



American  
Farmland  
Trust



# On the Plate at SUNY

Growing Health, Farms and Jobs  
with Local Food

**THE  
NEW YORK  
ACADEMY  
OF MEDICINE**

HEALTHY CITIES.  
BETTER LIVES.



MAY 2018

# Acknowledgements

## American Farmland Trust

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is a national organization dedicated to saving the land that sustains us by protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices and keeping farmers on the land. AFT unites farmers and conservationists in developing practical solutions that protect farmland and the environment. We work from ‘the kitchen table to Congress’—creating solutions that are effective for farmers and communities and can be magnified for greater impact. Since our founding, AFT has helped protect more than five million acres of farmland and led the way for the adoption of conservation practices on millions more.

AFT’s national office is in Washington, D.C., with a network of field offices across America where farmland is under threat. We established our New York office in 1990, as the state is home to some of the most threatened farmland in the nation.

AFT launched its collaborative Farm to Institution New York State (FINYS) initiative in 2013 to dramatically expand the volume of food grown on local farms that is served in institutions across New York. The mission of the FINYS initiative is to strengthen the economic security of farmers and the health of New Yorkers by empowering institutions to spend at least 25 percent of their food budget on food grown in New York.

We greatly appreciate the generous financial support from the Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation, the Local Economies Project of the New World Foundation and the members of American Farmland Trust who made this report possible.

## The New York Academy of Medicine

The New York Academy of Medicine advances solutions that promote the health and well-being of people in cities worldwide. Established in 1847, The New York Academy of Medicine continues to address the health challenges facing New York City and the world’s rapidly growing urban populations.

We accomplish this through our Institute for Urban Health, home of interdisciplinary research, evaluation, policy and program initiatives; our world-class historical medical library and its public programming in history, the humanities and the arts; and our Fellows program, a network of more than 2,000 experts elected by their peers from health-related professions. Our current priorities are healthy aging, disease prevention and eliminating health disparities.

REPORT COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIETRICH GEHRING (TOP) AND PAUL MILLER/UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY (BOTTOM).

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- SUNY Adirondack
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- College at Brockport
- University at Buffalo
- SUNY Canton
- SUNY Cobleskill
- SUNY Cortland
- SUNY Delhi
- SUNY Fredonia
- SUNY Geneseo
- Jamestown Community College
- Monroe Community College
- SUNY New Paltz
- SUNY Old Westbury
- SUNY Oneonta
- SUNY Oswego
- SUNY Polytechnic Institute
- SUNY Potsdam
- SUNY Purchase
- Suffolk Community College
- Tompkins Cortland
- SUNY Ulster

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# Executive Summary

The State University of New York (SUNY) is the largest comprehensive university system in the United States.<sup>1</sup> It includes 64 campuses with more than 436,000 students and 91,000 faculty and staff.

SUNY is uniquely positioned to impact the economic security of New York communities through its food purchasing choices. With campuses located in 43 New York counties, SUNY purchases large volumes of fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meats and other foods. Decisions about the types of food purchased and the geographic origin of this food have a significant impact on farmers and the state's economy.

Similarly, food security and access to healthy food are substantial concerns for college students. Recent national research found that 48 percent of college students faced food insecurity in the previous 30 days and that food insecurity was more prevalent among students of color.<sup>2</sup>

In 2017, a survey of 55 of the SUNY campuses was conducted to better understand their food purchasing systems and the potential to purchase more food grown in New York. Of the 55 SUNY campuses contacted, 23 responded—a 42 percent response rate.

Findings from this survey, interviews with SUNY faculty and staff as well as an evaluation of available information regarding food purchasing by SUNY campuses found the following:

- SUNY campuses spend over \$150 million per year purchasing food. If at least 25 percent of these food dollars were spent on food grown in New York, it would create over \$54 million of economic output in New York. Additional data on current local purchasing will help clarify the full economic potential.
- Large numbers of college students face food insecurity. Increasing access to fresh and minimally processed foods on SUNY campuses could impact the health of over 430,000 students.
- Food service teams on SUNY campuses are motivated to purchase local foods by concerns for student health and food quality. Supporting the local economy and environmental sustainability are also strong motivators for local food procurement.
- SUNY campuses are working to address student food insecurity in a variety of ways—most commonly by providing support services for students seeking nutrition assistance programs or through campus-based food pantries.

- Many SUNY campuses that track the geographic origin of food purchases do not distinguish between fresh and minimally processed foods grown in New York and food and beverages manufactured in the state.
- Help with connecting farmers, distributors and SUNY campuses and fostering effective communication regarding purchasing needs and expectations are priorities for SUNY campuses interested in purchasing more food grown in New York.

These findings suggest that SUNY and its individual campuses have great potential to impact the food access and health of hundreds of thousands of college students as well as the state's economy. Recommendations for helping achieve this significant potential include:

- The SUNY system and individual SUNY campuses with student meal programs should establish goals of spending at least 25 percent of their food dollars on fresh and minimally processed foods grown in New York. It is critical that such goals distinguish between fresh and minimally processed foods grown in the state, and other foods that are manufactured, processed or distributed in the state with out-of-state ingredients.
- SUNY should establish a system-wide Farm-to-SUNY Coordinator position to promote and support local food purchasing across campuses. This position should be responsible for developing guidance for campuses to track local purchases, reviewing campus data and delivering an annual report on local food purchasing across SUNY.
- SUNY campuses should be supported in establishing campus Farm to SUNY Coordinators who can help facilitate relationships with local farmers and distributors as well as track local food purchases and promote local food purchasing with students, faculty and staff.
- SUNY campuses should be encouraged to include language in contracts with food service management companies and distributors that sets clear goals for spending at least 25 percent of their food dollars on fresh and minimally processed foods grown in New York.
- The SUNY system should help campuses track and annually report on fresh and minimally processed foods purchased from within the state.
- The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and other organizations should continue to support farmers in achieving Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification and enrolling in the New York State Grown and Certified Program to help SUNY campuses identify GAP-certified farmers.
- Empire State Development should dedicate resources to support New York farmers in becoming minority and/or women owned business enterprises (MWBE) certified to achieve a double win of meeting state MWBE and local food purchasing goals.

# Introduction

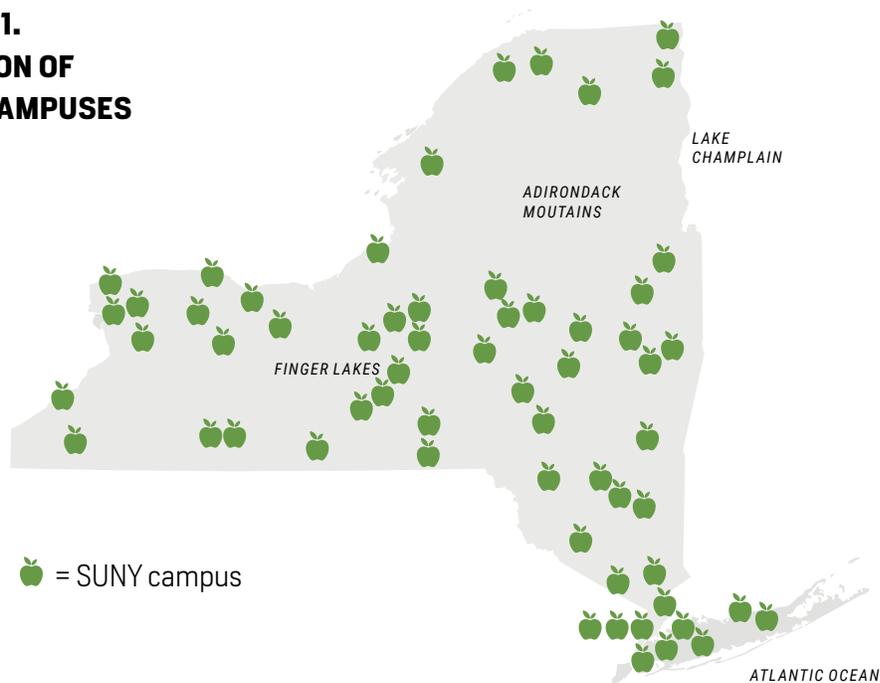
*On the Plate at SUNY* is the second report in a series developed by American Farmland Trust and The New York Academy of Medicine investigating the purchasing of local food by institutions in New York State.

Fresh food is vital to the health and well-being of all New Yorkers. Producing food is a critical part of the state's economy, and expanding access to fresh, healthy food is essential to solving major public health problems in our state.

Individuals and families buy and grow food to consume in their homes, but many New Yorkers are also fed in institutions such as schools, hospitals, universities, childcare centers, prisons, senior centers and food pantries. This report puts a spotlight on opportunities within the State University of New York (SUNY) network to use locally grown foods to improve the economy and public health of New Yorkers who rely on the system for their education and nutrition.

With campuses in 43 counties, SUNY has a presence in communities throughout New York.<sup>3</sup> In the 2015–16 academic year, 64 total SUNY campuses enrolled 436,138 students. Of these students,

**FIGURE 1.  
LOCATION OF  
SUNY CAMPUSES**



30 percent were Pell Grant recipients<sup>4</sup> and over 90 percent were residents of New York state for at least one year prior to enrollment. In addition to student enrollment, SUNY employed nearly 100,000 faculty and staff.<sup>5</sup>

Food purchasing decisions regarding food served in dining halls, on-campus retail sites and other settings are generally made at the individual SUNY campus level. However, when combined, SUNY campuses collectively purchase and prepare food for over 500,000 students, faculty and staff<sup>6</sup> with an annual food purchasing budget of approximately \$150,382,384.<sup>7</sup>

Given that roughly one in eight New York households experiences food insecurity,<sup>8</sup> it is logical that food insecurity and access to healthy foods would be an issue of concern on SUNY campuses. A recent national survey found that 48 percent of responding college students have faced food insecurity in the previous 30 days and that food insecurity was more prevalent among students of color on college campuses.<sup>9</sup>

Public-private sector collaboration for expanding healthy, sustainable food options on university campuses is growing nationwide, as evidenced by both the success of grassroots initiatives and the growing number of state-sponsored programs and policies aimed at encouraging the purchase of local foods by public institutions. Universities are getting involved in the local foods movement for many different reasons—ranging from concerns about environmental sustainability to a desire to support local farms and an interest in offering more nutritious foods for students, faculty and staff.

In recent years, SUNY has developed a suite of policies and programs that together facilitate the purchase of healthy foods grown in New York by public institutions. In 2013, Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature passed the “Food Metrics” law [S.4061/A.5102] that established a framework for monitoring spending by state agencies and for tracking the origin of the food they procure.

In 2014, Governor Cuomo established the Buy NY program, which encourages government agencies to source food produced in New York. Subsequently, New York State Grown and Certified was established as a statewide food certification and labeling program. By clearly marking local foods that meet food safety and environmental standards, New York State Grown and Certified empowers consumers to more easily choose these foods at the market.<sup>10</sup>

Farm to Institution New York State (FINYS) is a collaborative initiative led by American Farmland Trust (AFT) to dramatically expand the volume of food grown on local farms served in institutions

across New York. As part of the FINYS initiative, AFT helped launch the Farm to SUNY project that sought to expand purchasing of New York grown fruits and vegetables at four SUNY campuses—Albany, New Paltz, Oneonta and Oswego. In its first year, the University at Albany experienced a 38 percent increase in local produce sourcing, investing \$156,129 back into the local economy in 2013–14.<sup>11</sup>

Despite progress in increasing the amount of New York grown foods purchased by the four participating SUNY campuses, as well as by other campuses, limited information is available about food purchasing decisions made across the SUNY system. In 2017, AFT and The New York Academy of Medicine partnered with the State University of New York to conduct a survey assessing food procurement practices across 55 SUNY campuses.

The SUNY Food Service Director Local Food Purchasing Survey was an online survey sent to 55 SUNY campuses from July to August 2017. Results from the 23 responding campuses were supplemented with in-depth interviews with seven campus food service directors.

The following report outlines the results of this survey and supporting research. The report provides baseline data regarding local food purchasing across SUNY campuses along with practical recommendations, grounded in our findings, about how to most effectively support the continued growth of local food purchasing across SUNY.

# Findings

## Characteristics of Surveyed SUNY Campuses

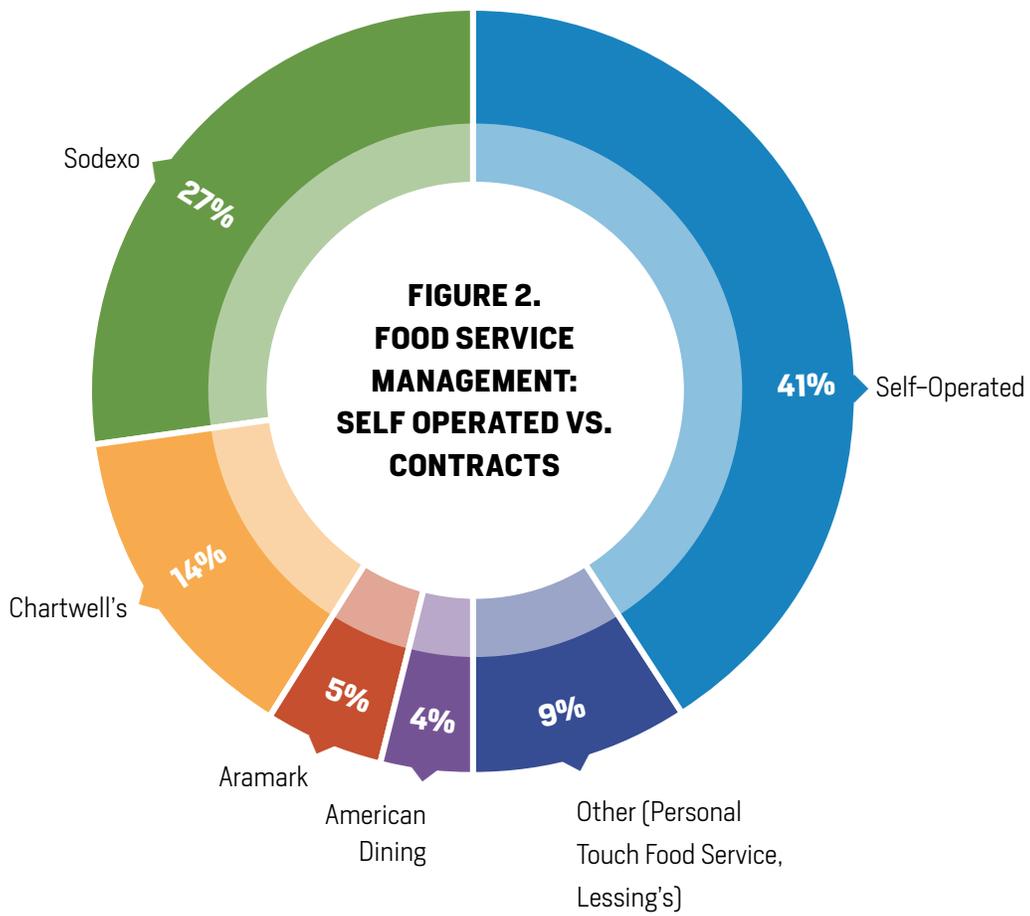
Of the 55 SUNY campuses contacted, 23 responded—a 42 percent response rate.

Respondents included:

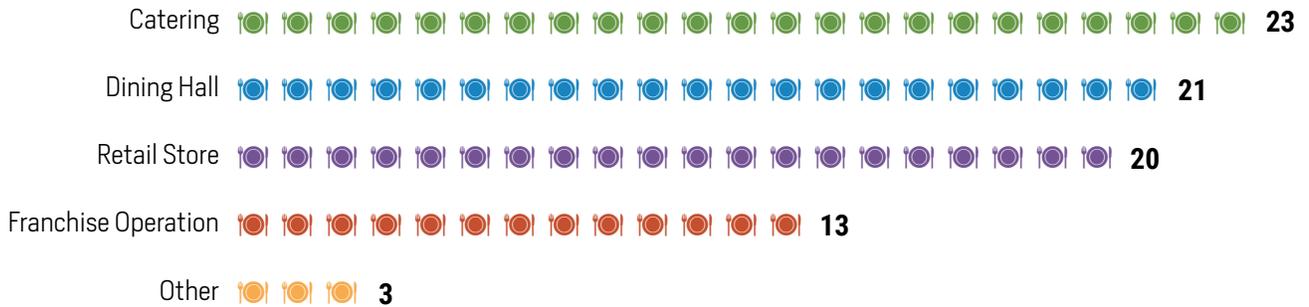
- SUNY Adirondack
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- SUNY Geneseo
- Jamestown Community College
- Monroe Community College
- SUNY New Paltz
- SUNY Old Westbury
- SUNY Oneonta
- SUNY Oswego
- SUNY Polytechnic Institute
- SUNY Potsdam
- SUNY Purchase
- Suffolk Community College
- Tompkins Cortland Community College
- SUNY Ulster

The following characteristics were identified regarding responding SUNY campuses:

- A majority of respondents offer at least one dining hall as a foodservice option.
- Meal plan participation ranges from 200 to 7,000 students, while total annual food spending ranges from less than \$300,000 to over \$10 million.
- Responding institutions collectively enrolled over 190,000 students in the 2015–16 academic year.
- 41 percent of responding campuses are “self-operated”—meaning that staff within Campus Auxiliary Services or Faculty Student Associations operate dining facilities.
- 59 percent of responding campuses contract with a foodservice management company to manage on-campus dining facilities including Sodexo (27 percent), Chartwell's (14 percent), Aramark (5 percent), American Dining (4 percent), or another company.
- Nearly half (43 percent) of respondents represent “University Colleges,” or institutions that award both bachelor's and master's degrees and tend to be situated in smaller cities or towns.



**FIGURE 3. FOOD SERVICE OPTIONS PROVIDED ON CAMPUS**



**FIGURE 4. AVERAGE ANNUAL FOOD SPEND:  
TWO-YEAR VS. FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS**

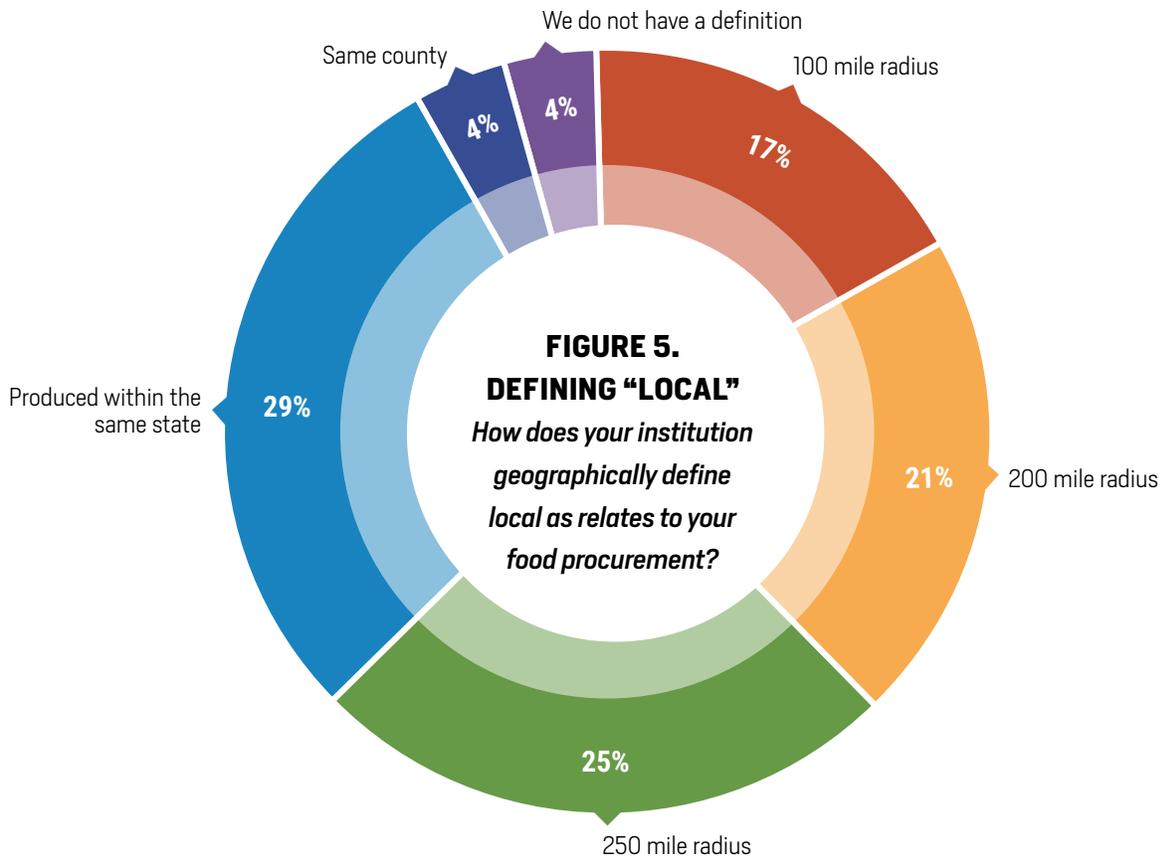


## What is “Local Food?”

### *Defining, Preferencing and Tracking “Local Food” at SUNY*

#### DEFINING LOCAL FOOD

To expand purchasing of locally grown food, institutions must first develop a definition of “local” that suits them best. Most survey respondents report geographically defining local as food either produced within the state (29 percent) or sourced within a 250-mile radius (25 percent). Inconsistencies within the SUNY network as to the definition of “local” can make it difficult to compare efforts across campuses. However, campus definitions reflect an institution’s purchasing motivations and procurement priorities.



We wanted to have as much impact on this geographic location as possible, and that’s why we determined a 100-mile radius from Geneseo worked best for us. We want to be able to help out the regional economy as much as possible, and we realize that it’s a pretty tight radius. We live in the heart of dairy country and apple country as well as a wide variety of other produce items such as, potatoes, squash, onions or corn etc. Hopefully our customers realize the benefit of an item that comes from within 100 miles from this location, grown, harvested and boxed up and sent to this campus in a fresh state or that potentially the dairy products or produce they are consuming came from a family operated farm within a few miles of campus.

**TOM D’ANGELO**  
 Director of Supply Chain with Campus Auxiliary Services, SUNY Geneseo

SUNY campuses face critical choices regarding how they track the local food they purchase. Based on our findings, campuses' local food aggregates tend to encompass the following three food product types:

1. Fresh or minimally processed foods that are locally grown or produced.
2. Processed food products that are manufactured locally, regardless of whether raw ingredients are local. This might, for example, include pasta that was manufactured in a local processing facility with raw ingredients sourced from outside New York.
3. Food products purchased from local distributors that may have local corporate offices or headquarters, regardless of whether the products have been grown, produced or manufactured locally.

Each of these three kinds of food products has vastly different implications for the local economy as well as for SUNY eaters' access to fresh, healthful foods on campus. If the driving incentives behind purchasing more local food are to both impact state public health and support local agriculture, it is imperative that campuses prioritize the first of the three categories—locally grown fresh and minimally processed foods. Accurately assessing the current impact of SUNY's local food efforts requires that purchasing reports distinguish from among these different food product categories.

Tracking methods that fail to differentiate between different food product types have led to public skepticism regarding the transparency of campuses' local food programs.<sup>12</sup> Our findings indicate that some wariness is warranted. For example, a survey response from one SUNY campus included claims of bananas as a top local fruit product.

**More broadly, we found that 67 percent of responding SUNY campuses do not distinguish between fresh and minimally processed foods grown in New York and foods manufactured in the state, irrespective of their origin of ingredients.** As a result, this study is not able to provide a reliable estimate of the amount of fresh and minimally processed food grown in New York purchased by SUNY campuses.

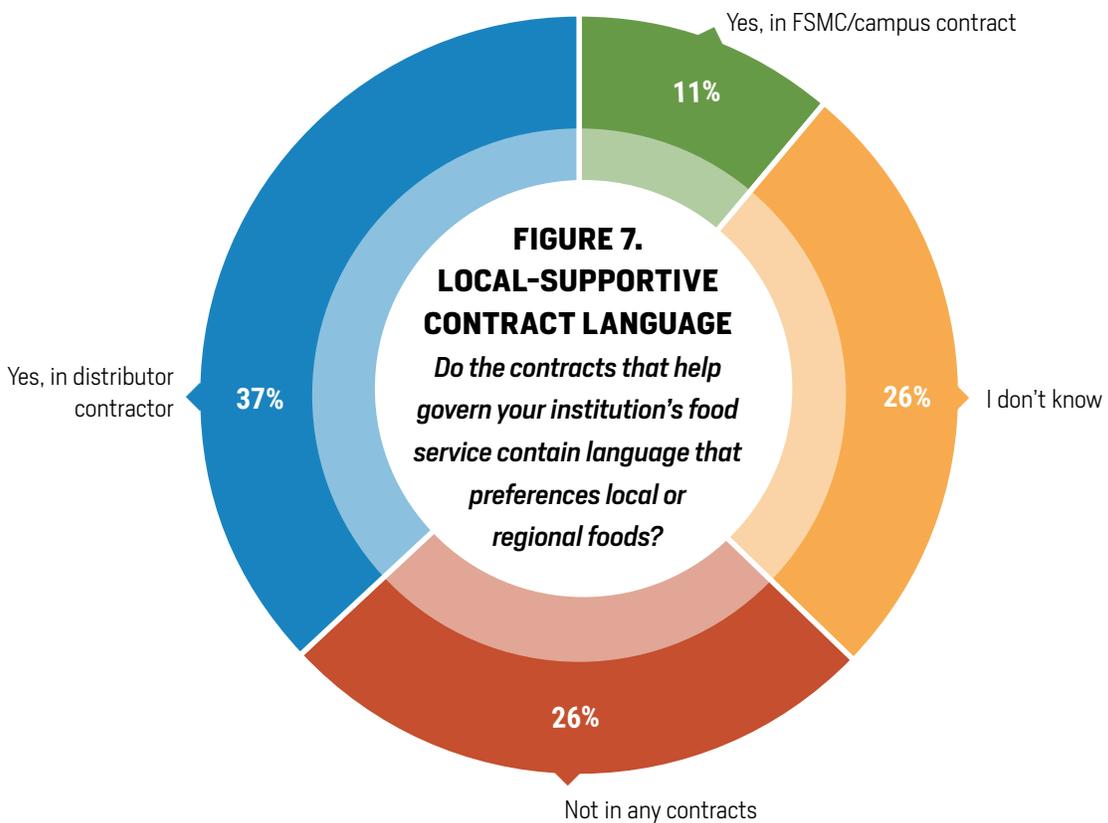
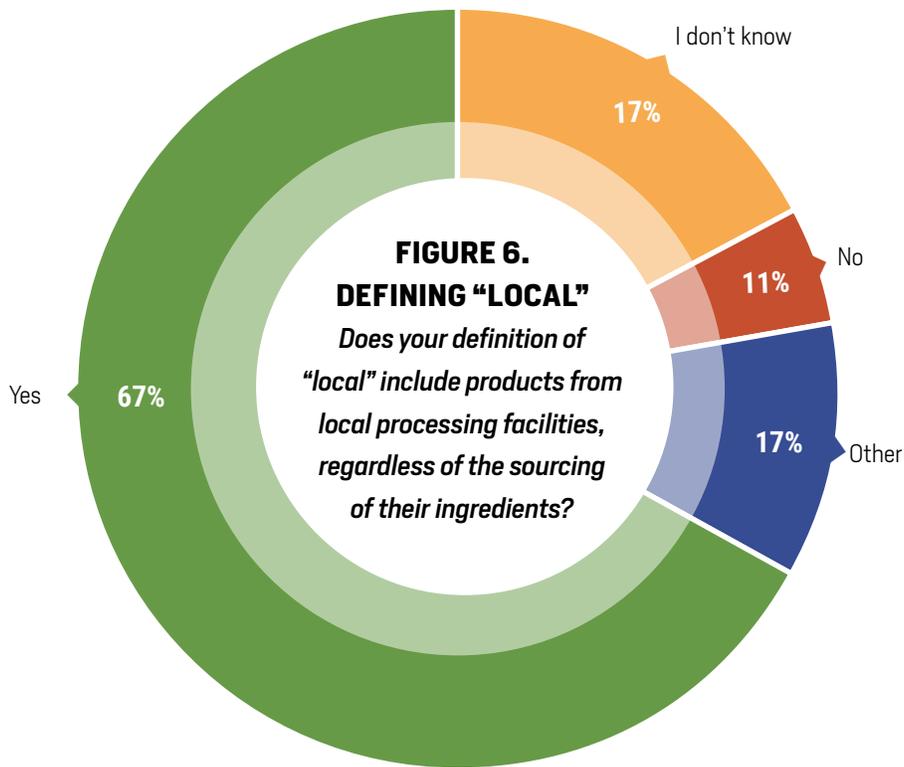
Moving forward, SUNY campuses should be supported in developing more accurate and sensitive local food tracking systems. In working to achieve this, we recommend increased oversight and support for campuses from the SUNY system, the inclusion of more specific tracking requirements in distributor contracts, and the establishment of a system-wide Farm-to-SUNY Coordinator tasked with leading purchasing efforts. It is essential to distinguish locally *grown* food products from those that are locally manufactured using non-local ingredients. More sensitive tracking

mechanisms must also ensure that wholly non-local food products (bananas, for example) are not incorrectly included in local aggregates. Improved tracking and reporting practices will enable a more effective quantification of the potential economic impact of expanding SUNY local food purchasing efforts.<sup>13</sup>

### **Economic Impact of 25% Local Purchasing Goal \***

**Spending 25 percent of SUNY food dollars on minimally processed food grown in New York would create over \$54 million of economic output<sup>14</sup> in New York.** To determine exactly how much of this economic impact would be new, better data is needed about actual local purchasing today. What is clear is that there is great opportunity to grow local purchasing. This growth would be especially beneficial to the health and local economies of rural communities, where farms are often confronted with substantial development pressure. **Keeping purchases local can help rural communities create jobs and maintain a sustainable economy. Moving forward, improved tracking and reporting practices will be instrumental to accurately understand the economic impact of SUNY food purchasing on the local economy and on New York state agriculture.** <sup>15 16 17</sup>

\* While we are unable to provide a reliable estimate of SUNY's current local food purchasing based on the results of this survey, prior studies have approximated the potential economic impact of increasing local purchasing to 25 percent.



## PREFERENCING LOCAL PURCHASING IN CONTRACTS

Forty-eight percent of responding SUNY campuses have language that preferences local in either a distributor or food service management company contract. By clearly communicating and establishing the institution's purchasing expectations, such contracts can play a key role in ensuring that campus contractors achieve targeted local purchasing goals.

**For our broadline distributor program, it was part of the interview and negotiations process. We go through this with every major partner. Within their presentations (we interviewed four companies for the broadline business) they had to demonstrate how their organizations support the local economy and what products were available as well as prove to us that we could expand on this with their assistance. They had to understand what our goals were and that they needed to help us achieve those goals and track this information for us. For smaller distributors, we have a memo of understanding—'we're interested in doing business with you and we want to be able to offer as many New York state-based products or services as possible.' This can be anything from produce and dairy products, fruits and vegetables, protein items or even cardboard boxes. We make informed decisions based upon our business needs and proceed. We don't just acquire products because they fit the model! It's got to be a win-win situation for all concerned.**

**TOM D'ANGELO**

**Director of Supply Chain with Campus Auxiliary Services, SUNY Geneseo**

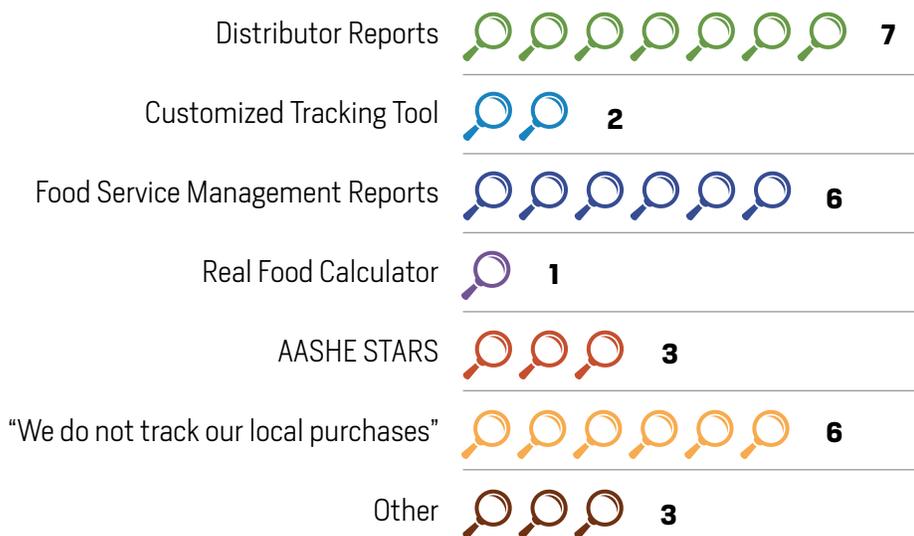
## REPORTING AND TRACKING TOOLS

SUNY campuses engaged in tracking local food purchases often rely on a combination of distributor reports and third-party tracking tools, such as AASHE STARS.<sup>18</sup> Interviews with respondents consistently highlighted the critical role of food service directors in initiating communication with distributors regarding their reporting needs and purchasing priorities:

**I ask Maines to run a report for me, a report of all the products within our 250-mile radius that we buy local. They do that for me and I use that data along with some of the other places where I buy local and come up with the data for AASHE. Maines is very supportive. They're a great partner.**

**TERRY BAKER**  
Dining Director with SUNY Cortland

**FIGURE 8. TRACKING TOOLS USED BY RESPONDING CAMPUSES**



## Student Health and Nutrition

The issue of food insecurity among college students is of growing concern nationwide.<sup>19</sup> Food insecurity is defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as “a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.”<sup>20</sup> A recent study in 12 states found that “food security is a problem even for students who are employed, participate in a campus meal plan, or seek other financial or material help.”<sup>21</sup>

Based on our survey findings, SUNY campuses are working to address student food insecurity in a variety of ways—most commonly by providing support services for students seeking to access nutrition assistance programs or through campus-based food pantries. Institutional procurement of local foods can provide nutritionally vulnerable students with fresh, healthy foods that are also associated with lower incidence of chronic disease.

Food Service Directors (FSDs) often see their role on campus as one that fosters and facilitates health for students. Consistently emphasizing nutrition as a top concern, FSDs look to locally grown foods as a way to provide the freshest, most nutritious meals possible:

**FIGURE 9. SUPPORT SERVICES OFFERED ON CAMPUS**



**I don't teach the students academically in the classroom but I feel like we educate the students outside of the classroom. We can educate them in terms of buying locally—how important it is to support the local economy and get the freshest product available that you can eat. I like to educate students on how to eat, how to eat locally, and how to eat healthy too. It's the first time they're able to make all their own choices. So let's tell them how to eat local, fresh and healthy all at the same time.**

**TERRY BAKER**  
Dining Director with SUNY Cortland

**We want to introduce students to what their options are when they're outside of college. [Through our local program] we have students see what's available so that when they're out in public hopefully they'll be more likely to buy local.**

**DEBORAH HANSON**  
Regional Sustainability  
Manager, Sodexo  
Campus Services

Consumption habits developed during the college years can have a lasting impact. The period of emerging adulthood, defined as 18–25 years of age, has been identified as an important developmental stage for establishing long-term health behavior patterns. This demographic also represents the most coveted audience among fast food and soft drink marketers. Burger King, Hardees and Jack in the Box have identified young men between the ages of 16–34 years old as having the heaviest usage in the fast food category. Additionally, national survey data has shown that there is an increased risk for excess weight gain during the transition period between adolescence and adulthood. Obesity increases risk for serious health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, stroke, arthritis and some cancers. Unfortunately, most of New York's population is impacted by obesity and related non-communicable diseases. In 2015, 60 percent of adults were overweight or obese in New York state.<sup>22</sup>

Local procurement on college campuses presents an opportunity to change this story for hundreds of thousands of students. During the five-year transition period after high school, young people are eating fewer fruits and vegetables.<sup>23</sup> Diets that include nutrient-rich foods, such as fresh fruits

and vegetables, can prevent weight gain and help control cholesterol levels and blood pressure. By serving food made from fresh, local produce, FSDs have the ability to present the healthy choice as the easy choice. Changing the context to make individuals' default decisions healthy has been demonstrated as an effective way of increasing the population impact of public health interventions.<sup>24</sup>

Importantly, increasing the availability of fresh, local foods at public institutions like SUNY can serve as a structural intervention for addressing health disparities linked to inequitable food access. Low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately exposed to neighborhood environments that lack adequate public and private services, including transportation and food retail services.<sup>25,26</sup> Fostering healthful food availability at public institutions like SUNY, therefore, can work to enhance community food security across the state by ensuring that all members of the SUNY community have access to fresh, local food. This capacity of local procurement practices to enhance community food security and further food justice in New York state will be strengthened by expanding connections between local food and emergency food programs on campus.<sup>27</sup> Partnership between emergency food services, such as campus food pantries and food recovery programs, and SUNY local food procurement is supported by state-sponsored initiatives such as the Farm to Food Bank Bill and the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program.

## **Key Factors for Increasing Purchasing of New York-Grown Foods**

When asked about the services that would be most useful for their campuses' local purchasing efforts, FSDs most often cited matchmaking services, information about local farms/farmers, and assistance promoting local food efforts.

These responses align with findings from in-depth FSD interviews that identified communication and community as keys to campuses' local purchasing successes. More specifically, food service directors highlighted:

- Importance of strong relationships and communication between campuses, distributors and producers
- Impact of institutional goal-setting
- Importance of community-oriented local food events

**TABLE 1. RESOURCES AND SERVICES MOST REQUESTED BY RESPONDING CAMPUSES**

WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING SERVICES WOULD BE MOST USEFUL TO YOUR CAMPUS?	# OF RESPONDING CAMPUSES
Matchmaking between producers (farms/fishermen), distributors, processors, and institutions	12
Information about local farmers/suppliers	10
Assistance promoting your local food efforts	9
Sample language for contract & RFPs related to local foods	5
More budget flexibility or dedicated funds for purchasing local foods	5
Staff training on how to launch a local food sourcing program	4
Help incorporating local foods into your menu (economics, planning, recipes)	4

### STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS, DISTRIBUTORS AND PRODUCERS

Throughout the entire procurement process—from distributors making institutions aware of available local foods to the delivery of purchasing reports—effective communication between institutions, distributors and farmers is key. Because responsibility for prioritizing local products is often made at the campus level, clear communication of expectations to distributors is important.

For example, distributors may present client institutions with local options where available. However, institutions that first communicate their priority interest in and expectation of purchasing local products are more likely to get better results.



*Terry Baker and the SUNY Cortland Food Service Team visit local producer, Main Street Farms.*

**Our distributors know that we look for New York products. They know what we're looking for. If they see a new local company or producer that pops up that they're going to be buying from, they bring those to our attention. These are relationships that have been built over the years and we've just continued to follow through.**

**RUTH STEVENS**  
Food Service Director  
with SUNY Oswego

**I took the staff, some of the cooks and managers, to have a tour of the farm last week. It really was a great experience. They got to know a different perspective, walk the fields and hear how he grows the food from seed to harvesting. It was a really great learning experience to see how the food they make in the kitchen comes from this farm. They grow half an acre of tomatoes for us. It's been a good partnership.**

**TERRY BAKER**  
Dining Director with SUNY  
Cortland

## BENCHMARKS AND GOAL-SETTING

Clear goals and benchmarks for local purchasing set by SUNY campuses, or potentially the SUNY system, can make a big difference. Food service directors consistently refer to top-down institutional goals as a critical factor in their local purchasing successes—both in setting the tone for their purchasing decisions and in encouraging their teams and colleagues to prioritize locally grown food as reflecting an institution’s values and priorities.

**The biggest goal I always keep in my head is 20 percent by 2020. It’s always in the back of your mind. For me it helps me in reminding the chefs and reminding the general managers—you know ‘these are our goals. We’re going to get there.’**

**SUNY Food  
Service Director**

**Having a reasonable goal is key. We have great dialogue with the management team—from the business office to dining facilities and your frontline hourly people. We talk about the importance of the goal as well as how we can communicate what we’re doing to the customer. This is instrumental to our success. We communicate with each other in a productive way and share information about our goals often. Everyone is encouraged to be involved in the process.**

**TOM D’ANGELO  
Director of Supply Chain with Campus  
Auxiliary Services, SUNY Geneseo**



*National Kale Day celebration at SUNY New Paltz and University at Albany SUNY*

## COMMUNITY-ORIENTED PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Promotional events, such as food tastings, apple crunches, and other activities, educate the campus community about the importance of local food while generating support for local procurement programs. Given that food service teams' local purchasing efforts are often motivated by interests in the local economy and in student health, events that reflect these values and the contributions of local food to the community are often most successful.

**We believe in having local produce. We do believe our produce tastes better out of Oswego County. We're proud of what we do here.**

**RUTH STEVENS**  
Food Service Director with SUNY Oswego

# Recommendations

Increasing purchasing of New York-grown foods by SUNY campuses has the potential to strengthen the state's economy and improve food security and the health of hundreds of thousands of young adults. Individual SUNY campuses have made important strides in purchasing more food grown in New York, but unlocking the true potential of the SUNY system will require direct action. We recommend that the following steps be taken:

- The SUNY system and individual SUNY campuses with student meal programs should establish goals of spending at least 25 percent of their food dollars on fresh and minimally processed foods grown in New York. It is critical that such goals distinguish between fresh and minimally processed foods grown in the state, and other foods that are manufactured, processed or distributed in the state.
- SUNY should establish a system-wide Farm-to-SUNY Coordinator position to promote and support local food purchasing across campuses. This position should be responsible for 1) developing guidance for campuses to track purchases of minimally-processed foods grown in New York State, 2) reviewing campus data and 3) delivering an annual report on local food purchasing across SUNY.
- SUNY campuses should be supported in establishing campus Farm-to-SUNY Coordinators who can help facilitate relationships with local farmers and distributors as well as track local food purchases and promote local food purchasing with students, faculty and staff.
- SUNY campuses should be encouraged to include language in contracts with food service management companies and distributors that sets clear goals for spending at least 25 percent of their food dollars on fresh and minimally processed foods grown in New York.
- The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and other organizations should continue to support farmers in achieving GAP certification and enrolling in the New York State Grown and Certified Program to help SUNY campuses identify GAP-certified farmers.
- Empire State Development should dedicate resources to support farmers in becoming MWBE-certified to achieve a double win of meeting state MWBE and local food purchasing goals.

# For SUNY Students, Faculty and Staff

If increasing local food on-campus is important to you, please help spread the word to others in the SUNY system and encourage the adoption of these recommendations.

- Share this report with campus organizations, such as environmental and sustainability clubs
- Learn more about your campus' goals to purchase New York grown foods
- Discuss the potential impact and barriers to increasing locally-procured food in institutional settings in the classroom
- Talk with your campus Food Service Director, Administration and others about purchasing foods grown in New York
- Organize a Farm to College event on campus, such as a local apple tasting
- Find resources and the latest news at [www.finys.org/farmtocollege](http://www.finys.org/farmtocollege)



## Connect With Us



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FarmtoInstitutionNYS



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