

Cuts that Bite:

Recent Impacts to Federal Farm to School Programs



Earlier this year, USDA announced two alarming cuts that mark a significant step backward for farm to school:

Local Food for Schools and Child Care Program (LFSCC)

Total Loss: \$660 Million
for small family farms via sales to schools
and child care sites

2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program Awards

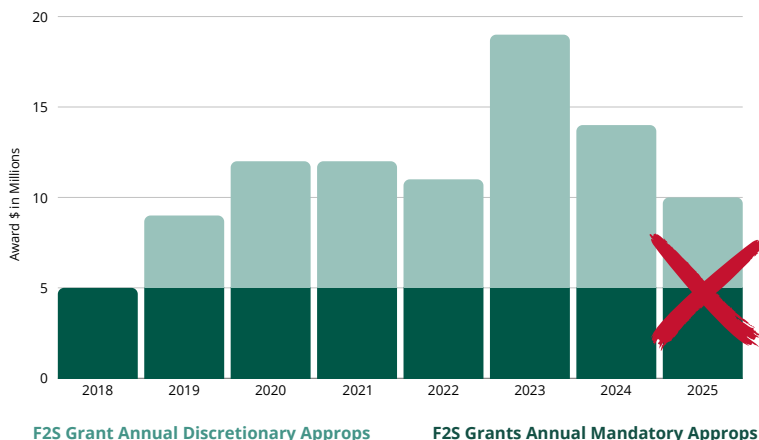
Total Loss: \$10 Million
for farmers, schools, child care, NGOs,
and state, local, and tribal govts

Without this funding, vital progress toward healthier food for kids and the education to learn where that food comes from, is at risk.

Congress and USDA must take immediate action to restore and secure long-term funding for these programs.

Cancellation of \$10M in 2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants

The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program is one of the only dedicated federal funding sources for connecting children with healthy, local food while supporting farmers. Since 2013, this competitive annual grant has invested **\$100M to 1,275 grantees** to help them plan, grow, and sustain farm to school programs through nutrition education, school gardens, and local food purchasing.



The Issue

- This program was **mandated** by congressional legislation in 2010
- Funding was **already appropriated**
- Applications were **already submitted**

The Reason

No longer aligned with USDA priorities: Different racial groups, low-income and rural schools, and small farms would have received up to 10 bonus points of 100.

The Impact

Stalled national progress, weakened state and local investments, and threatened the long-term sustainability of farm to school programs.

Our Ask

We urge USDA to fulfill its responsibility to carry out this program each year, and offer a **re-issued grant application** at the **earliest possible opportunity**.

Termination of the \$660M Local Food for Schools & Child Care Program

\$130M
INVESTED
SINCE 2022

Representing
\$257M
IN LOCAL
ECONOMIC IMPACT

LFSCC along with its companion program for food pantries—the Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program—was launched during the pandemic when supply chain disruptions exposed the risks of relying solely on national and global food systems. In response, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service invested in small local producers to strengthen long-term food security, initially providing \$200 million in funding. The first round included **42 states and DC**. A second round (FY25), announced in October 2024, expanded the program to include child care and would award **\$660 million over three years** to state agencies to purchase minimally processed, local foods.

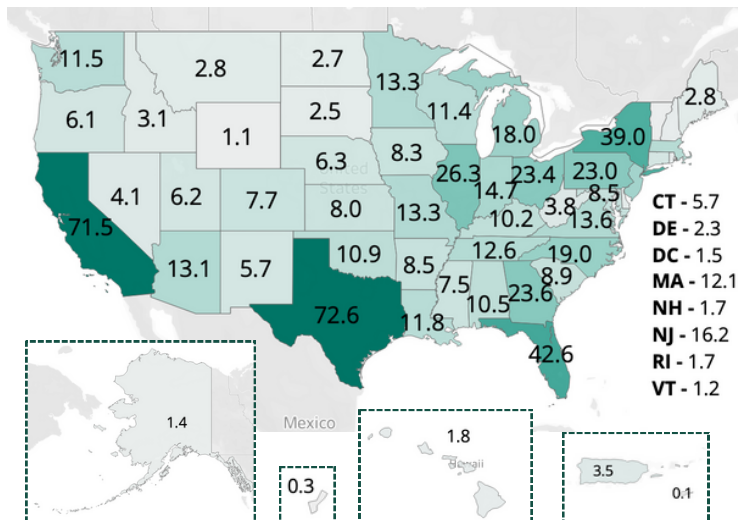
100% of funds end up in the hands of family farmers and producers.

LFSCC dollars do not cover administrative costs—every dollar not spent is a missed opportunity to support farmers and strengthen local economies. There is no other USDA program that effectively connects small, local, independent producers with the school food marketplace.

LFSCC ensures kids are eating whole, healthy, unprocessed food in schools.

According to USDA, one of the most commonly reported challenges by schools is food cost. Without LFSCC, schools will struggle to afford local food among rising food costs, and small farmers will lose a critical market. If we want to make America healthy, this program is a shining example of serving kids high quality, dye-free, scratch-made meals while supporting American farmers.

Latest LFS Cuts: How Many Millions Did Your Farmers Lose?



Issue

Contracts between USDA and state agencies **were already signed**.

The Impact

Trust in USDA is undermined.

Producers, schools, and state agencies made investments in seeds, supplies, and labor based on already signed contracts between USDA and states. Cutting LFSCC hurts the commitment to domestic food systems at a time when producers need reliable markets.

There is strong public backlash.

200+ news articles across 44 states have already cited harm from the cancellation.

Our Ask

- USDA has an opportunity to **develop an improved version of LFSCC** tailored for it's new vision.
- **Congress can direct USDA to implement LFSCC or create a new program through legislation.**

BOTTOM LINE: The loss of LFSCC threatens the progress we've made in supporting small farmers, and ensuring kids eat healthy. Now is the time to speak up and demand a better solution.

“ *Sandy Curwood PhD, RDN*

Former State Director of School Nutrition,
Virginia Dept. of Education

The infrastructure we've built through farm to school—from food hubs to local partnerships—has taken years of work. To lose this support now is devastating, especially in rural communities. You're taking away income from farmers and meals from children. That's a double hit. It makes no sense.



Take Action Today:
www.farmtoschool.org/policy/take-action

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