

# USDA LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: INITIAL IMPACTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

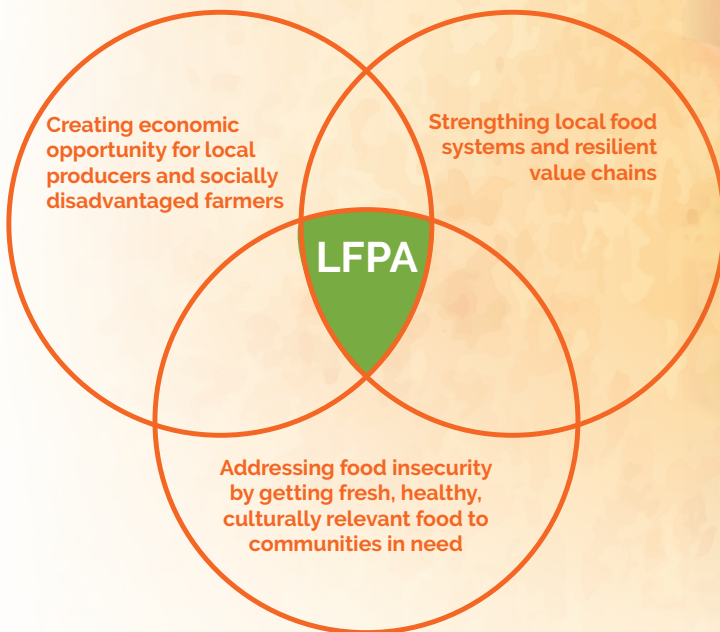


# The Local Food Purchase Assistance Program

In December 2021 the USDA announced the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA), an innovative \$900M effort led by the Agricultural Marketing Service’s (AMS) Commodity Procurement Program. LFPA is part of a historic effort led by USDA to transform the food system as we know it, to make a more resilient food supply chain and a fairer food system that invests in family farmers and rural economies, emphasizes equity, and makes nutritious foods more accessible and affordable.

The purpose of LFPA is to improve domestic agriculture supply chain resiliency by strengthening local and regional food systems, expanding economic opportunities for local and socially disadvantaged farmers, and building partnerships that get fresh, nutritious food to underserved communities (USDA AMS, 2022). The program is operated through non-competitive cooperative agreements with state agencies, and territory and tribal governments, who in turn work with local farmers, food hubs, food banks, and community-based organizations to implement the program.

**By granting state, territory, and tribal governments resources to align efforts to address hunger and support local farms, USDA has leveraged the power of federal purchasing to create an innovative systems-change solution to address some of the most pressing issues facing America’s farmers, agricultural economy, and food insecure communities.**



*“One of the lessons from COVID-19 is that the current food system is too rigid, consolidated and fragile. These cooperative agreements will help state, tribal and local entities purchase food more efficiently from local producers and invest in infrastructure that enables partner organizations to reach underserved communities more effectively.” (USDA AMS, 2022)*

*A volunteer sorts apples during distribution day at the Food Depot in New Mexico*

# Initial Impacts

In the short time since its inception, the LFPA program has demonstrated its potential as a powerful investment in farms and communities. There are some changes that would increase the ability of this program to meet its stated goals. However, even in its early stages, LFPA has proven to be incredibly impactful for local farms and food businesses – particularly those owned by socially disadvantaged producers – local and regional food systems, and underserved communities.

- Investing \$691 million in local economies, with a potential total economic impact of \$1.53 billion
- Creating stable, reliable markets where farmers set the price and can use the funding to build and stabilize their businesses
- Getting fresh, healthy, culturally-appropriate foods to communities experiencing hunger and food insecurity, including those that traditional anti-hunger efforts don't adequately serve
- Building relationships and new value chains between farms, food hubs, food banks and other food distribution sites
- Strengthening more resilient and equitable local and regional food systems that are more accountable to farmers, and provide greater food security for local communities.

“We opened our fresh food pantry as a result of COVID and now LFPA funding is supporting it. It's like a little market where our neighbors come in and select their fresh food. They're getting a higher quality selection, more variety, and they come in talking about the foods that they're preparing in their homes for themselves and their families. It's just amazing! I've been in food banking for over 20 years, and I never thought that I would see the day that we're able to respond to the needs of our food insecure neighbors in this way.”  
- Grove Christian Outreach Center, Williamsburg, VA

## LFPA in Numbers

Approximately **\$864M** invested in resilient regional agricultural value chains

**\$24M** going to tribal governments

**\$691M** estimated funds going to farmers and ranchers

Over **\$1.5B** in estimated local economic impact generated through LFPA purchases from local farms.

**53 cooperative agreements** with state agencies, territories, and D.C.

**29 cooperative agreements** with tribal governments

“We have seen our partners use funds to purchase additional product from local farmers. Farmers have reported increased acreage, jobs, sales, quantity sold, and overall positive impact on their businesses.”  
- Food Access Organization



Raul Rodriguez and his wife are enthusiastic to participate in New Mexico's LFPA program. Here they tend to the fields in anticipation of this year's harvest.

# Building on what works

The LFPA program is an innovative and promising model that demonstrates that the federal government can use its significant purchasing power to work at the intersection of supporting local and socially disadvantaged producers, strengthening local and regional food systems, and providing nutritious, culturally-relevant food to people in need.

## Key drivers of success and impact:


- ✔ The flexibility of a program that is administered through state agencies and tribal governments
- ✔ The responsiveness and attentiveness of the USDA staff that created and is managing this new program
- ✔ Investing in local and regional networks that have strong relationships with farmers and distribution partners
- ✔ Values-based competitive bidding processes to prioritize BIPOC producers
- ✔ Intentionally building sustainable relationships between farmers, food hubs, food banks and other food assistance programs
- ✔ Using LFPA to build capacity with farmers and regional value chains to serve other institutional markets such as schools and hospitals
- ✔ Designing programs around providing culturally relevant foods. Within tribal governments, using funding to support native foodways.
- ✔ Forward contracting and production planning which helps farmers invest in their business
- ✔ Supporting a wide variety of food assistance programs, including grassroots programs through schools, farmers markets, local non-profits and early childcare education centers

“We were able to build a strong network of farmers, food hubs, and community partners by leaning into pre-existing relationships and actively working to maintain trust by advocating for their needs. These relationships, particularly those that we have built with our food hub partners, are foundational to our program’s success.”  
- Value Chain Coordination Organization

# Recommendations for continuation and improvement

Based on research and conversations with hundreds of farms, businesses, governments, and organizations implementing LFPA, the Wallace Center has developed the following recommendations that we hope will help Congress, USDA, and its cooperators build on the initial success of this program and sustain and increase its impact:

- **Continue to support the LFPA program into the future.** Keep what's working while continuing to make improvements. Funding for LFPA should be included in the 2023 Farm Bill, with tweaks to improve its effectiveness.
- Study the models being developed by LFPA implementers that **prioritize attributes and values besides lowest costs and apply them to other federal food procurement programs.**
- **Continue to administer the program through cooperative agreements with state, territory, and tribal governments.**
- **Take measures to ensure deep and diverse partnerships between program implementers,** using the [USDA Regional Food Systems Partnership](#) grant (RFSP) as a model.
- **Prioritize Black and Indigenous producers, and other producers of color.**
- **Coordinate and align other USDA-AMS investments with LFPA-related infrastructure needs.**
- Require that LFPA subcontractors demonstrate that they can **procure culturally-relevant foods.**
- **Consult with Indigenous coalitions to create more equitable funding allocation formulas and to ensure that Indigenous food sovereignty is an explicit priority of the program.**
- **Allow tribal governments to source from other tribes, Indigenous producers, and businesses, even if they exceed the 400-mile radius.**
- Provide oversight of LFPA programs to **ensure that the funding is resourcing complementary expertise between food hubs, food systems nonprofits, food banks and food assistance programs.**
- In cases where there was a long delay in getting contracts and subcontracts signed due to administrative delays, **allow for a one time no-cost extension to enable these programs to have sufficient time for implementation.**
- Create spaces for USDA program staff to meet with LFPA program implementers who are subcontractors to state agencies and **work to address challenges with administering and reporting on the program.**



In the short time since its inception, the Local Food Purchase Assistance program has demonstrated its potential as a powerful systems-level solution to supporting family farms, local and regional food systems, resilient supply chains and local economies. LFPA is a critical piece of USDA's efforts to transform the food system to be fairer, more competitive, and more resilient. The Wallace Center applauds USDA's efforts to establish this important program and hopes to see its continuation.

Read the full report here!



**Wallace Center**  
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL

## About the Wallace Center

The Wallace Center at Winrock International is a national nonprofit that brings together diverse people and ideas to co-create solutions that build healthy farms, equitable economies, and resilient food systems. For more information visit [wallacecenter.org](http://wallacecenter.org) or email [wallaceinfo@winrock.org](mailto:wallaceinfo@winrock.org).

*Raul Rodriguez and family actively participate in New Mexico's LFPA program, planting the seeds of abundance.  
Photography Credit: Christie Parent of 4 Birds Photography, New Mexico*