BUY AMERICAN:
SUPPORTING DOMESTIC AGRICULTURE IN SCHOOL MEALS

The **BUY AMERICAN PROVISION** safeguards the health and well-being of our Nation’s children and supports the U.S. economy, American farmers, and small and local agricultural businesses (7 CFR 210.21 (d) and Memo SP 38-2017).

School food authorities (SFAs) in the continental United States* must purchase domestic agricultural commodities and food products. For foods that are unprocessed, the agricultural commodities must be domestic, and for foods that are processed, they must be processed domestically using domestic agricultural food components that are comprised of over 51% domestically grown items, by weight or volume. A domestic creditable food component is the portion that counts toward a reimbursable school meal (meats/meat alternates, grains, vegetables, fruits, and fluid milk).

- Foods and food products of Guam, American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Mariana Islands are considered domestic.

**How SFAs Can Buy American Foods**

- Develop menus that include only domestic foods and domestic food products. **
- Include the Buy American provision and Geographic Preference option in written procurement procedures, specifications in solicitations, and contracts for food; be sure to monitor contractor performance.
- Require suppliers to attest that their final food products are either 100% domestic commodities or a food product containing over 51% domestic food components, by weight or volume.
- Use USDA Foods and food products processed in the United States using USDA Foods.
- Participate in **USDA’s Farm to School Grant Program**.

**Exceptions to Buy American**

There are two limited exceptions when non-domestic foods may be purchased. These exceptions are determined by the SFA:

- The food or food product is not produced or manufactured in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities of a satisfactory quality; or
- Competitive bids reveal the cost of a United States food or food product is significantly higher than the non-domestic product.

**REMEMBER:**
Document exceptions and keep records!

*SFAs in Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. territories are exempt from the Buy American provision. However, SFAs in Hawaii are required to purchase food products produced in Hawaii in sufficient quantities, as determined by the SFA, per 7 CFR 210.21(d) [3]. Likewise, SFAs in Puerto Rico are required to purchase food products produced in Puerto Rico in sufficient quantities, under 42 USC 1760(n)[4].

Was the agricultural commodity or food product purchased using the nonprofit school food service account?

- **NO**: Buy American does not apply.
- **YES**: Buy American applies.

Is this a processed food product that uses agricultural commodities?

- **NO**: This is an agricultural commodity (i.e., unprocessed). Agricultural commodities must be produced in the United States.
- **YES**: The agricultural food product must be:
  1) processed in the United States; and
  2) of the creditable food components, over 51% must be domestic by weight or volume.*

  Applies to Program and non-Program foods.

Is the agricultural commodity or food product produced or manufactured in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities of a satisfactory quality?*

- **NO**: Do either of the exceptions apply?
- **YES**: A documented exception is permitted, and a non-domestic agricultural commodity or food product may be purchased.

Do competitive bids reveal the United States agricultural commodity or food product is significantly more costly?*

- **NO**: Buy American applies.
- **YES**: Document any exceptions used; Consider domestic food alternatives prior to approving non-domestic foods; Show documentation on procurement and administrative reviews.

*As determined by the SFA.

SFAs can obtain information on Buy American at: https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/compliance-enforcement-buy-american or by contacting their State agency.