

New Mexico Grown

Approved Supplier Program (ASP) FAQ

January 2022



NOTE: Text that is [blue and underlined](#) are hyperlinks direct to documents.

GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION — FOR FARMERS

Q1. What is the New Mexico Grown Program?

A. NEW MEXICO GROWN is a program that incentivizes the purchase of NM grown produce and other foods served to students in New Mexico public schools, elders in senior centers, and young children in preschools. Special state funding makes it possible for institutions to purchase local product at fair market prices. Member agencies are committed to reducing hunger, improving nutrition, and increasing agricultural economic viability in the state.

Q2. Which State Agencies Participate in the New Mexico Grown Program?

A. Agencies that administer the NM Grown Program include the Public Education Department (PED), the Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD), and the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD). Current contacts for each agency are:

- PED, Mike Chavez, Director-Student Success, MichaelA.Chavez@state.nm.us 505-699-4562
- ALTSD, Ophelia Steppe, State Nutritionist, Ophelia.Steppe@state.nm.us 505-692-8885
- ECECD, Pam Mitchell, Nutrition and Ed. Training Mgr., pam.mitchell@state.nm.us 505-699-2632

Q3. How Does the Approved Supplier Program Support New Mexico Grown?

A. The Approved Supplier Program was designed to grow and diversify the base of NM producers able to sell to institutions. It creates a process for buyers to more easily purchase safe, traceable produce, and it streamlines internal purchasing processes. The ASP provides an alternate pathway for producers traditionally marginalized by the process and reduces costs of third-party food safety certification.

Q4. What Kinds of Food Can Be Purchased Through New Mexico Grown?

A. As of January 2022, fruits and vegetables are the only allowable items. Processed food and meat may also be allowed after the legislative session. Product-specific food safety requirements will apply.

Q5. Who are the Primary Support Partners in the Approved Supplier Program?

A. Primary partners include the NM Department of Agriculture (NMDA), NM State University Cooperative Extension Service (NMSU), and the NM Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA). Additional partners include the NM Grown Coalition and community stakeholders.

Q6. Why Is the Approved Supplier Program Important for Buyers and Farmers?

A. All schools, preschools, and senior centers using NM Grown state funds for local food purchases are required to purchase from vendors on the ASP List. It creates a level playing field for producers of all sizes and ensures uniform food safety standards for vulnerable populations.

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GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION — FOR FARMERS (CONT.)

Q7. Once I Am an Approved Supplier, How Do I Begin Selling to Institutions?

A. Becoming an Approved Supplier is step one, but depending on who you wish to sell to, you may either need to submit a pricing bid (for large school districts or district coops) or provide price information directly to buyers (for smaller districts or senior centers). Buyers may reach out to you when they see your name on the Approved Supplier List, or you can reach out to buyers. Ultimately, ongoing sales depend on buyers and vendors relationships.

Q8. What Does the Annual Process Look Like?

A. WINTER: Regional buyer/grower meetings take place so that both groups can begin to plan for the following buying year. In 2022, the virtual Buyer-Grower meeting will take place on February 2, from 2–4 p.m. Additionally, during winter new vendors who need food safety training and help creating a Farm Risk Assessment do so during this time frame.

EARLY SPRING: New and returning vendors, along with food hubs and distributors, submit their applications to become an Approved Supplier. Deadline for all applications is March 1 for those who wish to be approved by May 1. Applications will also be accepted on a rolling basis.

SUMMER: In early May, the Approved Supplier List is distributed to state agency partners. Senior Centers may start purchasing in June, and schools often follow in July. Food service buyers will start looking at the list of Approved Suppliers to identify which farmers they would like to work with to source product for their menus. Buyers will reach out by phone or email to begin the purchasing process.

FALL: Farmers continue filling orders for buyers. Ongoing food safety and technical assistance for farmers is available all year.

Q9. I Want to Learn More. How Do I Get Started?

A. Attending the annual Buyer-Grower meeting is a good first step to have your questions answered and to meet buyers, program administrators, and technical service partners. For more information, [visit our website](#), or contact agency personnel listed on Page 1 of this FAQ.

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NEW VENDOR INFORMATION

Q10. Who Is Eligible to Become An Approved Supplier?

A. Producers of all scales are encouraged to sell their NM grown food to schools, senior centers, and preschools. No farming operation is too small for the NM Grown Program. Culturally relevant food is encouraged; food sovereignty is respected.

Q11. What is Required to Become A New Vendor?

A. To become a new vendor in the Approved Supplier Program, producers must:

- Fulfill [food safety training requirements](#)
- To start selling by May 1, be sure to attend food safety trainings in early winter
- Submit a [Farm Risk Assessment](#) that receives approval
- Technical assistance for Risk Assessments is available. Contact NMFMA value chain coordinator Michael Venticinque, 505-448-2891, vcc@farmersmarketsnm.org
- [Fill out a New Vendor Application](#)

Q12. Who is Considered A New Vendor?

A. New vendors have not yet sold through the Approved Supplier Program. This includes FY2020-21 and FY2021-22. Farmers who are unsure of their status, may contact NMFMA Farmer Programs Coordinator Sophia Rose, 304-646-8291, sophia@farmersmarketsnm.org

Q13. What are the Deadlines for 2022?

A. **Submit your full application by March 1, 2022 to begin** selling on May 1. Applications may also be submitted on a rolling basis. New vendors should expect a 45-day approval process.

Q14. What are the Food Safety Training Requirements for Produce Vendors?

A. There are three ways to fulfill the food safety training requirements:

1. Your farm is third-party audited; **OR**
2. You take a Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Training **AND** turn in a Farm Risk Assessment; **OR**
3. You take New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA) Tier 1 and Tier 2 Training **AND** turn in a Farm Risk Assessment.

[NMFMA trainings are offered online and in-person, English and Spanish](#)
[PSA trainings are offered online](#)

Covid restrictions may apply.

Q15. Do I Need Insurance?

A. At this time, some—but not all—school districts and other institutions require a minimum of \$1 million in product liability insurance. While not universally required by all buyers, it is a best practice for farmers to have product liability insurance coverage. Buyers will request and collect this information directly from the grower annually. Information will vary on a case-by-case basis.

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NEW VENDOR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Q16. What Are the Key Differences Between the Different Types of Food Safety Trainings?

- A. *NMFMA Tier 1 and Tier 2 Training: Cost: \$25; Length of time: 6 hours* — Developed specifically for NM’s small- to medium-size producers, these trainings are presented on-farm and online by local food safety trainers. Bringing food safety concepts to life, this training explores food safety hazards that may be present on farms and the practices useful in mitigating risks. By applying these concepts directly to their own farm, producers can begin writing their own Farm Risk Assessment with hands-on technical assistance. For more information [visit the NMFMA’s website](#).
- B. *PSA Training: Training: Cost: \$45; Length of time: 8 hours* — This remote, two half-day training event is intended for New Mexico fruit and vegetable growers and others interested in learning about the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), Produce Safety Rule, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPS), and co-management of natural resources and food safety. Details on how to develop a farm food safety plan is also be provided. **NOTE:** This course does not provide personalized assistance for creating a Farm Risk Assessment, a requirement for the NM Grown Approved Supplier Program. [Visit the NMSU website to learn more](#).

Q17. How Does the Application Approval Process Work?

A. After submitting your New Vendor Application and supporting materials, your Farm Risk Assessment is reviewed by a team of food safety trainers. If they have questions, someone will contact you for further information. Once the Risk Assessment has passed the desk audit, you will receive approval by email. New applications should be approved within 45 days of submission. Vendors will receive email approval from the NMFMA with a Certificate of Compliance that verifies readiness to sell to institutions through the NM Grown Program.

Q18. How Do Buyers Find Me?

A. The Approved Supplier Program List is shared with all state agency partners. Agency food buyers are regularly trained by agency leadership and partners. Additionally, an annual Buyer-Grower Meeting brings producers and buyers together.

Q19. When and Where is the 2022 Buyer-Grower Meeting?

A. The annual Buyer-Grower meeting will be February 2. The meeting will be virtual. Further information will be available soon. You can check with agency contacts listed on Page 1 of this FAQ, or [visit the NMFMA’s website for updates](#).

Q20. What if I Only Have a Small Volume of Food or Need Help with Delivery to Buyers?

A. Local food hubs can help! Local food hubs provide a variety of services to farmers including aggregating produce, delivery to buyers, and more! [Check this resource to find a food hub near you and to learn about the services they provide](#).

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RETURNING VENDOR INFORMATION

Q21. How Do I Know if I am a Returning Vendor?

A. Returning vendors have sold directly to schools, senior centers, and/or other institutions through the NM Grown ASP during FY2021-22 or FY2020-21. If you're not sure if you're a returning vendor, contact Sophia Rose, at Sophia@farmersmarketsnm.org, 304-646-8291

Q22. What is Required for Returning Vendors?

A. Beginning in 2022, returning vendors only need to submit a short survey that takes about 10 minutes. Going forward, a full application will only be submitted every three years. [Here is the survey for returning vendors](#)

Q23. What is the Deadline for Returning Vendors to Submit the Survey/Application?

A. **March 1 is the deadline** if you wish to be eligible to start selling as early as May 1. Applications will also be accepted on a rolling basis, but Certificates of Compliance may take 45 days to issue.

Q24. Why Did the Process Change for Returning Vendors?

A. The annual application process has been simplified in order to encourage continuous program participation. You no longer need to submit a written Farm Risk Assessment each year.

Q25. How Does the 3-Year Application Cycle Affect My On-Farm Food Safety Practices?

A. While you only have to submit a Farm Risk Assessment for review every three years, it is imperative that you keep your Risk Assessment up to date and maintain all health and safety records, including traceability codes, worker training, sanitation schedules, etc. **At the end of the survey, you will be asked to check a box that shows you are continuing to follow all food safety protocols outlined in the Risk Assessment that you previously submitted.**

Q26. What if I Make Changes on the Farm or Change My Phone Number?

A. If you make any changes on your farm, including the products you are selling, or a new irrigation method, you will need to contact the NMFMA to update your information. The same is true if you have a new phone number, email, or personnel changes that you want buyers to know. Allow two weeks for these changes to be reflected in the ASP list to buyers. Contact the Farmer Programs Coordinator, Sophia Rose at sophia@farmersmarketsnm.org, 304-646-8291

Q27. Does this New Cycle Mean I am Locked into Prices for 3 Years?

A. Becoming an Approved Supplier is totally separate from the bid process. Each district or district cooperative procure produce outside of the Approved Supplier Program. Prices are set through bids with larger districts and through information procurement with smaller districts.

Q28. When Can Buyers Start Purchasing From Me?

A. If you submit your application by March 1, you will be approved to start selling by May 1.

Q29. How Can I Locate Potential Buyers if They Don't Call Me?

A. Contact the agency representative listed on Page 1 of this FAQ for information.

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FOOD HUB AND DISTRIBUTOR INFORMATION

Q30. If We Are a Food Hub or Distributor, What is Required to Become a Vendor?

A. Food hubs and distributors are required to submit a full application each year due to the number of individual vendors they may represent. [Here is the application for fiscal year 2022-23](#)

Q31. Are Food Hubs/Distributors Required to Collect Annual Risk Assessments from Vendors?

A. No, the same three-year cycle applies to vendors who sell through food hubs or distributors. However, food hubs and distributors should make sure their vendors understand that they need to abide by all food safety principles reported in their initial Risk Assessment, and that any changes to the farm should be reported to the food hub or distributor food safety contact. Food hubs/distributors that are selling through the NM Grown Approved Supplier Program must demonstrate how participating farms meet the program requirements, as applicable. This may be done by:

- Providing a list of supplying farms that are on the Approved Supplier Program List or otherwise third-party certified, or;
- Developing an in-house food safety training and verification program. In-house programs are based on Tier 1 and Tier 2 trainings and approved on a case-by case basis by the Farm Risk Assessment Plan Review Team.

Please note:

- Producers who attend in-house food hub food safety trainings can only sell through the food hub to NM Grown buyers.
- It is the responsibility of the food hub food safety contact to ensure their farmers are meeting food safety training requirements.

Q32. When Do Participating Food Hubs/Distributors Need to Become Third Party-Audited?

A. Food hubs/distributors that are not third party-audited will be required to become HGAP+ certified by 2023, or after their third year in the program. Please note there are funds available to help pay for these initial costs. Contact NMFMA Value Chain Coordinator Michael Venticinque to learn more: vcc@farmersmarketsnm.org 505-448-2891

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BUYER INFORMATION

Q33. How does the Approved Supplier Program Work for Buyers?

A. The Approved Supplier Program helps ensure that fresh produce moving through schools, senior centers, and early childhood sites is safe, traceable, and originates from a garden or farm using sound and current food safety practices. Buyers often do not have the time or skills to adequately and safely onboard new vendors for their New Mexico Grown programs. Thus, the Program was created to streamline the minimum vendor requirements across all New Mexico Grown participants and to remove the responsibility from school buyers to be up-to-date and knowledgeable about on-farm food safety practices. An additional benefit for buyers is the universal training approach led by PED, Aging and Long-Term Services, and the Early Childhood Education and Care Department and partners that aims to equitably onboard new producers through a comprehensive training portfolio that includes wholesale viability, product specifications, pricing, and more.

Q34. Must State Agencies Accessing NM Grown Program State Funding Purchase Only From Vendors on the Approved Supplier Program List?

A. Yes, buyers are strategically linked to all state monies from the NM Grown program and must therefore only use these funds with vendors on the Approved Supplier list. Buyers are free to use other funding sources to purchase from vendors not approved through the program.

Q35. What Kinds of Food Can Be Purchased Through New Mexico Grown?

A. As of January 2022, fruits and vegetables are the only allowable items. Processed food and meat may also be allowed after the 2022 legislative session. Product-specific food safety requirements will apply.

Q36. How Do Broadline and/or Produce Distributors Fit Into This Program?

A. Major distributors that serve New Mexico schools, senior centers, and early childhood sites have their own supplier verification and auditing processes, and solely purchase from growers with third-party certification. For this reason, purchases from major distributors are allowable in the Approved Supplier Program.

Q37. We are a Small District or Small Center and Want to Buy From our Local Hardware or Grocery Store. How Does This Work?

A. Unlike major distributors, not all grocers and hardware stores adhere to industry standards around issues of food safety and traceability. For the purposes of ensuring that safe, clean products are moving into New Mexico schools, senior centers, and early childhood sites it is recommended that buyers purchase directly from the producer or through existing contracts with trusted distributors. If a buyer purchases from a grocer or produce stand, the farm name must be listed on the invoice or receipt, and the producer is required to be an Approved Supplier vendor.

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BUYER INFORMATION (CONT.)

Q38. I Work with a Local Producer Who Wants to Join the Program. How Do I Get Them Started?

A. The ASP's core mission is to expand the network of small to mid-scale growers selling to NM schools, senior centers, and early childhood sites. New producers of all scales with varying levels of comfort with food safety requirements are invited to participate in the program. Please have the producer contact NMFMA value chain coordinator Michael Venticinque at 505-448-2891, vcc@farmersmarketsnm.org, or ask Mike to contact the producer.

Q 39. We Operate a Garden to Cafeteria Program. Do These Purchases Fit Into This Program?

A. At this time, school or center-based garden and farm programs are not allowed to become Approved Vendors. Agencies will pilot a process specifically designed for Garden to Cafeteria programs in School Year 21-22. Additional information will be available on PED and partner agencies' websites. [See more information on PED's website here.](#)

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Farm to School Support

MICHAEL CHAVEZ

Director of Student Success and Wellness Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department
MichaelA.Chavez@state.nm.us 505-699-4562

Farm to Senior Center Support

OPHELIA STEPPE

State Nutritionist, New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department
Ophelia.Steppe@state.nm.us 505-692-8885

Farm to Early Childhood Support

PAM MITCHELL

Nutrition and Education Training Manager, Early Childhood Education & Care Department
Pam.Mitchell@state.nm.us 505-699-2632

General Program Support, inc. Food Safety Training

SOPHIA ROSE

Farmer Programs Coordinator, New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association
Sophia@farmersmarketsnm.org 304-646-8291

Spanish Language Farmer Training and Technical Support

MARIO HOLGUIN

Farm Fresh Manager, La Semilla Food Center
mario@lasemillafoodcenter.org 915-215-3865

Farmer and Food Hub Technical Assistance

MIKE VENTICINQUE

Value Chain Coordinator, New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association
vcc@farmersmarketsnm.org 505-448-2891

Produce Safety Alliance Training and General Food Safety Support

JOHN GARLISCH

Bernalillo County Extension Agent, New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension
Garlisch@nmsu.edu 505-243-1386

Find more information about the New Mexico Grown Program:

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8e6pvv>

<https://tinyurl.com/3zs6p54p>