

USDA LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:

INITIAL IMPACTS, OPPORTUNITIES
AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Wallace Center
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL

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Promising Innovations Towards Food Systems Transformation

Over the last three years it has become undeniably clear that bold, systems-level solutions are necessary to address the pervasive issues threatening the U.S. food system and the farmers, ranchers, fishers and workers that are its backbone. Through the novel [Food Systems Transformation framework](#), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) aims to meet this moment and create more resilient food supply chains and a fairer food system that invests in family farmers and rural economies, emphasizes equity, and makes nutritious foods more accessible and affordable (USDA AMS, 2022).

In December 2021, USDA announced an important new program that is a key element of this vision for food systems transformation, the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA). LFPA is an innovative \$900M effort led by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Commodity Procurement Program with the goals of improving 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). LFPA works to address hunger and food insecurity by supporting family farms and investing in local and regional food systems. Through LFPA, food procured from local farms is distributed through food assistance programs including food banks, schools, faith-based organizations and nonprofits that reach underserved communities, and the program places special emphasis on sourcing from socially disadvantaged producers.

LFPA builds upon a wave of 'farm to food assistance' initiatives that sprung up in communities across the country in response to food supply chain disruptions and increased food insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past several years, the Wallace Center at Winrock International has been working to better understand and support the people and organizations building and implementing these farm to food assistance programs across the US. Our national reach and broad, diverse network of community food systems leaders enabled rapid, participatory research and sensemaking of emerging trends in the field which we then share back with key stakeholders.

“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

This report aims to share what we've learned about how farm to food assistance programs funded by LFPA function, their initial impact, challenges they are facing, and recommendations to help USDA, its cooperators, and other key stakeholders ensure the success of the program and others like it. **In the short time since its inception, the Local Food Purchase Assistance program has demonstrated its potential as a powerful investment in farms and communities.** There are necessary changes that would increase the ability of this program to meet its stated goals, but 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. We are optimistic about the future of this program and hope to see its continuation.

The research that informed this report began in early 2022 and includes data and insights collected via:



- Establishing a national Farm to Food Assistance Community of Practice of over 350 people and organizations to build relationships between program implementers, provide a space for technical assistance and peer learning, and lift up effective models.



- Working closely with a Subject Matter Expert Panel and other key partners to inform the research process and deepen our understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by LFPA and other farm to food assistance initiatives.



- Facilitating a national survey of over 300 farm to food assistance practitioners in partnership with Duke University World Food Policy Center to capture quantitative and qualitative data from the field.



- Conducting interviews and conversations with dozens of LFPA implementers, including tribal leaders, government employees, farmers, anti-hunger advocates, food hub operators, and policy experts across the country to learn about different models, strategies, challenges, and recommendations.
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By investing in local, resilient, accountable value chains, USDA's support for LFPA programs is building common ground and relationships among people who have not traditionally worked together. They are seeding the exploration and co-creation of approaches that address the root causes of poverty while shifting power, resources, and decision-making to local communities and regional value chains. We see farm to food assistance as one of many pathways to more systemic, transformative food systems change - that builds equity, health, wealth and resiliency within communities - and LFPA is a great example to learn from and build upon.

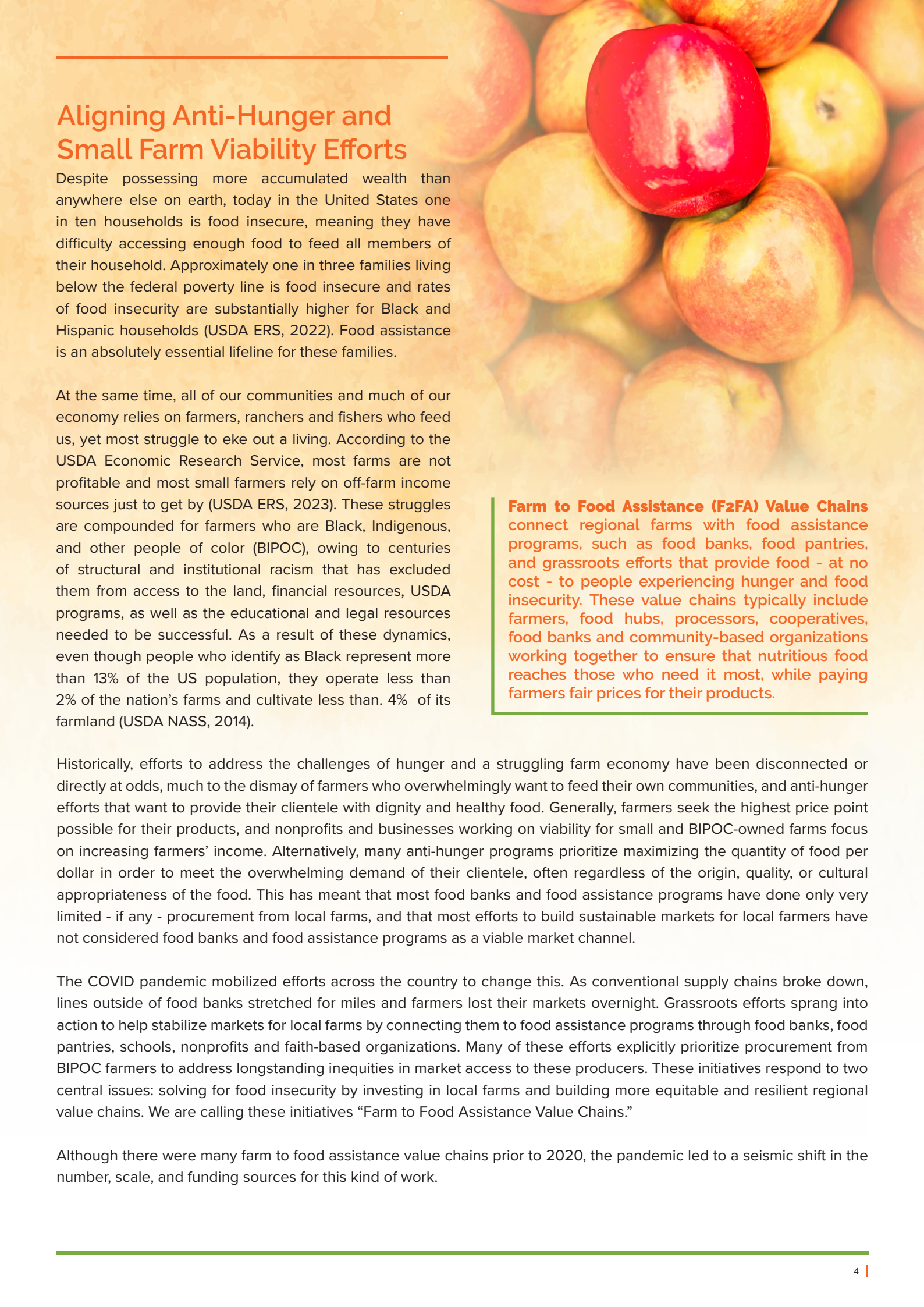
We also want to be honest about the shortcomings of this approach. Despite its impacts, farm to food assistance does not inherently address the root causes of hunger, or solve the challenges facing small farmers, and Black farmers, Indigenous farmers, and other farmers of color (BIPOC farmers). The prevailing charitable model of channeling surplus food into food banks and food pantries will not end hunger or poverty. Short term funding streams that enable food banks and food pantries to buy farmers' products at a fair market price are not a long-term solution to the instability and inequity of the US farm economy. These systemic problems are caused by corporate consolidation and structural inequality in how wealth and power are distributed in this country. We recognize that as long as this is the case, people will still experience chronic hunger, and farmers, particularly BIPOC farmers, will struggle to make ends meet.

Despite the systemic challenges, we are encouraged by what we are learning and see farm to food assistance as a promising strategy to address acute needs and break down barriers to create long term solutions. Over time, we believe these efforts can help lead to transformational change. We applaud USDA's bold and visionary work to establish this program as part of their larger efforts to transform the U.S. food system to make *"markets work better for both family farmers and the families they support—making more nutritious food available to more people at more affordable prices, all the while reducing carbon pollution with crops that are good for our health and our environment"* (USDA-AMS, 2022). We are eager to share the findings of our research in pursuit of this vision.

Aligning Anti-Hunger and Small Farm Viability Efforts

Despite possessing more accumulated wealth than anywhere else on earth, today in the United States one in ten households is food insecure, meaning they have difficulty accessing enough food to feed all members of their household. Approximately one in three families living below the federal poverty line is food insecure and rates of food insecurity are substantially higher for Black and Hispanic households (USDA ERS, 2022). Food assistance is an absolutely essential lifeline for these families.

At the same time, all of our communities and much of our economy relies on farmers, ranchers and fishers who feed us, yet most struggle to eke out a living. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, most farms are not profitable and most small farmers rely on off-farm income sources just to get by (USDA ERS, 2023). These struggles are compounded for farmers who are Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC), owing to centuries of structural and institutional racism that has excluded them from access to the land, financial resources, USDA programs, as well as the educational and legal resources needed to be successful. As a result of these dynamics, even though people who identify as Black represent more than 13% of the US population, they operate less than 2% of the nation's farms and cultivate less than 4% of its farmland (USDA NASS, 2014).



Farm to Food Assistance (F2FA) Value Chains connect regional farms with food assistance programs, such as food banks, food pantries, and grassroots efforts that provide food - at no cost - to people experiencing hunger and food insecurity. These value chains typically include farmers, food hubs, processors, cooperatives, food banks and community-based organizations working together to ensure that nutritious food reaches those who need it most, while paying farmers fair prices for their products.

Historically, efforts to address the challenges of hunger and a struggling farm economy have been disconnected or directly at odds, much to the dismay of farmers who overwhelmingly want to feed their own communities, and anti-hunger efforts that want to provide their clientele with dignity and healthy food. Generally, farmers seek the highest price point possible for their products, and nonprofits and businesses working on viability for small and BIPOC-owned farms focus on increasing farmers' income. Alternatively, many anti-hunger programs prioritize maximizing the quantity of food per dollar in order to meet the overwhelming demand of their clientele, often regardless of the origin, quality, or cultural appropriateness of the food. This has meant that most food banks and food assistance programs have done only very limited - if any - procurement from local farms, and that most efforts to build sustainable markets for local farmers have not considered food banks and food assistance programs as a viable market channel.

The COVID pandemic mobilized efforts across the country to change this. As conventional supply chains broke down, lines outside of food banks stretched for miles and farmers lost their markets overnight. Grassroots efforts sprang into action to help stabilize markets for local farms by connecting them to food assistance programs through food banks, food pantries, schools, nonprofits and faith-based organizations. Many of these efforts explicitly prioritize procurement from BIPOC farmers to address longstanding inequities in market access to these producers. These initiatives respond to two central issues: solving for food insecurity by investing in local farms and building more equitable and resilient regional value chains. We are calling these initiatives "Farm to Food Assistance Value Chains."

Although there were many farm to food assistance value chains prior to 2020, the pandemic led to a seismic shift in the number, scale, and funding sources for this kind of work.

In the fall of 2022 the Wallace Center, in partnership with Duke University World Food Policy Center, conducted a survey of over 300 F2FA programs. We found that:

56% had some F2FA programming before COVID.

32% of programs sprang up to address the increased demand for food and provide a market channel to producers who had lost their markets as a result of the COVID pandemic.

77% who had programs pre-pandemic noted that their farm to food assistance activities increased after the onset of the pandemic.

77% anticipate that their F2FA programming will increase within the next 2-3 years.

The Federal Government's Response

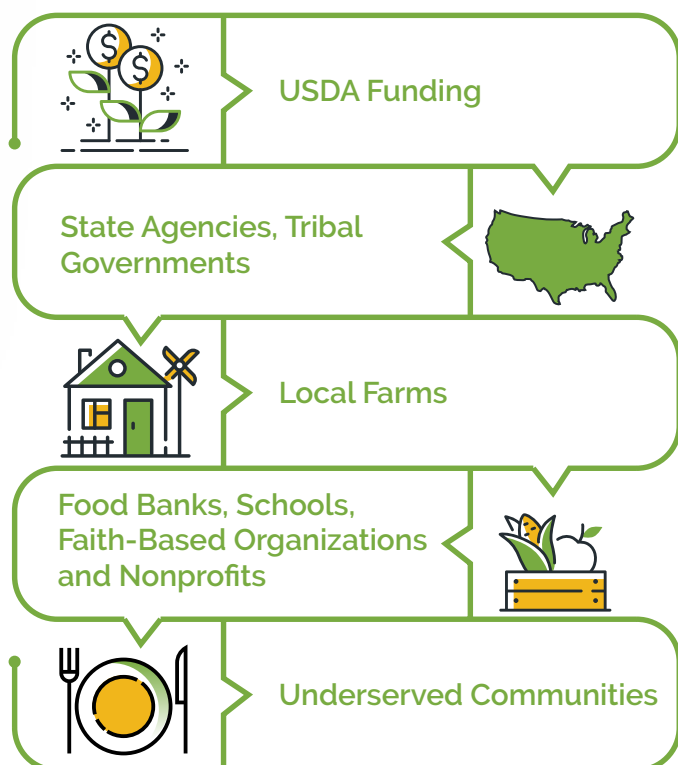
At the height of the pandemic, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) introduced the \$1.78 billion Farmers to Families Food Box program in response to massive supply chain disruptions that were hurting farmers and spiking rates of food insecurity. Although only a small fraction of total funding went to contractors that were sourcing from local and regional farms, these contracts still comprised over \$84M in investment in local farms, regional businesses, and communities. The Wallace Center conducted research with locally sourcing contractors and found that they were overwhelmingly effective in implementing the program. They shored up regional value chains, helped farmers stay solvent, provided nutritious, culturally relevant foods to communities in need, and proved that small- and mid-sized local farms could successfully participate in USDA Commodity Procurement Programs. [Read more here.](#)

The outstanding performance of the contractors that were sourcing from local farms demonstrated that the twin goals of addressing food insecurity and supporting the economic viability of local farms can be complementary. It showed that the USDA has a unique opportunity to simultaneously support small- and mid-sized producers, invest in resilient local food value chains, and address hunger and food insecurity. The program also acted as a pilot and proof of concept - particularly in how USDA could leverage its procurement programs to strengthen local and regional food systems. It proved that when food banks and food assistance programs have the financial leeway and support to make procurement decisions on factors other than lowest price, they can source healthier, fresher, more culturally relevant foods for their clients while supporting local farms and building more resilient regional food systems.

The USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Program

In December 2021, USDA took bold action to build off of the initial learnings of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program and announced the establishment of the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA). Funded by the American Rescue Plan, this innovative new program would provide \$400M through non-competitive cooperative agreements with state, tribal and territory governments to allow for the purchases of local foods to be distributed through food assistance programs. In December 2022, USDA announced LFPA Plus, an additional \$464M funded by the Commodity Credit Corporation, which allowed for the expansion of LFPA programs and the addition of tribal governments and territories who did not participate in the first round of LFPA.

According to USDA, the purpose of LFPA is to improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency. Through cooperative agreements with USDA, participating states, tribes and territories work with local partners to procure and distribute local/regional foods that are “healthy, nutritious, and that meet the needs of the population.” Food procured from local farms is distributed through food assistance programs including food banks, schools, faith-based organizations and nonprofits that reach underserved communities (USDA AMS, 2023). As of May 2023, 49 states (with the exception of Wyoming), the District of Columbia, three territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, and Northern Mariana Islands), and 29 tribal governments have signed cooperative agreements with the USDA to implement LFPA. LFPA agreements will last two years, with an additional year for LFPA Plus agreements.



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

Goals of LFPA:

1. Provide an opportunity for states and tribal governments to strengthen their **local and regional food** system.
2. Help to support local and **socially disadvantaged** farmers/producers through building and expanding economic opportunities.
3. Establish and broaden partnerships with farmers/producers and the food distribution community, and local food networks, including non-profits, to ensure distribution of fresh and nutritious foods in rural, remote, or **underserved communities**.

In the words of USDA:

“These purchases will help to transform the food system and build back a better food system—one that is fair, competitive, distributed, and resilient because the purchases will expand local and regional markets and place an emphasis on purchasing from historically underserved farmers and ranchers.”

“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)

Local and regional foods - produced within the state or within 400 miles of delivery distribution (USDA AMS, 2022)

Socially disadvantaged producer - a farmer, fisher or rancher who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (USDA AMS, 2022)

Underserved communities - communities that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. (USDA AMS, 2022)

Initial Impacts

Even in its early stages, LFPA is creating economic opportunities for producers, strengthening regional food systems, and getting fresh, healthy, culturally relevant food to people in need.

Through this decentralized federal procurement program that works at the intersection of supporting local and socially disadvantaged producers, strengthening local and regional food systems, and providing nutritious, fresh, culturally-relevant food to people in need, USDA has created an innovative and promising model for simultaneously addressing some of the most pressing problems in the US food system. While many LFPA programs are just getting off the ground in early 2023, those that have started, and those that are building off of existing efforts, are reporting notable benefits to local farms, regional food systems, and underserved communities, and are poised for future impacts.

Purchasing \$691M from local producers

Approximately 80% - or \$691M of the \$864M invested through LFPA - is going to local and regional farmers, ranchers, and fishers through direct purchases. Over half of these purchases will be from socially disadvantaged producers. These new sales help farmers maintain and create jobs, and expand and invest in their businesses.



“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 Survey Respondent

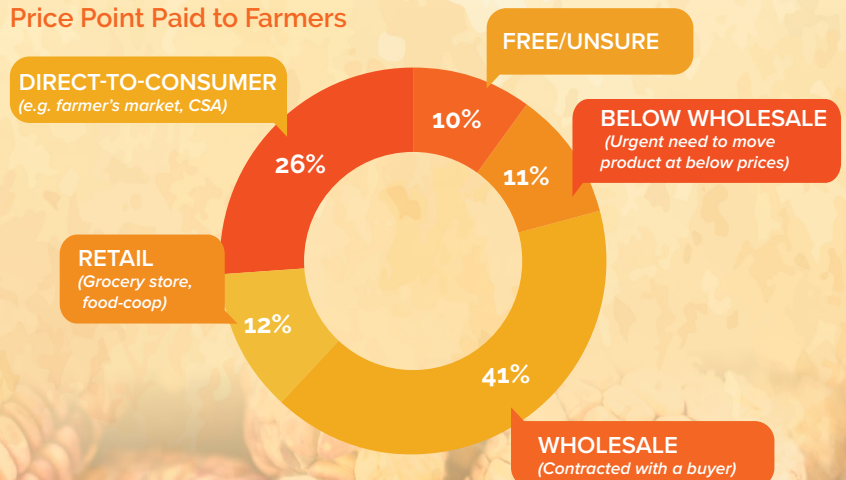
Generating 1.53B in local economic activity

Using the local food [economic multiplier calculator](#) developed by USDA and Colorado State University, we find that **the estimated \$691M being invested through LFPA and LFPA Plus on food purchases can generate over \$1.53 billion in local economic activity.** Economic multipliers show the impact of money spent in a certain sector on the overall economy of a place. Money spent on local food has a higher economic multiplier than the conventionally produced food because local farmers tend to buy products that are also locally produced, thus allowing those dollars to circulate in their communities (Shideler and Watson, 2019).¹

Creating fairer markets

55% of farmers participating in farm to food assistance value chains - like those created by LFPA - are setting the prices for their products, in stark contrast to most markets where they are price takers due to the downward pressure of market forces and consolidated corporate power. In 17% of cases, prices are negotiated between producers and buyers at the food bank, food pantry, or other point of purchase. The price point paid to farmers is most often wholesale rate (41%).

Price Point Paid to Farmers



Note, this calculation assumes that of the \$864M in total funding from LFPA awards, 80% (\$691M) goes to purchasing from farms, with the remaining 20% covering costs of administration and implementation. For the purposes of this calculation we also assumed multi-state regional impacts through both direct to consumer and intermediated sales.

Getting fresh, nutritious, culturally appropriate foods to communities experiencing hunger and food insecurity

Over 70% of the survey respondents said their F2FA programs serve culturally relevant or traditional foods to meet the diverse needs and preferences of food insecure communities. Seventy nine percent said this was a priority.

“LFPA funds are critical in helping Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank meet the specific food needs for each community we serve. Through LFPA, we were able to partner with Salem’s to distribute halal meat processed locally in Pennsylvania. Since Pittsburgh has a growing Muslim population, providing culturally relevant items, such as halal foods, helps us ensure all of our neighbors have access to the food they need.”

- Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

Building more resilient and equitable local and regional food systems

93% of survey respondents shared that their work in farm to food assistance led to the creation or strengthening of important relationships across the value chain. These relationships are key to counteracting the fragile, conventional food system that we saw collapse during the early days of the COVID pandemic, and can outlast short term subsidies from programs like LFPA. Food hubs, farms, food banks, nonprofits, and food assistance programs all echoed this sentiment—**the relationships and systems being invested in through LFPA are creating regional food systems that are more resilient and durable, more accountable to local and regional farms, and provide greater food security for local communities.**

“There are tribal members that live at fishing access sites right along the river and traditionally they have to drive all the way back to the Reservation to get services, like from a local food bank. The issue was ongoing but the pandemic is what sent it over the edge. Hopefully with these systems set in place, it will help to manage these issues in the future, issues that are not going away just because the pandemic did.”

- Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission



Shaffer Ridgeway, a committed farmer in Iowa's LFPA program, runs Southern Goods, specializing in traditional Southern crops.

What's working well

The flexibility of the LFPA program: Administering the program through non-competitive cooperative agreements enables each state and tribal government to design programs that are responsive to the unique context, needs, relationships, and resources of each place.

A defining characteristic of LFPA is that no two programs are exactly alike. Each is designed by and for the state, tribe, or territory in which it takes place, making each approach bespoke and reflective of the needs and assets of the participating partners and communities. This is enabled by the non-competitive cooperative agreement model; states, tribes and territories are not competing with one another for funding and can design programs and partnerships that are uniquely suited to their communities. The cooperative agreement approach also enables a wider range of procurement options than would be possible if the participating entities (farms, food banks, etc.) were contracted directly by the federal government.

State, tribal, and territory governments have the authority to determine what agency administers the program and to select core partners to serve as implementation leads for the program. In 34 states, the cooperative agreement with USDA is administered by the Departments of Agriculture/Food/Forestry. Departments of Social/Human/Health Services took the lead in 11 states. In six states, these two departments cosigned the agreement with the intent to partner together. In Hawaii and Michigan, LFPA is administered through the Departments of Education, and in Rhode Island, through the Department of Environmental Management.

Although there is a wide range of diversity in how programs are designed, three main models of LFPA programs have emerged:

1. Local producer networks and value chain coordinators as core partners

In this model, the state department allocates funds to one or multiple state-wide food system networks or value chain coordinators through subawards. These partners then contract with food hubs, cooperatives, and other local food businesses and nonprofits to coordinate procurement from local farms and distribution to food access organizations who interface directly with the individuals receiving the food.

Our research indicates that states that have substantive involvement and leadership from grassroots food systems networks and value chain coordination professionals are standing up robust programs that are responsive and accountable to the needs of farmers, and particularly socially disadvantaged farmers.

Example: North Carolina

As a result of COVID-19, [Carolina Farm Stewardship Association \(CFSA\) launched FarmsSHARE](#), a food assistance program that was piloted in 2020, expanded in 2021 and 2022 through state and philanthropic funding, and now is the basis of North Carolina's LFPA. Fourteen food hubs work with CFSA toward this goal, aggregating locally-grown foods from approximately 120 sustainable farms across North Carolina into CSA-like food boxes. The food hubs partner with food assistance organizations and community based partners that distribute the food boxes to people experiencing food insecurity. CFSA's strong network of food hubs and producers across their state and their previous piloting of the FarmsSHARE program made them an ideal core partner to the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services - the LFPA administrative lead. This partnership is enabling an LFPA program that is proactive, tailored, and accountable to farmers and communities in North Carolina.

[Check out a full diagram of their model.](#)



Manny Encinias and family are part of the Trilogy Beef Community, a small, integrated community of New Mexico beef producers.

2. Food bank/food bank network as core partner

Some state governments are partnering directly with a food bank or state-wide food bank network to implement LFPA via a subaward. In several states, these food banks are working closely with local food hubs and regional food systems networks and nonprofits to create relationships with and procure from local producers. However, in some cases – particularly where relationships between food banks and local and regional food systems organizations and food hubs are less developed – these food banks are operating mostly on their own. This model seems to make the most progress towards the goals of LFPA when there are close partnerships between food banks and food systems networks, food hubs, and value chain coordination nonprofits to ensure that the needs and abilities of local and socially disadvantaged farmers are centered in procurement strategies.

Example: Oregon

The Oregon Food Bank (OFB) is the core partner in Oregon's LFPA program. Though they are the lead subcontractor to the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), OFB is leveraging their partnerships with the state's food hub network, community partners working with farmers, and other partner agencies to provide funds to growers, ranchers, fishers, food distribution organizations, and processors who will then distribute product to their local and regional communities through the Oregon Producers Feeding [*Oregon Communities Fund*](#) which OFB manages.

The fund aims to provide more than \$2 million per year over three years to support anti-hunger efforts through purchases of local food from socially disadvantaged farmers, fishers and ranchers. OFB developed an application for farmers to apply directly to the fund, with specific priority given to producers who are Black, Indigenous, and producers of color and who also identify as socially disadvantaged, small and/or beginner, located in rural areas, and those who intend to supply food to communities not typically served through traditional food distribution networks. Producers who don't currently distribute to communities impacted by hunger are being connected to distribution outlets throughout the Oregon Food Bank Network of 20 regional food banks and partner agencies such as food pantries, free food markets, and/or community organizations that can reach those marginalized populations. Through this program, ODHS and OFB's objectives are to 1) Increase the number of socially disadvantaged farmers supplying food to underserved communities; 2) Identify distribution channels that aren't currently reached by TEFAP programs to serve underserved communities; and 3) increase connectivity between growers through peer-to-peer sharing.



Distribution day at The Food Depot a New Mexico food bank.

3. Hybrid model

Some states are employing a combination of the above, with food banks leading part of the program, and food hubs, value chain coordinating organizations, and food systems networks leading another part of the program. This hybrid approach has the potential to leverage the strengths of different partners but requires deep relationship building, coordination, and collaboration.

Example: New Mexico

As part of Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham's Food Initiative, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) - the LFPFA administrative lead - recognized that partnering with food banks was crucial for the success of their LFPFA program. The state had also been increasing its efforts and investments in making locally-sourced food more accessible and LFPFA provided an opportunity for a natural expansion of the existing [New Mexico Grown Approved Supplier](#) program. So NMDA created sub-agreements with both the New Mexico Association of Food Banks (NMAFB) and with the New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association (NMFMA) to leverage the strengths of both partners.

The New Mexico Association of Food Banks is a collaboration between all five food banks in the state. Partnering with the association allowed the state to combine their buying power to purchase in bulk, share costs of transportation, and centralize applications from producers through one central location. All food purchases on behalf of NMAFB are overseen by two dedicated food procurement specialists at the [Food Depot](#), who make purchases using a values-based procurement system, invoice suppliers, and coordinate aggregation and distribution of locally sourced food through the network of pantries and other community sites working with the five NMAFB food banks.

[New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association](#) is the other main sub-awardee to NMDA. NMFMA manages the NM Grown Approved Supplier Program, which is the entry point for all farmers, ranchers, food hubs, and other eligible food businesses to be able to sell to institutional buyers in New Mexico - including the food banks. NMFMA networks with small and mid-sized farmers and food hubs, provides value chain coordination helping link producers with the buyers, develops and maintains food safety standards and processes for participating producers, develops tools to add new product categories to NM Grown, and provides technical assistance and training to producers. NMAFB provides NMFMA with data and expanded market opportunities for producers, food hubs, and other eligible food businesses that are part of the Approved Supplier Program. NMFMA provides NMAFB assistance with procurement systems development, as well as value chain coordination and outreach to farmers, food hubs and other suppliers. Check out a full diagram of their model [here](#).



“The New Mexico Department of Agriculture's LFPFA staff have consistently supported the funding partners with strong project management, collaboration, and a transparent ethos. The radical task of deepening local food system resiliency, and prioritizing funding for the benefit of underserved producers within the historically fractured food system is complex, demanding, and enterprising work. It takes a literal village. We truly appreciate the commitment of NMDA's staff to support those efforts, and to connect nutritious New Mexican grown foods to New Mexican people seeking food assistance.”
- The Food Depot

The responsiveness and attentiveness of the USDA staff that created and is managing this new program.

This program would not be possible without the extraordinary efforts of the staff at USDA who have worked tirelessly to establish this program through 82 cooperative agreements. The staff at USDA AMS Commodity Procurement responsible for administering this program is led by Assistant to the Deputy Administrator, Elizabeth Lober, and supported by Team Lead Sarah Fong, and a collaborative team of regional leads. Together they have created a uniquely responsive program that engages constituents through monthly office hours and offers support and coordination through regional contacts within AMS. The exemplary work of USDA-AMS in establishing this important program and taking such intentional efforts to support it has contributed significantly to its early success.

Investing in local and regional networks that have strong relationships with farmers and distribution partners.

Consistently we have seen that LFPA programs designed with, by, and for local and regional organizations that have strong pre-existing relationships with farmers and successful existing programs are able to launch more efficiently, faster, and truly center socially disadvantaged farms. Food systems organizations have been working for decades to develop trusting relationships with farmers. They understand the unique challenges of procurement, aggregation, and distribution of locally produced foods, and can support actors across the F2FA value chain with their experience and expertise.

“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. Without these trusted partnerships, our program would not have experienced the growth and success it has had over the last two years.” - Value Chain Coordination Organization Survey Respondent

Values-based competitive bidding processes to prioritize BIPOC producers.

Although LFPA emphasizes supporting “socially disadvantaged farmers,” it does not provide requirements on how this is implemented or enforce that programs take measures to ensure project funds are supporting these producers. States can set their own targets for the total numbers of farmers that will participate, and what percentage identify as “socially disadvantaged” per the USDA definition.

Several states are proactively designing procurement systems that are more targeted than the USDA’s broad definition of “socially disadvantaged.” Their goal is to ensure that a preponderance of funds go to farmers that identify as Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color (BIPOC).

From the Field:

Iowa: The Iowa LFPA program has a tiered model that prioritizes farmers with specific identifies. Tier one producers are those who identify as BIPOC, immigrants and refugees, women, veterans, and LGBTQIA+. The food hubs that are managing the farmer relationships are aiming for between 60 and 100% of purchases from producers that fall into tier one.

“Any producers that self-identify in those categories, we wanted to prioritize the investment in their businesses.” - Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development



Shaffer Ridgeway a farmer engaged in Iowa’s LFPA program, takes pride in his herd.

Intentionally building trusting relationships between farmers, food hubs, food banks and other food assistance programs. There are many food banks and food assistance programs that, prior to COVID and the advent of LFPA, had little to no experience sourcing from local producers or working with local food hubs. Some organizations participating in LFPA-funded programs did not have any relationships with socially disadvantaged farmers, particularly those that identify as BIPOC. Investing time and resources into building trusting, transparent, and consistent relationships is key to programs that meaningfully center the needs of these farmers. LFPA provided an impetus for farmers, food hubs, farmer cooperatives, food banks, and grassroots food assistance programs to sit down together, focus on building relationships, and co-create farm to food assistance value chains that can sustain beyond the life of the funding.

From the Field:

“Ohio: *“We are prioritizing our outreach to socially disadvantaged producers and specifically BIPOC producers, AAPI producers, women, and LGBTQ+ producers. I think the most important part about this is forming relationships with these groups and being transparent as possible with them. Asking for their advice, building the program around what would work best for them and hearing their concerns has been key. A big thing that has come up is some unease about the program due to the history with the USDA, and that needs to be recognized and addressed, not ignored. Being transparent about how the funds are coming from them and how we intend to use them specifically to support BIPOC farmers is important. Meeting in person and traveling the distance to see folks’ farms and talk face to face has been huge in establishing trust.”*
- Ohio Department of Agriculture

Using LFPA to build value chain capacity to serve institutional markets beyond the life of LFPA. As of right now, the LFPA program is slated to sunset at the end of its original 2-3 years of dedicated funding. Most stakeholders are keenly aware that end of the program could be harmful to participating farms and food businesses, and are working to use this current investment to build capacity with farms, invest in regional value chains, and increase access to other institutional markets such as schools, university dining services, and hospitals. LFPA has demonstrated that when USDA invests in values-based procurement from local and regional farms in one market channel, it builds relationships and capacity across value chains.

From the Field:

Texas: The Common Market is using investments from LFPA to expand markets for BIPOC producers, helping them to get wholesale ready and build value chains with other institutional markets.

“*“We will deliver over 160,000 Farm Fresh Boxes of local produce sourced from participating farmers. This is a tremendous opportunity to create a lasting impact for BIPOC farmers looking to expand and grow to serve communities at scale. We are supporting a pipeline of wholesale ready producers that can go on to serve institutional markets, beyond the scope of LFPA. This is truly a launching pad, and a means to foster resiliency for socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and producers in the state of Texas.”*
- The Common Market Texas



Designing programs around providing culturally relevant foods. Within Tribal governments, using funding to support Native foodways.

Many of the programs interviewed mentioned the importance of providing culturally relevant foods and designing programs that are responsive to the needs of the communities they intend to serve. For example, in California, participating food hubs communicate with client-facing food banks to ensure they're providing food that meets the needs of their communities. This often means determining the composition of food boxes based on the number and types of items in the box, not the weight of the box. As a staff member from the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, a nonprofit that is supporting the implementation of California's LFPA, put it, "*Cilantro is really important to the Latina communities we serve, but it isn't very heavy!*"

From the Field:

Spirit Lake: The Spirit Lake Tribe, located in North Dakota, encountered barriers securing enough food from native producers to fulfill the market created by LFPA. "*Here we have cattle, grains, beans... and very long winters,*" said Mary Greene, Director of Spirit Lake's Food Distribution Program. This makes procuring a variety of cultural foods from Indigenous producers within the 400 mile radius required by the program nearly impossible. Spirit Lake wanted to prioritize getting traditional foods from Native producers, but also wanted an array of food options. They received a waiver from USDA to establish a partnership with [Tocabe Market](#), an Indigenous marketplace based in Denver, CO that sources from Indigenous producers from North and South Dakota and Minnesota. Tocabe creates a rotating variety of seasonal, ready-to-eat meals that include cultural foods like bison, blue cornmeal, wild rice, corn, turnips, beans, and squash. These meals are then distributed to over 750 members of the Spirit Lake Tribe every month, with an emphasis on reaching homebound elders.

Forward contracting and production planning. One of the greatest challenges to small farm viability is the significant time delay between when farmers pay for inputs like seeds, supplies, and labor and when they are paid for their products. This makes cash flow extremely challenging for a small business and poses a risky proposition, especially as climate change increasingly disrupts farmers' best laid production plans. LFPA has enabled many states to deploy forward contracting, a practice in which farmers are partially paid upon signing a contract with a buyer, and the rest is paid upon delivery of the final product.

From the Field:

Rhode Island: Farm Fresh Rhode Island (FFRI) is a food hub and nonprofit that is the core partner in the state's LFPA. FFRI pays participating farmers 60% upon signing a contract (up front) and the other 40% when the product is delivered, thereby sharing the risk of production with the farmer. FFRI pairs this forward contracting with dedicated value chain coordination and production planning— facilitating communication between participating farmers and food banks to determine the type and quantity of products that are needed and the timeline for production. This kind of farmer-centered planning helps make these value chains more feasible for all farmers, and particularly socially disadvantaged producers who might not otherwise be able to take on the significant risk of selling into a new market channel.

“Upfront farmer payments have been an essential component of our program - they provide support for farmers while building trusting relationships and securing products for hunger relief markets at an affordable price as costs continue to increase. It truly is a win-win situation.” - Farm Fresh Rhode Island



Supporting a wide variety of food assistance programs. Although food banks and food pantries are often major players in LFPA programs, they are far from the only food assistance outlets involved. Food hubs and farms are partnering with farmers markets, schools, faith-based organizations, early childcare education centers, senior centers, and other community-based nonprofits to ensure underserved communities that may not be reached through traditional feeding programs can access food in convenient and dignified ways.

Distribution Sites



Iowa Farm Table Delivery distribution day, a volunteer unloads truck.

Opportunities for Improvement

Currently LFPA is slated to end after two years, with the opportunity for a third year for LFPA Plus awardees. This has created major concerns among key program stakeholders who are pouring limited human resources and time into building these value chains and are encouraging producers to scale up to meet demand that might disappear if the USDA is unable to continue the LFPA program.

“This should not be just a pilot program. This is something that should be funded into the future. We have already seen SNAP benefits going down while food [costs] in grocery stores are increasing. This program helps us control our food sovereignty, getting our cultural foods to our people. Sometimes elders will say “wow - we haven’t had that food in our diet for a long time.” It is a way to provide nutritious foods from within the community. We need this funding to last so that we can continue to provide culturally relevant foods to our tribal members.” - Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission

Growers need access to land, capital, technical assistance and infrastructure to scale up to meet the demand of this program. Across the value chain, organizations and businesses need funding for both hard and soft infrastructure. In our survey, amongst the organizations with farm to food assistance programs who planned to participate in LFPA, the number one challenge was the lack of infrastructure. But in interviews with LFPA programs, many mentioned that it is hard to make that investment when there isn’t a long term guarantee that the program will continue into the future.

Investments are needed in hard infrastructure - like land, warehouses, cold storage and trucks.

“**Colorado:** “Insufficient storage for produce in the winter; we lack the infrastructure to protect storage crops from freezing temperatures in our current storage facility.” - Good Food Collective

“**Minnesota:** “The challenge I have is access to the resources that could enable me to grow and scale. These include, amongst others, access to land and capital. Most emerging farmers lose the excitement when they realize that the entry barriers to allow them to continue with their operations are extremely limiting.” - Better Greens LLC



A volunteer sorting beans at the New Mexico Food Depot.

But programs also need investments in the soft infrastructure of value chain coordination, relationship building, capacity building, and technical assistance.

“ **Michigan:** *“I think the major challenge is growing these urban farms. They are used to growing food for the community, but not for wholesale. Developing transportation and logistics schedules, case sizing, accounting procedures, etc. for farms that haven’t had to worry about that will be challenging.”*
- Eastern Market Partnership

“ **Oklahoma:** *“Most of our producers are very small and also need to be invested in so that they are able to scale to increase production required from this demand. Apart from capital, they also need technical assistance, mentorship/apprenticeship and land access.”* - OKC Food Hub

These needs are especially acute in rural and Tribal communities, where transportation and distribution costs are particularly high.

“ **Colorado:** *“Transportation to more rural parts of our region is a major challenge; existing distribution routes are few and far between to the most rural parts of our state, and we do not have the assets/resources to build out new routes. This means that some of our most marginalized communities might be left out of receiving food from the program.”*
- Good Food Collective

Allocations to tribal governments has been – in some cases – grossly inadequate and the funding formula used for tribes is inequitable and insufficient.

LFPAs allocations were determined using state criteria based on The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) formula, which only considers poverty rate and unemployment levels in each state. The TEFAP formula does not consider the disparate rates of poverty and underemployment for tribal nations in comparison to overall state rates in which each tribal nation is respectively located.

For example Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin which is a consortium of all 11 tribal nations of Wisconsin– was awarded \$750,110, only 23% of their total request of \$5,203,053. By way of comparison, Texas, a state with four federally recognized tribes received a total allocation of \$37.8M. Adjacent Oklahoma, home to 39 tribes, received an allocation of only \$4.4M. Most egregiously, in Alaska, a total of \$360,000 was allocated across 229 federal tribes, leaving each tribe with a maximum request of \$1,572.05.

LFPAs Plus attempted to correct some of these inequities in tribal funding allocations by reserving \$100M, nearly a quarter of LFPAs Plus funding, for tribes. While a laudable attempt, the initial round of LFPAs made it clear that the TEFAP formula is inadequate for determining appropriate and equitable allocations to tribes.

The “in state” or 400-mile limit on sourcing has made it difficult or impossible for some tribes to source seasonal, Indigenous grown, traditional foods and to engage in trade across tribal nations.

From the Field:

Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

“It is a foreign concept for tribes to have boundaries. We are trying to support as many Native producers as we can. We need to eliminate the 400-mile boundary in this program!” - Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission

The [Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission \(CRITFC\)](#) LFPAs program is a distinctive collaboration involving tribal partners in the states of Oregon - Warm Springs, Washington - Yakama Nation Farms, and Idaho - Nez Perce Tribe, demonstrating the absence of geopolitical boundaries in tribal food systems. The waters of the Columbia Basin serve as the unifying factor for this diverse group of tribes. They depend on these sacred waters for fishing salmon, a traditional first food that they have continued to protect and revitalize and is essential to their survival. Increasing food security, encouraging healthy eating, generating economic and employment opportunities, and protecting cultural and natural resources are all top priorities for CRITFC, which is why they are putting a strong emphasis on indigenous food sovereignty in their LFPAs program.



The reservations and ceded lands of the four Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) member tribes.

Differing mental models, policies, and priorities and nascent relationships between many food banks, food hubs and food systems organizations have posed difficulties for several LFPA programs.

In March 2023 the Wallace Center hosted a [Farm to Food Assistance Community of Practice](#) call, in partnership with [Feeding America](#), the country's largest food bank network, to identify and unpack some of the core challenges emerging in LFPA partnerships between food banks and food systems organizations. Relationships between these actors are essential to effective LFPA implementation, but often require learning and compromise for people used to working in different paradigms.

- **Price point** - Food banks generally prioritize lowest price to ensure consistent quantity of food distribution to their clientele. Many farmers and food hubs fear that LFPA is creating an artificial, short-term willingness among food banks to pay local farms higher, fairer prices. In most cases where food banks had experience working with local producers prior to LFPA, it was often through gleaning and donation-based programs. That dynamic has required that many food banks shift their mindset to think about purchasing from local farmers, rather than receiving their products via donation.

“Budgeting is a challenge because buying produce is sort of outside the norms of the business of the food bank so we’ve had to do some studies and a pilot program to prove to our management that the numbers can work. But we are making the commitment to figure it out. We say we want to focus on social justice. If we want to walk the walk, then we have to make our actions line up.”
- F2FA Community of Practice Member

- **Mismatched purchasing timelines and schedules** - Some food banks are accustomed to spot purchasing, and aren’t practiced at managing long term purchasing commitments or production planning with growers.

“The Common Market has been seeking to extend long term commitments to growers. That kind of planning and security allows farmers to make affirmative commitments to grow their businesses. Mostly what’s happening is spot procurement - where food banks want purchasing commitments on a week’s or a month’s notice. That means we haven’t been able to match up supply and demand, make commitments, and talk with farmers and food banks about how to make it work.”
- The Common Market

- **Issues with scale, supply, logistics, and seasonality** - Food banks often require product volume and consistency to meet the demand of the people they serve. Local food systems are by nature slower and tied to seasonality - which can compound the issues of fulfilling food banks demand for volume and regularity, especially in the winter.

“Buying local produce has really challenged our [food bank’s] ways of working. Before we started doing this, we had no experience paying suppliers on the same day as the product is delivered, but we wanted to do that for these local farms. Creating systems that allow us to do this has taken extra effort but has been huge in establishing trust with the growers.”
- F2FA Community of Practice member

- **Systemic challenges and power imbalances** - In some cases food banks hold a lot of sway with state agencies and power over how resources get distributed, but may not have strong relationships with and accountability to local farms and food businesses.

“The organizations who have access to the funding aren’t the same as the ones who have connections to the communities and the growers that were intended to be supported. In many places, the majority of the funding is going to food banks directly; they’re getting the overhead. While the organizations that have been engaging “socially disadvantaged” farmers are locked out of the decision making process.” - F2FA Community of Practice Member



Administrative challenges and capacity constraints:

- **Delays in a.) getting contracts signed between the state agencies and USDA and/or b.) getting subcontracts signed with partners have set many programs - and the farmers they serve - back by entire seasons.** Typically the cited reason for these delays is limited capacity in state agencies. Farmers need lead time to know what to plant and when. In states where it has taken many months for the state to sign subcontracts, it has hindered their ability to do production planning with farmers and food assistance programs.
- **Other programs have cited problems with cash flow** - that payment terms between state agencies and sub-awardees are longer than the payment terms they have with farmers. Food hubs are typically committed to paying farmers in a timely manner. If a food hub has terms to pay farmers within 15 days, but they themselves won't get reimbursed for 30-60 days, it puts their business in a financially compromised situation.

“**Virginia:** *“The biggest challenge has been in the delay getting started and the wait for reimbursements. Our farmers were ready to go mid-summer and missed a full season waiting for the grant to process. The bitter cold snap in December took out most of their crops so they were anxious to get going January 1 with what little they had salvaged. The pantries are in high demand now and want to place big orders. This is putting us in a difficult place as we have to wait 30 days for reimbursement and this is a lot of money to front to keep our farmers paid. We are hoping that we can get a bank loan to get through these first few months until spring when things will even out. Farmers are stretched as it is and asking already disadvantaged farmers to wait 30 days for payment is not a helpful strategy, nor is putting this burden on the farmers markets and food hubs. We will get there but this has been a steep hurdle.”*

- Lulu's Local Food

- **Building capacity for LFPA reporting requirements** - Many organizations surveyed and interviewed through this research cited the difficulties managing the reporting and administrative requirements of the program.
- **Challenges in gathering demographic data:** Asking demographic questions to determine if producers meet the definition of “socially disadvantaged” can seem invasive and inappropriate, particularly when working with communities who have been discriminated against. Food banks and pantries also expressed hesitation on collecting demographics of clients receiving food in order to maintain their dignity and privacy. Some are using statistical extrapolation to make best guesses about clientele.

“**Vermont:** *“Farmers are reluctant to be listed as such on state and federal reporting. We are balancing ensuring that the spirit of the grant is upheld while also ensuring privacy and that organizations can have creativity in how they approach the reporting.”*

- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets



Conclusion and Recommendations

In the short time since its inception, the Local Food Purchase Assistance program has demonstrated its potential as a powerful investment in farms and communities. There are necessary changes that would increase the ability of this program to meet its stated goals, but 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. LFPA is a critical piece of USDA's efforts to transform the food system to be fairer, more competitive, and more resilient. We applaud USDA's efforts to establish this important program.

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

Continue to deliver the LFPA program into the future — and keep what works. LFPA has the potential to be an effective, holistic program. Even in its early stages, LFPA has proven to be incredibly impactful through investing in local farms and food businesses, particularly those owned by socially disadvantaged producers, strengthening local and regional food systems, and getting nutritious, culturally relevant foods to underserved communities. 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. LFPA has modeled that USDA procurements can have better outcomes for local farms, value chains, and economies when they prioritize values other than lowest cost. Other USDA procurement programs, such as USDA Foods, which procures food for schools across the country, and TEFAP, which provides food to food banks and other emergency food outlets, can learn from LFPA programs that have developed scoring models for purchases that prioritize farmer attributes like socially disadvantaged, small, or beginning farmers.

Continue to administer the program through cooperative agreements with state, territory, and tribal governments. State, territory, and tribal governments are rooted in the places where LFPA programs are happening; this makes them more accountable and responsive to the unique needs of the partners implementing these programs on the ground and the communities it is intended to serve. Administering the program through local governments has also allowed for more nimble programs making it easier for local farmers, food hubs, and nonprofits to participate when compared to procurement programs administered directly by the federal government.

Prioritize Black and Indigenous producers, and other producers of color. Future versions of LFPA should be more specific about the farmers they are aiming to support to ensure that the funding reaches those communities. We recommend that USDA adopt the socially disadvantaged definition in 7 CFR § 1466.3 which more specifically addresses racial discrimination ("Electronic Code of Federal Regulations: Title 7, Subtitle B, Chapter XIV, Subchapter B, Part 1466," n.d.).



Raul Rodriguez and family are enthusiastic farmers participating in New Mexico's LFPA program.

Take measures to ensure deep and diverse partnerships between program implementers, using the [USDA Regional Food Systems Partnership](#) grant (RFSP) as a model. RFSP invests in projects that develop relationships and networks between local and regional food systems actors. RFSP requires applicants to demonstrate strong partnerships and plans for expanding and strengthening partnerships. Future iterations of LFPFA should use RFSP as a model and require that states, tribes, or territories demonstrate their commitment to building and strengthening partnerships with a diversity of local and regional food systems actors. Letters of commitment and/or partnership should be required for all named program partners.

Coordinate and align other USDA-AMS investments with LFPFA-related infrastructure needs. Hard infrastructure, including trucks, cold storage, warehousing space, and processing, is needed across the farm to food assistance value chain, and LFPFA funding cannot be used for these kinds of investments. In May, 2023 USDA-AMS announced the [Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure \(RFSI\) Program](#) which aims to build resilience in the middle of the food supply chain and to provide more and better markets to small farms and food businesses. Like LFPFA, the RFSI program is designed to provide up to \$420M in noncompetitive cooperative agreements to states and territories to make competitive subawards that support infrastructure for domestic food and farm businesses and other eligible entities. Although RFSI has the potential to address many of the critical infrastructure needs faced by LFPFA program implementers, at the time of completing this report there is an active proposal in Congress to rescind the funding for the RFSI program. Still, the need to address the critical investments in hard infrastructure that would enable LFPFA programs to be successful and sustainable remains unchanged. We recommend that USDA consider providing technical assistance to LFPFA program operators to identify other USDA funding opportunities to address the infrastructure needed across LFPFA programs and value chains.

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. The USDA should collaborate with the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, Intertribal Agriculture Council, the Native Farm Bill Coalition, and other Indigenous coalitions to design 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. Indigenous foodways don't follow state boundaries. The limitation on the geography where tribal nations can purchase food restricts their ability to purchase Indigenous-produced and culturally relevant foods with this funding.

Provide oversight of LFPFA programs to **ensure that the funding is resourcing complementary expertise between food hubs, food systems nonprofits, food banks and food assistance programs.** LFPFA has a broad set of objectives which require transparent, fair, and collaborative partnerships. Food banks that are core partners should be required to demonstrate their relationships with local food systems organizations and their experience purchasing and distributing local food, or be required to have a partner accountable to prioritizing local food, underserved farmers, and fair prices. Similarly, local and regional food system actors that are core partners should be required to demonstrate their expertise in distributing food to communities experiencing hunger, or their partnership with organizations that have that expertise.

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 LFPFA program implementers who are subcontractors to state agencies and **work to address challenges with administering and reporting on the program.** The USDA team charged with administering LFPFA has done a tremendous job working with state and tribal agencies by hosting monthly office hours and appointing regional leads as program contacts. We recommend that USDA also take measures to ensure that they are hearing from the subcontractors to these agencies who are implementing these programs on the ground. Holding a space to meet regularly with implementing organizations can help all parties address these administrative challenges and reporting requirements.

Conclusion

In 2022, the USDA announced its vision for transforming the U.S. food system so that it supports truly resilient supply chains, invests in family farms and rural communities, ensures that nutritious foods are accessible and affordable, and emphasizes equity (USDA-AMS 2022). Achieving this vision will take years of sustained and coordinated efforts, but it is absolutely essential if we are to build a thriving future for America's farmers, our economy, and our communities. The Local Food Purchase Assistance program is a purposeful step by USDA and thousands of farmers, ranchers, fishers, food businesses, food hubs, food banks, and community organizations towards this inspiring vision. It is our hope that through continued support for and investment in this program, together we can build a food system that is better for farmers and for families.

Next steps and getting involved

Many LFPA programs are still getting off the ground, so we are aware that the data and stories we have been collecting on LFPA programs are preliminary. Later in 2023 the Wallace Center will be conducting an in-depth national survey of LFPA programs, focus groups, and additional interviews. A full length report of these findings will be released in 2024. If you are interested in learning more and getting involved, please join the national Farm to Food Assistance Community of Practice where we will continue to host monthly calls as well as share out information and opportunities to get involved in this research process. You can join the Community of Practice discussion group and sign up to participate in monthly calls [here](#).

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Please note that the findings and conclusions shared are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of The Rockefeller Foundation, or any other individual or organization mentioned above.

About the Wallace Center and the Food Systems Leadership Network

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. Wallace has been a leader in the development of healthy regional food and farming systems for 40 years, working to scale up the supply and positive environmental, social, and economic benefits of regional, sustainably produced food. We seek to affect systems change to bring benefits to the environment, to communities, and to the farmers and food businesses that are the building blocks of a healthy and equitable food system.

The Wallace Center is the backbone organization for the Food Systems Leadership Network, a national peer learning community that connects current and emerging leaders, strengthens individual and collective leadership capacity, and fosters collaboration across communities. The Farm to Food Assistance Community of Practice is one of many strategies within the FSLN to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, resources, and innovations among food systems leaders.

For more information visit wallacecenter.org and foodsystemsleadershipnetwork.org.

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Wallace Center
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL

Raul Rodriguez and family actively participate in New Mexico's LFPA program, planting the seeds of abundance.