What's in the Local FARMS Act?

The Local Food and Regional Market Supply Act (The Local FARMS act) will strengthen communities through farm to fork investments and put choice back into the hands of the people by:

SUPPORTING FARMERS MARKETS AND GROWING THE SALES OF LOCAL FOOD TO RETAILERS, INSTITUTIONS, AND MORE

- Creating a new 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.

GETTING MORE FRESH, HEALTHY LOCAL FOOD TO THE PEOPLE WHO NEED IT MOST

- 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.

HELPING SMALL FARMERS OVERCOME BARRIERS IN INFRASTRUCTURE, TRAINING, AND COSTS IN ORDER TO GROW

- 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.
- Creating a new Food Safety Certification Cost-share Program funded at $10 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.
- Delivering stable funding for the Organic Cost Share Certification Program for farmers and handlers at $11.5 million per year.

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Food and Farm Facts

FACT: Our government currently spends and estimated 13.4 billion per year on programs that support commodity crop production. By contrast, programs that support small farmers and local food systems receive less than .82 billion. That’s 16 times more funding for commodity crop production than actual food production.

FACT: According to the Illinois Hunger Coalition, more than 11% of Illinois households are classified as food insecure.

FACT: According to the USDA, the U.S. family farm industry has witnessed the loss of 1.25 million farms since the early 1960s, that means less family farms living in our communities and more corporations shipping our food from thousands of miles away.

FACT: According to a Ken Meter study in 2012, while Illinois has some of the richest farmland in the world, our state imports about 95% of the food we eat-- meaning that 95% of our food dollars are being exported and not staying with in our local economies. The study estimates a $5.8 billion loss annually due to the sourcing of food and agricultural inputs outside of the state.

FACT: According to the American Public Health Association, for every $1 invested in food and nutrition education, there is a $10 return in reduced health care costs. Many programs in the Local FARMS ACT, like the Farmers Market Promotion Program and the Harvesting Health Prescription Program, address nutrition education and help make healthy local food more accessible to the communities that need it most.

FACT: According to the Illinois Department of Agriculture, if every household in Illinois dedicated $10 of their existing weekly grocery budget to the purchase of Illinois products, over $2.4 billion would be reinvested in the Illinois economy annually!

FACT: According to the Public Broadcasting Service, 70% of the American diet is made up of processed foods, which have been linked to heart disease, cancer, obesity, and diabetes. The U.S. currently ranks just 37th globally in life expectancy.

FACT: The Local FARMS Act will support American family farmers by: helping farmers reach new markets through outreach, cost-share, and technical assistance programs; increasing access to fresh, healthy, local food among low-income groups and communities in need; and developing new and strengthening existing infrastructure that connects producers to consumers.

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