



SECTION 5

Motivations, Barriers, and Challenges for Purchasing and Serving Michigan-Grown Foods

10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids and Farms (10 Cents), administered by the Michigan Department of Education, matches what participating schools, districts, and early care and education centers spend on Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans with grants of up to 10 cents per meal.

This brief is part of *10 Cents a Meal 2020–2021 Evaluation Results: Expanded Eligibility Increased Impacts*.

Key Takeaways

The top three reported motivators for purchasing and serving local foods:

- 1 **support for Michigan farms and businesses** (21% of all motivators mentioned)
- 2 **higher quality food** (19% of all motivators mentioned)
- 3 **access to fresher food** (14% of all motivators mentioned)

The top reported barrier for purchasing and serving local foods was **limited availability** (37% of all barriers mentioned), which was reported twice as frequently as any other barrier.



OTHER TOP BARRIERS	14% Supplier Logistics	13% Budget Constraints
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The top three reported logistical challenges were:

- 1 **distribution methods** (22% of all challenges mentioned)
- 2 **lack of available local foods** (19% of all challenges mentioned)
- 3 **lack of staff labor to prepare local foods** (19% of all challenges mentioned).

Of the 118 food program managers (FPMs) who responded to the February survey, all responded to the barriers and logistical challenges questions, and 115 responded to the motivators question.

All three questions had open-ended responses that allowed participants to offer feedback in their own words. Evaluators categorized the text entries based on common themes. A single grantee's response could have multiple themes within it, so the number of mentions to themes is often higher than the total number of responses to each question.¹ Because these questions were open response, some themes may appear more than once among results for different questions. For example, limited availability of local foods was a top response in both the barriers and logistical challenge questions. See a summary of responses in the chart at the end of this section.

The top motivator for purchasing and serving local foods reported by responding FPMs ($n = 115$) was support for Michigan farms and businesses (21% of all motivators mentioned), followed by higher quality food (19% of all motivators mentioned), and access to fresher food (14% of all motivators mentioned).



We have a lot of farmers in our school community, so I would like to support our families. I also think that finding local produce gives us a fresher product for our students.”



Support local farm and industry, better perception of food service program, better food.

Other frequent response themes related to motivators included supporting the local economy (13% of all motivators mentioned), providing educational opportunities (10% of all motivators mentioned), and promoting positive public relations with the community (10% of all motivators mentioned). Knowing where local food is sourced (4% of all motivators mentioned), increased consumption of local foods by children (3% of all motivators mentioned), increased variety of local foods served (2% of all motivators mentioned), promoting sustainability efforts (2% of all motivators mentioned), and affordable price (1% of all motivators mentioned) were also reported, but less frequently.

The top barrier to purchasing and serving local foods reported by responding FPMs ($n = 118$) was the limited availability of Michigan agricultural products as it related to seasonal availability.

This barrier was stated more than twice as much as any other (73 grantees, 37% of all barriers mentioned). The second most frequently cited barrier was supplier logistics (14% of all barriers mentioned), which included limited delivery options, product shortages, and adequate or large enough volumes. The third most frequently cited barrier was centered around perceived budget constraints to purchase local foods (13% of all barriers mentioned).



Aggregation is the largest barrier. It is difficult purchasing locally grown, fresh produce in the volume needed for our large school district.



Cost, seasonality, foods from far away are much cheaper...

¹ See [Technical Notes](#) in the full report for a detailed explanation of open-text response analysis.

Other frequently reported barriers included inconvenience related to increased time to process local products and ordering from suppliers (7% of all barriers mentioned), a limited supply of farmers and food suppliers (7% of all barriers mentioned), and issues caused by the ongoing pandemic (6% of all barriers mentioned). Less frequently reported barriers were lack of consumer demand (4% of all barriers mentioned), limited knowledge (3% of all barriers mentioned), lack of flexibility in contracts with food service management companies¹ (3% of all barriers mentioned), staffing (2% of all barriers mentioned), federal procurement regulations (2% of all barriers mentioned), and food safety concerns (1% of all barriers mentioned).

Notably, 24 grantees provided statements about experiencing no logistical challenges related to 10 Cents. For those FPMs who did report these types of challenges ($n = 118$), the top logistical challenge to purchasing and serving local foods was the limited availability local foods (22% of all logistical challenges mentioned) related to adequate volumes, seasonality, and availability of minimally processed and prepackaged foods. Limited availability of local food was also a concern raised in FPM interviews for a previous evaluation report,² which highlighted the difficulty of finding local sources with sufficient volumes of Michigan-grown products to meet the 10 Cents grant amount and the matching requirement. The second most frequently reported challenge was distribution methods, often related to limited delivery options from local food vendors and farmers (19% of all logistical challenges). The third most frequently reported challenge was the lack of staff labor to prepare local foods (19% of all logistical challenges mentioned).



Processing is a challenge. Locally grown fresh produce can be purchased but needs to be processed.



Not sure if we will be able to find enough farmers to produce the amounts of produce locally that we will go through. Also, not sure if the famers will be willing to deliver to the school for us.

Logistical challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic were also frequently mentioned (10% of all logistical challenges) for the 2020–2021 year. Reported challenges included school closures having an impact on the operations of the food program and the number of children being served meals. Additionally, a concern about the lack of available prepackaged Michigan items during the ongoing pandemic was mentioned.



With COVID, we have to serve/wrap/prepackage everything. No salad bars to let the kids get their own fruits/veggies.



We cannot have fruit and vegetable bars at this time, and many students are remote, so we send home meals.

Other logistical challenges mentioned included lack of storage for local products (6% of all logistical challenges mentioned), difficulty identifying local foods from distributors (5% of all logistical challenges mentioned), lack of available farms and food suppliers (5% of all logistical challenges mentioned), and order sizes, such as minimum order requirements or lack of bulk options (5% of all logistical challenges mentioned). Grantees also indicated the high costs of local food (4% of all logistical challenges mentioned), lack of flexibility in food service management company contracts (when applicable) to procure from local food suppliers (3% of all logistical challenges mentioned), and a lack of equipment to prepare local foods (2% of all logistical challenges mentioned).

1 Refer to the [Technical Notes](#) in the full report for more information about types of food service program operations, including contracted food service management companies that are referred to here.

2 Refer to [What a Dime Can Do: An Evaluation of the 10 Cents a Meal Pilot](#).

Related to motivators, barriers, and challenges is the topic of sourcing from Michigan farms (farm of origin). The legislation for 10 Cents requires program grantees to report the name and Michigan location of the farm that grew the produce.¹ Grantees report this as a motivator for purchasing local foods through a desire to know the source of their food and support farm families. However, it can also be perceived as a challenge because some grantees struggle to find and report the farm of origin for their purchases if a food vendor does not provide easily identifiable source information to grantees, whether at the point of sale or in purchasing reports. This challenge can be especially apparent when grantees purchase from a supplier that sources and sells Michigan-grown foods from multiple farms (such as broadline distributors) without a way to track or communicate the farms of origin, or when grantees purchase products that are minimally processed² (e.g., frozen, peeled, sliced, etc.) by a food vendor separate from the farm that grew the original, whole product.

Table 5.1. Reported Motivators, Barriers, and Logistical Challenges to Purchasing and Serving Local Foods

Theme	Categories	Number (percent) of mentions	Number (percent) of grantees
Motivators • 299 total statements • 115 total grantees	Support Michigan farms and businesses	63 (21.1%)	63 (54.8%)
	Higher quality food	58 (19.4%)	58 (50.4%)
	Access to fresher food	43 (14.4%)	43 (37.4%)
	Support local economy	38 (12.7%)	38 (33.0%)
	Educational opportunities	29 (9.7%)	29 (25.2%)
	Public relations	29 (9.7%)	29 (25.2%)
	Knowledge of food source	11 (3.7%)	11 (9.6%)
	Increased consumption	9 (3.0%)	9 (7.8%)
	Increase variety of food	7 (2.3%)	7 (6.1%)
	Sustainability	7 (2.3%)	7 (6.1%)
	Price	4 (1.3%)	4 (3.5%)

1 State of Michigan [Public Act 165 of 2020](#).

2 The 10 Cents definition of minimally processed is derived from the United States Department of Agriculture definition of unprocessed, which is for the purpose of [applying geographic procurement preference](#). For 10 Cents, this includes Michigan-grown fruit and vegetable products that are frozen, peeled, sliced, diced, cut, chopped, bagged, or dried (including dry beans). Products that are excluded from this definition, and are therefore ineligible for 10 Cents, are those that are cooked, heated, canned, or contain additives or fillers.

Theme	Categories	Number (percent) of mentions	Number (percent) of grantees
Barriers • 195 total statements • 118 total grantees	Limited availability of local foods	73 (37.4%)	73 (61.9%)
	Supplier logistics	28 (14.4%)	28 (23.7%)
	Budget constraints	25 (12.8%)	25 (21.2%)
	Inconvenience	13 (6.7%)	13 (11.0%)
	Limited suppliers	13 (6.7%)	13 (11.0%)
	Pandemic	11 (5.6%)	11 (9.3%)
	Limited knowledge	7 (3.6%)	7 (5.9%)
	Lack of consumer demand	6 (3.1%)	6 (5.1%)
	Lack of flexibility in food service management company contracts	5 (2.6%)	5 (4.2%)
	No barriers	5 (2.6%)	5 (4.2%)
	Food program staffing	4 (2.1%)	4 (3.4%)
	Federal procurement regulations	3 (1.5%)	3 (2.5%)
	Food safety concerns	2 (1.0%)	2 (1.7%)
	Logistical challenges • 116 total statements • 118 total grantees	Limited availability of local foods	25 (21.6%)
Lack of a distribution method		22 (19.0%)	22 (8.69%)
Lack of staff labor to prepare local foods		22 (19.0%)	22 (18.6%)
Pandemic related challenges		12 (10.3%)	12 (10.2%)
Lack of storage		7 (6.0%)	7 (5.9%)
Difficulty identifying local products		6 (5.2%)	6 (5.1%)
Lack of available vendors		6 (5.2%)	6 (5.1%)
Order size		6 (5.2%)	6 (5.1%)
Cost of local foods		5 (4.3%)	5 (4.2%)
Lack of flexibility in food service management company contracts		3 (2.6%)	3 (2.5%)
Lack of equipment to prepare local foods		2 (1.7%)	2 (1.7%)

Evaluation of 10 Cents is led by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS). The work presented here is part of *10 Cents a Meal 2020–2021 Evaluation Results: Expanded Eligibility Increased Impacts* by Colleen Matts and Megan McManus of CRFS and was generously funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and 10 Cents administrative funds for partner organizations.

To learn more, visit tencentsmichigan.org, foodsystems.msu.edu/10-cents-a-meal, and mifarmtoschool.msu.edu.

