



# Bridge the Communications Gap

*Guide to Help Farmers and School Food Service Staff  
Communicate Effectively*

All who work in food do not all speak the same language! Where farmers measure quantity in pounds and differentiate between dollars made on the retail market vs. the wholesale market, School Food Service speak about providing meals, meeting the nutrition guidelines while staying within a tight budget.

**Below are some common communication misconceptions that both the farmer and School Food Service need to be aware of:**

## POUNDS PER STUDENT

Farmers work in pounds; Food Service work in serving sizes. Both need to know how to talk to each other during an order. Confirm with the farmer the number of produce items in one pound before placing your final order.

## STANDARD PACK SIZE

Farmers have a very specific way they pack produce and it's different for each crop. Food Service needs to know what to expect when they order one box of carrots.

## WORK WITH DISTRIBUTORS

Do you work with a distributor but want to source more locally? Feel comfortable asking your distributor to help you source locally. Often they are more than willing to make the extra effort to provide their customers with the quality and type of produce they need.

## NEW PURCHASE ORDERS

To set up a new Purchase Order (PO) with a farm, the Food Service needs to be prepared to provide a W-9, liability insurance and list the farm as additionally insured on the Certificate. Farms should be prepared to be asked for a GAP certification.

## SELL THE WHOLE FIELD!

Building relationships with farmers is easier than you might imagine. Farmers have the goal of selling everything they grow. Food Service has the goal of feeding every student the best food they can afford. A simple way to meet both of these goals is through Contract Growing.

Find a farmer who is willing to plant an extra row for your school, or commit to selling a certain amount of the crop with the agreement that the school might get the seconds or the less visually appealing produce. This helps to cut down on costs, the produce will likely be made into a recipe and the farmer can *Sell the Whole Field*. It's a win win for all!