

Food Connects Food Hub (FCFH) Vendor Handbook

General FCFH Information

The Food Connects Food Hub is a nonprofit wholesale food distributor committed to strengthening the regional food system. We provide access to source-identified, locally and regionally produced food, develop new markets for vendors, and help small and medium-sized vendors access wholesale markets, all while contributing to a vibrant local economy.

We provide customers with a streamlined ordering platform that enables wholesale buyers to access thousands of source-identified products from local and regional vendors. We work with over 130 farms and food businesses in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and surrounding states, and deliver to over 300 wholesale customers throughout our service area. Our customers include grocery stores, food co-ops, farm stores, country markets, gourmet food stores, schools, colleges, hospitals, retail markets, caterers, and buying clubs. Our Food Hub model aims to increase efficiencies for both our vendors and customers by consolidating ordering and delivery for a wide variety of regional food products.

Food Hub Procurement Team

- General Contact information:
 - Email: procurement@foodconnects.org
- Katie Endicott: Procurement Specialist
 - Phone number: 802-689-8818
- Amber Hubner: Procurement Coordinator
 - Phone Number: 802-659-1615
- David Paysnick: Business Development Manager
 - Phone Number: 802-451-0545

Holidays and Closures Schedule

The Food Connects Food Hub operates 52 weeks per year, 5 days a week. We will adjust our delivery schedule accordingly to accommodate the following holidays:

- New Year's Day (January)
- Memorial Day (May)
- Independence Day (July)
- Labor Day (September)
- Indigenous Peoples' Day (October)

- Thanksgiving (November)
- Christmas Day (December)

Adjusted holiday schedules will be communicated via email in advance of the given holiday. It is very important to reply to those schedules with your closures or adjusted holiday schedules so we can communicate that to customers and adjust our operations accordingly.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather, we may need to reschedule pickups and/or deliveries. If this happens, a Food Hub Team member will communicate directly with affected customers and vendors via phone or email to provide an updated delivery schedule.

Product Categories

FCFH has two separate product categories: Just-In-Time (JIT) and Inventoried. Requirements and scheduling differs based on each category. Detailed information is outlined below for both JIT and Inventoried Product.

Inventoried Products

For inventoried products, we use a traditional inventory model. We will purchase product from you, stock it in temperature-controlled, food-safe zones in our warehouse, and sell that inventoried product to our customers, reordering from you as needed.

Product Updates

- If you have any changes to your product lineup, pricing, packaging, lead times, etc, please notify us at procurement@foodconnects.org.

Purchase Orders

- When we need a restock, we will submit orders to you by emailing a PDF purchase order. If you require that POs go to a specific email address or to multiple people, please be sure to communicate that information to us. When you receive a PO from Food Connects, **please acknowledge receipt of purchase orders in a timely manner and inform us asap if you anticipate any issues or have any concerns with the PO or the pickup/delivery date.**

Just-In-Time (JIT) Products

Just-In-Time, or JIT, is pre-sold to our customers. Typically fresh local produce and perishables, this product comes into our warehouse and is, in most cases, delivered to the customer within 24 to 48 hours. JIT vendors are generally located within close proximity to Food Connects. Purchase Orders are typically sent for next-day pickup or delivery twice a week. Product availability is communicated via the vendor to the Food Hub Procurement Team for regular updates to our website. Some JIT products/vendors may require an alternative schedule, to be negotiated as needed.

Product Listings - As a valued partner, we ask that you **please ensure that Food Connects always has up-to-date information on the following:**

- Current product availability and pricing are updated and communicated via a shared Google Sheet (for import to our e-commerce site).
- Contact information - Phone and email addresses for key contacts at your company
- Location/pickup instructions/details
- Important changes to your business, products, or schedules (lead time, delivery, availability, etc)

JIT Schedule and Overview - While these details are broadly applicable to most vendors, we may have discussed alternate arrangements with you during your onboarding process. If anything here conflicts with other agreements we may have discussed, please reach out to clarify expectations.

Availability / Product Price Lists

- If your product **availability or pricing varies** from week to week, please ensure that you have communicated accurate availability details each week **by noon on Friday for the following week**. If we do not receive an update from you, **we will assume that you are not offering any products for the following week or that there are no changes to your current listings**.
- We email a request for availability updates on Wednesday afternoons.

Purchase Orders will be sent to JIT Vendors by Food Hub Procurement each **Monday and Wednesday between 11:30am and 12:30pm**.

- If you do not receive an order by 12:30pm, this generally means that we have not received any customer orders for you on this order cycle, please reach out if you have questions.

- If you require that POs go to a specific email address, or to multiple people, please be sure to communicate those addresses to us. When you receive a PO from Food Connects, **please acknowledge receipt of purchase orders in a timely manner and inform us asap if you anticipate any issues or have any concerns with the PO or the pickup/delivery date.**

Pickup/Delivery

- JIT Vendor pickups and deliveries typically occur each **Tuesday and Thursday**.
- It is critical that product is delivered on time, or ready on time for our vehicle to pick up. Any delays in receiving product put a strain on our team's ability to pack customer orders in an organized and timely manner; your cooperation is critical to our collective efficiency and short supply chain.
- Depending on your location and other logistical factors, the timing and nature of pickups/deliveries will vary. We will coordinate specific details with each vendor individually. If you have any questions about the timing of our truck on a particular day, please contact our Operations Team at 802-302-3800

General Vendor Requirements

These apply to all vendors, whether you are providing JIT products, inventoried products, or both.

Billing & Payment

- All price increases must be communicated in writing, with a minimum of two weeks lead time, and a preference for 30 days notice (*two week lead time not applicable for fresh produce*).
- Products should be accompanied by an invoice with the related PO number clearly noted. Invoice must match the pricing per FCFH's Purchase Order.
- PO Pricing is binding once fulfilled. Please notify FH Procurement Team of any pricing discrepancies before order fulfillment.
- Vendor will invoice Food Connects for all orders, and Food Connects will remit payment on 30-day net terms. Please invoice promptly. 30 days will be counted from the delivery/pickup date, or the date that the invoice is received, whichever is later.
- All Purchase Orders must be invoiced within 6 months of receipt. Food Connects reserves the right to refuse invoices that are received more than 6 months after product receipt.

- We prefer that a paper and electronic invoice accompany each order
 - Email invoices to procurement@foodconnects.org and bookkeeper@foodconnects.org.

Product Information & Listings:

In order to ensure that your products are accurately represented in our catalog, please email the following details at your earliest convenience for all applicable products and any new products you may add over time. (or share a link to google drive, drop box, etc):

- Product images as square JPEGs
- Logo Image(s)
- Product descriptions
- Product Ingredients
- Product Allergen list
- Product UPC Codes

Product Updates

- If you have any changes to your product lineup, pricing, packaging, lead times, etc, please keep us up to date by notifying us at procurement@foodconnects.org.

PO Pricing

- Please review the pricing on your purchase orders and notify us immediately if you see any errors. We make every effort to ensure that the price listed on each PO is the price that you have quoted for your products. PO pricing is binding once fulfilled. We expect your invoice pricing to match our POs.

Order Issues

- If you receive an order from FC that you are unable to fill, please contact procurement@foodconnects.org or call Katie at (802) 689-8818 ASAP. We understand that this can happen occasionally, and we appreciate prompt communication in all situations.

Delivery & Transportation: For vendors dropping off to the FCFH Facility:

- Address: 22 Browne Ct Unit 185, Brattleboro, VT 05301
- Receiving hours are 10AM - 3PM Monday through Friday
- For anything outside these hours, please let us know so that we can determine if alternative arrangements are available.
- Bring all orders to the loading dock, **call our Warehouse Team at (802) 689-1132**, and a staff member will meet you at the docks.

- For a dock-height vehicle, the preferred docks are 8 and 9. For smaller vehicles, there is a ramp.
- See Appendix 1 of this document for directions to our loading docks.

For all products delivered by you to the FCFH Warehouse, we require that:

- All Food products must be delivered through the loading dock access. Please do not bring food deliveries to the Food Hub front door.
- Products must be transported in a covered vehicle, meaning items must not be transported and delivered in the open back of a truck or other vehicle.
- Products must NOT be transported with other potentially contaminating materials.
- Certified Organic products must not be commingled with non-organic products in a manner that may risk cross-contamination.
- Products must be transported and delivered within the required temperature zones. A FCFH Warehouse employee will temp-check products upon receiving per food safety requirements.
- For products with cold chain requirements: Any out-of-temperature product will be reported to the procurement team to determine how to proceed. If the product is subject to a HACCP plan, anything beyond the critical control point temperature will be rejected outright.

Fresh Produce Quality Protocols:

- All fresh produce must be #1 quality, unless otherwise indicated in the item description (for example, "Carrots, seconds").
- Fresh produce is subject to a weekly quality & safety inspection by a trained Food Connects staff member.
- If produce is unsellable due to subpar quality, we will use our discretion as to whether the product is suitable for sale at a discount, donation, disposal, or return to the farm.
 - In cases where produce is unsellable, or unsellable at full price, you will be notified with photos and a description of the problem.
 - Where applicable, Food Connects can offer technical assistance to address the issue.
- Typical identifiers of subpar produce include:
 - Physical Damage – Bruises, cuts, cracks, or crushed areas.
 - Decay or Rot – Mold, soft spots, or signs of spoilage.
 - Pest Damage – Insect holes, larvae, or signs of infestation.
 - Undersized or Oversized – Produce that does not meet size specifications.
 - Overripe or Underripe – Too soft, mushy, or not fully developed.

- Discoloration – Yellowing, browning, excessive scarring, lesions, or off-colors that indicate poor quality.
- Wilted or Limp Texture – Loss of freshness in leafy greens, herbs, or root vegetables.
- Excess Dirt or Debris – Not properly washed or contains foreign material.
- Misshapen or Deformed – Extreme irregularities that impact usability.
- Off Smell – Unusual or foul odors indicating spoilage.

Packaging: All products shipped to Food Connects must be packaged securely according to the following requirements.

- Products must be packaged in clean boxes or bags, and arrive packaged as sold, per the purchase order.
- Boxes must be sturdy - no flimsy boxes
- Boxes must be easy to handle by warehouse staff
- Each case may not weigh more than 50#
- Each case must be securely closed - **Staples are not permitted**
- Boxes must be stackable, and contents of the case may not stick out of the top of the box.
- Product must be secure inside the case (aka so smaller boxes/units aren't sliding around inside the larger case)
- If reusing boxes from another food vendor
 - Boxes must be clean
 - Ensure that any info not applicable to the current order is removed
 - Do not repack into cases that state Organic if your product is not Certified Organic
 - Do not repack into cases previously used for meat/seafood/allergens
 - Do not repack into non-food boxes

Shipping Labels: All products shipped to Food Connects must be labeled on the outside of each case.

- Vendors may use their own labels if they meet the requirements outlined below. If they do not, Food Connects will supply printable shipping labels for just-in-time products.
- **Shipping Label** - Please ensure that all cases are clearly labeled with the following (minimum):
 - Vendor Name
 - Product Name
 - Pack size (weight or count)
 - Certified Organic (if applicable)

- Expiration/Best By date (if applicable)
- Lot # (where applicable, especially when no date code exists)
- Please note that you, as the vendor, are responsible for ensuring that all retail labels comply with all applicable labeling laws.

Compliance & Food Safety

FCFH is a Certified Organic, fully regulated food distributor. We recognize the importance of food safety and regulatory compliance across all sectors of the supply chain and within FCFH's sourcing, handling, and distribution systems. We adhere to all relevant Federal, State, and municipal regulations, as well as industry best practices and standards. Food Hub holds a third-party audit verifying compliance with all current Good Manufacturing Practices. Our team is experienced in handling a wide range of food and food-related products and is trained on safe food handling and proper allergen handling. Our facility offers complete cold chain tracking services, with temperature control, temperature alerts, and the ability to provide cold chain and facility preventative maintenance records upon request.

Upon onboarding with FCFH, all vendors are required to submit documentation providing proof of food safety systems and licenses. Please understand that these requirements are part of the supply chain regulations we must abide by.

Vendor documentation will be renewed annually, but it's helpful to send us any renewed certificates as soon as possible to fh.compliance@foodconnects.org.

If you change co-packers or processing location, or have significant changes or updates to your food safety systems, please notify us immediately and send updated documentation. If you add new products that require additional food safety systems, we will request those before listing the new product.

In the case of a recall or food safety issue, FCFH must be notified as soon as possible. This includes reporting any issue at hand, the severity, details on the affected product lots, and any recall, market withdrawal, or stock recovery options.

Reports and Meetings

- Upon request, sales reports may be provided monthly (or on an alternate interval), including itemized customer recipients.
- Upon request, customer lists may be shared.

- Business Development meetings can be arranged for team samplings, road sales, and other planning and promotional activities.

Promos

- FCFH runs a monthly schedule of promotions for all customers
 - Targeted customer promos can also be arranged
- We aim to schedule promos with at least a month's notice, preferably more, to ensure time to communicate to our customers. Larger stores tend to plan out promos at least 6 weeks in advance.
- Promos may be arranged on a billback or off-invoice basis; further details and options are provided during the planning discussion.

Vendor Demos

- Vendor demos are an excellent opportunity to share your products and excitement directly with your customers.
- FCFH can provide store contact information and can assist with coordination, but does not directly schedule demos.
- Please share demo details with the Business Development Team 2-4 weeks in advance so that we have adequate inventory stocked and time to encourage buyers to stock up on your products before the demo date.
- Plan to bring extra product on the day of the demo in case the store inventory is depleted.
 - When a vendor delivers product to a retail customer during a demo, you may bill the store directly, with store approval, or billing may be coordinated through Food Connects.
 - If billing through Food Connects:
 - After demo/delivery, email procurement@foodconnects.org and sales@foodconnects.org with the following information
 - Customer Name (and location if multiple stores)
 - Date of delivery
 - Items and quantities delivered
 - Contact person at store who approved and/or received the delivery.
 - We will then send you a PO for these cases. Please wait for a PO to invoice, so our PO# can be included on your invoice.

Samples

- FCFH Business Development Team may request product samples for any new or existing SKU or brand.

- FCFH can distribute samples to customers upon request. Please either send extra sample cases along with purchase orders or send FCFH a credit for inventoried product to be used as samples.
 - Notify FCFH of the quantity and variety of samples to be expected so that we can add them to applicable Purchase Orders and Sales Orders.

Marketing

- Please add procurement@foodconnects.org to your newsletter and product/pricing announcements.
- We believe that Vendors are the best representatives to share their story and passion for their products. Our Sales and Marketing Teams will share your products and passionate stories with our customers and we find the most effective vendors take an active role in the partnership.
- We love to promote your product and share your story! Our team has a number of communication channels, including regular Order Reminder Emails, Food Connects Food Hub Newsletter, Food Connects Website, SuiteCommerce Catalog (our e-commerce site) and Social Media Platforms.
- FCFH has a small staff - any content you can provide us to share on your behalf is highly appreciated. Please share when you make updates or announcements, and feel free to send content directly to our marketing team - marketing@foodconnects.org
- Share folders of item images, brand logos, and any brand imagery or photos that we can use on your item pages
 - Please keep listings accurate with up-to-date information
- Items will have their own page on SuiteCommerce, our online platform, at shop.foodconnects.org
 - Please request a login if you'd like to become a customer
- Forward or cross-tag any social media posts for your products
- We love to feature vendors in social media and blog posts - please let us know if you are open to interviews or promotional visits.

Conduct

Food Connects values diversity in all forms and prohibits any form of discrimination or harassment of our employees, especially with regard to race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender identity & expression, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, or any other category of people typically marginalized or legally protected. We expect our partners, vendors, and customers to make the same commitment. We reserve the right to stop serving or working with any party violating this standard.

Contact Us

Have questions? A member of our team is happy to help you with them!

- Procurement Team:
 - Procurement@foodconnects.org
- David Paysnick - Food Hub Business Development Manager, 802-451-0545
- Katie Endicott - Procurement Specialist, 802-689-8818
- Amber Hubner - Procurement Coordinator, 802-659-1615
- Sales Team:
 - Sales@foodconnects.org
 - orders@foodconnects.org
 - 802-689-8676
- Bookkeeper:
 - bookkeeper@foodconnects.org
 - 802- 451-0464
- Operations:
 - operations@foodconnects.org
 - (802) 302-3800
- Warehouse:
 - warehouse@foodconnects.org
 - (802) 689-1132

APPENDIX 1: FCFH DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS

Food Connects Food Hub Loading Dock & Warehouse Delivery Directions

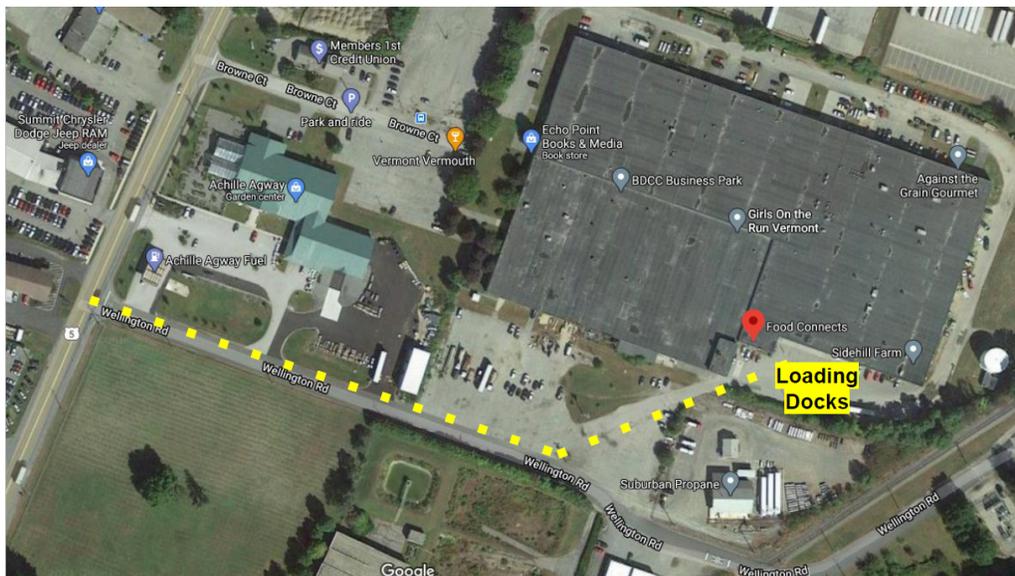
Updated: 2025.04.15

Address: 22 Browne Court, Unit 185, Brattleboro VT, 05301

Warehouse Phone Number: (802) 689-1132, Operations phone Number (802) 302-3800

Warehouse Hours: Mon-Fri; 8AM-4PM (preferred receiving between 10AM-2PM)

Map to Loading Docks:



To Access the Building:



- Back your vehicle up to any available dock
- Call the Warehouse **(802) 689-1132**, and someone will come to assist you.
- OR walk in through the person door at the top of the loading dock ramp, past the Food Connects office (second door on the left when you walk in) and ring the doorbell

identified below. To find our warehouse, take a left when you walk in from the loading docks- we are three doors down the hallway on your right (Unit 185).

