eating habits at a young age.



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