

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Certified Local Farm and Fish Program

ANNUAL REPORTING MANUAL

Fiscal Year 2026

Reporting Period: July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026 (FY26)

Submission Deadline: September 30, 2026 at 11:59 PM

Finance & Procurement §§14-701—14-707

Document Version: FY2026.1 (ADA Compliant PDF)

This manual provides step-by-step guidance for Maryland state agencies and public universities to complete their mandatory annual food procurement reports. All reporting files must be submitted electronically to the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Table of Contents

I. Definitions	Page 2
II. Program Overview and Sourcing Mandates	Page 2
III. Mandatory Reporting Obligations	Page 4
IV. Step-by-Step Reporting Instructions	Page 4
A. Microsoft Excel Startup Rules (Excel, Editing and Saving)	Page 4
B. 'Start Here' Tab Instructions (Unit Information)	Page 5
C. 'Annual Metrics' Tab Instructions (Purchases Log)	Page 5
D. 'Waivers Requested' Tab Instructions (Outreach Log)	Page 7
V. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)	Page 8
VI. Contact Information and Support	Page 8

I. Definitions

i. Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers

For the purposes of this report, the directory of approved farms and seafood vendors is abbreviated as '**Certified Local Providers.**'

- **Certified Local Farm:** A farm with a Maryland Department of Agriculture nutrient management plan or that meets Maryland's nutrient management requirements can be eligible to become a Certified Local Farm.
- **Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers:** A seafood dealer licensed as a Tidal Fish Dealer with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources can be eligible to become a Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider (e.g. wild blue catfish).
- **CLFF Directory:** The official, searchable list of these certified vendors is available online and updated continuously by the MDA.

ii. Solicitation

A solicitation is a public notice of bidding, offers, or expressions of interest stating the nature of the procurement, deadlines, and technical specifications. This includes: (a) legal advertisements; (b) newspaper notices; (c) bid board notices; (d) bid or proposal documents, including Invitation for Bids (IFB) or Request for Proposals (RFP); or (e) eMaryland Marketplace Advantage (eMMA) notices.

II. Program Overview and Sourcing Mandates

The State of Maryland created the Certified Local Farm and Fish (CLFF) Program to encourage state agencies and public four-year universities to achieve an overall goal of purchasing **20 percent of their food** from Certified Local Farms and Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers. Each procurement unit must structure its food procurement procedures to achieve this 20% target of the unit's total dollar value of food procurement contracts, whether sourced through prime vendors, subcontractors, or direct farm-gate purchases.

This program was established in 2020 by **House Bill 1488** (codified in Md. Code Ann. Agriculture Article, §2-103 and State Finance and Procurement Article, §§14-701—14-707). It was expanded in 2023 by **House Bill 63** to incorporate invasive species, and modified procedurally in 2024 by **Senate Bill 290**.

III. Mandatory Reporting Obligations

All Maryland state agencies and public universities that purchase food are required to submit an Annual Report and, if applicable, a Waiver Request to the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) on or before **September 30** of each year. For Fiscal Year 2026, reports are due on **September 30, 2026, by 11:59 PM**.

Consequences of Non-Compliance (Non-Responsive Status): If an agency fails to submit the completed Excel reporting form on time, the unit will be reported as **'Non-Responsive'** in the consolidated annual report submitted to the General Assembly and the Board of Public Works (BPW) on October 31. The agency is solely responsible for obtaining the necessary purchasing data from its supply chain, including prime contractors and food service management companies.

IV. Step-by-Step Instructions for Completing the Report

A. Microsoft Excel

To ensure a seamless reporting experience and preserve data integrity, please follow these instructions exactly as stated when opening the spreadsheet file:

- 1. MANDATORY Microsoft Excel Usage:** The report form is a specialized spreadsheet designed to run specifically in **Microsoft Excel**. It contains automated relational formulas, dropdown lists, and cross-sheet totals that are incompatible with other spreadsheet software. If your agency does not have access to Microsoft Excel, contact local.food@maryland.gov immediately to coordinate an alternative reporting format.
- 2. Enable Editing and Save Your Information:** Upon opening the file, Microsoft Excel's Protected View top bar will appear. Click the **'Enable Editing'** button immediately to unlock the cells and macros. To avoid losing your progress, make sure to **save your information continuously** as you fill out the report.

Preparation Checklist: Documents and Information to Gather

Before entering any data, please assemble the following records:

- **Raw Food Invoices:** Isolate raw food purchases for Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026). Exclude non-food expenses like paper goods, service fees, kitchen equipment, or labor.
- **Certified Provider Details:** Gather net purchase amounts (the farm-gate price received directly by the farmer, excluding distributor margins), purchase dates, product descriptions, and buyer identities.
- **Outreach Records for Waivers:** If your local spending is below 20%, you must collect communication logs (dates, emails, phones, names of representatives, copies of solicitations sent, and specific obstacles identified) to justify a waiver.

B. 'Start Here' Worksheet Tab (Unit Information)

This is the initial administrative tab. It utilizes a **color-coded cell system** to simplify data entry and guide the user through the process. Ensure the following points are completed sequentially:

- **Grey Cells (Dropdowns):** Choose your agency or university name from the integrated dropdown list (Point 1). If your unit is not listed, select 'Other:' and type your full agency name directly into the adjacent blue field.
- **Blue Cells (Manual Entry):** Type the primary Point of Contact (POC) information, including Full Name, official Title, Email, and Phone Number (Section 1.1). Under Section 1.2, indicate if your food services are 'Self-Operate' or operated by an external Food Service Management Company (FMC) like Aramark or Sodexo (and enter their company name).
- **Green Cells (Automated Totals):** These cells display automated calculations (Point 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6). *Do not attempt to type over or alter formulas in green cells.*
- **Yellow Help Boxes:** Clicking on any input cell will trigger an instant on-screen yellow tooltip describing the exact data required and helpful tips.

C. 'Annual Metrics' Worksheet Tab (Purchases Log)

The 'Annual Metrics' tab tracks your agency's overall food budget and details individual local transactions completed during Fiscal Year 2026. Complete this tab by entering the following information:

Point 2.1 - Total Food Expenditure (\$): Enter the total manual dollar amount spent purely on food purchases. Do not include operating fees, plates, cups, napkins, labor, or equipment.

Tracking Methodology for Self-Operated Facilities:

To track raw food expenditure, query accounting systems for CPC transactions and the following Comptroller Expenditure Object Codes:

Comptroller Code	Expenditure Focus / Details
OBJ 0811	Food Services - Direct procurement of dining services
OBJ 0920	Food - Standard raw materials and ingredients
OBJ 0901	Agriculture - Agricultural purchasing with raw food components

Review CPC card transactions using the following **Merchant Category Codes (MCC): 5300, 5411, 5422, 5441, 5451, 5462, and 5499.**

Section 2.2 - Purchases Log Columns: Complete the detailed transaction log to record your local purchases. Each column corresponds to a specific requirement:

- **Select Certified Provider (Grey Cell):** Select the certified local farm or seafood provider. If they are not listed, select 'Other:' and enter their Name, Cert #, and Address.
- **Farm/Fish Provider Gate Price (Blue Cell):** Enter the gate price (the net amount received directly by the farmer, excluding distributor markup or logistics fees). This is a statutory requirement to ensure direct community impact.

- **Product Description (Blue Cell):** Enter the quantity, product type, and packaging (e.g. '5 cases x 25 lb of Blue Catfish fillets' or '6 cases x 25 lb of Kale').
- **Enter Purchase Date (Blue Cell):** Enter the date of the invoice/delivery (MM/DD/YYYY). All dates must fall strictly in FY26 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026).
- **Identify Direct Buyer (Blue Cell):** Enter the name of the entity transacting directly with the farmer (your agency, the FMC, a GPO, or a Distributor).

D. 'Waivers Requested' Worksheet Tab (Good Faith Outreach)

If your Overall Participation (green cell at Point 2.3) falls below the **20% statutory goal**, the green cell at Point 3 will display **'YES'**, indicating that a formal waiver request is required. In this event, you are legally obligated to complete the **Efforts Table (Point 3.1)**. Reporting requires documented proof of proactive local outreach. Fill out the table columns as follows:

Person Contacting Provider (Blue Cell): Enter the full name, official email, phone, and represented company of the staff member who initiated contact (e.g., 'Jane Doe, j.doe@email.com, 410-555-0123, Aramark').

Certified Local Provider Contacted (Grey Cell): Select the local farm or fish dealer from the dropdown. If not listed, choose 'Other:' and type their Certification Number, Name, and full Physical Address.

Did Provider Respond to Solicitation? (Grey Cell): Select 'Yes' if they replied. Select 'No' if multiple contact attempts via both phone and email went unanswered.

Enter Contact Dates (Blue Cell): Input the dates when contact was made (MM/DD/YYYY). Separate multiple dates with commas to prove persistent good faith engagement (e.g. '10/12/2025, 10/15/2025').

Provider Contact Details (Blue Cell): Enter the provider representative's Full Name, Physical Address, Phone Number, and official Email (e.g., 'John Smith, 123 Farm Rd, smith@email.com, 410-555-0100').

Solicitation Info Shared (Blue Cell): Briefly describe the contract opportunity shared (e.g., product types, quantities, delivery frequency, submission rules, and deadlines).

Sourcing Obstacle / Limitations Identified (Grey Cell): Select the main reason the transaction was not completed. Options include: *Volume (too large or small)*, *Supply Frequency*, *Quality*, *Price (not competitive)*, *Payment Method/Time*, *Food Safety*, or *Insurance*. If none of these fit, select 'Other:' and type your specific obstacle in the formula bar.

Procurement Planning Method (Grey/Blue Cell): Select your procurement strategy. Select 'LAST-MINUTE' if contact was reactive to an immediate shortage with no planning flexibility. Otherwise, specify your proactive planning method.

Voluntary Progress Updates (Point 4): Click the dropdown to opt-in for progress reports due **January 30 and May 30, 2027**. Opting in qualifies your unit for technical assistance from the MDA to help identify local sources and streamline compliance.

V. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Q: My agency uses a Foodservice Management Company and doesn't directly buy food. Do I still need to report?

A: Yes, your prime contractor and subcontractors would need to send the information to the state agency procurement officer to report out. MDA can also offer contract language if the contract needs to be revised.

Q: There are no Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers listed in my area, what should I do?

A: Search for local producers in your area that are convenient for you and encourage them to get the certification. It's easy, free and takes only 5-10 minutes to fill this form.

Q: I can't find farmers in my county, what should I do?

A: Expand your search to the entire state of Maryland. Some producers distribute their products more than an hour away from their farm. Or, ask your distributor to buy from the Certified Local Farms and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Directory.

Q: My business model doesn't permit me to buy directly from the farmer and I use foodservice distribution companies, what should I do?

A: Talk with your distribution company, ask them to buy from Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers.

Q: Our agency or prime/subcontractor is already buying from farmers in Maryland but they aren't Certified, what should I do?

A: Talk with the farmers and encourage them to get the certification. It's easy, free and takes only 5-10 minutes to fill this form.

Q: Our agency/university signed the contract with my food management contractor before the law took effect. Do we still need to complete the report?

A: The law went into effect on March 14, 2021. If your contract was signed before that date, you are not required to submit the report. However, you are welcome to submit a voluntary report. Doing so is a great way to support Maryland's local food economy and farmers. It can also help you prepare for future reporting requirements when the law does apply to your contracts.

VI. Contact Information and Support

For program inquiries, reporting spreadsheets, technical assistance, or directory access, contact the program administrators at the Maryland Department of Agriculture:

- **Program Email:** local.food@maryland.gov (Highly recommended for inquiries)
- **Office Phone:** (410) 841-5816
- **Mailing Address:** Maryland Department of Agriculture, CLFF Program, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401