



State of Hawai‘i
Department of Education

Annual Report on Local Meals and Farm to School Meals

November 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
Local Meals and Farm to School 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, 2024, through June 30, 2025, was \$77,363,171.08. Hawai'i sourced products were purchased at a cost of \$5,029,704.86.

This report focuses solely on food purchases made by the School Food Services Branch (SFSB). While public charter schools and other Department branches and programs may procure locally sourced food products, those expenditures are not included in this report.

The SFSB's total food cost of \$77,363,717.08 can be broken down as follows:

- Local food cost: \$5,029,704.86 (6.5%)
- Non-Local Food cost: \$72,333,466.22 (93.5%)

The 6.5% local food percentage breakdown shows that local fresh fruit and vegetables accounted for 2.34%, local meat for 2.88%, local dairy for 1.25%, and local items for special meal events accounted for 0.03%.

To address the total cost of local food data requirements, the Department is providing the following data, listed in order of largest to smallest amounts:

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

County	Local Food Cost
Honolulu	\$744,502.39
Maui	\$584,585.67
Hawai'i	\$397,983.95
Kaua'i	\$82,618.76
Grand Total	\$1,809,690.77
Local Percent of Total Food Cost	2.34%

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 4.16%.

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

County	Local Food Cost
Honolulu	\$1,496,633.54
Hawai'i	\$361,557.20
Maui	\$239,720.69
Kaua'i	\$130,188.00
Grand Total	\$2,228,099.43
Local Percent of Total Food Cost	2.88%

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

County	Local Food Cost
Hawai'i	\$933,509.321
Honolulu	\$31,037.16
Maui	\$2,022.86
Kaua'i	\$615.16
Grand Total	\$967,184.50
Local Percent of the Total Food Cost	1.25%

Table 4: Special Meals Events Using Locally Sourced Ingredients and Percentage of all Counties, as Measured by the Total Cost of Food

County	Local Food Cost
Honolulu	\$16,754.71
Maui	\$4,340.79
Hawai'i	\$3,310.79
Kaua'i	\$323.55
Grand Total	\$24,729.84
Local Percent of Total Food Cost	0.03%

The percentage of locally sourced food purchased in SY 2024-2025 was 6.5%.

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.	0.66%
Maui Cattle Company, LLC	0.29%
Total	2.88%

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

Company	Local Food Cost
Ham Produce and Seafood, Inc.	0.99%
Watanabe Vegetable Processing LLC	0.73%
Hilo Products, Inc.	0.51%
Esaki's Produce	0.11%
Total	2.34%

Initiatives to Increase Locally Sourced Foods

In last year's legislative report, the SFSB stated its focus to increase the procurement of local foods by educating farmers about the fundamental steps necessary to become an eligible vendor and to encourage partnerships with contracted distributors. The SFSB has added on a priority to accurately forecast the usage of food ingredients, in the categories of produce, meats and processed foods, so that farmers, ranchers and vendors can plant fields, raise livestock, or allocate ingredients to have the food ready for distribution in accordance with the Department's menu schedule, projected item volumes, and school kitchen locations. The Department studies past trends in average student daily participation data to assess popular meal items over the course of the school calendar.

To ensure that students receive consistently high quality and safe meals, the Department implemented the USDA's Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standards on July 1, 2025 for all farm vendors providing raw or lightly processed produce. This new standard is a key part of the Department's ongoing commitment to student health and well-being, ensuring that the food served in Hawai'i public schools meets the most stringent safety guidelines. To roll out this standard, the SFSB is connecting farmers with education-focused organizations who offer GAP certification programs. A farm, together with a distributor, can secure significant sales volume for school meals. We expect these initiatives to increase the proportion of the Department's expenditure on locally sourced foods in the future.

The Department is further developing its plan and capacity to purchase locally sourced food. In its Board of Education approved FY 2027 supplemental budget request, the Department requested additional positions to support these efforts. These positions are critical to support procurement and coordination to achieve the State's goals for locally sourced products.

Conclusion

The Farm to School Program continues to evolve in its capacity to procure more locally sourced food as current and potential suppliers increase their knowledge of the state's complex procurement system. Through increased technical knowledge and experience, the Department staff are finding pathways to simplify the process in ways that can be explained to vendors, while remaining compliant with state and federal laws. Growth is evident as the Department improves its forecasting capabilities for volume usage of produce, meats and processed foods.

On August 1, 2025, the Department witnessed the launch of an exciting new school menu featuring new items and scratch recipes that boosted the amounts of local produce utilized. Although there were some supply shocks due to the unexpected popularity of certain meals, the distributors, suppliers, and the School Food Service Managers are working out the lead time and distribution complexities across six islands. The positive feedback from students, parents, school food service staff and faculty provide this branch with encouragement to push forward, in collaboration with Hawai'i's agriculture community, to source more local food items for school meals.