



Office of General Services

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OGS ANNOUNCES NEW YORK SCHOOLS COMMITTING AT LEAST \$2.1 MILLION IN USDA FUNDING TO BUY LOCAL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

New York State Office of General Services (OGS) Commissioner RoAnn Destito today announced school districts across the state have made a commitment to dedicate at least \$2.1 million in USDA funds toward the federal agency's Pilot Project for the Procurement of Unprocessed Fruits and Vegetables during the 2016-17 school year. This investment represents a 320 percent increase over the \$500,000 commitment by schools in 2015-16 for the pilot, which is administered by OGS on behalf of the state.

"When Governor Cuomo announced in 2014 that New York was one of eight states selected for a USDA pilot program for the procurement of unprocessed fruits and vegetables by schools, it was seen as a great opportunity to use USDA funding to get more locally grown produce into our schools while strengthening New York's agricultural industry at the same time," Commissioner Destito said. "As we plan for the third year of the pilot, we are excited to see a growing commitment by schools throughout the state to this program and the creation of new relationships between them and the growers, distributors, and sellers of produce."

"It is tremendously important to provide fresh, healthy food options to our schoolchildren, to make sure they know where their food comes from, and understand the importance of eating well," said New York State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball. "This program reinforces the state's continuing efforts to do that and to connect our farmers to new markets. It is encouraging to see how much the program has grown in New York, and we look forward to building on that success during our third year of participation."

The pilot began in 2014 midway through the 2014-15 school year with six school districts committing approximately \$10,000 in USDA funds to purchase unprocessed fruits and vegetables, including apple slices, frozen broccoli, and salad mixes. For 2016-17, that number will grow to at least 134 districts, including union free school districts and BOCES in 24 counties (listed at the end of this press release).

The amount of USDA funds school districts receive is based on the number of lunches they serve. These funds have traditionally been used by schools to buy food through the USDA Foods program, including fruits, vegetables, lean meats, fish, poultry, rice, low fat

cheese, beans, pasta, flour, and other whole grain products. The schools that have committed to participating in the USDA pilot during the 2016-17 school year are estimated to receive USDA funding in amounts that range from \$2,300 to \$1.9 million next school year. Those schools have made commitments to spend a portion of that funding, from \$107 to \$500,000, to purchase unprocessed fruits and vegetables through the pilot program in 2016-17.

The pilot program allows schools in selected states to use some of their USDA Foods allocation to purchase unprocessed fruits and vegetables directly from the vendors. This gives participating schools another avenue to use funds that can be left on the table when the items provided through the USDA don't meet their needs. Another benefit of the pilot is that it gives schools using USDA funds the flexibility to order food from their vendors when and how they need it instead of having to order it months ahead of time.

There are currently 18 vendors on the USDA-approved vendor list that are eligible to participate in the pilot in New York State. Those vendors include farmers, growers, produce wholesalers, and distributors.

With the hope that the USDA will turn the pilot into a permanent program, OGS has worked with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the USDA, school districts, and representatives of the state's agricultural industry to ensure the pilot's success. Efforts are ongoing to grow interest in the pilot and get more schools and food vendors to participate.

The 134 school districts scheduled to participate in the pilot during the 2016-17 school year are located in: Alleghany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Dutchess, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Nassau, Niagara, Ontario, Orange, Orleans, Oswego, Rensselaer, Rockland, Seneca, Suffolk, Sullivan, Tioga, Ulster, Wayne, Westchester, Wyoming, and Yates counties.

The schools and districts participating are: Alden, Allegany, Andover, Avon, Barker Central, Batavia, Bayshore, Bemus Point, Bloomfield, Bolivar Richburg, Brighton, Brockport, Brocton, Byron Bergen High, Caledonia Mumford School, Canandaigua, Cattaraugus, Chatauqua Lake, Chester, Churchville, Clarkson South HS, Cornwall, Cuba Rushford Central Schools, Clymer, East Irondequoit, Dover Union Free, East Greenbush, East Ramapo, Eastridge, East Rochester School, Ellicottville, Fairport, Falconer, Felix Fiesta, Florida Union Free, Forestville, Franklinville, Fredonia, Fredonia/Ashville BOCES, Friendship, Gananda, Gates Chili, Genesee Valley Educational, Geneseo Central, Geneva, Glen Cove, Gowanda, Goshen, Grand Island, Greenwood Lake UFSD, Half Hollow - Dix Hills, Highland, Hilton, Hinsdale, Honeoye Central School, Hope Hall School, Hyde Park, Immaculate Conception, Jamestown/Washington, Kendall, Keshequa, Kingston, LeRoy High/Middle School, Lakeland, Livonia, Lockport, Lyndonville Central, Lyons, and Marcus Whitman.

Also participating are: Marion, Medina, Middletown Public School, Monroe BOCES Forman Center, Monroe Woodbury, Mount Morris, Nanuet, Naples, Newark, Newfane,

New Hope Manor, Niagara Wheatfield, North Rockland, North Rose, North Shore, Notre Dame HS, Oakfield, Oracle Charter, Orange Ulster BOCES, Panama, Pawling, Peekskill, Pelham, Pembroke School, Perry, Phelps Clifton Springs, Phoenix Central School System, Pine Bush, Pine Plains, Pine Valley, Port Jervis, Portville, Randolph, Ripley, Rocky Point, Rondout, Rush Henrietta, Scio, Seneca Falls, Sherman, Silver Creek, Southwestern, Spackenkill, Spencerport, Tarrytown, Tuxedo, Ulster County BOCES, Universal School, Valley Central, Wappingers, Warsaw, Warwick Valley, Washingtonville, Waterloo, Wayne, Webster, Webutuck, Wellsville, West Irondequoit, West Valley, Wheatland Chili, Whitesville, Williamson High School, and Wilson.

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