



What is

Farm *to* Institution?

FTI allows **farmers and ranchers** to develop new markets and sell to local institutions, such as K-12 schools, hospitals, colleges, cafeterias, and state agencies.

Growers have the opportunity to sell their goods to local institutions. This is a mutually beneficial opportunity that...

Advances the community's public health

Improves health outcomes by providing fresh, high-quality produce to hospitals, schools, and other institutions. ¹

Contributes to environmental sustainability

Creates a sustainable regional food system, cutting down on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by reducing "food miles", food waste, and long-term refrigeration. ²

Stimulates community economic development

Augments the local economy through job and income development; Creates greater market opportunities for local producers. ³

Local Policy Support: Arkansas's Farm to Institution geographic preference policy, The Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act (Local Food Act).

The Local Food Act requires **institutions** receiving at least \$25,000 annually from the state and that have a food program to set a goal that 20% of their total food budget be spent on **local food**. It also requires institutions to submit an annual form reporting on their local food procurement budget to the **Arkansas Department of Agriculture**.

Key Terms:

- **Institution:** Entity of the state, such as institutions of higher education, childcare facility, after-school programs, libraries, prisons, senior care centers, state agencies such as DHS or ADVA, etc.
- **Local Food:** Food products that are grown in Arkansas and/or packaged and processed in Arkansas.
- **Food packaging** is the enclosing of food for transport, storage, and retail sale. Ex: enclosing, bagging, etc.
- **Food processing** is the alteration of food from its natural raw state. Ex: washing, cutting, etc.

1. Harris, D., Lott, M., Lakins, V., Bowden, B., & Kimmons, J. (2012). *Farm to Institution: Creating Access to Healthy Local and Regional Foods*. *Advances in Nutrition*, 3(3), 343-349. doi:10.3945/an.111.001677

2. Baranski M, Babbie K, Pirog R. A Consumer's Guide to Local Food Systems and Greenhouse Gases. Michigan State University Extension; 2012:6. Accessed November 11, 2021. [https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/local_food_systems_and_greenhouse_gases_\(e3178\).pdf](https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/local_food_systems_and_greenhouse_gases_(e3178).pdf)

3. Bagdonis, J. M., Hinrichs, C. C., & Schafft, K. A. (2008). The emergence and framing of farm-to-school initiatives: Civic engagement, health and local agriculture. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 26(1-2), 107-119. doi:10.1007/s10460-008-9173-6

For more information:

<https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-department-of-agriculture-programs/the-local-food-farms-and-jobs-act>

For a copy of this resource visit: <https://nwa.uams.edu/chr/resources/nutrition/>

Farm *to* Institution

The UAMS Northwest Community Health and Research team conducted interviews with representatives from key food supply chain sectors in the state of Arkansas. Interviews were aimed at better understanding motivators, barriers, facilitators, and opportunities for Farm to Institution (FTI) procurement in Arkansas. Below are the main themes that emerged from interviews with representatives within the distribution sector.

Motivators: factors which inspire action or demand for local procurement

Consumers and institutions prefer local food for nutrition, taste, and health benefits

Local food supports local growers and the local economy

Local food provides consumers diverse offerings

“ People say why do they buy local food? Always flavor first. Everything else is secondary. If you have local food that tastes better, you’re always going to have a market for it.

Barriers: factors which make selling local food more difficult

Local food can be more expensive

Local farms have limited production capacity

Relationship and communication challenges can impede local procurement

Labeling, tracking, and defining local products is challenging

“ Farmers in general are really good at farming things and they’re not distribution specialists, and they’re honestly not that good at marketing, that’s where [distributors] come in.

Facilitators: existing avenues that facilitate local food procurement

Trusting communication and relationships support local procurement

“ So, we don’t necessarily go out and hunt for the local food and stuff, we just have, you know we’ve probably got a couple dozen Arkansas farms we’ve just been buying from for years and we continue to buy from them.

Opportunities

Ideas for encouraging or improving capacity for local food in Farm to Institution

- Develop partnerships and contracts that guarantee local food procurement at the institutional-level
 - Provide local product and FTI education
- Develop a system of shared FTI goals, values, and processes across supply chain