

Agricultural  
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Service

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## Farm to Institution Metrics: Harmonizing Farm to Institution Reporting Protocols (Summary)

Under a cooperative agreement between USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the University of Kentucky Research Foundation, the National Farm to Institution Metrics Collaborative, which consists of farm to institution leaders from across the United States, developed a suite of farm impact metrics designed to standardize the reporting of local food purchases by institutions.

An easy-to-use template for tracking these metrics, a protocol guide for using the template, and a short video walking users through the metrics are available at: <https://ftimetrics.localfoodeconomics.com/>.

### WHY DEVELOP STANDARDIZED REPORTING METRICS FOR FARM TO INSTITUTION PROGRAMS?

In order to track expenditures and impact on local food businesses, it is important for institutions to keep records of their local food purchases.

*Standardized* farm to institution metrics:

- allow practitioners and policymakers to use aggregated purchase data to evaluate and compare progress, challenges, and impact across sectors and regions;
- increase the consistency and transparency of local food purchase reporting by institutions; and,
- reduce the costs on distributors in tracking local purchases, which makes it more likely they will do so.

### HOW WERE THE METRICS IDENTIFIED?

In the fall of 2019, the National Farm to Institution Metrics Collaborative launched a one-year project, sponsored by USDA AMS, to identify key farm impact metrics that can be used by farm to institution (FTI) practitioners. The Collaborative consists of FTI organizations across the U.S. working together to increase the measurement and evaluation of FTI programming. Through a literature review, interviews, discussions, and an in-person meeting, several metrics emerged that addressed the interests of FTI organizations and leaders; responded to current challenges and gaps; and provided greater context, nuance, and detail about the impact of farm to institution programs.

## WHAT METRICS DID THE PROJECT DEVELOP?

While the benefits of FTI projects are many, this project focused on farm impact. The project developed standardized farm impact metrics intended to be used as an integrated suite of indicators to provide a more complete description of food purchases, rather than a typical local/non-local classification scheme. The Collaborative is not advocating for a shared definition of local. Instead, users of the metrics need to establish their own definition of local and use it consistently when tracking purchases.

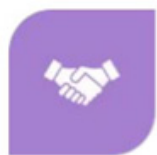
The project focused on farm impacts because:

- virtually all FTI programs share supporting local farms and food businesses as a principal objective, and
- farm impacts are more practical for distributors to track than metrics pertinent to other topics.

The metrics that the project developed are compatible with existing national standards like the Real Food Standards, the Good Food Purchasing Standards, and the Health Care Without Harm/Practice Greenhealth Food Purchasing Standard.

The metrics consist of the following:

- What is the type and location of business who produced the final product?
  - Independently or cooperatively owned and operated local farm
  - Independently or cooperatively owned and operated local food business
  - Farm in local region that is not independently owned by farmer or cooperative
  - Franchise, affiliative, or publicly traded food business within local region
  - Farm/food business outside local region or unknown
- Is the business women or minority-owned? (Yes/No)
- What percentage of the item consisted of ingredients sourced from farm(s) within the local region?
  - All (>99%)
  - Majority (50% to 99%)
  - Some (1% to 49%)
  - None or unknown
- Does the item contain local farm sourced ingredients that are identity-preserved (i.e., can be traced back to the original farm)? (Yes/No)
- Which food type best matches the item? (choose from list of 10 product types)
- What market channel was used for the food purchase?
  - Directly from a farmer, rancher, fisher, or food processor
  - Through a food hub or farmer cooperative that focuses on local sourcing
  - Through a specialty or broadline distributor



**Business Type**



**Ownership**



**Farm Impact**



**Farm Identity Preserved**



**Product Type**



**Market Channel**

## **CALL TO ACTION: PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED METRICS**

Despite significant disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, interest in buying local foods remains high among schools, universities, and other institutions. It is likely that support of regional food systems will continue to be a priority for institutional buyers and their stakeholders.

The project is seeking food system participants that are interested in piloting these metrics in their own tracking and reporting systems. The involvement and engagement of practitioners is important as the metrics are refined. Please let us know if you adopt the metrics and we welcome all feedback on the proposed metrics from those that use them. Assistance with implementing these metrics is available at: <https://ftimetrics.localfoodeconomics.com/>.

Please contact Hannah Leighton at Farm to Institution New England for information about how to join the National Farm to Institution Metrics Collaborative: [hannah@farmtoinstitution.org](mailto:hannah@farmtoinstitution.org).

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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