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CAMPAIGN BRIEF

THE LOCAL FARMS ACT

“When we make it easier to connect farmers to their communities, we don’t just help individual farms – we invest in entire local economies.”

- Senator Sherrod Brown

For more information, visit the [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition \(NSAC\)](#), an alliance of grassroots organizations that advocates for federal policy reform to advance the sustainability of agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities.



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BACKGROUND

The [Local Food and Regional Market Supply \(FARMS\) Act](#) will help farmers sell their products directly to consumers, create rural jobs, and invest in local and regional food economies. The bill will also ensure that rural and urban consumers have better access to nutritious, locally-grown food and protect long-term funding for local food programs.

The Local FARMS Act helps farmers grow their businesses and boosts rural economies by investing in three existing grant programs:

- **The Value Added Producer Grant**, which provides important resources for farmers to expand into new markets, create new products, and market their existing business.
- **The Local Food Promotion Program**, which invests in farmers working to establish or expand local food businesses.
- **The Farmers Market Promotion Program**, which works to create and grow farmers market programs to help farmers sell their products directly to local consumers.

The bill also expands the **Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program**, which helps seniors access fresh foods at farmers markets and assists low-income military veterans as well.

The American farm economy is in a multi-year downturn, so small towns and rural communities need the Local FARMS Act now more than ever. Connecting farmers to local and regional food opportunities will create long-term economic success close to home.

If passed, the Local FARMS Act would help farmers reach new markets through outreach, cost-share, and technical assistance programs and increase rural and urban consumer access to fresh, healthy, local food among low-income groups and communities in need while developing and strengthening existing infrastructure that connects producers to consumers.



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LEGISLATIVE STRATEGY

Senate Bill: S. 1947

House Bill: H.R. 3941

Cosponsors: Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Representatives Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), and Sean Maloney (D-NY)

The Local FARMS Act was introduced by a bipartisan coalition in the House and Senate on October 4, 2017 to catalyze investments in programs and policies that spur economic development in rural and food producing communities during the 2018 Farm Bill debate.

The principal bill authors are Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Representatives Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), and Sean Maloney (D-NY).

While the bill is being considered now in the U.S. House, parts of the bill could be included in the 2018 Farm Bill that's currently being crafted.

THEORY OF CHANGE

WHO are we organizing?

We are organizing local farmers, consumers who support local food, and rural progressives.

WHAT do we want them to do?

Tell their members of Congress in the House and Senate to support the Local FARMS act.

HOW do we want them to do it?

First by signing our online petition and then by calling their members' office.

WHY do we want to do it?

The Local FARMS Act means opportunity for our family farmers, as well as increased access to fresh, healthy foods for rural and urban American families.



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WINNING ARGUMENTS

Support for Local Family Farms

Family farms are hurting. Times are tight and local farmers have to be a jack of all trades just to get by. The Local FARMS Act seeks to invest in infrastructure to help meat, dairy and other farmers produce and market their products to consumers more efficiently.

In today's global agricultural economy, local farmers struggle to enter the local and regional marketplace. A lack of infrastructure, such as storage, aggregation, transportation, and processing capacity, and marketing and business planning have made it difficult for many farmers and producers to update their businesses to reach these new customer bases.

Findings from the Agricultural Census in 2007 and 2012 show 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. That's why the Local FARMS bill gives local farmers an opportunity to reach new markets so that they can make a decent living and keep their farms in business.

Programs that support local and regional food systems are essential to the success of our emerging generation of farmers. Connections to local and regional food opportunities can help them to create lasting economic success for family farmers. When we make it easier for farmers to sell directly to consumers in their communities, we build a better future for family farms.

Invest in Rural Communities and Small Towns

Times are tough for small town folks. The mechanization of agriculture, the exhaustion of natural resources like timber, minerals, and coal, and factory jobs being shipped overseas have resulted in nearly a century of rural decline. To make matters worse, big box retailers put countless family run downtown retailers out of business.

The Local FARMS Act is not just an 'agriculture bill,' it's a jobs bill too. The proposed legislation supports job creation by improving programs and policies that help grow local and regional food economies.



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The USDA's Economic Research Service found that communities with strong local food networks have a better chance at thriving in our new global economy. The research showed 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. The report also found that the Farmers Market Promotion Program could create as many as 13,500 jobs nationally over a five-year period, if reauthorized, by providing modest funding for 100 to 500 farmers markets per year.

Locally grown food has always been part of the social and economic fabric for rural communities and small towns and local food production is key to solving many of the challenges impacting small towns and rural communities, especially when it comes to economic development and community health.

Bridge the Rural and Urban Divide

The Local FARMS Act helps both rural and urban communities prosper through farm to fork investments. By helping to connect rural producers with local and regional customers (including individuals and institutions), congress can generate wins that equally benefit farmers and eaters, as well as rural and urban communities.

The Local FARMS Act means opportunity for our family farmers, as well as increased access to fresh, healthy foods for American families, especially families in low income groups and communities in need. We need to invest more in farm to school program which are an essential step toward curbing childhood obesity and ensuring that we have another generation of farmers interested in growing food.

Failing to pass this legislative will also impact low-income residents who are looking to redeem food nutrition subsidies at local food markets to help them afford fresh fruits and vegetables because, currently, not all markets are able to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.



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TOOLS FOR ACTION

Sample Petition Language

Petition Text

Support small towns and rural communities and cosponsor the Local Food and Regional Market Supply (FARMS) Act!

Petition Background

Small towns and rural communities depend on family farms because small farms employ more people per acre than large farms. When they disappear, jobs in the community evaporate with them.

Today, family farms are hurting. Since 2007, more than 56,000 midsize farms have disappeared from the American landscape. The loss of jobs and business opportunities in rural America is putting once-vibrant small towns at risk.

The Local Food and Regional Market Supply (FARMS) Act offers solutions to these problems by helping farmers reach new markets while expanding access to fresh, healthy, local food in low-income communities.

By increasing the demand for local food, the Local FARMS Act would stimulate economic growth in rural communities, creating jobs and reliable revenue streams for farmers and ranchers.

The Local FARMS Act would be a win for farmers, a win for consumers, and a win for communities. Sign this petition now and ask your member of Congress to cosponsor the Local FARMS Act.

Phone Script

Hi my name is FIRST NAME and I'm a constituent from CITY, STATE. I am calling to ask that CONGRESS PERSON cosponsor the Local FARMS Act. Family farms are hurting and small towns like mine need your help. The Local FARMS Act helps create resilient rural communities and enables farmers to reach new markets and combating food deserts in both rural and urban neighborhoods by giving consumers access fresh, healthy food and farm products. Thank you!



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Letter to the Editor

Family farms are hurting and small towns like our's need Congress to act! That's why I am calling on CONGRESS PERSON to cosponsor the Local FARMS Act.

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Additional Resources

- NSAC: [a one-page overview of the Local FARMS Act](#)
- NSAC: [a policy summary of the Local FARMS Act](#)
- NSAC: [a detailed outline of the Local FARMS Act](#)
- NSAC: [Organization Sign On Letter to endorse the Local FARMS Act](#)