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NSAC News

Release: Local Farms and Food Act Introduced in Both Houses

April 19, 2023

For Immediate Release

Contact: Laura Zaks

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

lzaks@sustainableagriculture.net

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Bill Would Strengthen Food Systems Infrastructure and Promote Local Economic Development

Washington, DC, April 19, 2023 – Today, Representatives Pingree (D-ME-1), Newhouse (R-WA-4), Caraveo (D-CO-8), Tokuda (D-HI-2) and Senators Brown (D-OH), Smith (D-MN), Welch (D-VT), and Fetterman (D-PA) introduced the Local Farms and Food Act (LFFA) in both the House and the Senate. The LFFA is a comprehensive bill that offers reforms to the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP), Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). The legislation would increase access to each program to catalyze investments in underserved areas and among small producers. These investments will strengthen local and regional food system infrastructure and promote local economic development in both rural and urban communities.

“The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) applauds Representatives Pingree, Newhouse, Caraveo, and Tokuda and Senators Brown, Smith, Welch, and Fetterman for their steadfast leadership in supporting resilient local and regional food economies. Reforms offered through this bill seek to remove barriers identified by our Coalition and partners that will help farmers start and grow businesses, and connect with supply chains that allow them to access new market opportunities while strengthening community food systems,” said **Hannah Quigley, NSAC policy specialist.**

The 2018 Farm Bill made critical investments in LAMP, an umbrella program for the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Programs (FMLFPP), the Value-Added Producer Grant Program (VAPG), and the Regional Food Systems Partnership. These investments provided significant returns when the pandemic and other recent supply chain disruptions upended our food system. However, too many producers are still left out of the system. Appropriately sized processing, aggregation, and distribution infrastructure is still inadequate. A lack of technical assistance for producers and entrepreneurs on a range of issues from

food safety to business planning continues to make it difficult for many farmers and producers to update their businesses to meet current needs. Program reforms offered through the Local Farms and Food Act seek to generate investments in these underfunded areas to expand program impact.

The Local Farms and Food Act will:

- Increase equity and access to LAMP programs by creating simplified applications, scaling cost-share requirements for smaller growers, and ensuring funding reaches underserved communities,
- Meet critical and under-supported needs for local food system equipment, value-chain coordination, and business technical assistance,
- And expand impactful nutrition incentive programs and ensure low-income families have easy access to healthful local foods by equipping farmers' markets to readily accept federal nutrition benefits, increasing funding for SFMNP, and reducing barriers for organizations to participate in the GusNIP program.

*“OEFFA appreciates Senator Sherrod Brown’s work over the past decade or more to champion legislation that invests in rural and urban communities, helps farmers access higher value markets, provides community members with access to healthful foods, and grows local and regional economies. When many Ohio residents saw bare grocery shelves during the start of the pandemic in 2020, they turned to farmers in their communities,” said **Amalie Lipstreu, Policy Director for Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association**, an NSAC member. “The Local Farms and Food Act will continue to build those local supply chains by filling in gaps in infrastructure.”*

“The VAP Grant program is vital in helping growers secure needed funding to make “jumps” in their business. Value-added products often allow small farmers to have a shelf stable product that can bring in revenue during the slower times of the year. It’s an important market diversification strategy,” said

Kali Feiereisel, Farm Services Director for Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF).

“CAFF has been working with small farmers in guiding them through value-added product business development and explanation of the USDA’s VAP Grant. Some small farms have a great value-added product idea but can’t apply for the grant because they do not have enough extra cash on hand to meet the match requirement. Reducing the farmer match requirement for the VAP Grant will make the program more accessible and impactful!”

“Research suggests that a strong local food system can help expand access to nutritious foods, while supporting small and midsize farmers and strengthening local economies. But programs that build the infrastructure for farmers to bring their products to local markets, as well as programs that provide direct incentives to low-income households to purchase local products, are currently underfunded. As a result, programs like the Local Food and Farmers Market Promotion Program turn away roughly three out of every four applicants a year. That is why increasing funding for local food systems is so important.”

said Alice Reznickova, PhD, Interdisciplinary Scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, also an NSAC member.

The bill outline can be found [here \(https://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Local-Farms-and-Food-Act_Outline.pdf\)](https://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Local-Farms-and-Food-Act_Outline.pdf).

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About the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is a grassroots alliance that advocates for federal policy reform supporting the long-term social, economic, and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities. Learn more and get involved at: <https://sustainableagriculture.net> (<https://sustainableagriculture.net/>).

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

110 Maryland Avenue NE, Suite 209 Washington, DC 20002

[Contact Us \(/contact-nsac\)](#).

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