



## **Incorporating Local into Your Cafeteria**

1. Define local- Develop a clear definition of what local means within your organization and effective ways to communicate that to your suppliers and customers. ASAP defines local as a 100 mile radius from Asheville while still in the Southern Appalachians. Many large distributors define local as anywhere within a state or larger geographical region and your definition may be more narrow. Ask for specific farm names and locations of products identified as local by your distributor.
2. Begin where you are- Communicate to your group purchasing organizations or distributor your preference for local foods. It is possible that you are already purchasing local food and simply need to identify it. Encourage your vendors and/or food management companies to tell you what is local and to source more locally produced foods.
3. Start small-Take time to talk to growers and clearly communicate your needs. Be patient and flexible building new relationships takes time.
4. If possible avoid signing a contract with a prime vendor - If you must have a contract make sure to take full advantage of the percentage of foods that can be purchased outside of the prime vendor to purchase local. Use the contract renewal period as a time to increase your off-contract purchasing percentage.
5. Develop a network within your community to support your local food initiative. Work with local farmers, community-based organizations and local food suppliers to increase the availability of locally-sourced food.
6. Encourage kitchen staff to visit farmers markets as a way to meet local farmers, look at product quality, and familiarize themselves with what is in season.
7. Staff training-With the increased use of precooked and highly processed foods in institutional kitchens a switch to fresh local foods could be challenging. Offer trainings on how to prepare and serve meals made using fresh ingredients.
8. Understanding seasonality- You may be used to getting a consistent supply of food, from one vendor throughout the year. Products such as meats and dairy are potentially available year-round, but purchasers should keep in mind that other products are only available at certain times of the year.
9. Price-Sourcing local can sometimes be more expensive than purchasing from a traditional distributor who deals in higher volume. If the food is being sold in a cafeteria there is more opportunity to pass on the costs to consumers than with patient food. Try incorporating local food into catering, workshops or meetings where budgets might be larger.
10. Develop a marketing program to communicate within your system, to your patients, and out to the community about your commitment to local food. Gaining support for the work you are doing will be helpful in sustaining momentum.