



# Michigan LFPA: Expanding and Strengthening Communities

In Michigan, agriculture is the state's second-largest industry. It contributes around \$100 billion to the state economy and employs nearly 1 million people or almost one-fourth of its workforce. Producing more than 300 different commodities - including cherries, dairy, and beans - Michigan is the second-most agriculturally diverse state in the country and exports nearly \$4 billion dollars in products annually. Despite these strengths, according to the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Michigan lost 500 farms in 2021, and farmers of color make up just 0.5 percent of the state's roughly 47,600 farms.

Another challenge facing the state is rising food insecurity. The U.S. Department of Agriculture assessed that, on average, people in 11.9% of Michigan households went without food because of money concerns between 2020 and 2022. The national rate for the same time frame was 11.2%. In Detroit, Michigan's largest urban center, a staggering 69% of households were food insecure in 2021.

Recognizing the need to find ways to strengthen the state economy and feed the state, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) signed Cooperative Agreements with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the new Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) and LFPA+ programs. These agreements allocated \$21.5 million for local food purchasing and distribution to communities in need.

## By the Numbers

**\$21.5 million** allocated to source and distribute food from Michigan farmers to those in need

**Purchased from 200+ local producers and farmers - including more than 100 who identify as socially disadvantaged**

**Covering all 83 counties statewide, including purchasing from local farmers in each county and distributing food to families in need across the state**

Through the LFPA funding, MDE's Local Food Purchase Assistance Program created and expanded community partnerships between existing agencies, organizations, and local and regional underserved farmers and producers. The initiative began in January 2022 with an open call for proposals from partners across the state who could facilitate the purchase and distribution of locally and regionally produced fruits and vegetables. Potential program partners were also identified through their work in local communities to strengthen the local food system and help farmers and producers establish and expand their customer base beyond the program.

Eight sub-agency partners were selected through this competitive sub-granting approach, combining to cover all 83 counties in the state and representing new and different food distribution models supported by LFPA. The partners selected were: The Food Bank Council of Michigan, Michigan State University's Center for Regional Food Systems, Eastern Market, Flint Fresh Food Hub, Kalamazoo Valley Community College ValleyHUB, Mid Michigan Community Action, Thumb Food Policy Council, and West Michigan Food Processing Association.

MDE's partners prioritize purchasing from "socially disadvantaged" (defined by the USDA as belonging to racial or ethnic categories that have historically faced discrimination) Michigan farmers. In 2023, the program worked with over 100 farmers in this category, and 60% of program dollars were used to purchase food from them. The partnering organizations distribute food purchased from these farmers and others across the state through various methods and partnerships to reach underserved communities in each county.

## Innovative Regional Partnerships

As a partner to the LFPA program, the Food Bank Council of Michigan (FBCM) created a new partnership with UPCAP (Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress) to increase access to locally sourced fresh and healthy foods in the Upper Peninsula of the state known as "The UP Fresh Food Access Program." This program provides an opportunity for economically challenged and food insecure residents to enjoy fresh meat, fish, eggs, produce, poultry, dairy, wild rice, honey, and syrup from local producers. The local food is the same high quality as what is available at farmers' markets and farm stands throughout the Upper Peninsula.

In Detroit, Eastern Market partners with twenty non-profit organizations in the metro area to provide food directly to insecure families and at-risk populations. Nearly 1000 families receive boxes of nutrient-dense, locally-grown produce and value-added products each week during the growing season. All the food in each box is grown locally, and 60% of the purchases are sourced from BIPOC farmers in Detroit.

*"The Michigan Department of Education is excited to partner with these eight organizations around the state to ensure that our families and children most in need have improved access to fresh and healthy foods. At the same time, we are pleased that this effort permits us to support underserved farmers and food producers."- State Superintendent Michael Rice, Ph.D.*



*"Making purchases from local farmers and makers, especially those historically disadvantaged, helps them invest in growing their businesses. Over time, these purchases will help farms flourish in Southwest Michigan; meanwhile, the food will feed our neighbors." – Rachel Bair, Director for Sustainable and Innovative Food Systems for Kalamazoo Valley.*

## Focusing on Market Access for BIPOC Farmers

A hallmark of Michigan's LFPA program is a partnership with the Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund. Together with Eastern Market, the Fund identifies BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) farmers and helps them access new markets, such as Detroit Community Markets, other Eastern Market programs, and the Detroit People's Food Co-op. This helps farmers grow their businesses and realize their ambitions while providing nutrient-dense food to the community. The program also works with other organizations supporting socially disadvantaged communities, including American Indian Health and Family Services. This has helped drive money and resources to urban farmers and resulted in significant income growth. Eastern Market expects to spend \$800,000 in LFPA funds directly on urban-grown produce.

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*Our goal is to provide not just groceries but a sense of ownership and empowerment to our community. We are a Black-led cooperative with a strong focus on building Black food sovereignty and supporting the local Black economy.” - Chris Dilley, Interim General Manager of Detroit People's Food Co-op.*



## Additional Resources

More information about Michigan's approach to LFPA can be found [www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/lfpacap](http://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/lfpacap) and [www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/lfpacap/plus](http://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/lfpacap/plus).



## 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.