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State agriculture officials to support programs for increasing economic growth via access to local foods

WASHINGTON, D.C. – At the [2025 Winter Policy Conference](#) today National Association of State Departments of Agriculture members passed several policy amendments promoting increased programs for local and regional foods through federal policies and programs for states.

Members [adopted policy](#) supporting the permanent establishment and funding of the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Programs, or any successor programs, administered by the USDA. In addition, members [supported](#) easing procurement regulations for schools participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, increasing their ability to purchase more food from in-state sources or nearby regions. Members also [supported](#) policies and programs that reduce administrative burdens on school districts as well as increase resources to support the preparation, storage and introduction of local and regional foods into school meals.

“Investing in local and regional food systems not only strengthens the connections between farmers and their local communities, it bolsters supply chain resiliency as well. By connecting our farmers with school nutrition programs, we create meaningful economic incentives that strengthen local food systems, supports producers, and stabilizes our communities nationwide.” NASDA President, Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture, Wes Ward said. “Securing continuity of these programs and reducing unnecessary regulatory requirements is crucial to ensuring children have access to a variety of nutritious meals while at school.”

Background

Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program helps strengthen regional food supply chain resiliency by providing funding for state and local governments to purchase and distribute food grown within their region. Through a non-competitive, cooperative agreement model, the program provides funding to enable farmers, ranchers and food producers to meet the unique needs of the local population with a variety of nutritious foods.

In 2024, NASDA [testified](#) in a Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Food and Nutrition hearing on programmatic changes to the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program. Currently, USDA allows schools to use “local” sourcing as a component of food procurement. NASDA believes it is important to build on that momentum and allow greater flexibility and support for local and regional sourcing so that schools can more easily take advantage of in-state sources for meal preparation.

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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 grows and enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement. To learn more about NASDA, please visit www.nasda.org.



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