



General Sales & Supplier Guidelines

Valley Co-op is committed to providing our members with healthy, whole, and natural foods and goods for their families. As a micro-grocer we will not carry every product in multiple varieties, but select items based on our guidelines, member needs and unique specialty items on occasion.

We strive to provide the highest quality locally grown produce and emphasize direct relationships with local small family farms. This supports sustainable agriculture, preserves rural life, protects natural resources and provides our customers with simply delicious food. We seek suppliers who offer produce as fresh as possible, as local as possible, and as naturally grown as possible. Because of this, the food we carry may not look or taste like conventional supermarket food. We do our best to learn as much about our suppliers as we can, but ultimately the responsibility for false advertising, or products that don't live up to their descriptions, rests with the suppliers themselves. We are transparent about our suppliers: on our website the public can access the producer applications they've submitted to us, and links to their websites.

We support small farmers who are dedicated to animal husbandry practices that prioritize the health of the animals and a respect for the environment. The meats we sell are sustainably raised and free of added growth hormones and antibiotics. All poultry has been raised in humane environments and is free of antibiotics, added hormones, nitrites, and artificial preservatives. Fish is ethically caught and sourced from sustainable fisheries.

Valley Co-op strives to sell:

- Fresh produce that is locally and sustainably grown by farms or sourced by farmer cooperatives suppliers committed to environmental sustainability and social responsibility (through organic certification, organic practices and/or "Good Agricultural Practices" (GAP) certification/inspection).
- Animal products that are locally sourced, raised and produced in a humane manner, using sustainable methods; for example, through free range rearing or by organic or near organic standards.
- Unprocessed whole foods such as whole grains, nuts, and beans as well as dried herbs and spices.
- Products that are minimally refined or processed.
- Foods low in sweeteners, salt, and common allergens.
- Foods that meet the needs of various dietary ideals (e.g., gluten-free, sugar-free, dairy-free, vegan).
- Body care products that are botanically-based or naturally derived.
- Products sold in bulk and products in reusable, recyclable, recycled, and/or minimal or reduced packaging, to minimize our overall waste production.

Valley Co-op will not knowingly sell:

- Foods containing synthetic preservatives, hydrogenated oils, trans fats, antibiotics, hormones, high fructose corn syrup, or made with genetically modified ingredients (see section below).
- Foods containing artificial flavorings or colorings.

- Animal products, including milk or milk by-products from cows, goats, or sheep, treated with recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH) or any other growth hormone, or that comes from a supplier that administers antibiotics prophylactically.
- Meat products from Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).
- Products from manufacturers or corporations who engage in unnatural processes such as forced molting for egg production.
- Body Care products whose ingredients have been used in laboratory animal testing.
- Any product that is illegal for sale within the state of Maryland.

About GMOs

Without federally required labeling of products containing GMOs, Valley Co-Op cannot guarantee all the products it carries are GMO-free. Because 85-90% of all soybeans, corn, cotton, sugar beets and canola and much of the alfalfa grown in this country contain patented genetically altered genes, products that include these ingredients and which were grown using conventional agricultural practices may contain GMOs.

Certified organically grown products are prohibited from using ingredients that have been genetically modified. For this reason, Valley Co-Op is committed to providing whenever possible Non-GMO or Organic Certified products.

About Fair Trade

Valley Co-op is also aware of the growing demand for Fair Trade items. [Fair Trade standards](#) are designed to reduce poverty and empower producers in the poorest countries in the world. The standards apply to both producers and traders. Valley Co-op will attempt to provide Fair Trade goods whenever possible.

Licenses and Insurance

Valley Co-op requires that our suppliers be licensed by State/County as required by law, such as:

- State Egg Producer License
- State Food Processor License
- State Food Service Facility License or similar.

Valley Co-op encourages all suppliers to carry insurance that is appropriate for their business type.

Other Endorsements

Valley Co-op encourages endorsements carried by suppliers that promote humane treatment of animals, and environmentally responsible and sustainable practices such as the Certified Humane ® Program, Food Alliance Certified, Green Business Seal from Green America, and the EPA Green Power Partnership. Suppliers that carry other endorsements should notify Valley Co-op for review prior to promotion to membership.

Additional Supplier Requirements

- All Valley Co-op suppliers must register by completing an online application for review and approval. Please include all certifications, business and management details and unique key features of your business as a means to offer transparency and to educate our membership. This registration should be reviewed annually for updates and changes.
- Suppliers will supply goods produced solely by their own business. Exceptions may be allowed with prior approval by Valley Co-op.

- Valley Co-op reserves the right to make periodic visits to every vendor's place of production.
- Suppliers will maintain the accuracy of their own products for sale on our VCSHOP system in preparation for each order cycle. Assistance with the use of this online system is available by contacting us at help@valleycoop.org.
- All deliveries will be made by the deadline for the pickup location and will be coordinated with the Valley Co-op General Manager. Deliveries must include an invoice stating products, quantities and price. Suppliers will not be paid until Valley Co-op receives this invoice.
- Suppliers will guarantee the freshness of perishable products for 48 hours after delivery to our location. Non-perishable goods will be guaranteed for 30 days from customer receipt. Valley Co-op reserves the right to allow the purchasing member to work directly with the supplier for complaints with products.
- No substitutions of products are allowed unless the substitution is confirmed to be acceptable by the purchasing member. Please work directly with member as appropriate.
- Suppliers should label each pre-ordered product with the purchasing member's name prior to delivery. "Labels" with your product details are provided on the Producer Panel in VCSHOP for your convenience.
- Arrangements must be made ahead of time with the General Manager to bring leftover/extra inventory. Extra inventory brought for sale to the pickup location must include a product number and price for each unique item.
- If a product contains more than one ingredient, all ingredients must be clearly listed on the product label.
- Nonfood producers warrant that their products meet all legal and regulatory standards. All bath, body and health products must adhere to FDA standards. Products must adhere to the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.
- Valley Co-op reserves the right to remove suppliers at any time if violations from these standards or other concerns arise and are not adequately resolved.

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed Valley Co-op's Sales and Supplier Standards. Our/My Business understands the expectations to be a supplier with Valley Co-op and meet the Standards as they pertain to our/my products and operations.

Date: _____

Business/Farm Name: _____

Printed Name of Business/Farm

Representative: _____

Signature of Business/Farm

Representative: _____