



Laura Belin &lt;laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com&gt;

---

## USDA Cancels Local Food Funding, Creating Uncertainty for Iowa Farmers and Food Hubs

---

Iowa Farmers Union <info@iowafarmersunion.org>  
Reply-To: Iowa Farmers Union <info@iowafarmersunion.org>  
To: Laura <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>

Mon, Mar 10, 2025 at 4:29 PM

[View this email in your browser](#)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2025

Contact: [cmdexter@iowafarmersunion.org](mailto:cmdexter@iowafarmersunion.org)

## USDA Cancels Local Food Funding, Creating Uncertainty for Iowa Farmers and Food Hubs

NEVADA - The Iowa Farmers Union is deeply alarmed and disappointed by the USDA's sudden termination of state contracts for the 2025 Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) and Local Food for Schools (LFS) programs. This decision comes despite the USDA's October 2024 commitment to extend these highly successful programs through 2028, with an \$11.3 million investment slated for Iowa alone between 2025-2028. These programs have been transformative for Iowa's food system, allocating over \$7.8 million to schools and food banks for purchases over the last three years. The abrupt cancellation now threatens to upend all of the progress that farms, food hubs, schools, and food banks had built through relationships, infrastructure, and

increased production around these programs.

For Iowa farmers, the impact is immediate and potentially devastating. Producers who have already planned over \$3 million in food sales in 2025 through these programs now face sudden financial uncertainty. Our members ramped up production, expanded operations, and made investments in response to what seemed like a guaranteed market to schools and food access sites. Farmers who scaled up their businesses to meet the demand of these programs now don't know how they'll recoup costs. Vegetable farmers, who already operate with slim profit margins, may struggle to make ends meet, and schools and food access sites that have come to rely on these programs for access to fresh, nutritious food will be left without options.

"Our farm has been supplying fresh, local meat through this program since it began," said Ryan Marquardt of Wild Rose Pastures in Van Meter. "We planned our 2025 production based on the promise of these programs continuing. Now, we have product in the pipeline with nowhere to sell it. LFPA allowed us to move remaining inventory efficiently, secure preorders for specialized products, and free up our limited time to focus on growing. With a couple thousand dollars in meat sales each year through LFPA, we've increased our gross farm sales by 50% over the last three years—money that goes right back into our local community."

Other producers share similar concerns. "LFPA has been the most impactful federal program I've seen in my decade of growing vegetables for local markets," added Jordan Scheibel, owner of Middle Way Farm in Grinnell. "In many cases, it's not that Iowa's communities can't produce the food locally, it's that farmers cannot risk scaling up unless they know that what they grow can be sold. LFPA gives that certainty to many growers. This funding being unceremoniously cut off hurts farmers, low-income households, and rural vitality with no discernable benefit. It's short-sighted and, in fact, wastes the effort and planning that has gone into the program up to this point. I hope that once decision-makers understand the impact of this funding cut, they will reconsider this course of action."

Mari Hunt Wassink, of Black Earth Gardens in Cedar Rapids, emphasized how the programs helped young and small farms thrive. "One of the reasons I fell in love with farming is because I want to feed my community and make sure

everyone has access to healthy, delicious food, so these programs have been an important part of me fulfilling my calling as a farmer and neighbor. From a financial standpoint, LFPA/LFS have increased my farm's revenue by 15%, which is huge when you're trying to achieve viability and profitability as a start-up business. I've invested the extra income back into my farm to scale up and grow more vegetables for my neighbors. I really don't see a downside to the LFPA/LFS programs—they are a win for small, local farmers who need fair prices for our produce, and it's a win for our school-aged kids and families across Iowa who live with food insecurity.”

Rosmann Family Farms in Harlan, a certified organic livestock and egg operation, has been a leader in Iowa agriculture. “We've spent decades investing in organic and sustainable farming,” said Ron Rosmann. “The USDA's cancellation of these programs is a slap in the face to farmers around the state who have done everything right—adapting to new markets, diversifying crops, growing food for their communities, and investing in sustainable agriculture.”

Jeff Hafner of Early Morning Harvest in Panora, an aquaponic farm and grain mill that had been selling into the Food Bank of Siouxland through the LFPA, emphasized the broader consequences: “It's sad that local food won't be funded. This decision disrupts an entire system that is much healthier for Americans and that was just starting to flourish.”

With these federal programs gone, it is more important than ever for Iowans to support local farmers both by contacting their elected officials about this issue and by shopping locally. The Iowa Farmers Union urges consumers, schools, and businesses to prioritize buying directly from Iowa's food hubs, farmers' markets, and directly from farmers. By doing so, we can sustain the farms that have worked so hard to feed our communities and prevent devastating financial losses.

“We need our communities to step up,” said Aaron Lehman, President of the Iowa Farmers Union. “These farms have been growing food for Iowa families, schools, and food banks. We can't let the USDA's decision undermine everything they've built.”

## About Iowa Farmers Union

The Iowa Farmers Union (IFU) is a grassroots organization dedicated to

supporting family farms, sustainable agriculture, and strong rural communities. IFU advocates for policies that protect farmers, promote local food systems, and ensure a resilient and fair agricultural economy.

## Media Contact:

Tommy Hexter

Policy Director, Iowa Farmers Union

[thexter@iowafarmersunion.org](mailto:thexter@iowafarmersunion.org)

---

*Copyright © 2025 Iowa Farmers Union, All rights reserved.*  
You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website.

**Our mailing address is:**

Iowa Farmers Union  
P.O. Box 1883  
Ames, Iowa 50010

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).