

Illinois Equitable Access Towards Sustainable Systems

IL-EATS Impact Report



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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IL-EATS Impact Report Executive Summary

Background

In 2022, Illinois received \$28 million through the USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program to purchase local food from Illinois farmers for communities experiencing food insecurity. The Illinois implementation, known as Illinois Equitable Access Towards Sustainable Systems (IL-EATS), was administered through a partnership between the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA), Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), and the University of Illinois Extension. Over 18 months, IL-EATS demonstrated how local food purchasing programs can strengthen farm businesses, expand food access, and build more resilient regional food supply chains.

Program Reach and Economic Impact

The program supported **200 Illinois farmers**, **15 lead agencies**, and **987 distribution sites**, with local food reaching communities across **88 of Illinois' 102 counties**. A total of **\$26.5 million** was spent on food from Illinois farms, generating an estimated **\$45.8 million** in economic impact across the state.

Supporting Illinois Farmers

IL-EATS expanded market opportunities for farmers while prioritizing underserved producers.

- **94%** reported increased sales
- **89%** reported increased profits
- **79%** accessed new buyers or markets
- **55%** are beginning farmers (<10 years), **52%** are female-owned, and **22%** are BIPOC-owned

Many farmers used program revenue to invest in infrastructure, expand production, and cover operational costs.

Expanding Food Access

IL-EATS increased the availability of fresh, local food in underserved communities.

- **100%** of lead agencies reported the program increased access to fresh, local food for the communities they served
- Distribution occurred through food pantries, mobile markets, and community organizations

Community partners reported improvements in food quality, variety, and dignity for neighbors receiving food assistance.

Strengthening the Food System

The program also strengthened connections across the Illinois food system

- **95%** of lead agencies connected with new farmers
- **84%** connected with new community partners or distribution sites
- **76%** of farmers and **84%** of lead agencies reported they are likely to continue partnerships formed through IL-EATS

Looking Ahead

The report's findings highlight the significant impact of local food purchasing programs and offer recommendations to strengthen future initiatives that support farmers, expand food access, and build a more resilient Illinois food system.

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Introduction

In 2022, Illinois received \$28 million through the USDA's Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program to purchase fresh, locally produced food from Illinois farmers for distribution to underserved communities. Funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), LFPA provided \$900 million nationwide to support local food purchasing and distribution.

The LFPA program aimed to:

- Support local food producers, especially socially disadvantaged farmers
- Enhance access to fresh, local foods in underserved communities
- Build and expand market opportunities for local farmers
- Develop sustainable partnerships between farmers and community partners

Program Overview

LFPA was implemented in Illinois through a partnership between the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA), Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), and the University of Illinois Extension. The program operated as a reimbursement model, with USDA funds flowing through IDOA and administered by IDHS (Figure 1). Extension provided technical assistance and coordination support to lead agencies, farmers, and distribution sites. The Illinois implementation of LFPA became known as IL-EATS (Illinois Equitable Access Towards Sustainable Systems).

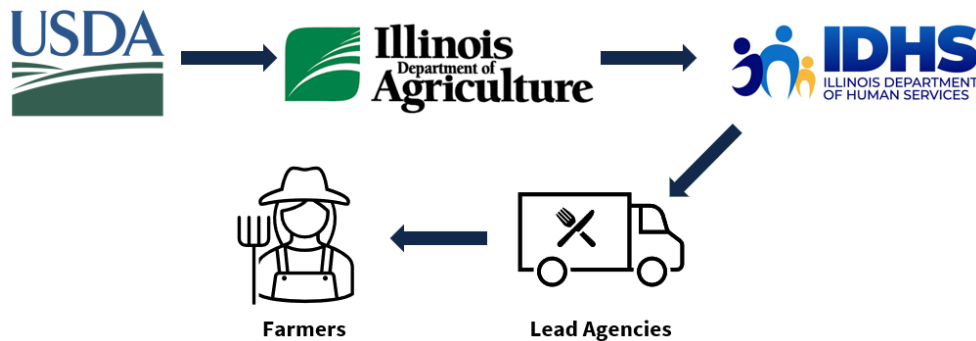


Figure 1. Flow of IL-EATS funds from the USDA through state agencies to lead agencies and farmers

Program Design

IL-EATS was designed through stakeholder engagement, including an advisory committee (Appendix I) and statewide listening sessions, and implemented through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process administered by IDHS. Illinois Extension supported outreach and facilitated connections among prospective lead agencies, farmers, and community partners.

Partners participated in IL-EATS as lead agencies, growers or producers, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Lead agencies were selected through the Merit-Based Review (MBR) NOFO process, and farmers and CBOs partnered with them. The lead agency model reduced administrative burden on producers and distribution sites and enabled community-driven use of funds. Lead agencies served as regional coordinators and fiduciaries, managing farmer payments, coordinating distribution logistics, and prioritizing which communities to serve. By selecting agencies rooted in the communities they serve, the model strengthened place-based knowledge and relationships. While

many states chose to work directly with food banks to administer food and funds, Illinois prioritized working with a range of organization types to ensure the opportunity was available to entities who had never received state contracts. A complete list of lead agencies is included in Appendix II.

IL-EATS sourced products from Illinois farmers who met at least one of the socially disadvantaged criteria (Appendix III). Producers were required to meet food safety standards, with 120+ farmers completing food safety training as part of the program. A Fair Market Value list was established to ensure fair compensation, with prices set at wholesale or better. Producers were required to receive at least the minimum price and could request a higher price within the range to account for production practices (such as regenerative, organic, or humane), transportation, and processing costs. The final list included 171 products. All foods purchased through IL-EATS were distributed at no cost to underserved communities. Distribution occurred through community-based organizations and lead agency initiatives, including food pantries, mobile markets, and prescription box programs.

Program Impact

In just 18 months, the IL-EATS program supported **200 farmers**, **15 lead agencies**, and **987 distribution sites**, with local food reaching **88 of Illinois' 102 counties**. A total of **\$26.5 million** was used to purchase food from Illinois farms, resulting in an estimated **\$45.8 million** in economic impact for the state ([USDA and Colorado State Local Food Impact Calculator](#)). Beyond direct food purchases from producers, funds stimulated local economies, flowing through processors, aggregators, and transportation networks as food moved to communities.

Program at a Glance



Lead Agency Impact

The 15 selected lead agencies comprised a relatively diverse set of sub-awardees (Appendix II). The group included 8 food banks, 3 community-based hunger-relief nonprofits, and 4 farmer-focused grassroots organizations. For over half of these organizations, IL-EATS was their first contract with the state.

Baseline Survey Results

At the start of the program, 19 lead agencies and their key partners completed a survey on their organizational capacity, partnerships, and program goals. Most were small organizations, with 58% employing 20 or fewer staff, and over half planned to hire additional staff to support IL-EATS. Lead agencies primarily identified farmer partners through existing relationships, supplemented by Extension's matchmaking support and referrals from other farmers.

Through IL-EATS, lead agencies aimed to:

- Strengthen their relationships with farmers, community-based organizations, and broader food system partners

- Expand access to high-quality local foods in their communities
- Offer a capacity-building opportunity for farmers to serve larger, institutional markets.

Lead agencies identified a need for additional infrastructure, particularly cold storage, more funding, and regional relationship-building opportunities.

Exit Survey Results

At the end of the program, 19 lead agencies and their primary project partners reported on their experience, capacity, and outcomes. Most organizations had prior experience sourcing local food, although some entered the program with limited or no experience.

Through IL-EATS, lead agencies reported:

- Increased organizational capacity, with **63% hiring staff**
- Sustained staffing capacity, with more than half expecting IL-EATS-funded positions to continue beyond the program
- Strong interest in continued participation, with **83% likely to participate** in future farm-to-food access programs

Successes and Challenges

Leads were asked to select the aspects of the IL-EATS program that were most helpful and most challenging.

Most helpful aspects of IL-EATS:

- Building new relationships with farmers (**78%**)
- Sourcing a higher quality of food (**72%**)
- Enhancing client dignity through quality food (61%)

Most challenging aspects of IL-EATS:

- Program ending (72%)
- Navigating federal grant requirements (56%)
- Managing cash flow (39%)

Farmer Impact

This section highlights the characteristics, outcomes, and experiences of farmers participating in IL-EATS.

Baseline Survey Results

Early in the program, 121 farmers reported on their farm characteristics and intended use of program funds.

Farm characteristics

Most participating farms were small, beginning operations primarily selling through direct-to-consumer markets.

- Most operated with 1-2 employees
- Most farmed on 1-5 acres
- 64% had been farming for less than 10 years



Farmers planned to use program funds to expand their business, invest in infrastructure, and cover operational expenses.

Exit Survey Results

Near the close of the program, 62 farmers answered questions on their experience.

IL-EATS reached underserved farmers

Farm characteristics

- **55%** are beginning farmers (<10 years)
- **52%** are female-owned farms
- **22%** are BIPOC-owned farms, most identifying as Black (14%)
- 65% were age 54 or younger, compared to the statewide average age of 58

Geographic and market access

- 26% operated farms in a high-vulnerability county
- 21% operated farms greater than 50 miles (or 30 minutes) to the nearest distribution point

Participation in IL-EATS supported farm expansion and diversification

- **94% reported increased sales**
- **89% reported increased profits**
- 74% expanded production and 53% added new livestock or crops

IL-EATS expanded market access for participating farms

- **79% reported accessing new buyers, markets, or distribution channels**

Farmers used program funds to:

- Invest in on-farm infrastructure (58%)
- Scale-up production (58%)
- Purchase inputs such as seeds and fertilizer (55%)

Successes and Challenges

Most helpful aspects of IL-EATS:

- Fair Market Value pricing (**82%**)
- Access to new buyers and sales channels (**71%**)
- Networking opportunities (48%)
- Experience with wholesale practices (40%)

Farms reported strong interest in continued participation, with **90% likely to participate** in a future farm-to-food-access program.

“It has been a great learning experience to harvest and package for wholesale. I primarily sold at farmers markets before, but now feel equipped to sell to wholesale customers.”
—IL-EATS Farmer

Most challenging aspects of IL-EATS:

- Program ending (82%)
- Uncertainty about contract volume or duration (60%)



- Time it took to receive payment (40%)

Distribution Impact

This section highlights community impact, distribution site capacity, and purchasing trends.

Access and Community Impact

IL-EATS Expanded Access to Fresh, Local, and Culturally Responsive Foods

- All lead agencies reported the program was effective in increasing access to fresh, local food, with **47% describing it as extremely effective**
- **61%** intentionally sourced culturally responsive foods

Lead agencies reported increased demand, satisfaction, and awareness of local food. Many highlighted improved food quality. In some cases, IL-EATS translated into direct connections between farmers and community members, including requests to purchase additional products.

"There has always been a lack of high-quality fresh produce in our food pantries. Bringing that high-quality fresh produce to our pantry gives our neighbors the dignity of having high-quality food."
—IL-EATS Lead Agency

Distribution Site Capacity

Early in the program, 125 community-based organizations reported on their capacity and program goals.

- Food pantries were the most common distribution model, followed by faith-based organizations and mobile markets
- **65% operated without paid staff**, relying entirely on volunteers
- Organizations served an average of 1,450 individuals per month, totaling over 174,000 individuals served monthly
- 68% reported a need for more cold storage

Product and Purchasing Trends

Invoice data from March-December 2024 highlights product diversity, spending patterns, and seasonality.

Product diversity

- 107 unique products were purchased across six categories
- Vegetables accounted for the largest share of unique products (54%), followed by animal-based proteins (21%), and fruits (9%)

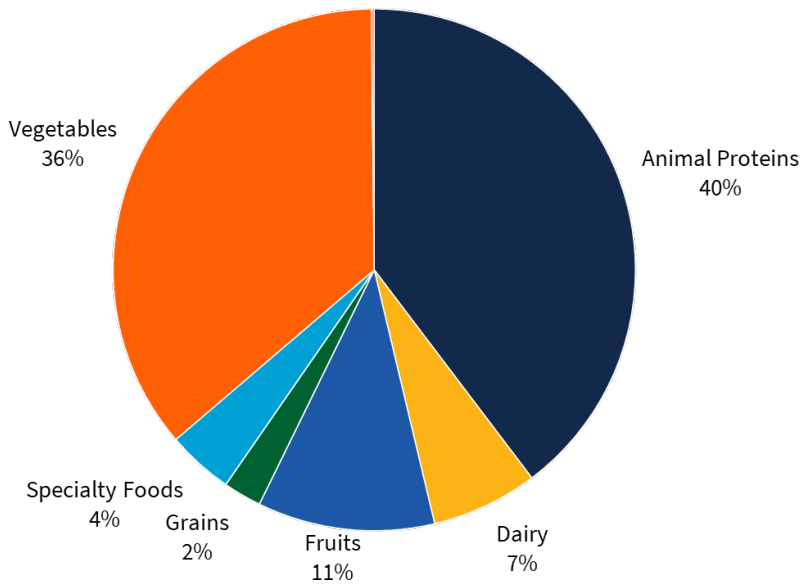
Spending patterns

- Animal-based proteins accounted for the largest share of total spending (**40%**), followed by vegetables (**36%**)
- Specialty products (4%) and grains (2%) represented the smallest share

Product pricing influenced total spend across categories (Figure 2).



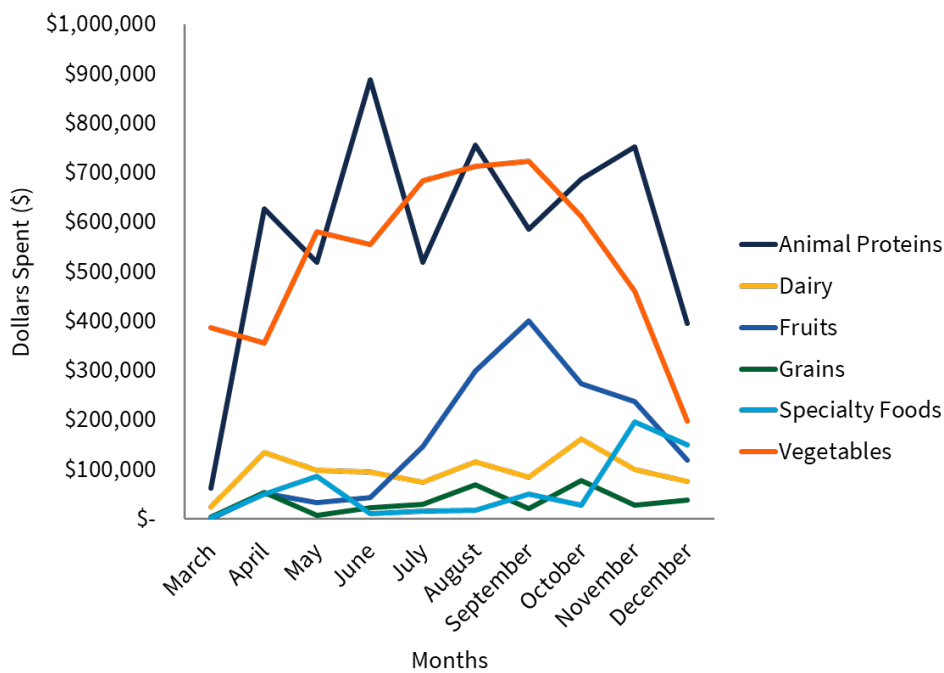
Figure 2: Spending by Product Category (March-December 2024)



Seasonal trends

Spending patterns closely followed the Illinois growing season, increasing through spring, peaking in summer, and declining in fall and winter (Figure 3). Purchases of fruits and vegetables peaked in late summer and early fall, and specialty products increased in late fall as fresh produce availability declined.

Figure 3: Monthly Spending by Product Category (March-December 2024)



Top Products

The most purchased IL-EATS Products from March to December 2024 were:

- Ground beef (**17%**)
- Potatoes (**11%**)
- Apples (9%)
- Chicken (6%)
- Bell peppers (5%)
- Eggs (5%)

A more detailed breakdown of the top products in each category is provided in Appendix IV.

Partnership and System Impact

IL-EATS strengthened partnerships across the food system.

- **95%** of lead agencies connected with new farmers
- **84%** connected with new community partners or distribution sites
- **76%** of farmers and **84%** of lead agencies reported they are likely to continue partnerships formed through IL-EATS

Program Successes and Challenges

Key Successes

The IL-EATS program strengthened coordination across the food system, particularly in aggregation, distribution, and relationship-building.

Strengthened Local Food Supply Chains

IL-EATS supported the development and expansion of aggregation and distribution infrastructure across Illinois, including new and expanded food hubs. In some regions, larger farms and community institutions served as aggregation points, helping smaller farms access markets.

Expanded Market Participation and Capacity

The program enabled producers to enter new market channels, particularly institutional markets. Farmers gained experience with invoicing, packaging, and food safety requirements, building skills and capacity needed to access wholesale markets.

Improved Food Access and Quality

IL-EATS increased access to high-quality, locally produced food in underserved communities. Community partners offered fresh produce, proteins, and other nutrient-dense foods that are often difficult to source, increasing client satisfaction and dignity.

Enabled Locally Driven Solutions

The diversity of lead agencies enabled regionally tailored implementation, including support for year-round production, culturally relevant foods, and innovative distribution models such as mobile markets and prescription food programs.

Key Challenges

While the program achieved significant outcomes, several challenges emerged related to program design, coordination, and system capacity.



Administrative and Communication Complexity

Participants faced challenges navigating federal and state grant requirements, particularly because many lead agencies were managing their first state contracts, which in turn affected the farmers and community-based organizations they partnered with. Communication gaps and a lack of understanding of the overall system between state agencies, lead agencies, and partners created challenges around reimbursement timelines, program expectations, and participation processes. Variability in communication across lead agencies also resulted in inconsistent experiences for farmers and distribution sites. In some cases, limited communication led to farmer confusion and unpreparedness, leaving distribution sites unaware they were receiving IL-EATS products. Despite efforts to provide consumer materials, participants identified a need for clearer communication with consumers on the benefits of local foods and how to prepare them.

Market Readiness and Coordination Gaps

Differences in ordering, packaging, and delivery requirements across lead agencies created challenges for farmers, particularly those working with multiple buyers. The lack of standardized contracts outlining product volumes, pricing, and timelines contributed to uncertainty and, in some cases, disrupted market relationships. Inconsistent units of measure across transactions also created challenges for pricing and invoicing, increasing administrative burden for both farmers and lead agencies. Additional support for wholesale readiness and supply chain coordination would have improved program efficiency.

Infrastructure and Logistics Constraints

Limited access to infrastructure, particularly cold storage and meat processing, posed significant challenges across the supply chain. These constraints were especially pronounced for livestock producers who face long processing waits and for beginning and underserved farmers lacking access to essential infrastructure and capital.

Geographic distance also created logistical challenges. When lead agencies partnered with distant farms, they faced difficulties managing distribution and minimizing food waste. Variability in lead agency experience further increased the complexity of program implementation. More support was needed to connect farmers and distribution sites with the appropriate lead agencies to better align product availability and demand, organizational capacity, and geographic proximity.

Program Design and Timing Challenges

The reimbursement structure created cash flow challenges for both farmers and lead agencies. Despite the program's best effort, the reimbursement time to lead agencies ranged from 60-120 days due to factors at the federal, state agency, and lead agency levels. Delays in program rollout affected production planning, leaving some farmers with surplus product. Later in the program, government disruptions created additional challenges, leaving leads to manage uncertain cash flow and farmers to contend with excess inventory. The short program duration limited the ability to make long-term investments and fully realize the benefits of expanded production and market access. Some of the program's goals were not fully realized due to program disruptions.

Key Recommendations

Several opportunities exist to strengthen future local food purchasing programs and improve coordination across the supply chain. The following recommendations are informed by direct feedback from farmers, lead agencies, and program implementation experience.



Strengthen Program Design and Financial Structure

Improve Payment Structures to Reduce Financial Risk

Reimbursement-based funding created significant cash flow challenges for both lead agencies and farmers, particularly smaller organizations with limited operating capital. With 60-120 day payment terms as the best-case scenario at the state agency level, multiple lead agencies and the farmers they worked with faced financial strain while awaiting payment. At the federal level, funding should be distributed in advance on a quarterly basis—consistent with other federal programs—to ensure state agencies have sufficient cash flow to pay providers and grantees in a timely manner.

Future programs should consider alternatives to the reimbursement model, such as providing awardees with full or partial upfront funding or shortening reimbursement timelines. Additional options include offering low- or no- interest financing to help farmers and lead agencies manage cash flow while waiting for reimbursement. In line with industry best practices in local food procurement, organizations responsible for paying farmers should be required to pay within 30 days of receiving an invoice (Net 30), with faster timelines such as Net 15 strongly encouraged.

“What would be drastically impactful would be planning with contracts that include partial prepayment to help farmers scale and cover upfront input costs. With a contract and down payment, farms like ours can produce the staple items institutions need.”

—IL-EATS Farmer

Adjust Pricing Model to Reflect Market Realities

For programs focused on supporting underserved farmers, a price list is strongly recommended. Prices should reflect product realities and, where possible, support opportunities for long-term purchases without program funds.

Lead agencies identified challenges with Fair Market Value pricing, particularly minimum price requirements that limited quantities and created unintended incentives for farmers to grow higher-cost crops that may be less impactful for recipients. Farmers similarly reported that pricing did not consistently reflect market realities, with some products priced too low to be viable and others priced above typical market rates. While the price list was considered a strength, particularly by farmers, both leads and farmers expressed concerns regarding the sustainability of the pricing beyond the program's duration.

Align Program Design with Agricultural Realities

Align Program Timelines with Agricultural Production Cycles

Farming requires months of planning, from crop production to livestock scheduling. Both lead agencies and farmers emphasized the importance of aligning program timelines with agricultural production cycles. Earlier contract commitments and clearer program timelines would allow producers to align their crop planning, livestock scheduling, and production decisions with program demand.

Future programs should consider a phased approach, with a soft launch in the fall to support planning and coordination, followed by a full launch in the spring. Aligning program timelines with agricultural



production cycles can reduce supply disruptions, mitigate farm risk, and build stronger, more reliable relationships between farmers and buyers.

"I need to know by December if we are going to be providing onions in September so we can order seeds and get them started in the greenhouse by late January."

—IL-EATS Farmer

Strengthen Market Coordination and Procurement Practices

Standardize Procurement Practices and Require Written Contracts

Many farmers and lead agencies faced confusion around product volumes, pricing expectations, and delivery schedules. Requiring written contracts outlining agreed-upon quantities, prices, and delivery timelines would increase transparency, reduce producer risk, and build trust between farmers and buyers. Contracts could be on a seasonal or quarterly basis to provide farmers with greater market stability while maintaining flexibility for buyers. Forward contracting, when purchase agreements include 20-50% prepayment to cover upfront production costs, is a best practice that allows farmers to expand production while reducing their financial risks related to inputs, labor, and weather-related crop losses.

While potentially challenging to implement, standardized packaging, invoicing, and delivery expectations across lead agencies could reduce administrative burdens for both lead agencies and farmers working with multiple buyers. Additionally, requiring all partners to complete an onboarding process could provide training, share resources, and ensure a clear understanding of the program expectations and goals.

Strengthen Producer-Buyer Matching and Market Coordination

Although matchmaking efforts helped connect lead agencies, farmers, and community partners, additional coordination support would improve alignment between product availability, organizational capacity, and geographic proximity. If capacity allows, future programs should incorporate producer-buyer matching efforts that reflect production scale, market demand, and logistical feasibility. Establishing dedicated value chain coordinators could further strengthen these efforts by facilitating connections across the supply chain, reducing the burden on individual programs, and expanding market opportunities for farmers more sustainably.

Improve Communication, Transparency, and Access

Strengthen Communication and Coordination Across Program Partners

While significant communication was directed to lead agencies, with the expectation that it would reach their farmers and distribution sites, gaps in information flow revealed the need for more consistent, transparent communication with the entire network. Strengths of this project recommended for future programs include establishing an advisory committee to guide program design and implementation, and funding a backbone or technical assistance organization to strengthen communication, coordination, and relationship-building.

Lead agencies identified a need for clearer guidance and support in navigating grant requirements and reporting processes. Farmers requested greater transparency into program participation, including the selection criteria for farmers and improved communication on pricing, payment timelines, and



participation processes. As demonstrated in this project, regular opportunities for engagement – such as office hours and monthly meetings – can help answer questions in real time and build trust with farmers, lead agencies, and community partners. Clear communication of expected payment timelines, ideally during the application period, is also essential, particularly for reimbursement-based funding models.

"I had to beg my way in, and only got in because a different farm backed out. The lead agencies got to choose who they bought from, and it's unclear what criteria they used."

—IL-EATS Farmer

Strengthen Prioritization of Small and Underserved Farmers

Several farmers called for stronger prioritization of small, beginning, and minority-led farms. Some expressed concern that larger, more established operations received a disproportionate share of sales. Future programs should strengthen prioritization criteria to ensure that small, beginning, and underserved farmers are the primary beneficiaries, with larger operations serving a complementary role when needed.

Invest in Long-Term Food System Capacity

Invest in Local Food System Infrastructure

Infrastructure is consistently identified as one of the largest bottlenecks to growth in the Illinois food system. Limited access to infrastructure such as cold storage, meat processors, and distribution networks makes it difficult for small, beginning farms to access markets, creates logistical challenges, and intensifies the impacts of supply chain disruptions. Strategic investments in regional processing, cold storage, and aggregation infrastructure would strengthen Illinois food system partners' ability to participate in local food procurement programs while reducing food waste and transportation burdens. Pairing programs with capacity-building grants is strongly recommended to ensure these programs are accessible, scalable, and sustainable.

Explore Multi-Year Program Models

Longer-term program models would strengthen the impact of local food procurement programs by providing greater market stability and enabling farmers to make long-term investments in infrastructure, labor, and production. Several producers commented on the challenges of relying on temporary government funding to expand their operations, particularly when making upfront investments. Multi-year program models – such as five-year funding cycles – would support more sustainable farm growth, improve the stability of beginning farms, and expand local food production in Illinois.

Conclusion

Funded by the USDA's Local Food Purchase Assistance program, IL-EATS successfully advanced its core goals of supporting local food producers, expanding market opportunities, increasing access to fresh, local food, and strengthening partnerships across the food system. In just 18 months, the \$28 million program supported Illinois farmers—many of whom were beginning or underserved—while creating new market channels and building their capacity to participate in wholesale markets. At the same



time, IL-EATS increased access to high-quality, locally produced food in underserved communities, improving both the availability and dignity of food access.

The program also strengthened relationships across the supply chain, connecting farmers, lead agencies, and community partners in new and lasting ways. These partnerships, along with investments in coordination and infrastructure, contributed to a more integrated and resilient local food system. With thoughtful adjustments to program design, funding structure, and coordination, similar local food purchasing models offer a promising pathway to an Illinois that can provide food for its residents and communities.

Acknowledgements

We would like to share our deepest gratitude to the farmers, community partners, and lead agencies who participated in IL-EATS and generously shared their time, experiences, and insights throughout the program. Their contributions were essential to the program's implementation and the development of this report.

We also acknowledge the contributions of the IL-EATS Advisory Committee for their guidance in shaping the program's design, as well as staff from the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of Human Services, and University of Illinois Extension for their collaboration and support.

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Appendix

Appendix I. Advisory Committee Members

The following organizations were members of the Advisory Committee:

- University of Illinois Extension
- Illinois Department of Agriculture
- Illinois Department of Human Services
- Illinois State Board of Education
- Feeding Illinois
- Illinois Farmers' Market Association
- Illinois Farm Bureau/Illinois Specialty Growers Association
- Experimental Station
- Illinois Public Health Institute
- Chicago Food Policy Action Council
- Illinois Stewardship Alliance
- 4-H
- Chicago Botanic Garden
- Western Illinois University - Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs

Appendix II: IL-EATS Lead Agencies

The following organizations were selected as lead agencies for the IL-EATS program:

- Black Oaks Center
- Central Illinois Foodbank
- Eastern Illinois Foodbank
- Farmers Rising
- Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Jo Daviess Local Foods
- Midwest Food Bank
- Northeast Community Fund
- Northern Illinois Food Bank
- Operation Food Search
- Rooted for Good
- St. Louis Area Foodbank
- Think Regeneration
- Top Box Foods
- Tri-State Food Bank

Appendix III: Socially Disadvantaged Farmer Criteria

Producers within one of the following categories were eligible to participate in the program:

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Black / African American
- Latine/o/a
- Refugee
- LGBTQ+
- Veteran
- Female business owner
- Greater than 50 miles (or 30 minutes) to the nearest distribution point
- (farmers market or market opportunity)
- Qualify for benefits based on income (low socioeconomic status)
- Person with disabilities
- New farmer/rancher (USDA definition is under ten years)
- Business is in a high-vulnerability county

High-vulnerability was determined using the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index and included the following counties: Cass, Champaign, Coles, Cook, Douglas, Fayette, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Kane, Kankakee, Knox, Lake, Lawrence, Macon, Marion, Massac, Morgan, Peoria, Perry, Pulaski, Rock Island, Saline, St. Clair, Stephenson, Union, Vermilion, Warren, Wayne, Winnebago.




Appendix IV: Top IL-EATS Products by Category

Top IL-EATS Products by Category (March – Dec. 2024)

Category	Top Products (% of Sales)
Animal Proteins	Ground Beef (17%), Chicken (6%), Eggs (5%)
Vegetables	Potatoes (11%), Bell Peppers (5%), Lettuce (4%)
Fruits	Apples (9%), Peaches (1%), Strawberries (<1%)
Grains	Popcorn, Rice, Flour (each <1%)
Dairy	Yogurt (2%), Cheese (2%), Sour Cream (1%)
Specialty Foods	Applesauce (1%), Apple Butter (1%), Honey (1%)



A shopping cart filled with various fresh food items. In the foreground, there are two cartons of Farm Fresh Eggs, one labeled 'One Dozen Eggs' and 'Perishable'. Next to them are several large, bright orange carrots. Behind the eggs, there are two large white jugs of milk with red caps, one labeled 'SELL BY 04/03/24'. To the left, there are bags of 'TWIN OAK MEATS' and 'PORK'. In the center, there is a container of 'PRAIRIE FRUITS Chevre Fraita'. To the right, there is a bag of 'ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR'. The background shows more items in the cart, including a bag of 'DOWN THE FARM' ground beef and a bag of 'BENIE'S MILK'.

**“It is such a unique program.
The economy is stimulated; my
family is supported; people who
need food are getting food.
It’s a win-win-win.”**

— IL-EATS Farmer

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