

Support Family Farms and Healthy Food Access For All

Support a \$500,000 appropriation for the Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund- HB2520, Rep. Butler



WHAT DOES HB2520 DO?

Calls for \$500,000 state investment in the Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund, which will be used to double the purchasing power of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants to afford fresh, healthy food at farmers markets and other direct producer-to-consumer venues. If funded, this program would:

- Give Illinois farmers markets the ability to apply for state funding to create or expand a SNAP/LINK Match program for their farmers market.
- Double the purchasing power of SNAP/LINK customers to shop at farmers markets.
- Put more federal SNAP dollars into the pockets of family farmers in our state instead of big box stores.
- Help our most vulnerable population afford fresh, healthy, local foods with matching funds that subsidize fresh fruits and vegetables
- Give Illinois the ability to apply for a federal match, bringing another \$500,000 investment into our state, and making the total fund \$1,000,000 dollars.

“Fresh fruits and vegetables are the first things to be cut from the grocery list when money is tight. Link Match doubles our spending power and helps us make healthier choices while living within a limited budget.”

-Alton Farmers Market Customer

WHY IS THIS NEEDED?

- The impact of COVID-19 has increased the need for food assistance to help Illinois families, with unemployment spiking and food pantries seeing unprecedented need across the state.
- The COVID-19 pandemic's impact demonstrated just how important it is to maintain a flexible, adaptive, and diversified local food supply chain that can more easily respond to national and global market disruptions. It also revealed racial disparities in health and social conditions. It's more critical than ever that Illinois invest in its local farmers and increase access to healthy food for low-income communities.
- Illinois imports more than 90% of its food and exports most of what it grows,[1] creating an unstable local food system in times of crisis. At the same time, there are approximately 1,000 farms selling their products locally and looking to grow their businesses.[2]
- Existing SNAP/LINK Match programs at farmers markets have shown remarkable success. Farmers who vend at SNAP Match markets generate between 15 and 30 percent of their weekly income from these programs. One survey showed that 78% of participating consumers said the program positively impacted their fruit and vegetable intake.[3] A statewide fund would expand this successful program.
- Federal changes to the national program that supports existing SNAP match incentives have created uncertainty for consumers and farmers that participate in the program.

[1] Illinois Department of Agriculture (2011). Illinois Agriculture. Retrieved April 9, 2020 from <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Consumers/FarmersMarkets/Documents/Local%20Food%20Systems%20Presentation%20January%202011.pdf>

[2] Illinois MarketMaker (2020). MarketMaker Map. Retrieved April 13, 2020 from <https://il.foodmarketmaker.com/>.

[3] Experimental Station (2019). Link Up Illinois: 2019 report. Chicago, Illinois.

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WHO BENEFITS?

- **SNAP/LINK customers.** The fund will double their purchasing power to afford fresh, local produce.
- **Illinois Farmers.** The fund will incentivize SNAP customers to spend more federal SNAP dollars with Illinois farmers.
- **Illinois Farmers Markets.** Illinois has over 375 farmers markets and farm stands, 167 of which have the capacity to accept SNAP. A statewide fund would enable more farmers markets to create or expand a SNAP Match program.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

A dollar spent at a farmers market can generate \$1.80 for the community's economy.[1]

Since 2009, over 103 farmers markets and direct-to-consumer venues in Illinois have offered SNAP match programs thanks to a private grant program matched by federal dollars administered by Experimental Station. These match programs have generated over \$1.54 million in SNAP+WIC sales, and over \$1.02 million in Double Value Coupon sales at participating markets since 2009 [2]-- all of which is directly invested into Illinois farmers and the Illinois economy. A statewide fund would build on this work and has the potential to invest another \$1 million into the Illinois economy.

Low-income Illinoisans are 3 times as likely to have type 2 diabetes, which cost Illinois \$12.2 billion in 2012. Limited access to affordable, healthy food contributes to obesity and type 2 diabetes and is costly to the State of Illinois.

EQUITY IMPACT

Limited access to affordable, healthy food is more prevalent among low-income Illinoisans and Illinoisans of color. This fund makes healthy food access more equitable for all Illinoisans

[1] Sonntag, V. (April 2008) "Why Local Linkages Matter: Findings from the Local Food Economy Study," Seattle, Washington, Sustainable Seattle.

[2] Experimental Station (2015), Reported data, 2015.

ENDORSEMENTS

- Advocates for Urban Agriculture
- American Cancer Society
- Cancer Action Network, Inc.
- American Diabetes Association
- American Farmland Trust
- American Heart Association
- American Stroke Association
- Angelic Organics Learning Center
- Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
- Chicago Food Policy Action Council
- Cook County Health and Hospitals System
- Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC) at Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
- Delta Institute
- Experimental Station
- Food Works
- Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Healthy Schools Campaign
- Illinois Action for Healthy Kids
- Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity
- Illinois Environmental Council
- Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
- Illinois Public Health Institute
- Illinois Stewardship Alliance
- Illinois Farmers Market Association
- Izaak Walton League
- Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
- Seven Generations Ahead
- The Land Connection
- The Liberty Prairie Foundation