**APPENDIX C**

**DISTRIBUTOR INTERVIEW TELEPHONE SCRIPT**

**2019 FARM TO SCHOOL DISTRIBUTOR INTERVIEW**

INTRO: Hello, my name is and I am calling on behalf of the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). I’m with Abt Associates, a firm that has been hired to conduct research with distributors of school foods to learn more about the supply chain for local foods in school meals and how farm to school efforts (Note to interviewer, you may define further if needed.) have influenced distributor practices and operations. You are one of 20 selected Distributors being interviewed for this study.

|  |
| --- |
| [READ FIRST CONTACT ONLY]  SCREEN\_SFA: First, does your organization distribute food to schools, school districts, or school food authorities?  ❑ YES 🡲 CONTINUE  ❑ NO 🡲 THANK AND TERMINATE  ❑ DON’T KNOW 🡲 “May I speak with someone who would know?”  SCREEN\_R: Next, I want to be sure I’m speaking with the person who is most knowledgeable about local products purchased by schools and school districts. Is that you?  ❑ YES 🡲 EMAIL  ❑ NO 🡲 “May I please speak with that person?” COLLECT NEW RESPONDENT(R) INFORMATION. GO TO NEW\_R  NEW\_R: Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling from Abt Associates on behalf of the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Abt Associates has been hired to conduct research with distributors of school foods to learn more about the supply chain for local foods in school meals and how farm to school efforts (Note to interviewer: you may define further if needed.) have influenced distributor practices and operations. You are one of 20 selected Distributors being interviewed for this study. I was just speaking with \_\_\_\_\_ about this study, s/he suggested you were the best person to speak with on this topic. Would you have the time to discuss now?  IF NO: I would like to send you an email with more information about the study and schedule another time to talk.  May I please have your email address?  COLLECT EMAIL:  Thank you. I will call you again to schedule a time for the interview. 🡲 TERMINATE |

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-XXXX. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Policy Support, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1014, Alexandria, VA 22302, ATTN: PRA (0584-xxxx). Do not return the completed form to this address

EMAIL: Recently we sent you an email describing the study. Have you received the email?

❑ YES 🡲 SKIP TO Y\_EMAIL

❑ NO 🡲 CONTINUE TO N\_EMAIL

❑ DON’T KNOW 🡲 CONTINUE TO N\_EMAIL

N\_EMAIL: I will resend the email immediately following this call. May I confirm your email address as  
 ? COLLECT/CORRECT EMAIL IF NEEDED

Thank you. I will call you again to schedule a time for the interview. 🡲 TERMINATE

Y\_EMAIL: As the email stated, you have been selected by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service (USDA/FNS) to participate in our study and, in particular, take part in this interview. We are conducting interviews with only 20 food distributors who represent a broad range of distributors from across the country to learn more about the supply chain for local foods in school meals and how farm to school efforts have influenced distributor practices and operations. The interview will ask questions about local foods your company has supplied to school districts, and last approximately 60 minutes. When is the best time to complete this interview?

❑ NOW 🡲 CONTINUE

❑ SCHEDULE APPOINTMENT AND TERMINATE

Before we begin, all information gathered from food distributors is for research purposes only and will be kept private to the full extent allowed by law. Findings will be made public, but responses will be grouped with those of other study participants, and no individual food distributors will be identified. Participation in this study will not affect any reimbursements, credits, or foods your company receives through USDA programs.

[IF ASKED: Once complete, the report will be posted on the website for the FNS Office of Policy Support. I can give you that web address if you like. IF YES: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ops/research-and-analysis>]

**Permission to Record:** In order to ensure that we accurately capture the points raised during this interview, we would like to digitally record this conversation. Please note that the interviews will remain private. Your identity and any information attributable to you will not be released to anyone outside of the research team and the recording of your interview will be deleted at the end of the study, after all data have been analyzed. May I start recording now?

❑ PERMISSION GRANTED 🡲 START RECORDING NOW

❑ PERMISSION DENIED 🡲 ”That’s okay, I can continue without recording.”

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| --- | --- |
| **Distributor Company Name** |  |
| **Interview Date** |  |
| **Time Start** |  |
| **Time End** |  |

1. I’d like to confirm your contact information to make sure what we have is accurate:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Distributor Company Name** |  |
| **Name** |  |
| **Title** |  |
| **Phone** |  |
| **Email** |  |
| **Location Address** |  |
| **Overall Job Duties** |  |

The focus of this interview is on sales, and potential shifts in demand for local products to school districts. For this interview, when I say “school districts” I mean districts, schools, or School Food Authorities (SFAs). I understand you may also do business with other companies and institutions. For this interview, please focus only on your relationship with school districts unless otherwise specified.

**DEFINITION OF LOCAL**

Distributors and school districts may define the word “local” when referring to “local foods” in different ways. We are interested in how your company applies the word “local” when it comes to the foods you provide to school districts. We will then refer to your definition of “local” throughout the remainder of this interview.

**2.** In terms of boundaries, how is “local” defined for procuring and marketing local food products and producers? [**PROBES**: In terms of radius around your location, how do you define “local”? Is there another way your company defines “local”?] Do you define “local” differently for different products (or Districts)?

[**PROBE**: examples include: same city or county; produced within a 50 mile radius of your warehouse, a specific school district, or jurisdiction; within a 100 mile radius; within a 200 mile radius; produced within the State; produced within a Region]

[**PROBE** IF R ANSWERS “REGION”: How do you define Region? Do you code products by State or ZIP?]

[**PROBE**: How did your company arrive at this definition of “local”? [IF NECESSARY: Does your company have one definition, have one definition for “school districts,” or does it vary by client?]

Thank you! For the remainder of this interview, when I say “local foods” I’m referring to the definition you just provided. [READ ANSWER IN QUESTION 2 ABOVE]

**3.** Do you provide local foods to school districts? [IF NECESSARY: by local we mean any way you, your company and/or your school district clients define local as described earlier.]

❑ YES 🡲 SKIP TO Q4 (AFTER THE BOX BELOW)

❑ NO 🡲 CONTINUE TO Q3a BELOW

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| QUESTIONS FOR DISTRIBUTORS WHO DO NOT PROVIDE LOCAL FOODS:  3a. Do you get requests from school districts for local foods? If so, do school districts define local preferences? How do they make those requests? What kinds of items are requested?  3b. Please describe the reasons why you have not provided local foods to school districts. (RQ 1d) PROBE: Have you included local producers in your supply chain?  **THANK YOU AND END INTERVIEW** |

**REQUESTS FOR LOCAL FOODS & CONTRACTS**

**4.** How frequently do you get specific requests for local foods from school districts?

**4a.** How are these requests for local foods communicated by school districts? [**PROBES**: Is this done formally, through an RFP (Request for Proposals) or IFB (Invitation for Bids) or through market basket purchases? Or, are these requests more informal? Are these requests codified in the school district’s procurement document language?]

**4b.** What types of requests (Note to interviewer, this question focuses on whether the request is codified in the procurement language if answered in 4a.) related to local foods do you receive?

We are interested in what happens when your company receives a request from a school district for local foods. For the next questions, please think about how your company has responded to requests for local foods, or how you would respond to requests for local foods.

**5.** What local foods are typically requested by school districts? [PROBES: Fruits, vegetables, meat, seafood, grains, etc.? whole or processed product? (RQ Obj1 h) [Note to interviewer: If R says “none,” proceed to Q. 5e.]

**5a.** How have you been able to meet these requests?

**5b**. Which products (have been easiest/would be easiest) to source locally? Why?

**5c.** Which products (have been most challenging/would be most challenging) to source locally? For those that are most challenging, what are the biggest challenges?

**5d.** Have requests for local foods from school districts led to changes in overall company practices?

**IF YES**, what kinds of changes have these requests prompted? [Note to interviewer: Ask specific probes if they do not mention them in their response, one at a time.]

**Probes:** For example, I’d like to mention a few common changes you didn’t mention to confirm… Does your company now seek out more local producers? Has your company hired new staff? Are you now providing different information to your potential buyers? Do you respond to different RFPs/IFPs than before? Has your company developed local order/availability guides? Does your company now offer local expenditure reports? Are there any other changes in how you and your colleagues engage with school districts or local producers based on local food requests?

**IF NO**, just to confirm, common changes include things such as “seeking out more local producers;” or, “hiring new staff to be more responsive;” or “answering different RFPs/IFPs than you would have before.” Has your company made any of these types of changes to provide local foods to school districts? What would motivate you to make changes?

**5e.** IF THEY HAVE **NOT** RECEIVED REQUESTS FOR LOCAL FOODS (Responded “none” in Q5.]: If you were to receive requests for local foods, what business practices would you need to implement to fulfill these requests? [Changes may include: seeking out more local producers; providing different information to potential buyers; developing a local order/availability guide; offering reports on local expenditures; answering different RFPs/IFPs; or any other changes.]

**6.** What types of solicitations do school districts use to procure local foods from your company? [**PROMPT** IF NECESSARY: Such as: invitation for bid, request for proposals, informal solicitation, or use of micro-purchases (micro-purchases are for $3500 or less)?]

**6a.** What contract types have you used to provide local products?

* Fixed-price contracts
* Fixed-price with economic price adjustment contracts
* Cost-reimbursable contracts (no fixed fee)
* Cost-reimbursable with fixed-fee contracts
* Forward contracts

**7.** Does providing local foods give your company a competitive advantage with school districts? Do you promote or advertise this capability? If so, how? [**PROBE**: How do schools know you have local products? Do you label local products on an online database or in printed catalogues provided to schools?]

**7a.** Do you market or promote your company’s ability to sell local products? If so, please describe. [**PROBE**: Do you offer educational programs or farmer visits?]

**8.** Does your company set goals for local products you make available to school districts? For example, do you have a target where X percentage of items will be locally sourced? Please describe these goals.

**SUPPLY CHAIN & TOP 3 FOODS**

These next few questions focus on supply chains and the most commonly requested local foods. Your responses should focus on your experiences when requests have been made by the school districts with whom you work.

**9.** In order to supply local foods to school districts, have you had to establish new supply chains to connect with local producers?

❑ YES 🡲 CONTINUE TO QUESTION 9a.

❑ NO 🡲 SKIP TO QUESTION 10.

❑ REFUSED 🡲 SKIP TO QUESTION 10.

❑ DON’T KNOW 🡲 SKIP TO QUESTION 10.

**9a.** Please describe the process of establishing new supply chains. How do you find local vendors? Where/how do you find/recruit them? [**PROBE**: Is it competitive? On what basis are they selected as vendors?]

**10.** What is the process for sourcing local foods for the school districts you serve? [**PROBE**: What are the biggest factors that determine whether or not you would bring in a local product for a school customer? From your perspective, what are the challenges?]

**11.** Do you have staff specifically dedicated to working with local vendors to procure local foods on the supply side? Who is responsible for local food sales? [**PROBE**: Or, do you have one designated local foods representative?]

**12.** What would motivate your company to provide more local products to schools? [**PROBE**: Think about factors that would encourage you to find new local vendors, or expand your current supply chains if school districts showed more interest in purchasing local foods.]

**13.** What are the top 3 local food items, by volume, your company sold to school districts in 2018? Please be as specific as possible. For example: sliced apples, whole apples, chicken drumsticks, bags of lettuce, fish sticks. Is the cost of sourcing these local items more, less or the same as a non-local alternative? Does the volume depend on the season?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Volume Estimated** | **Cost of sourcing locally: more, less or same as non-local alternative** | **Is seasonality a factor?** |
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**14.** What are the top 3 local food items, by dollar sales, your company sold to school districts in 2018? Please be as specific as possible. Is the cost of sourcing these local items more, less or the same as a non-local alternative? Is seasonality a factor?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Dollar Sales Estimated** | **Cost of sourcing locally: more, less or same as non-local alternative** | **Is seasonality a factor?** |
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**CHANGES OVER TIME**

Section 18 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act was amended to create a Farm to School Program to assist eligible entities, through grants and technical assistance, in implementing farm to school programs that improve access to local foods in schools. For school districts, farm to school activities may include purchasing local foods for school meal programs, taking students to farms, bringing farmers into classrooms, and cultivating school gardens, among other activities. The next set of questions asks about changes you or your industry may have experienced over time because of farm to school efforts, since 2010.

**15.** Based on your definition of local, has the number of local producers you work with increased, decreased, or remained the same over the past ten years?

❑ INCREASED

❑ DECREASED

❑ REMAINED THE SAME **🡲** SKIP TO QUESTION 17

❑ DON’T KNOW 🡲 SKIP TO QUESTION 17

**16.** From your perspective, what are the top 3 factors driving that change?

**17.** Based on your definition of local, has the volume of local sales to school districts increased, decreased, or remained the same over the past ten years?

❑ INCREASED

❑ DECREASED

❑ REMAINED THE SAME 🡲 SKIP TO QUESTION 19

❑ DON’T KNOW 🡲 SKIP TO QUESTION 19

**18.** What are the top 3 factors driving that change?

**19.** How do you think farm to school efforts may have affected purchasing trends in school food? [**Probe** for changes in grade, aesthetics, value-added of foods purchased.]

**REPORTING**

FNS is interested in collecting more accurate, concrete information on local food purchases by school districts nationwide in future studies. The following questions are asked so we can better understand what information on local products is being requested by and reported to school districts, as well as whether this information is tracked by your organization.

**20.** Have you been approached by school districts for reports of volume or price for **locally** sourced products? Sometimes these are called “velocity reports.”

❑ YES 🡲 CONTINUE TO QUESTION 21

❑ NO 🡲 SKIP TO QUESTION 22

❑ REFUSED 🡲 SKIP TO QUESTION 23

❑ DON’T KNOW 🡲 SKIP TO QUESTION 23

|  |
| --- |
| QUESTIONS FOR DISTRIBUTORS WHO **HAVE RECEIVED** REPORT REQUESTS FROM SCHOOL DISTRICTS  **21.** When these types of reports are requested by school districts, are you able to provide them? [IF NECESSARY: Reports on the volume and/or price of locally-sourced products.] [IF NO PROBE: Why not?]  SKIP TO QUESTION 23 |

|  |
| --- |
| QUESTIONS FOR DISTRIBUTORS **WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED** REPORTING REQUESTS FROM SCHOOL DISTRICTS  **22.** What type of information or reporting do you provide for school districts on locally sourced products? [PROBE: Please describe in detail the elements of these reports. Examples could include volume, list of local items, and price.] [PROBE: Even if you do not regularly provide information on locally sourced products to school districts, what information would you be able to provide if requested?] |

**23**. How do you track velocity information? Is that process specific to local products?

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

**24.** Please estimate the total number of school districts with whom you work.

[Note to Interviewer, for Q24., record numbers here.] TOTAL NUMBER of school districts: .

**24a**. Within these districts, about how many schools does this represent?

[Note to Interviewer, for Q24a, record number here.]TOTAL NUMBER of schools:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**24b. For these schools,** do you have an estimate of how many of these are urban, suburban and rural? [IF NECESSARY: By urban, we mean an area with high population and infrastructure density. By suburban, we mean a smaller community outside of, but within the vicinity of, an urban area. By rural, we mean non-metro areas, located in areas with low populations of people.]

Percent urban\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Percent suburban\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Percent rural\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**24c**. What TOTAL NUMBER of States do these districts/schools represent? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Thinking about your definition of local, how many of the following do you directly source from?

**25.** How many are local individual producers, farmers, ranchers or fishers? Please let me know if these are actuals or estimates.

NUMBER OF Farmers: Actuals? (Y/N) ❑ DON’T KNOW

NUMBER OF Ranchers: Actuals? (Y/N) ❑ DON’T KNOW

NUMBER OF Fishers: Actuals? (Y/N) ❑ DON’T KNOW

[Note to Interviewer: Use “other” if another type of producer is mentioned by R.]

Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Actuals? (Y/N) ❑ DON’T KNOW

**26.** How many are local producer cooperatives, including farmer, rancher, or fisher cooperatives? Do you know how many producers each cooperative represents? Please let me know if these are actuals or estimates.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Cooperative Name/Type** | **Number of Producers** | **Estimated?** |
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**27**. Do you source from “food hubs”? Please describe your relationship with the food hubs and what kinds of items you source in that manner.

**28.** What were your company’s estimated total sales for all customers in 2018? Please include all customers, and not just school districts.

TOTAL SALES ($)

**29.** What percentage of your company’s total sales was accounted for by sales to school districts in 2018?

PERCENTAGE TO school districts (%)

**30. Earlier, you defined local as: [insert response from Q2.]** Using that definition of local, what is the estimated percentage of your total school district sales that were local food in 2018? [IF NECESSARY: For this question, the term local is defined as ANSWER TO QUESTION 2]

PERCENTAGE LOCAL SALES (%)

**Final Thoughts**

Now, we’d like to find out from you if there are things we may have left out or you think are important for us to know about farm to school efforts or local food sourcing.

**31**. From your perspective, what action(s) could schools and/or school districts take to make it easier to fulfill their local (product) requests?

**32**. What resources, if any, could your company (or the industry) use to better meet local product requests?

**33**. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about farm to school or local food sourcing?

**CLOSING**

**Thank you for completing the Distributor Interview! Do you have any questions for me?**

If you have any additional questions or comments, please [feel](mailto:feel) free to contact our project team, toll-free, at 866-778-1316 or by email at farmtoschool@abtassoc.com.