

The Local Farm, Food, and Jobs Act – Rep. Chellie Pingree and Sen. Sherrod Brown

The Local Farm, Food, and Jobs Act will improve federal farm policy programs that support local and regional food systems. This legislation will not only help farmers and ranchers engaged in local and regional agriculture by addressing infrastructure, aggregation, processing, marketing, and distribution needs, but will also assist consumers through improving access to direct, retail, and institutional markets. And of utmost importance, this legislation will provide more secure funding for critically important programs that support family farms, expand new farming opportunities, and invest in the local agriculture economy.

The Benefits of Local and Regional Food Systems

Local and regional agriculture is a major economic driver in the farm economy. There are now more than 7,000 farmers markets throughout the United States—a 150 percent increase since 2000, direct to consumer sales have accounted for more than \$1.2 billion in annual revenues, and recent study found that a modest amount of public funding for between 100 and 500 farmers markets could create as many as 13,500 jobs over a five-year period.

By providing further investment in local and regional food systems, the Local Farm, Food, and Jobs Act will:

Boost Income and Create Jobs for Farmers and Ranchers

- Improves access to Farm Service Agency credit programs for farmers and ranchers producing for local and regional food markets and requires FSA to improve outreach and enhance lending opportunities for these producers.
- Requires Farm Credit Services institutions to enhance lending opportunities for farmers and ranchers producing for local and regional food markets, beginning farmers, and small farms.
- Funds Value-Added Producer Grants at an annual amount \$30 million and expands the program to include food hubs and provide outreach to underserved states and communities.
- Authorizes the Risk Management Agency to develop a Whole Farm Adjusted Revenue Risk Management insurance product that is available to all diversified operations including but not limited to specialty crops and mixed grain/livestock or dairy operations, contract producers, and organic and conventional farms.
- Increases rural development Business and Industry grant and loan funding to 10 percent for local and regionally produced agriculture products and food enterprises.
- Allows community and non-profit facilities engaged in local and regional food systems to qualify for rural development grants and loans and also ensures that facilities located in urban areas may receive funds if the primary beneficiaries of a project are rural.
- Funds the National Food Safety Training, Education, Extension, Outreach and Technical Assistance competitive grants program at an annual amount of \$15 million through mandatory farm bill funding.
- Improves the authorization of appropriations and grant funding to provide outreach and technical assistance to small and very small livestock processing plants.
- Requires the Food Safety and Inspection Service to create guidance for small and very small livestock processing plants to better enable compliance with FSIS requirements.
- Requires FSIS to provide an electronic submission option for the meat label approval process and to create a searchable database of existing meat labels.
- Clarifies that small poultry processors under the 1,000 bird exemption are subject to sanitary condition standards, but not the requirements for industrial processing facilities.
- Directs USDA to produce a report to Congress on additional steps that can be taken to better meet the needs of small poultry growers and processors.

Increase Production of Local and Healthful Food

- Funds the Local Marketing Promotion Program, a scaled up version of the former Farmers Market Promotion Program, at an annual amount \$30 million through re-established mandatory farm bill funding.

- Funds the Specialty Crop Block Grant program at an annual amount of \$90 million through mandatory farm bill funding and creates an annual allocation of \$30 million for local and regional specialty crop development.
- Funds the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program at an annual amount \$30 million through re-established mandatory farm bill funding and raises the maximum cap for participants from \$750 to \$1,000.
- Directs the Risk Management Agency to complete the development of organic price series to allow organic policies to pay out at the organic price and to eliminate the organic premium surcharge.
- Expands the production of fruits and vegetables by allowing greater planting flexibility for commodity program participants.

Expand Access to Healthy Foods for Consumers

- Improves SNAP participant access to farmers markets, CSAs, and other direct marketing outlets by creating a level playing field for electronic benefit transfer among vendors.
- Improves SNAP Education and Outreach by encouraging states to use farmers markets and other direct marketing outlets as a venue for nutrition education activities, providing states the discretion to include nutrition incentives as part of educational efforts, allowing states to partner with farmers market organizations in their outreach plans, and allowing for reimbursement to markets engaged in outreach that complies with state plans.
- Funds the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program at \$25 million.
- Provides \$10 million for the Community Food Projects program and increases the maximum term of CFP grants from three to five years.
- Allows schools the option to use a portion of their AMS school lunch commodity dollars or DoD Fresh program dollars for the purchase of local and regional foods.
- Bolsters requirements that specify AMS purchases use a geographic preference for the procurement of locally produced foods.
- Amends Section 32 to ensure that funds support the development of local and regional agriculture markets.
- Encourages States to include community-supported agriculture programs as eligible to participate in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

Benefit Conservation Efforts

- Improves opportunities for local and regional food producers to participate in conservation programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program, and Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative.
- Provides greater access to technical assistance for local and regional food producers.

Enhance Agriculture Research

- Establishes local and regional food systems as a priority area within the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative.
- Authorizes a new Extension technical assistance initiative to help create sustainable local and regional food systems in the neediest parts of rural America.
- Creates a new initiative for the collection and production of critically important research data on local and regional food systems.
- Directs USDA Research division to prioritize and coordinate classical plant and animal breeding research activities and projects.