

Geographic Preference

THE 2008 FARM BILL directed the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage schools to purchase locally grown and locally raised products “to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate.” The Secretary was also instructed to allow child nutrition program operators to use a “geographic preference” when procuring locally grown and locally raised unprocessed agricultural products. Unprocessed locally grown agricultural products that retain their inherent character are eligible for a geographic preference. These processes do not change the inherent nature of foods:

- Cooling, refrigerating, or freezing
- Peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting, chopping or shucking
- Grinding
- Forming ground products into patties without any additives or fillers
- Drying or dehydrating
- Vacuum packing and bagging
- Addition of ascorbic acid or other preservatives to prevent oxidation of produce
- Butchering of livestock and poultry
- Cleaning fish
- Pasteurization of milk

These processes do change the inherent nature, and food items that have undergone these processes cannot be given geographic preference in bidding:

- Canning
- Cooking
- Seasoning
- Being combined with other products (Different types of fruit or vegetables can be combined in fresh or frozen products, such as salad mix.)

See this document for more on geographic preference:

Geographic Preference: What It Is and How to Use It: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/GeoPreference.pdf>