



Food Assistance & Regional Markets

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) provides service to the people of Washington by supporting the viability and vitality of agriculture while protecting consumers, public health and the environment. The Food Assistance programs are part of the Food Safety and Consumer Services Division which plays an active role in defending the safety, integrity and availability of our food system.

Our Food Assistance programs have recently expanded to include support for the Small Farm Direct Marketing and Farm to School programs (Regional Markets). To reflect this change you will see a new name but no other changes that will impact you. Our new name is Food Assistance and Regional Markets (FARM). We are looking forward to the opportunity to learn from each other and target our collective efforts to enhance all of the programs, the agricultural community and the communities we serve.

WSDA's Food Assistance programs assist local organizations and tribes in providing emergency food to 1 in every 6 Washingtonians. The program provides approximately \$20 million worth of federal and state food and funding to support 500 food banks, food pantries, meal programs and tribes. Our goals are to develop key partnerships and data-driven strategies to alleviate hunger and increase access to healthier food options available in the emergency food system while supporting the agricultural community.

WSDA works collaboratively with contractors, partners and stakeholders for continuous improvement within the emergency food system. Our advisory committee is part of the Washington Food Coalition and plays a critical role in developing coordinated, responsive and strategic solutions to the issue of hunger in our state.

The WSDA Food Assistance programs include:

[Emergency Food Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) - A state funded program that helps alleviate hunger for low-income families by providing critical funding to food banks, food pantries, tribes and tribal organizations. The funding is flexible and they may use their funding for the purchase of equipment or repairs, to purchase food and for operational costs. Tribes receiving funding may use it to help operate a food pantry or for issuing tribal food vouchers. Annual budget: \$6.05 million.

[The Emergency Food Assistance Program \(TEFAP\)](#) - A federally funded (USDA) program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Washingtonians, including elderly people. TEFAP provides food and limited operational funding for distribution to nonprofit organizations, such as community action councils, food banks, food pantries, meal programs and shelters. Annual budget: \$1.63 million; Food: \$11.33 million.

[Commodity Supplemental Food Program \(CSFP\)](#) - A federally funded (USDA) program that provides nutritious food "packages" designated specifically for the needs of low-income elderly people at least 60 years of age (limited availability). Annual federal budget: \$387,195; Food: \$1.32 million.

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Food Safety and Consumer Services Division

*Defending the safety, integrity
and availability of our food system.*



Food Assistance & Regional Markets

The Regional Markets team (Small Farm Direct Marketing Program and the Farm to School Program) supports the economic viability of small and direct marketing farms and increases the availability of Washington grown products in schools, institutions, and on tables throughout the state. The team provides education, outreach, technical assistance, and other services to increase market opportunities for Washington's food and agriculture businesses.

This work supports WSDA's goals to facilitate the movement of Washington agricultural products in domestic markets and to protect and reduce the risk to public health by assuring the safety of the state's food supply. The team serves as a central point of information, resources, and tools to assist Washington's agricultural stakeholders, to share best practices, and to highlight successful projects across the state to support the development and success of local supply chains.

WSDA's Regional Markets team helps farmers and food businesses access markets that match their scale and type of production, and assist them to diversify their markets as they become ready. The team supports development of emerging markets by educating buyers and consumers, and by designing and sharing education and marketing materials to help consumers recognize the value of Washington-grown foods. They work closely with buyers to increase their understanding of seasonality, marketing, and purchasing considerations for buying and selling locally-grown foods.

The Regional Markets team supports agencies and institutions to develop purchasing, food service, menu planning, and communication policies and procedures that support local purchases. Their education and outreach model is built on peer-led, on-site workshops; clear and detailed publications; and approachability and accessibility for offering knowledgeable and accurate technical assistance to individuals, businesses, and communities.

WSDA's market development work ties to community goals for economic development through partnerships in urban and rural communities to increase markets and sales for locally-grown foods, and for increased public health through better access to healthy foods grown in Washington.

The Regional Markets team works on projects in the following areas:

[Farm to School](#) and Farm to Public Cafeterias through our online farm to school toolkit, procurement policies and assistance, facilitation of farmer/school connections, and support to networks of farm to school and farm to cafeteria practitioners of many types.

[Small Farm Direct Marketing](#) support with technical assistance and resources to help farms access and sell to markets that match their scale and interests, facilitating farmer/buyer connections, and provide guidance on direct marketing strategies and regulations

[On-Farm Food Safety](#) for diversified and small farms with our Bridging the GAPs project and outreach and education on the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety rule.

Development of local food systems and supply chains by identifying needs and opportunities in local supply chain infrastructure and relationships from facilitating business to business connections, encouraging sharing of best practices between food hubs, to technical assistance and regulatory guidance for small scale and farm based value-added food processors.

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