

10 CENTS A MEAL PILOT: 2018–2019 EVALUATION RESULTS



Motivations, Barriers, and Challenges for Purchasing and Serving Local Foods

In the September baseline evaluation survey, school food service directors (FSDs) participating in 10 Cents were asked to select their top three responses (in any order) from a list of response options, including an open-ended “other” option for each of the following three questions:

- What motivates you to purchase and serve local foods in your school food service program?
- What barriers do you face in purchasing local foods for your food service program?
- What logistical challenges do you face in serving local foods in your food service program?

Of FSDs from 57 participating schools/districts, 55 responded to this set of survey questions.

The top three motivators for purchasing and serving local foods selected by participating FSDs were:

- support the local economy,
- increase student consumption of fruits and vegetables, and
- help Michigan farms and businesses.

These responses are listed in order of frequency selected. Although in a different order than most frequent motivators selected the previous pilot year (2017-18), the same three motivators were chosen both years. “Help Michigan farms and businesses” was chosen most frequently, and “support the local economy” was chosen third most frequently in 2017-18. The remaining response options for motivators were selected with relatively similar frequency in 2017-18.

The top three barriers to purchasing local foods selected by participating FSDs were:

- lack of products available at certain times of the year,

- inconvenience, and
- budget constraints.

“Lack of products available at certain times of the year,” related to the seasonal availability of Michigan agricultural products, was selected by FSDs as a barrier to local food purchasing over twice as many times as other barriers.

It has also been the most frequently selected barrier over all three of the 10 Cents pilot years. This barrier was also mentioned numerous times through open-ended feedback in the monthly surveys. “Budget constraints” was the second most frequently selected barrier over all three years of the pilot. In the 2017-18 year of the pilot, “federal procurement regulations” was the third most frequently selected barrier, but it fell to the fifth most frequently selected barrier in 2018-2019. This change may represent a positive response by FSDs to increasingly supportive federal rules for local food procurement. Most significantly, these include an increased threshold for micro-purchasing, the easiest way for FSDs to properly procure local food directly from farmers and local food vendors. Other barriers FSDs reported through the open-ended option included lack of quality produce available, difficulties associated with delivery of local foods, lack of time for food service staff to clean, prepare and/or pick up local foods, staff members’ ability to prepare local foods, and, for one district, difficulty sourcing local foods while using USDA Foods.

The top three logistical challenges to purchasing local foods selected for 2018-19 were the same as those selected by FSDs participating in the 2017-18, just in a slightly different order. They were:

- lack of a distribution method to get local foods to my building(s),
- lack of staff labor to prepare local foods, and
- and lack of storage.

Frequency of Selected Motivators, Barriers, and Logistical Challenges for Purchasing and Serving Local Foods*

MOTIVATORS	
Support the local economy	37
Increase student consumption of fruits and vegetables	31
Help Michigan farms and businesses	25
Access to fresher food	20
Higher quality food	17
Knowing food sources	11
Good public relations	10
Parent demand for local foods	5
Ability to purchase special varieties or types of produce and legumes	5
Ability to purchase special quantities	2
Less use of pesticides	1
Student demand for local foods	0
Lower transportation costs	0
Other (please describe)	0
BARRIERS	
Lack of products available at certain times of the year	40
Budget constraints	19
Inconvenience	16
Lack of growers/producers in the area from whom to purchase	14
Federal procurement regulations	13
Food safety concerns	11
Other (please describe)	9
Liability concerns	8
Lack of information about how to source local foods	7
Lack of demand from student customers	3
District procurement regulations/policies	3
Lack of support from school district	1
LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES	
Lack of a distribution method to get local foods to my building(s)	29
Lack of staff labor to prepare local foods	29
Lack of storage	13
Lack of staff training to prepare local foods	11
Lack of facilities to handle fresh, whole foods	9
Other (please describe)	8
Lack of equipment to prepare local foods	8
Lack of equipment to serve local foods	7

Note: N = 55, September baseline survey

*Food service directors who responded to this question could select all responses that applied and did not rank order their responses.