

# FOOD SYSTEMS

STRENGTHENING U.S. REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS, SUPPLY CHAINS AND NUTRITION SECURITY

Strengthening the connectivity within supply chains not only creates new market opportunities for small, medium-sized, and beginning farmers but also bolsters rural economies and improves access to nutrient-dense foods. NASDA supports science-based policies and food safety standards, urging policymakers to uphold evidence-based dietary recommendations that promote safe, healthy food for all.



*Scan to learn more about NASDA's Food Systems policy.*



## BACKGROUND

Connecting local agriculture to regional feeding programs addresses food insecurity and public health challenges while generating new market opportunities, especially for small, medium-sized and beginning farmers. **Policies that enhance connections between regional food systems and nutrition security can support food systems in a variety of important ways:**

- **Strengthening Supply Chain and Regional Food System Resiliency:** USDA's Regional Food Business Centers and the Regional Food Systems Initiative have shown that linking local and regional food systems with nutrition security creates market opportunities for small and medium-sized farmers while enhancing supply chain resilience. NASDA supports programs like these as they are vital for improving supply chain infrastructure and advancing smaller-scale farmers.
- **Increasing Nutrition Security:** Initiatives that connect local agriculture with federal and regional feeding programs reduce food insecurity and improve public health.
- **Preventing Food Waste and Crop Loss:** NASDA advocates for policies and programs that prevent surplus foods and crops from becoming waste, increase flexible and regional solutions for food procurement and redistribution of surplus crops into nutrition security programs. NASDA also works to support farmers and food processors in offsetting distribution costs to expand access to charitable food programs and ensure excess food reaches communities in need.
- **Prioritizing Public Health via Regional Foods in "Food as Medicine" Initiatives:** NASDA recognizes the significant potential at the intersection of regional food systems and growing interest and demand from healthcare to prevent and promote health and wellness and consumers through increased access and consumption of nutrient-dense foods. NASDA supports policies and programs that bolster opportunities for local and regional food systems to provide nutrient-dense foods into these growing public health-focused initiatives.

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## NASDA POLICY ASKS

NASDA advocates for continued and increased investments in nutrition and food assistance programs to combat national food insecurity, bolster local and regional food systems and improve public health outcomes.

- 1. Strengthen the Resiliency of Regional Food Systems & Supply Chains:** Support programs that connect local and regional food systems with nutrition security initiatives. NASDA urges Congress to prioritize policies that enhance the resiliency and adaptability of food supply chains, ensuring they can withstand and recover from disruptions.
- 2. Promote Public Health Through Nutrition Security:** Expand policies and programs that ensure all communities have access to affordable, nutrient-dense foods, promoting better health and well-being.
- 3. Enhance Administrative Support & Flexibility at the State and Implementation Level:** Increase funding and resources for programs that allow states to implement tailored solutions, addressing the specific food security challenges faced by different regions.
- 4. Strengthen Procurement Opportunities for Local & Regional Food Systems in Nutrition Assistance Programs:** Enact policies that facilitate greater local procurement within federal feeding programs, enabling communities to integrate regionally sourced foods into nutrition assistance programs more effectively.

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