



State of Hawai'i
Department of Education

Annual Report on Local Meals and Farm to School Meals

January 2025

Section 27-8, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, requires the Hawai'i State Department of Education to annually report on its progress towards the percentage of food purchased that is local.

Section 302A-405.6, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, requires the Hawai'i State Department of Education to annually report on its progress toward local farm to school meals, sourcing and cost metrics for local food procurement, locally sourced meal composition, and training of cafeteria staff.

**Hawai'i State Department of Education
Farm to School Meals and Local Meals Reports**

Introduction

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) reports that the total cost of food purchased from school year (SY) July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, was \$82,018,139.62. Hawai'i sourced products were purchased at a cost of \$4,452,525.83.

This report focuses solely on food purchases made by the School Food Services Branch (SFSB). While other Department branches and programs, such as Public Charter Schools, may procure locally sourced food products, their specific expenditures are not included in this report.

Last school year, the Hawai'i Child Nutrition Program procured locally sourced produce to train school food service staff in preparing specific recipes for school meals. Additionally, the Ho'opili 'Ai program (Harvest of the Month), a grant-funded effort managed by the Hawai'i Farm to School Network, provided locally sourced produce to participating Department and charter schools. This produce was used in classroom activities and was not a part of regular school meals.

The total food cost of \$82,018,139.62 can be broken down as follows:

- Local food cost: \$4,452,525.83 (5.43%)
- Non-Local Food cost: \$77,565,613.79 (94.57%)

The 5.43% local food percentage breakdown shows that local fresh fruit and vegetables accounted for 1.83%, local meat for 3.00%, local dairy for 0.51%, bottled local water for 0.06%, and poi processed from taro for 0.03%.

The SFSB now includes the cost of locally sourced bottled water because the product is served to students with school meals in the cafeteria. The United States Food and Drug Administration regulates bottled water as a packaged food, on par with milk and juice products. The Department expended \$51,124.14 to offer bottled water as an ala carte item for students to purchase with their school meals.

To address the total cost of local food data requirements, the Department is providing the following data:

Table 1: Locally Sourced Fresh Produce Purchased and Percentage of all Counties, as Measured by the Total Cost of Food

County	Local Food Cost
Honolulu	\$573,757.83
Maui	\$513,867.63
Hawai'i	\$352,273.72
Kaua'i	\$57,551.83
Grand Total	\$1,497,451.01
Local Percent of Total Food Cost	1.83%

Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 detail the four categories of local value-added, processed, or manufactured food products used to calculate the local percentage as measured by the percent of the total cost of food, which totaled 4.12%.

Table 2: Locally Sourced Ground Beef Purchased and Percentage of all Counties, as Measured by the Total Cost of Food

County	Local Food Cost
Honolulu	\$1,579,457.54
Hawai'i	\$463,765.68
Maui	\$275,454.44
Kaua'i	\$143,260.00
Grand Total	\$2,461,937.66
Local Percent of Total Food Cost	3.00%

Table 3: Locally Sourced Dairy Purchased by County and the Percentage of all Counties as Measured by the Total Cost of Food

County	Local Food Cost
Hawai'i	\$412,574.31
Honolulu	\$4,517.50
Maui	\$0.00
Kaua'i	\$0.00
Grand Total	\$417,091.81
Local Percent of the Total Food Cost	0.51%

Table 4: Locally Sourced Poi (Monthly Special for May 2024) Purchased and Percentage by County, as Measured by the Total Cost of Food

County	Local Food Cost
Hawai'i	\$11,575.46
Maui	\$7,511.60
Kaua'i	\$5,834.15
Honolulu	\$0.00
Grand Total	\$24,921.21
Local Percent of Total Food Cost	0.03%

Table 5: Locally Sourced Processed Bottled Water Purchased by County and the Percentage as Measured by the Total Cost of Food

County	Local Food Cost
Kaua'i	\$25,559.76
Maui	\$13,125.66
Honolulu	\$8,527.20
Hawai'i	\$3,911.52
Grand Total	\$51,124.14
Local Percent of Total Food Cost	0.06%

The percentage of locally sourced food purchased decreased from 6.14% in SY 2022 – 2023 to 5.43% in SY 2023 – 2024. This decline was due to several factors, including food price inflation and decreased farm productivity caused by climate change and pests. Additionally, the local percentage was affected by the new inclusion of dairy product data in this year’s SFSB calculations.

The inclusion of dairy data reduced the local food percentage because dairy costs were not included in last year’s report. Previously, drinks were not categorized in SFSB’s food calculations; however, this year, both dairy and locally sourced bottled water are included.

Dairy contributed to the decrease in the local food percentage because non-local and local products added \$8,793,908.72 to the total cost of food, of which only \$417,091.81 was sourced from Hawai’i.

The SFSB is focused on increasing the procurement of local foods by educating farmers about the fundamental steps necessary to either become eligible vendors or partner with contracted distributors. Through upcoming vendor education forum presentations, farmers will be guided on how to enroll in the Hawai’i Compliance Express database, which is required to receive payments, and the Hawai’i Electronic Procurement System, which is necessary for a vendor to view the Department’s product specifications, demand volumes, and school distribution destinations.

Tables 6 and 7 below provide the percentage of locally sourced products from the Department’s largest contracted distributors.

Table 6: Percentage of Locally Sourced Ground Beef Products Purchased from the Department’s Largest Distributors, as Measured by the Total Cost of Food

Company	Local Food Cost
Palama Meat Co., Inc.	1.93%
Y. Hata & Co., Ltd.	0.78%
Maui Cattle Company, LLC	0.29%
Total	3.00%

Table 7: Percentage of Locally Sourced Fresh Produce Purchased from the Department’s Distributors, as Measured by the Total Cost of Food

Company	Local Food Cost
Ham Produce and Seafood, Inc.	0.70%
Watanabe Vegetable Processing LLC	0.62%
Hilo Products, Inc.	0.43%
Esaki’s Produce	0.07%
Other Maui Produce Vendors	0.01%
Total	1.83%

Conclusion

Since the Farm to School Program's launch in 2015, it has grown from an entrepreneurial pilot benefiting students in the Kohala and Mililani areas into a statewide program that incorporates local ingredients into the menus for approximately 100,000 daily meals. The goal remains to serve students flavorful, healthy, locally procured food while providing local farmers and vendors with steady revenue from a collaborative customer. The Department continues to simplify the critical compliance steps inherent in procurement, data reporting, and food safety.

After studying successful Farm to School Programs in other states, the SFSB strives to provide collaborative training among farmers, food processors, distributors, food hubs, and school food service managers. This collaborative approach aims to create a shared vision of serving quality local food to Hawai'i students. Additionally, the SFSB aims to solidify its identity as a dependable, collaborative buyer.