

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food



Developed by Minority & Veteran Farmers
of the Piedmont, in partnership with
Virginia Career Works – Piedmont Region

Welcome!



What's inside:

- **Start Here**
5 easy steps to shop local food.
- **Where to Find Local Food**
- **Your Options, Explained**
The most common ways to shop local food.
- **Buying on a Budget**
Make local food costs work for you.
- **Talk With a Farmer**
Questions to ask about your food.
- **Learn More**
Further reading on how local food is grown.
- **Market Checklist**
Things to think about before, during, and after shopping the farmers market
- **Why Buy Local?**
Reasons to support your local producer.
- **Resources**
Local organizations to learn more about.

Start Here: 5 Easy Steps



You can do all five in one trip!

1

Find a market or farm

Look up markets near you at www.mvfpva.org/rabbithole or scan the code on the back.

2

Buy one or two things you already eat

Eggs, tomatoes, greens. Start small.

3

Say hello

"Hi, I'm new here." That's all you need.

4

Ask what's in season

In-season food is often the best value.

5

Stay connected

Follow the farm, sign up for updates, come back next week.

REMEMBER:

- You don't have to be an expert.
- You don't have to buy a lot.
- You don't have to know what to ask.

Where to Find Local Food



<https://www.pecva.org/our-work/working-farms-and-food/buy-fresh-buy-local/>

Buy Fresh Buy Local Piedmont is brought to you by **The Piedmont Environmental Council**. Their directory lists farmers and retailers committed to providing the best of Virginia agriculture.



Local Food Directories
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

<https://www.usdalocalfoodportal.com/>



Use the **USDA Local Food Directory** to locate regional:

- Farmers markets
- Community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs
- On-farm markets
- Food hubs
- Agritourism operations



<https://vagrown.vdacs.virginia.gov/whats-in-season>



Visit **Virginia Grown** to see what is *in season* (crops harvested at their peak), giving you the freshest, tastiest, and most nutrient-packed options.

Your Options, Explained



Some of the most common ways to shop local:



Farmers Markets & Stands

Farmers markets connect consumers directly with local farmers and food producers. They offer fresh, seasonal products while creating opportunities to learn where your food comes from and meet the people behind it.



CSA Programs

A CSA lets you purchase a “share” of a farm's harvest. Members typically receive weekly produce boxes and seasonal products; opportunities to visit the farm; and direct communication with the grower. Joining a CSA can help you understand seasonality and gives farms a predictable income to plan around.



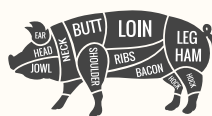
Pick-Your-Own Farms

This type of farm invites visitors to harvest their own fruits, vegetables, flowers, or other crops directly from the field. This experience allows consumers to connect with agriculture, enjoy fresh seasonal products, and learn more about how food is grown.



Herd Shares

A herd share is an arrangement in which individuals purchase a share of a dairy herd and receive products from that herd as permitted by state law. It offers a way to connect directly with local farmers and learn more about dairy production.



Bulk Meat Shares

Many local livestock producers offer quarter, half, or whole animal purchases. While the upfront cost is higher, buying meat in bulk can reduce the cost per pound and provide a steady supply of locally raised meat. Many families choose to split a purchase with friends or relatives to make it more affordable.

Your Toolkit

Buying on a Budget



PROGRAM	WHAT IT IS	WHO IT'S FOR
	A program that helps people buy food using an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.	Individuals and families who qualify for nutrition assistance.
 Senior & WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (Sj/FMNP)	This program is Virginia's Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) for buying fresh, local produce at participating markets and stands.	Pregnant and postpartum individuals, infants, and young children enrolled in WIC; as well as eligible adults ages 60+.
	A network of vendors and community food stores that DOUBLE SNAP/EBT on fruits and vegetables.	SNAP/EBT and SUN Bucks users.

If these programs do not apply to you,

you still have the opportunity to shop budget-friendly:

- Start with **one product** you use frequently.
- Shop **seasonal produce**.
- **Split bulk purchases** with friends or family. Livestock producers are able to offer a quarter, half, whole cow, pig, etc.
- **Freeze or preserve** seasonal foods.
- Ask vendors about **end-of-day deals**, **"seconds"** (not visually appealing, but nutritionally the same), or **bulk purchase** options.



Talk With Your Farmer

One of the greatest benefits of buying local is getting to know the people who grow and raise your food. Farmers appreciate customers who ask questions, learn about seasonal production, and support local agriculture throughout the year.

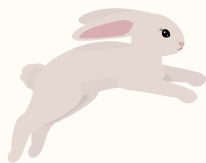
Questions to ask:

- What do you grow or raise?
- How long have you been farming?
- What is currently in season?
- What products are most popular?
- Can visitors tour your farm?
- What is your biggest farming challenge right now?
- What are you most proud of on your farm?
- What products will be available next season?
- How can customers support local agriculture beyond shopping?



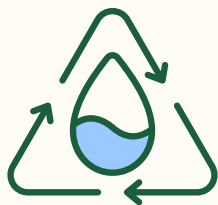
Want to Learn More?

Go “**Down the Rabbit Hole**” to learn more about what goes into growing your food at the link below.



Soil Health

Healthy soil helps plants grow by providing water, nutrients, and support for roots. Farmers use a variety of practices to keep soil productive and protect it for future generations.



Water Conservation

Clean water is essential for growing crops and raising livestock. Farmers use conservation practices to reduce waste, prevent erosion, and protect local waterways.



Animal Care

Farmers work to keep animals healthy by providing proper nutrition, housing, veterinary care, and safe handling practices. Animal care approaches vary by farm and species.



Biosolids

Biosolids are treated materials from wastewater treatment that may be used on some farms as a fertilizer or soil amendment. Their use is regulated by federal and state guidelines.

To learn more about each of these, visit

www.mvfpva.org/rabbithole

Market Checklist



Before You Go

- ☐ **Know how to pay:** Does this market accept cash, card, Virginia Fresh Match, SNAP, or WIC/Senior FMNP benefits? Have your payment forms ready to use.
- ☐ **Pack reusable bags** and (if it's warm outside) a cooler.

At the Market

- ☐ **Meet a farmer** and introduce yourself.
- ☐ **Learn what's in season.**
- ☐ **Ask where products are grown** or sourced, if not grown on-site.

After the Market

- ☐ **Plan a visit to a local farm.**
- ☐ **Follow a local farm** you met on social media.
- ☐ **Bring a friend** on your next shopping trip!

Why Buy Local?



Understanding Local Food

Not every tomato is perfectly round, and not every apple looks like the ones displayed in a grocery store. Fresh, **locally grown produce may vary in size, shape, or appearance because it is often harvested closer to peak ripeness and may be grown using different farming practices.** In most cases, “ugly” produce is just as nutritious and flavorful as produce with a picture-perfect appearance.



Local food is also seasonal. Strawberries, peaches, sweet corn, pumpkins, and other crops are naturally available at different times of the year. Shopping seasonally allows consumers to enjoy produce at its freshest while supporting local farms throughout the growing season.

Why Prices May Differ

The price of locally produced food can vary from farm to farm and may sometimes differ from prices at large grocery stores. Factors such as labor, feed, fuel, equipment, land, weather, and production practices all contribute to the cost of growing and raising food.

When you buy directly from a local farmer, you're purchasing more than a product. You're supporting local farms, local jobs, and a regional food system while building a connection with the people who produce your food.



Resources



<https://ext.vt.edu>

<https://ext.vsu.edu>

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) offers trusted, research-based information on agriculture, food, gardening, and natural resources. Local extension offices provide educational programs and resources for farmers, families, and communities across Virginia.



<https://vafma.org>

info@vafma.org

The Virginia Farmers Market Association (VAFMA) supports farmers markets by promoting local agriculture, providing educational resources, and helping consumers connect with fresh, locally produced food. VAFMA helps strengthen local food systems and makes it easier for consumers to find and support Virginia farmers and market vendors.



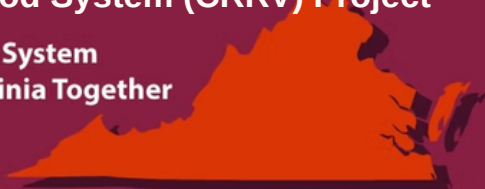
Minority & Veteran Farmers of the Piedmont (MVFP) supports local farmers and helps connect consumers with information, resources, and opportunities to engage with the regional food system.

<https://www.mvfpva.org>

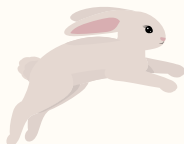


LEARN MORE: Cultivating Rural Vitality in Virginia's Food System (CRRV) Project

Addressing Food System Resiliency in Virginia Together



Go Deeper



www.mvfpva.org/rabbithole

Find links to market directories, program details, and answers to the questions we didn't have room for.



PIEDMONT REGION

Virginia Career Works – Piedmont Region is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary Aids and Services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. TDD-VA Relay: 711. Funded by Federal, State, and Local funds. Interpreters available upon request.
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