Buy American in the 2026 Farm Bill
Impact on School Meal Programs

SNA supports schools buying American-sourced food whenever possible, but stricter requirements as currently written in the House-passed *Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026* (H.R. 7567) and the Senate Agriculture Committee's *Agricultural Act of 2026* would mean higher food costs and more administrative burden for school meal programs already in a financial crisis. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the House Buy American provision would impose an unfunded mandate of about $25 million a year.[1]

Currently, schools must purchase domestic foods "to the maximum extent practicable."[2] USDA's 2024 rule caps non-domestic purchases at 10%, phasing down to 8% in SY 2028–29 and 5% in SY 2031–32.[3] Programs rely on three flexibilities to comply: product exceptions on the federal non-available list, state agency waiver authority to grant temporary accommodations, and a cap measured in aggregate rather than by product category. Even so, 82.9% of school nutrition directors report that the availability of Buy American-compliant foods is a significant or moderate challenge. [4]

Current versions of House and Senate Farm bills narrow that flexibility. Both bills immediately apply a 5% non-domestic limit and a new requirement to track compliance based on every Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) food category. Additionally, the House bill would eliminate state agency waiver authority.

	CURRENT REQUIREMENTS USDA 2024 rule	**HOUSE BILL** H.R. 7567, Sec. 4302	**SENATE BILL** Agricultural Act of 2026, Sec. 4304
Non-domestic limit	10%, phasing down to 8% in SY 2028–29 and 5% in SY 2031–32	5% limit; 95% domestic required	5% limit; 95% domestic required
Compliance measured	In aggregate across all commercial food purchases	In each AMS food purchase category	In each AMS category, per school year
Unavailable products	Product exceptions on the federal non-available list	USDA list created; listed products excluded from the 95% calculation	Same list within six months, updated every two years; listed products excluded
State agency waivers	Allowed	Eliminated; USDA barred from waivers except for listed products	Preserved (existing USDA authority to grant exceptions)

The Ask:

- Set the non-domestic limit at 10% (90% domestic)
- Measure compliance across all commercial food purchases, not by AMS category.
- Preserve state agency waiver authority, as the Senate bill does.
- Strengthen the domestically unavailable list, so it reflects what schools can and cannot source domestically, including seasonal shortages and exclude listed items from the non-domestic cap.
- Fund any new requirements placed on schools and state agencies.

[1] Congressional Budget Office, *Cost Estimate: H.R. 7567, Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026, as reported by the House Committee on Agriculture on April 21, 2026*, April 24, 2026.
[2] Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, sec. 12(n), 42 U.S.C. 1760(n).
[3] USDA Food and Nutrition Service, *Buy American Provisions Related to the Final Rule*, memo SP 23-2024, May 29, 2024.
[4] School Nutrition Association, *School Nutrition Trends Report, SY 2025–26*, Figures 8–9, pp. 14–15.