**Background**

- The National School Lunch Programs serves about 31 million meals each day (USDA, 2015).
- Local food use in school nutrition programs:
  - Helps students better understand where and how food is produced.
  - Provides new markets for farmers.
  - Foodservice directors have complex set of responsibilities; procurement is one.
  - Sourcing of local fruits and vegetables is a challenge.

**Purpose**

- Assess foodservice directors’ views of purchasing fruits and/or vegetables from local farmers for use in school meals.

**Methods**

- An e-survey sent to populations of School Food Authorities in both states
- Respondents provided information about:
  - Selection factors in purchase fruits/vegetables.
  - Frequency of local purchases and use.
  - Characteristics about district’s program.
  - Roles in decision-making, and themselves.
- Survey included multiple choice, yes/no, and open ended questions.

**Findings**

- Of the 174 participants, 54% were located in Iowa and 46% in Pennsylvania.
- Majority of respondents were:
  - Female (56.3%)
  - Between age 55 and 64 years (31.0%)
- Number of definitions for local used (grown within state, school garden produce, and/or within 200 miles of district).
- Reasons for not purchasing local produce:
  - Lack of food safety information.
  - Growers unwilling to meet district procurement policies.
- Local produce currently used in 26% (n=45) of school meal programs.
- Of those purchasing from local growers, 88% had no requirements related to food safety.

**Conclusions**

- Findings showed interest in local fresh fruit and vegetable use in schools, yet communication gaps with local growers still need to be overcome.
- Relationship building is an important component of farm to cafeteria sales.
- Awareness by grower–sellers of school market potential along with procurement rules is needed.

**Implications**

- Initiatives such as USDA’s Produce Safety University are one way to address foodservice directors’ identified need for more food safety information.
- Collaborative communications between state agencies, school nutrition program, school district staff, regional food system advocates, and growers would address information needs.
- Potential for use of local produce in school nutrition programs exists.