

Contact:
Lauren Zajicek
Manager, Communications
lauren.zajicek@nasda.org

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Food system leaders advocate for continued and enhanced nutrition security funding

INDIANAPOLIS – Today at the 2024 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture [Annual Meeting](#), three key thought leaders joined the Food Systems & Nutrition Committee to share their insights on the integration of local and regional food systems into nutrition security programs. Fair Food Network Policy Lead Mark Nicholson, NourishedRx Vice President of Partnerships and Compliance Kendall Singleton and Urban School Food Alliance Cooperative Agreement Administrator Dottie Arnold joined the committee, and NASDA spoke with the speakers on the importance of their discussion.

Nicholson represented the Alliance for National Nutrition Incentives to emphasize the importance of the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, advocating for its continued support in the next farm bill.

“From September 2022 to August 2023, GusNIP programs generated \$107.4 million in local economic impact, with over 40 percent - \$43.4 million - supporting farm-direct businesses,” Nicholson said.

“Participants also increased fruit and vegetable consumption beyond the national average. As Congress debates the farm bill, there’s an opportunity to enhance this proven model, benefiting more farmers and families.”

Singleton emphasized the work of NourishedRx, a food-as-medicine company, in providing personalized food solutions and nutrition education for vulnerable populations, particularly those with diet-sensitive chronic conditions at risk of nutrition insecurity.

"At NourishedRx, we recognize that food access challenges are inherently local, varying significantly from one community to another," Singleton said, "Our comprehensive approach involves partnering with a diverse array of food suppliers, including local organizations, to develop tailored food-as-medicine programs that meet the unique needs of each participant."

Arnold focused on efforts to improve procurement practices for school districts of all sizes across the U.S., both rural and urban, through a USDA cooperative agreement launched in fall 2023.

“We had a lot of really amazing conversation today about food as medicine,” Arnold said. “Going back to the start when kids are in school and making sure that all kids have access to good food so that someday they do have the opportunity to try broccoli or eat some new squash they've never had before. I think that's where my heart is for this project.”

NASDA members work on a broad spectrum of issues related to food safety programs, nutrition security, resiliency of local and regional food systems and food waste prevention. During annual meeting, the three presenters highlighted emerging opportunities to boost economic stability in states while strengthening nutrition security and demand for rural producers across the U.S.

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NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement. To learn more about NASDA, please visit www.nasda.org.



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
4350 North Fairfax Drive, #810
Arlington, VA 22203
Tel: 202-296-9680
www.nasda.org