GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of Contracting and Procurement

ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIFICATION GUIDANCE FOR FOOD AND BEVERAGE PURCHASES

The District of Columbia is committed to procuring quality goods and services in a timely manner and at a reasonable cost that support the District in meeting its sustainability goals. Compliance with specification guidance is sufficient to meet PPRA Section 1101(a) environmentally preferable procurement requirements. Additional context is provided here to assist in the implementation of the specification. To access solicitation documents with full contract language, click here.

Scope

This specification applies to all food and beverage procurements over $100,000. Applicable procurements include grocery items, vended pre-packaged meals, and food for congregate meal programs.

COPY AND PASTE THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATION LANGUAGE INTO THE REQUIREMENTS SECTION OF YOUR STATEMENT OF WORK

Within the first month of each calendar year, the Contractor must submit to [agency name] and DOEE purchasing records that include the weight or volume of each food and beverage item purchased under the contract during the previous calendar year (see data collection template). These documents must be emailed to [contract administrator email] and to greenfood@dc.gov.

Contractor may serve no more than two servings of red meat (i.e., beef, pork/swine, or lamb) per week.

At each meal service, the Contractor must serve at least one completely plant-based meal option. A meal is considered "plant-based" if it does not contain any animal products, such as meat, eggs, dairy, or fish.

Contractor shall not serve any seafood products rated “Avoid” by the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch.

Contractor shall source-separate all organic materials, including food scraps and compostable food service ware, in accordance with DC Code § 8–1031.03a where applicable and dependent on the District’s capacity to haul organic materials.

BENEFITS

14,573

Metric tons of CO2e avoided if the District reduced its food-related GHG emissions by 25%

This is equivalent to taking **3,400** cars off the road.

Sources

https://www.epa.gov/energy/gr

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Supplementary Recommendations

To further reduce carbon emissions and improve the environmental performance of food and beverages purchased by the District of Columbia beyond the minimum requirements of the specification guidance, purchasers should consider adopting the supplementary recommendations listed below.

Good Food Purchasing Program

Food-procuring agencies are encouraged to adopt Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) values and meet the criteria outlined in the Good Food Standards. GFPP provides a metrics-based framework that supports large institutions in directing their procurement towards five core values: local and community-based economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and community health and nutrition. Institutions participating in GFPP must commit to meeting targets in each value area.

The Good Food Standards, summarized below, are a scoring methodology by which the Center for Good Food Purchasing evaluates whether an institution's food procurement aligns with the GFPP values.

Equity, Accountability, and Transparency

Client feedback should be solicited annually and considered as part of the menu planning process. Methods of solicitation include focus groups, surveys, or taste tests.

Prioritize purchases and address barriers to entry for suppliers who have experienced negative systemic social and/or economic impacts

Report annually on progress towards fundamental strategies

Share purchasing data, purchasing targets, and/or implementation plans publicly

Have or develop a supplier/vendor diversification plan

- Plan should address barriers to entry for suppliers who have experienced negative systemic social and/or economic impacts

Local Economies

Prioritize local suppliers. "Local" refers to products grown and/or processed in Washington DC, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and New Jersey.

Prioritize small and mid-sized businesses:

- Businesses that are privately, cooperative, or nonprofit owned and operated or B Corp certified
- Businesses with revenue under $1 million (produce) or under $20 million (other)

Valued Workforce

Increase purchasing from fair suppliers, as identified by their participation in qualifying certification programs and attributes (see Background Information)

Ensure vendors and suppliers respect workers' rights, including the right to organize, and comply with labor laws through contractual requirements and enforcement

Animal Welfare

Offer and promote plant-based entrée options at every meal

Increase purchasing of products with qualifying animal welfare certifications (see Background Information)

Environmental Sustainability

Increase purchasing of products with qualifying environmental sustainability certifications (see Background Information)

Community Health and Nutrition

Increase whole/minimally processed food purchases

Purchase animal products raised without routine antibiotic usage

Waste Reduction

The Contractor shall ensure that employees are informed about source separation requirements by providing training about proper methods to separate and store food waste.

In addition to separation of non-edible food waste, the Contractor shall set aside excess edible food for donation.

The Contractor shall set a goal for reducing food waste and conduct quarterly waste audits. The total weight of all waste types (including trash, recyclables, edible and non-edible food waste, and other compostables) shall be measured and recorded over at least one full day of normal operation. These results shall be compared to the data from previous audits and tracked over time. Results shall be used to identify additional opportunities for source reduction and donation.

The Contractor also shall support the District in conducting more detailed audits as requested from time to time through sorting, storing, and labeling bags or containers of waste, recyclables, and compostables following instructions provided by the District.

Solid Waste Recycling

The Contractor shall assist the District in recycling all types of materials for which recycling is available through the proper sorting of recyclables from compostable items and waste. Recyclable items shall align with those accepted by the facility's waste, recycling, and composting programs.

Background Information

Green Food purchasing data collection template

Description	Brand	Unit weight	Pack	Quantity	Net weight

Key:

Data element	Definition	Optional/required
Description	Name of product	Required
Brand	Brand name of product	Optional
Unit weight	Weight or volume of one product unit – must include unit of measurement (e.g. lb, kg, gal)	Optional
Pack	Number of product units in pack/case	Optional
Quantity	Number of packs/cases purchased	Optional
Net weight	Total weight of product purchased (unit weight x pack x quantity) – must include unit of measurement (e.g. lb, kg, gal)	Required

Example:

Description	**Brand**	**Unit weight**	**Pack**	**Quantity**	**Net weight**
Jumbo Chicken Breast	Sysco	10 LB	4	772	30,880 LBS
Pollock Mini Tenders	Trident	10 LB	1	792	7920 LBS
Biscuit Baked Whole Grain	Pillsbury	2 OZ	120	316	4740 LBS
Mayonnaise Light	Kraft	1 GAL	4	271	1084 GAL
Ketchup Packet	Simply Heinz	9 GM	1000	135	2,700 LBS
Sauce Wing Buffalo	Frank's	5.67 L	2	10	260 LBS
Apples				714	34272 LBS
Milk	Cloverland	Half pint		1200	75 GAL

Relevant Good Food Purchasing Program certifications:

Environmental Sustainability

American Grassfed (also Animal Welfare) – these standards for ruminant meat, pastured swine and poultry require that livestock are fed a 100% grass diet, raised on pasture without confinement, never treated with antibiotics or hormones, and are born and raised on American family farms.

Animal Welfare Approved (also Animal Welfare) – to meet this certification's requirements, a farm's animals must be able to behave naturally and be in a state of physical and psychological well-being. Animals must be raised outdoors on pasture or range using sustainable and high-welfare production, transport, and slaughter practices

Certified Grassfed (also Animal Welfare) – an optional, additional accreditation to American Welfare Approved. Guarantees food products come from animals fed a 100% grass and forage diet, raised outdoors on pasture or range and managed according to the highest welfare and environmental standards.

Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Guide – this classification system rates different types of seafood according to the risk its farming practices pose to the environment. Products rated Green, or "Buy First", are caught or farmed in an environmentally responsible manner. Products rated Yellow, or "Good Alternative", pose a moderate environmental risk. Products rated Red, or "Avoid", pose a high risk to the environment.

Bee Better – To promote pollinator species on farms, this certification ensures that farmers create flower-rich habitats, provide nesting locations with a diversity of native plants, and create a safer environment for pollinators by protecting them from pesticide exposure and the spread of disease.

Equitable Food Initiative – EFI, a social responsibility certification focused on the food industry, ensures better working conditions, a culture of food safety, integrated pest management, and more transparent and responsible farming practices across the fresh produce supply chain.

Marine Stewardship Council Blue Fish Label – this certification indicates that a product is made with wild-caught and certified sustainable seafood. The product must come from healthy and sustainable fish stocks, must be fished in a way that minimizes environmental impact, and must be sourced from a fishery that applies effective management practices and complies with relevant regulations.

Certified Seafood International/Responsible Fisheries Management Standard – CSI assesses whether a fishery is responsibly managed and maintains a transparent chain of custody. The main objective of the RFM standard is to preserve the biological sustainability of fish stocks with consideration for conservation, biodiversity, and ecosystem integrity, and due regard to social responsibility and the economic vitality of the industry.

Valued Workforce

Fair Trade International – the Fairtrade standards aim to provide a structure for sustainable agricultural production, protect workers rights, and distribute power in trade relations more equally between producers and buyers, as well as support environmentally sustainable practices. The certification may be applied to producer organizations and traders, as well as individual products.

Fair Food Program – participating farms must adhere to the Fair Food Program Code of Conduct, which requires a high standard of fair labor practices including direct hiring of workers, zero tolerance of forced labor and child labor, a work environment free from violence, sexual harassment, discrimination and verbal abuse, and improved health and safety practices.

Food Justice Certification (also Environmental Sustainability) – FJC is a food label for farms, food businesses, and retailers based on rigorous social justice standards for labor and trade practices. The standards guarantee just working and living conditions and fair pay for all food system workers, as well as environmental stewardship through organic practices.

Animal Welfare

Certified Humane – this certification ensures that producers meet Animal Care standards, which stipulate that animals are never kept in cages and are free to engage in natural behaviors; have appropriate shelter with protection from inclement weather, are fed a diet of quality feed without antibiotics or growth hormones; and are handled by competent, trained caregivers.

Global Animal Partnership – G.A.P.'s science-based animal welfare standards use a tiered labeling strategy ranging from Base Certification to Entire Life on Farm. Standards are developed specifically for each animal group, including beef cattle, chickens, turkey, dairy cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and farmed salmon.

Regenerative Organic Certified – a certification for food, textiles, and personal care ingredients that requires products to meet the highest standards in the world for soil health, animal welfare, and farmworker fairness. All certified livestock products must have proof of an existing USDA Organic certification or recognized equivalent, as well as an eligible animal welfare certification. Eligible certifications include:

- Animal Welfare Approved by A Greener World
- Global Animal Partnership
- Certified Humane

Environmental Hotspots — The most important environmental benefits associated with this specification

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS	The food system is responsible for 25% of global GHG emissions, making it a significant contributor to climate change. Roughly half of these emissions come from cows and other ruminant animals. Limiting red and processed red meat consumption could reduce the District's GHG emissions by 14,000 MT CO2e.
FOOD WASTE	Reducing wasted food at District government facilities could further reduce GHG emissions, save money, and divert valuable resources from landfill and incineration.
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE	Procuring from environmentally sustainable farms and food businesses promotes soil health and biodiversity, reduces use of pesticides and fertilizers, and minimizes the carbon and water footprints of food production.

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Significance to the District

Green Food Purchasing Amendment Act	This law requires DOEE to track greenhouse gas emissions associated with the District's food and beverage purchases, develop best practices to reduce food-related emissions, and achieve a 25% emissions reduction from a 2022 baseline by FY2030.
Zero Waste DC Plan	Achieve a citywide solid waste diversion rate of 80%. Adopt a universal composting ordinance requiring the source separation and collection of compostables within all government buildings. Ensure school cafeterias instill best practices for food waste reduction, donation, and composting.
Sustainable DC Plan	Goals of Sustainable DC 2.0 include: Target 1 – By 2032, put 20 additional acres, including public right of way and rooftops, under cultivation for growing food; FD2.6 – Improve the quality of institutional food grown or purchased with District local funds, including in DCPS and public charter schools, childcare centers, jails, homeless shelters, and other institutional settings; Target 4 – reduce food waste by 60% by 2032; WS2.4 – Support the development of a locally based, circular economy by facilitating the separation of waste into commodity streams.
Good Food Purchasing Program	As a member of the Good Food Purchasing Program, DCPS conducts an annual analysis of food procurement trends, and commits to aligning its procurement with the five core GFPP values: local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and nutrition.
DC Code § 8–1031.03 Mandatory source separation	Solid waste shall be separated at the point of discard into the following categories: A) Recyclable materials; B) Compostable materials; and C) Trash. Separation of compostables shall apply upon the Mayor's implementation of a compost collection program.

For more information about sustainable specification guidance or the District's Sustainable Purchasing Program, please visit: https://ocp.dc.gov/page/sustainable-purchasing-program or call the OCP Procurement Center of Excellence at: 202.724.4477 or email sppdc@dc.gov.