

Define Local Food For Your Institution

Many Wisconsin institutions know they source local food, but do not have an exact definition for what local is. Because there is no one definition (*local food* is not legally regulated like *organic* is), you have the opportunity to create a definition that suits your needs.

Define Local Food in Order To...

- Share your definition with your vendors to avoid purchasing something your vendor considers local, but that you do not
- Use your definition to market local food to your customers
- Track your local purchases – a definition will help you decide which purchases to count

Examples

Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics:

“Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics defines local food as owned & produced within Wisconsin.”

UW-Stevens Point:

“... local foods (produced within 100 miles of Stevens Point) and regional foods (produced within 250 miles of Stevens Point).”

Taken from their Dining Services mission statement.

UW-Milwaukee:

- 1) All produce, prepared foods, and equipment that originate from Wisconsin.
- 2) Any prepared foods in which the main ingredient or component originates from a Wisconsin company or farm.

Taken from their “Living, Operating, Consuming and Acquiring Locally” (LOCAL) concept document.

Borders or Miles?

Defining local food as from Wisconsin means the economic benefits come back to our state, and your local food will be marketable to all Wisconsinites. It will also increase your local sourcing options.

However, institutions bordering other states may want to use a mileage radius in order to include nearby producers across state lines. Using mileage can also help highlight the environmental impact of local sourcing for institutions with sustainability goals.



Define Local Template

_____ (*your institution's name*) defines local

(*produce or food*) as having been

(*grown and/or processed*) in Wisconsin - **or** -

within _____ (*number of miles*) of our institution

- **optional** -

and with _____ (*percentage*) or more of the

ingredients grown in Wisconsin - **or** -

grown within _____ (*number of miles*) of our institution.

Exceptions

Keep your definition of local simple so you are able to be flexible, but add caveats if there is a product you feel strongly about including, or excluding, in what you count as local food. There is no right or wrong answer as long as your definition of local suits your needs.

Examples of exceptional situations might include:

- Produce grown in Wisconsin that has been shipped out of state to be packed or processed before reentering the state
- Products made with some Wisconsin ingredients that are processed and owned out of state
- Products that are not made with Wisconsin ingredients but that are processed in Wisconsin by a Wisconsin-owned company, such as locally-roasted coffee
- Products that are not healthy, not made sustainably, or are from companies that do not pay fair wages to farmers

Local Food Legislation

You may remember a bill introduced in Wisconsin in 2010 (it did not pass) that proposed institutions receiving state funding that spend more than \$25,000 per year on food should spend 10 percent of the food budget on local food. The bill defined local food as:

“Local food products” means food products that are grown, processed, packaged, and distributed in this state.

Comparing Apples to Oranges

Consider your “foodshed” before you compare your definition of local food to another institution in Wisconsin, or an institution in another state. A foodshed describes the flow of food in a geographic area while taking into account the capacity of an area to produce food for the people there. Institutions in highly agricultural or productive areas may have a foodshed that is geographically small, and the capacity to source food grown very close to the institution may be large. But institutions located away from producers, or away from distribution routes of local food suppliers, will have a geographically larger foodshed, and may need to source locally from a wider geographic area.

What Does the USDA Say?

A 2010 report from the United States Department of Agriculture called Local Food Systems explains:

Though “local” has a geographic connotation, there is no consensus on a definition in terms of the distance between production and consumption. Definitions related to geographic distance between production and sales vary by regions, companies, consumers, and local food markets. According to the definition adopted by the U.S. Congress in the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (2008 Farm Act), the total distance that a product can be transported and still be considered a “locally or regionally produced agricultural food product” is less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the State in which it is produced.

www.ifmwi.org

This fact sheet was made by Dane County's Institutional Food Market Coalition.

IFM is a Dane County UWEX economic development program that builds the institutional market for local food through outreach, education, and networking for large volume food buyers and sellers.

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