



BERKSHIRE FOOD CO-OP FOOD & PRODUCT POLICY

5/27/2020

GOOD FOOD FOR ALL

1. THE BERKSHIRE FOOD CO-OP IS A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Berkshire Food Co-op is dedicated to an all-natural, whole food, local and healthy approach to grocery shopping. The Co-op will strive to be a full-service grocery store that serves our community natural fresh, prepared and packaged food and produce, household items, health and body care products, general merchandise, bulk foods, wine, beer and ciders.

In our retail operation, we will maximize the presence of healthy nutritious foods, alternatives to commonly allergenic ingredients, locally produced items organic products and socially and environmentally conscious options. Additionally, our merchandising will inform consumers through transparency, honesty and a focus on education.

We also recognize and respond to the needs of our customers who are economically challenged. We offer products at value price points as well as support programs that assist seniors and those of any age who find themselves with food insecurity.

2. THE BERKSHIRE FOOD CO-OP IS A STANDARD BEARER FOR FOOD INTEGRITY

The Co-op's brand is to be perceived as the primary source for clean food in South County. We strive to inspire confidence in our customers that we sell the highest quality local and organic foods available in the area.

We recognize, however, that everyone is on a different dietary path. 'Good food for all' can mean different things to the same person over their lifetime.

To that end, the co-op aims to educate, not lecture; to offer choices, not limit selection based on any ideal perception of purity. We believe that broadening our appeal with a welcoming message to all will dispel the misconception that the co-op is an elite food clique and that we allow more customers to realize better health through better diet.

WHAT WE VALUE

The Berkshire Food Co-op will **prioritize** these qualities in what we sell:

- Basic, whole foods
- Seasonal and local produce
- Non-GMO
- Fair trade
- Encouraging equitable labor practices and produced without slave or child labor
- Certified organic
- Certified glyphosate-free
- Locally and sustainably produced that reduces our carbon footprint

- Animal products that are local, traceable, humanely-raised, and free of growth hormones and antibiotics
- Fish that is highly rated by Monterrey Bay Seafood Watch
- Food that accommodates limited and specific diets
- High quality nutritional supplements free of artificial ingredients
- Body care products produced by reputable companies, free of artificial ingredients, and that are not tested on animals
- Environmentally friendly cleaning products free of irritants, toxins, or carcinogens
- Products with minimal packaging
- Prepared foods that are convenient, wholesome options made fresh every day in our kitchen with the same quality and sourcing standards we apply to grocery products

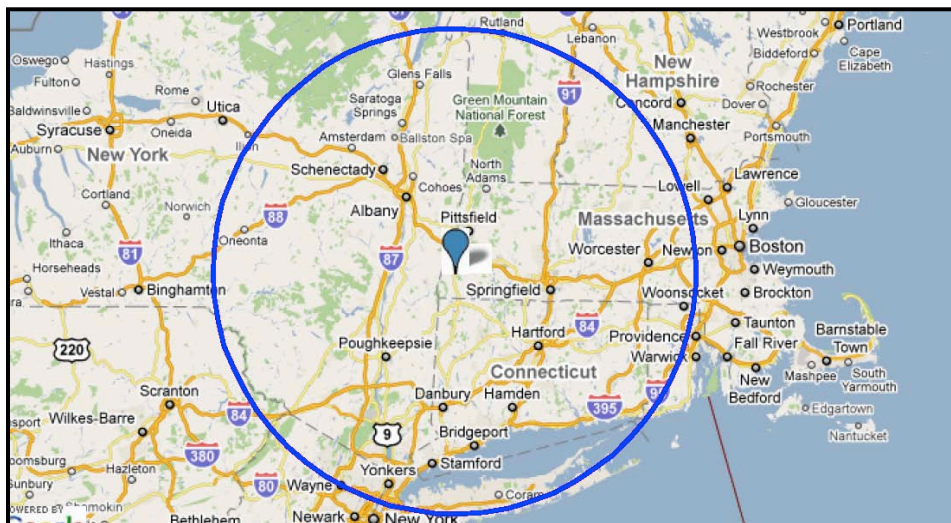
We will minimize:

- Highly processed and refined foods
- Environmentally hazardous products
- Products that involve inhumane treatment of animals
- Genetically engineered foods
- Excessive packaging

DEFINING A LOCAL PRODUCT

“Local” is defined as within a radius of 100 miles. To be tagged as local, a product must also satisfy one or more of the following requirements:

- Products that are grown locally on sustainable farms
- Products that are cooked, prepared, assembled or otherwise produced locally
- Products that add to and enhance economic development through job and business creation that involves more than simple transportation or distribution



What Does This Mean?

If a product is not significantly altered by the local business, it is not a local product. For example, a local meat distributor may simply receive and reship product without changing or preparing it in any way. This product will not be considered local. A local business that imports coffee beans, roasts them and packages them to sell, however, will be considered local.

LABELING ORGANIC & ALL-NATURAL

'Natural Foods' as a Baseline

The USDA definition of natural foods are products that do not contain artificial ingredients or preservatives, and the ingredients are only minimally processed. A natural product, however, may contain antibiotics, growth hormones, and other similar chemicals which the Co-op does not permit.

The term 'natural' has been a vague, catch-all description for minimally processed products that is now almost meaningless. While we are known in the community as a natural foods grocer, the Co-op will continually strive to differentiate ourselves among our competitors with a message that we are the best source of wholesome, nutritious foods. Moreover, we have the largest selection of organic produce in the area.

Organic

The Co-op abides by and promotes the USDA definition of organic: "Organic is a labeling term that indicates that the food or other agricultural product has been produced through approved methods. The organic standards describe the specific requirements that must be verified by a USDA-accredited certifying agent before products can be labeled USDA organic." Access the full set of resources including the National List of non-organic approved ingredients please refer to the USDA website: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/organic-standards>

The Co-op is the Community's Most Reliable Source of 100% Organic Produce

Raw or processed agricultural products in the "100 percent organic" category must meet these criteria:

- All ingredients must be certified organic
- Any processing aids must be organic
- Product labels must state the name of the certifying agent on the information panel
- May include USDA organic seal and/or 100 percent organic claim

Organic packaged foods

Raw or processed agricultural products in the "organic" category must meet these criteria according to the USDA:

- Products sold, labeled, or represented as organic must have at least 95 percent certified organic content.

- Non-organic ingredients allowed per National List may be used, up to a combined total of five percent of non-organic content (excluding salt and water).
- Products sold, labeled, or represented as “made with” organic must have at least 70 percent certified organic content. The USDA organic seal may not be used on these products.
- Products containing less than 70 percent organic content may identify specific ingredients as organic in the ingredients list.

Local Grower & Supplier Agreement

Whether a local grower is certified USDA Organic or practices organic farming but chooses not to apply for organic certification, all suppliers must meet the Co-op’s basic requirements in order to protect the Co-op and its customers, and to foster transparency in food sourcing.

As such, the Co-op must have all of the following on file and updated on an annual basis:

- Liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000 aggregate naming the Berkshire Cooperative Association as additional insured
- If certified organic, a copy of their current organic certification
- If not certified organic, a written description of their current growing practices describing the specific method of farming used
- A written description of their current labor practices

Made with Organic Ingredients

Multi-ingredient agricultural products in the “made with” category must meet these criteria:

- At least 70 percent of the product must be certified organic ingredients (excluding salt and water)
- Any remaining agricultural products are not required to be organically produced but must be produced without excluded method
- Non-agricultural products must be specifically allowed on the National List
- Product labels must state the name of the certifying agent on the information panel
- Must not include USDA organic seal anywhere or represent finished product as organic
- Must identify organic ingredients (e.g., organic dill) or via asterisk or other mark

SUPPORT FOR NON-GMO and GLYPHOSATE-FREE FOODS

Our co-op is committed to providing our owners and community with high quality foods, sourced with integrity and committed to sustainability. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are prevalent in our nation’s food supply, and it is difficult for stores to completely remove these products for a number of reasons, including cost and affordability for shoppers at different income levels, and limited alternative options in certain product categories.

Glyphosate is used in farming as an herbicide and desiccant. Awareness of this chemical, introduced in the product Round-Up, is increasing as it has been found to be an endocrine disrupter, and linked to liver disease and birth defects.

Some manufacturers are now certifying their products Glyphosate-Free. The Co-op will continue to educate consumers and make additional attempts to identify foods that are Glyphosate-Free.

Non-GMO does not mean Glyphosate-Free. Only certified organic foods are considered Glyphosate-Free. Non-GMO strictly refers to the lack of genetic alterations. A non-GMO product may contain traces of glyphosate.

While we are not a GMO-free store, we are committed to GMO education and transparency, actively supporting GMO labeling legislation, sourcing non-GMO products when possible and implementing these principles throughout all of our businesses.

MERCHANDISING POLICY

Our product merchandising will attempt to represent the values of our Co-op. Merchandising preference will be given to products that have one or more the following characteristics:

- Produced locally according to the Berkshire Food Co-op definition of local
- USDA Certified Organic
- Fair Trade Certified
- Produced with environmentally sustainable practices
- Non-GMO and Glyphosate-Free
- Produced by a company that addresses social and humanitarian issues

DEPARTMENT-SPECIFIC STATEMENTS

GROCERY

The Berkshire Food Co-op Grocery Department will offer high-quality and sustainable products in each of its categories. We will continually evaluate our product selection based on store food policies as well as offer value options for cost-conscious consumers.

The Co-op's aim is to raise awareness and educate our customers about health and environmental concerns through our merchandising and product selection. We strive to:

- Source as much local and regional food as possible
- Source foods that satisfy the needs of special diet requirements and maintain active research on current trends
- Give preference to organic products over natural products
- Make every effort to source Fair Trade Certified products whenever possible;

- Merchandise local, organic, and Fair Trade products prominently when possible, with clearly visible signs and marketing materials designating them as such;
- Sell only fairly traded coffee as defined by Fair Trade USA, Fair Trade International standards, or by documentation from local distributors that describes fair trade practices;
- Sell bulk items and offer environmentally friendly packaging options for those items;
- Offer bulk filtered water at an affordable price. In addition, we have eliminated single-use plastic bottled water as decreed by the Town of Great Barrington;
- Give preference to minimally packaged and sustainably produced products.

All non-food products sold in the grocery department will strive to meet the following criteria:

- Minimum of 40% postconsumer recycled material in all paper products (80-100% recycled is preferable)
- Must be free of chlorine and other potentially harmful additives and treatments
- Recyclable, biodegradable, compostable and/or reusable
- Petrochemical and 1,4-dioxane-free
- Dioxin-free

BEER, WINE & CIDER

We strive to provide a unique and price-sensitive selection of beer, wine and cider emphasizing these options: locally produced, organic, sustainable, gluten-free, and no-added sulfites.

PRODUCE

Our Produce Department will provide shoppers with a comprehensive selection of sustainably grown and certified organic produce.

During the local growing season, we will source from local sustainable farms to reduce our carbon footprint, support the local economy, and provide local farmers a place to sell their goods.

Aside from certified organic and local producers using organic practices, we reserve the right to source and label a short list of items (e.g. some apples, pears, asparagus) certified IPM: Integrated Pest Management. IPM is a process that controls pests while minimizing risks to people and the environment.

We provide floral options that are the least chemically treated and preferably locally grown.

Local Sourcing

We will source organically and sustainably grown local products whenever possible. In this process we will make every effort to include all local farmers, regardless of size. Continued and long-lasting relationships will be based on the following requirements:

1. Proof of liability and indemnification insurance;

2. Documentation: If a grower is certified organic, evidence of that certification must be provided. If a grower is not certified organic, a list of sustainable growing practices used in the operation must be provided and our sustainability agreement must be signed.
3. Openness to yearly site visits that will demonstrate sustainable practices;
4. Consistent supply and delivery times;
5. Dependable communication between the farmer and the co-op.

As we conduct our business, we will:

- Prioritize certified organic produce when ordering from regional, national or international sources
- Cultivate win/win relationships with local farms and farmers
- Give preference to sustainable and organic products that are labeled as Fair Trade
- Store all food according to the standards of the National Organic Program
- Provide accurate signage for all products including country of origin and farm of origin when possible

MEAT, SEAFOOD AND CHEESE

Our meat, seafood and cheese buyers will source products that are the freshest and healthiest options available to us. We will only offer humanely raised, certified organic and all-natural meats and poultry.

We strive to sell:

- Locally source products whenever possible
- Certified organic or all-natural products as defined by the USDA
- Products that were not produced with the use of synthetic hormones such as recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST) and recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH)
- Only free-range and free roaming poultry and eggs with preference for fed organically
- Antibiotic-free products
- Organic options for chicken and beef at all times (assuming supply is available)
- Educational materials about GMOs in meat and cheese and a description of our providers and their practices
- Seafood rated highly by the Monterey Bay Seafood Watch

Synthetic Growth Hormone Vetting Policy

All manufacturers, producers and farmers must do one of the following:

1. Publish a standards statement that states that the product is raised without growth hormones or preventative use of antibiotics. These statements may be printed on packaging or on a company website.
2. Provide the co-op with a signed letter outlining production procedures and stating that the product is raised without growth hormones or preventative use of antibiotics.

FRESH FOODS

Our Prepared Foods, Cafe and Bakery departments are committed to serving a wholesome selection of freshly prepared foods including hot and cold entrées, soups, to-go food both hot and salad, bakery items and made-to-order options. The selection will feature the full spectrum of natural foods including nutritious, local, organic, minimally processed dishes, items that prove popular, and alternatives to commonly allergenic foods.

The Co-op makes an ongoing effort to reduce packaging, and the packaging we do source we will be as sustainable as possible.

We are also sensitive to trends and health concerns as they arise. With the pandemic, for instance, we worked as quickly as possible to adapt to new methods of serving nutritious food:

- Offer a full-service hot bar that includes brown rice or grain, a hearty green and at least one vegetarian option and one meat option
- Endeavor to meet a variety of dietary needs including vegan and gluten-free options
- Properly label all food with ingredients
- Offer salads that include organic and sustainably produced salad greens and produce
- Consider all recipes for their sugar, fat and sodium contents as well as flavor and consistency

PERSONAL CARE & WELLNESS

The Wellness Department at the Co-op is committed to providing customers with carefully selected body care/beauty products that are not tested on animals and that are made with plant-based ingredients.

We will offer a curated assortment of supplements preferring whole food-based and organic as well as wide selection of vitamins striving to:

- Offer products that are free of questionable or harmful ingredients such as parabens, urea, DMDM hydantoin, synthetic fragrances, sodium lauryl and laureth sulfates (SLS), polypropylene and polyethylene glycol (PEG) and 1,4-dioxane;
- Offer a selection of whole food and organically grown nutritional and herbal supplements, locally manufactured when possible
- Offer vitamins with full disclosure informative labeling, rigorous (third-party) quality control, testing of all raw materials and final product, NNFA's GMP top rating, and a line of USDA certified organic products

Note: Milder preservatives that are not likely to cause allergic reactions, such as potassium sorbate, sodium benzoate or grapefruit seed extract, may be used when necessary.

GENERAL MERCHANDISE

All general merchandise sold at the Co-op will be manufactured with fair and humane labor practices. As we conduct our business, we will:

- Require vendors to supply a social responsibility document proving fair labor practices and humane employee treatment before products are considered
- Give preference to locally produced products
- Give preference to products that are produced sustainably and promote social awareness, environmental stewardship and cooperative values

Ethical and Humane Labor Practices Vetting Policies: All manufacturers and suppliers must do one of the following:

1. Prove that the product is made in the United States or a nation with fair labor laws and is in compliance with that country's labor laws.
2. Publish or provide a social accountability policy statement that includes fair wages, willful employment, and third-party evaluation.

Note: Berkshire Food Co-op is a charter member of The Domestic Fair Trade Association and is committed to the concept and practice of Fair Trade domestically and internationally. For more information; www.thedfta.org