



New Mexico LFPA: Building a Local Food System on Efficiency, Trust, and NM Values

In New Mexico, the agriculture sector now contributes more than \$40 billion to the economy annually and is responsible for almost 260,000 jobs with more than \$11 billion in wages. New Mexico's agricultural system is one of the nation's top onion, pecan, and chile producers. The state is also a leader in dairy and cattle production and has a large number of women, Black, and Indigenous farmers (25%-30% of land owners identified in these categories). Like other states, however, 90 percent of the food – or about \$6.5 billion annually – is purchased from producers outside the state and large-scale growers control the majority of farmland and revenues. The state is also at risk of losing small and family farms; Three out of four farmers and ranchers in New Mexico are 55 years of age or older, and the average age of New Mexico farmers is 61. In addition to the lack of a resilient agricultural system, hunger and food insecurity impact more than 280,000 people including 90,000 children who are unsure of where to get their next meal.

Recognizing New Mexico farmers' and families' challenges, community-based advocates and partners have worked collaboratively to expand local farming education and market opportunities and to increase procurement of locally grown foods by the kitchens of schools, elder centers, and more as part of Governor

By the Numbers

\$6.3 million was allocated to source and distribute food from New Mexico farmers to New Mexicans

180 farmers, ranchers, and food hubs who sold local foods to food banks at fair market prices

\$1.4 million in new sales by New Mexico farmers and ranchers in the first year

Michelle Lujan Grisham's Food Initiative. These efforts are supported, in part, by a new partnership made possible with funding received through the USDA's Local Food Purchasing Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA and LFPA+), with funding support from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

“LFPFA and LFPFA+ have been a path forward for the emergency feeding network. It provided the dollars to guarantee that the network could identify and access locally produced food. It builds upon foundational work supported through Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's Food Initiative and NM Grown Coalition.”

Using LFPFA funds, The Food Depot (northern NM's food bank), purchases all foods secured with these funds and works in direct partnership with all five food banks in the New Mexico Association of Food Banks to coordinate distribution to each of the 33 counties in the state; with an emphasis on serving rural communities and keeping food close to where it is produced. **By offering fair prices to farmers, ranchers, and other food producers, the Regional Farm to Food Bank Program (RF2FB) strengthens local food systems, while ensuring New Mexicans who experience food insecurity gain access to healthy, fresh local foods.**

In addition to The Food Depot, key partners include: the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (which assures compliance with the federal cooperative agreement), and the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (which manages the New Mexico Grown Approved Supplier Program).

Values-based procurement is vital to program's success

A crucial part of New Mexico's LFPFA program is the emphasis placed on values-based procurement, including prioritizing foods produced within the state, farmers and ranchers utilizing regenerative production practices, and other metrics that facilitate positive social impacts. This includes encouraging the participation of socially disadvantaged farmers in the state's innovative New Mexico Grown Approved Supplier Program. Through the program, more than 90% of the money has been spent with socially disadvantaged producers.



A “socially disadvantaged” group is defined by USDA as “...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.”





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“We have a real opportunity with this program to establish meaningful and long-lasting relationships with New Mexico growers. This will improve the resiliency of our local and regional food system and allow us to bring locally sourced, nutritious, and fresh food into the food banks, reaching those most in need.”

New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA) supports farmers and the overall food distribution process. They provide infrastructure for marketing activities, including outreach, roundtables, Q&A sessions, and meetings with producers. They also offer expertise in negotiating with small-scale producers and help advise on logistics, pricing, and food distribution to maximize benefits for farmers and communities in need.

The goal is to make the Approved Supplier Program accessible and beneficial to producers, as it represents a sustainable source of revenue in the long term. Collaboration and communication between all parties involved are key to addressing issues and ensuring the program's success.

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“It's an ongoing collaboration dedicated to continuously adapting and evolving outreach based on community feedback and the needs of the emergency food assistance network. For example, based on the strong desire from the food banks for high-protein, lower-cost foods, The Food Depot is working with NMFMA to create production standards that encourage participation from more local producers and make regionally produced eggs available.”

Working in Partnership with Tribal Communities

Unlike other states, Tribal Governments do not have a separate LFPA agreement in New Mexico. To ensure that the needs of Tribal communities are met and that Tribal producers have access to the program, New Mexico is collaborating with native communities through a federal project called TEFAP Reach and Resiliency. This initiative is focused on providing TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) commodities to tribal communities. By combining the LFPA and TEFAP Reach and Resiliency projects, greater support is available to expand food access in these communities.

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“There are 23 indigenous and Tribal communities here in New Mexico. Not all of them are located within an easy drive of Albuquerque. We have designed a partnership, through the food banks and the Approved Supplier Program, where we can reach everyone in the state. No one has to go hungry, and everyone can benefit.”



Impact & Significance

New Mexico's LFPA program is committed to retaining locally grown food within New Mexico and addressing the current issues of hunger, food access, and lost economic opportunities. Success also hinges on maintaining pricing structures that are advantageous to farmers. The program has resulted in a significant shift towards retaining more locally produced food within the state's borders, and concurrently increasing the number of producers in the Approved Supplier Program (with 67% of producers identifying as socially disadvantaged). This expansion supports local agriculture, keeps financial resources within the state, and improves farmers' capacity to produce a more diverse range of locally grown food.

Key Partners in New Mexico's LFPA



Additional Resources

More information about New Mexico's approach to LFPA can be found through the New Mexico Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program (LFPA) at nmfoodbanks.org/farmtofoodbank

About LFPA

The USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement (LFPA) is a transformative federal initiative that empowers state agencies, tribal governments, and their community partners to collaboratively source and distribute food, benefiting local socially disadvantaged producers and underserved communities. With a budget of \$900M, LFPA, led by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Commodity Procurement Program, aims to strengthen regional food systems, support local and regional farms, and address hunger and food insecurity through partnerships with food assistance programs. This groundbreaking program has demonstrated its potential as a powerful investment in farms and communities in a short time since its inception in 2021.