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**January 2026**



# **2025**

# **Local Food Marketing Practices Survey**

## **Interviewer's Manual**

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## Chapter 1 - Purpose

### General

This chapter contains information about the 2025 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey. You will learn how the survey will be conducted, why it is needed, and how the data will be used.

### Purpose and Scope of the Survey

The 2025 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey will be conducted to gather data related to the production and marketing of foods directly from farm producers to consumers or retailers who market that product with local emphasis. The primary purpose of the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey is to produce statistics on the number of operations that produce local foods, the value of local foods sales (in total and by specific marketing channel), and marketing practices and expenses. Operators in all 50 states will be asked to provide these data. NASS plans to release estimates at the national and regional or state levels, where publishable (due to disclosure and statistical reliability limitations).

The 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey produced benchmark national, regional, and state level estimates of the total value of local foods sales from direct marketing channels. The 2017 Census of Agriculture (CoA) also gathered limited data on sales. The 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey and 2022 CoA expanded on and produced the first data sets which were comparable to their predecessors. This resulted in the first national level local food data points available. Since then, the demand for national and regional statistics on local foods sales has only continued to grow.

### Authority and Area Covered

General authority for these data collection activities are granted under U.S. Code Title 7, Section 2204. This statute specifies that “The Secretary of Agriculture shall procure and preserve all information concerning agriculture which he can obtain ... by the collection of statistics ... and shall distribute them among agriculturists.”

### Farm Definition

The farm definition has been changed nine times since 1850, when minimum criteria defining a farm for census purposes were first established. The current definition, used since 1974, is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agriculture products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year.

## Methods of Enumeration and Data Collection

The 2025 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey is primarily a mailout/mail back survey, except for a small percentage that is reserved for phone or field enumeration due to the need for special handling. A central mailout will be conducted from the National Operations Division (NOD).

Note: Due to a lapse in government funding in October – November 2025 the previously scheduled “EDR Push” postcard mailing scheduled for November 21, 2025, and a NEMO email blast scheduled for December 10, 2025, were cancelled.

The initial questionnaire mailing will take place On January 6, 2026. The initial mail package includes a questionnaire, instruction sheet, and a letter requesting a prompt response. The operator is asked to return the completed questionnaire to the NOD in the pre-paid reply envelope. A Thank You/Reminder postcard will be sent to respondents on January 30, 2026. A follow-up mailing containing a reminder letter, questionnaire, and instruction sheet will occur on March 3, 2026. Phone follow-up will be conducted from April 2 to April 30, 2026.

## Uses of Local Food Marketing Practices Survey Data

Because the survey gathers data on production, risk management, and marketing practices, it will be used by several USDA agencies and federal policymakers to inform their policies and programs. For example:

- Farm Service Agency (FSA): Data from this survey will illustrate the use of the FSA Microloan Program (mandated in the 2014 Farm Bill), the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, and other FSA programs.
- Risk Management Agency (RMA): Data will inform implementation of the Whole Farm Revenue Protection program, which was mandated in the 2014 Farm Bill and targeted smaller-scale, diversified producers such as those in local markets.
- Rural Development (RD): Data will increase understanding of the value-added business activities within this sector and inform execution of some of RD's business programs.

- Food and Nutrition Service (FNS): Data will measure acceptance of electronic benefit transactions (EBTs) from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by local food farmers and farmer engagement in farm-to-school activities.
- Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS): Data will increase understanding of the marketing outlets utilized by local foods farms and will shed light on the size and scope of marketing activities that take place within the local foods sector.

In addition, statistics from this survey will be used by state agencies to better understand, support, and promote their local food markets, as well as by researchers studying local foods. The statistics will also be informative for farmers and others in the agricultural industry in planning business strategies.

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## Chapter 2 - Terms and Definitions

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**Enumerators working on the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey should be familiar with the definitions of the terms listed below. General agricultural terms can be found on the NASDA website.**

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### Survey Terms

**SCOPE:** Farms that produce and sell food and drink for local consumption Food sold directly to consumers, or directly to one party removed (sold to one party, which then sells directly to consumers).

Farm: A place from which \$1,000 of agricultural products were sold, or normally would have been sold, valued at the commodity level. Additional value gained from value added or marketing would not be included in the \$1,000 definition.

Production contract animals and crops are not included in the focus of the project: Contractees do not market the commodity, and contractors do not produce the commodity. The portion of agriculture that the contractees or contractors produce that is not under production contract is included in the scope of this project.

Production contract: An agreement setting terms, conditions and fees to be paid by the contractor to the operation, to produce crops, livestock, or poultry. The contractor usually owns the commodity and often provides inputs.

#### Abnormal Farms

Abnormal farms are not within the scope of this survey. Abnormal farms include institutional, experimental, and University research farms. Institutional farms are those operated by hospitals, penitentiaries, churches, schools, and grazing associations. Any abnormal farms that were sampled should be coded as out of scope.

#### **VALUE OF SALES:**

General - Value of sales includes the edible agricultural sales an operation produced and sold through any of the defined direct marketing channels. Respondents should report sales by the marketing practice where the product was first sold. Sales in 2025 are reported regardless of the year of production. Sales should be reported before the deduction of expenses, marketing fees, or taxes. Sales should also include the estimate of the value of any crop or livestock bartered directly to consumers for services or other goods. Sales should only be reported in whole dollars.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Sales - Report the value of fresh fruits and vegetables sold as food for human consumption in 2025 in the appropriate category. Also, include crops such as grains, tea, coffee, and any agricultural products that are unprocessed for human consumption in this column. Report the sales in 2025 regardless of the year crops were harvested or raised. Include the value of the landlord's share of the commodities harvested. Report the gross value of sales before the deduction of expenses or fees.

Meat, Farmed Seafood, and Egg Sales - Report the value of meat, farmed seafood and eggs sold by this operation for human consumption in 2025. Include food items sold in their unprocessed state, such as farmed clams, oysters, soft-shelled crabs, and bulk sales of honey. Livestock sold on small scale farms with the established intent to be immediately butchered are in-scope. Exclude livestock on feed, sold at traditional auctions or not sold for human consumption such as pets, fur, and breeding. Some farms offer hunting or fishing for a fee. If this farm sells only whole game animals or fish, those transaction are not included. If this farm raises the game or fish and processes the game or fish into meat, those transactions are included as value added. Fee hunting and fishing operations on farms are in the category of "other direct-to- consumer markets" in Section 1. Include the value of your landlord's share of the commodities produced. Report the gross value before the deduction of expenses or fees.

Milk and Dairy Product Sales - Report the value of milk and dairy products, such as butter, cheese, and yogurt, sold by this operation for human consumption in 2025. Include the value of the landlord's share of the commodities produced. Report the gross value of sales before the deduction of expenses or fees.

Other Processed Food Product Sales - are products that have been altered or packaged before being sold to the consumer. Include canned or preserved vegetables, jam, jelly, wine, juice, cider, and meats. Include only those commodities that the initial agricultural commodity was produced on this operation. For example, if wine was produced from grapes purchased from

another operation do not include it. If the grapes were produced on this operation, then the value of sales for wine produced from the grapes grown on this operation should be reported.

**TOTAL EXPENSES:**

This includes both Production and Marketing Expenses.

Production Expenses - Expenses associated with growing, raising, and harvesting agricultural commodities. A live turkey ready for slaughter, eggs and milk before shipment or packaging, and apples in the farm's cooling shed are examples of commodity level production. All costs associated with getting the products to this point are production expenses.

The questionnaire asks for total expenses of the farm, including the portion that is not marketed as local food.

Marketing Expenses - all costs associated with the direct sales of food or drink to the consumer. Marketing expenses includes transportation expense, farm stand/store maintenance expense, local food safety regulatory expense, website maintenance expense, promotion expense, advertising expense and value-added expenses – such as the cost to turn apples into cider.

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## Chapter 3 - Survey Procedures

This chapter describes materials and procedures for conducting interviews, guidelines for completing questionnaires, and instructions for turning in completed work. The NASDA Enumerator Handbook covers administrative matters.

### Supervision and Quality Control

Your supervisor may set up an appointment to meet with you early in the survey. This visit will help you get off to a good start by spending time reviewing a few of your completed interviews.

### Planning Your Work

The operator or operation name, mailing address, and ID number are accessible using your CAPI device. The Regional Field Office may provide other information for specific operations.

Before you begin map each operation assigned to you. Use this map to plan your daily travel; this will help keep travel expenses down and save time.

You may need to ask Post Office or Farm Service Agency employees for directions to some operations. Try to do this early in the survey so you can put the information on your map when possible. Tell your supervisor about any operator whose home or office you cannot find.

### Interview and Call Back Procedures

Interview the farm operator, if possible, because information collected from other people may be less accurate. If the operator says someone else is more knowledgeable, interview that person.

Generally, you can contact the operator and complete the interview on the first attempt; but occasionally, you may need to make one or more callbacks. Plan each follow-up attempt to occur at a different time of day. The following instructions are a guide.

#### 1. First Attempt

If the farm operator is not present but is expected shortly, wait for the

interview. If the operator is extremely busy, set up an appointment. It is very important to keep the appointment or call back if it cannot be kept.

Make notes on the questionnaire or CAPI of observations or any information learned while trying to contact the operator. This information will be useful if you are unable to contact the operator on a later visit.

If the operator is not available until after the survey is over, interview a well-informed person such as the spouse, partner, adult child, or hired person. Try to interview the person most knowledgeable about the farming operation.

## 2. Second Attempt

If a second attempt is required, try again to interview the operator. Try to set up an appointment. If you cannot meet with the operator, interview a well-informed person associated with the operation.

After completing each interview, be sure to review the questionnaire while the interview is still fresh in your mind. Make sure you record all answers correctly and the questionnaire is complete. Check your calculations. Make sure all notes are clear.

## Respondent Burden

You will reduce the burden on the respondent if you are thoroughly familiar with the questionnaire and instructions. Pay close attention to skip instructions in the questionnaire to avoid asking questions that are not needed. When skip instructions are not printed after an item, you will continue with the next item.

Be aware of the estimate of average completion time in the Burden Statement. The estimated average completion time is based on pretest and the judgments of NASS and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB is an agency that approves all surveys conducted by the federal government. The expected average interview length for Local Food Marketing Practices Survey is 60 minutes. The burden statement is printed on the face page of the questionnaire and the CAPI instrument.

Respondents often ask, “How long will this survey take?” Enumerators should note the burden statement average time requirement and never directly contradict it. However, enumerators may provide additional information such as:

“The official average for this survey is 60 minutes but interviews I have been conducting in this area are averaging around 30 minutes.”

## Refusals

Most people you contact cooperate and furnish the needed information. Response to the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey is mandatory; however, there are always a few people who are reluctant to provide information. It is important to be courteous and friendly. Make a diligent effort to obtain the respondent's cooperation by explaining the purpose of the survey, confidentiality of the data, and the need for accurate agricultural statistics. The NASDA Employee Handbook explains why reports issued from these surveys are important and suggests ways the respondent might use the reports to make decisions. You can also reference the previous section on uses of the data.

If a respondent refuses to provide information, note it on the questionnaire and proceed to the next respondent.

**Important:** Do not spy or deceptively try to obtain data, as this can hurt cooperation with other respondents in the area. Do not interview hired workers or other family members after the operator has refused.

Do not become discouraged if you get a refusal. Some people will not talk to anyone, and experience tells us most refusals are from operators caught at a bad time for a survey or interview. On your next interview, continue to meet people with ease and friendliness.

## Completing the Questionnaire

If it is necessary to complete the questionnaire on paper, make all entries clear and easy to read. Local Food questionnaires are designed for mail data collection.

### Boxes or Entry Cells (item code boxes)

Answers must be written entirely within the box or space provided (including YES and NO check boxes) and properly located in relation to preprinted decimals and zeros. If the answer to a question is NONE, check the "none" box. A zero may be mistaken for a "6." Write all numbers clearly, so a 3 and 5 are not confused, or a 1 and a 7 are not confused.

### Respondent/Enumerator Instructions

Since the questionnaires are designed to be self-administered, it is necessary to

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provide the respondents with instructions throughout the questionnaire. It is important that the respondent is made aware of these instructions. Here are a few examples:

1. Prompts, "includes and excludes," and other instructions for respondents: These prompts are to help you and the respondent when a question arises regarding the intent or meaning of the question. Read these when needed to clarify the meaning of the question.

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### Section 1 – Direct-to-Consumer Sales

1. During 2025, did this operation **produce and sell** any crops, livestock, poultry, or agricultural products **DIRECTLY TO CONSUMERS**?

INCLUDE

- farmers markets
- on-farm stores or farm stands located on this operation
- roadside stands or roadside stores located off of this operation
- CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture)
- online marketplaces
- other direct-to-consumer markets (pick-your-own, mobile market, etc.)

EXCLUDE

- products purchased and resold
- products produced and sold directly to retail markets (Section 2), institutions (Section 3), or intermediate markets (Section 4)

1150    1 ☐ Yes - Continue                      3 ☐ No - Go to Section 2

2. Always ask the next question unless instructed to do otherwise with a skip instruction.

2. Did this operation have a food safety plan that covered produce in 2025?

INCLUDE

- |              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| • fruit      | • dry beans        |
| • berries    | • peas and lentils |
| • vegetables | • peanuts          |
| • herbs      | • sprouts          |
| • tree nuts  | • mushrooms        |

7001    1 ☐ Yes - Continue                      3 ☐ No - Go to item 4

3. Make notes about answers outside of expected ranges on a blank area of the form or in CAPI comments. Do not write notes or make unnecessary entries in the answer cell. Your note provides an explanation for the reviewer when the questionnaire is edited in the Regional Field Office. CAPI provides an item-level comment function; use this for comments related to a specific item. The boxes at the bottom of the screen are for questionnaire/operation level comments.

## Yes / No Check Boxes

If the respondent does not know if the answer is YES or NO, then record "DK" next to the code box. If the respondent refuses to answer, then record



“REFUSED” in notes outside the box. Most check boxes have a “GO TO” instruction associated with either the YES or NO answer. However, if there is no “GO TO” instruction, then continue to the next question.

24. Did this operation own this online marketplace?

1174 1 ☐ Yes

3 ☐ No

## Completed Questionnaires

Turn in your completed questionnaires according to the instructions you receive from your supervisor. CAPI is the preferred method of data collection and submission, but paper copies will be accepted. If you think the last few questionnaires you complete, might not reach the NOD before the final due date, call your supervisor.

Keep a record of when you complete each questionnaire and when you passed it on to your supervisor or mailed it to the Regional Field Office. This will help the Regional Field Office find survey materials if they are delayed.

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## Chapter 4 - Screening

### Face Page

#### Introduction

Before beginning data collection, develop an introduction you are comfortable using. In the introduction, include who you are, whom you represent, and the purpose of the visit. You should be familiar with the information in Chapter One of this manual.

Some operators may have already heard about the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey. They may also have read about the survey in the newspaper or farm magazine articles.

When making your introduction, remind the respondent that data they report will be kept strictly confidential. All information they provide will only be used to make national, regional, and state level estimates.

Be prepared to answer questions the respondent may have about the purpose of the survey and uses of the data.

### Substitution

Substitution is not allowed in the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey. If the operation on the label is no longer operating, the form should be coded as out of business.

### Identifying the Sampled Operation

The 2025 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey is a follow-on to the 2022 Census of Agriculture.

The Local Foods Marketing Practices Survey is an operation dominant survey. This means that the unit being sampled is the operation, not the operator whose name appears on the label. An operation may still be in business even though the operator has changed.

Abnormal farms such as institutional, experimental and research farms are excluded from the list sample. If your sampled operation is one of these abnormal operations, code it as out of scope and leave comments for the Field office.

## Target Operation and Address Verification

All questionnaires will have one label. The first thing you will do is verify the name and address for the target name.

Examples of common corrections are:

<p>CRAIG BRADLEY <del>RR 1</del> 5 Elm Drive RED OAKS YS 46725</p>	<p>Middle name is Alan MARK HAYES RR 1 BOX 50 DEARCREEK YS 54670</p>
<p>Bob isn't a partner TOM <del>&amp; BOB</del> SANDERS TOM SANDERS 9295 OLD HWY 22 AMHERST YS 26477</p>	<p>New manager: Dave Hagel FLYING J RANCH <del>BOB R ELLIOTT MGR</del> RR 2 BOX 99 EDNA YS 43212</p>

## Out-of-Business Determination

If Item 1 is 'No,' then the selected operation is out-of-business for the 2025 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey. Therefore, the interview should be ended. **Go to SECTION 9 on the back page and complete.**

## Out-of-Scope Determination

If Item 1 is 'Yes' and items 2 or 3 on the Face Page or Item 4 on page 2 are 'No,' then the selected operation is out-of-scope for the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey. Therefore, the interview should be ended. **Go to SECTION 9 on the back page and complete the requested information.**

## Completed Questionnaires

CAPi is the preferred method of data collection, however if it is necessary to complete a paper questionnaire, then completed paper questionnaires are to be returned to the NOD for processing at the address below.

USDA/NASS  
National Operations Division  
9700 Page Ave., STE 400  
St. Louis, MO 63132-9982



## Chapter 5 - Completing the Questionnaire

### General Instructions

The 2025 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey is designed as a mailout/mail back survey. Therefore, most of the instructions for answering the questionnaire are contained on the questionnaire itself. Most of what you will need to know can be learned by reviewing the questionnaire. Instructions in this manual will provide more detail than is contained on the questionnaire to assist with unique situations. Please remember to mark the “none” boxes where applicable, as this will aid in the editing process.

It is possible you will be assigned an operator who is not involved in direct marketing. The mail list for this survey is based upon answers to the 2022 Census of Agriculture. If an operation stopped farming during 2025, complete the questionnaire for the portion of 2025 that was farmed. Write “Stopped farming in 2025” and the date the operator stopped farming below the address area.

*There are many questions that are repeated throughout the survey for each marketing channel. For this reason, they are explained in detail for the first section but are left out of the manual for sections 2, 3, and 4. These questions include the “miles to market”, the “first year food was sold directly to a market” and sales tables.*

### Channels for Marketing Food Directly to -

<b>Consumers</b>	Farmers markets, on-farm stores, roadside stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) arrangements, online marketplaces, etc.
<b>Retail Market</b>	Supermarkets, supercenters, restaurants, caterers, independently owned grocery stores, food cooperatives, etc.
<b>Institution</b>	K-12 schools, colleges or universities, hospitals, workplace cafeterias, prisons, foodbanks, etc...
<b>Intermediate Market</b>	Businesses or organizations in the middle of the supply chain marketing locally- and/or regionally branded products such as distributors, food hubs, brokers, auction houses, wholesale and terminal markets, and food processors.

## The Face Page and Screening Questions

The main purpose of the screening questions on the face page is to determine if the sampled operation is in scope for the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey. To qualify in scope for this survey the operation must be in business for 2025, meet the farm definition of \$1,000 in sales or potential sales, and check 'yes' to all three questions on the face page of the questionnaire.

Follow the proper skip directions once it is determined that the target name qualifies for the items of interest being collected.

If the operation is not in business or does not meet the farm definition the questionnaire should be coded as out of business. Be sure to make notes on the questionnaire as to what happened with the operation.

Operations that did not produce and sell any crops, livestock, poultry, or agricultural products for human consumption directly to consumers, a retail market, an institution, or an intermediate market in 2025 should skip to Section 10.

## Section 1 – Direct-To-Consumer Sales

Report the value of edible agricultural sales this operation produced and sold directly to consumers. **Report only the first point of sale, even if that sale was to another farm or business owned by the respondent.**

- Exclude sales of products that were not for human food or drink, such as animal feed, wool, nursery and flowers. Report sales completed in 2025 regardless of the year production was harvested or raised. Report the gross value of sales before the deduction of expenses, marketing fees, or taxes.
- Include as sales an estimate of the value of any crop or livestock bartered directly to consumers for services or other goods. Report in whole dollars only. If there are sales in more than one direct-to-consumer marketing channel, please report sales of each marketing channel separately in the tables at the end of Sections 1-4.
- Exclude crop and livestock production under production contract.

### Farmers Market (Items 4-6)

Item 4 asks if the operation produced and sold food directly to consumers through a farmer's market. If the "Yes" box is checked, items 5 and 6 (number of farmers market locations operation sold food through and miles one way to largest grossing farmers market) should be completed.



### On-Farm Store or Farm Stand Located on the Operation (Items 7-9)

Item 7 asks if the operation produced and sold food directly to consumers through an on-farm store or farm stand located on the operation. If the “Yes” box is checked items 8 and 9 should be completed. Item 9 should account for all on-farm stores or farm stands combined.

### Roadside Stand or Store Located Off the Operation (Items 10-15)

Item 10 asks if the operation produced and sold food directly to consumers through a roadside stand or store located off the operation. If the “Yes” box is checked, item 11 should be completed. Item 13 accounts for all roadside stands and stores combined. If items 12 and/or item 13 are unknown or refused, leave those cell(s) blank. Item 14 identifies if the off-farm roadside stand or store was owned by the operation. Item 15 accounts for one-way mileage to largest grossing roadside stand or store located off the operation.

### Community Supported Agriculture (Items 16-21)

Item 16 asks if the operation produced and sold directly to consumers through a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). If the “Yes” box is checked, items 17 and 18 should be completed. If item 17 and/or item 18 are unknown or refused cell(s) should be left blank. Item 19 specifies if the CSA that the operation received their largest gross value of food sales was on farm or off farm. Item 20 accounts for one-way mileage to the largest grossing CSA pickup site. The CSA pick up site is where members come to pick up their products. Item 21 asks if the operation on the label owns the CSA.

### Online Marketplace (Items 22-25)

Item 22 asks if the operation produced and sold food directly to consumers through an online marketplace. If yes, items 23, 24, and 25 should be completed. Item 23 accounts for the percentage of the operation’s online food sales sold directly to consumers living within the same state as the operation or within a 400-mile radius of this operation. Percent of food sales must not be greater than 100. If an operation did not sell to anyone within 400 miles, a 0 (zero) must be entered into item 23 to prevent imputation of a positive response. Item 24 identifies if the operation had ownership in any online marketplace through which they sold food produced by their operation.

Item 25 asks the year the sampled operation first produced and sold food directly to an online marketplace. This could be before the current operator was involved in the operation if, for example, it has been a family farm for generations. If there have been gaps in the use of this marketing practice, report the most recent return to the practice if the gap exceeded five years

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Items 26-27)

Item 26 asks if the operation accepted Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits with electronic benefit transfer (EBT) technology owned by the operation or at a direct-to-consumer market at which the market administers SNAP payments with EBT technology. If yes, item 27 should be completed. Item 26 includes all direct-to-consumer markets where the operation SNAP benefits from EBT technology. Multiple options for Item 27 can be checked.

Item 28 asks the year the sampled operation first produced and sold food directly to consumers. Follow the same guidelines described in item 25 for this item.

Item 29 asks the total gross value of sales the operation received for unprocessed and processed food produced and sold directly to consumers in 2025. These sales should be reported by the market through which the product was sold. Be sure that the questions corresponding to the direct-to-consumer markets with a positive value in this table are answered in the previous part of the section. For instance, if a value is reported in Farmers Market Crop Sales, questions 4, 5, and 6, should be completed and vice versa.

## **Section 2 – Direct-To-Retail Market Sales**

Report the value of edible agricultural products this operation produced and sold directly to retail markets. Report only the first point of sale, even if that sale was to another farm or business also owned by the operation on the label. Exclude sales of products that were not for human food or drink such as animal feed, wool, nursery products and flowers. Report sales completed in 2025 regardless of the year production was harvested or raised. Report the gross value of sales before the deduction of expenses, marketing fees, or taxes. Sales should include the estimate of the value of any crop or livestock bartered directly to consumers for services or other goods. Report in whole dollars only. If the operation sells in more than one direct-to-retail marketing channel, report sales of each marketing channel separately in the tables at the end of Sections 1-4. Exclude crop and livestock production under production contract.

Items 1 and 2 are screener questions for Section 2. Item 1 identifies whether the sampled operation produced and sold any products directly to retail. Item 2 determines if the products sold directly to retail markets were food for humans to eat or drink. They also guide the operations that did not produce and sell food products directly to retail to skip to Section 3 of the questionnaire.

This section repeats many of the same questions that are in Section 1. For this reason, they are included in the manual for Section 1 but not repeated for later sections.

## Section 3 – Direct-To-Institution Sales

Report the value of edible agricultural products this operation produced and sold directly to institutions. Report only the first point of sale, even if that sale was to another farm or business also owned by the operation on the label. Exclude sales of products that were not for human food or drink such as animal feed, wool, nursery products and flowers. Report sales completed in 2025 regardless of the year the product was harvested or raised. Report the gross value of sales before the deduction of expenses, marketing fees, or taxes. Sales include the estimate of the value of any crop or livestock bartered directly to consumers for services or other goods. Report in whole dollars only. If there is more than one direct-to-institution marketing channel, report sales of each marketing channel separately in the tables at the end of Sections 1-4. Exclude crop and livestock production under production contract.

Items 1 and 2 are screener questions for Section 3. Item 1 identifies whether the sampled operation produced and sold any products directly to institutions. Item 2 determines if the products sold directly to institutions were food for humans to eat or drink. They also guide the operations that did not produce and sell food products directly to institutions to skip to Section 4 of the questionnaire.

This section repeats many of the same questions that are in Section 1. For this reason, they are not included in the Manual here.

## Section 4 – Direct-To-Intermediate Market Sales

An intermediate market is a business or organization in the middle of the supply chain marketing locally and/or regionally branded products. These markets include distributors, food hubs, brokers, auction houses, wholesale and terminal markets, and food processors. An operation would have to *intend* to use these intermediates to market their product as locally or regionally grown and in return, the intermediate would have to brand that product as locally or regionally grown to be considered as selling to an intermediate market. Intermediate markets that label the product with the place of production with no intent for that place name to imply that the product was produced near where it will be sold should be excluded.

Locally or regionally branded means the food product sold was raised, produced, and distributed in the locality or region where the final product is marketed to consumers.

Item 3 asks the respondent to verify whether the intermediate markets labeled the products as regional or locally produced. Check the boxes in the first column if the operation sold through the corresponding market type. Then select the appropriate answer in column 2. Only select one answer for column 2.

This section repeats many of the same questions that are in Section 1. For this reason, they are not included in the Manual here.

## Section 5 – Other Information

Item 1 asks about the total gross value of sales for food produced and sold directly through at least one of the four marketing channels in Sections 1-4. Only one category can be recorded. The sales category marked should match the total of sales reported in Sections 1-4.

Item 2 asks the distance of food sold directly to consumers, a retail market, an institution, or an intermediate market. Include all sales reported in Section 1-4. These three items must equal 100%.

Item 3 asks if this operation had non-edible products that were produced and sold directly to consumers, a retail market, an institution, or an intermediate market in 2025. Include hay, cut flowers, Christmas trees, nursery products, live animals, and wool. Exclude any agricultural commodities for human consumption.

Item 4 Report the total gross value of sales for the non-edible products referenced in Item 3 that were produced and sold directly to consumers, a retail market, an institution, or an intermediate market in 2025. Include hay, cut flowers, Christmas trees, nursery products, live animals, and wool. Exclude any agricultural commodities for human consumption. These sales should not be included in Item 1.

Items 5 and 6 asks for total acres operated. All land on this operation, not just the portion used for directly marketed production, should be included. Total acres are equal to the acres owned plus acres rented from others minus acres rented to others.

Item 7 asks for the type of crop and livestock products an operation produced and sold in 2025. It also asks if those products were produced and sold as a food product directly to at least one of the four marketing channels. Multiple categories may be selected.

For each row, select yes or no in column. 1. If column 1 is yes, select yes or no in column 2 to indicate whether any of the crop and livestock categories were produced and sold, regardless of marketing channel. Exclude any crops and/or

livestock sold under production contract.

Some of the rows in column 2 are greyed out for commodities not typically eaten by humans.

Item 8 asks for the total gross value of sales of all commodities produced on the operation. This item is different from item 1, all production sales should be included, not just direct sales. The value of product removed for all crops, livestock, and poultry produced under contract is included. Exclude the value of production for items for home consumption. Check the code that represents the operations total gross value of sales in 2025.

Item 9 Include all farm expenses paid by the operation and/or the landlord(s) for crops, livestock, or poultry produced on this operation in item 9. Include expenses incurred in 2025 even if they were not paid in 2025. Estimate if exact figures are not known. Include marketing expenses incurred from value added production. Marketing expenses are also itemized in item 10.

Item 10 Report marketing expenses paid by the operation in 2025 for the food produced and sold directly to consumers, a retail market, an institution, or an intermediate market in 2025. These expenses should also be reported included in item 9.

## **Section 6 – Practices**

Section 6 is a series of yes/no questions used to determine if the operation used the internet to access specific resources, have a farm business website, participated in USDA programs, maintained farm management records, or was a member of a cooperative. If the respondent is unsure about a particular practice, leave it blank.

## **Section 7 – Third-Party Certification and Food Safety**

Section 7 is used to report practices used by the operation, particularly program participation, certifications by the USDA or other organizations, and food safety audits/plans used by the whole operation. If the respondent is unsure of program participation, leave it blank.

## Section 8 – Personal Characteristics

The operators are those persons responsible for the day-to-day management decisions for this operation, including hired managers. In the event there is more than one person involved in the day-to-day decisions, four columns are provided to record the characteristics of up to four operators.

Item 1 asks if the operations' household and extended family own more than 50% of the farming operation.

Item 2 asks how many individuals were involved in the decisions for the operation. The total number of men and women should be reported in the appropriate cell. Hired workers should be excluded unless they were a hired manager or family member who was also an operator.

Item 3 asks for the demographics for up to four individuals who were involved in the decisions for the operation as of December 31, 2025. If there were more than four operators, the four most senior operators should be reported.

Item 3a indicates if the operator listed at the top of the column is male or female.

Item 3b indicates the age of the operator listed at the top of the column.

Item 3c indicates which ethnicity and/or race the operator listed at the top of the column self identifies as. Multiple answers are allowed.

Item 3d indicates which occupation the operator listed at the top of the column spent a majority of his/her worktime in 2025.

Item 3e indicates the year the operator at the top of the column began to operate ANY farm.

Item 3f indicates whether the operator listed at the top of the column served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard.

## Section 9 – Conclusion

Complete this Section with the name of the respondent, telephone number, date, and release request.

Item 1 Report the name, phone number, and address of anyone or operation that could potentially report the same information.

Item 2 Inform the respondent that the report will be available at [nass.usda.gov](http://nass.usda.gov) in the Quick Stats database. If the respondent would like a copy of the results by email, record a valid email address in item 2. There will be no paper publication for this survey. The release is scheduled for 3pm on December 15, 2026

## Administrative – Office Use

Response Code Upon completion of the interview, enter the response code in cell 9901 on the back page of the questionnaire. Response codes are:

Code 1 - Complete: The questionnaire is complete, including questionnaires for respondents that are no longer in business.

Code 2 - Refusal: The respondent refused to cooperate or grant an interview.

Code 3 - Inaccessible / Incomplete: The operator was not available throughout the survey period (inaccessible). You will also use code 3 if the respondent gave an interview but could not or would not answer many of the questions (incomplete questionnaire).

Respondent Code The respondent code identifies the person who was interviewed. Enter the code identifying the person who provided most of the data in cell 9902.

Code 1 = Operator or Manager

Code 2 = Operator's Spouse

Code 3 = Accountant or Bookkeeper

Code 4 = Someone Other than Code 1, 2, 3, or 9

Code 9 = Partner

## 2025 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey

### Interviewer's Manual

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The Mode Code identifies how the person was interviewed.

Code 1	=	Mail
Code 2	=	Telephone
Code 3	=	Face-to-Face
Code 6	=	e-mail
Code 7	=	Fax
Code 19	=	Other

Enum Code Record your enumerator ID number in cell 9998.

Item codes 9907 and 9908 are reserved for your Regional Field office use. These cells should remain blank unless your Regional Field office directs you otherwise.

Review the entire questionnaire before forwarding it to your supervisor. Make sure all items are complete, including 'Yes' and 'No' boxes checked, and dashes are entered in cells when the response is 'None' or 'No' as appropriate. Make sure notes are present and complete for unusual situation.