



New Mexico Grown and the Approved Supplier Program

Program FAQs for Producers, 2023

Updated February 2023

What is the New Mexico Grown program?

GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

New Mexico Grown is a program that incentivizes the purchase of New Mexico-grown produce, meat, and other locally produced foods served to students in New Mexico public schools, elders in senior centers, and young children in preschools. Additional beneficiaries are individuals and families who rely on food provided by the New Mexico Association of Food Banks.

How is New Mexico Grown funded?

Special state and federal funding make it possible for institutions to purchase local product at fair market prices. Participating agencies are committed to reducing hunger, improving nutrition, and increasing agricultural economic viability in the state.

Which state agencies and other buyers participate in the program?

State agencies that administer the New Mexico 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). The program also includes buyers for the New Mexico Association of Food Banks at The Food Depot.

What kinds of food can be purchased through New Mexico Grown?

Allowable products may vary by specific buyer based on nutrition requirements and can include fresh as well as lightly processed foods. Product-specific food safety requirements apply. As of February 2023, the broad categories of allowable products include:

- Fruits and Vegetables, Nuts, Grains, and Legumes (referred to as "Produce-Plus" through the rest of the document)
- Meat, including Beef, Bison, Lamb/Mutton, and Pork products

See the full [Allowable Products List](#) for details. This List currently includes two tabs, one for Produce-Plus and one for Meat, and it will likely be updated in mid-2023.

What is the Approved Supplier Program?

The [Approved Supplier Program](#) is a food quality assurance program designed to support buyers and producers alike. It provides an inclusive and accessible way for producers to sell to New Mexico Grown buyers, and it simplifies the process for buyers to purchase safe, traceable products while streamlining procurement processes within and across state agencies. **All New Mexico Grown purchases must be made from suppliers on the Approved Supplier Program list.**

How does the Approved Supplier Program serve small- and mid-scale growers?

The Approved Supplier Program was designed to grow and diversify the base of New Mexico producers able to sell to institutions and other buyers. It does so by providing an alternate pathway for producers traditionally marginalized by the process of expensive food safety certification also known as third-party food safety certification. Producers of all scales are encouraged to sell their New Mexico-grown food to schools, senior centers, preschools, and food banks. No farming or ranching operation is too small for the New Mexico Grown Program. Culturally relevant food is encouraged; food sovereignty is respected.

Who are the core partners in the Approved Supplier Program?

The Approved Supplier Program is managed by the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA), a statewide nonprofit organization. Partners include the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA), New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service (NMSU), and community stakeholders.

Why is the Approved Supplier Program important?

State agency buyers (schools, preschools, and senior centers) as well as food bank buyers using New Mexico Grown state or federal funds for local food purchases are required to purchase from vendors on the Approved Supplier List. It creates a level playing field for producers of all sizes and ensures uniform food safety and quality assurance standards for vulnerable populations.

Once I am an Approved Supplier, how do I begin selling to Institutions and food banks?

Becoming an Approved Supplier is step one, but depending on who you wish to sell to, you may also need to submit a pricing bid (for large school districts or district co-ops), some type of application, provide price information directly to buyers (for smaller districts or senior centers), or respond to other buyer requests for information. Buyers may reach out to you when they see your name on the [Approved Supplier List](#), or you can reach out directly to buyers who are also listed in separate tabs within the Approved Supplier List document. Ultimately, ongoing sales depend on buyer-vendor relationships.

How do buyers find me?

The [Approved Supplier List](#) is shared with all state agency partners. Institutional food buyers are regularly trained by agency leadership and partners. Additionally, an annual Buyer-Grower Meeting brings producers and buyers together.

Do I need insurance?

- Produce-Plus Vendors:
 - 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. If it is needed, buyers will request and collect this information directly from the grower annually. Information will vary on a case-by-case basis.

- Meat Vendors:
 - Product liability insurance at a minimum of \$1 million is required for processors, distributors, and producers who are engaged in direct marketing.
 - For producers not already engaged in direct marketing, insurance is highly recommended.

What are the food safety training requirements for Produce-Plus vendors?

FOOD SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR SUPPLIERS OF PRODUCE-PLUS PRODUCTS

There are three ways that suppliers of Produce-Plus products can fulfill the food safety training requirements:

1. Your farm is third-party audited (through GAP, Primus, SQF, etc.);
OR
2. You take the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA) or approved hub in-house Tier 1 and Tier 2 Training AND turn in a Farm Risk Assessment;
OR
3. You take a Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Training AND turn in a Farm Risk Assessment.

Risk assessment templates can be found here: [\[ENGLISH\]](#) [\[SPANISH\]](#)

What are the key differences between the different types of food safety trainings?

1. The NMFMA Tier 1 and Tier 2 Trainings:

- Cost: \$25 (with scholarships available if needed)
- Length of time: 6-8 hours
- Content: 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, these trainings explore 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. The NMFMA Tier 1 and Tier 2 trainings are offered online and in-person, English and Spanish.

2. PSA Trainings:

- Cost: \$45
- Length of time: 8 hours
- Content: 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. Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) trainings are offered online.

2023 PROGRAM DEADLINES AND APPLICATIONS

For Suppliers with Produce-Plus (Produce, Nuts, Grains, Legumes) Products

[Meat suppliers can skip down to the middle of p. 5 for details on meat applications]

What are the FY24 application deadlines and types of applications for Produce-Plus suppliers?

Priority deadline: Submit your full FY24 application by March 31, 2023 so that you are eligible to begin selling by July 1, 2023 (which is the start of FY24). After March 31, applications may also be submitted on a rolling basis. New vendors should expect a 45-60 day approval process.

There are three categories of Produce-Plus applications for the Approved Supplier Program. Use the links to find the appropriate application for you.

What do I need to know if I am a new individual producer?

Who is a returning a returning individual vendor and how does that affect my annual application process?

What if I don't know if I'm considered a returning vendor?

What if I am a Food Hub or Distributor?

1. **New Individual Vendor:** FY24 Application links: [\[ENGLISH\]](#) [\[SPANISH\]](#)

A full application for new vendors is required showing food safety training and other paperwork OR you can show third-party food safety certification. After submitting your New Vendor Application and supporting materials, your Farm Risk Assessment and other supporting materials will be reviewed by a team of food safety trainers. If they have questions, someone will contact you for further information. New applications should be approved within 45-60 days of submission, or in significantly less time (within 15 days) if there is a third-party audit. 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.

2. **Returning Individual Vendor:** FY24 Application links: [\[ENGLISH\]](#) [\[SPANISH\]](#)

If you are a returning vendor—that is, you have sold through the New Mexico Grown program anytime since 2020—you are considered a returning vendor. This will considerably shorten the annual application process. A short application must be filled out each year, as returning individual vendors only need to submit a full application on the fourth returning year. The NMFMA will notify you when it's time to re-submit a full application. Review for a returning vendor should be completed within 15-30 days, and once your returning vendor application has been reviewed and approved, you will be kept on the Approved Supplier List. If you are growing new products, added any new production methods, or made any major changes at your farm, those types of details will be needed for the returning vendor application. Once the application has been approved, you will receive notification by email and a new Certificate of Compliance for the relevant year. Producers who are unsure of their status, may contact the NMFMA Approved Supplier Program Coordinator Sheena Tallis-Tallman: sheena@farmersmarketsnm.org

3. **Food hub/Distributor:** FY24 Application links: [\[ENGLISH\]](#) [\[SPANISH\]](#)

Food hubs and Distributors are required to submit a full application annually. These applications should take about 30 days for review, or significantly less if there is a third-party audit.

Please note that the requirements for Food Hubs & Distributors have been updated for this year.

Documentation:

- Food Hubs & Distributors that have already participated in New Mexico Grown for 3 years must have HGAP+, USDA GMP, or equivalent certification by their 4th year of participation in New Mexico Grown
- Food Hubs & Distributors in their 1st, 2nd, or 3rd year of participation may submit a food safety risk assessment, food safety plan, or an equivalent document describing the Hub/ Distributor food safety practices
- A list of supplying producers and the county they are located in for all suppliers that have been approved to sell through the Hub/Distributor to New Mexico Grown buyers will need to be provided with the ASP application

Supplier Food Safety Assurance:

Food Hubs/Distributors that are selling through the New Mexico Grown Approved Supplier Program must demonstrate how supplying farms meet the program's food safety requirements. This may be done through:

- Supplying farms being on the Approved Supplier List or otherwise 3rd-party certified

- Supplying farms having completed a Tier 1 and Tier 2 training provided by the NMFMA or attended a PSA training, and having completed a farm food safety risk assessment or equivalent
- Supplying farms going through a Hub/Distributor's in-house food safety training. An in-house Hub/Distributor training must be aligned with the New Mexico Grown Training [Minimum Standards & Expected Outcomes](#), and must be reviewed and approved by the Approved Supplier Program Food Safety Leadership Team.
- Hubs intending to use the in-house training option will be asked to provide training curriculum for review and approval. Producers who receive training from an approved Hub/ Distributor training program should also be issued a training certificate or equivalent by the Hub/Distributor. This will also fulfill the training requirement for any individual producer applying directly to the Approved Supplier Program.

Regional Producers [only applicable to sales to Food Bank buyers]

For New Mexico Grown sales to the food banks, hubs/distributors can source from regional producers in neighboring states. Any regional producer must be located within 400 miles of the final delivery point to the food banks. All regional producers must also adhere to the supplier food safety assurance described above.

For Suppliers with Meat (Beef, Bison, Lamb/Mutton, and Pork) Products

Priority deadline: FY24 applications will be released on/about May 1, 2023. Submit your full FY24 application by May 31, 2023 so that you are eligible to begin selling by July 1, 2023 (which is the start of FY24). After May 31, applications may also be submitted on a rolling basis. Meat vendors should expect a 15-30 day approval process.

For FY24, there will be two categories of Meat applications for the Approved Supplier Program:

- **New Meat Vendor:** full application will be required
- **Returning Meat Vendor:** for those meat suppliers that have participated in the Approved Supplier Program during FY23, an abbreviated application will be required

If you are interested in selling meat before July 1, you can still apply for FY23 sales – see [FY23 meat vendor application](#).

What are the FY24 application deadlines and types of applications for Meat suppliers?

What are the requirements for selling meat?

In order to sell meat into the New Mexico Grown program, the product must meet 3 of the 4 following criteria:

- Animal was born/raised in New Mexico
- Animal was fed/finished in New Mexico
- Animal was slaughtered/processed in New Mexico
- Animal was maintained by a New Mexico producer

Additional FY23 program requirements include:

- Meat must be slaughtered and processed at a USDA facility
- Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) distribution license is required for any operation that handles meat product once it is no longer a live animal. The FSIS license is free to obtain from the USDA. Application for the FSIS license can be found [here](#).

- Product liability insurance (minimum of \$1 million coverage) is required, except for small-scale individual producers that are only engaged in direct marketing
- Product must be in original packaging with USDA FSIS inspection stamp on the packaging
- Supplier must register with NMDA's Taste the Tradition program (free)

Updates to the FY24 requirements will be provided with the FY24 applications.

What if I only have a small volume of food or need help with delivery to buyers?

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.

Who can I contact for assistance?

PROGRAM CONTACTS

State Agencies:

- Public Education Department (for K-12 schools), Alena Paisano, alena.paisano@ped.nm.gov 505-469-2061
- Aging and Long Term Services Department (for Senior Centers), Ophelia Steppe, Ophelia.Steppe@state.nm.us 505-476-4722
- Early Childhood Education & Care Department, Franceska Alexander, Franceska.Alexander@ececd.nm.gov 505-487-3965
- NM Department of Agriculture, Nick Frazinni, for meat industry questions, nfrazinni@nmda.nmsu.edu 505-339-5046

NM Association of Food Banks/ The Food Depot:

Bonnie Murphy, bmurphy@thefooddepot.org 505-510-7492
 Meredith Lorencz, mlorencz@thefooddepot.org 505-510-5785

The Approved Supplier Program - New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association:

Michael Venticinque, Value Chain Coordinator (TA for producers), vcc@farmersmarketsnm.org 505-448-2891

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