



State of Arizona  
Department of Education



Health and Nutrition Services Division

HNS 01-2018

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**To:** LEAs operating the National School Lunch Program, Sponsors of the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program

**From:** Melissa Conner, Associate Superintendent  
Arizona Department of Education, Health & Nutrition Services Division

**Date:** January 5, 2018

**Subject:** Locally Grown Fresh, Raw, Whole Fruits and Vegetables

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*Original Signed*

This memo is issued in response to public or private school(s), childcare homes, centers and nonprofits interested in purchasing locally grown fresh, whole, raw fruits and vegetables and/or accepts donations of such products. Public or private schools, childcare homes, centers and nonprofits are permitted to purchase locally grown fresh, whole, raw fruits and vegetables and/or accept donations of such items.

Sources of locally grown fresh, whole and raw produce items include farms, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture programs, produce auctions, community gardens, produce distributors or any other source for locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. In reference, specifically to school gardens, please review HNS-11-2016.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines prepared or processed fruit and vegetable produce items to include the following preparation methods: peeling, cutting, dicing, or cooking. Farms and other establishments that supply prepared or processed products are required to have licenses. Licensing is also required for the manufacture or preparation of food for sale through the process of canning, extracting, fermenting, distilling, pickling, freezing, baking, drying, smoking, grinding, cutting, mixing, coating, stuffing, packing, bottling, packaging or through any other treatment or preservation process.

School agencies participating in the Federal Child Nutrition Programs, such as National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program, must comply with all sanitation and health standards as required and applicable via state agency and/or local laws and codes.

Arizona Administrative Code Title 9, Chapter 8, Article 1, entitled *FOOD AND DRINK* is the official version of the Arizona State Food Safety Rules and is available from the Arizona Secretary of State. The rules incorporate most of the 1999 U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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Model Food Code by reference. The rules also contain licensing and compliance provisions. Each county may adopt a newer version of the Food Code as deemed necessary by the local authority. A map of each county and its adopted version of the Food Code can be found at the link to follow: <http://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/food-safety-environmental-services/index.php#az-food-safety-regulations>.

An example of the technical requirements for food safety rules regarding all food items brought into a certified food service establishment, per the 1999 Arizona Food Code that specifically addresses the definition of approved sourcing of food is as follows:

1-201.10 (4) “Approved” means acceptable to the REGULATORY AUTHORITY or to the FOOD regulatory agency that has jurisdiction based on determination of conformity with principals, practices and generally recognized standards that protect public health.

Food service establishments that are interested in purchasing from new vendors and are also concerned about food safety practices and/or certifications verifying said food safety practices, are encouraged to discuss such concerns with each new food vendor. It is best practice to use one or more of the following opportunities as discussion topics regarding food safety practices and/or certification:

- Reviewing Food Safety Plans and Food Safety Checklists. A good example of a Food Safety Check List comes from the Yavapai County Department of Public Health’s *Guidance for Certified Kitchen Use of Whole Vegetables, Fruits and Nuts Grown in Yavapai County*.
- Reviewing and/or requiring a USDA Good Agriculture Practice/ Good Handling Practice (GHP/GAP) food safety plan and/or certification, and
- Industry Lead Third Party Audit of food safety practiced on a farm and/or processing house and distributor warehouse. Examples of these include:
  - Arizona’s Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement
  - Primus Labs
  - Markon Five Star Program

USDA encourages schools to offer fresh fruits and vegetables to students participating in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and other child nutrition programs. Many schools are increasing the amount of fresh produce available to students. While fresh produce provides many nutritional benefits, it must be handled safely to reduce the risks of foodborne illness. Harmful bacteria in soil or water that comes into contact with fresh produce could contaminate it at any point during growth, harvest, processing, transportation, storage, preparation or service. When fresh produce is served raw, cooking does not kill any bacteria present before students consume it. Any harmful bacteria present have the potential to cause a foodborne illness.

Produce Safety University (PSU) was launched in 2010 as a collaborative venture between USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The week-long comprehensive course is designed to help school foodservice professionals interested in or already engaged in farm to school program development identify and mitigate food safety risks for fresh produce. Topics addressed in this course include:

- Understanding Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Handling Practices (GHPs)

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- Writing specifications for fresh and fresh-cut produce
- Assessing produce upon receipt to ensure that it meets bid specifications
- Storing fresh produce properly
- Handling fresh produce during food preparation and service

Additional resources for safe food handling of various produce items and information on this course can be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety/produce-safety-university>.

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