

The logo for the USDA Farm to School 2023 Census. It features the text "USDA" in a dark blue serif font, "FARM to SCHOOL" in a green sans-serif font with "to" in a smaller, italicized font, and "2023 CENSUS" in a large, bold, dark blue sans-serif font. A green graphic element resembling a stylized field or waves is positioned between "USDA" and "FARM to SCHOOL".

USDA FARM *to* SCHOOL 2023 CENSUS

The questions and answers below are from the 2023 Farm to School Census School Food Authority webinar, held October 12, 2023. If you have additional questions, please contact the Farm to School Census team at Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com.

Common survey questions

Q: I don't know my National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) ID number. What do I do?

A: You can look up the NCES ID number of the school district that your SFA provides meals for here: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch>. This link is also available in the Census survey, as well as the [Census Preparation Worksheet](#).

Q: Does every SFA have an NCES ID number?

A: NCES ID numbers are associated with school districts. If you are not associated with a school district with an NCES ID or you cannot find the NCES ID, you can still proceed in the Census without it by clicking the response option "My SFA does not have an NCES ID number."

If your SFA serves more than one district, and you cannot find an NCES ID for each, please enter those that you can find. Please complete the survey to reflect all the districts that your SFA serves.

Survey logistics questions

Q: What is the closing date of the Census?

A: The 2023 Farm to School Census is scheduled to close at the end of the calendar year, by December 31, 2023.

Q: Am I able to add to, update, or correct data entered by team members, partners, or myself after submission?

A: You can edit data after your survey is submitted, but it will require a submission to the help desk (Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com or 866-986-2230) to reopen your survey.

Q: How can I review data from the last Census?

A: Previous Census data can be found here: <https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/census-results/census-data-explorer>

There is a section in green at the bottom of the page where you can search by state or specific SFA. If you would like a walkthrough of the search process, watch the SFA Webinar recording here: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/census-sfa-2023-webinar>

Q: What do I do if I never received the Census link?

A: If you have checked your spam folder and still can't find an email with the survey link, that may mean that we don't have your correct contact information. Reach out to the help desk (Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com or 866-986-2230) and provide us with the email contact information for your SFA, and we will get the link to you.

Q: Are we able to get a hard copy of the survey?

A: Yes, you can find a hard copy of the 2023 Census on the Farm to School website here: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/census-sample-survey>

Q: There are multiple team members participating in completing the survey. Who is responsible for "submitting" the survey?

A: Anyone can submit the survey when it is complete. Before submitting, please ensure that all contributors have answered questions to the best of their ability and all sections of the Census are complete.

Questions about who should participate in the Census

Q: My SFA no longer participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Do I still need to complete the survey?

A: The Census asks about the 2022-2023 school year, so if your SFA participated in the NSLP in SY 2022-2023 we would like you to complete the survey even if you are not participating in the NSLP this school year. If your SFA did not participate in the NSLP during the 2022-2023 school year, please let us know by contacting us at Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com or 866-986-2230.

Q: My SFA closed. Do I still need to complete the survey?

A: If your SFA was closed last year, contact us at Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com or 866-986-2230, and let us know your SFA was not operating last year. If your SFA was open and participating in the NSLP during the 2022-2023 school year, we would appreciate your participation.

Q: We are a summer camp. Do I still need to complete the survey?

A: If you only operate summer programs without NSLP, you do not need to fill out the survey, but please contact us at Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com or 866-986-2230 to let us know.

Q: We are a small private school. Do I still need to complete the survey?

A: We are interested in private schools. If your SFA participated in the NSLP during the 2022-2023 school year, we would appreciate your participation.

Q: Should small schools and schools with special needs fill out the Census?

A: If your SFA was open and participated in the NSLP during the 2022-2023 school year, we would appreciate your participation.

Q: How are charter schools being handled for the 2023 Farm to School Census?

A: We send out our surveys based on the information that we get from States about who participates in the NSLP. If the structure of a charter system is such that each school is formally considered its own entity for the purpose of school meals (i.e., a school food authority), then each individual school/SFA should complete a survey.

Q: Should Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sites be included in the Census?

A: We are interested in all of the programs your SFA participates in and which local foods are used in each of the programs (including School Breakfast, CACFP, Summer programs, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)). If your site only participated in CACFP but not NSLP in the 2022-2023 school year, then please contact us at Farm2SchoolCensus@dir-online.com or 866-986-2230 to let us know.

Q: We plan to start buying local foods in the future, but we haven't yet. Would we need to fill out the Census or wait until the next round?

A: Please fill out the current Census. There are questions for SFAs that do not currently participate in Farm to School but plan to in the future.

Q: What if we don't purchase locally grown foods? Should we fill out the Census?

A: Yes; there are many ways to participate in farm to school. Please complete the survey, even if you do not purchase locally grown foods.

Q: Only 1 of the 3 sites in our District come up on the NCES search tool provided, so do we submit the survey with all 3 schools' data in the 1 site that comes up?

A: Please submit data for all the schools in your SFA, even if you do not know the NCES ID.

Q: If my school is under Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), do we need to do the census?

A: Yes! We are interested in hearing from all SFAs that participate in the NSLP.

Q: I am currently filling in for my supervisor who is out on medical leave. I've pulled up the link she was emailed, and all her information is provided. I will complete, but if she decides not to return, would I need to go back and change her info?

A: You should be able to complete the survey using her link, and you will not need to change the contact information.

Q: My school no longer participates in F2S. Should I still complete the survey?

A: Please complete the survey regardless of farm to school participation. The Census includes questions about why you are no longer participating in farm to school.

Local foods definition questions

Q: How does the Census define "local" foods? How do we determine which USDA or DoD Foods are local? Is FFVP part of farm to school and is it considered "local"?

A: There is no official definition of "local" for the purposes of farm to school. You should fill out the survey based on your understanding of what constitutes "local," and there is a place in the Census for you to provide your definition. We are not asking you to do an exploratory investigation to figure out the source of all your foods, and we know it can be difficult, as you do not always get that information. If it is something that is provided to you (for example, USDA DoD Fresh should provide the state of origin), you can use that as a guideline. Take your best guess with the information that you have on hand, and we are happy to accept that in the survey.

Q: Is milk purchased locally considered to be a "local" food? Does this include both white and chocolate milk?

A: Please use your own or your SFA's definition of "local" within the survey. If you and your colleagues would consider your purchased milk to be "local," then please consider it local for the purposes of the survey (including as part of your total spending on local). Local milk can be of any color/flavor or type (nonfat, 1%, etc).

Q: My school recently started a fruit, vegetable, and herb garden, so we are producing some of our own produce. Can I include that?

A: Yes, you will have the opportunity to provide information about your garden in the Census.

Questions about external food partners

Q: Is the Russ Davis Fruit and Vegetable vendor considered farm to school?

A: Potentially! If you consider your purchases from that vendor to be local, then they are. We expect that respondents will have different definitions for local.

Q: What should I do if we use a food service management company/vendor/outside organization?

A: We encourage you to collaborate with your partners, including food service management partners and vendors, to obtain the information needed to complete the census. The Census will ask about other activities happening within schools, as well, and we encourage you to fill out as much of the survey as possible. Provide estimates or best guesses, where needed.

Food procurement, spending, and funding questions

Q: Should spending totals include only what is spent on food, or do we consider other items such as training, staff pay, supplies?

A: It is only food spending. Do not include spending that is not on food purchases.

Q: When we purchase some food items through our local grocery store that we can't get off of our food truck, do we claim those totals?

A: Yes, please include all food items in your totals, regardless of source.

Q: Are grant funds included in local food spending totals (e.g., the Local Food for Schools Grant, Fruit and Vegetable Grants, or the Food Chain Supply Grant)

A: Please include grant funds in spending totals. This includes Local Foods for Schools Grant and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) funds. There are questions in the Census about sources of funding for farm to school activities, which includes purchasing local foods, and one of the options to respond to that question is about federal funding sources.

Q: You are looking for an annual total of the school year for amount spent, correct?

A: Yes, we are looking for spending totals by school year—specifically for school year 2022-2023.

Q: Can we use the entitlement value on our pre-survey as the total spent on USDA Foods?

A: If the entitlement value you calculated in the pre-survey is the amount you spent on USDA Foods specifically, then yes. If you spent some of those funds on USDA DoD Fresh product, we will want you to break that out separately.

Q: Is funding from USDA foods included in spending totals? For example, the USDA Foods entitlement value, USDA “bonus” foods that only cost a delivery fee and no entitlement spending, or the DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

A: USDA Foods spending would include both direct delivery/brown box AND products sent to processing. While we often think of USDA Foods as having three parts (direct delivery, for processing, and USDA DoD Fresh), we capture USDA DoD Fresh separately here.

Q: Do we only include USDA products, or do we also include our local farmers on RFP or microprocurement?

A: For the questions on spending, we are interested in the total purchase amount regardless of contract vehicle. We are interested in food purchases of all kinds, from formal broadline contracts to micropurchases from your grocery store.

You will tally USDA DoD Fresh and USDA Foods separately from all other food spending.

Imagine the question in this format:

	Amount Spent
Q35. Total food spending (NOT including USDA Foods or DOD Fresh)	\$
Q36. Spending on local food, including fluid milk (NOT including USDA Foods or DOD Fresh)	\$
Q37. Spending on local fluid milk	\$
Q38. Total spending on USDA Foods (NOT including USDA DoD Fresh.)	\$
Q39. Spending on local foods through USDA Foods (NOT including USDA DoD Fresh.)	\$
Q40. Total spending on USDA DoD Fresh (NOT including USDA Foods.)	\$
Q41. Spending on local foods through USDA DoD Fresh (NOT including USDA Foods.)	\$

Q: Does DoD Fresh include FFAVORS?

A: Yes, FFAVORS is the data management system for USDA DoD Fresh. You should be able to get an accurate total of your spending on USDA DoD Fresh for school year 2022-2023 using FFAVORS.

Q: What if the food is donated to the school? How do we report that?

A: Donated foods would not be included in spending. However, we do ask about whether you received in-kind donations as part of the question on funding sources for farm to school. Please include those donations as part of that question.

Miscellaneous questions

Q: How do we get more involved with the Farm to School program with our school?

A: The [USDA Food and Nutrition Service Farm to School website](#) is a great place to start. They also send out a [monthly newsletter](#) that has a lot of information. The Census Survey itself also has a lot of good examples of farm to school activities (big and modest). There are great external organizations like the [National Farm to School Network](#), where you can find more resources and connect with others active and informed about farm to school in your area.