



**KENTUCKY**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE**

Jonathan Shell, Commissioner

# Local First School Nutrition

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# Local First School Nutrition Update



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## Progress since SB 5

- Implementation
- Uptake and Successes
- Federal Progress



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## Challenges

- For producers, processors, and schools
- Infrastructure needs and processing gaps



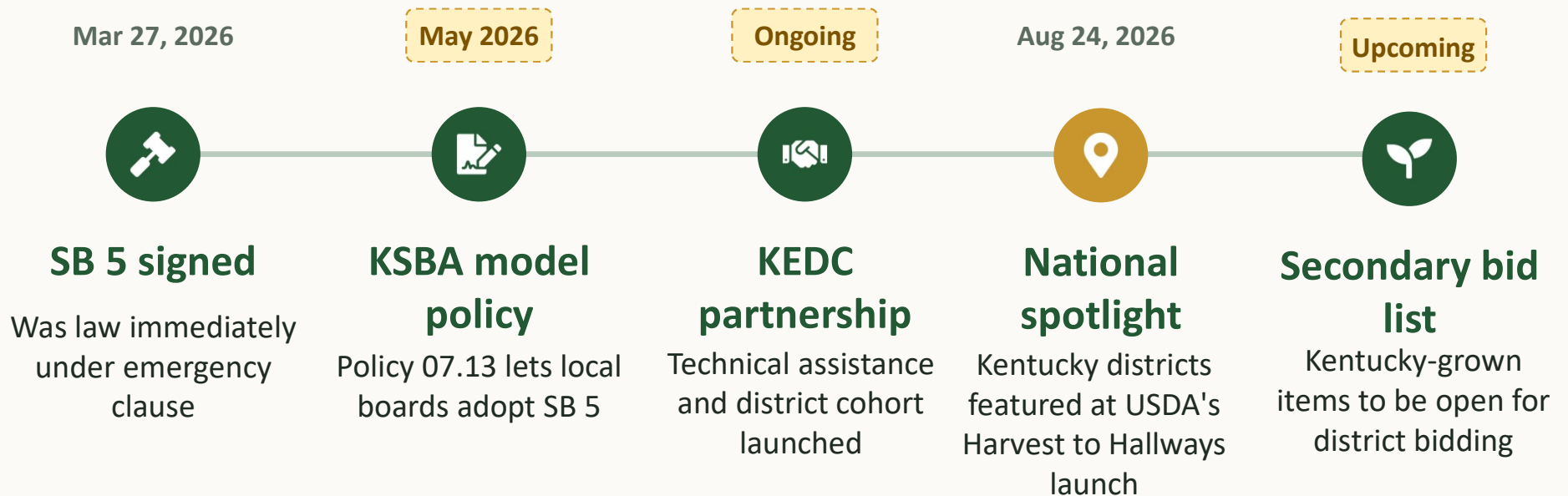
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## What comes next

- Where continued state involvement matters
- How Committee Members can help locally

# What Has Been Accomplished Since SB 5

*Six months from signing to building a statewide framework for buying Kentucky-grown*



## KDA - KEDC Cohort Collaboration



### **Menu mapping for seasonality**

Introduce new foods when Kentucky crops are in season



### **SKU swaps**

Replace existing menu items with Kentucky-grown equivalents



### **Cohort learning**

Small groups of districts sharing best practices & toolkits



### **Farmer introductions**

Connect food service directors with nearby producers



### **Forward contracting**

Commit to volumes ahead of the season so farmers can plant for schools



### **Dual-track buying**

Direct-to-farmer purchasing plus changes to prime vendor contracts

# KDA - KEDC Cohort Collaboration

*Forecasted Kentucky-grown items on the secondary bid list*



Apples



Broccoli



Cucumbers



Iceberg lettuce



Romaine  
lettuce



Carrots and  
Yellow onions



Cherry  
tomatoes



Strawberries



Beef patties



# Federal Momentum: Harvest to Hallways

*USDA and HHS initiative announced August 24, 2026, to bring more local food into school meals*

## \$50M

new school cafeteria infrastructure (up to \$70M with prior equipment grants)

## \$25M

additional Patrick Leahy Farm to School grants, FY 2026

## \$30M

NIH research on improving school meal nutrition with DEPEND grants

Harvest to Hallways is a program with incentives to help benefit schools and school districts that show the motivation to implement the policies.

### Expanding local procurement

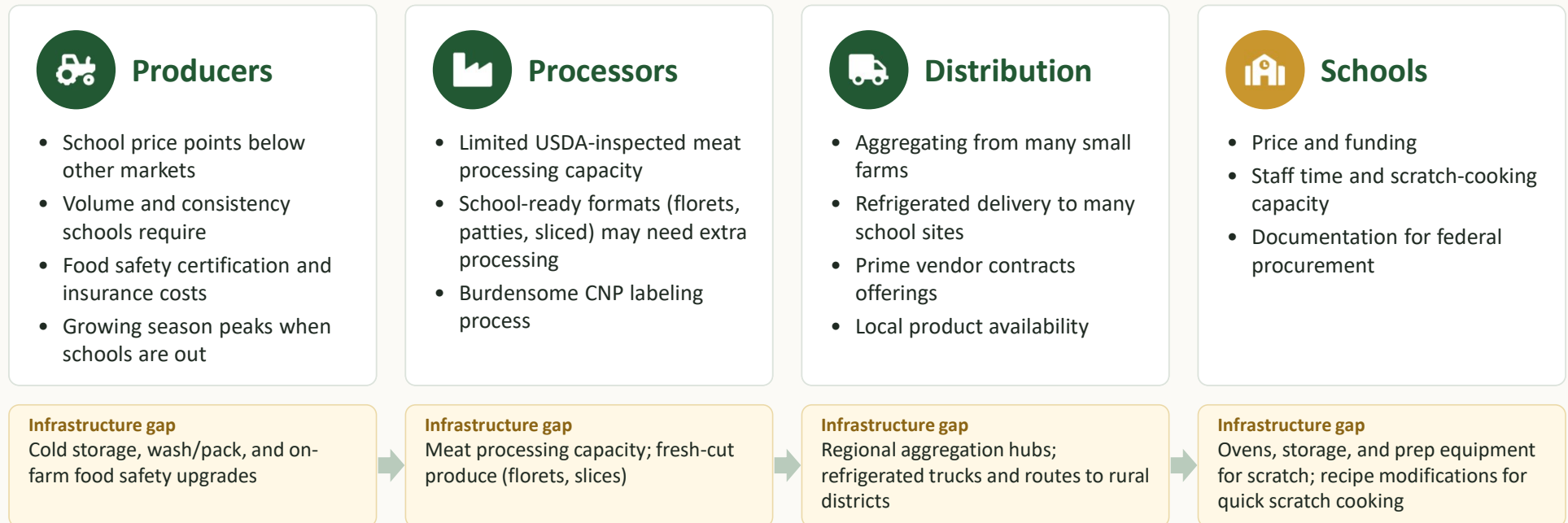
USDA is promoting its "Local Option" procurement pathway, and federal geographic preference rules let each district define "local" in its specifications (7 CFR 210.21). SB 5 removes the state-level bidding steps that stood in the way.

# Kentucky in the Front Row at Harvest to Hallways



# Challenges and Infrastructure Gaps

*SB 5 removed barriers; these remain at each step from Kentucky farm to school tray*



# Continued State Involvement and Potential Legislation

## Continue building on SB 5

### *Legislative and Executive Action Items*

- KDA technical assistance and the KEDC district cohort
- Farmer–school matchmaking and producer onboarding
- Staffing needs: New position(s) at KDA
- Encouraging local adoption of KSBA Model Policy
- Helping districts apply for federal Harvest to Hallways funds
- Processing center in Rockcastle County; Federal funding
- Infrastructure: Funding for aggregation, processing and cold storage

# How Agriculture Committee Members Can Help at Home

*Local leadership is what turns SB 5 from permission into purchases*



## **Ask your districts**

Ask superintendents and food service directors whether they are using SB 5, and what's stopping them if not.



## **Encourage policy adoption**

Urge local boards to adopt KSBA Model Policy 07.13 so the option is ready to use.



## **Make introductions**

Connect farmers and processors in your district with KDA's Farm to School team.



## **Share the wins**

Visit a cafeteria serving Kentucky-grown food and help tell the story to your communities.



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# Questions?

Thank you

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