

# Berkshire **Food** Co-op

## Food & Product Policy

Berkshire Food Co-op is dedicated to an all-natural, whole food, local and healthy approach to grocery shopping. The co-op will be a full-service grocery store that provides only natural fresh, prepared and packaged food and produce, household items, health and body care products, general merchandise and bulk foods. The selection will feature healthy nutritious foods and alternatives to commonly allergenic ingredients. Purchasing will support local and organic farmers and socially and environmentally conscious producers. Our merchandising will inform consumers through honest and educational strategies. Additionally, we will not knowingly sell products that:

- Contain artificial preservatives, flavors, sweeteners or colors;
- Contain synthetic hormones like recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST) and recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH);
- Contain high-fructose corn syrup;
- Contain added monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Contain hydrogenated oils;
- Are produced with unfair or inhumane labor practices.

## **POLICY ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs):**

Due to the insufficiently regulated introduction of genetically modified crops into our food system and a complete lack of labeling it has become difficult for the consumer to make informed choices in the marketplace. With this in mind, we have established the following actions:

### **High-risk Crops**

According to the Non-GMO Project, the following crops carry a high risk of being genetically engineered organism, because engineered varieties are grown on a large scale in North America and certain other parts of the world and are available in the commercial market.

- Alfalfa
- Canola (Rapeseed)
- Corn
- Cotton
- Soy
- Sugar Beets
- Papaya
- Zucchini
- Yellow Summer Squash

### **Non GMO Project**

The Co-op is enrolled as a Supporting Retailer with The Non-GMO Project, a nonprofit multi-stakeholder collaboration committed to preserving and building sources of non-

GMO products, educating consumers, and providing verified non-GMO choices. The Non-GMO Project Verified Seal indicates products have been produced according to rigorous best practices for GMO avoidance, including testing of high-risk ingredients.

### **Packaged Grocery & Wellness**

We recognize that the market is being flooded with GMO products and big food companies spend most of their dollars developing and promoting new products. Therefore, we will do the following:

- Our co-op will not bring in any new non-organic packaged food products that contain ingredients that are high risk for GMOs.
- We will label all products certified as Non-GMO by the Non GMO Project.
- We will actively examine our product selection to determine the GMO status of our products and remove as needed.

### **Produce**

- As part of the sustainability vetting for local, non-organic farms, we will ensure that GMOs are not part of the farm's process at any stage. Farmers will be asked to sign a statement that states the same.
- All products sourced outside 100 miles will be certified organic.

### **Animal Products**

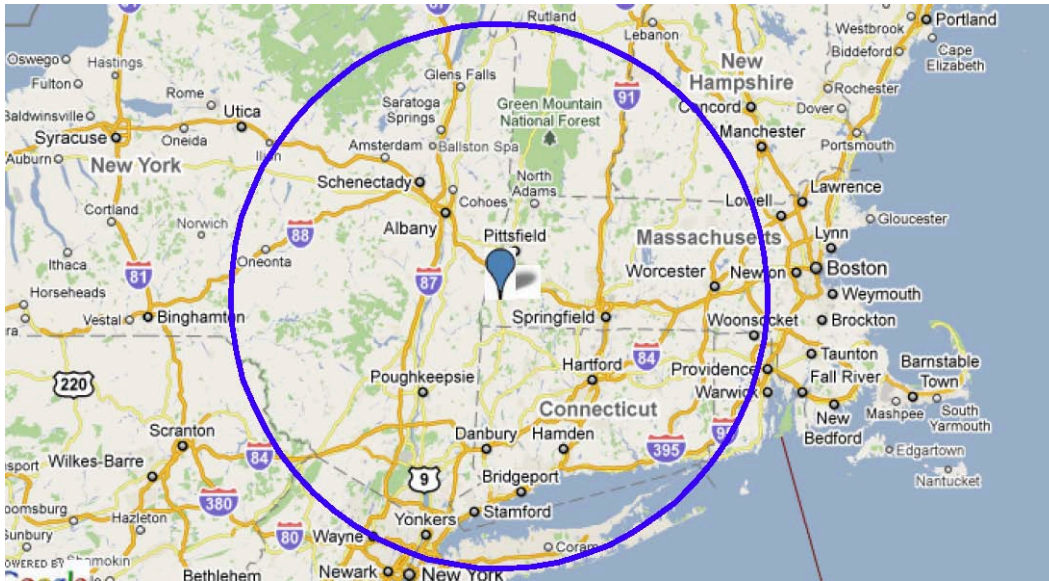
We recognize that in matters of animal feed, there is an added difficulty in tracing and confirming sources. Furthermore, strict non GMO policy in this category could severely limit our ability to source from local farms and dairies and control consumer cost. With that in mind, we will follow these practices:

- We will not sell products produced with synthetic hormones like recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST) and recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH);
- We will offer certified organic beef, chicken, milk, cheese and eggs at all times (barring instances of supply shortages). These options will be clearly labeled.
- We will offer educational resources on GMO's in animal products to help consumers make informed choices.

## **DEFINING A LOCAL PRODUCT**

"Local" is defined as within a circumference of 100 miles by shortest distance between points (as the crow flies). 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?

It means that 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. But, a local business that brings in coffee beans, roasts them and packages them to sell, will be considered local.

### LABELING ORGANIC & ALL-NATURAL

100% Organic 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.
- Must identify organic ingredients (e.g., organic dill) or via asterisk or other mark.

## **Organic**

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

- All agricultural ingredients must be certified organic, except where specified on National List.
- 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).
- Product labels must state the name of the certifying agent on the information panel.
- May include USDA organic seal and/or organic claim.
- Must identify organic ingredients (e.g., organic dill) or via asterisk or other mark.

## **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 methods.<sup>1</sup>
- Non-agricultural products must be specifically allowed on the National List.<sup>1</sup>
- Product labels must state the name of the certifying agent on the information panel.
- May state "made with organic (insert up to three ingredients or ingredient categories)."
- 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.

<sup>1</sup>These lists can be found at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop>

## **PRODUCT PREFERENCE HIERARCHY**

As we do our purchasing, preference will be given to products according to the following guidelines:

**Packaged Foods:** Local Organic > Local Natural > Regional Organic > National Organic > Regional Natural > National Natural > International Natural

**Farmed Foods:** Local Organic > Local Sustainable > Regional Organic > National Organic > International Organic

## **MERCHANDISING POLICY**

Our product merchandising will attempt to represent the values of our cooperative as well as the strategies laid out in this document. 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;
- 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 current and future product selection based on store food policies. We will attempt not only to flourish, but also to raise awareness and educate our customers about health and environmental concerns through our merchandising and product selection. As we conduct our business, we will:

- 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 in these matters.
- Give preference to organic products over natural products whenever possible;
- 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 will attempt to reduce the use of single-use bottled water through merchandising, pricing and alternative offerings;
- Give preference to minimally packaged and sustainably produced products.

All nonfood products sold in the grocery department will meet the following criteria:

- Minimum of 40% postconsumer recycled material in all paper products. Eighty percent to 100% recycled is preferable. They will also 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

## **PRODUCE**

The Berkshire Food Co-op produce department will provide shoppers with sustainably grown and certified organic produce. During the local growing season, we will source from local sustainable farms to reduce our food miles, support the local economy, and provide local farmers a place to sell their goods.

### **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 friendships 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:

- Offer only certified organic products when ordering from regional, national or international sources:

- Keep strong and long lasting relationships with local farms and farmers;
- Give preference to sustainable and organic products, including bananas, that are labeled as Fair Trade;
- Store all food according to the standards of the National Organic Program (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop>);
- Provide accurate signage for all products. Signs will include country of origin, and farm of origin when possible.

## **MEAT & DAIRY**

Berkshire Food Co-op's meat and dairy buyers will provide 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.

As we conduct our business, we will:

- Source local products whenever possible;
- Offer only certified organic or all-natural products as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture;
- Offer only products that were not produced with the use of synthetic hormones such as recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST) and recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH);
- Offer only free-range and free roaming poultry and eggs;
- Offer products that are produced without regular doses of antibiotics.
- Offer organic options for chicken and beef at all times (assuming supply is available).
- Offer educational materials about GMOs in meat and dairy and a description of our providers and their practices.

**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.

## **SEAFOOD**

The world's oceans are being over-fished and their ecosystems are being harmed by destructive fishing practices and open-system fish farms. The Berkshire Food Co-op seafood department will source only sustainable seafood options. To that end, we are a



participant in the Fishwise Retailer Program. Fishwise, a nonprofit organization designed to improve the sustainability of seafood retailers, will provide comprehensive assistance in training, informational resources, product sourcing and communication. Furthermore, we will only carry seafood that is rated as “Best Choice” or “Good Alternative” by Fishwise in our seafood case.

## **PREPARED FOODS**

The Berkshire Food Co-op prepared foods department is committed to serving a hearty selection of freshly prepared foods including hot and cold entrées, to-go food, a hot bar, a salad bar, bakery items and made-to-order options. The selection will feature the full spectrum of natural foods including wholesome, local, organic, minimally processed healthy foods, items that prove popular, and alternatives to commonly allergenic foods. As we conduct our business, we will:

- Offer a hot bar that includes brown rice, a hearty green and at least one vegetarian option;
- Endeavor to meet a variety of dietary needs including dairy and gluten-free options;
- Properly label all food with ingredients and their organic status;
- Offer a salad bar that includes organic and sustainably produced salad greens and produce;
- Use local sustainable and organic produce whenever possible;
- Use certified organic foods whenever possible;
- Consider all recipes for their sugar, fat and sodium contents as well as flavor and consistency.

## **PERSONAL CARE & WELLNESS**

The wellness department at Berkshire Food Co-op is committed to providing customers with health and beauty products that are not tested on animals and that are made with plant-based ingredients. We will offer carefully selected body care products, whole food and organic supplements and a wide selection of vitamins. As we conduct our business, we will:

- 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. We will give preference to supplement products displayed in light-resistant amber glass bottles.

- Offer vitamins with full disclosure informative labeling, rigorous 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 Berkshire Food Co-op will be created 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](http://www.thedfta.org)*