

The Local Food and Regional Market Supply Act of 2017

S. 1947 / H.R. 3941

**Sponsored by Senator Sherrod Brown, Representative Chellie Pingree,
Representative Jeff Fortenberry and Representative Sean Maloney**

Summary

The Local Food and Regional Market Supply Act (The Local FARMS act) helps communities prosper through farm to fork investments. This legislation supports job creation by improving programs and policies that help grow local and regional food economies. In so doing, it helps family farmers reach new and growing markets and helps consumers access fresh, healthy food.

Local and Regional Food Economies: A Mature Market

With the American farm economy experiencing a multi-year downturn, family farms nationwide have increasingly found that connections to local and regional food opportunities can help them to create lasting economic success close to home. Data from the 2007 and 2012 Agricultural Censuses shows that farmers who market food directly to consumers have a greater chance of remaining in business than similarly sized farms that market through traditional channels. In 2015, over 167,000 U.S. farms produced and sold food locally through food hubs and other intermediaries, direct farmer-to-consumer marketing, or direct farm to retail. Those sales resulted in \$8.7 billion in revenue for local producers. Together this shows the significance of local and regional food economies and importance of continued investment in this maturing sector of the agriculture economy.

The Local FARMS act will strengthen communities with farm to fork investments and put choice back into the hands of the people in the following ways:

Helping Farmers Reach New Markets

- Creating a new comprehensive and streamlined local and regional food economies development program funded at \$80 million per year that merges the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program and Value-Added Producer Grants Program and includes support for farmers markets, farm to retail marketing, local food enterprise development, value-chain coordination, food hubs, planning and feasibility studies, producer-owned value-added enterprises, and regional planning through public-private partnerships.
- Delivering stable funding for the Organic Cost Share Certification Program for farmers and handlers at \$11.5 million per year.
- Creating a new Food Safety Certification Cost-share Program funded at \$20 million per year to help family farmers comply with new food safety rules and regulations by upgrading on-farm food safety infrastructure and becoming food safety certified.

Increasing Access to Fresh, Healthy Local Food

- Expanding the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program to include low-income military veterans and increasing funding to \$50 million per year.
- Piloting a Harvesting Health program to demonstrate and evaluate the impact of produce prescription programs in addressing food insecurity, supporting local agriculture and reducing health care costs.
- Providing regulatory relief to school food procurement, making it easier for schools to procure locally and regionally produced food and farm products.

Developing and Strengthening the Infrastructure that Connects Producers to Consumers

- Expanding the ability of Rural Development and Farm Service Agency grant and loan programs to be used to support livestock, dairy and poultry regional supply chain infrastructure.
- Expanding the Food Safety Outreach Program, the food safety training program for small and medium sized family farmers, by providing \$20 million per year in funding and prioritizing projects led by community-based organizations.