



Fostering Friendship, Producing Success

Local Food Manual for Farmers, Growers, & Vendors

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PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

This manual will serve as a resource to both, current and potential farmers, growers and vendors pursuing wholesale distribution of their products into mainstream markets including institution, schools, restaurants, and other foodservice entities. This document is a living document serving as a summary of operations, policies and procedures to assist suppliers in meeting the demands of Foster-Caviness in the wholesale foodservice industry. Many of the practices found within this manual are common throughout the industry, however Foster-Caviness has further developed procedures that build efficiency within operations, as well as ensuring the quality of the products.

INTRODUCTION

Foster-Caviness Company, Inc.

Foster-Caviness was established in 1902, and under current ownership since 1985. With over 55,000 sq. ft. of combined warehouse space with 42,000 combined refrigerated warehouse space and a fleet of 55 refrigerated truck, we have the infrastructure to provide a complete cold supply chain to local farms.

Foster-Caviness connects farmers to markets through marketing, logistics, distribution and education. We realize that robust local food systems offer social, environmental and economic benefits. In order to meet the demand for locally and regionally grown food, and move significant quantities of this food into markets such as institutions and restaurants, local food systems need to be scaled up or expanded from farmer-direct sales of small quantities of product to wholesale transactions.

Foster-Caviness offers a mid-scale, regional distribution system that moves local food into mainstream markets in an effective and cost efficient manner. We will continue consolidated efforts through the facilitation of our local food initiative, Friends of Farmers.

Friends of Farmers (A Foster-Caviness Local Initiative)

Friends of Farmers is a Foster-Caviness initiative to connect producers with Chefs throughout the region. The purpose of this initiative is to provide local restaurants and other foodservice entities with safe, quality produce grown throughout North Carolina.

PRO*ACT

Foster-Caviness is one of the 35 member cooperative called PRO*ACT. PRO*ACT is America's leading distributor of fresh produce to the foodservice industry. For almost two decades, PRO*ACT has been providing Foster-Caviness with the distinct benefit of streamlining the produce supply chain – offering significant cost benefits and an easy, one

call solution to secure the freshest produce from over 70 third-party inspected distribution centers across the United States and Canada.

Greener Fields Together (A PRO*ACT/Foster-Caviness Partnership Local Initiative)

Greener Fields Together is a groundbreaking, industry-wide sustainability program for the entire produce value chain. It was created and is administered by PRO*ACT and will be run by PRO*ACT and its national network of independently owned local purveyors. As a formalized, stand-alone program, Greener Fields Together engages and involves farmers, distributors, foodservice operators and retail locations in efforts to work toward safer produce from seed to fork.

Greener Fields Together has two primary goals:

- To implement sustainability practices that will improve environmental impact;
- To ensure the availability and safety of produce for foodservice and retail partners in all industry segments.

To participate as Greener Fields Together partners, all local farms must agree to annual food-safety audits such as those offered by NSF International (or, in some cases, to audits by another approved third-party certifier they may already be using) and complete an educational program designed to enhance the safety of their products. PRO*ACT's national network of distributors, who bring the Greener Fields Together initiative to market, are providing financial support to help local farmers in their markets to meet these requirements.

With participating local and regional Carolina farms, Greener Fields Together provides producers with the tools necessary to upscale production into mainstream food supply chains. All growers participating in Greener Fields Together are encouraged to use sustainable production practices and priority will be given to such farms.

Policies and Procedures

General Requirements

Foster-Caviness Foodservice works with a diverse range of farms and food entrepreneurs of all sizes and levels of experience. In order to maintain consistent product, which is what our customer demands, Foster Caviness prioritizes working with suppliers that can provide the highest level of product quality, consistency and service. It is critical that our suppliers communicate timely with us about anticipated volumes, gaps in production, or any other unforeseen circumstances.

Annual Planning

Foster-Caviness, in combination with other community partners, works with farmers to develop a plan for the year. This process uses annual sales projections for the business to determine anticipated quantities of each product. Suppliers review and bid on which products they would like to provide. More than one producer throughout each season, as well as in fulfilling a single weekly order, can supply products.

Many factors will be taken into consideration in choosing a supplier. The supplier will be selected based on seniority (for example a Greener Fields Together Partner), product niche, farm scale, and the ability to meet annual volume needs and all Foster-Caviness requirements, including food safety, grading, packaging and labeling standards. New farmers, growers and vendors are added when there are gaps in supply.

The annual crop plan will be finalized in February and serves as a guide for the year. Suppliers can use the pre-planning information (products, volumes and anticipated delivery dates) to prepare for the season.

This planning process is not to be considered a commitment from Foster-Caviness to purchase a certain quantity of product. Again, the purchasing of product will be based on quality, consistency, pricing and consumer demand.

Pricing

Our goal is to create a pricing structure that allows Foster-Caviness to maintain a viable business while providing fair and competitive prices to suppliers. In order to accomplish this, we will work with each independent producer to determine pricing. Note: There may be certain crops that will go through a bid process. In this case, Foster-Caviness will notify all potential parties at one time and you will be given notice of this during the winter months.

Ordering

Using Foster-Caviness' annual plan discussed above as a guide, the Foster-Caviness buyer will confirm weekly orders with suppliers to verify availability. If the supplier is unable to fill the intended order, then the Foster-Caviness buyer will seek out a replacement and fill in needed product.

Deliveries

Foster-Caviness has two warehouse locations in Greensboro and Charlotte. Deliveries will be made to the warehouse that is the closest to the product growing area.

Greensboro Warehouse - 2914 Sandy Ridge Road, Building 1, Colfax, NC

Charlotte Warehouse - 10810 Withers Park Cove, Charlotte, NC

Both warehouses are equipped with refrigeration, unrefrigerated and frozen storage space.

Receiving Hours

Foster-Caviness will receive deliveries from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM on the following days:

Monday - Greensboro ONLY

Wednesday – Greensboro & Charlotte

On-Farm Pick-up

In order to maintain the shelf-life of the products, Foster-Caviness has the means to pick-up on the farm maintaining the cold supply chain, as well as supporting sustainability efforts utilizing empty trucks to backhaul produce to the warehouse reducing food miles. This service will be considered when negotiating pricing.

Product Refusal & Crediting

All products must be delivered according to Foster-Caviness product quality standards (quality, food safety, grading, packaging and labeling). All products that do not meet these standards will be subject to refusal. Products may be refused upon delivery or within 24 hours after delivery. If product is refused, the supplier will be given the opportunity to replace product with one that meets Foster-Caviness product quality standards within 24 hours, otherwise credit will be issued to Foster-Caviness.

Billing & Payment

Suppliers must invoice Foster-Caviness on the day of delivery. Invoices can be submitted via email or fax prior to delivery or via hard copy with the delivery. The invoice must contain the following information:

- Date of billing (Must be the same as the delivery/pick-up date)
- Supplier name
- Supplier FID#
- Supplier contact information
- Address for remittance
- Product and quantity delivered
- Price per unit
- Total payment due

All invoices will be paid within a 30-day period. Any questions pertaining to billing and payment should be directed to the buyer or the AP department at Foster-Caviness, who will verify information with the buyer.

Product Quality Standards

Foster-Caviness is committed to offering our customers with the highest quality product. Therefore, all product supplied to Foster-Caviness must meet or exceed our product quality standards including quality, food safety, grading, packaging and labeling as outlined below.

Quality

Foster-Caviness aims to offer quality, longer shelf life products than their competitors. We offer a full cold supply chain to our customers. Harvesting processes and handling practices may be evaluated in order to ensure product quality. Ensuring that fresh product is chilled properly to reduce field heat immediately after harvest and temperature controlled until it reaches the warehouse is critical to its quality, shelf-life and competitiveness in the marketplace. If a reasonable shelf life for individual products is not maintained, Foster-Caviness may choose to seek another supplier.

Food Safety

Suppliers selling product to Foster-Caviness are expected to use best practices to ensure food safety when handling and distributing products to Foster-Caviness. Suppliers must follow all required state and federal safety regulations and provide proof of certification to Foster-Caviness (where appropriate), as well as properly labeling of products as required by specified regulations mandatory by produce growers.

Foster-Caviness encourages all produce farmers to have a comprehensive food safety plan and to obtain 3rd Party G.A.P. Certification in order to move their product into mainstream markets. Foster-Caviness can assist farms in obtaining this certification. Prior to purchasing and at anytime we see fit, Foster-Caviness will perform an on-site 2nd Party Audit ensuring that proper steps are being taken to minimize the risks of foodborne illnesses.

Resources for developing a food safety plan and obtaining G.A.P. Certification:

- USDA Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices Audit Verification Program
- Carolina Farm Stewardship G.A.P Manual
www.carolinafarmstewards.org/gaps-manual

Grading

Crops sold to Foster-Caviness must be graded on style, size, firmness and cleanliness. Foster Caviness has adapted U.S. Grade #1 provided by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to develop a set of product standards. We require product to meet Good Delivery Standards, meaning a specific crop must be of similar varietal characteristics, fresh and/or firm, fairly well shaped and colored, fairly clean, free from rot, and consistent in size.

To learn more about specific crop USDA grade standards, visit:
www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/freshmarketvegetablestandards

Packaging

Foster-Caviness has guidelines regarding packaging, including acceptable containers and appropriate case sizes. We do not do any packing in-house. The produce must be delivered ready to move throughout the supply chain. Case sizes are specific to each product. It is recommended that suppliers over-fill cases by approximately 5% to offset weight loss during packing, storage and transit.

Container Labeling

All containers delivered to the Foster-Caviness Warehouse must be properly labeled. At a minimum, labels need to include the supplier name, product (carrots, turnip greens, etc.), packing date and the count and/or net weight (50 pound, 24 count, etc.).

Buyers of Foster-Caviness products are starting to demand the support of the Product Traceability Initiative (PTI). In an effort to take the next big leap towards standard case labeling and product track and trace, Foster-Caviness has recently upgraded their Warehouse Management system with the ability to have standardized case labels, consistent with PTI standards. Eventually, product out of compliance will be rejected. Therefore, we encourage growers to include the required UPC label on their case packs that will allow for traceability back to their farm.

For more information, please visit www.producttraceability.org.

Technical Assistance & Support

Foster-Caviness is committed to providing all suppliers with certain resources they need to have successful, viable and strong businesses.

In general, we offer suppliers a range of support and services, including distribution, sales and marketing. We also offer suppliers access to new markets and pass along any market information, including market demand, trends and needs. This information serves as a resource for our suppliers, enabling them to increase production, develop new products and meet evolving requirements for pricing, packaging, labeling, and food safety.

If we cannot assist with a particular need, Foster-Caviness will gladly recommend food system partners throughout the state that can assist you by providing specialized support and business planning assistance to help expand your markets, increase revenues and achieve other quality life goals that are critical to keeping you farming. This is the sole purpose of our Local Food Program.

Best Practice for Farmers, Growers and Vendors when Working with a Wholesaler

- Maintain all food safety and product standards.
- Send a weekly or bi-weekly availability list to the Foster-Caviness buyer to communicate availability for real-time purchasing. Orders may be confirmed or placed any day of the week as needed to meet the demand of the customer.
- Communicate in a timely manner regarding crop failures, harvesting gaps, crop end dates, or any other information that may result in Foster-Caviness having to seek other avenues.
- Incorporate sustainable production systems.
- Maintain proper recordkeeping...remember if it is not documented, it did not happen.
- Maintain specific pack sizes requested by the wholesaler.
- Maintain consistent quality of all products being purchase by the wholesaler.

Contact Information

If you are business that would like to promote your products throughout the small farm community, we solute you!

If you are a producer or vendor that would like to move your products into mainstream distribution, please email your contact information, as well as a description of products and/or services that you offer to ptripp@foster-caviness.com. If you do not have access to email, please feel free to contact Patricia Tripp, Director of Sustainability, Food Safety and Local Resources directly at 336-706-1866 (mobile) or at 336-662-0571, ext. 224.

We look forward to assisting you with growing you business.