

# Hawai'i **Farm to School** Plan

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Hawai'i State  
Department of Education



# A Fresh Start for Local Food in Our Public Schools

Hawai'i's students deserve healthy meals made with fresh, local ingredients. Our farmers deserve strong, reliable markets. And our communities deserve a food system that keeps dollars in the islands and connects keiki to 'āina.

Yet despite a strong vision and legislative support from 2016 (Ige, SB882), Hawai'i's Farm to School efforts have not yet reached the statewide goal: sourcing 30% of school food locally by 2030. In 2024, only 5.43% of school food spending went toward Hawai'i-grown products.

Under Superintendent Keith Hayashi's leadership, the Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) is refocusing its efforts, strengthening partnerships, and taking action to move the needle.

This plan outlines the path to 30% locally sourced food by 2030, with clear goals, specific strategies, and a renewed commitment to transparency and accountability.



# Why This Matters

Farm to School connects classrooms, cafeterias and communities. When local food is served in school meals:

- Students eat fresher, more nutritious meals
- Schools reduce reliance on imports
- Local farms and food producers gain steady income
- Students learn where food comes from and build real-world skills

Beyond a food program, this effort is a statewide strategy for economic development, food security, and education. The program was formally established through state legislation with key laws setting ambitious goals for local food procurement. The timeline below shows how we got here—and where we’re headed.

## Legislative Timeline: Building the Foundation

**Act 218 (2015)** Created the Hawai‘i Farm to School Program under the Department of Agriculture (HDOA) and established a coordinator position.

**Act 175 (2021)** Transferred the program and coordinator to the Hawai‘i State Department of Education (HIDOE). Set the benchmark: 30% of school food must be locally sourced by 2030, measured by total food cost.

**Act 176 (2021)** Established broader procurement benchmarks for all state departments: 10% local food by 2025; 50% by 2050.

**Act 144 (2022)** Amended Act 176 to clarify timelines and responsibilities.

**Act 258 (2022)** Strengthened farm-to-school education; created a School Garden Coordinator position within HIDOE.

**Act 137 (2025)** Reaffirmed HIDOE’s 30% local food goal by 2030 and removed outdated benchmarks, streamlining the legislative framework.

# Our Goals by 2030

## **Goal 1: 30% of food served in public school meals will be locally sourced.**

Locally sourced food means products that are grown, raised and harvested in Hawai'i, including both fresh and value-added items. This target will be measured by the percentage of the Department's total food cost. In 2024, the baseline was just over 5%. Achieving 30% by 2030 will require coordinated action across procurement, menu development, and supply chain support.

### ***What Counts as Local Food***

Fresh local products are 100% grown, raised, and harvested in Hawai'i.

Value-added local products must contain at least 51% Hawai'i-grown primary agricultural content.

## **Goal 2: All students will participate in agriculture or nutrition education.**

This includes hands-on, standards-aligned instruction in science, health, Career & Technical Education, and Hawaiian Studies. Activities may range from classroom-based food prep and taste testing to school garden projects, farm visits, and work-based learning experiences. The goal is to build knowledge, foster kuleana, and prepare students for lifelong healthy eating and food system careers.

## **Goal 3: Every public school in Hawai'i will have a garden.**

Gardens may be in-ground, raised bed, aquaponic, hydroponic, or even farm labs. The aim is not just to build gardens but to integrate them meaningfully into instruction and student life. Gardens support social-emotional learning, reinforce core subjects, and offer a powerful connection to land, food and culture.

Before we can achieve these ambitious goals, we need a clear strategy grounded in real-world action. The following priorities guide our efforts and outline the practical steps we'll take between now and 2030.



# Priorities and Strategies to Reach Our Goals

## Local Food on the Menu

- Replace processed imports with Hawai'i-grown fruits, vegetables, proteins, and staples
- Launch the state's first regional kitchen (serving schools in the Leilehua-Mililani-Waialua Complex Area) by 2027-28 to centralize and modernize meal prep
- Streamline procurement to make it easier for local farms to sell to schools
- Provide culinary training for school cafeteria staff to prepare fresh meals from scratch
- Improve student dining experiences to boost participation and reduce waste



## Hands-On Learning for All Students

- Expand garden-based education and 'āina-based nutrition learning across grade levels
- Increase opportunities for field trips, mentorships, and internships with local farms and food producers
- Offer professional development for teachers on agriculture, health, and sustainability education

## A Garden at Every School

- Support all public schools in starting and maintaining gardens (raised beds, in-ground, hydroponic, etc.)
- Partner with organizations such as the Hawai'i Farm to School Network, Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience, the Hawai'i Agricultural Foundation, Future Farmers of America, and others to expand program reach and impact
- Provide technical support, curriculum materials, and training for teachers
- Link garden-based learning to school meals to promote consumption of locally grown food
- Conduct periodic assessments to track progress and support continuous improvement



## Annual Progress Benchmarks

| Year | % Locally Purchased | Local Food Procurement                                                                            | School Garden Programs                   | Hands-On Learning                                              |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2025 | 10%                 | Non-local, processed foods replaced                                                               | Baseline year                            | Baseline year                                                  |
| 2026 | 14%                 | Menu infuses more local produce as procurement pipelines expand and supplier relationships deepen | 75% of elementary schools                | 10% of schools have program for agriculture, health/ nutrition |
| 2027 | 18%                 | First regional kitchen opens                                                                      | 100% elementary; 75% middle; 50% high    | 30% of schools                                                 |
| 2028 | 22%                 | Regional kitchen expands                                                                          | 100% middle; 75% high                    | 40% of schools                                                 |
| 2029 | 26%                 | Fully operational regional kitchen                                                                | 100% of schools serving all grade levels | 60% of schools                                                 |
| 2030 | 30%                 | Additional regional kitchens come online                                                          | 25% of schools GAP certified             | 100% of schools                                                |

## Transparency and Accountability

The HIDOE recognizes that public trust must be earned. The Department commits to:

- Share annual progress updates publicly
- Work with partners to align efforts across agencies
- Identify and address policy and procurement barriers
- Center student, family and community voices in planning

