



# Complete List of Task Force Recommendations

This list is aggregated from each Directive, detailed in the Directives Section of the 2023 Alaska Food Security and Independence Task Force Report. Further discussion and context about these recommendations are provided in the respective sections of the report.



## Institutional Procurement of Locally Harvested and Produced Food

### DIRECTIVES

- ★ Identify factors, including regulatory or statutory burdens that might discourage or prevent locally harvested and produced food from being purchased by federal, State, and local agencies, institutions, and schools.
- ★ Provide recommendations that increase the procurement and use of Alaska-sourced foods within State and local agencies, institutions, and schools, including any administrative and statutory changes that are required.

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Further expand and enforce Local Purchase Preference program
- Embrace and fund Farm-to-School and Fish-to-School
- Change reimbursement-based programs to grant payment models through State assistance to pay up-front expenses on both State and Federal grants
- Support and inform Alaska Food and Farm Caucus
- Incentivize producers to fill out the Census of Agriculture and publicly report data annually, within the state
- Create free access to all K-12 breakfast and lunch programs for students
- Create incentives for private industry to invest in Alaska food infrastructure such as distributed and shared cold storage and processing facilities
- Assist Tribes in the development of public partnership relationships to procure Alaskan grown food
- Identify Federal Agency barriers, especially within FDA and USDA
- Facilitate wider network of Future Farmers of America (FFA)

### INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- Statewide, distributed cache system to better ensure consistent supply and meet year-round demand
- Cold-chain transportation and storage intra-state
- Aggregators and/or wholesalers to assist in the sell and movement of Alaska Grown products
- Additional farmers, trained and ready to meet the nutritional needs of Alaskans
- An Alaska USDA position to help facilitate connections and contracts between producers and institutions who can help navigate additional state and federal funding for institutional buyers and growers

### RESEARCH NEEDS

- Determine specific production requirements to meet all school, hospital, and senior center annual needs. This study must include nutritional considerations beyond national baseline requirements as well as traditional foods.
- Understand the opportunity of available sourcing options, and logistics for rural and urban populations for prescription produce programs.
- Project food assistance, financial need and community impact for the state by 2035, taking into account expected increasingly low fisheries escapements and more regular climate events.
- Further analysis of controlled environment growing opportunities, using circumpolar case studies.
- Review aggregated policy scans—such as the New England State Local Food Procurement Policy Scan, for replicable policy actions.



# Producer Barriers to Launch, Scale, and Access Markets

## DIRECTIVE

- ★ Identify barriers that farmers, stock growers, fishermen, mariculture professionals, and others engaged in the growing, harvesting, or raising of food face when starting a business or getting their products into the Alaska market. Provide recommendations on how the State can address those obstacles, including through administrative or statutory changes.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Creation of a Department of Agriculture & Mariculture or Agriculture & Mariculture Subcabinet
- Create a stand-alone Alaska Department of Agriculture, instead of housing it as a division in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
  - ▶ Alternatively, adequately staff the Division of Agriculture to successfully accomplish their mission to promote and encourage agriculture development and growth
- Consider funding and development path similar to Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI)
- Update and help facilitate participation in the Agriculture Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF) terms and policies to increase access to farmer capital
- Leverage newly created agriculture-related grant funding streams, created by HB 298
- List DEC Environmental Health Lab PST testing as an essential service
- Advocate for the repeal or exceptions to the Jones Act
- Establish and maintain clearinghouse to match restaurants with local suppliers
- Work with the farming community to understand where leases for State-owned land should be expanded; ensure agriculture activities are happening on these lands
- Ensure feed and agriculture product traceability is employed and enforced
- Better utilize rural air carriers traveling between communities, for food security and trade
- Establish Alaska Agriculture Product Registration guidelines and labeling laws for improved traceability and revenue, while ensuring this does not create new barriers to entry
- Ensure local communities and tribal entities are represented in new or revised policy
- Expand the new Cooperative Agreement for the Alaska Local Food Purchase Assistance Program
- Fund and facilitate grants for large-scale commercial operations, such as those for building facilities like deep-pit design feedlots for cattle, hogs, and chickens
- Create statutory change to require state entities buy Alaskan food when available prior to putting out large-scale contracts that cannot be locally sourced. Refer to AS 36.30.332 for reference.

## INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- Facilitate aquatic farm equipment for lease, rent, or loan.
- Create large-scale animal husbandry operations to both produce more meat in-state and create inputs for fertilizer.
  - ▶ Large-scale animal-feeding operations create opportunity for decentralized meat chain, cow/calf operations, feedlots, slaughter, and ability for producers to leverage economies of scale with higher output
- Distributed meat processing and storage facilities to make animal transport less onerous for producers and less stressful for animals
- Build small-scale community freezer capacity to create disaster preparedness stores, and create seasonal storage for local producers
- Work with Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) to increase in-state packaging and processing manufacturing capacity, with focus on Alaska produce, livestock, poultry, Alaska seafood, shellfish, kelp, and imported produce/commodities.
- De-risk the farming environment by securing long term funding and program support in areas such as:
  - ▶ Ensure inspection and certification services
  - ▶ Farmer access to responsible credit
  - ▶ Decrease barriers to entry in retail environment through State collaboration
  - ▶ Distribution infrastructure
  - ▶ Survey farmers for solutions
  - ▶ Complete cost-benefit analysis of government intervention
- Build grain drying and storage facilities near areas where grains are being grown
- Create or support the creation of a farm equipment rental program or library
- Fund post-secondary agriculture research and education programs in the University of Alaska system such as crop development and climate controlled growing
- Increase in-state crop and oyster seed stock
- Increase in-state production of poultry chicks
- Increase in-state animal feed supply

## RESEARCH NEEDS

- Conduct an analysis to understand the commercial and retail Alaska Grown demand for local products, with particular attention to commodities.
- Research in-state, out-of-state, international market size and purchasing power for Alaska Grown, or complete a targeted analysis of existing reports.
- Explore the marine barge cost reduction options for producers and purchasers.



# Wild Foods and Increasing Abundance

## DIRECTIVE

- ★ Assess the levels of wild game and fish harvests in Alaska. Suggest measures that would increase the abundance and harvest of wild game, fish, and food by Alaskans.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Regulate pesticide sprays to include consideration of wild harvested foods.
- Work with Federal entities to change Marine Mammal Protection Act to replace the blood quantum requirement in current regulations with proof of membership in a federally recognized Tribe.
- Include wild, Traditional Alaskan foods in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).
- Expand cooperative programs with Tribes (e.g. government-to-government agreements) and build capacity for cooperation as a way for ANCSA Tribes to have more voice in food security.
  - ▶ From the tribal perspective there is opportunity to improve management through application of Traditional Knowledge in a cooperative structure.
  - ▶ Help Tribes build capacity and opportunities for management through workforce development, training, monitoring, and collecting baseline and other data.
  - ▶ Increased State support for creating cooperative agreements or protected land-use designations.
- Address bycatch by changing regulation and management in sensitive ecosystems.
- Create policy solutions that address maximizing food production on lands that are federally managed.
  - ▶ The State cannot manage resources on federal land (ex: fire control on federal land to increase moose production is difficult).
- Enact policies and increase regulatory protections for wild populations that maintain healthy habitats for the fish and wildlife harvested by Alaskans.
  - ▶ A major threat to the abundance of wild fish and game populations that should be given serious consideration is the development and potential development of mining and oil development. It is well understood that these industries are an important part of Alaska's economy, however, any future projects should be weighed against the potential to disrupt, diminish or decimate wild species stocks that are also part of Alaska's economy (both cash and subsistence economies).
- Address user group conflicts in a way that prioritizes community and household food security.
  - ▶ Examples: Subsistence versus commercial use areas, visitor/sport fishing competing with subsistence in traditional use local sockeye streams, charter operations harvesting shrimp and crab to the detriment of personal use.
- Enact policies and regulations that prioritize harvest and food security for all Alaskans above harvest and export by out-of-state visitors.
- Increase ability to circulate subsistence foods
  - ▶ Example: a local Tribe has funds for special hunts/harvests to be donated foods for Elders, Youth, and Traditional Foods programs.
- Ensure policy for mariculture development includes a consultation process with local communities and Tribes to evaluate if the proposed site identified for the lease is a traditional use area, and/or an area heavily used by residents to avoid user conflict.
- Maintain predator control programs to maintain ungulate populations for human harvest.
- Foster an increased wild harvest of shellfish.
- Improve PST testing and awareness through a State program that routinely tests traditional shellfish harvest areas for PST and high vibrio danger.
- Monitor more locations and target more species
  - ▶ Example: monitor littleneck and butter clams, which can hold PST for at least two years.
  - ▶ Misinformation and fear may currently be generated unnecessarily because of focus on the wrong species/locations.
- Change practices to better understand what's happening and then change the narrative. Listen to traditional harvesters and incorporate traditional knowledge in testing programs.
- Make PST management an "essential service" and provide deeper support and capacity than currently exists under a single authority (DEC).
  - ▶ If funding is cut, there is no backup/path for recourse or for maintaining programs and public education.
- Establish cooperative agreements with Tribes.



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## INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- Increase access to mobile and modular wild harvest butchering space, such as outfitted shipping containers.
- Increase in-state fish processing infrastructure. This will prevent catch being sent to Seattle and brought back, as happens currently in many Alaska fisheries. This will reduce the cost of locally-caught fish and help make fresh fish available to Alaskans in the summer.
- Use existing commercial fisheries assets to bring food back to communities.
- For example, commercial licensing for salmon allows fishermen to retain part of their harvest and bring back to communities and neighbors.
- Invest in education programs aimed at increasing harvest effort, especially in younger generations. This will:
  - ▶ Raise awareness of the nutritional value of wild foods
  - ▶ Provide more information on what opportunities exist to participate and what resources are available for wild harvest and/or for purchase from producers
  - ▶ Provide and support programs that train people to hunt, fish, prepare, preserve and otherwise participate in other wild harvests

- ▶ Advertise more broadly that SNAP program funds can be applied toward supplies and gear needed for wild harvest. This is an important access issue—many food insecure households that could benefit from wild harvests do not have the equipment or gear to participate
- Educate about which wild harvests require licensing and reporting, and which do not.

## RESEARCH NEEDS

- Invest in research that helps maximize resource yields and ensures adequate stock assessments across the state.
- Examine how the carrying capacity of Alaska lands is currently being measured and ensure the methods follow best practices in ecological and management sciences.
- Add to current research on ocean acidification, the effects on shellfish, and future production of shellfish.
- Research the potential impact of establishing Sockeye salmon hatcheries in Southeast Alaska to enhance food security.
- Incorporate Traditional Knowledge of streams and habitat restoration models. Use Sockeye hatchery research in South Central as a potential model.



## Fishery Shortfalls and Disaster Response

### DIRECTIVE

- ★ Recommend a program to assist communities and households impacted by fishery shortfalls and disasters.

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Assist impacted communities and households by preventing fishery shortfalls and disasters.
- Adopt management and harvest policies that support healthy ecosystems and therefore support healthy people.
  - ▶ Many Tribal communities do not want food boxes; they want to practice traditional ways of life. Give priority and assistance to subsistence communities over sport and commercial interests.
  - ▶ Priority for subsistence communities is currently sandwiched between the State's need to meet the requirements of the North Pacific Salmon Treaty and commercial fleet harvest activity.
  - ▶ Recognize that a lack of food in rural areas causes an influx of people into urban centers where food programs are already maxed out. Policies should account for the long term actual costs of food assistance to subsistence communities and individual harvesters versus the cost of management that supports subsistence.



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- Better fund and bolster bycatch recovery programs to ensure distribution, avoid underreporting and create consequences for non-compliance.
- Explore ways to legally use bycatch
  - ▶ Use tax credits to incentivize bycatch use and distribution.
  - ▶ Alaska's film crew and TV production tax credits, and oil and gas tax incentives could be used as models.
- Expand cooperative management opportunities to leverage federal dollars to create strong and meaningful infrastructure projects throughout the state.
  - ▶ Greater collaboration between the State & Tribes could leverage more federal funding.
  - ▶ Align Tribes with trusted partners to increase their capacity to apply for grants, where needed.
- Work to increase federal funding for fisheries observer programs.
- Increase the bypass mail system to increase storage at distribution and transfer hubs, expand cargo capacity for more timely deliveries and fewer delays due to shipment prioritization, and improve tracking to prevent items from sitting on the tarmac that should be either refrigerated or frozen to better support food distribution.
  - ▶ Currently, pallets of food are not given priority on flights and often are left on the tarmac until space is available on a later flight. This leads to food waste as a result of freezing and/or spoiling due to high temperatures.
- Educate the public and institutions about regulations to allow fish caught in personal use fisheries to be donated to food banks and other donation programs.
  - ▶ Precedence exists through the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) in Anchorage, which accepts donations of hunted and gathered foods to their inpatient food service program. Donations they can accept include most wild game meat and bones (caribou, moose, deer, sheep, goat, and beaver), most fish and seafood, seal meat and fat, and plants and berries.
  - ▶ DEC allows donation of:
    - ▶ Hatchery salmon from ADFG to a food bank (18 AAC 31.200(b)(2))
    - ▶ Seafood to a non-profit or institution if the seafood is whole, gutted, or gilled at 18 AAC 31.205
    - ▶ Other traditional foods are allowed (plants, most game animals)
- ▶ Not allowed due to the high-risk nature of these products (18 AAC 31.210):
  - ▶ Fermented seafood products
  - ▶ Smoked, canned, or reduced-oxygen packaged fish unless from a permitted processor.
  - ▶ Personally harvested molluscan shellfish
- Impose a tax on the large commercial fisheries operators (e.g., processors) to support community subsistence activities.
  - ▶ Commercial fishermen are individual operators and already have a heavy tax burden—ask commercial fleets for donations but don't impose new taxes.

## INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- Invest in adequate dry, cold, and frozen storage at distribution hubs specifically for bypass food products and food security improvement in communities.
  - ▶ The State's experience from the last two years demonstrated that a lot of cold storage is needed to make the donations work.
  - ▶ Determine required storage needs at hubs and how to distribute from hubs to communities.
  - ▶ Build in-state expertise to be housed through the Division of Agriculture to run food logistics and maintain onsite emergency storage caches. Partner with experts at retailers and incentivize them to bring more expertise to the state. For example, Walmart's expertise with 'mixing centers', Carrs/Safeway is the largest retailer for warehousing, AC Stores are widely distributed across the state.
  - ▶ Incentivize more retailers to cache more in-state (Note: See also Directive on Disaster Food Caches)
- Invest in infrastructure that supports food logistics and shortens supply chains, including at node locations that reduce the distance between harvest and distribution.
  - ▶ This could possibly reduce costs of food generally and also in the case of disaster assistance.
  - ▶ This is a cross-cutting need across the Directives, and overlaps with the Directive on Food Caches—which requires distributed processing, storage, and more regional dry and cold food storage to support the distribution network.
  - ▶ These investments could be State supported.



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## RESEARCH NEEDS

- Inventory both existing programs and the need for new programs assisting communities impacted by fisheries disasters and sharing resources across the state.
- Conduct an audit of existing infrastructure and infrastructure needs. Identify opportunities to leverage transportation, processing, storage and other existing infrastructure. Identify ways to reduce costs, localize, and shorten the distance between harvest and distribution.
- Identify who is already doing last-mile distribution to help address some of the transportation barriers.
- Research opportunities to incentivize sharing of fish caught in both commercial and personal use fisheries via food banks and/or other donation programs.
- Conduct more research to identify the full monetary value of subsistence fisheries, and promote understanding of the cultural value of subsistence fisheries/harvests.
  - ▶ A recent study of cost to replace subsistence-caught Bristol Bay salmon is an example.
- Research if hatcheries could help address shortfalls.
  - ▶ State runs two hatcheries for sport fisheries.
  - ▶ All others are private, nonprofit producing salmon to enhance commercial, sport, subsistence, and personal use fisheries.
- Research existing programs/approaches and new ways to support the harvest of more culturally acceptable alternative foods.
- Examine bycatch programs for opportunities for improvement in prevention and distribution of non-target species.
  - ▶ NOAA observers (observer program and electronic data collection systems) are sample based and not on every vessel, and not on board for the full season.
  - ▶ The observer program is under funded and fisheries specific, which could lead to underreporting.
  - ▶ Most of the bycatch is not distributed to rural communities that are losing subsistence runs. Examine and improve where the bycatch is distributed.
  - ▶ Bycatch is often multi-species and multi-age (meaning throwback age or appropriate harvest age), making aggregation and distribution complicated.
- Calculate the costs of population shifts caused by food insecurity in the state. Recognize that a lack of food in rural areas causes an influx of people into urban centers where food programs are already maxed out. Policies should account for the long term actual costs of food assistance to subsistence communities and individual harvesters versus the cost of management that supports subsistence.
- Determine required storage needs at transportation and community hubs and how to distribute products from hubs to communities to eliminate waste.



## Preparing for Disaster: Food Caches

### DIRECTIVE

- ★ Assess the need for disaster food caches within the State; and how the caches can be developed utilizing Alaskan-sourced foods.

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Provide additional funding to Cooperative Extension Services.
- Create State capacity to offset food storage energy costs.
- Support small Alaskan growers by promoting local production through advertising and incentives that tie local production to an increase of food security and a decrease in the need for food caches. Most of Alaska's producers are considered small-scale by USDA standards (under 10 acres of production)
- Through the utilization of state land, create no cost, 10-acre plots and root cellars for rural community use that include animal and pet feed in planning efforts
- Prioritize local processing when possible in all state and federal contracts—create local food purchasing agreements with farmers, food hubs, and food distributors
- Position the State of Alaska to be the biggest buyer of Alaska Grown and harvested products, helping to bolster surplus and storage of local foods to assist in disaster relief efforts



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- Continue to engage FEMA in planning efforts
  - ▶ Examine the delta between immediate response and FEMA intervention. There is roughly a two to three day supply right now, with what's in the state.
- Create public education campaigns on the need for household preparedness to ensure families have seven days of food supply on hand
  - ▶ Encourage household security from three to five days to 14 days
  - ▶ Provide additional tools to address the cost barriers to preparation
  - ▶ Create an engaging disaster goods store cookbook
- Encourage and incentivize food stocks in the private industry. Engage with local distributors to identify barriers to diversify food stocks
- Fully define and operationalize disaster terms: Eustress, Distress, Disaster, and Crisis
- Establish an autonomous State Department or Division to streamline food security efforts
- Prioritize cooperation with Tribes and local governments which could lead to a reduction of costs to the state by contracting with local communities or Tribes
- Follow the recommendations of the Director of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Director and local jurisdiction input for implementing the appropriate response for food caches and food security preparedness
- Champion transportation investments to restore air, port, and ferry transportation infrastructure that are as important as having a financially sustainable amount of shelf-stable disaster supplies located in Alaska
- Create a distributed network of community-accessible root cellars
- Invest in Alaska-based processing for:
  - ▶ Alaska Grown produce, livestock, and poultry
  - ▶ Alaska seafood, shellfish, and kelp
  - ▶ Imported produce/commodities

## RESEARCH NEEDS

## INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- Build and appropriate enough funding for a long-term distributed network of climate-controlled storage
  - ▶ Low-energy, low-cost storage should be a priority
  - ▶ Employ and mainstream Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to address food storage technologies appropriate to various Alaskan regions
    - ▶ For example, there are food preservation techniques to help foods store better, like saltless forms of processing and storage and dried product that may need rehydration
- Climate-controlled food cache structures for both disaster and commercial uses. These may be built into airports and schools.
- Determine applicability of federal grants and consider creation and maintenance of a federal grant clearing house.
- Complete a regional food chain assessment of needs throughout Alaska
  - ▶ As a state, we don't know fully what is needed
  - ▶ Considerations to explore:
    - ▶ Modes of transportation, preservation, types of storage (mobile/brick-and-mortar)
    - ▶ Identify what is required to assess the need
      - ▶ Example: examine the 2017 USDA Agricultural Census; take the amount of food produced and divide on per person's needs to establish a baseline
- Access the differences/overlaps in needs between rural and urban communities, considering their existing infrastructure and capacities
  - ▶ Examine opportunities for greater rural food security and transportation options—for example, empty planes between rural communities present an opportunity
- Review state and city regulations that disallow certain food security activities
  - ▶ Example: A city yard could support goats that could feed infants/toddlers if there's no milk in a community or donations of personal harvest fish and game could be donated to community organizations.



# Alaska Food System Research Needs

The following research needs were highlighted in addition to those listed previously in this section.

## DIRECTIVE

★ Identify research needed to support and encourage increased consumption and production of Alaskan foods sourced within the State.

- Systematic review and analysis of producer needs, with producer-centric approach and inclusion.
- Determine funding potential and use of Federal funds, considering the land grant status of entire University of Alaska system.
- Research accuracy of “95% of food is imported”
  - ▶ Create a publicly accessible food security dashboard to track local food production, imports, and consumption levels. Measuring impact is essential to show efforts are improving food security in the State.
- Explore Prescription Produce programs, in partnership with healthcare providers
- Economic impact of food insecurity, both long-term and immediate crisis-driven
- Determine the amount of federal match dollars to be earned with State-led food security initiatives as well as the economic loss of not pursuing those dollars
- Comparative analysis of other state budgets, concerning the reallocation of agricultural programs to more specific budget lines to better insulate agricultural program investments from administration changes
  - ▶ Example: Plant Materials Center current budget approval flow
  - ▶ State of Alaska > Dept. of Natural Resources > Division of Mining, Land, and Water > Division of Agriculture > PMC
- Develop a University of Alaska integrated workforce team to leverage grant funding and increase research training within the state
  - ▶ Example: The UA system is comprised of faculty at all UA institutions doing work and teaching across the food systems spectrum (production, biology, marketing, consumption patterns, policy development, engineering, etc.), yet opportunities for collaboration and integration have not been maximized
- Increase public awareness of upcoming and existing funding opportunities to assist with startup food production, scaling agricultural projects, acquiring land, and completing business and feasibility plans
  - ▶ Connect Alaskans with Inflation Reduction Act funding to assist in paying for energy and sustainability improvements to their food-related businesses



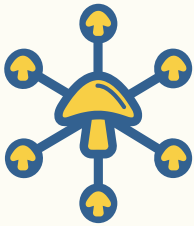
# Further Discussions Needed

Because impactful and sustainable food system change often requires an iterative and multi-sector approach, many potential recommendations that were discussed warrant additional discussion, research, and stakeholder input before consensus may be reached. The following topics were discussed by Task Force members, who ultimately decided they required more time and attention than was available. This work may be continued by any or all groups involved in food policy and decision-making, such as The Alaska Food Strategy Task Force, established by House Bill 298, The state legislative Alaska Food and Farm Caucus, the Alaska State Office Of Food Security, as well as additional stakeholders and regulatory entities.



## OVERALL

- Consider impact and policy implications of the term "co-management" rather than more general terms such as "cooperative". Due to the lack of consensus, the Task Force opted to use "cooperative" in this report.



## WILD FOODS AND INCREASING ABUNDANCE

- Recognize Tribal rights to subsistence.
  - ▶ The State could adopt best practice policies supporting Indigenous subsistence rights, such as those developed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for compliance with Section 810 of the Federal Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) which requires an evaluation of subsistence uses and needs for any permitted activities on federal lands in Alaska.
  - ▶ Preference for harvest will directly support food security across the state.
  - ▶ Understand and acknowledge the difference in terminology and legal rights and implications of using the terms wild harvest, subsistence, and personal use.
    - ▶ Alaska Native peoples use subsistence to refer to their traditional harvests, and subsistence rights are guaranteed by ANILCA.
    - ▶ While acknowledging there are certain rights afforded to Tribes and Tribal Members with the term subsistence, the State of Alaska uses subsistence to apply to all residents.
  - ▶ Consider harvest of wild foods essential for rural and urban Alaskans.



## INSTITUTIONAL PROCUREMENT

- Revise "Farm-to-institution" model and revamp program to be more sustainable and long-term.