

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
District CFOs

FROM: Ellen E. Weaver
State Superintendent of Education

DATE: April 1, 2025

RE: “Buy Local – Buy Fresh” Initiative & District Procurement Policies

In the Fall of 2024, the Office of Health and Nutrition (OHN) launched the “Buy Local – Buy Fresh” initiative to enhance the availability of fresh, local products for school meals. This initiative encourages South Carolina School Nutrition Directors to prioritize the procurement of local, fresh products whenever feasible and seeks to eliminate barriers for both our schools and local farms. This benefits your students, serves as an excellent way to support local business, and ensures that the impact of dollars spent remains close to home.

The “Buy Local – Buy Fresh” initiative is a statewide effort that builds upon the insights gained from the 2023 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Local Foods for Schools grant. These insights highlight the critical importance of partnership and communication among child nutrition directors, local farmers, and various community stakeholders. By fostering these relationships, the “Buy Local – Buy Fresh” initiative aims to improve the effectiveness and reach of local food programs across the state.

As you may be aware, the most recent [South Carolina Model School District Procurement Code](#) has raised the small purchase threshold from \$2,500 to \$10,000, provided that the prices of products purchased are fair and reasonable. Approximately half of the school districts in our state have not yet opted to adopt the South Carolina 2021 Model Procurement Code. The increase in the small purchase limit from \$2,500 to \$10,000 offers significant support for the “Buy Local – Buy Fresh” initiative by simplifying the procurement process for both buyers and sellers.

I urge you to review your procurement policies. **If your school district is still operating under the old \$2,500 small purchase limit, please consider taking action to increase it to \$10,000.** This change will not only enable your School Nutrition Directors to provide better, healthier meals for students but also support family farms in your own back yard.

Should you have questions or need additional information please contact Philip Truesdale (Education Associate, OHN Food Distribution) at ptruesdale@ed.sc.gov.