The Food and Agriculture Policy Collaborative is a partnership of national and local organizations working to promote the vision of healthy food and healthy economies through the advancement of four basic ideas:

• The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides the first defense against hunger in the U.S. and its structure, eligibility rules and benefit levels should be protected and strengthened as part of a healthy foods, healthy economies agenda.

• Fruit and vegetable incentives for SNAP participants can improve access to healthy food while also supporting American family farmers.

• Healthy Food Financing programs create jobs, build vibrant communities and increase consumer access to healthy foods.

• Strengthening the infrastructure that connects regional farmers with consumers builds the framework for healthy food systems.
The Food and Agriculture Policy Collaborative (FAPC) is a partnership of national organizations working to promote the vision of healthy food, healthy economies and equity through the advancement of four policy priorities:

- Protect and Strengthen SNAP
- Promote Fruit and Vegetable Incentives
- Finance and Support Healthy Food Retail and Supply Chains
- Build Local and Regional Food Economies

Each FAPC member brings expertise from one of the four policy priorities but works together because these four policies are stronger when applied together rather than apart.

FAPC has worked with consumers, farmers, ranchers, grocers, community organizations and advocacy groups to inform policymakers about Farm Bill policies and programs that ensure Americans do not go hungry, have retail options that provide access to healthy, affordable food, and that farmers can produce and market food in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner. We believe a food system that serves all Americans will provide healthy food for all and support healthy economies.

This brochure includes information on United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) policies and programs that help strengthen our food economy and local communities. There are brief descriptions of key Farm Bill provisions, examples of how some of these programs are being used, and links to more in-depth resources. You can also contact the four organizations that lead the Collaborative.

**Fair Food Network** is a national nonprofit that connects people to the power of food to improve health, ignite local economies, and open opportunities for all — especially in our most underserved communities.
www.fairfoodnetwork.org

**Food Research & Action Center** has been the central nonprofit leader in the fight to end hunger in the United States through improved and expanded public nutrition and anti-poverty programs since 1970.
www.frac.org

**National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition** is an alliance of more than 100 grassroots organizations that advocates for federal policy reform to advance the sustainability of agriculture, food systems, natural resources and rural communities.
www.sustainableagriculture.net
**PolicyLink** is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by lifting up what works.  
www.policylink.org

**The Food Trust** is a nonprofit founded in 1992 to make healthy food available to all by working with neighborhoods, schools, grocers, farmers and policymakers to develop a comprehensive approach that combines nutrition education and greater availability of affordable, healthy food.  
www.thefoodtrust.org

**Reinvestment Fund** is a national mission-driven financial institution that creates opportunity for underserved people and places through partnerships. We marshal the capital, analytics, and expertise necessary to build strong, healthy, and more equitable communities.  
www.reinvestment.com

FAPC is funded by the **Convergence Partnership**, which promotes equitable policies and practices that sustain healthy people and healthy places.  
www.convergencepartnership.org

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**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

SNAP (formerly food stamps) provides low-income Americans with monthly benefits on Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards used to purchase food at authorized retailers, from traditional grocery stores to superstores to farmers' markets. SNAP has multiple positive impacts: SNAP promotes food security, lessens poverty, protects children’s health and generates economic activity. It is structured to respond to changes in need, whether due to economic downturns or natural disasters. Each $1 in federal SNAP benefits generates $1.79 in economic activity, boosting the entire food system, from producers to truckers to grocery clerks. Those SNAP benefits can be particularly important to support food retail access in underserved communities, including in rural America.

Nonetheless, SNAP’s positive economic and health impacts are limited by gaps in participation and by low benefit levels, with the average allotment only $4 a person a day. Changes in federal and state policy could address those shortcomings. [http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/snap-initiatives-to-make-snap-benefits-more-adequate.pdf](http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/snap-initiatives-to-make-snap-benefits-more-adequate.pdf)

**2018 Farm Bill Implementation**

The 2018 Farm Bill preserves SNAP’s structure, eligibility rules and benefit levels. See FRAC analysis of the Nutrition Title of the bill and USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)’s March 6 and March 7, 2019 memoranda regarding 2018 Farm Bill implementation.

The 2018 Farm Bill requires the USDA Secretary to re-evaluate and publish the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) every five years based on dietary guidance, current food prices, food composition data, and consumption patterns. The TFP, which is the least costly of the government’s food
plans, serves as the basis for determining SNAP benefit levels. Previous research has documented deficiencies in the current TFP.

The 2018 Farm Bill also requires the USDA Secretary to issue guidance clarifying the process for SNAP authorized food retailers to seek waivers to offer SNAP consumers incentives for purchasing SNAP-eligible staple foods: [https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20181210/CRPT-115hrpt1072.pdf](https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20181210/CRPT-115hrpt1072.pdf)

Increasing SNAP Access and Benefit Levels

- States have policy options to strengthen SNAP by improving the reach of federal benefits or supplementing them with state funded benefits
- States can opt to serve more working families with children
- States can provide a simplified SNAP application for seniors
For more information, search for “SNAP” in the FRAC website’s “Resource Library”

For updated information, please visit:


Facilitating Consumer Access to SNAP Food Benefits

Federal and state governments are partnering with retailers, EBT processors, advocates and others to facilitate consumer access to SNAP food benefits. Initiatives include new online and mobile technology tools consumers can use to apply for SNAP and check their balances; testing the feasibility of SNAP purchases via mobile payments and the internet; enhanced capacity for SNAP EBT transactions at farmers’ markets and at college campus-based stores and dining halls; and ways to serve victims of natural disasters.
Healthy Fruit and Vegetable Incentives and More

The 2018 Farm Bill includes several programs that improve access to healthy produce for participants in federal nutrition assistance programs and for the development of resilient community food systems. These programs are all designed to increase low-income consumers’ access to affordable, nutritious food, connect these shoppers with local farmers, stimulate rural and regional economies and build resilient food systems for the long-term.

Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program (FINI)
Now known as the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program in honor of the former USDA Undersecretary and healthy food incentives pioneer, the 2018 Farm Bill now offers an expanded SNAP fruit and vegetable incentive funding, and also provides funds to create...
training, technical assistance and information centers and to improve data collection and ensure that results are publicly available. The Farm Bill also creates a new produce prescription program for low-income and nutritionally at-risk shoppers, connecting the medical and farm retail communities with a “food as medicine” approach. A total of $250 million is available for the grant programs and support centers over the next five years.

For more information, visit the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture website: https://nifa.usda.gov/program/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-fini-grant-program

Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program
The Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program provides funding to state agencies to give coupons to low-income seniors that can be exchanged for fruits and vegetables from authorized farmers, farmers’ markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture programs. The funding level continues to be $20.6 million/year. For more information, please visit: http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/local-food-systems-rural-development/farmers-market-nutrition-program/

Community Food Projects Program
The Community Food Projects Program provides grants for projects that promote self-sufficiency and food security in low-income communities. The farm bill provides $5 million/year to the program. For more information, please visit: http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/local-food-systems-rural-development/community-food-project-grants/

Healthy Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Case Studies

“You can’t have a strong workforce without healthy people.” A local group incubated by area business leaders launched Double Up to boost the health and economic vitality of the state. Hear from a community leader about this work. Community Leader | Des Moines, Iowa https://fairfoodnetwork.org/resources/voices-of-double-up-in-america/

“My only regret is that we didn’t do it sooner.” SNAP incentives can support farmers markets by bringing in new customers and boosting vendor sales. Hear the difference Double Up has had for one market in a small town in Michigan. Farmers Market Manager | Mt. Pleasant, Michigan https://fairfoodnetwork.org/resources/voices-of-double-up-in-america/

“It’s a win-win. There is no downside.” Helping more Americans buy more fresh produce is great for local businesses and benefits the broader community. Hear from a Midwest grocery store leader on why they brought Double Up to their stores. Grocery Leader | Kansas City, Kansas https://fairfoodnetwork.org/resources/voices-of-double-up-in-america/
Financing for Healthy Food Projects

USDA estimates that 29.7 million people live in low-income areas more than one mile from a supermarket.¹ Community leaders, advocates and policymakers are working hard to turn back this tide, and over the past five years, there has been tremendous improvement in the form of innovative projects and policies such as the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) and other city and state efforts.²

Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) is a public-private partnership that directs investment into projects including the development and expansion of grocery stores, food hubs, farmers’ markets, corner stores, mobile markets, co-ops, urban farms, kitchen incubators and other healthy food retail. The program originally was initiated in 2010 at the U.S. Department of the Treasury and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and was formally established at USDA with the 2014 Farm Bill. Since 2010, HFFI has helped leverage more than $220 million in grants and an estimated $1 billion in additional financing. It has also supported nearly 1,000 grocery and other healthy food retail projects in more than 35 states across the country, revitalizing economies, creating jobs, and improving health.

HFFI is demonstrating that improving access to healthy food revitalizes local economies, creates jobs, improves health and creates a healthier food system. The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorizes HFFI and expands its reach beyond food retail to allow HFFI to serve food enterprises. With continued funding, HFFI holds the promise of bringing access to healthy food for all. For more information, please visit: www.healthyfoodaccess.org/policy-efforts-and-impacts/federal

² http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/policy-efforts-and-impacts/state-and-local
Building Local and Regional Food Economies

For increasingly more Americans, eating locally produced food is becoming a priority. Family farmers are interested too, because local and regional marketplaces often offer better prices for farmers’ products, which helps them to sustain their businesses and put food on their families’ tables. Once considered a niche industry, local and regional food systems are now providing significant income for farmers looking to diversify. Local food markets not only help sustain family farmers and small businesses, they also help to make healthy foods more readily available to consumers – particularly lower-income families.

The Local Agriculture Market Program
Farmers need both physical infrastructure and peer-to-peer professional networks in order to enter and succeed in new marketplaces. The 2018 Farm Bill invests significant resources in developing the human and physical infrastructure to expand and build local and regional food systems.
supply chains through the creation of a new program call the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP). LAMP is an umbrella program that provides permanent funding and important improvements to two existing local food programs with strong track records of success - the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program and the Value-Added Producers Grant Program - sending an important signal that local food is here to stay. LAMP also creates a new public-private partnership program to encourage “food-shed” approaches to developing local food economies.

**Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program**
This program provides competitive grant funding to projects that market directly to consumers and to local and regional food business enterprises that aggregate, process, and distribute food products to meet market demand. Priority is given to projects serving low-income/low food access communities. For more information, please visit: http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/local-food-systems-rural-development/farmers-market-promotion-program/

**Regional Partnership Program**
This program provides competitive grant funding to form multi-stakeholder partnerships and encourage “food-shed” approaches to planning and developing local and regional food economies. Priority is given to projects in distressed low-income communities, and eligible partners range from food councils and farmer cooperatives to state agencies and Farm Credit System lenders. For more information, please visit: http://sustainableagriculture.net

**Value-Added Producer Grant Program**
The Value-Added Producer Grant Program is a competitive grants program that provides business planning and working capital grants to farmers, groups of farmers and farm co-ops to develop value-added producer-owned businesses that provide high quality food products to consumers. Priority is given to projects that increase opportunities for small- and medium-sized family farms and beginning, minority and veteran farmers. For more information, please visit: http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/local-food-systems-rural-development/value-added-producer-grants/
Building Local and Regional Food Economies Case Studies

“In the West Willow neighborhood of Ypsilanti, Michigan, Growing Hope works to reduce food inequity and inequality among fellow residents. Growing Hope is helping residents to increase food access through two farmers markets, a garden mentorship program, garden-based nutrition education programming and food entrepreneurship assistance. The Farmers Market Promotion Program is helping Growing Hope to deepen their work in strengthening community relationships with their local farmers markets and improving access to healthy local food.” [Link](http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/stories-from-the-field-growing-hope/)

The Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative: Conventional banks are often very hesitant to loan to new start-ups, especially to those that are engaged in innovative business models, like food hubs. That’s why programs like the Value-Added Producer Grants Program (VAPG) that provide financial assistance to farmers and groups of farmers trying to plan for and establish new businesses are so important. The Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative, a farmer-led cooperative owned by the producers, and the Wisconsin Farmers Union that is dedicated to helping local farmers reach new local retail and institutional markets, would not be where they are today if it wasn’t for financial assistance the received through VAPG. VAPG was essential to the initial growth and success of the food hub. Now thanks to additional support through the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program the coop is expanding further, tapping into new markets in the region and helping to increase access to fresh local food in Madison, Wisconsin. [Link](http://www.wifoodhub.com/)

“A recent USDA Economic Research Service study regarding VAPG’s impacts on job creation and farm survivability, found that businesses that received VAPGs were less likely to fail than similar businesses that did not receive support through the program. According to the report, VAPG recipients were 89 percent less likely to fail two years after the grant and 71 percent less likely to fail four years after the grant, when compared to similar non-recipients. Moreover, on average, VAPG recipients provide more jobs (five to six more employees) for their communities than similar non-recipient businesses.” [Link](https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/88839/err-248_summary.pdf?v=43224)
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