

The Pennsylvania Farm to School Network Success Story:

HAPPY VALLEY MEAT CO.

Lancaster County, PA

Serving meals in school cafeterias that include ingredients sourced from local farmers and producers is one way that farm to school is implemented across Pennsylvania. By purchasing locally, schools and early care and education sites provide healthy, nutritious meals to their students while supporting the local economy. Happy Valley Meat Co., in addition to working with institutions, restaurants, and retail shops, connects small Pennsylvania family farms with public schools across the state so students are served high-quality PA beef during lunch while supporting small family farms in Pennsylvania.



During the 2022-2023 school year, the PA Beef Council launched its PA Beef to PA Schools' initiative and partnered with Happy Valley Meat Co. to help six public school districts (Donegal, Spring Grove, Hemsfield, North Penn, Tulpehoken, and Northern Bedford County) serve local, Pennsylvania-raised beef as part of their school lunch programs. Happy Valley Meat Co. worked directly with the farms to purchase whole animals, break them down into standard cuts, and find homes for every single cut. All of the beef for this PA Beef program was sourced from the following seven farms and sold by Happy Valley to the public schools: Masonic Village Farm in

Elizabethtown, Ste-Wan Farm in Middleburg, Timmons Farm in Orrstown, Tiffany Farm of Athens, Shook Farm in Spring Mills, and Tanis Farm in Centre Hall.

The PA Beef Council was able to use grant funding to implement a cost-share model that covered 50% of the cost, and the school districts covered the remaining 50%. In its inaugural year, the program helped the participating school districts serve over 6,500 pounds of PA beef to their students. Menu items included creative dishes like beef gyro bowls with hummus from Lancaster Hummus Co. and brisket sandwiches on Kaiser rolls.





For schools that want to start sourcing ingredients from local producers, Kevin Early of Happy Valley Meat Co. has some great advice:

- Since price point can often be the primary obstacle, we'd recommend featuring local products for specific special events, like a "Local Thursday" lunch event that showcases one or multiple locally sourced items.
- Look for additional budget with grants from the state or federal government to promote local procurement.
- Hold a workshop for local farms to teach them what you need and how they can meet your procurement procedural requirements.
- Because of their buying power, schools have the ability to act as an anchor account for broadline distributors, which can make it logistically easier to purchase local goods and helps producers reach new customers.
- Find more cost-effective and sustainable cuts like local ground beef from PA farms with Happy Valley Meat Co.
- Farms should ask the dining director: How are they cooking food, are they a scratch kitchen, or do they need most items pre-cooked? Do they enjoy getting creative and learning new cuts, or does their team need something tried and true? Once they know what the school needs, they can match the items they sell to what the school can use.
- Invite a farmer to visit your school and provide education on where their food comes from



For more information, visit shop.happyvalleymeat.com or contact Kevin Early, sales@happyvalleymeat.com.

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