

Friends of the Farm **FAQ for Farmers & Ranchers**

How are purchases for the Friends of the Farm program made?

The Friends of the Farm program can purchase through two arrangements: 1) spot purchases, buying surplus when available; and, 2) advanced written purchase agreements for upcoming seasons.

What products are eligible for purchase for the Friends of the Farm program?

The Friends of the Farm program can purchase any Arizona-grown fruits, vegetables, or animal proteins (including eggs, dairy, and meat). However, we aren't able to purchase all products at all times.

In addition to providing additional market opportunities for Arizona's small farms and ranches, the Friends of the Farm program is designed to provide diversity to food bank clients. As we make Friends of the Farm purchases, we are working to complement other products being distributed at the same time.

For those interested in planning advanced purchase agreements/contract growing, we will start the conversation by determining the products and quantities you are most confident and comfortable growing.

What volume of product are you looking to purchase?

Generally, we are looking for larger volumes in order to provide consistency to clients, which means we're purchasing a pallet rather than just a handful of cases. But it always depends, so feel free to reach out to us to ask!

What farms are eligible to participate in the program?

Any Arizona-based farm, ranch, farm/ranch collaborative, or gleaning group with Arizona-grown produce or protein is eligible to participate in the Friends of the Farm program. Entities may be for-profit, non-profit, and/or cooperatives.

The focus is to purchase from small growers. We define "small growers" according to the USDA farm classification scale of annual gross cash farm income below \$350,000 or 150 acres (both will be considered on a case by case basis).

Do farmers have to deliver their own product to qualify?

It's ideal, though not required, if you can arrange for delivery of your products to one or more of the following food banks: Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona (Tucson), St.

Mary's Food Bank (Phoenix), or United Food Bank (Mesa). Some deliveries can occur directly to other agencies & food pantries around the state, which will occur on a case by case basis with advance arrangement. We encourage you to apply or reach out to us regardless of your ability to transport your product to a major metro area.

If a farmer signs an advance purchase agreement, what happens in the event of a crop delay (or complete loss) due to weather or another unexpected event?

We know things happen, and will work with growers on a case by case basis to determine the best course of action. We strongly encourage producers to let us know as early as possible if there is a change in harvest date or volume so we can work together on a Plan B. In most cases, we will be able to accept a delay in order fulfillment and/or roll over the commitment to the next growing season. In other cases, we will discuss crop substitutions to achieve similar weight goals and price points.

Do farms have to have a third-party food safety audit to be selected?

Not necessarily, but we do need to see evidence of each farm's knowledge of (and commitment to) on-farm food safety. If farms have a food safety plan or risk assessment completed, we ask them to include it in their application. They are also encouraged to list any food safety trainings that they or their farm managers have attended within the last two years.

If growers need guidance with this, we can help connect them with peers or local resources. Just email us with your questions.

Do participating farms/ranches need to hold liability insurance?

We do not require producers to hold any particular insurance policy. We strongly recommend they connect with an agency that can recommend the appropriate coverage for their individual operations.

How does payment work? What is the schedule?

Upon onboarding, farms/ranches can elect to receive payment via check, or via ACH Direct Deposit.

In some instances for advance purchase agreements, AzFBN is able to make advance payments to support supply purchases. Invoices received post-delivery will be paid on a pro-rated or rolling basis at mutually agreed upon terms.

What reporting is required of participating farms and ranches?

AzFBN requires only proof of delivery. This is ideally a packing slip signed by the food bank scheduled to receive the delivery.



Any pictures of planting, growing, harvesting, packaging, and delivery are very welcome! We love sharing your hard work with our clients, agencies, and the community. We invite growers to send photos directly to us, or tag us on Facebook and Instagram at @azfoodbanks.

For farms/ranches that have never signed an advanced grower agreement, what should they consider?

Signing into an advanced purchase agreement is a personal business decision. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) has created a manual to help walk farm operators through considerations of contract growing. You can review their insight [here](#).

Arizona's Friends of the Farm program is designed specifically to benefit small farms & ranches. The AzFBN team is open to conversations and modification of agreement terms to help meet each farm's needs.

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