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Subject: **FARM TO SCHOOL**

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**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this procedure is to define what Farm to School is and ensure proper handling of Farm to School produce.

**General Information**

Farm to School programs seek to improve student nutrition, support local farmers, and reduce environmental impact of food distribution. Farm to School allows school districts to offer more locally grown, fresh produce at school meals. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) began offering Florida-grown fruits and vegetables through the school meal program in 2009. Farm to Table programs are a nationwide effort to support local economies, curb environmental pollution by decreasing transportation and offer a wide variety of fresh produce. Fruits and vegetables that are consumed close to where they are grown are typically picked when ripe, which provides a higher nutritional content when compared with items that are picked immaturely to allow for long transport periods.

**Definitions**

Farm to School programs provide “local food” to students through school meal and snack programs. M-DCPS defines:

- A. Local - all produce grown within the state of Florida with preferences for produce grown in Miami-Dade County
- B. Regional - produce grown in the southeastern region of the United States
- C. Domestic - as produce grown within the contiguous United States.

**Services and Offerings**

Farm to School items include locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables and may also include other local farm-produced items. A wide variety of fruits and vegetables are available year-round throughout Florida. The typical season for vegetables in South Florida starts in December and ends in April. Although different fruits are available throughout different times of the year, most fruits from South Florida are typically available from May until October. The chart ([Attachment A](#)) includes a list of produce grown in South Florida that may be served through the school meal program with each item’s approximate seasonal availability. Locally grown produce items will be served to students through the existing breakfast, lunch, and snack programs, as well as through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

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**PROCEDURE**

**HACCP**

Always start any food preparation by using proper hand washing procedures. Do not use bare hands to handle ready-to-eat foods at any time (See Food and Nutrition Procedures [H-02](#) and [H-04](#)).

**Receiving and Storage**

- A. Farm to School items shall be received and stored at proper temperatures using the following procedure:
  - 1. Fruit - stored at room temperature until ripe and stored under refrigeration until served if they are delivered ripe. (DO NOT FREEZE)
  - 2. Vegetables - root vegetables and gourds, such as calabaza and boniato, may be stored in dry storage.
  - 3. Vegetables - leafy greens and other vegetables should be stored in refrigerated units (DO NOT FREEZE).
- B. All Farm to School items should be checked upon delivery. Food service managers will verify that all produce items are delivered in boxes or cases identifying the place of origin on a label as the State of Florida (county and/or city). Any Farm to School item delivered in unlabeled boxes should be refused. Please refer to Food and Nutrition Procedure [H-16](#) for additional information on receiving and storage.

**Washing Produce**

- A. Wash fresh fruits and vegetables under cool running water.
- B. Scrub produce items that have a tough outer skin in the sink with a brush to remove all visible dirt.
- C. Please refer to Food and Nutrition Procedure [H-13](#) for more information on proper washing of fruits and vegetables.

**FOOD AND NUTRITION  
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Serving

- A. Farm to School items are to be prepared and served within five (5) days of delivery. Please refer to Food and Nutrition Procedures [H-08](#), [H-9](#), [H-10](#) and [H-15](#) for more information on cooling, controlling temperature, holding hot and cold food and serving foods.
- B. Fruit should only be served when ripe.

*For Action By: All Food Service Staff*

*Refer Questions to: Department of Food and Nutrition*

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