

# KEY FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL FARM TO FOOD ASSISTANCE SURVEY

PRELIMINARY REPORT | NOVEMBER 2023

## SURVEY GOALS

COVID-19 led to a surge in community-based initiatives that link food assistance programs with farm fresh products, while paying farmers a fair price. This national survey, conducted in the fall of 2022, aimed to understand how these Farm to Food Assistance (F2FA) programs function, who benefits from them, how they are funded, and how they have changed over time.

### FARM TO FOOD ASSISTANCE VALUE CHAINS

Farm to Food Assistance 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, 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.



## 316 VALID SURVEY RESPONSES

**55**  
17%  
**PRODUCERS**  
FARMERS OR VALUE-ADDED FOOD PRODUCERS

**50**  
16%  
**FOOD HUBS**  
FOR-PROFIT OR NON-PROFIT

**115**  
36%  
**FOOD ACCESS ORGANIZATIONS**  
FOOD BANKS, FOOD PANTRIES, FOOD RECOVERY GROUPS, COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS, OR OTHER FOOD ACCESS PROGRAMS

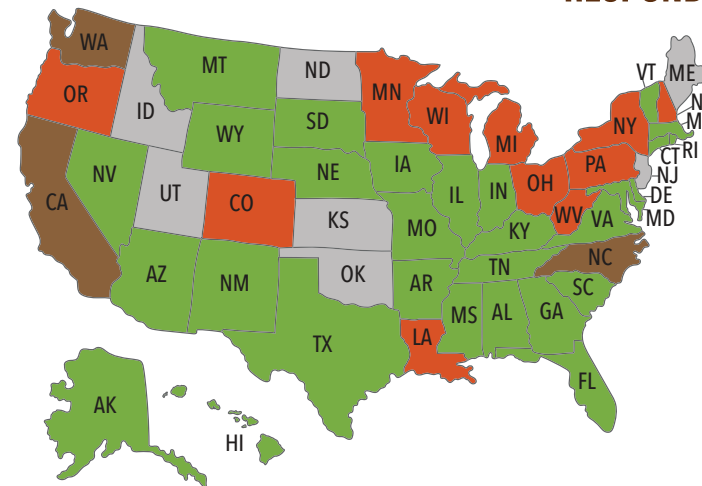
**72**  
23%  
**VALUE CHAIN COORDINATORS**  
EXTENSION, FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATIONS, LOCAL FOOD COUNCILS, AND OTHER NONPROFIT SERVICE PROVIDERS

**24**  
8%  
**GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**  
TRIBAL, STATE, OR LOCAL, AND INCLUDE GOVERNMENTAL DEPARTMENTS SUCH AS HEALTH OR AGRICULTURE

*The Wallace Center partnered with Duke World Food Policy Center and a panel of Subject Matter Experts to develop a survey of people contributing to these efforts in their communities. The survey was open from September-November 2022.*

## RESPONDENTS BY THE NUMBERS

STATES REPRESENTED: 43



# CHARACTERISTICS OF FARM TO FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

## CHANGE OVER TIME

- 56% HAD F2FA PROGRAMS IN PLACE PRIOR TO MARCH 2020
- 77% WITH EXISTING, PRE-PANDEMIC PROGRAMS NOTED THAT F2FA ACTIVITIES INCREASED AFTER THE ONSET OF THE PANDEMIC
- 76% ANTICIPATE THAT F2FA ACTIVITIES WILL INCREASE OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS

*"When most of the restaurants, employers etc purchasing food from local farms stopped operating because of the pandemic, we were able to step in and help and form new business relationships that had started out as purely donations." - Food Access Organization*

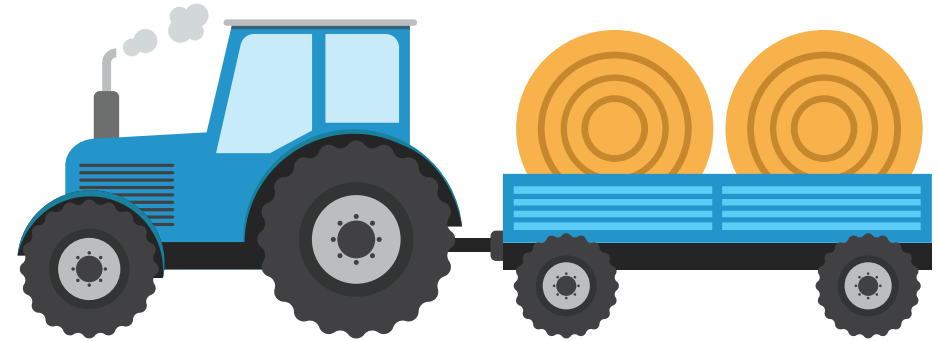
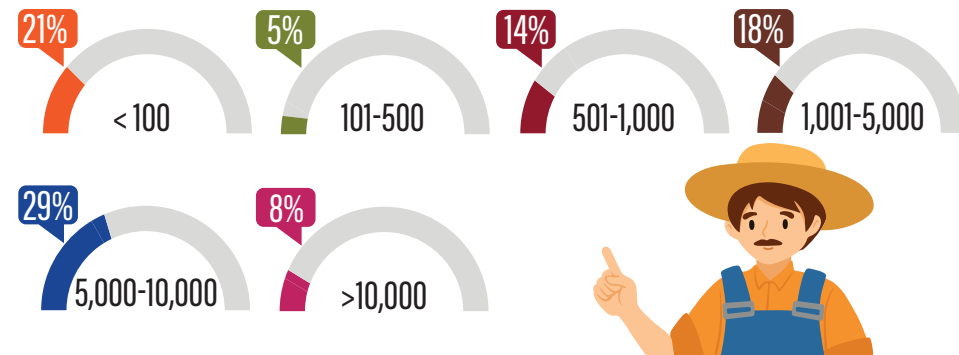
## FUNDING

FARM TO FOOD ASSISTANCE REQUIRES FUNDING TO PURCHASE FOOD AND COVER ADMINISTRATIVE AND INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS. FUNDING COMES FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES:



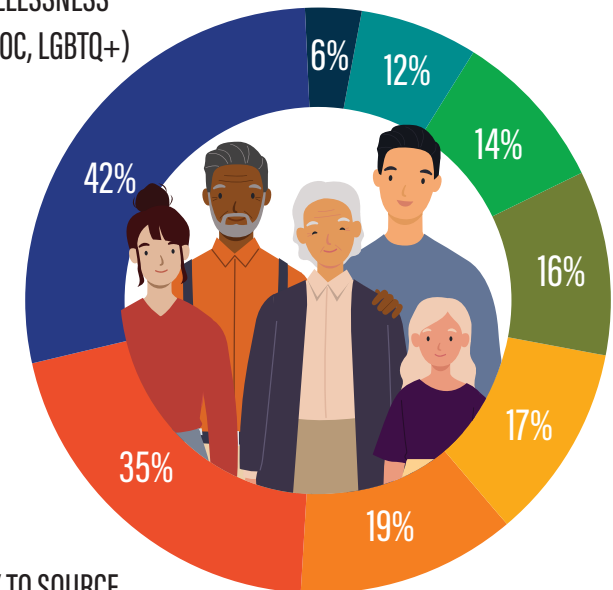
## BENEFICIARIES

NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED ON A MONTHLY BASIS:



## F2FA PROGRAMS PRIORITIZED SERVING SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

- POVERTY/ LOW-INCOME/ HOMELESSNESS
- UNDERSERVED IDENTITIES (BIPOC, LGBTQ+)
- IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES
- SENIORS
- FAMILIES AND CHILDREN
- TRIBAL POPULATIONS
- DIET-RELATED DISEASES
- RURAL

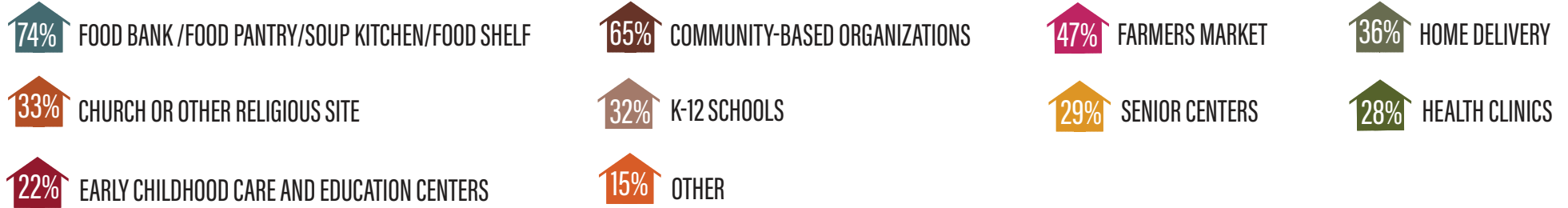


68% REPORTED IT WAS A PRIORITY TO SOURCE CULTURALLY RELEVANT FOOD FOR THEIR CLIENTELE

63% REPORTED F2FA PROGRAMS ALLOWED THEM TO SERVE CULTURALLY RELEVANT FOODS

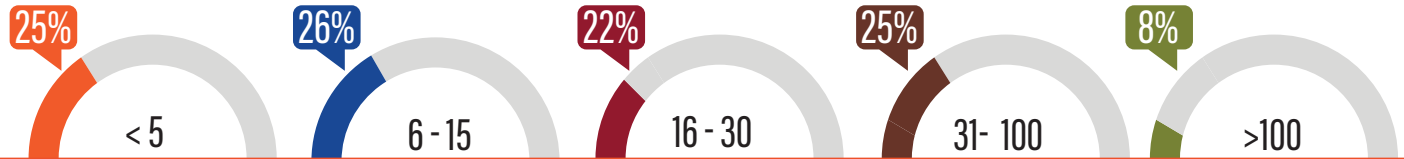
*"We prioritize culturally-significant foods on both ends of the supply chain. We contract with BIPOC growers to source them, and we sell to hunger relief orgs that serve those same communities." - Food Hub*

## F2FA EFFORTS DISTRIBUTE FOOD AT A WIDE ARRAY OF LOCATIONS



### FARMER REACH

THE NUMBER OF FARMS F2FA PROGRAMS PURCHASE FROM:



F2FA SURVEY RESPONDENTS REPORTED PURCHASING FROM APPROXIMATELY 5,000 TOTAL FARMS. ON AVERAGE F2FA PROGRAMS PURCHASED FROM 45 FARMS.

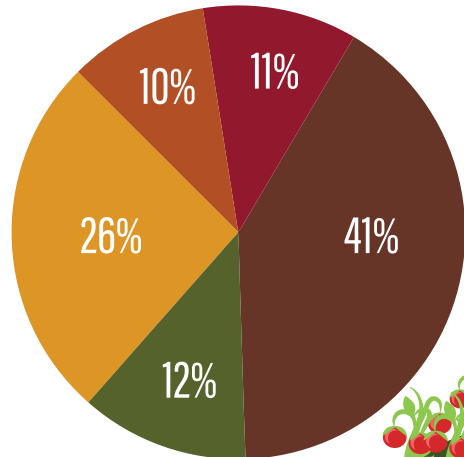
### PURCHASING PRIORITIES

- 87% SMALL FARMERS
- 63% NEW AND BEGINNING FARMERS
- 55% BLACK, INDIGENOUS, OR OTHER FARMERS OF COLOR
- 47% WOMEN FARMERS

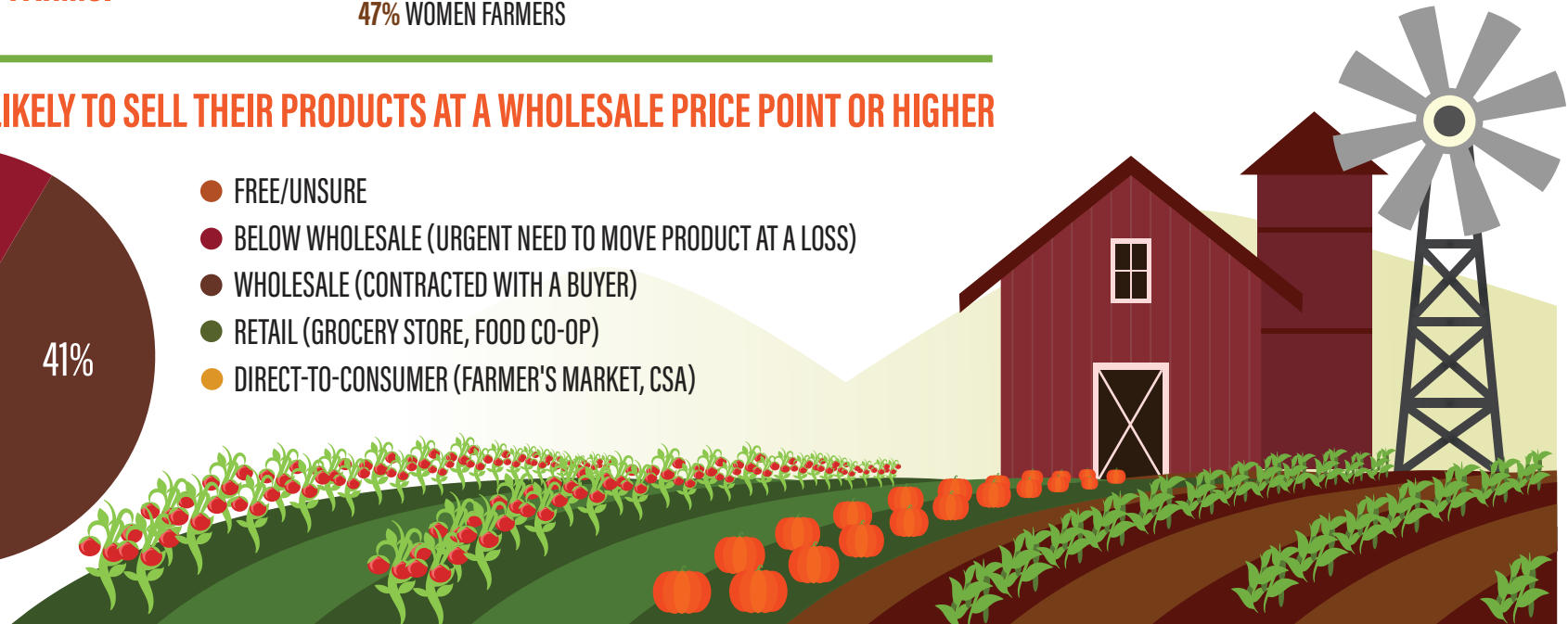
### PRICING

- ON AVERAGE, 80% OF F2FA EXPENDITURES ARE FOR FOOD PURCHASES
- 55% FARMERS SET THE PRICE
- 17% PRICES NEGOTIATED BETWEEN FARMERS AND BUYERS

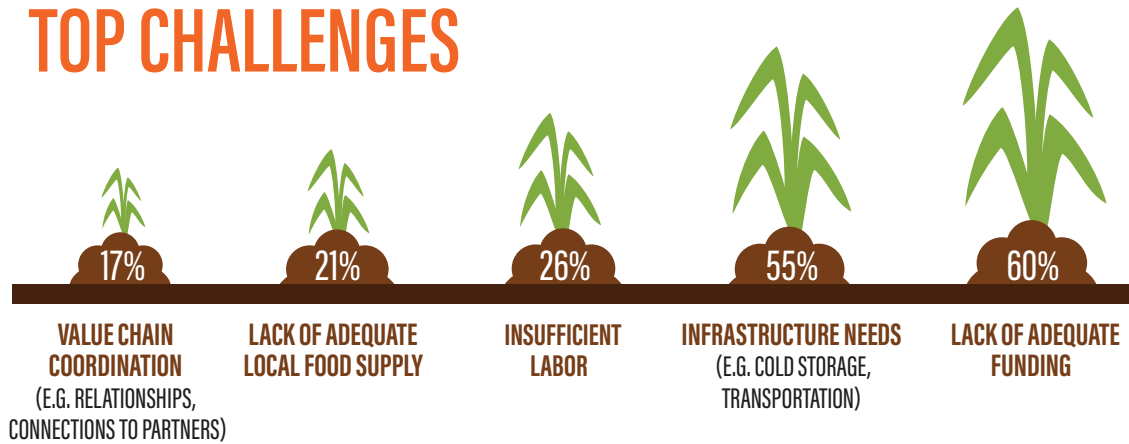
## FARMERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO SELL THEIR PRODUCTS AT A WHOLESALE PRICE POINT OR HIGHER



- FREE/UNSURE
- BELOW WHOLESALE (URGENT NEED TO MOVE PRODUCT AT A LOSS)
- WHOLESALE (CONTRACTED WITH A BUYER)
- RETAIL (GROCERY STORE, FOOD CO-OP)
- DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER (FARMER'S MARKET, CSA)

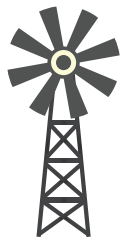


# TOP CHALLENGES



*The biggest challenge is lack of secure funding. There is certainly a need and want for additional local foods. As an organization, we would be able to add a staff person to coordinate this program with multi-year funding. Additionally, we could negotiate better prices with farmers and work with them to specifically grow the foods that our clients want if we had secure advance funding. - Value Chain Coordinator*

**BENEFITS** In addition to increasing market opportunities for farmers and improving food access for people experiencing hunger, F2FA programs provide a wide range of benefits to farms, regional food value chains, and local communities.



- 93%** STRENGTHENED IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS
- 93%** CREATED NEW IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS
- 45%** CREATED JOBS IN THE COMMUNITY
- 88%** MADE FOOD ACCESS IN THE COMMUNITY MORE EQUITABLE
- 69%** HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



# CONTRIBUTORS TO SUCCESS

- 62%** INCREASED FUNDING AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC
- 59%** PRE-EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS
- 53%** NEWLY ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIPS WITH VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS
- 35%** FUNDING SUPPORT FROM FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

*"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 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*

*This report was made possible through a USDA Local Food Promotion Program grant. To learn more about our work supporting and understanding the Farm to Food Assistance landscape, please visit <https://foodsystemsleadershipnetwork.org/opportunities/f2fa/>*