

Silver City Food Co-op Purchasing Guidelines

The ultimate aspiration of the Silver City Food Co-op is to provide products of the highest quality standard. We prioritize purchasing products and from vendors, with trusted third-party certifications, including:

- Organic: The highest standard for all store items.
- Regenerative Agriculture: Supporting methods that restore soil and ecosystem health.
- Fair Trade: Ensuring ethical labor practices and fair wages for farmers.
- B Corporation: Brands verified to meet high standards of social and environmental performance.
- Produced by a Cooperative: Supporting the democratic co-op model globally and locally.
- Environmental/Marine: Rainforest Alliance, Wild Caught, and Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certifications.

For non-organic packaged and prepared foods, our purchasing guidelines require products to be "clean." They must contain:

- No artificial additives or synthetic preservatives.
- Minimal processing.
- Wholesome, recognizable ingredients.

To uphold our commitment to quality, our fresh produce department follows a strict hierarchy:

- Fresh produce will feature only certified organic items as our primary standard.
- Exceptions for New Mexico Produce: Fresh produce grown locally within the state of New Mexico may be exempt from organic certification requirements. However, it must be "unsprayed" (grown without synthetic pesticides) and produced following safe handling practices.
- Specialty Produce Items: Non-organic specialty produce may be stocked if certified organic versions are unavailable to our shoppers.

Our meat department is committed to strict ethical and biological standards. We strictly source and sell meat that is:

- Humanely Raised: Animals must have access to pasture, adequate space, and be raised under verified animal welfare protocols.
- No Antibiotics or Hormones: Grown entirely without the use of subtherapeutic antibiotics, growth hormones, or synthetic steroids.
- High-Quality Feed: Animals must be fed vegetarian, 100% grass, or certified organic feed, completely free of animal by-products and low-quality fillers.

Strict ingredient rules may conflict with other co-op goals. We review and may make exceptions on a case by case basis, for various reasons, including the following:

- Supporting Local New Mexico Production: Food grown, made, or produced in New Mexico may be purchased even if it does not meet the "clean" standard. The greater good of supporting our local economy and farmers outweighs stringent ingredient limits in this category.
- Cultural Diversity: We may feature diverse food items throughout the store that do not meet the strictest "clean" guidelines. This promotes inclusivity and diversity in our community's food choices.

- **Special Dietary Needs:** Products catering to specific dietary needs (e.g., gluten-free, vegan) may be stocked even if they conflict with the baseline "clean" ingredient requirement, ensuring accessibility for all shoppers.
- **Packaging & Sustainability:** We prioritize vendors utilizing minimal, recyclable, compostable, or plastic-free packaging to reduce our operational waste footprint.

Strict ingredient rules may also conflict other values, such as product affordability, cultural accessibility, or local food security. When conflicts arise we will weigh these factors collaboratively, prioritizing clear shelf-labeling transparency so our member-owners can make fully informed purchasing decisions.