

Growing Resilience

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF FARM TO SCHOOL
TO STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMY, SUPPORT NEW YORK FARMS,
AND IMPROVE STUDENT HEALTH IN THE FACE OF NEW CHALLENGES

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www.farmland.org/growingresilience



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the **New York State Health Foundation, the Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation,** and **members of American Farmland Trust** for their generosity and for making this report possible.

Thank you to **Governor Cuomo, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, New York State Education Department,** Members of the **State Legislature,** and our partners in the **New York Grown Food for New York Kids Coalition** for making the New York State Farm to School Incentive Possible!

Thank you to our New York State Farm to School Champions!



What is your connection to Farm to School work?

I work for a school or BOCES that supports farms

I am a farmer, vendor, food business, distributor, or work for a farm trade association

I work directly with farms or schools

I am a legislator or government employee who supports farm to school

I am a farm to school advocate or researcher



American Farmland Trust

SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US

Nonprofit Organization founded in 1980
Committed to Saving the Land That Sustains Us

Protecting Farmland from Development
Promoting Sound Farming Practices
Keeping Farmers on the Land

Farm to Institution New York State (FINYS) works to strengthen the economic security of farmers and the health of New Yorkers by empowering institutions to spend at least 25% of their food budget on foods grown in New York.



Why Farm to School Now?

Two thirds of New York farmers reported being negatively impacted by loss of sales and market reductions due to COVID-19.

Institutional purchases create new markets and opportunities for farmers, who in turn support a wide array of businesses

The pandemic emphasized **health outcome disparities** among White, Black, and Hispanic New Yorkers and those with underlying **diet-related** conditions.

Increasing access to healthy, fresh food is a necessary public health intervention for all New Yorkers





Investing in Our Communities

Each dollar invested in Farm to School stimulates up to **\$2.16** in additional local economic activity

Each new Farm to School job creates up to an additional **2.35 jobs** in the local community

Cornell study found one additional Farm to School purchase per week would increase annual revenue for New York vegetable farmers by **\$9.2 million**, or for New York fruit growers by **\$5.3 million**

Investing in Our Children

According to the Department of Health **1** in **3** New York kids and teens are overweight or obese

New 2020 estimates reveal **1** in **4** children in New York are food insecure and lack consistent access to the nutritious foods they need

1/2 of a child's daily calories comes from school meals

1.7 million children in New York eat school meals



Photo by Josh Baldo

About the Survey

Surveyed Representative Sample
of **300** School Food Authorities
During July 2020

54% Response Rate

Findings Generalizable Statewide
to a Reasonable Degree



Photo by Josh Baldo

Important Definitions



School Food Authority (SFA) - The governing body responsible for the administration of meal programs at schools. SFAs may serve one or several school districts, or individual schools and are managed by a food service director.

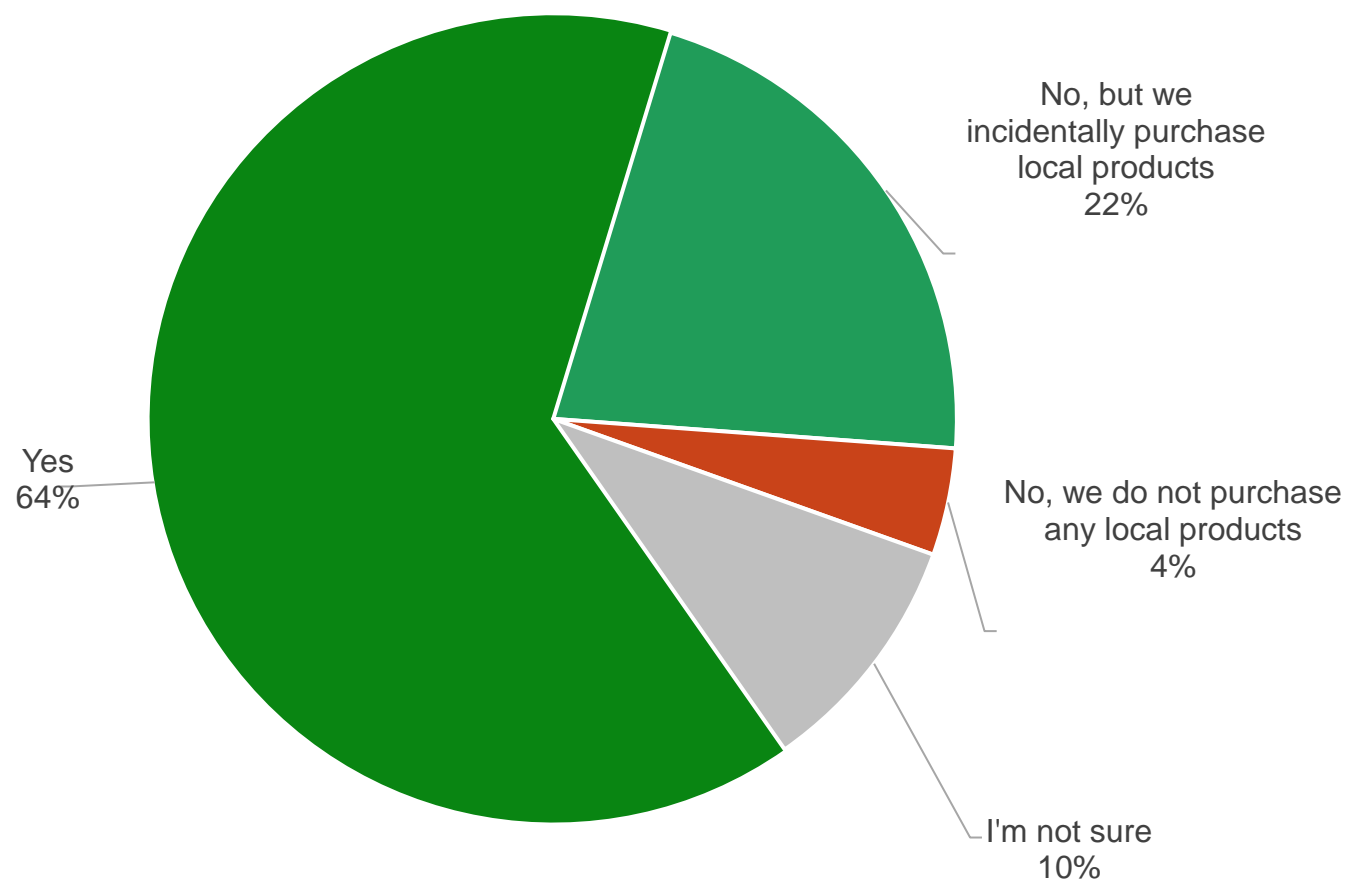


New York Food Product - Items grown, harvested, or produced in New York State (NYS); or a processed product comprising over 50.1% agricultural raw materials grown, harvested, or produced in NYS, by weight or volume.



NYS Farm to School Incentive or 30% NYS Initiative- SFAs that spend at least 30% of their total lunch costs on NYS food products in the preceding school year are eligible to receive up to 19 cents additional reimbursement per lunch meal from the State during the following year.

Do you intentionally purchase New York grown food to serve to your students?



N=163

Most Schools are buying local food

86% of schools reported either Intentionally or Incidentally buying New York grown food

Students had increased access to nutritious New York products



Fruit
87%



Vegetables
54%



Fluid Milk
51%



Processed Products
42%



Other Dairy
32%



Animal Protein
22%



Honey/Maple Syrup
4%

Top 10 New York Items Schools Bought More of by Value During the 2019-20 School Year

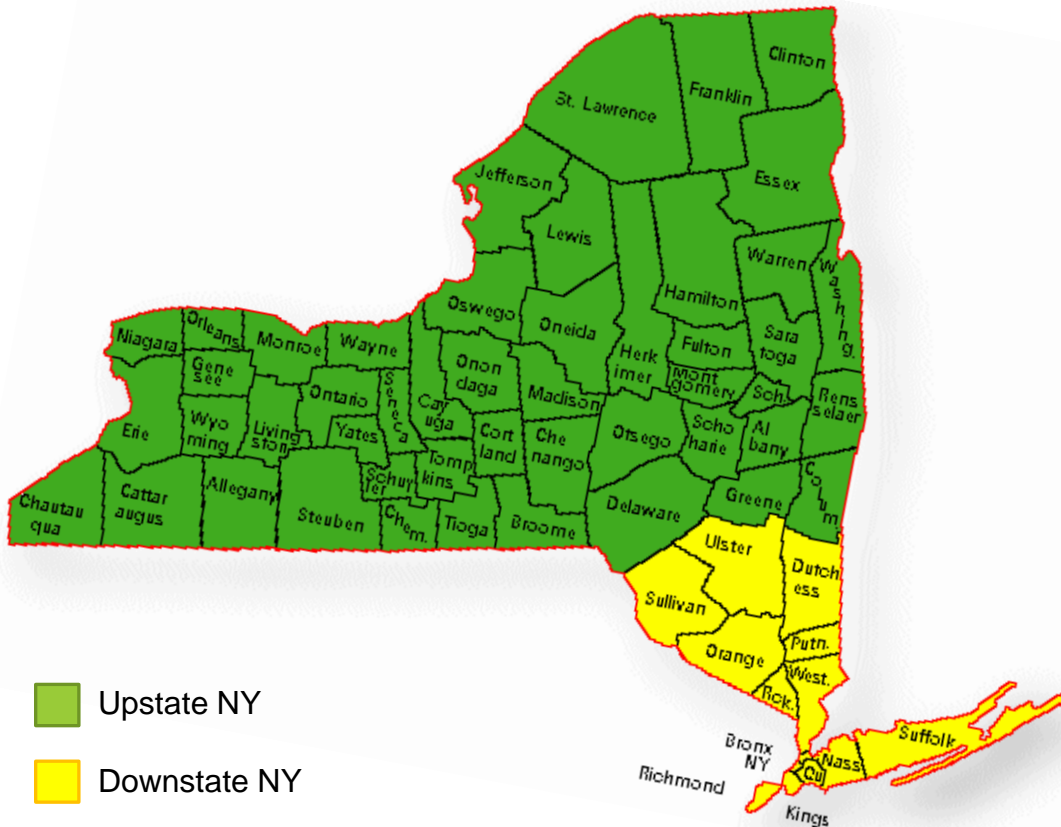
1. Whole Apples
2. Fluid Milk
3. Apple Slices
4. Yogurt
5. New York Grape Juice
6. Tomatoes
7. Potatoes
8. Carrots
9. Cucumbers
10. Cheese



Which Schools Buy Local?

Upstate schools were **statistically more likely** to report buying New York grown food than downstate schools (p=0.002)

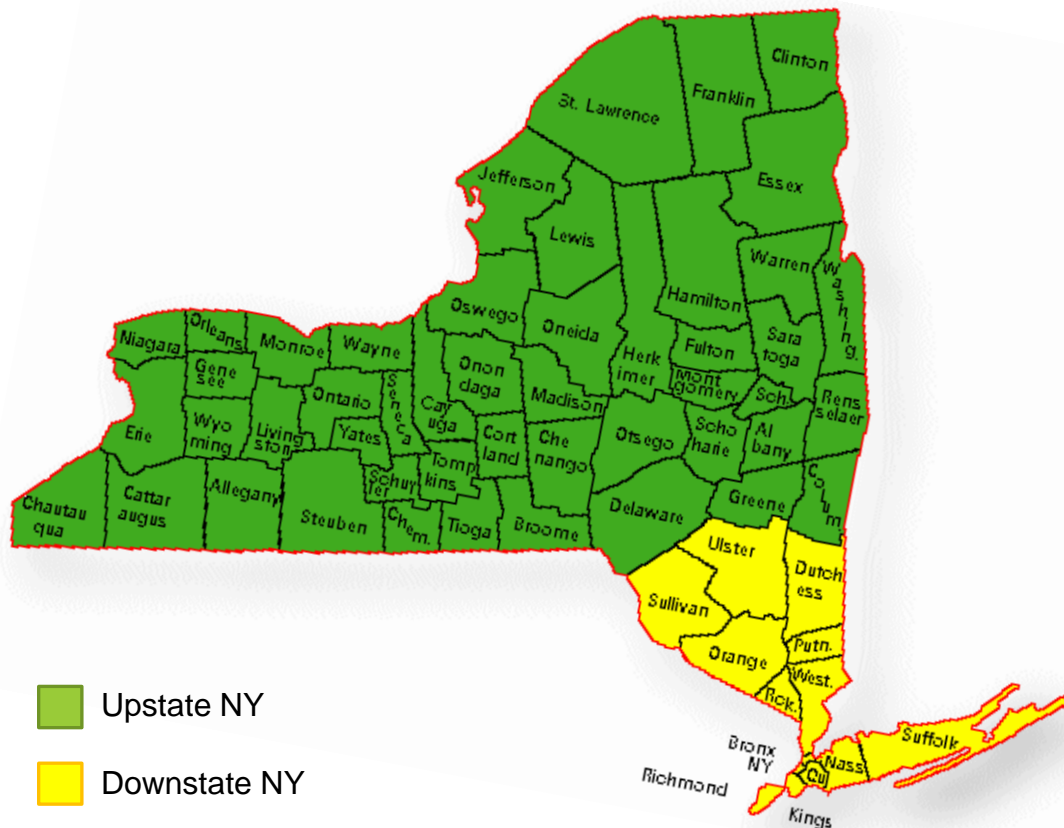
Trend of Non-Urban schools more likely to report buying New York grown food than Urban schools (p=0.088)



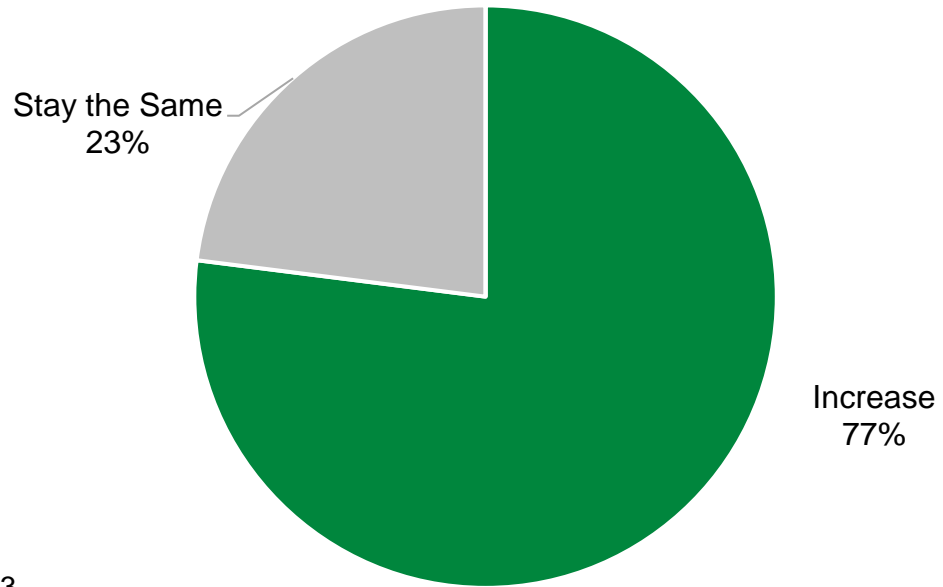
Implications for Equitable Access

Upstate and non-urban schools have **disproportionately higher** percentages of white students. ($p < 0.001$)

Downstate and urban schools have **disproportionately higher** percentages of Black and Hispanic students. ($p < 0.001$)

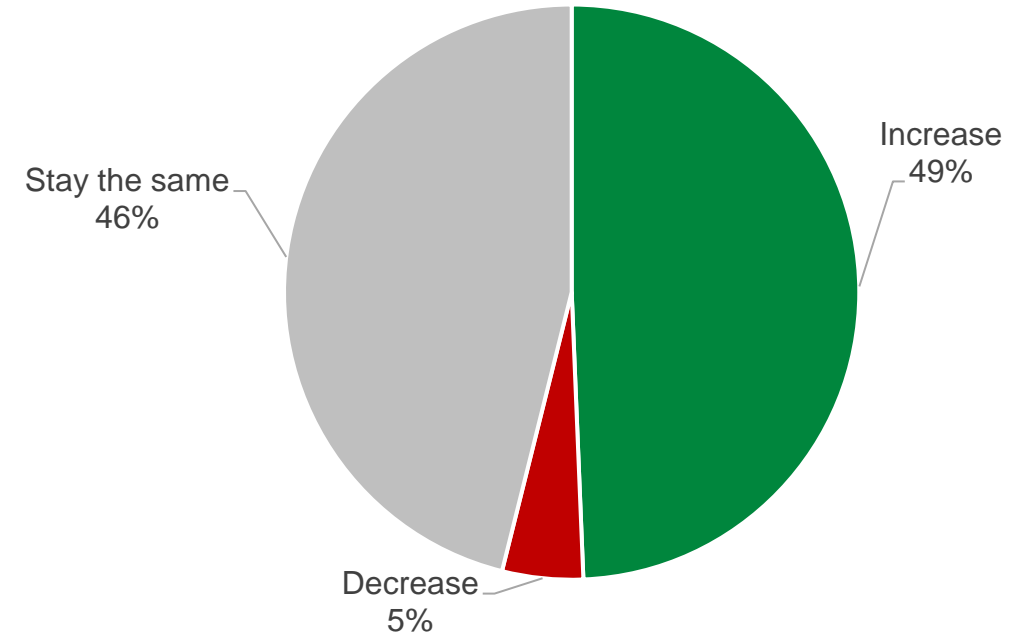


Local Food Purchasing Expectations
2019 Survey Answers



N=133

Local Food Purchasing Expectations
2020 Survey Answers

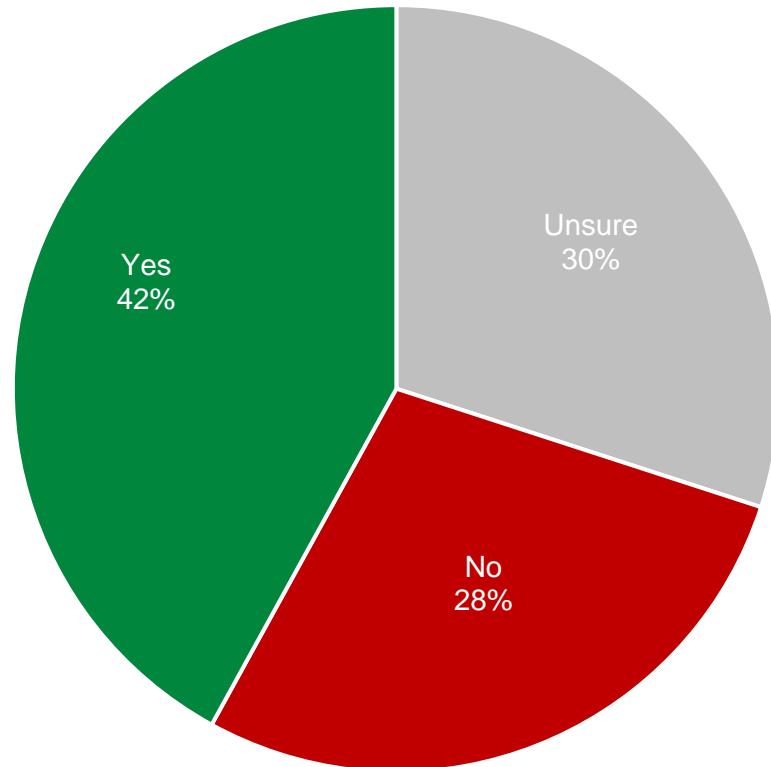


N=154

Most Schools Still Expect Local Purchasing to Increase or Stay the Same

The Impact of COVID-19 on Farm to School in 2020

Do you have new concerns about your ability to buy New York grown food and reach 30% in the Future due to COVID-19 ?



N=100

Changes in meal service were incompatible with serving New York grown food

Lack of staff **time or capacity** to coordinate local purchases

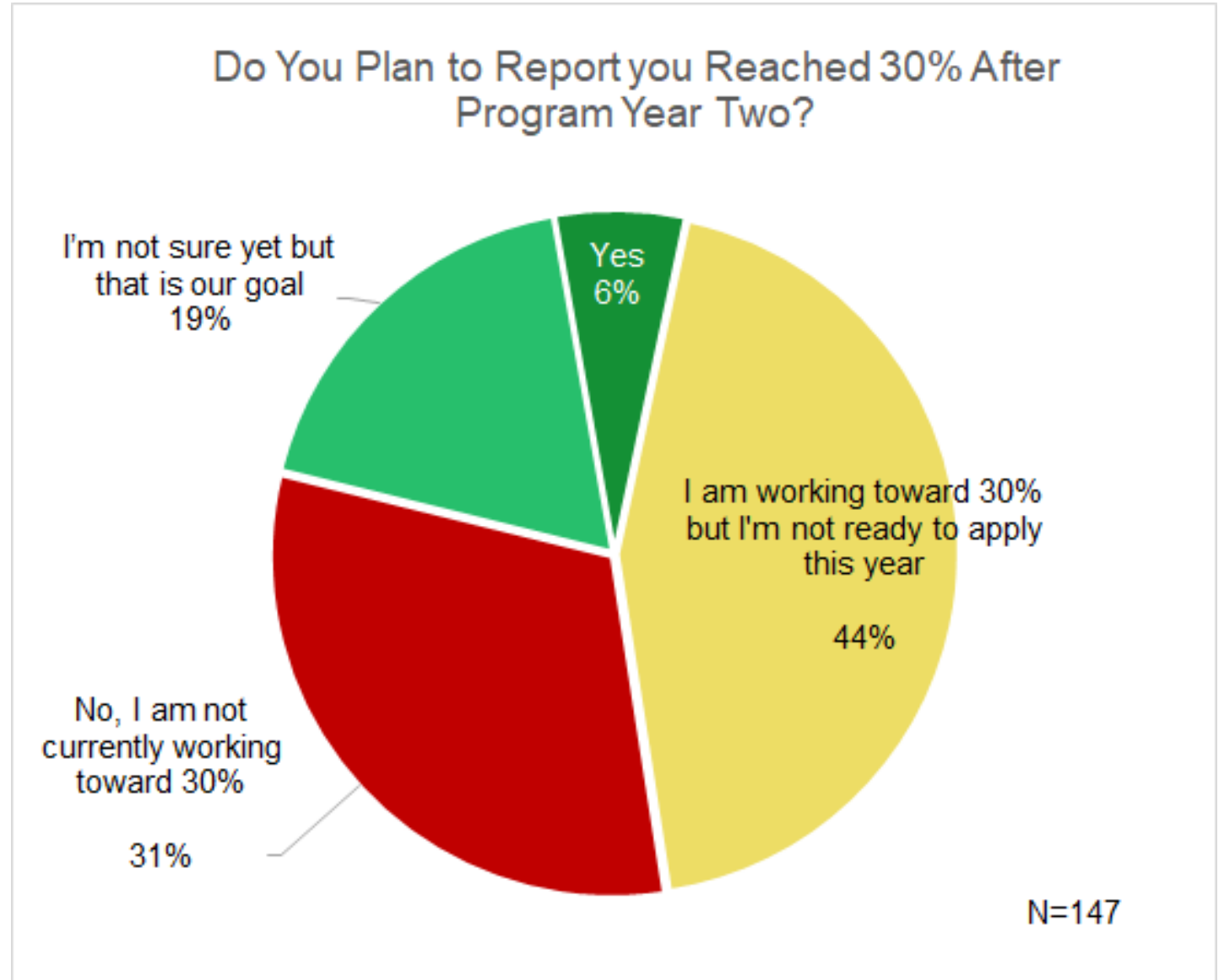
Budget shortfalls or uncertainty mean less flexibility in spending on local foods

Many food service directors expressed that they were simply “trying to keep their heads above water”

Participation in Program Year 2

NYSED has reported that 57 SFAs, or about 6% of the total SFAs in the state, applied in Year Two, reportedly **spending over \$5 million on New York Grown Food**.

The average reported spending level was **39%**!



A man with a beard, wearing a blue button-down shirt, light-colored overalls, and a baseball cap, stands in a warehouse. He is surrounded by numerous stacks of white cardboard boxes. The boxes are labeled 'FARM FRESH' in green and yellow, with an illustration of corn. Smaller text on the boxes reads 'GROWN & PACKED BY EDEN VALLEY GROWERS EDEN, NEW YORK 14057 716-992-9721'. The man is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Farm to School Incentive Program in Year 2

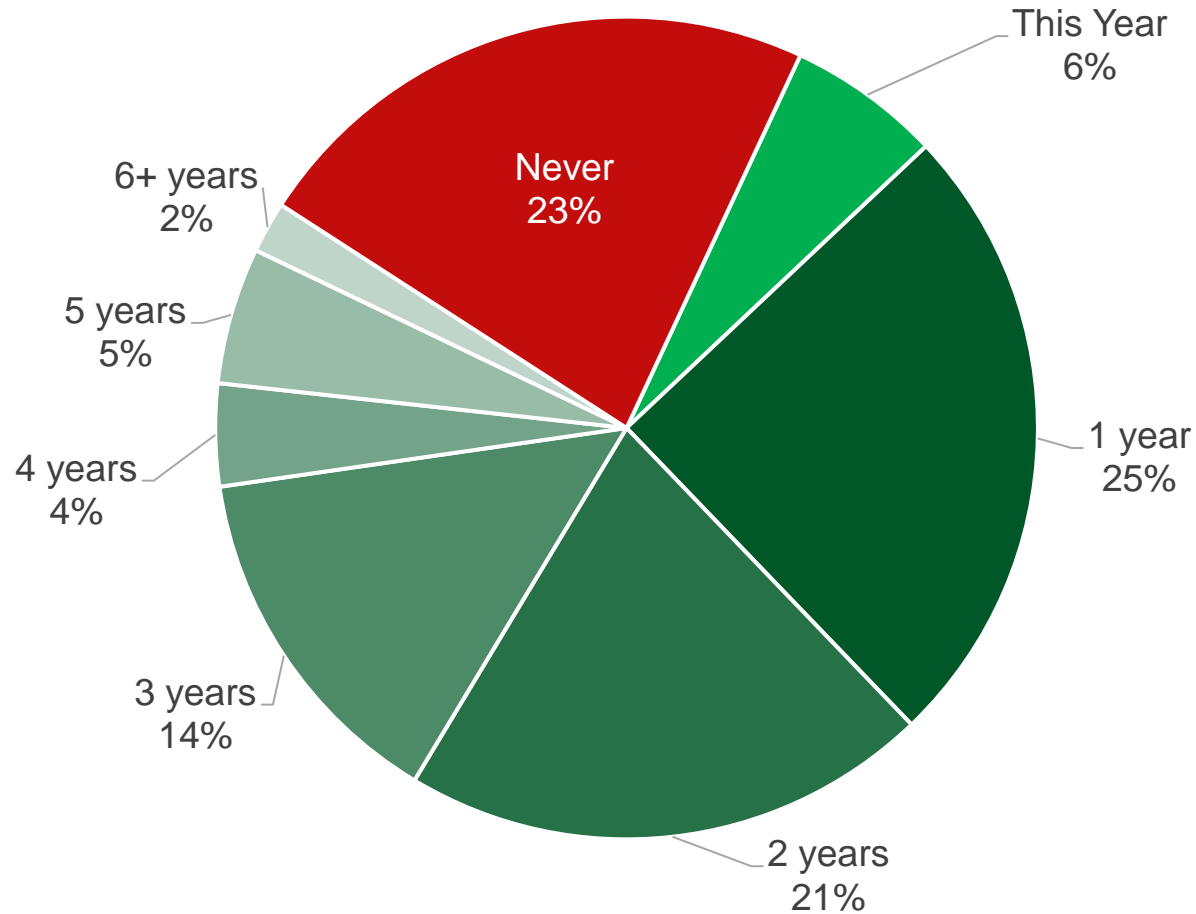
Of the schools who are working on qualifying for the incentive, but don't yet:

For nearly **one third** (32%), the switch to summer meal programs or the cancellation of school meals in March affected their ability to reach 30%

Just over **one fifth** (21%) reported that after March they had no time to purchase New York grown food

9% reported their new meal service was incompatible with serving New York grown food

With the right support, when do you think your SFA will reach 30% spending of lunch costs on New York grown food?



N=149

With the Right Support, 75% of Schools Report they Will Reach 30% Spending on New York Grown Foods for Lunch by 2025

WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORT...



75%
of schools

anticipate reaching **30%** spending
on **NEW YORK GROWN FOOD**
for lunch by 2025.



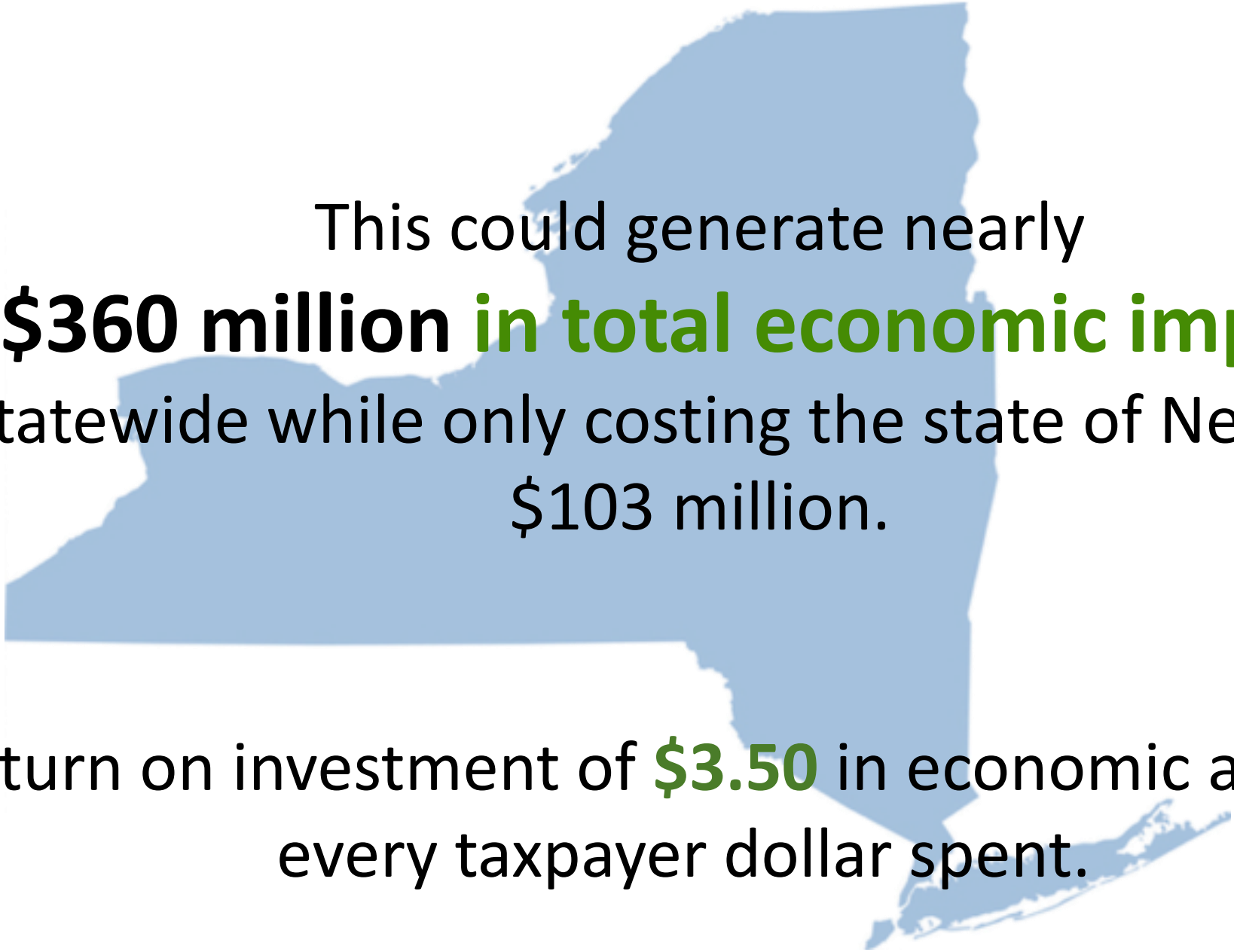
This would increase
school spending on food
from **NEW YORK FARMS** to

\$250 million

while increasing access to
HEALTHY, LOCAL FOOD
to more than

900,000
students.





This could generate nearly
\$360 million in total economic impact
statewide while only costing the state of New York
\$103 million.

A return on investment of **\$3.50** in economic activity for
every taxpayer dollar spent.

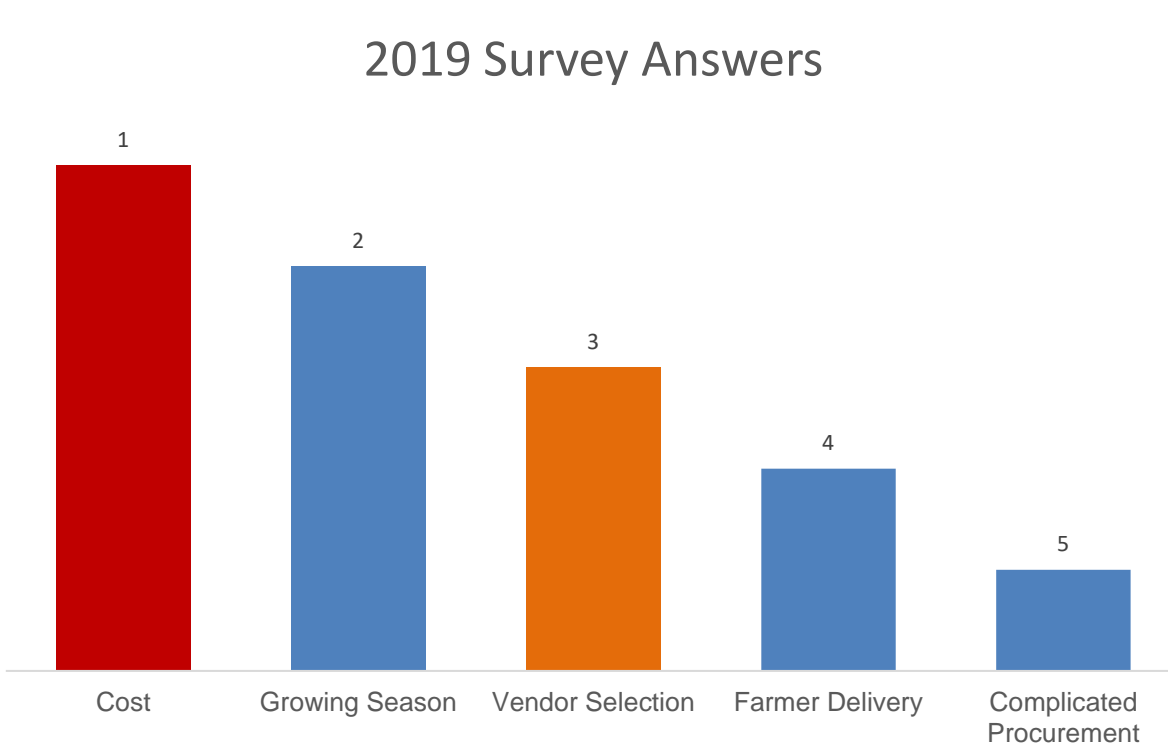




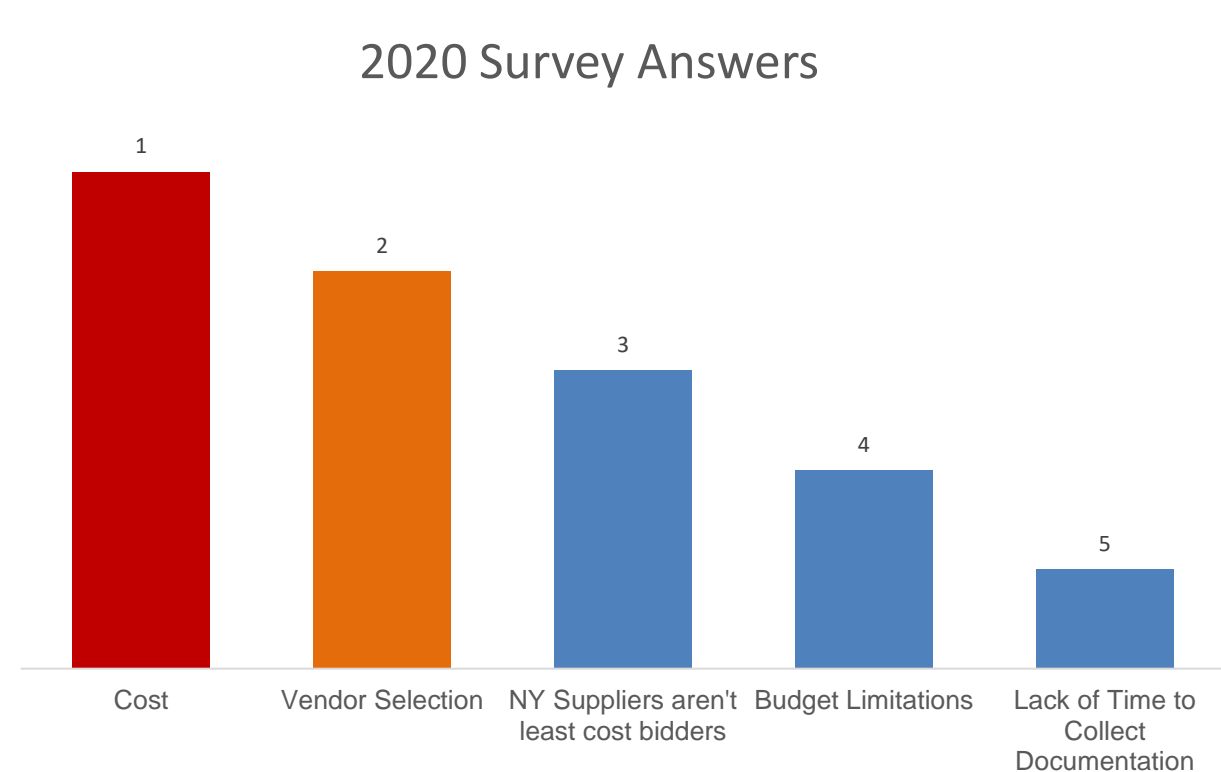
Photo by Josh Baldo

Barriers and Opportunities

2019 Survey Answers



2020 Survey Answers



Cost remains the #1 Barrier to Purchasing Local Food

Barriers to Program Participation

1. Lack of time to collect documentation
2. Lack of staff time to prep New York grown food
3. Current vendors sell little or no New York grown food *
4. Suppliers of New York grown food are not least cost bidders
5. I wouldn't know where to start [purchasing from New York farms]
6. Budget limitations
7. NY producers aren't bidding
8. There aren't enough shelf stable local products in the winter
9. Cost of New York grown food too high *
10. Vendors can't provide documentation to affirm sourcing

Additional Barriers to Program Participation

1. 30% is too high*
2. Separating lunch from other meals*
3. Documentation requirements are too strict*



Why Some Schools Report They'll Never Reach 30%

1. **Cost** of local food is too high
2. **Limited availability** or variety of local products that schools need or want
3. Others said:
 - **Milk:** lack of access to fluid milk is a main barrier
 - **Tracking:** is too hard and time intensive
 - **Suppliers:** don't provide/mark New York grown food
 - **Application system:** is too challenging
 - **Size:** my small size makes it difficult
 - **Service style:** we are a heat and serve school

Do these barriers to buying local food resonate with you in your service area?

Yes, I share these barriers

No, our barriers are different

Some of these barriers apply more than others

I'm not sure

Navigating Procurement to Buy Local




Photo by Nancy J. Parisi

Formal Purchasing Methods:


- Required when spending amounts over the “small purchase threshold”, which is set at the Federal (\$250,000), State, and local levels.
- Schools are required to go through a burdensome process, and award contracts to **least-cost, most responsive** bidder.
- **46%** of schools reported using formal methods to buy New York grown food.

This might be why most schools continue to report “the cost of New York Food Products” as their number one barrier to buying local.

An Easier Way to Buy Local Food

 **Small Purchase Methods** can be used with procurements below the Small Purchase Threshold. Schools call vendors directly and get three quotes before awarding the contract to the least cost, most responsive bidder. The State of New York has its own small purchase threshold more restrictive than the federal threshold, and municipalities often do too.

23% of schools reported using small purchase methods to buy local.

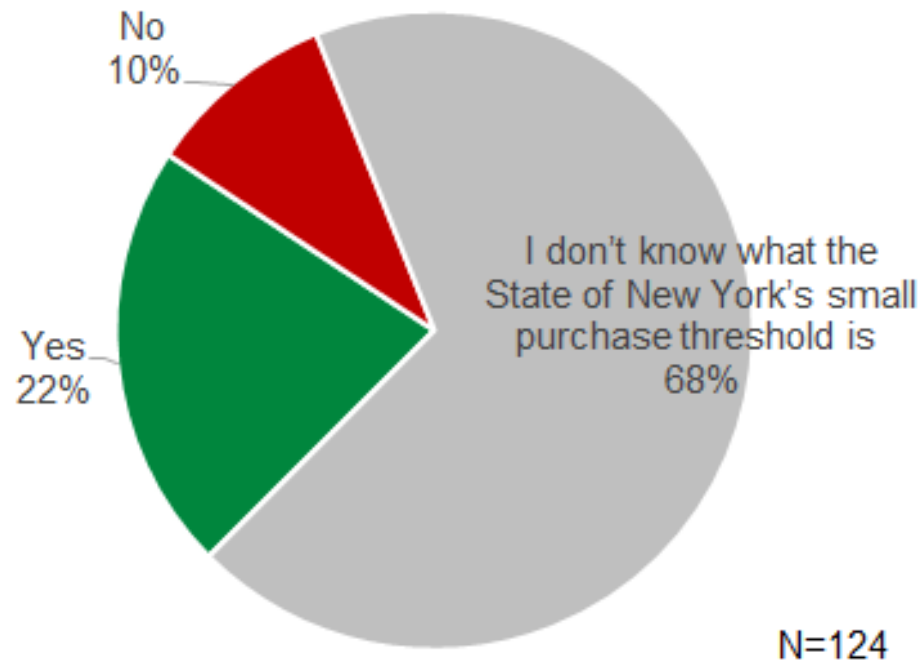
 **Micropurchases** allow schools to make small one-off purchases of \$10,000 or less without much administrative legwork.

30% of schools reported making micropurchases to buy local.

These methods are underused and represent untapped potential to increase spending on New York grown food.

What *is* the State Small Purchase Threshold?

Is Your Local Small Purchase Threshold
Lower than the State's?



According to GML section 103, schools calculate their own small purchase threshold using a complicated formula based on the number of students and school days, and then apply for waivers to make local purchases over a certain amount.

*68% of schools don't know what the state small purchase threshold is. The current law is **confusing** and the process **administratively burdensome**.*

Raising and simplifying the state small purchase threshold could enable schools to increase the amount they spend locally and help them reach 30%



Photo by Josh Baldo

Expanding the Incentive Beyond Lunch

Why Add Breakfast?



Administrative challenge of separating lunch from other meals was identified as a top barrier to working towards reaching 30% in 2019 and 2020



Focusing on lunch **limits the potential** economic and student health impact of program



Schools are **incentivized to shift** New York foods purchased for other meals to lunch, creating a mirage of increase in farm spending while decreasing student access to these foods throughout the school day



97% of meal costs are shared between **breakfast and lunch**. 95% of schools serve breakfast and only 60% of schools serve other meals in addition to breakfast and lunch

Taking a Closer Look at Breakfast



83% of schools reported serving New York grown foods at breakfast



Schools reported spending **28%** of total food costs on breakfast on average, and **23%** of their breakfast costs currently on New York grown food



Nearly **half** (48%) of this local spending is on NY produced fluid milk

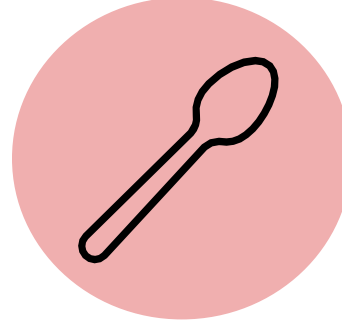
Schools served many New York Grown foods at breakfast...



Fluid Milk
84%



Apples
78%



Yogurt
49%



Grape Juice
30%



Eggs
24%

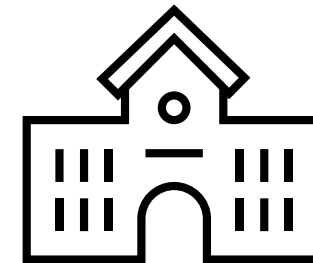


Cheese Sticks
19%



Granola
12%

Potatoes – 7%
Sausage – 5%
Bacon – 3%



Example: School A

Total Food Costs: \$100,000

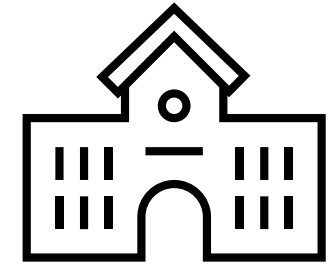
Total Lunch Cost: \$69,000

Current NYFP Spending for Lunch: \$15,000

Total Breakfast Costs: \$28,000

Current NYFP Spending for Breakfast: \$7,000

Extra Reimbursement School A will receive with the current program: \$21,000



Current Program

| Item | Amount | Source |
|--|----------|----------------------------------|
| Threshold of spending on NYFP School A Needs to Meet to Qualify | \$20,700 | 30% of Lunch Food Costs |
| Total NYFP Spending that Qualifies | \$15,000 | Spending on NYFP Served at Lunch |
| Increase in Amount School A Need to Spend on Food from NY Farms to Qualify | \$5,700 | |

Result: Under the Current Program, School A must Spend \$5,700 more on New York Food Products for a total of \$20,700 to Receive \$21,000 in Reimbursement from the State

Scenario 1: Keep the threshold at 30% of Lunch Costs and allow schools to count breakfast purchases to achieve 30%

Data Shows This Would Help Schools...



39% of schools said this would help them successfully qualify for the Incentive



82% reported they would qualify by 2025



On average, it would take schools **1 year less** to reach 30%

But Not New York's Farm Economy.



16% of Schools would qualify automatically without increasing spending on farm products

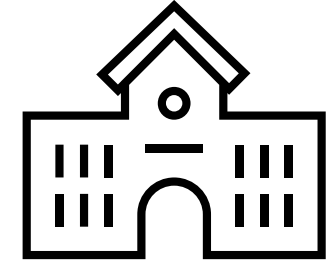


58% of automatic eligibility would be due to milk alone



This alone could cost the state **\$8.7 million** in reimbursements

Scenario 1



| Item | Amount | Source |
|--|----------|---|
| Threshold School A Needs to Meet to Qualify | \$20,700 | 30% of Lunch Food Costs |
| Total NYFP Spending that Qualifies | \$22,000 | Spending on NYFP Served at <u>Lunch (\$15,000)</u> and <u>Breakfast (\$7,000)</u> |
| Increase in Amount School A Need to Spend on Food from NY Farms to Qualify for the Incentive | \$0 | |

Result: Under Scenario 1, School A Qualifies without 0 Extra Spending, Receives \$21,000 in Reimbursement from State

Scenario 2: Change the threshold to 30% of Lunch *and* Breakfast Costs and allow schools to count breakfast and lunch purchases to achieve 30%

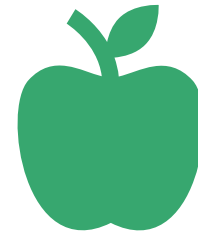
Scenario 2 would help ...



Ease the program's
administrative burden

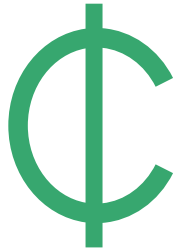


Retain the incentive to increase
spending on food from New York
farmers—only 3% of schools
would automatically qualify



Retain student access to
local food throughout the
school day

But schools would need additional support.



19 cents would not cover
higher spending costs

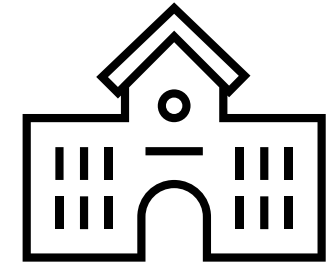


This would make the
program unachievable for
those who can't buy New
York milk



3% of schools who
already qualify would
have to increase
spending to re-qualify

Scenario 2



| Item | Amount | Source |
|--|----------|--|
| Threshold School A Needs to Meet to Qualify | \$29,100 | 30% of <u>Lunch and Breakfast</u> Food Costs |
| Total NYFP Spending that Qualifies | \$22,000 | Spending on NYFP Served at Lunch and Breakfast |
| Increase in Amount School A Need to Spend on Food from NY Farms to Qualify | \$7,100 | |

Result: Under Scenario 2, School A Must Spend \$7,100 more on food from NY farms for a total of \$29,100 to receive \$21,000 in Reimbursement from the State



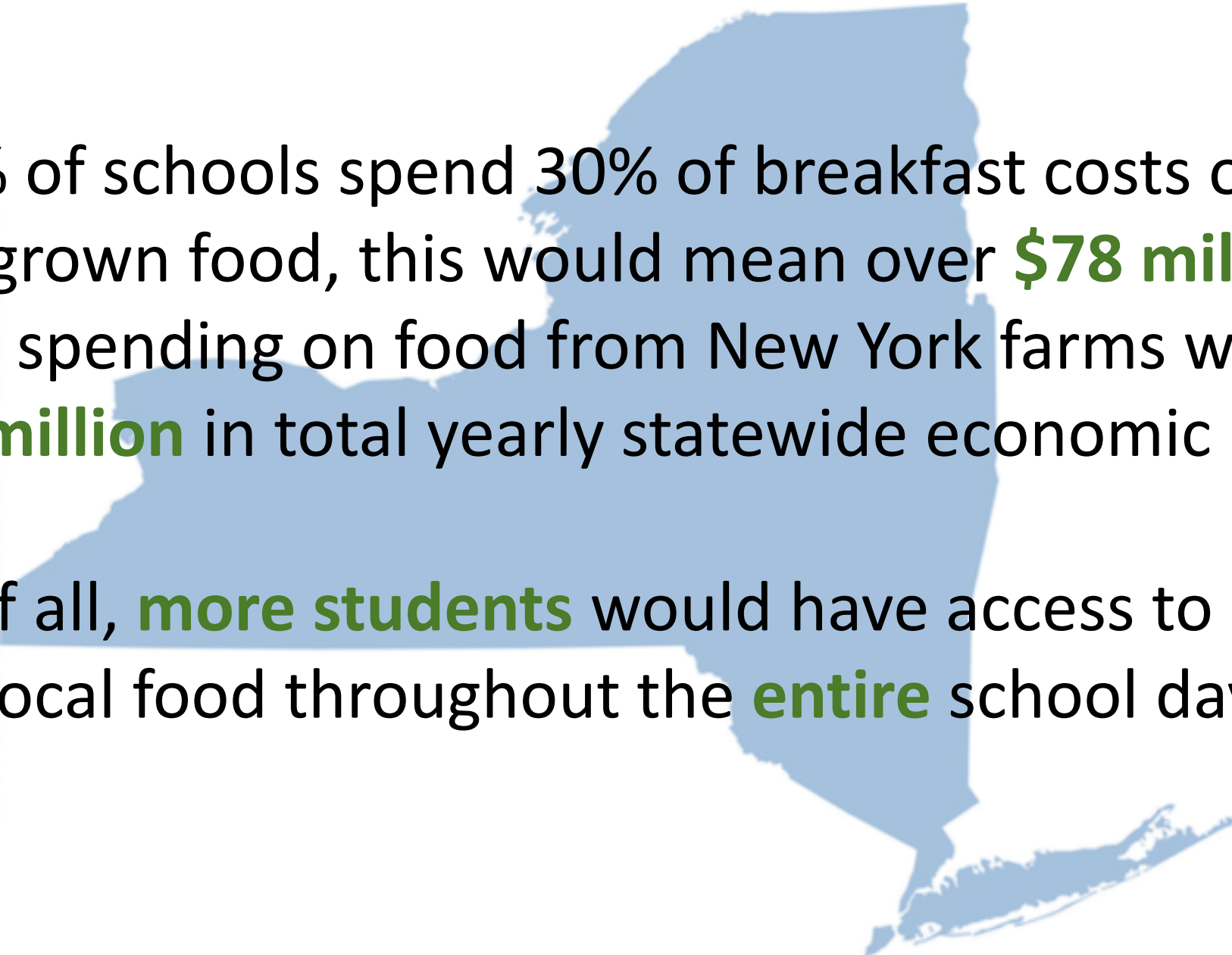
Photo by Nancy J. Parisi

Recommendations




Expanding Access and Impact:

Continue Funding the Farm to School Incentive Program and Include Breakfast by Reimbursing Schools that Qualify at a Higher Rate for both Breakfast and Lunch



If 75% of schools spend 30% of breakfast costs on New York grown food, this would mean over **\$78 million** in annual spending on food from New York farms with over **\$112 million** in total yearly statewide economic impact.

Best of all, **more students** would have access to healthy local food throughout the **entire** school day!





Incentivizing schools to purchase more New York grown food to serve to students at breakfast *and* lunch could unlock roughly **half a billion dollars** in statewide economic impact.

New York Grown Food For New York Kids Coalition Recommended First Steps to New York State in SFY22

1. **Maintain \$10 million** in Funding for Farm to School Incentive Program to Benefit the Farm Economy and Student Health, and work to define a program for breakfast for the future

Barriers to Program Participation

1. Lack of time to collect documentation
2. Lack of staff time to prep New York grown food
3. Current vendors sell little or no New York grown food
4. Suppliers of New York grown food are not least cost bidders
5. I wouldn't know where to start [purchasing from New York farms]
6. NY producers aren't bidding
7. Budget limitations
8. There aren't enough shelf stable local products in the winter
9. Cost of New York grown food too high
10. Vendors can't affirm sourcing



Provide Support and Training:

Continue Funding the New York Farm to School Grants Program and Ensure Investments Reach Urban Schools

A photograph of a school cafeteria. In the foreground, a woman wearing a large, purple, inflated costume that resembles a bunch of grapes is leaning over a table. She is smiling and has her hands raised, palms facing forward, as if interacting with a young boy. The boy, wearing a red jacket, is also smiling and has his hands raised in a similar gesture. They are sitting at a table with various items on it, including a blue tray with snacks and a white container. In the background, other children and adults are visible, some sitting at tables and others standing. The cafeteria has a tiled floor and a long window on the right side. The text "Increase Capacity and Support School Staff: Invest in a Network of Regional Farm to School Coordinators" is overlaid on the bottom half of the image in a green and black font.

Increase Capacity and Support School Staff:
Invest in a Network of Regional Farm to School Coordinators

New York Grown Food For New York Kids Coalition Recommended First Steps to New York State in SFY22

1. **Maintain \$10 million** in Funding for Farm to School Incentive Program to Benefit the Farm Economy and Student Health, and work to define a program for breakfast for the future
2. **Maintain \$1.5 million** for the Farm to School Grants Program to continue to Provide Critical Support to Schools to motivate them to reach 30%
3. Dedicate **\$500,000** from the Grants Program to **create** a Farm to School Regional Coordinator Program, written into the state budget

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RUSSELL FARMS

Revamp Procurement Laws: Raise and Simplify State and Local Small Purchase Thresholds and Continue to Train Schools on how to use Procurement Methods to Buy Local



Photo by Josh Baldo

New York Grown Food For New York Kids Coalition Recommended First Steps to New York State in SFY22

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3. Dedicate **\$500,000** from the Grants Program to **create** a Farm to School Regional Coordinator Program, written into the state budget
4. **Simplify** and **Increase** the State Small Purchase Threshold in GML section 103 to \$250,000

Barriers to Program Participation

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Strengthen Overall Farm to School Supply Chain:
Improve Access to Local Food and Support Schools in
Procuring New York Produced Milk

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3. Dedicate **\$500,000** from the Grants Program to **create** a Farm to School Regional Coordinator Program, written into the state budget
4. **Simplify** and **Increase** the State Small Purchase Threshold to \$250,000
5. **Sign** S8561A (Metzger)/A10607 (Lupardo) to Create a Supply Chain Working Group for New York State **(completed!)**

Barriers to Program Participation

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10. Vendors can't affirm sourcing

Farm to School



Photo by Josh Baldo

Improve Tracking: Streamline Program Administrative Requirements, and Continue to Ensure this Paperwork Reliably Proves Purchases come from New York Farms with Spot Checks



Photo by Josh Baldo

Concluding Remarks

Further Research

Understand and address potential inequities in access to local foods in urban areas

Design a program that incentivizes spending on New York food served at breakfast

Enable schools that can't buy New York Milk to do so

Better understand barriers farmers face in selling to K-12 schools and other institutions



Photo by Nancy J. Parisi

The Future of Farm to School in New York

- Innovative and successful program
- Support child nutrition and public health
- Build resilient local supply chains and markets
- Contributor to economic recovery and growth



Photo by Josh Baldo

Thank You! Questions?

www.farmland.org/growingresilience