



INDIANA
STATE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

MAKING INDIANA HEALTHY AGAIN

by Increasing Hoosier Access to Local Foods

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GOVERNOR BRAUN'S FOREWORD

In April 2025, I signed a series of executive orders aimed at better understanding Indiana's public health landscape, identifying unique challenges and opportunities in our state, deeming this objective Make Indiana Healthy Again.

Make Indiana Healthy Again creates fresh opportunities for farmers to diversify into new markets and empowers more Hoosiers to get involved in farming.

My administration sees Hoosier agriculture as the key partner in this initiative. To me, Make Indiana Healthy Again is about expanding opportunities for Hoosier farmers to get their products to consumers.

As part of that effort, I signed Executive Order 25-58 which required the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) to conduct a comprehensive study related to Hoosiers' access to local foods.

Increasing awareness, availability and access to Indiana's rich heritage of local fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy not only provides nutritious food sources for Hoosiers but further strengthens Indiana agriculture as the backbone of our State's economy. Indiana holds a strong national position in agriculture, ranking among the top farming states in the country - providing a solid foundation for expanding local food systems.

Through the identification of existing state programs, gaps, trends in consumer behavior, and successful state and local models, Indiana is well positioned to eliminate existing barriers to our State's local food systems and ensure Hoosiers are helping Hoosiers from farm to table.

Make Indiana Healthy Again will empower Hoosiers to lead healthier lives, provide transparent information to help make better health decisions, and make it easier to access fresh local food from Indiana's incredible farms.

Hoosier agriculture is my biggest partner in this endeavor, and I'm proud to stand with Indiana farmers and producers to empower Hoosiers to live healthier, longer, better lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Braun".

GOVERNOR MIKE BRAUN



DIRECTOR LAMB'S FOREWORD

This “Access to Local Foods” study represents months of thoughtful research, meaningful stakeholder engagement and broad cross-sector collaboration. Under Executive Order 25-58, our mission was clear: Assess the current landscape of local food access across Indiana and develop recommendations that can strengthen the system for producers, distributors, retailers, institutional food-service buyers and consumers alike.

Throughout this process, we listened closely to the voices of Hoosiers — from farmers cultivating the land to food councils strengthening regional networks to community leaders, educators, agribusinesses and families striving to source local food options. Their stories, perspectives and experiences shaped every chapter of this report. Indiana is home to a network of innovative producers; a growing consumer interest in local foods; and a shared desire to build a stronger, more robust local food system. What we heard from stakeholders underscores a reality we cannot ignore: While challenges exist, from distribution bottlenecks to affordability concerns, so do remarkable opportunities.

This study presents practical strategies to expand market access for local producers; enhance infrastructure and reinforce regional food networks. It also emphasizes the importance of increasing consumer awareness and ensuring all Hoosiers have the ability to choose fresh, locally produced foods. Above all, it highlights that progress will require ongoing collaboration across state agencies, communities and agricultural sectors.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the dedicated team whose hard work made this study possible and to the many Hoosiers who lent their voices, insights and passion. Together, we can build a more well-connected and thriving local food system — one that supports our producers, nourishes our communities and strengthens Indiana for generations to come.

DIRECTOR DON LAMB



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Indiana stands at a pivotal moment in shaping the future of its food system. By better connecting Hoosier farmers, food businesses, institutions, chefs and consumers, Indiana can keep more food dollars in the state, improve farm profitability and expand access to local foods. The “Making Indiana Healthy Again Access to Local Foods Study,” initiated under Executive Order 25-58, finds Indiana has the agricultural base, consumer interest and programmatic foundation to increase Hoosier access to local foods. However, progress is constrained by gaps in processing, distribution, inconsistent regulatory interpretation, availability, and underinvestment in agribusiness support and resources. The study evaluates the full farm-to-table continuum — examining agricultural capacity, food-processing infrastructure, consumer behavior, economic impact and policy needs — to identify the most effective pathways for strengthening Indiana’s food system. Successfully executed, these efforts will further strengthen the central pillar of our state’s economy: agriculture.

Agriculture is already one of Indiana’s core economic drivers, generating over \$35 billion in economic impact and supporting more than 108,000 direct jobs, with total agricultural activity supporting about 200,070 jobs statewide. Yet only a fraction of the \$27.5 billion Hoosiers spend on

food each year is captured by Indiana farmers. Most consumers shop in supermarkets or large retailers, but many local producers lack the infrastructure and market channels needed to reach those buyers consistently and at scale.

This study found a strong interest from consumers to shop local. A statewide survey of Hoosier grocery decision-makers showed more than 90% are aware of local food channels, and nearly two-thirds say local sourcing matters to them. Even so, price, availability and convenience continue to limit consistent purchasing. Grocery decision-makers are the individuals responsible for making purchasing choices for their household’s groceries. This includes the person who selects where to shop, what food items to buy and how much to spend for the purposes of this survey and study.



Stakeholders across the state echoed findings and emphasized recurring priorities: greater processing and aggregation capacity, expanded storage and distribution infrastructure, clearer and more consistent regulatory guidance, better access to capital and business support services, stronger support system for beginning and transitioning farmers, and improved consumer awareness of Indiana-grown products.



Indiana is well positioned to act. The state has a strong and diverse agricultural base, including established poultry, dairy and livestock, along with specialty crop sectors. For the purposes of this study, specialty crops are defined as any cultivated or managed fruit, vegetable or tree-nut crops. Schools, universities, hospitals and restaurants show increasing interest in local procurement. These strengths provide a solid platform for coordinated statewide action.



Building on these strengths, this study recommends practical, tried-and-true strategic initiatives focused on removing barriers and expanding opportunities. A central priority is modernizing and aligning regulatory and food-safety systems so farmers and food businesses have a clear, predictable regulatory experience across counties. Strengthening market development and business support is equally important, including expanded technical assistance, streamlined business onboarding, greater promotion of Indiana-grown products, and stronger pathways that help producers connect with larger retail and wholesale buyers. The study also highlights the need for expanded agency capacity — particularly in inspection, technical assistance and grant coordination — to ensure the state keeps pace with the needs of a modern food and agricultural economy. Finally, long-term growth will depend on targeted investment in infrastructure, including food-processing facilities; cold storage; food hubs; distribution networks; and specialized training programs, such as butchery, produce safety and diversification of farms.

Overall, the study concludes that strengthening Indiana’s local food system — in short, “making local easier” — is both an agricultural and economic development opportunity. With the implementation of this study’s recommendations, Indiana can keep more food dollars in the state, improve access to fresh and local foods, expand market opportunities for farmers and food businesses, and build a more resilient food system for communities across Indiana.





SECTION I.
INTRODUCTION



PURPOSE OF STUDY

Indiana stands at a pivotal moment in shaping the future of its food system. Executive Order 25-58 was introduced to redefine how the state of Indiana supports our Indiana food and farming operations, ensuring that locally grown, raised and processed foods are more accessible to families across the state.

This executive order recognizes that Indiana’s agricultural heritage is one of its greatest assets and underscores the importance of building stronger ties between Hoosier farmers and families, creating pathways for fresh, locally grown food to reach every community across the state.

This study was undertaken to assess the current awareness, availability and accessibility of locally grown food in Indiana; identify the obstacles that prevent Hoosier farmers from reaching or tapping into new markets; and explore strategies that can expand and strengthen the local food economy statewide. By grounding this work in data, stakeholder input and economic analysis, this study provides a road map for achieving the goals of Executive Order 25-58.

SCOPE OF RESEARCH

To fully understand Indiana's local food system, the study examines the entire farm-to-table continuum.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, FOOD PROCESSING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

This study evaluates Indiana's agricultural production capacity, from commodity crops and dairy, poultry and livestock to specialty crops and emerging markets, and how these products move through the state's food system. It assesses food-processing infrastructure, including meat processors, produce packing facilities and value-added operations, identifying gaps that limit market access. The study also explores consumer behavior, including awareness of local food options; household purchasing patterns; and participation in direct farm purchases, like farmers markets, on-farm stands and institutional procurement. Expanding market channels for food and farming businesses is the focus of this study; addressing food insecurity within the state was not in scope for this work.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

This study analyzes the economic implications of strengthening local food systems, including farm profitability, job creation, community economic multipliers, food affordability and supply chain resilience. It also evaluates policy considerations, such as licensing, inspection requirements, local procurement framework and opportunities to streamline regulations to support local producers.

DEFINITION OF "LOCAL"

For the purposes of this study, "local" refers to food that is grown, raised, processed and/or packaged within the state of Indiana. This definition aligns with the intent of Executive Order 25-58 and the Department of Agriculture's (ISDA's) Indiana Grown program, emphasizing the importance of supporting in-state businesses.





“SETTING THE TABLE” – WHAT’S WORKING WELL IN INDIANA AGRICULTURE

Indiana enters this moment of transformation with significant strengths already in place. The study findings reflect insights from virtual and in-person community listening sessions; one-on-one discussions with stakeholders, commodity groups, agribusinesses, educators and consumers; and many secondary sources of data.



A STRONG AND STEADY AGRICULTURAL FOUNDATION

Indiana agriculture reflects a broad mix of production styles, scales and commodities. Family farms, multigenerational operations, emerging growers and diversified enterprises contribute to a system that is both thriving and grounded in practical knowledge. Producers continually refine how they grow, raise and manage their operations, adapting to changing conditions, new technologies and evolving community needs.

This foundation is supported by a culture of problem-solving, collaborative networking and learning that is visible across all regions. Whether through informal networks, relationships with universities, supporting agriculture partners or peer collaborations, Indiana farmers have long relied on shared experience to navigate challenges and identify new opportunities. This environment of producer-driven adaptation strengthens the agricultural base and positions Indiana well for future-focused initiatives.

CONSUMER CULTURE SHIFTS TOWARD LOCAL

A statistically significant study conducted by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, based on a survey of 488 Hoosier grocery decision-makers in early 2026, found that freshness is the strongest motivator for buying local (63%), followed by better taste (55%) and supporting the local economy (42%).

Hoosiers increasingly seek food that is seasonal, local and rooted in place. Regional listening sessions describe a steady mainstream of local purchasing in urban and rural communities alike, along with agritourism drivers, such as u-pick farms or farm stores, that draw visitors across county and state lines. Consumers are also signaling preference for restaurants that highlight local producers, reinforcing the role of identity, story and transparency in everyday food choices.

Despite these positive attitudes, 90% of Hoosiers report at least one barrier to buying local, with “higher prices” and “limited availability” each cited by about half (51%/50%). This gap between perception and reality underscores the importance of affordability measures in normalizing local food as an everyday choice.

OUR INDUSTRIES



CORN & SOY



PORK



BEEF



DAIRY



POULTRY & EGGS



SPECIALTY CROPS

AGRICULTURAL BACKBONE: “SETTING THE TABLE”

Indiana's agricultural landscape is anchored by robust corn and soybean production, which consistently positions the state among national leaders in yield, acreage and economic output. These commodity crops form the foundation of Indiana's farm economy, supporting thousands of jobs across production, processing, transportation, feed manufacturing and biofuel industries. Their scale and stability create a reliable agricultural backbone that helps sustain the broader food system.

CORN AND SOY

While corn and soy may not be as visible to consumers as a carton of berries or a bunch of kale at a grocery store, they are essential to the infrastructure that makes local food possible. Indiana-grown corn and soybeans do more than feed livestock — they're also processed into starches, oils and other ingredients that support a wide range of value-added food products. In doing so, these crops contribute far more than first-order commodity value — they help sustain the availability of local meat, poultry, eggs, dairy and value-added goods. Together, Indiana's corn and soy industries serve as foundational pillars that complement and strengthen a diverse, community-connected, regionally rooted local food system.

PORK

Indiana's pork industry serves as one of the state's most dynamic agricultural sectors, supported by strong grain production, efficient feed systems and long-standing livestock expertise. As one of the top pork-producing states in the nation, Indiana benefits from a tightly linked agricultural ecosystem in which corn and soy — major feed components — flow directly into high-value livestock production. This interconnected system generates substantial economic impact, supporting farmers, processors, veterinarians, transportation networks and rural communities.

The pork sector plays an important role in strengthening Indiana's local food system. Hogs fed Indiana-grown grains contribute to a wide range of local protein offerings, from small butcher shops and farm stores to restaurants and local, regional and national retailers that sell Indiana pork.



BEEF

Indiana's beef industry is a steady and multifaceted contributor to the state's agricultural economy, grounded in a mix of family farms and larger commercial enterprises. Indiana benefits from a strong grain sector, enabling producers to raise and finish cattle using locally grown feed and helping maintain a relatively stable supply of beef within the state. Within the local food system, beef plays an especially visible and trusted role. Consumers consistently seek out local meat, and Indiana's beef producers contribute to that demand through farm stores; farmers markets; Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA), on-farm sales; and partnerships with butcher shops, retailers and restaurants. The presence of cattle across every region of the state ensures locally raised beef is accessible, familiar and woven into the identity of Indiana agriculture.

As consumer demand for Indiana-grown products continues to rise, the beef sector offers opportunities to further integrate commodity agriculture with local food pathways. Locally raised, finished, value-added products demonstrate how the state's established beef industry can diversify markets and enhance community connections.



DAIRY

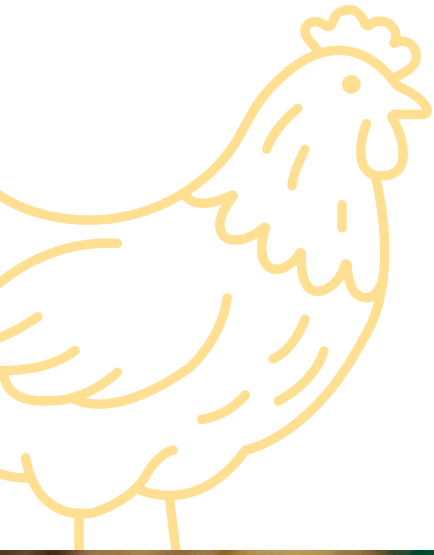
Indiana's dairy industry is a long-standing pillar of the state's agricultural economy, supported by a mix of family-run operations, multigenerational farms and modern dairy enterprises. Indiana's dairy producers benefit from the state's abundant corn and soybean resources, enabling efficient and reliable milk production. The dairy sector supports a wide network of jobs across milking operations, feed services, veterinary care, milk hauling and processing, keeping economic value circulating in rural communities.

Dairy plays a uniquely visible and trusted role in Indiana's local food landscape. Milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, and ice cream from Indiana dairy farms offer consumers familiar staples with a clear local identity. Many Indiana dairy farms also participate in agritourism through creamery storefronts, on-farm events and educational tours, which strengthens community connection and deepens consumer understanding of how local food is produced.

POULTRY

Indiana's poultry and egg industry is a dynamic and nationally competitive agricultural sector, distinguished by both its scale and diversity. Indiana ranks among the top poultry states in the country — No. 1 in duck production, No. 3 in egg production and No. 4 in turkey production — reflecting a highly specialized and efficient system that plays a major role in meeting regional, national and international demand. This strength is underpinned again by Indiana's reliable supply of corn and soy for feed, as well as its developed network of processors, feed mills and distribution partners.

Within Indiana's local food system, poultry and eggs occupy a particularly important space. Eggs, chicken and turkey are everyday staples with strong consumer trust, and Indiana producers bring these products directly into communities. Indiana's poultry and egg sector — competitive at the national level and deeply rooted locally — provides essential protein staples and an accessible gateway into local food purchasing.





SPECIALTY CROPS

Indiana's specialty-crop sectors — particularly tomatoes, pumpkins, mint and melons — add seasonal vibrancy and diversity to the state's agricultural landscape. Growers build on deep horticultural experience, pairing long-standing knowledge with region-specific growing practices. These crops also contribute to Indiana's national profile, with the state consistently ranking as a top producer of pumpkins, processing tomatoes, watermelons and mint, underscoring a strong and diverse horticultural base.

Specialty crops play a particularly visible role in Indiana's local food system. Seasonal fruit and vegetables move through farm stands, CSAs, farmers markets, retailers, universities, institutions and restaurants, creating fresh, recognizable connections between growers and communities. Many farms also integrate agritourism, including u-pick operations, educational opportunities and seasonal festivals, strengthening ties between Hoosiers and communities while extending economic opportunity.

Indiana's specialty crops are an essential component of the broader agricultural landscape. They bring financial diversity to farms; reinforce the identity and visibility of Indiana-grown foods; and provide fresh, seasonally distinctive products that anchor local markets and community food connections across the state.

“SETTING THE TABLE”

Viewed together, the stories of Indiana's commodity, dairy, poultry, livestock and specialty-crop sectors demonstrate an agricultural state rich in capability, tradition and innovation. They highlight a food and farming landscape that is both broad and deep that excels at production, adapts through collaboration and expresses strong community commitment.

A UNIFYING IDENTITY: INDIANA GROWN

Agriculture has long been one of the state's strengths, a foundation of the economy, a defining element of Indiana's identity and a livelihood passed down through generations. With more than 14½ million acres, Indiana remains a place where agriculture is both heritage and innovation, generating billions in economic activity and touching every community with a blend of tradition and modern opportunity.

Within this expansive agricultural landscape, the Indiana Grown program has become an impactful initiative. Created with a straightforward yet ambitious mission to help Hoosiers identify, purchase and champion products grown, raised, processed or packaged in Indiana, the program has since grown beyond its origins as a branding and awareness effort. Today, Indiana Grown functions as a statewide economic development engine, strengthening local supply chains, elevating producers, and ensuring that more of the value created by Indiana agriculture remains in Indiana communities.

Its impact is visible across every corner of the state's food system. Indiana Grown gives farmers, producers and food businesses a unified identity that consumers trust, a mark that signals authenticity, quality and local origin. Members consistently describe the program as providing "credibility," "visibility" and "a sense of professionalism" that would otherwise be hard to achieve for small businesses navigating crowded retail and wholesale markets. Survey responses repeatedly show that the Indiana Grown logo often sparks conversations that lead to new customers, sales opportunities and stronger community relationships.

Through its business support, branding, digital platforms and outreach, Indiana Grown has played a central role in shifting local food from a niche interest to a recognizable choice. It's clear, trusted identity provides a shared language for Indiana's local food movement, reinforcing trust, strengthening regional efforts, and helping producers be seen while helping consumers confidently find local products.





COLLABORATION IS AN INDIANA ADVANTAGE

Collaboration is woven throughout Indiana's food system and remains a strong asset. Opportunities still exist, however, to more clearly define agency roles and create a more intentional partnership model. The role of local food systems emerges as a central theme in this study and provides a compelling organizing principle for future statewide efforts. Across Indiana, food councils, co-ops, food hubs, value-chain professionals and agencies coordinate efforts to bring growers together and connect them with wholesale and institutional buyers. Recognizing this landscape offers an important opportunity to clarify where state agencies are currently contributing, where gaps remain, and how the recommendations in this study can help Indiana strengthen the connective framework of its food system, ensuring Indiana agriculture is not only prioritized, but positioned as a core component of the state's economic strategy.

SCHOOLS LEANING IN

K-12 schools across Indiana are increasingly ready to source locally when supply, cost and logistics allow. This growing interest reflects a broader shift toward strengthening Indiana's food system and creating a greater number of direct connections between producers and institutional buyers. State-led efforts through the Indiana Farm to School Network (facilitated by the departments of Education, Agriculture and Health) use an approach that engages local stakeholders and builds stronger pathways between early-childhood-education centers, K-12 schools and farms. As participation expands, state agencies remain committed to exploring additional strategies to support schools. The state aims to elevate successful models; expand peer-learning opportunities; and ensure every school has a clear, well-supported pathway. Looking ahead, there is also an opportunity to strengthen and scale Farm to School participation with specific recommendations as a part of this study.



These interconnected strengths form the backbone of Indiana’s agricultural identity and offer a solid foundation for building a more unified, accessible and future-ready statewide framework.

“Setting the Table” is more than a summary of what’s working — it is a reminder that Indiana’s path forward rests on strengths already in motion, ready to be scaled, connected and supported through proven recommendations, common sense policy and strategic investment. The ingredients for transformation are already present; Indiana’s next step is to bring them together into a unified, thriving and robust framework that serves every Hoosier.

Indiana’s agricultural sector stands at a pivotal moment, one defined by both its enduring strengths and its emerging opportunities. Across the state, farmers, food businesses, community partners and industry stakeholders contributed their voices through listening sessions, producer roundtables, partner convenings and public engagement efforts. Their insights shaped a set of recommendations designed to strengthen Indiana agriculture as a whole and ensure it remains resilient, competitive and deeply connected to the communities it serves.

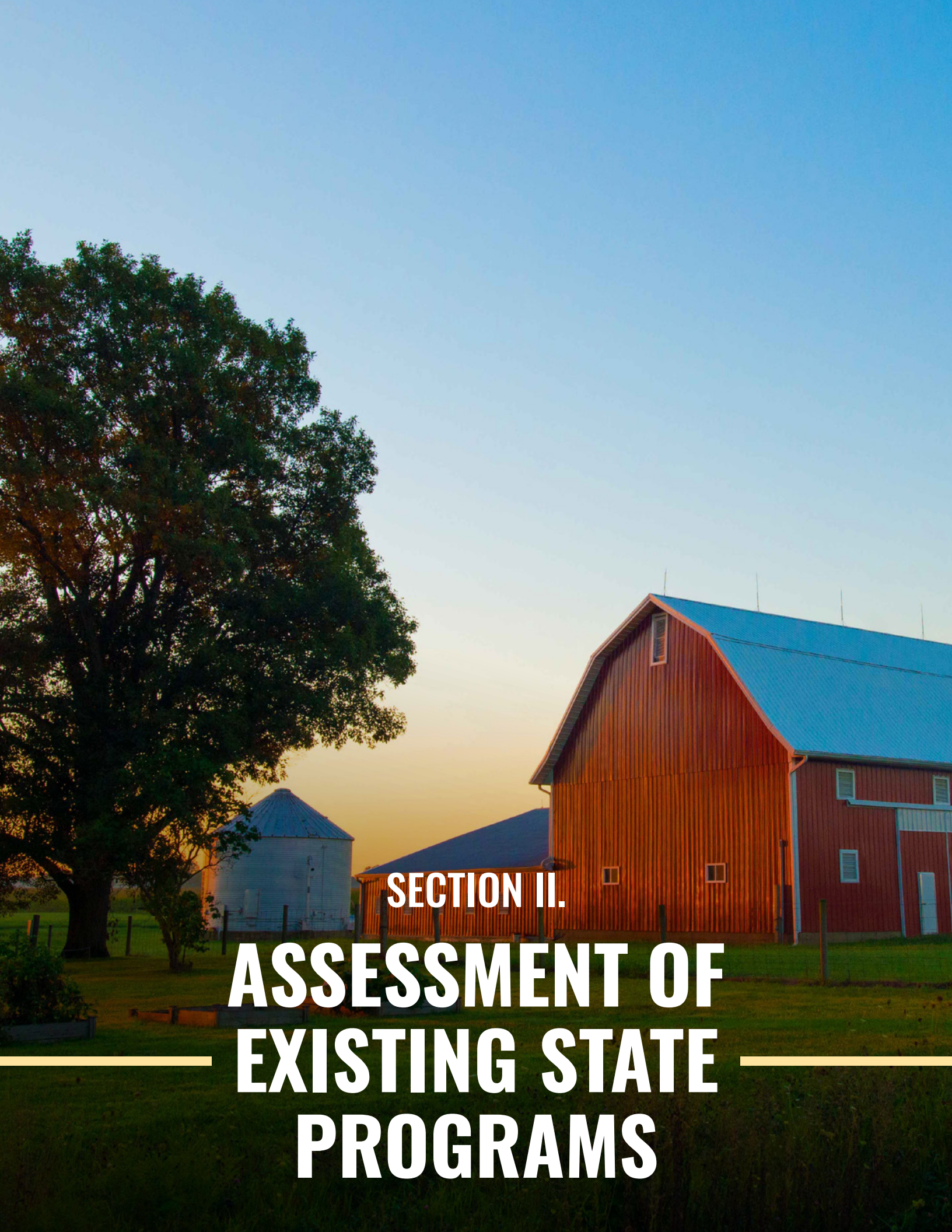
A consistent message across all stakeholder engagement was the need for a more coordinated, comprehensive support system for food and farming businesses. By better aligning programs, technical assistance and market-access strategies across the agricultural

ecosystem, Indiana can create a seamless network of wraparound services that help businesses navigate regulatory funding, adopt new technologies and scale their operations. This integrated approach ensures producers receive timely guidance and consistent resources at every stage of growth.

Together, the following recommendations chart a path toward a more vibrant, robust and locally connected food and farm economy. By expanding market pathways, fostering entrepreneurship, providing wraparound support systems and removing barriers, Indiana can strengthen the infrastructure that links producers directly to Indiana communities. The result is a food system that ensures the benefits of Indiana agriculture — economic vitality, local pride, nourishing food and successful businesses — are shared broadly and felt at every table across the state.

As Indiana looks ahead, understanding the current landscape of agricultural programs, assets and opportunities is essential. The following overview of existing efforts provides context for recommendations, highlighting areas in which strategic investment and partnership can further expand Indiana’s agricultural potential. Grounded in community insight, informed by proven models and tailored to Indiana’s unique agricultural landscape, these recommendations outline a future in which Indiana agriculture continues to lead, innovate and grow.





SECTION II.

ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING STATE PROGRAMS

INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture serves as a unifying role in Indiana's agricultural community, advancing stewardship, economic development and growth. Through its programs and partnerships, ISDA strengthens local economies, supports the state's producers and ensures Indiana's agricultural legacy continues to thrive.

From its earliest days, ISDA embraced a modern mission: to strengthen Indiana agriculture through economic growth and market expansion. Today, that mission is carried forward through the work of the Economic Development Division, which plays a central role in building a resilient and opportunity-rich agricultural economy. Through a portfolio of programs, technical assistance and strategic collaborations, the division strengthens markets, expands economic opportunity and elevates the visibility of Indiana-grown products. These coordinated efforts reinforce one another, supporting producers at every stage of growth, building consumer trust, and ensuring Hoosiers statewide have access to food that reflects the strength and diversity of Indiana agriculture.

As Indiana charts its path forward, it is essential to understand not only where ISDA stands today, but also how it can be positioned for growth in the future. The following overview of ISDA's current programs provides the foundation for this assessment, illustrating the agency's existing strengths, areas of focus, and the vital services already supporting food and farming businesses.





INDIANA GROWN

At its heart, the Indiana Grown program is a bridge — between rural and urban communities, between long-established farms and first-generation entrepreneurs, and between the traditions that shaped Indiana's past and the innovations that will define its future.

Businesses that join the program gain more than a label; they gain a champion. Indiana Grown helps them tell their stories, establish and grow market channels, and connect with consumers who care deeply about supporting local. Whether at farmers markets or on grocery shelves, restaurant menus or digital platforms, the Indiana Grown logo signals something meaningful: This product is part of Indiana's agricultural family.

Beyond its branding resources, Indiana Grown has grown into a robust suite of initiatives designed to elevate local products and deepen the connection between producers and consumers. The Indiana Grown Showcase offers members a high-visibility forum to present products directly to buyers, distributors and retailers — opening doors to new markets and long-term partnerships. In addition to the annual in-person showcase, the program provides buyer matchmaking, helping connect businesses with the right purchasing partners to strengthen sales opportunities and expand businesses' market reach throughout the year. Complementing this is the Indiana Grown marketplace, which creates direct-to-consumer sales opportunities and helps businesses broaden their reach and increase consumer awareness. Generating more than six figures in annual sales, the marketplace does not retain revenue within the program; instead, revenue flows directly to the participating businesses, ensuring the financial impact meaningfully supports local producers.

The program's marketing campaigns amplify consumer awareness efforts by sharing the stories behind Indiana-grown products, helping Hoosiers understand the craftsmanship and passion behind





every purchase. These campaigns strengthen consumer trust, increase statewide awareness and reinforce the value of choosing local.

Building on this foundation, survey results as part of this study show that Indiana Grown's visibility and storytelling are translating into meaningful impact. Nearly two-thirds of Hoosiers are familiar with the Indiana Grown mark, making it the most widely recognized local-food identifier in the state. This level of awareness gives Indiana Grown a strong platform for influencing purchasing behavior, particularly because over 90% of Hoosiers surveyed buy local at least occasionally, with grocery stores and farmers markets serving as the primary access points for local food.

The featured farms in marketing campaigns align closely with what motivates consumers most. Hoosiers consistently cite freshness (63%), taste (55%) and a desire to support the local economy (42%) as their top reasons for buying local. Indiana Grown's focus on showcasing producers, highlighting product quality and reinforcing community connection directly taps into these values. As a result, Indiana Grown not only

builds emotional resonance but also deepens consumer confidence in the integrity and quality of Indiana-produced foods. Importantly, this growing connection is shaping future purchasing behavior: Almost two-thirds of surveyed Hoosiers say they are likely to increase their purchases of local products in the next year. Indiana Grown's marketing campaigns — which emphasize authenticity, farmer stories and transparent sourcing — position the program to capture and accelerate this momentum. Together, these insights demonstrate that Indiana Grown's marketing investments are not merely raising awareness — they are actively strengthening consumer trust, aligning with core purchasing motivations and driving measurable shifts in buying habits across the state.

Indiana Grown also hosts educational and networking events. Its annual symposium convenes subject matter experts and industry leaders to discuss current and future trends and to provide insights and growth opportunities for food and farming businesses. Digital, print and live media appearances further broaden the program's reach, highlighting member



businesses throughout the year and encouraging consumers to discover new products and agritourism experiences across the state.

Together, these efforts create a shared identity for Indiana's local food movement, one that strengthens trust, supports business growth, and aligns regional and statewide networks around a unified message: Local matters. As the program matured, so did its impact. Indiana Grown has become a catalyst for economic development, a champion for small businesses, and a trusted resource for consumers seeking to support the state's food and agricultural economy.

The program spotlights the extraordinary range of Indiana agriculture — beyond the familiar corn and soybeans to honey, bison, duck, popcorn, dairy, fresh produce, maple syrup, craft beverages, and locally crafted products that showcase the creativity and innovation of Hoosier producers.

Most importantly, Indiana Grown helps make “local” easier. It provides the tools, visibility and connections needed to ensure every Hoosier can choose local. Whether it's families shopping for dinner; a chef sourcing ingredients for a menu; or a school looking to bring nutrient-dense, local food into their cafeteria, Indiana Grown helps make those connections possible.

The program continues to grow, evolve and inspire. And with every new member, every new product and every new consumer who chooses local, Indiana Grown adds another chapter to the story of Indiana agriculture, one rooted in community, strengthened by collaboration and shared by all who call Indiana home.



INDIANA GROWN: PROGRAM REACH, SCALE AND IMPACT

Indiana Grown offers measurable benefits to food and farming businesses, consumers and the broader agricultural economy. With nearly 1,700 members spanning all 92 counties, the program represents the full spectrum of Indiana agriculture. This diversity underscores Indiana Grown's role as a unifying statewide platform that brings visibility, credibility and opportunity to businesses of all sizes.

Today, two-thirds of Hoosiers recognize the Indiana Grown logo, a sign of the program's increasing visibility and influence on purchasing decisions. This trust translates directly into economic value. Members consistently report increased visibility, improved market exposure, more wholesale and retail connections, and stronger direct-to-consumer sales channels as a direct result of participating in Indiana Grown program events.

Members describe the Indiana Grown logo as a mark of authenticity and quality that gives them a competitive edge in crowded marketplaces.

For many, the logo is the starting point for conversations that lead to new customers, wholesale accounts and partnerships. Surveyed members have indicated an average increase in revenue of 12% by incorporating the Indiana Grown logo into packaging, marketing materials and promotional materials. The program's marketing engine — digital campaigns, social media, television, radio and connected TV — has consistently outperformed industry benchmarks, with engagement rates that double or triple national norms. These efforts have driven more than a 350% increase in website traffic during peak campaigns and have directly contributed to significant sales growth, in some cases boosting individual businesses by several hundred percent.

Indiana Grown has already demonstrated, at scale, that when Hoosiers choose Indiana products, Indiana farms thrive. Remarkably, this level of impact is achieved with an annual appropriation of \$250,000, which supports two full-time staff. Despite this lean budget and staffing structure,



Indiana Grown delivers branding, marketing, wholesale and retail matchmaking, media exposure, regulatory navigation, and high-impact consumer events. This study found that modernizing the Indiana Grown program to meet the current needs of food and farming businesses is both timely and widely supported. Stakeholders overwhelmingly endorse expanding Indiana Grown to deepen visibility, broaden economic reach and strengthen its statewide impact. With an enhanced program, agribusinesses will gain greater access to the tools, markets and visibility they need to grow. Indiana Grown has already laid the foundation for a more connected and locally focused food system. Recommendations include increasing Indiana-grown products' presence in institutional venues, restaurants and retailers, enabling the development of stronger, more innovative market channels for businesses.

LIVESTOCK MARKET REPORTING PROGRAM

The Indiana Livestock Market Reporting Program, launched in 2016 through a partnership between the Indiana State Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), was created to address a long-standing challenge in Indiana's livestock sector: the lack of reliable, localized and timely market data. Before the program existed, producers often relied on out-of-state auctions or reports from neighboring states simply because those markets offered a better reporting infrastructure. Without access to accurate market prices for livestock sold in Indiana, producers operated at a disadvantage.

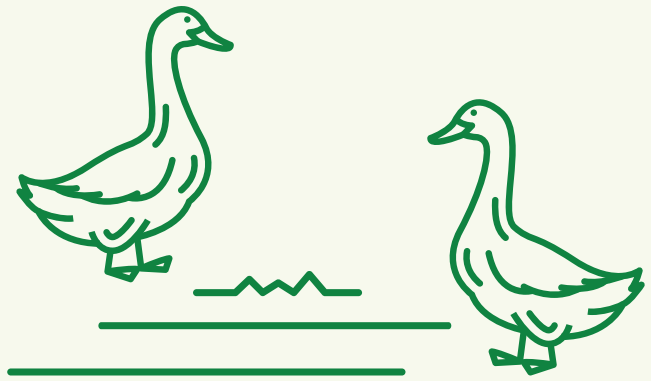
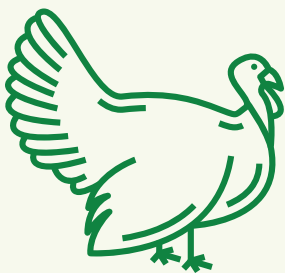
The Market Reporting Program filled that gap by providing weekly price and volume data for dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep, goats, hay and straw. Published through USDA Market News, these reports give producers real-time insight into trends and strengthened market transparency and competitiveness across Indiana.

GRANT SERVICES

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture administers two major federal grant programs that drive economic development, strengthen supply chains, and support innovation across Indiana's food and agricultural sectors. Within ISDA, the Grant Services Division oversees the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) program and the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). Together, these programs deliver critical investment and technical support to Hoosier farms and food businesses.

ISDA currently manages more than \$6.7 million in federal funding through the RFSI grant program, a one-time USDA investment designed to strengthen the middle of the supply chain, including aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storage, transportation and distribution. The program's four-year performance period (May 25, 2023–May 24, 2027) provides a unique window to advance Indiana's food systems infrastructure.

As part of ISDA's RFSI state plan to strengthen local and regional food systems, a dedicated value chain coordinator role was established to expand capacity for farm-to-market connections. The coordinator launched Indiana Food Business Consultants, a statewide, no-fee technical-assistance network providing one-on-one support in business modeling, bookkeeping, compliance and access to capital. To date, this network has supported more than four dozen businesses,



strengthened ties with the Indiana Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and provided specialized advising for emerging food and farm enterprises.

Beyond technical assistance, the RFSI grant program supports 17 active projects that expand processing, increase aggregation capacity and improve access to locally produced food. These include equipment purchases, such as refrigerated vehicles that improve statewide movement of fresh foods, and major infrastructure investments, like co-manufacturing facilities, a food hub and an incubator kitchen. Collectively, these efforts enhance Indiana's processing and distribution capacity, making the state's supply chain more robust and more competitive.

ISDA also administers the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, an annual USDA program funded through the Farm Bill. As of early 2026, ISDA manages more than \$1.5 million in active specialty-crop projects that advance research, education, market development, food safety and consumer awareness for fruits, vegetables, nuts, nursery crops and other specialty products.

Together, the RFSI and SCBGP programs underscore ISDA's role in strengthening local and regional food systems, supporting small and mid-sized farm and food businesses, and enhancing the competitiveness of Indiana's specialty-crop sector.



EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES AND STRENGTHENING INDIANA'S FEDERAL FUNDING STRATEGY

If funding through the USDA should expand — with growing investments in local and regional food-system grants — Indiana has significant opportunities to deepen and broaden its participation in federal programs beyond RFSI and SCBGP. Recommendations from stakeholders and alignment of best practices nationwide point to a clear need for Indiana to fully capitalize on these opportunities. To do so, Indiana should require cross-agency coordination on USDA local food grants, with a lead convener driving action.

A planned, proactive approach — uniting state agencies — would create a single, transparent pipeline for identifying, prioritizing and pursuing federal funding opportunities.

Beyond expanding its core programs and grant administration work, key recommendations have been identified for placement within the Department of Agriculture that reflect the challenges, opportunities and systemwide needs raised through this study. These recommendations strengthen ISDA's capacity to support the entire agricultural value chain and ensure Indiana's food and agriculture economy remains competitive, resilient and future-focused.

One of the most significant opportunities is restructuring the current ISDA's Center for Value Added Research into an agricultural-market development fund. Stakeholders emphasized an ag-market development fund would allow the state to support a broader suite of market-development tools, such as value-added production initiatives, mobile processing units, shared-use commercial kitchens and regional food-hub development. Stakeholders consistently noted that these investments would position





Indiana as a leader in value-added production, diversification and market innovation, supporting both emerging enterprises and established operations seeking to expand into new markets.

Stakeholders recommended establishing a statewide ISDA value-chain coordination network housed within the ag-market development fund. With dedicated food-distribution specialists at its core, the network would guide producers through wholesale-market navigation, logistics coordination and forward-contracting relationships that build predictable demand for local products.

The ISDA-led network ensures all food and farming businesses receive the support needed to enter, grow and compete across diverse market channels. Together, these coordinated functions would help align supply with diversified demand, streamline market entry, and position Indiana agribusinesses to compete effectively across both traditional and emerging sectors.

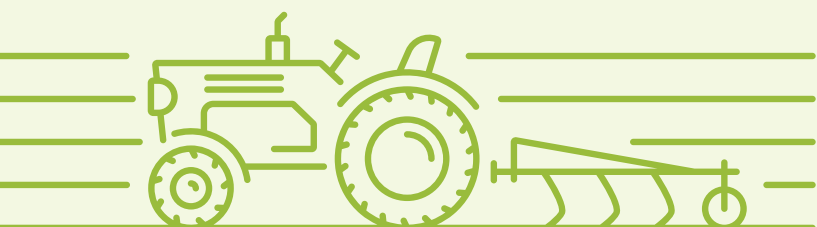
Stakeholders further underscored the need to expand support for beginning and transitioning farmers through a professional, statewide mentorship program that builds on current



educational programs. Stakeholders emphasized that new and diversifying producers need high-quality, hands-on guidance and training to enter markets successfully and to build long-term viability. Creating a paid mentorship program allows for quality, consistent training.

Together, these recommendations outline a forward-looking vision for Indiana agriculture, one in which producers have the services, infrastructure and markets needed to thrive; agencies and partners work collaboratively; and the food system is more connected and positioned for long-term competitiveness. As this study transitions from conceptual analysis to practical implementation, the ISDA has meaningful opportunities to collaborate on and contribute to the Department of Health's (IDOH) Executive Order 25-57 and the Department of Education's (IDOE) Executive Order 25-59. Strengthening connections between food and farming businesses and these state initiatives will be essential, not only for growing the local food economy, but also for integrating local products into key strategic efforts across the state.

As ISDA advances initiatives that strengthen markets, expand business development support and accelerate value-added growth across the state, the Indiana Board of Animal Health (BOAH) plays an equally essential role in ensuring Indiana's livestock, poultry, meat and dairy sectors are safe, regulated and positioned for sustainable expansion.





THE INDIANA BOARD OF ANIMAL HEALTH

For more than a century, the Indiana Board of Animal Health has served as an essential public health agency, protecting Indiana's animals, supporting its food system, and safeguarding the people and economy that rely on both. Originally created to stop the spread of disease in livestock, the Indiana State Board of Animal Health has grown into a modern regulatory agency. Its work now covers animal health, food safety, animal welfare and emergency response. Today, BOAH's mission is more relevant than ever, supporting Indiana's vast animal agriculture industry, and the complex systems that keep food safe from farm to consumer.

The scale of BOAH's responsibility is immense. Indiana ranks among the top national producers in multiple species, with 13.3 million ducks, 10.7 billion eggs, 22.9 million turkeys, more than 4.4 million swine and 4.5 billion pounds of annual milk production. Maintaining a healthy, disease-free environment for this industry requires continuous, statewide surveillance. BOAH veterinarians and inspectors investigate disease threats, monitor animal movement and coordinate closely with farmers, private veterinarians, USDA officials and neighboring states to ensure Indiana's animals remain healthy and its markets remain open.

This work has intensified as emerging threats such as highly pathogenic avian influenza persist. From October 2025 to March 2026 alone, BOAH staff devoted more than 15,000 hours to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) response. Despite these demands, the agency continues to deliver strong results with an efficient, highly dedicated team. Their ability to manage complex, statewide animal-health challenges demonstrates a solid foundation of expertise and commitment poised for growth: The Animal Health Division has decreased from 34 positions in 2004 to 28 today, underscoring the need to rebuild critical workforce capacity.

Animal welfare and humane standards are another core pillar of BOAH's mission. Through decades of leadership, from enforcing the Humane Slaughter Act to developing statewide livestock and poultry care standards, BOAH has shaped Indiana's reputation for consistent science-based animal care protections. Inspectors and veterinarians ensure humane handling in facilities and assist with investigations, supporting both industry integrity and consumer confidence.

ANIMAL HEALTH

2,910 HPAI tests of dairy cattle under the federal order

ZERO CASES Indiana maintained free status in 2024

ANIMAL MOVEMENTS UNDER OFFICAL DOCUMENTS

SUCH AS CERTIFICATES OF VETERINARY INSPECTION (CVI), COMMUTER HERD AGREEMENTS, PERMITS, ETC.

DOCUMENTS ISSUED	ANIMALS SHIPPED	LIVESTOCK	ECONOMIC VALUE TO INDIANA
22,754	9.2 Million Head	Livestock	\$6.2 Billion
20,206	34,859 Million Head	Equine	\$4.6 Billion
6,561	129.6 Million Head	Poultry	\$18.35 Billion



FOOD SAFETY

DAIRY INSPECTION

4.51 BILLION lbs of Milk Produced

678 Farms

520 Tanker Trucks

68 Plants

15 Farmstead Processors

33 Farms with **173** Robotic Milkers

MEAT & POULTRY INSPECTION

18.7 MILLION lbs of Meat Inspected

83 Official Establishments

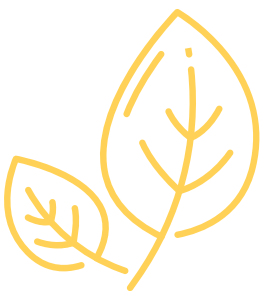
26 are Enrolled in Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program

55 Cutom-exempt Establishments

3 Limited Hotel-Resturant-Institution (HRI) Permits



BOAH serves as a foundational link in Indiana's food safety infrastructure. The Meat and Poultry Inspection Program (MPIP), operated under a federal partnership with USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, ensures that all meat and poultry products entering Indiana's markets are safe, accurately labeled and produced under humane conditions. State-inspected facilities serve local and regional supply chains, while 26 Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) plants are authorized to ship across state lines. The growth in CIS participation — from 10 plants in 2019 to 26 today — reflects BOAH's strong inspection program and industry trust.



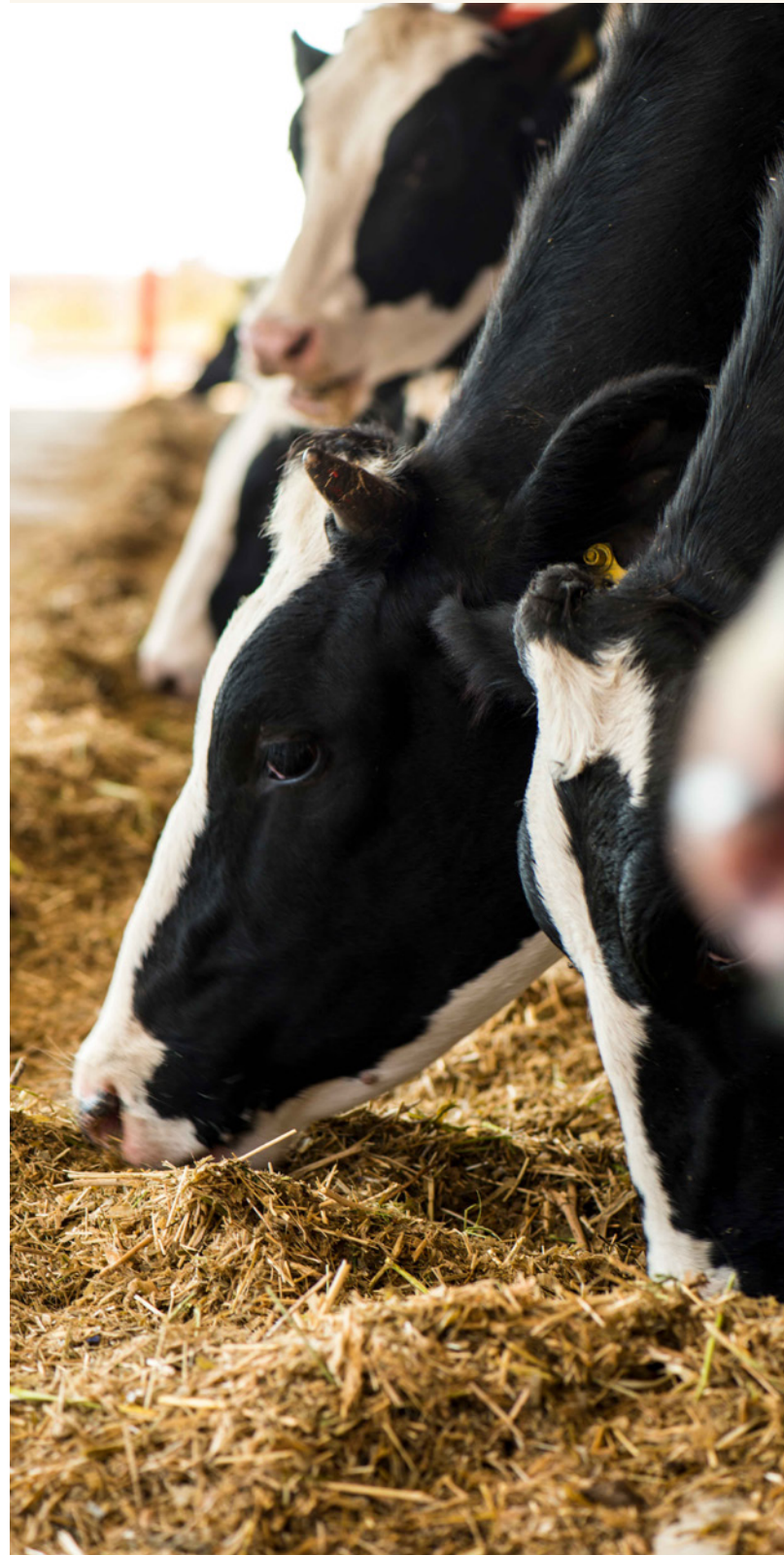
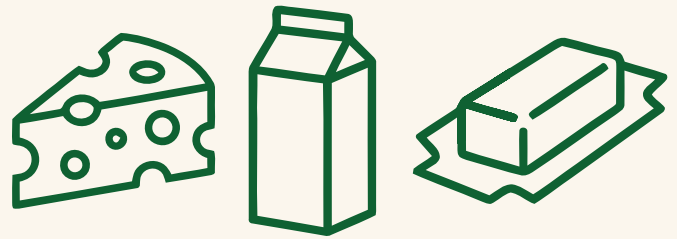
At the same time, the number of state-inspected facilities has risen from 125 in 2019 to 139 today. In 2025, state-inspected facilities produced more than 18.7 million pounds of meat and poultry, and slaughter numbers for both livestock and poultry continue to rise.

Across all programs, BOAH's work reflects a consultative model that stakeholders repeatedly describe as invaluable. Inspectors guide new meat plants through construction, teach food-safety practices step-by-step, help dairy operators troubleshoot equipment requirements and support farmers during disease events. During disasters, BOAH serves as the state lead for animal rescue and care, coordinating efforts across agencies and communities. This "boots-on-the-ground" support is central to why BOAH is trusted by farmers, processors and local governments alike.

Stakeholders also made clear that BOAH is essential but shared a vision for improvement. Stakeholders shared stories of unfilled processing inspection hours, small dairies struggling under tight milk pickup timelines to sell into co-ops, and entrepreneurs seeking clear support during permitting and construction or remodeling projects. Their feedback reflects a shared reality: Indiana's food and agriculture sectors are growing faster than the regulatory capacity that supports them, putting a strain on current operations.

The recommendations emerged from stakeholders' reality. They are grounded in practical needs and unanimously viewed as critical for the agency's next chapter.

Stakeholders' recognized BOAH's inspection staffing — an acknowledgment of how effectively the agency operates today. BOAH has consistently done more with a lean, highly capable team, bringing new facilities, state-inspected plants and dairy operations online with efficiency and professionalism. With at least a dozen new facilities projected in the near term, the momentum of Indiana's meat and dairy sectors is clear. To sustain this strong performance and support continued growth, the agency will need additional capacity. While BOAH has proven its ability to excel with current resource levels, expanding staffing is essential to prevent





delays and ensure farmers and processors have timely access to the markets they need to thrive.

Second, stakeholders emphasized the need for BOAH to establish and promote a designated industry liaison to support meat, poultry and dairy facilities — especially new or remodeling plants — as they navigate local approvals, zoning, construction and ordinance processes. A clear, formal path for requesting BOAH participation in public meetings, along with annual reporting on engagement metrics, was consistently cited as a game-changing improvement for processors statewide. Third, Indiana can support producers by removing inspection fees for farm-raised bison, quail and rabbit, helping reduce a meaningful cost barrier for niche livestock markets exploring entry into restaurants, retailers and local supply chains. This no-cost inspection approach can open additional sales channels for producers while increasing consumer access to Indiana-grown proteins.

Another recurring theme was the need for BOAH to lead a statewide review of the fluid milk pickup window. Current 24-hour pickup requirements limit market viability for small farms, many of whom cannot produce the volume needed for hauling within the required timeframe to sell into co-ops. Stakeholders suggested BOAH conduct a time-bound milk feasibility study — guided by a working group of industry leaders and impacted farmers — to explore expanded pickup timelines, right-sized regulations and modernized storage options that preserve safety while unlocking market access.

As the state looks ahead, BOAH enters its next century not as the agency it was, but as the agency Indiana now needs — responsive, well-funded, well-equipped and prepared to meet the needs of a modern agricultural economy. This alignment is critical to safeguarding Indiana's food system, supporting business expansion, and sustaining the trust that producers, processors and communities place in the BOAH every day.

INDIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION – SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Indiana is home to 591,671 small businesses, representing 99.4% of all businesses in the state. These enterprises employ 1.2 million Hoosiers — 43.2% of the state's workforce — underscoring their essential role in Indiana's economic strength. Indiana added 432 newly established businesses in 2025, reflecting continued positive growth in the state's business landscape.

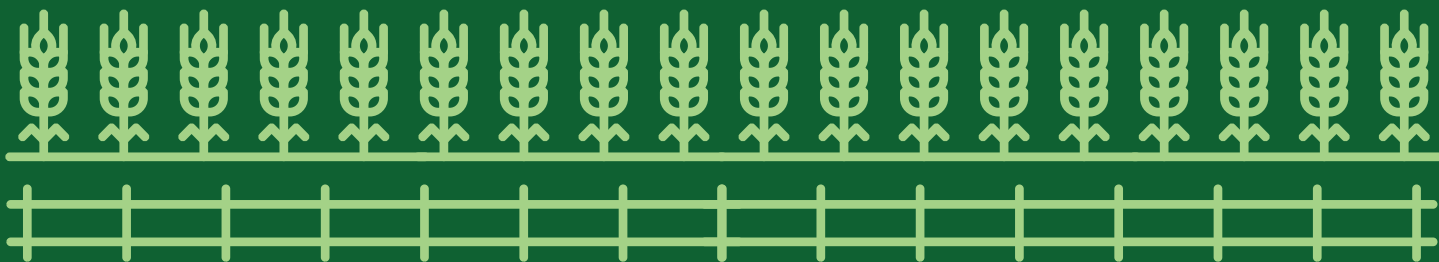
Small businesses also play a significant role in Indiana's global footprint. In 2024, 7,044 Indiana small businesses exported goods, contributing \$6.1 billion in known export value. Much of this came from soybeans, corn, soybean meal, feed grains, poultry and pork, which rank among Indiana's top five agricultural products that connect Indiana growers to international markets.



Within the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) provides no-cost, confidential advising through ten regional offices. Its mission is statewide, with services that span startup planning, financial packaging, operational strategy, innovation services and transition planning. Agribusiness clients, including farmers, processors, value-added manufacturers and food entrepreneurs, receive sector-specific advising while staying connected to local offices for hands-on, community-based support.

However, while both IEDC and SBDC offer strong business planning and entrepreneurial resources, stakeholders noted that neither currently operates programs designed specifically to support the growth and expansion of Indiana agribusinesses. This gap presents a meaningful opportunity for strategic alignment: Better coordination with the Indiana Department of Agriculture — particularly through ISDA's emerging agricultural-market development strategies — would help ensure that agricultural enterprises receive the targeted market-access support, sector-specific guidance and long-term growth pathways needed to remain competitive in evolving markets.





INDIANA SBDC AGRIBUSINESS INITIATIVE RESULTS (MAR 2022–DEC 2025)

Agribusiness Initiative Program reported results demonstrate both depth and demand:

- 544 unique agribusiness clients served
- 1,803 counseling hours provided
- Annual advising volumes of 600–700 hours and 150–180 clients
- Support for USDA lending, capital formation, value added product development, and export readiness

Illustrative annual performance targets (2025) include:

- 160–180 agribusiness clients
- 600–700 advising hours
- 6–8 training events (150+ attendees)
- \$3–\$5M in facilitated capital (incl. USDA loans)
- 5–25 USDA loan packages prepared
- 25–35 value added product projects assisted
- 20–30 export readiness clients

Indiana provides export support through the IEDC's State Trade and Export Promotion program and the SBDC's Export Indiana Accelerator program. The accelerator program is a 12-week educational planning course to build export strategies, while the STEP program helps cover the costs of executing them.

Across interviews and listening sessions, a clear theme emerged: Early connection to state and federal resources is essential for business growth. These insights point to the need for a more coordinated, user-friendly entry point into Indiana's agricultural and small-business ecosystem. The recommendation to create a unified onboarding experience developed in partnership with multiple agencies and integrated with existing state platforms, was born directly from this feedback. By allowing businesses to opt-in and automatically connect, Indiana can streamline early-stage support and transform the experience of starting a food or farming enterprise, making it clearer, faster and far more supportive.

The recommendation to create a unified onboarding experience — in partnership with other agencies and integrated with the ISDA Ag Portal — was born directly from these stories. By allowing businesses to opt in and automatically connect with IEDC, SBDC, ISDA, and other partners, Indiana can transform the early experience of starting a food or farming business.

Rather than discovering critical programs years into their journey, entrepreneurs would receive early, proactive guidance on:

- Capital access
- Workforce and training needs
- Facility development and permitting
- Modernization and expansion opportunities
- Market Development support

Stakeholders were clear: For some, this is the missing link — a better connection from the very beginning.

By embracing a unified onboarding model, Indiana shifts from a system that waits for food and farming businesses to seek help to one that proactively reaches out. This approach creates a more navigable experience for entrepreneurs by strengthening cross-agency coordination, reducing confusion and fragmentation, and ensuring that businesses gain early access to the resources most critical to their success. With clearer pathways and more consistent support, food and agriculture companies are better positioned to scale effectively and contribute to a stronger statewide food economy. This unified model also reinforces a broader statewide goal: Making “local” easier and advancing common-sense solutions within an entrepreneurial, service-oriented administration.

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of coordinated data-driven strategy to strengthen Indiana’s agricultural economy. In alignment with this feedback, this study suggests modernizing ISDA’s existing value-added research fund into the newly envisioned agricultural-market development fund, expanding its purpose and sharpening its strategic focus. The updated fund is designed to support statewide economic development framework, guided by regional analyses and sector-specific strategies to ensure Indiana remains responsive to shifting market conditions.



A central component of this modernized approach is the development and maintenance of a comprehensive GIS-based asset map, enabling faster, more informed decision-making and helping leaders identify opportunities, reduce project risk and direct resources where they will have the greatest impact. This strengthened analytical foundation will improve cross-agency collaborations, enhance investment readiness and provide timely, actionable data to better align priorities and support entrepreneurs across Indiana's food and agriculture economy.

As part of these regional strategies, stakeholders recommended creating a Grocery Store Development Task Force to identify gaps, address market barriers, and shape a statewide approach to attracting and expanding grocery stores. With time-bound deliverables, the task force would craft recommendations and provide project guidance.

Together, these recommendations outline a future-ready vision — one that equips Indiana to support agricultural businesses with modern tools, coordinated data, and stronger pathways for integrating agriculture into regional and statewide growth strategies. By improving business onboarding, strengthening economic development planning, and addressing food access directly, Indiana moves toward a more resilient, entrepreneur-friendly and community-focused food economy.

To understand the broader environment that Indiana's food and farming businesses must navigate, the next section examines the role of the Indiana Department of Health in fostering a consistent and predictable statewide regulatory system.



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

FOOD PROTECTION DIVISION (FPD)

Indiana’s Food Protection Division (FPD) sits at a complex intersection of public health and local autonomy. Indiana entrusts county health departments with significant authority to implement and enforce food safety regulations. FPD’s role is to orient, equip and calibrate that work — supporting consistent standards, providing voluntary training and responding rapidly when foodborne illness or recall concerns arise while respecting county decision-making. The result is a system that depends on partnership: State expertise paired with local execution. The Food Protection division’s portfolio spans Retail Safety Program, Wholesale Manufactured Foods, and Produce Safety, complemented by a Food Emergency Response function.

PROGRAMS OF FOOD PROTECTION DIVISION:

	SCOPE & FOCUS	STAFF
PRODUCE SAFETY PROGRAM	Covers farms growing fruits and vegetables for public consumption	2.5 Staff
WHOLESALE MANUFACTURED FOOD PROGRAM	Oversees facilities that process, package, or manufacture food products.	4.5 Staff
RETAIL SAFETY PROGRAM	Encompasses grocery stores, restaurants, and other food service establishments.	6 Staff
FOOD EMERGENCY RESPONSE	Activated for outbreaks, recalls and consumer complaints. Includes food borne illness reports and sanitation concerns.	3 Staff





PRODUCE SAFETY PROGRAM

Indiana's Produce Safety Program oversees a diverse landscape of fruit and vegetable farms. Today, the program oversees 393 registered operations, of which 147 fall into a routine three-year inspection cycle based on risk. The program operates within the framework of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR). Smaller farms often qualify for exemptions under PSR. The FDA determines whether a farm undergoes inspection, receives education-focused outreach, or remains exempt.

Since its inception in 2019, the program focused on education first, investing in grower training, on-farm consultations, and compliance assistance to build familiarity and trust before inspections became mandatory. Unlike many regulatory programs, Indiana has no formal registration requirements for farms, meaning the program relies heavily on outreach, self-reporting, and partnerships to identify farms that fall under FSMA oversight. State Inspections are complimentary though farms may encounter additional local fees depending on county requirements.



STANDARDS FOR PRODUCE SAFETY

COVERAGE AND EXEMPTIONS/ EXCLUSIONS FOR 21 PART 112

The Preventative Controls for Human Food rule clarified the definition of a farm to include primary production farms and secondary activities farms. This definition also applies to the Produce Safety rule (Section 112.3[c]). Below are the basic criteria for determining whether an operation meets the “farm” definition subject to the produce rule.

DOES YOUR FARM GROW, HARVEST, OR HOLD PRODUCE?

Sections 112.1 and 112.3[c]

We define “produce” in section 112.3[c]

NO

YOUR FARM IS **NOT** COVERED BY THIS RULE.

NO

DOES YOUR FARM ON AVERAGE (IN THE PREVIOUS THREE YEARS) HAVE \$25K OR LESS IN ANNUAL PRODUCE SALES?

Section 112.4[a]

YES

YOUR FARM IS **NOT** COVERED BY THIS RULE.

NO

IS YOUR PRODUCE ONE OF THE COMMODITIES THAT FDA HAS IDENTIFIED AS RARELY CONSUMED RAW?

Section 112.2[a][1]

If you grow, harvest, pack, or hold more than one produce commodity, you must ask this question separately for each one to determine whether that particular produce commodity is covered by this rule.

YES

YOUR FARM IS **NOT** COVERED BY THIS RULE.

NO

IS YOUR PRODUCE FOR PERSONAL/ ON-FARM CONSUMPTION

Section 112.2[a][1]

YES

YOUR FARM IS **NOT** COVERED BY THIS RULE.

NO

**IS YOUR PRODUCE INTENDED FOR
COMMERICAL PROCESSING THAT
ADEQUATELY REDUCES PATHOGENS
(FOR EXAMPLE, COMMERCIAL
PROCESSING WITH A “KILL STEP”)**

Section 112.2[b]

YES

**THIS PRODUCT IS ELIGIBLE FOR
EXEMPTION FROM THE RULE,**

provided you make certain statements in documents accompanying the produce, obtain certain written assurances, and keep certain documentation, as per Sections 112.[b][2] through [b][6]

NO

**DOES YOUR FARM ON AVERAGE
(IN THE PREVIOUS THREE
YEARS) AS PER SECTION 112.5:
HAVE <500K ANNUAL FOOD SALES
AND
A MAJORITY OF THE FOOD
(BY VALUE) SOLD DIRECTLY
TO QUALIFIED END USERS**

Section 112.3[c]

“Qualified End-User” as defined
in Section 112.3[c] means:

- The consumer of the food OR
- a restaurant or retail food establishment that is located–
 - (i) in the same State or the same Indian reservation as the farm that produced the food OR
 - (ii) not more than 275 miles from such farm

(The term “consumer” does not include a business.)

YES

**THIS PRODUCT IS ELIGIBLE FOR
EXEMPTION FROM THE RULE,**

Which means that you must comply with certain modified requirements and keep certain documentation, as per Sections 112.6 and 112.7

NO

**YOU ARE COVERED
BY THIS RULE**

HIGH RISK		MEDIUM RISK		LOW RISK		VERY LOW RISK	
2 YEARS		3 YEARS		4 YEARS		7 YEARS	
Description	PC	Description	PC	Description	PC	Description	PC
Cut Produce	20-28	Bakery Products, Dough, Bakery Mixes, Icings	3	Snack Foods	7	Beverage (W)	29
Sandwiches	37			Vegetable Oils	26	Ice (W)	29
Salads	39	Filled Milk, Imitation Milk Products	14	Spices, Salts, Flavors	28	Candy (W)	33,34
Cheese Products (M,R)	12	Fruits, Fruit Products	20-22	Soft Drinks, Bottled Water (Municipal Source) (M)	29	Snack Foods (W)	7
Egg (Non-Chicken), Egg Products (M,R)	15	Nuts, Edible Seeds	23	Beverage Bases	30	Alcoholic Beverages (W)	32
Fishery/Seafood Products (FDA) (M,R)	16	Vegetables, Vegetable Products	24,25	Coffee, Tea (Dry)	31	Multiple Food Warehouses (Ambient)	47
Sprouts (based on FDA guidance)	24,25	Dressings, Condiments	27	Alcoholic Beverages	32	Snack Bins, Cross- Docks (W)	
Ice (M) (Supplying State Fair) (June)	29	Multiple Food, Dinners, Gravies, Sauces	37	Candy	33,34		
Salvage/Food Banks	47x	Soups, Dried Soups	38	Gelatin, Pudding Mixes, Pie Fillings	35		
Bottled Water (Private Source) (M)	29	Macaroni, Noodle Products	4	Honey (July-Sept), Syrups, Sugars, Maple Syrup (Feb- March), Sorghum (Sept)	36		
		Cereals	5	Food Additives	45,46		
		Frozen Desserts	13	Multiple Food Warehouses (Cold & Frozen)	47		
		Vegetable Protein Products	18	Color Additives	50		
		Ice (M)	29	Cheese Produces (W)	12		
		Grains, Milled Grains, Starch	2	Egg (Non-Chicken), Egg Products (W)	15		
		Fermented Foods		Fishery/Seafood Products (FDA)(W)	16		

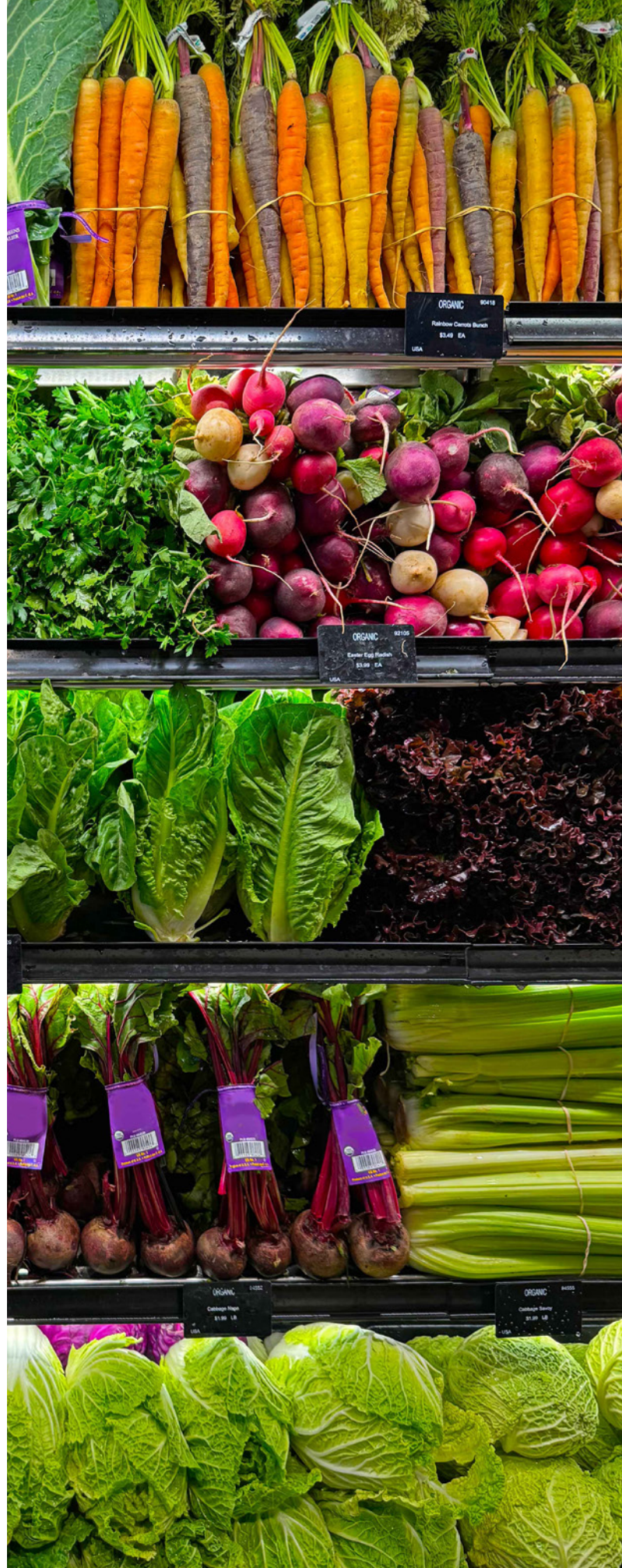
(PC) Product Code, (M) Manufacturer, (R) Re-Packaging, (W) Warehouse

WHOLESALE MANUFACTURED FOODS PROGRAM

FPD's Wholesale Manufactured Foods Program oversees one of the most diverse and complex segments of the state's food system. With 1,267 facilities operating across the state — from small specialty processors to large manufacturing plants — the program's work spans an enormous range of products, practices and risks. A team of 4.5 full-time employees supports the program, conducting fully risk-based inspections guided by a score-driven assessment system. High-risk facilities may see inspectors annually, while lower risk operations may be inspected as little as every 7 years. The Wholesale Manufactured Foods Program is regulated and inspected by IDOH under cooperative agreements with federal partners.

The Wholesale Manufactured Food Program also works corroboratively across regulatory boundaries: Facilities producing animal-derived products may fall under joint oversight with the Board of Animal Health (BOAH), requiring close coordination to maintain regulatory clarity.

Despite its size and complexity, the Wholesale Manufactured Foods Program focuses its work on practical support. Inspectors collaborate with processors to understand evolving risks, maintain sanitation controls, and implement regulatory requirements that vary by type and production scale. For new businesses entering the sector, whether launching a co-manufactured product, building a processing line, or expanding into wholesale markets, this program provides crucial guidance on food safety, labeling, environmental controls, and compliance expectations.





RETAIL SAFETY PROGRAM

Indiana's Retail Food Program is the largest and most locally driven component of the state's Food Protection Division. In this context, "Retail" refers to food sold directly to the end consumer. With more than 50,000 retail food establishments statewide, including grocery stores, restaurants, food trucks, catering facilities and other businesses, oversight is carried out largely by local county health departments under Indiana's home-rule structure. Counties have the authority to enforce the Indiana Food Code and establish fee structures, making local health departments central to daily regulatory activity.

Within this home-rule framework, the IDOH's Retail Food Program provides essential statewide support. IDOH conducts inspections of retail food establishments located on state property and provides calibration visits, technical consultation and voluntary training for local health departments. The Food Protection Division also maintains responsibility for statewide public communication during foodborne illness outbreaks, recalls and sanitation concerns. Through its consumer complaint hotline, IDOH receives reports of illness or unsafe conditions and relays them to the appropriate local health department for investigation.

Local health departments serve as the front-line inspectors of the Indiana Food Code, which is based on the 2022 FDA Model Food Code. They conduct retail food inspections within their jurisdictions and carry out a broad set of public health responsibilities, including environmental health and additional duties defined by statute or local ordinance. This structure creates natural complexity, especially for businesses operating across county lines or falling under multiple regulatory scopes.

RECIPROCITY AND APPEAL

In Indiana, no formal reciprocity or appeals process exists for food businesses that disagree with decisions made by their county health departments. For businesses, this can create confusion, particularly those operating in multiple counties with differing interpretations of the Indiana food code.

Stakeholders repeatedly expressed a desire for a clearer process to resolve disputes, clarify expectations and promote consistent enforcement. The FPD can play a greater role as an advisor, offering education and guidance when businesses and counties need clarity.



Across stakeholder insights, a clear picture emerged of Indiana's food safety landscape: It is wide, locally driven and deeply reliant on partnership. IDOH FPD sits upstream as a guide — calibrating, consulting and supporting — but without the authority to mandate uniform standards. That model creates both strength and strain. It allows counties to tailor oversight to their communities, but it also means that businesses experience inconsistency and variation when operation in multiple counties.

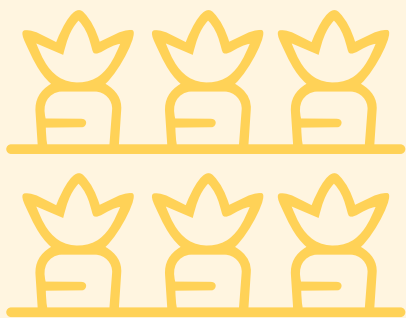
Stakeholders were candid about what would help. Stakeholders asked for predictability across county lines and better alignment.

The path forward begins with what we heard most often: Consistency. A statewide baseline requiring all counties to participate in IDOH-led trainings, adopt standardized inspector qualifications and submit monthly inspection data would create a shared foundation without undermining home rule. Annual trainings and county-hosted education sessions would give

small farms, homestead, home-based vendors, and food business clearer, more uniform expectations. A statewide reciprocity process for handling county-issued violations would help ensure that violations are aligned with the state's interpretation of the Indiana Food Code.

Focusing on the farmer experience creates an opportunity to turn Indiana's ag portal into a true one-stop shop for resources. By bringing all farmer-facing tools, guidance, and programs into a single, easy-to-navigate platform, the state can offer a more customer-service-driven experience. This streamlined approach makes it easier for growers to access opportunities and build stronger, more resilient operations.

By embracing statewide consistency, requiring reporting, prioritizing customer service in produce safety and strengthening communication, Indiana can turn a complex network into a cohesive statewide system — one that honors home rule, supports business growth and protects the health of every Hoosier.



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DIVISION OF NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (DNPA)

The Indiana Department of Health's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity leads statewide efforts to improve health, reduce chronic disease, and strengthen nutrition and physical activity environments across communities. DNPA's work centers policy, systems, and environmental change strategies and leverages federal and state funding to increase access to healthy foods for Hoosiers.

All nutrition initiatives are organized under a single umbrella known as Community Nutrition Programs. Within this structure, DNPA supports three primary categories of work that collectively advance food access, nutrition security, and connections to local food systems across Indiana.

The first category includes Food is Medicine programs, which integrate food access with positive health outcomes. These efforts include the Produce Prescription (Rx) Program, Double Up, and the electronic Farmers Market Nutrition Program (eFMNP) for both WIC and senior participants. Among all programs, Double Up and eFMNP serve as the only nutrition incentive programs, enabling eligible individuals to purchase additional fruits and vegetables, particularly from farmers markets.

The second category, general community nutrition, consists of the Farm to School program. Farm to School, implemented through the Indiana Grown for Schools Network, focuses on increasing student access to and education about locally sourced foods.

The third category consists of Commodity Programs, specifically TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) and CSFP (Commodity Supplemental Food Program). TEFAP delivers commodity food products directly to food banks, while CSFP supplies commodity food boxes for seniors to local partner organizations for distribution. Neither of these commodity programs includes a local food component.



Across the full portfolio, only two programs — Farm to School and eFMNP — are designed specifically to support and expand local food systems, whether through improved school procurement or farmers market incentives. Together, these programs demonstrate a comprehensive approach to improving nutrition access while also supporting Indiana’s agricultural community.





ELECTRONIC FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Indiana's WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) are collectively known as eFMNP. While separately regulated, because of the similarity between the two, Indiana chooses to administer them under a single, consolidated state plan of operation. The program aims to provide participants with access to fresh, locally grown, unprocessed fruits, vegetables, and edible herbs, while also increasing their awareness and use of farmers markets. An objective is to encourage participants to engage directly with local producers. All produce purchased through the program must come from WIC approved farmers markets and be obtained only at WIC authorized selling locations.

Eligibility is based on both residence and income criteria. Participants must live within the service area of a participating local agency and have a gross household income at or below 185% of the current federal poverty guidelines. For the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), eligible individuals must be at least 60 years of age. However, individuals who are at least 55 years old may also qualify if they reside in a household that is primarily elderly occupied and participates in congregate nutrition services.

DOUBLE UP INDIANA

Double Up Indiana is a nutrition incentive program that matches SNAP/EBT purchases dollar-for-dollar (up to \$20 per day) when eligible participants purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. Participants can use benefits to purchase double the amount of healthy, fresh produce at participating farmers markets, roadside stands, and grocery stores.

FOOD IS MEDICINE (FIM)

Food is Medicine is a broad, overarching healthcare model integrating healthy food into medical care. It is used to prevent, manage, and treat diet-related chronic conditions. This broad category also includes Produce Rx (Prescription) as well as Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) and Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG).

PRODUCE RX (PRESCRIPTION)

Produce Rx is a specific, targeted medical intervention where healthcare providers prescribe fruits and vegetables to a patient. Patients usually receive vouchers, debit cards or loyalty points to purchase these items at local grocery stores or farmers markets.

According to the predictive modeling from the 2026 Feeding the Economy Study, Indiana's Food is Medicine (FIM) State Snapshot reveals a striking opportunity: More than 993,000 Hoosiers living with diet-related chronic conditions and earning at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level would qualify for FIM support. Reaching these residents with medically tailored meals, groceries or produce prescriptions — sourced from local farms wherever feasible — would generate benefits far beyond individual health outcomes.

The study estimates that a fully scaled FIM system in Indiana could drive more than \$1.16 billion in annual expenditures, with approximately \$513.7 million circulating directly through the state's local food economy. This surge in purchasing power would help anchor stable, long-term markets for Indiana's farmers, processors, distributors, and food businesses. For farmers alone, the projected impact exceeds \$100.9 million in new revenue — supporting roughly 640 small- and mid-sized farms and influencing more than 236,000 acres of agricultural land statewide.

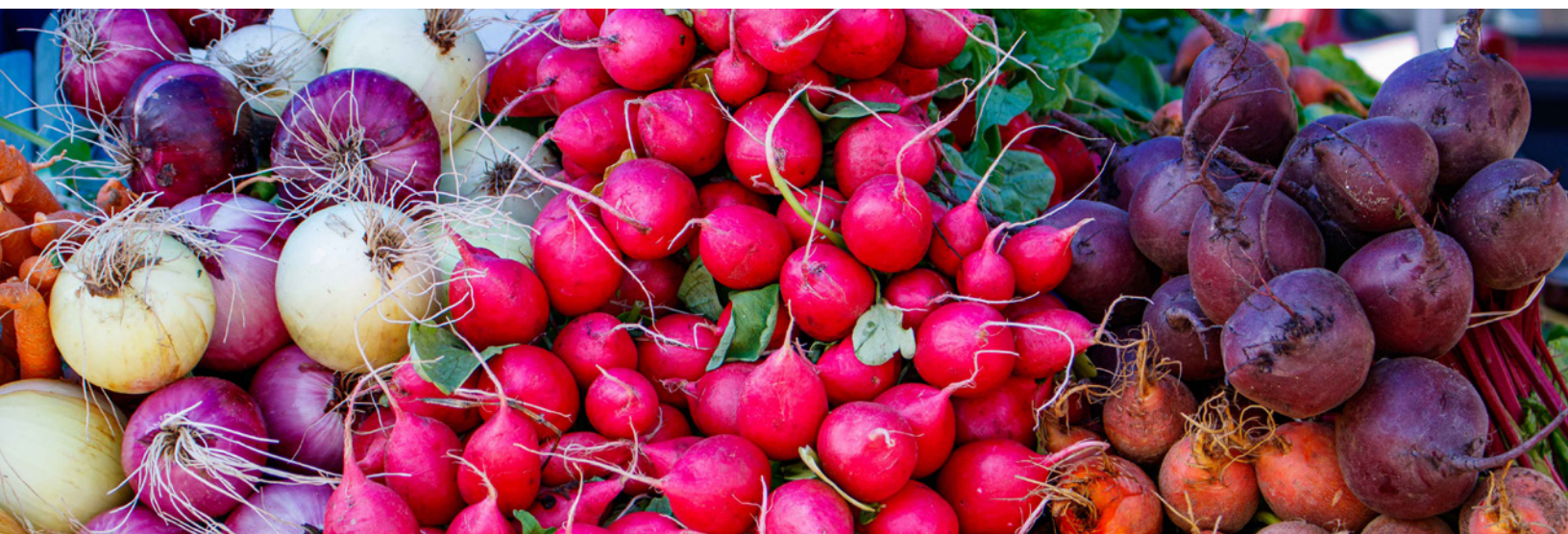
These dollars would not simply move through Indiana's food system; they would remain embedded within local communities, reinforcing the economic fabric of towns and counties across the state. The job creation potential is equally transformative. As detailed in the

2026 Feeding the Economy Indiana analysis, prioritizing local food procurement within FIM programs could catalyze more than 7,530 new jobs across food production, processing, logistics, fulfillment, and healthcare aligned services.

Food is Medicine and eFMNP programs within the Indiana Department of Health's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPA) are the most immediate and impactful ways Hoosiers experience the benefits of locally grown, nutritious foods. Funding for these initiatives is a blend of federal and private funding sources with minimal state investment.

INDIANA FARM TO SCHOOL

IDOH, working within DNPA's portfolio, has served as the lead grant recipient for the Patrick Leahy Farm to School grant through the USDA Farm to School Program. This multi-agency collaborative effort — spanning IDOH, IDOE, and ISDA — works to strengthen connections between Indiana schools and Indiana producers by building reliable procurement pathways and supporting agriculture-based education. In 2018, Indiana created the Indiana Grown for Schools Network, a coordinated statewide framework that assists schools in sourcing local foods and integrating agriculture into the classroom. Through this work, the program has developed practical toolkits,



buyer guides and implementation resources that enable schools to purchase Indiana grown products, implement Harvest of the Month, and engage students in school gardens and agricultural education activities.

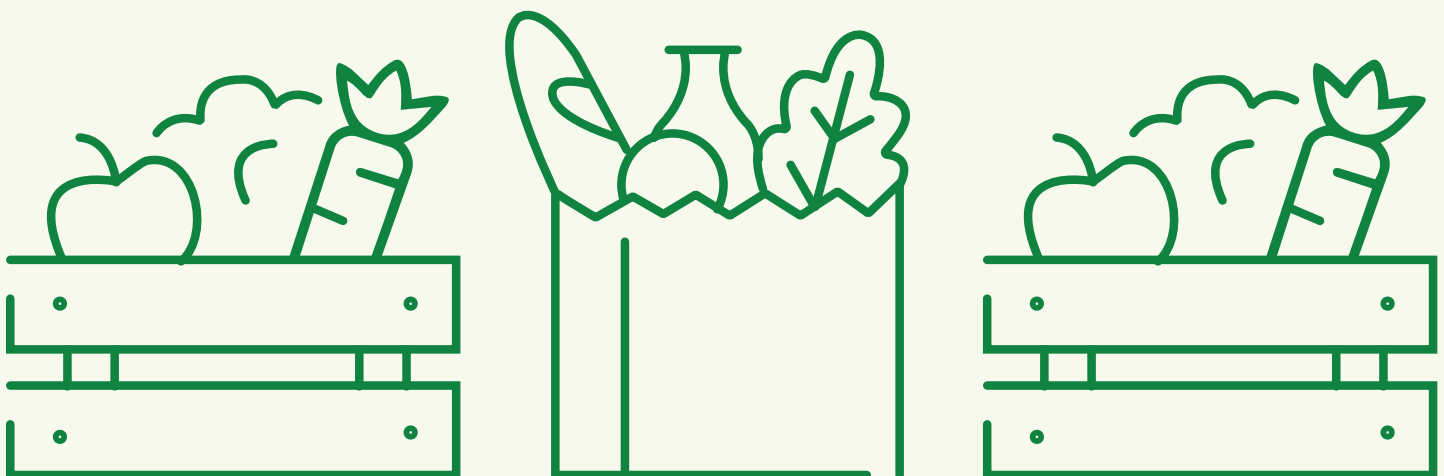
To anchor and sustain this work, IDOH employs a full-time staff member funded through stable state chronic disease dollars, ensuring continuity, technical assistance, and strategic deliverables. The Farm to School grant had also supported a Value Chain Professional who works directly with schools to source from Indiana farms; however, this position depends on grant funding for long-term continuation. The Indiana Department of Education similarly dedicates a full-time employee to Farm to School Coordinator, supporting districts across the state. ISDA contributes through the Indiana Grown staffing structure, reinforcing a coordinated cross-agency model that aligns agricultural development, educational priorities, and public health goals.

Indiana's Farm to School effort is rooted in a partnership-driven, capacity-building approach that emphasizes motivation, practical support and local flexibility. Schools consistently achieve the greatest success when they join the effort through shared goals rather than mandates. When districts feel excited, supported and connected to a broader vision through procurement tools, peer networks, dedicated staffing and hands-on

technical assistance, they are significantly more likely to adopt Farm to School activities, deepen their engagement and sustain programs over time.

Although Indiana state agencies were not awarded the Patrick Leahy Farm to School grant in the most recent funding cycle, IDOH, IDOE, and ISDA will continue to lead and support Farm to School activities across the state, maintaining progress through existing infrastructure, partnerships, and agency level commitment.

Given their strong alignment with the goals of Making Indiana Healthy Again, these programs warrant a focused, strategic alignment that leverages their measurable impact and potential. Each initiative serves not only as a direct intervention to improve access to nutritious food but also as a catalyst for broader systems change, strengthening Indiana's food and agriculture economy, reducing avoidable healthcare costs and reinforcing the state's long-term public health priorities. By prioritizing Indiana's food and farming businesses within these programs, Indiana can target investment and coordinated actions to effectively strengthen local agriculture, expand market opportunities, and generate meaningful health benefits for Hoosiers.





FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY NUTRITION PROGRAMS

PROGRAM NAME	TOTAL PROGRAM FUNDING	FUNDING SOURCE
COMMODITY SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM*	\$502,085	Federal Grant
DOUBLE UP INDIANA	\$291,460	Private and State Funding
PRODUCE RX	\$156,793	Private Funding
SENIOR FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM	\$115,831	Federal Grant
TEFAP (THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM)*	\$1,549,774	Federal Grant

*Note - no local food component to these programs

SUMMARIZING INDIANA STATE AGENCIES' DIRECT AGRICULTURAL IMPACT

Indiana's state agencies bring significant strength, reach and expertise to the foundation of the local food system, each playing a distinct yet complementary role in supporting producers and ensuring that food reaches Hoosiers safely and reliably.

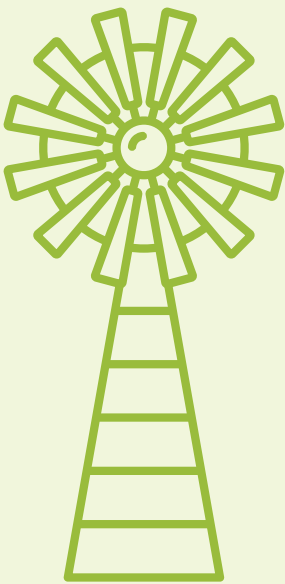
The Indiana State Department of Agriculture anchors this work, promoting Indiana-grown products, expanding market access, and supporting local and regional food system development across all 92 counties. BOAH protects animal health and food safety through inspection programs and disease response. The agency provides the regulatory foundation that allows consumers to trust the safety and quality of poultry, dairy and livestock products.

The Indiana Economic Development Corporation and the Indiana Small Business Development Center help food and farm entrepreneurs through advising, capital readiness and small-business support.

The Indiana Department of Health strengthens public health through food protection, nutrition programs, local health department engagement and community-based initiatives that link food access with long-term wellbeing.

As comprehensive as these programs are, they also highlight the next phase of Indiana's work. Insights from stakeholders point to areas where additional support for entrepreneurs and stronger structures could make "local" the easier and more viable choice.

These insights show where long-term, intentional investment is needed to reinforce the systems that will support Indiana's food and agriculture sector for decades to come. Ultimately, ensuring that Indiana agriculture continues to thrive is not just the mission of any single program — it is a shared, statewide priority.





OVERVIEW OF OUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM AND VALUE CHAIN COORDINATION (VCC) IN INDIANA

An ideal Indiana food system is one in which every part of the food economy operates in sync through a coordinated, statewide framework. Farmers, processors, distributors, buyers and consumers are connected through intentional regional networks that function as an integrated whole rather than a series of isolated or duplicative efforts. In this model, food production and consumption remain closely aligned, enabling farmers to retain more value in their operations while ensuring consumers have consistent access to fresh, Indiana-grown products.

A well-organized system provides clear, predictable pathways for farmers and food businesses to access support, enter new markets, and navigate the regulations and resources that shape their growth. Processors and distributors operate within an aligned logistics landscape that reduces inefficiencies, strengthens regional aggregation, and keeps more Indiana-grown food circulating within the state. Buyers, from schools and hospitals to grocery stores and restaurants, have reliable, streamlined routes to source local products, supported by strong relationships and modern infrastructure.



At the center of this ideal model is a shared statewide strategy — one that aligns goals, data, investments and operational capacity across agencies, partners and regions. With coordinated planning, real-time market insight, and stronger connections between local production and local demand, Indiana's food system becomes more resilient, more competitive, and more responsive to community needs.

However, realizing this vision is constrained by the absence of state support dedicated to food system coordination, and the lack of sustained capacity to lead this work. Although many partners across the state contribute valuable efforts, Indiana lacks a formal, state-supported structure that intentionally links agriculture, food access, health, and economic development into a unified system.

Indiana's food economy is poised to be not only efficient and well-structured, but also deeply rooted in community well-being. The recommendations of this study directly address the gap in state involvement and propose a clear pathway for building the coordinated, resilient, and Indiana-focused food system that Hoosiers deserve.

In 2025, Hoosiers spent more than \$27.5 billion on food. Redirecting even a portion of that spending toward local products presents a major economic opportunity for Indiana's agricultural sectors. However, capturing this opportunity requires that buyers — from individual consumers to institutions — can easily identify, purchase and receive Indiana-sourced products. Today, that pathway is often unclear or inconsistent, limiting the extent to which local food dollars stay within the state.

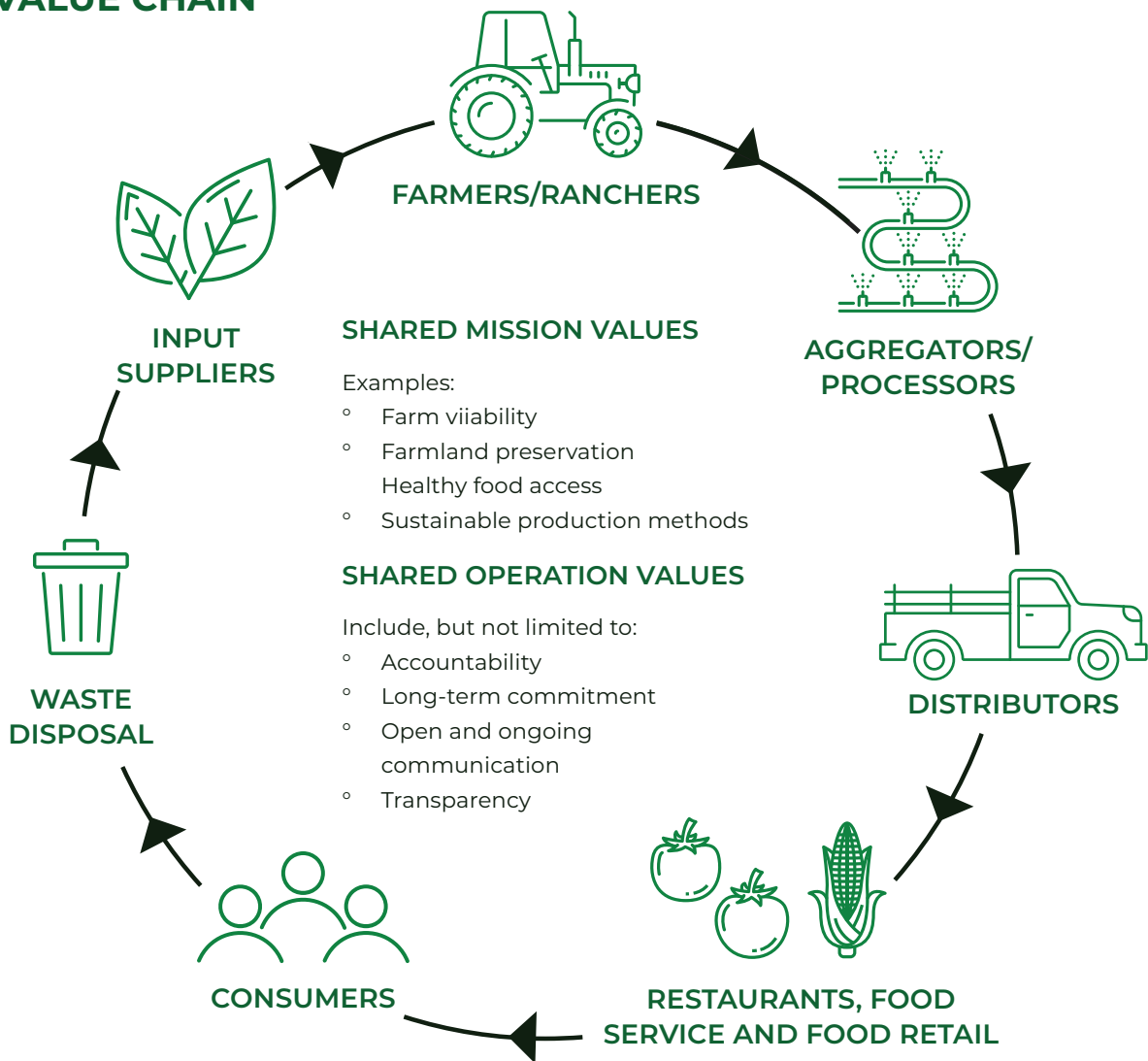


This is where Value Chain Coordination becomes essential. Value Chain Coordinators “connect the dots” across the food system to ensure that local products can move efficiently from Indiana farms to Indiana tables. They strengthen markets, improve transparency, and build the relationships required for a reliable supply chain that keeps more food dollars circulating in our local economy.

Indiana’s local food system includes a spectrum of sales channels — from farmers markets and CSAs to wholesale retailers, and restaurants. Each channel requires different volumes, packaging, pricing, food safety standards, and delivery logistics. For many small- and mid-scale farmers, navigating these complexities alone can be overwhelming and can limit access to margin-value markets. Value Chain Coordinators bridge this gap. They help farmers understand buyer expectations, help buyers understand what Indiana farms can reliably supply, and work across the system to address barriers such as limited aggregation and cold storage, inconsistent demand, or fragmented communication. With even a handful of existing VCC professionals, Indiana has already seen how transformative this role can be.

Through intentional coordination, farms, distributors and consumer-facing markets, VCCs become aligned rather than operating in isolation. VCCs help shift Indiana’s local food system from fragmented, individual efforts to a cohesive, thriving network — one that supports producers while creating meaningful, market-ready pathways to get local food onto plates in homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

FOOD VALUE CHAIN



DIRECT FARM-TO-CONSUMER MARKET CHANNELS AND BUSINESS MODELS

Across Indiana, direct farm-to-consumer channels form the most personal layer of the food system places where growers and eaters meet face-to-face, stories are exchanged, and community connections deepen. These channels allow farmers to share the fruits of their labor without intermediaries and give consumers a direct window into how their food is grown, raised, and harvested. From farmstands and u-pick operations to farmers markets, CSAs, and co-ops, Indiana farmers use a growing mix of pathways to bring local food directly into the hands of Hoosiers. These connections set the stage for a more thriving and transparent local food economy.

CURRENT BUSINESS MODELS WITHIN INDIANA:

FARMERS MARKETS

Farmers markets play a pivotal role in Indiana's food system. Across the state, farmers markets have become one of the most known entry points for farmers and food entrepreneurs, allowing them to test products, build customer relationships, and establish brand recognition without the high barriers typically associated with traditional retail. Farmers markets help ensure that more of that value stays rooted in local communities. While chain retailers often retain only about 15% of revenue locally, farmers markets keep as much as 45% circulating in the surrounding economy.

According to the 2022 Purdue Extension - Selling at Farmers Markets: Benefits and Price Trend study, farmers who participate in farmers markets are nearly 10% more likely to stay in business than those who do not. Additionally, this Purdue Extension study shows that half of all farmers selling at markets earn at least

50% of their total revenue from market sales. Purdue Extension's study highlighted in Indiana, nearly 63% of specialty crop growers rely on farmers markets as their primary sales channel, underscoring the critical role these markets play in sustaining local agriculture. Farmers markets also advance food access. Programs like Triple-Up SNAP at the Michigan City Market empower residents to turn \$20 of SNAP benefits into \$60 of purchasing power for fresh, local foods. Markets across the state increasingly offer SNAP, WIC, and Double Up Food Bucks, expanding healthy food access and strengthening local farm economies simultaneously.

Despite these strengths, Indiana lacks a unified, state-supported framework that connects markets, producers and consumers in a strategic way. The existing Indiana Grown initiative provides powerful branding and promotional infrastructure, yet it does not currently include a comprehensive platform to support the state's farmers markets or to help individual growers navigate these important direct-to-consumer opportunities. With modest investment and targeted coordination, Indiana has an opportunity to elevate farmers markets statewide, increasing economic impact while strengthening food access. Recommendations from stakeholders indicated a need for a state-wide program supporting farmers markets and this recommendation has been incorporated into the Indiana Grown program enhancements outlined in this study.





COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

Customers subscribe to seasonal shares and receive regular boxes of farm products, giving farms upfront cash flow and consumers a steady connection to local food.

ON-FARM RETAIL AND FARM STANDS

Dedicated farm shops (including year-round stores) allow producers to offer fresh and value-added items on-site, often paired with tastings, demonstrations, or educational opportunities or tours.

U-PICK / PICK-YOUR-OWN

Consumers harvest on the farm, allowing for an agricultural experience often paired with other activities deepening the farm-to-family connection.

MOBILE MARKETS / MOBILE FARM STANDS

Farms bring goods into neighborhoods via mobile formats to expand reach where traditional markets or stores are less accessible.

ONLINE DIRECT SALES

Farm-managed e-commerce platforms allow for preordering systems, often with pickup or delivery options, extending consumer access beyond farmers markets and other seasonal outlets. This creates an additional, year-round direct-to-consumer sales channel.

AGRITOURISM + RETAIL EXPERIENCES

Tours, festivals and farm events often combined with onsite retail, allow for the ability to reinforce the farm's story.

FARM STOPS

A brick-and-mortar store offering year-round products for customers, almost exclusively from local farms. Products are often sold on consignments with this model, which is an important component.

FOOD HUBS

An organization or facility that aggregates, stores, processes and distributes food from multiple local farms while maintaining each farm's identity throughout the supply chain. By coordinating logistics such as transportation, handling, and marketing, food hubs make it easier for farmers to reach larger markets without losing the direct connection between producer and consumer.

PRODUCER-OWNED COOPERATIVES

Shared administration, merchandising, and distribution that let multiple farms sell directly under coordinated operations.

ONLINE MARKETPLACES

Connecting producers and consumers through digital platforms that centralize ordering while keeping farm identification intact, yet rely on a third party to handle logistics, customer service and other back-end functions, allowing farmers to focus on production rather than administrative tasks.



RETAIL AND WHOLESALE PARTNERSHIPS FOR FOOD AND FARMING BUSINESSES

Retail and wholesale channels play an essential role in expanding market opportunities for Indiana's food and farming businesses. While direct-to-consumer sales remain important, scaling a resilient and profitable local food system requires strong partnerships with wholesalers, distributors, retailers, and food service entities. These relationships form the foundation of local and regional supply chains, enabling Indiana grown products to reach more households, institutions, and communities.

Wholesale distribution connects producers to consumers through intermediaries such as wholesale markets, food brokers and distributors. These channels are particularly valuable for farms and food businesses seeking to diversify sales portfolios, stabilize revenue, and move larger volumes of product. Wholesale markets also support consistent supply to large buyers, including schools, healthcare facilities, business dining and restaurants, whose demand often exceeds what individual producers can meet alone.

Retail partnerships — from large retailers and grocery stores to specialty markets and independent retailers — offer critical visibility and accessibility for Indiana-grown products. When producers integrate into retail markets, they gain access to wider audiences, stronger branding opportunities and predictable purchasing cycles that can significantly boost long-term profitability. A 2026 survey of 488 Hoosier grocery decision-makers found that most Hoosiers do their primary grocery shopping at supermarkets (82%) and large retailers (61%), with fewer than one in four regularly visiting farmers markets (24%). Retailers can benefit as well: Consumer demand for local foods continues to grow, offering product differentiation and stronger community ties. The survey also found that over 90% are familiar with local product availability in grocery stores, 50% buy occasionally and 33% buy often. Overall, 55% of Hoosiers buy local foods from grocery stores with local sections, second only to farmers markets (63%).





A successful wholesale or retail strategy requires careful consideration of several key factors:

COST AND PROFITABILITY

As products move into larger markets, transportation, logistics, storage, packaging, and marketing costs increase. Farms must balance these expenses with viable margins, and tools such as forward contracting can stabilize revenue and improve financial planning.

PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS

Wholesale food producers in Indiana operate primarily under federal food safety requirements, with IDOH conducting inspections through cooperative agreements with federal partners. As a result, the state's role centers on implementation, compliance assistance, education and technical support rather than establishing separate regulatory standards. Wholesale buyers depend on uniformity, rigorous food-safety compliance and consistent quality — expectations that dictate what farmers and processors must provide to access these higher-value markets.

For small- and mid-scale growers, one of the most significant barriers to entering wholesale channels is the requirement for third-party food-safety certification, such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) or Harmonized GAP. These certifications signal to buyers that products meet strict standards for safety, handling, and traceability. Yet for many producers, the path to certification is costly, time-intensive, and difficult to navigate without specialized technical assistance. The certification process alone can be a prohibitive barrier, preventing growers from entering wholesale markets that could substantially increase their sales and broaden their customer base.

Recognizing these challenges, stakeholders recommended establishing a cost-share program to reimburse first-time certification expenses. This type of support directly reduces a major financial barrier, helps more producers access wholesale and institutional markets, and strengthens the consistency and reliability of Indiana's supply for retail, foodservice, and institutional buyers.



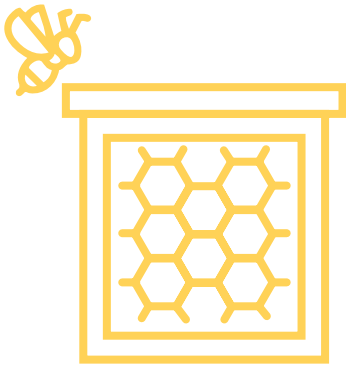
As producers gain access to new market channels, the state's food economy becomes more resilient, more competitive, and better positioned to meet the needs of wholesale partners and consumers alike.

To succeed in wholesale and retail markets, producers must build and maintain strong relationships with distributors and retailers by:

- Providing product specifications, training and support
- Maintaining reliable supply and clear communication
- Collaborating to respond to consumer feedback or make product adjustments

Behind these partnerships lies a critical layer of logistics. Effective supply chain management — from coordinating delivery schedules to ensuring cold chain integrity and contingency planning — is foundational. Investments in aggregation, storage and transportation infrastructure further strengthen reliability and help producers meet wholesale standards.

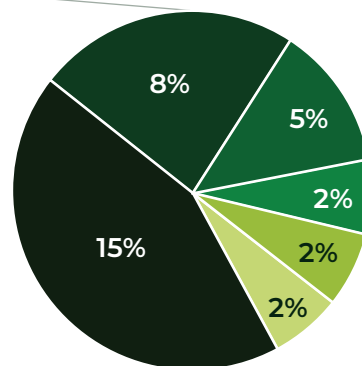
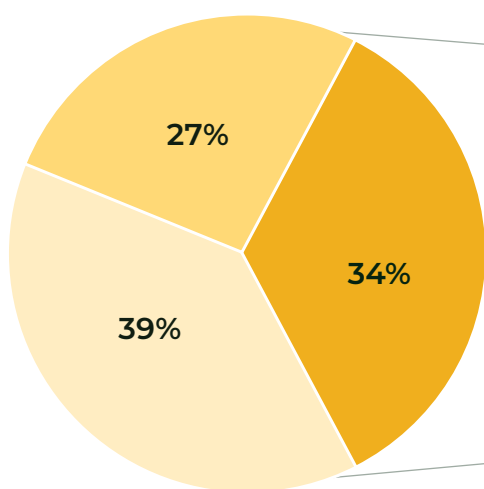
Together, wholesale and retail channels create a powerful engine for expanding Indiana's local food economy. They enable producers to scale, improve consumer access to Indiana grown foods, and strengthen the resilience and competitiveness of the state's agricultural marketplace.





IN THE MOST RECENT 2015 STUDY, FOODS SOLD THROUGH INTERMEDIATE MARKETS AND INSTITUTIONS ACCOUNTED FOR THE LARGEST SHARE OF LOCAL FOOD SALES

PERCENT OF LOCAL FOOD SALES BY OUTLET



MARKETS FOR DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER SALES

- Retailers
- Direct-to-Consumers
- Intermediate Markets and Institutions
- On-site farm stores or stands
- Farmers markets
- All other
- Community-supported agriculture programs
- Online
- Off-site stores or roadside stands

Note: Intermediate markets and institutions include processors, wholesalers, schools, hospitals, food hubs, and colleges and universities.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey.

SECTION III.

**IDENTIFYING
BARRIERS TO LOCAL
FOOD EXPANSION**



FARM DIVERSIFICATION & VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTION

Farm diversification is a strategy producers use to strengthen resilience by adding new enterprises or complementary activities alongside their core operation. Rather than depending on a single crop, or market channel, diversified farms spread risk, smooth out income fluctuations, and create steadier year-over-year returns. This can include agritourism, on-farm retail, offering private labeling, developing value-added projects to broaden market reach, or diversifying the crops and/or livestock the farm raises.

Value-added production refers to any process that enhances the value of a raw agricultural product by transforming it, differentiating it, or enhancing it in a way that increases its appeal to consumers. Value-added opportunities span far beyond jams and cheeses; they include ready-to-eat meals, smoked or cured meats, freeze-dried snacks, cold-pressed oils, infused honeys, specialty teas, baking mixes, syrups, condiments. Farms pursue value-added products because

these offerings help them capture a larger share of the consumer food dollar, enter new markets, build brand identity, deepen customer loyalty, and diversify income streams. By turning what they already raise into distinctive goods, farms can strengthen their economic position and create opportunities.

Yet despite the promise, both diversification and value-added ventures come with meaningful barriers. Many require substantial upfront investment in equipment, labor, facilities, packaging, and food safety compliance costs that can be prohibitive for small and mid-sized farms. High land prices and competition from non-agricultural development limit farmers' ability to expand or redesign their operations. Limited storage, transportation and processing infrastructure further complicate efforts to bring diversified products to market consistently. Plus, since value-added product often demands new skills like business planning, regulatory

navigation, marketing and risk management, farms hesitate to take on additional complexity in an already demanding profession. Together, these economic, logistical and knowledge-based challenges help explain why diversification and value-added production, while essential to a thriving local food system, remain difficult for many Indiana farms to undertake. Addressing these barriers is key to unlocking greater resilience, profitability, and opportunity across the state's agricultural landscape.

LABOR

Indiana's farming businesses face persistent and complex challenges in the agricultural sector: Finding and keeping the labor needed to sustain their operations. Across the state, from dairy to specialty crop farms, producers report that labor shortages are no longer occasional disruptions but a constant barrier that shapes what they can grow, how they operate and whether they can expand.

Indiana's Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting sectors are characterized by a thin labor supply and relatively low employer competition for available talent. The state employs 30,569 workers in this industry — well below the national expectation of 40,326 for a region of similar size, which highlights a persistent structural shortage of workers in the field. Geographically, job demand is concentrated



around key labor markets. These clusters reflect both agricultural production centers and locations where major employers or specialized operations are based.

Across the sector, employers primarily seek workers for traditional production roles.

Farmworkers and laborers in crop, nursery and greenhouse settings represent approximately 32% of all openings, making them the most sought after role. Farmworkers for farm, ranch and aquacultural animals account for about 16%, while fishing and hunting workers make up roughly 8%, forest and conservation workers about 4%, and agricultural equipment operators about 4% of total postings.

These proportions reflect the continuing dominance of hands-on, production-oriented roles within the sector.

Job titles associated with these occupations — such as Agricultural Equipment Operators, Farm Hands, Urban Forestry Interns, Sow Farm Technicians, and Farm Technicians — consistently appeared as the most frequently advertised.

Skill needs reinforce the hands-on nature of the sector. Employers consistently seek candidates with strong physical ability and operational competence, including lifting ability, animal welfare knowledge, biosecurity, machinery operation, and irrigation experience.





Many of these specialized skills are projected to grow, with particularly fast growth in machining, environmental education, and farm equipment proficiency. Common skills such as operations, communication, management, professionalism, teamwork, and willingness to learn are equally prominent, showing that reliability and adaptability remain essential traits for workers in this industry.

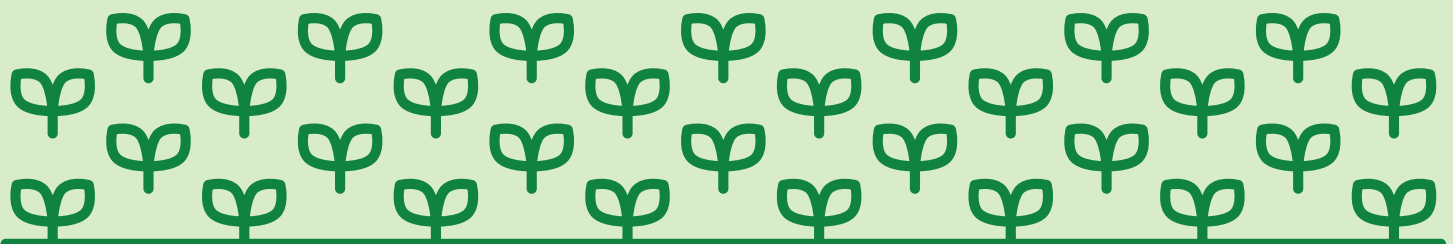
Even software skills feature in job postings, underscoring the increasing operational and administrative components of agricultural work.

Barriers to entry for workers remain low. Ninety-two percent of postings require no prior experience, and more than half list no minimum education requirement. High school diplomas appear in about one-third of postings, while bachelor's degrees are required only 13% of the time.

When employers do specify qualifications, they often focus on practical credentials such as commercial driver's licenses or standard driver's licenses.

These patterns suggest that the industry remains accessible to new entrants, which can be an advantage when trying to address labor shortages.

Economically, the sector contributes meaningfully to Indiana's economy, generating a Gross Regional Product of \$6.7 billion in 2025. Major expenditure categories include animal production, crop production, animal food manufacturing, and agricultural chemical production, reflecting the state's broad agricultural footprint and deep integration across supply chains.





Beyond availability, the high cost of labor places pressure on already thin farm margins. With wages rising and input costs increasing, labor often becomes one of the largest expenses on a farm. At the same time, the state's rural workforce continues to age, and younger generations show less interest in agricultural careers, further shrinking the long-term labor pipeline.

Infrastructure challenges add another layer. Many farm jobs are in rural areas where affordable housing, transportation, childcare, and reliable broadband are limited. Even when farms can recruit workers, retaining them becomes difficult when basic support is lacking.

Together, these hurdles create a cycle that strains Indiana's agricultural businesses: labor shortages reduce productivity, higher costs squeeze profits, and policy uncertainty prevents long-term workforce planning. The result is an industry that must constantly adapt through mechanization, workforce programs, community partnerships, and advocacy for clearer, more workable immigration and labor policies.

Indiana's farms are resilient and innovative, but the labor challenge is real and structural.



REGULATORY HURDLES FOR SMALL FARM, HOMESTEAD AND HOME-BASED VENDORS.

INDIANA HEA 1424 (2026) AND ITS IMPACT ON FOOD & FARMING BUSINESSES

Indiana's HEA 1424 represents a significant shift in state food-regulation policy in recent years, aiming to expand economic opportunity for small farms and homestead producers while redefining the relationship between these businesses and local regulatory agencies.

At its core, the bill creates a clear legal category for “homestead vendors” and “small farms,” defined as producers operating on their own property with gross annual sales below \$1.5 million. By formally recognizing these operations, HEA 1424 places them under a simplified regulatory framework that mirrors national “food freedom” trends seen in other states. Under the new approach, small producers would no longer be required to obtain local licenses, permits, or food-handling certifications beyond baseline federal requirements. This means that farmers selling everything from baked goods to uncut produce to certain value-added products can operate with fewer administrative burdens.

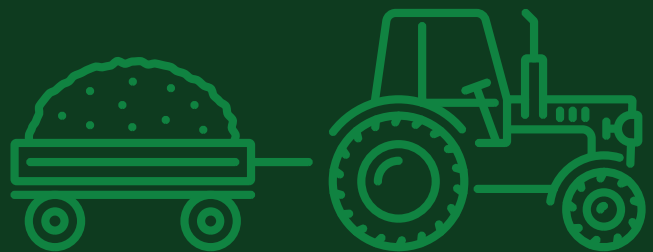


For food and farming businesses, the bill opens the door to greater flexibility. Many producers see HB 1424 as an opportunity to expand product offerings, reach new customers, and grow revenue without navigating multiple layers of regulations.

When enacted on July 1, 2026, HEA 1424 would impact Indiana's local food economy, offering unprecedented regulatory freedom while shifting more responsibility for transparency and safe practices directly onto businesses. This regulation did not repeal home-based vendor regulation, and it adds another layer for Indiana food and farming businesses to navigate. Small farm and homestead vendors can sell directly to consumers in person, by phone or online, including shipments or third-party delivery within Indiana only. Indiana's Home-Based Vendor (HBV) regulations established under HEA 1149 (IC 16-42-5.3) create an accessible yet structured environment for entrepreneurs to produce and sell low-risk foods directly to consumers. Vendors can operate from their primary residence and do not require the use of a commercial kitchen. HBVs may only prepare non-time/temperature-controlled (non-TCS) foods such as baked goods, jams made with high-acid fruit, candies, nuts, honey, and whole, uncut produce. High-risk items like meat, dairy, cut melon, pickles, salsa, and garlic-in-oil are expressly prohibited.

Sanitary compliance is a core requirement: vendors must use proper hand-washing, maintain food-prep areas free of animals, sanitize packaging and surfaces, seal products against tampering, and store food safely. Additionally, vendors must hold a Certified Food Handler credential from an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited program and present it upon request. Labeling must be clear and include specific language. HBVs can sell directly to consumers in person, by phone or online, including shipments or third-party delivery within Indiana only. Sales to retailers, restaurants, or out-of-state customers are not allowed.

HEA 1149 (IC 16 42 5.3) remains the governing framework for home-based, non-time/temperature control for safety food production in Indiana. It requires strict sanitary practices and clear labeling for products sold directly to consumers. HEA 1424 establishes a new pathway for small farms and homesteads, offering expanded product opportunities but limiting





sales to direct-farm or homestead transactions and farmers markets. With the adoption of HEA 1424, Indiana businesses now have the flexibility to choose the regulatory pathway that best aligns with their business model, how they connect with consumers, and their long-term growth goals.

Indiana's home rule structure means county health departments have authority to interpret and enforce food codes differently. As a result, home-based vendors (and soon to be small farms and homestead vendors) often experience inconsistent guidance, conflicting expectations, and uneven enforcement as they operate across counties or try to scale into new markets. These differences were among the most frequently cited barriers identified.

Recognizing this, stakeholders recommended a statewide consistency strategy — one that keeps home rule intact while ensuring businesses receive predictable, accurate information no matter where they operate. This strategy includes:

- Mandatory statewide training for county health departments on home based vendor rules, HEA 1424 requirements, and retail food interpretations;
- Standardized inspector qualifications to promote uniform code interpretation;
- Regular state-led calibration and education sessions to align county practices;
- A cohesive statewide reciprocity process — housed at the state level — to help resolve disputes or conflicting interpretations in a fair, consistent and transparent manner;
- Clear communication pathways so businesses can understand expectations before expanding into additional counties.



Together, these recommendations acknowledge a core truth: Home-based food businesses succeed when regulations are clear, consistent and navigable. By pairing county authority with statewide training, calibration and a neutral reciprocity process, Indiana can create a regulatory environment that supports business growth, protects public health and provides consumers with confidence — no matter where in the state a product is made or sold.



ACCESS TO CAPITAL FOR FOOD AND FARMING OPERATIONS

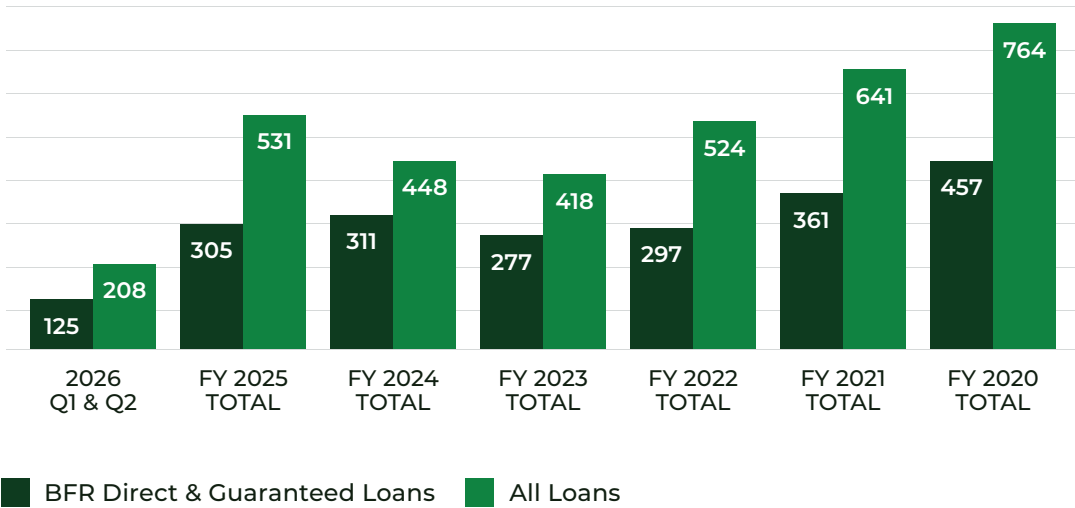
Access to capital remains a significant barrier for food and farming operations across Indiana. Whether a producer is launching a new enterprise, adding or scaling value-added production, modernizing equipment, or expanding market channels, financing often determines what is possible.

While Indiana offers a strong mix of federal, state and community-based funding options, navigating these pathways can be challenging, especially for beginning, small- and mid-sized businesses.

Many farms rely on traditional agricultural financing, but conventional loans often require collateral, long credit histories or significant equity conditions that newer or smaller operations struggle to meet. Federal programs, such as USDA Farm Service Agency loans, help bridge this gap by supporting land purchases, equipment upgrades, operating expenses and disaster recovery. Yet, these programs can be complex, paperwork heavy and take a minimum of 6 months, making it difficult for time-strapped producers to fully access them.

The first chart compares the number of beginning farmer and rancher (BFR) loans FSA has made over the years to the total number of all loans. Our goal this year is to make 308 BFR loans. You can see FSA is a little behind that goal as we are halfway through our year. This is primarily due to the 43-day federal shutdown during the first quarter, which has created quite a backlog for the agency.

INDIANA FARM LOAN PROGRAMS (FLP) 2020-2026

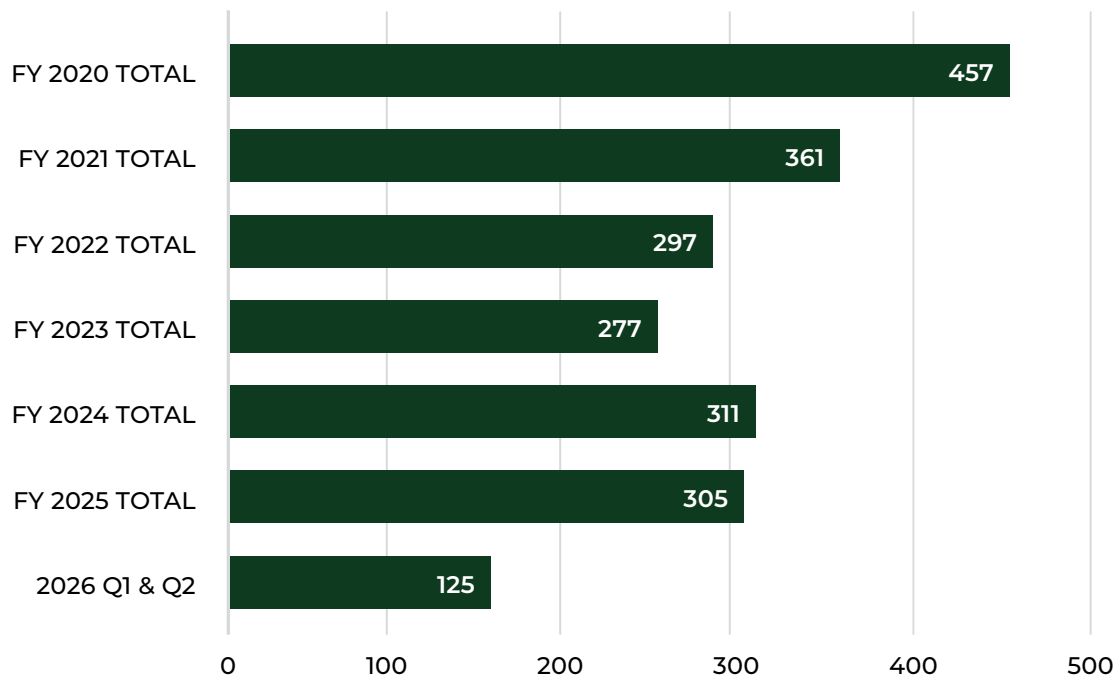


This table shows the percentage of loans made to BFR and the five-year average (21-25). Historically, most of the loans FSA makes are to BFR.

6 YEAR TOTAL TRENDS	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	5-YR. AVG.
TOTAL OF ALL D & G LOANS	764	641	524	418	448	531	512.4
TOTAL OF ALL BFR D & G LOANS	457	361	297	277	311	305	310.2
% OF ALL BFR D & G LOANS	59.82%	56.32%	56.68%	66.27%	69.42%	57.44%	63.67%

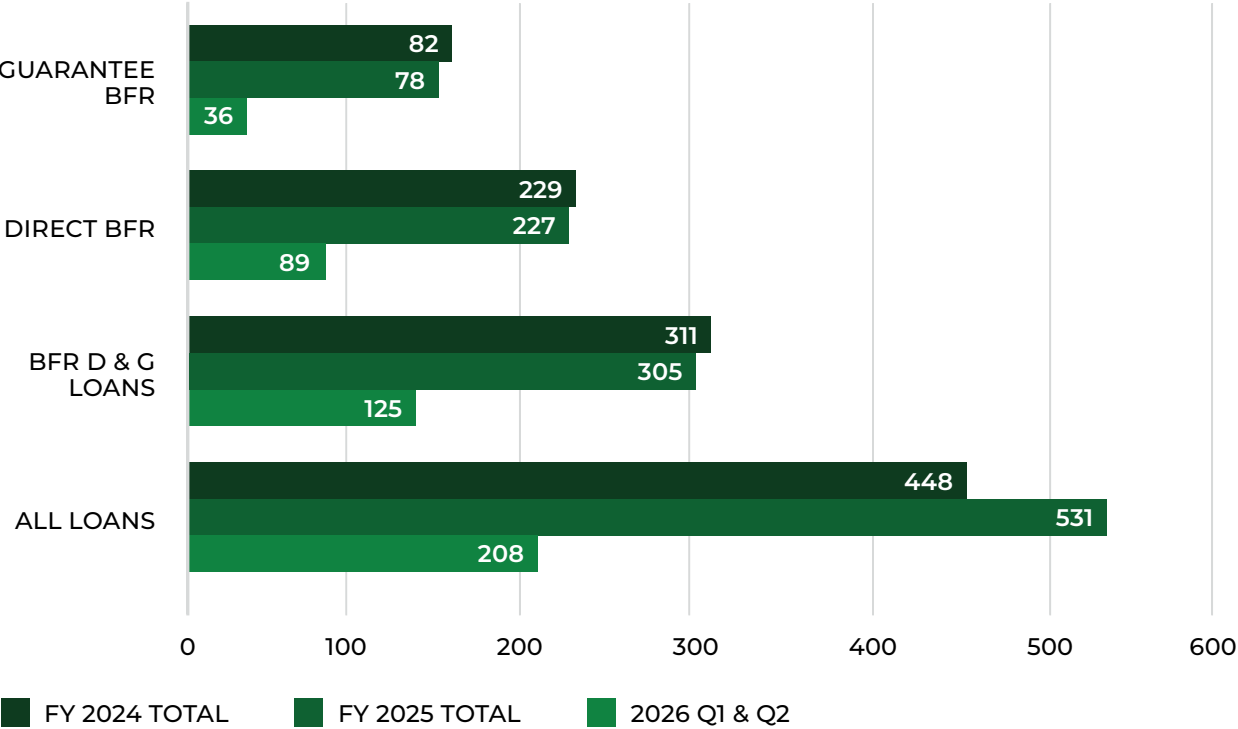
The second chart is only comparing the number of Direct (D) and Guaranteed (G) of BFR loans made over from 2020-2026. There was an exceptional amount of farm sales in 2020 and 2021, when it was more favorable to enter into farming. Since then, there have been more unknowns, increased prices of land, inputs, increased rates, more market disruptors, etc.

BFR DIRECT & GUARANTEED LOANS



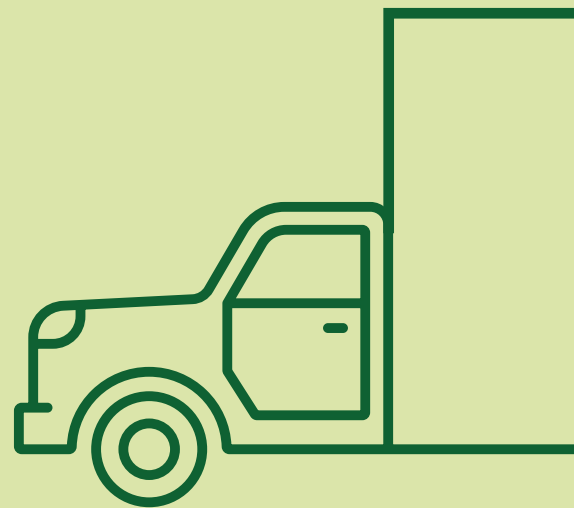
The third chart compares the total number of loans made in 2024 and 2025 to 2026, breaking them down into BFR loans, BFR Direct loans and BFR Guaranteed loans. The FSA offers two types of programs: Direct loans, which it funds, and Guaranteed loans, which are made by agricultural lenders and backed by the agency.

FARM LOAN PROGRAMS LOAN MAKING 2024-2026



Indiana has leveraged federal grants that strengthen the food system, including funding for food safety improvements through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and mid-chain infrastructure via the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure program. These grants can be transformative, but they are often project-specific, reimbursable and require detailed reporting barriers that limit accessibility for smaller operations without administrative capacity. The funding also provided in these federal level grants barely scratches the surface of the support indicated by our Indiana food and farming businesses.

Accessing capital isn't just about finding available funds. It's about having the knowledge, preparation and partnerships needed to tap into them. Strengthening these pathways is key to ensuring that Indiana's food system continues to grow, innovate and serve communities across the state.



INFRASTRUCTURE AND DISTRIBUTION CHALLENGES

Indiana's food and farming sector depends heavily on the strength of its processing, aggregation and co-manufacturing infrastructure.

Yet, gaps in the middle of the supply chain continue to constrain growth for farms and food businesses across the state.

While the state has a strong production base and growing demand for Indiana-grown and value-added foods, the systems that convert raw products into finished, market-ready goods remain uneven, creating barriers that are most acutely felt by small- and mid-sized producers.

Comanufacturing support has expanded in recent years. Shared-use commercial kitchens now offer licensed, affordable environments where emerging food entrepreneurs can produce compliant products without the high upfront cost of building their own facilities. Programs like Purdue University's Food Entrepreneurship and Manufacturing Institute and various food innovation incubators provide technical guidance, business development support and

access to pilot-scale processing equipment that help entrepreneurs move from idea to early commercialization. However, these resources are concentrated primarily in metropolitan areas.

This unevenness extends into postharvest handling and produce processing. Shared wash-and-pack-facilities sometimes called shared use post harvest hubs or aggregation hubs, and handling centers play a critical role in helping small and mid-sized specialty crop growers meet food safety standards, achieve consistent quality, and access wholesale and institutional markets. Some Indiana food hubs offer wash-and-pack areas with shared equipment, cold storage and traceability systems, while cooperative, grower-owned facilities provide shared space and equipment necessary for wholesale readiness. Yet, like co-manufacturing facilities, these post harvest resources are very limited in number and not evenly distributed across the state.

Producers and food entrepreneurs attempting to scale frequently encounter processors operating at or near capacity or facilities that lack

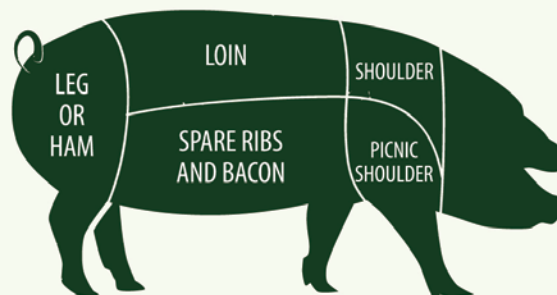
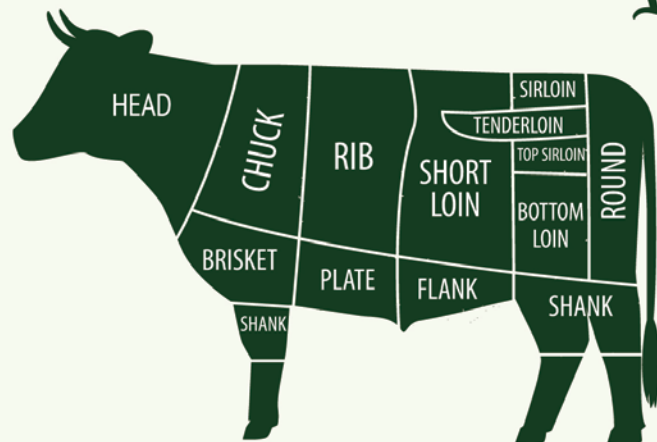
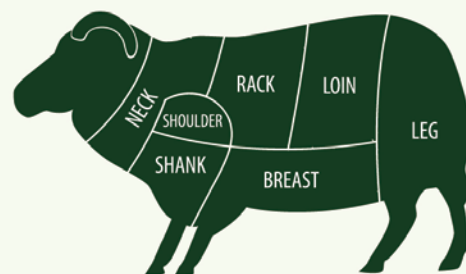
the specialized equipment needed for modern food products. Entrepreneurs with minimally processed vegetables, shelf-stable items, fermented foods or value-added portfolios often struggle to find co-manufacturers willing to take on small runs or custom processing. Similarly, producers seeking commercial kitchen space encounter widely inconsistent availability and equipment, constraining the ability to enter into new markets. The result is a system where strong infrastructure in select regions contrasts sharply with deficits elsewhere, reinforcing geographic inequities.

The recommendations in this study respond to these challenges with targeted, statewide strategies designed to strengthen the supply chain infrastructure that food and farming businesses rely upon. The study recommends supporting the ISDA agricultural-market development fund, which invests directly in processing, aggregation and co-manufacturing capacity through equipment and infrastructure grants, shared-use commercial kitchen development, mobile processing units and innovation grants that expand production capabilities. Regional food hub development efforts create pathways for public-private partnerships to build aggregation and handle capacity, supported by state matching funds and technical assistance. Enhancements to producer food safety programs aim to expand market access for growers entering schools, institutions and wholesale markets.

Together, these strategies position Indiana to build an entrepreneur-friendly and producer-ready food system, one where farmers and food businesses have the facilities, technical support and distribution networks needed to reliably move from concept to commercially viable products. Strengthening the middle of the supply chain is essential not only for expanding market access and increasing the economic competitiveness of Indiana producers, but also for ensuring that the state's food dollars circulate locally, creating and supporting thriving rural communities and a robust statewide food economy.



Butchery GUIDE



MEAT PACKING AND PROCESSING

Indiana's meat packing and processing sector sits at a pivotal moment, shaped by market dynamics, workforce constraints and infrastructure gaps that influence the future of locally sourced and processed proteins. The industry continues to be influenced by the four large national processors, whose pricing power and scale shape farmer decisions and often steer producers toward livestock auctions rather than local markets. When animals are sold at auction, they typically enter national commodity supply chains, which limits opportunities for local processors to secure a consistent, predictable supply of livestock. This also reduces farm-level control over pricing, and sends much of the economic value out of state. As a result, small- and mid-sized processors face irregular, seasonal throughput, making it difficult to plan staffing, invest in infrastructure or operate efficiently year-round. These interconnected pressures illustrate why strengthening regional processing options is essential to building a local anchored economy.

The post-COVID landscape has also introduced new pressures. After a brief period of expansion fueled by pandemic-era disruptions, several newer facilities now find themselves financially vulnerable, navigating a highly consolidated national marketplace while managing fixed costs, volatile supply and shrinking margins. At the same time, global trade continues to influence local realities, with foreign markets absorbing livestock at scales small processors cannot compete with, further tightening local availability.

Consumer demand for beef, pork, poultry and niche proteins remains strong, but rising prices have shifted purchasing behavior toward more affordable cuts, reasonable processing costs and value-added products. These trends present real opportunities for Indiana processors and butcher shops to elevate the visibility of Indiana-sourced meat. Stakeholders noted, however, that stronger marketing, retail partnerships and institutional awareness are needed to fully connect consumers and large buyers with Indiana grown protein.



Workforce shortages remain a bottleneck limiting processor throughput and the sector's ability to expand. Many facilities struggle to recruit and retain trained meat fabricators, processing technicians and value-added staff. Indiana currently has no statewide, industry-aligned training programs to build a skilled, modern meat processing workforce.

To directly address this gap, stakeholders recommend establishing the Indiana Butchery Training Program, housed within Purdue University's animal sciences department. This initiative would provide hands-on instruction, technical skill development and value-added product training tailored to small- and mid-scale processors. Designed to operate statewide, the program would supply a consistent pipeline of skilled workers, support regulatory readiness, modernize processing practices and enhance product diversification. The program could become a linchpin of Indiana's processing resilience, reducing bottlenecks, increasing capacity and supporting processor competitiveness.

INNOVATION AND VALUE-ADDED PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Innovation represents another major opportunity. Demand continues to grow for value-added meat products — jerky, meat sticks, smoked items and ready-to-cook offerings — but processors face barriers to expansion. Many stakeholders are stuck in “survival mode,” unable to pursue new product lines without outside technical assistance or business development support.

The proposed agricultural-market development fund would help fill this gap by supporting:

- Value-added production initiatives.
- Technical assistance for new product development.
- Business readiness and commercialization support.
- Equipment or infrastructure investments that enable processors to diversify.

When combined with BOAH's strengthened inspection capacity, processors would gain the regulatory support necessary to innovate safely and efficiently.



INSTITUTIONAL AND LOCAL MARKET ACCESS

Local and institutional market access continues to be a barrier. Despite strong statewide interest in sourcing Indiana-grown protein, processors struggle to enter K-12 schools, healthcare systems, universities and state parks. Contract rigidity, distributor dominance and transportation constraints reduce flexibility and make it difficult for Indiana-sourced products to compete with national suppliers.

A SYSTEM READY FOR STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

Taken together, Indiana's meat processing sector stands to benefit from a coordinated, statewide investment in workforce training, infrastructure support, market development, value-added innovation and regulatory alignment. The Indiana Butchery Training Program, paired with expanded processing support, enhanced inspection capacity and improved institutional procurement pathways, creates a strategic foundation for modernizing the industry.

FLOW OF FOOD FROM GROWER TO CONSUMER





Indiana's flow of food begins at the farm, where growers produce a diverse mix of crops and livestock that anchor the state's agricultural identity. While the state is widely recognized for its strength in corn and soybeans, our farms also contribute a significant range of fruits, vegetables, livestock, eggs and specialty crops that supply local and national markets, which contributes globally. Once harvested, products move through wash-and-pack facilities, processors, food hubs and distributors before reaching retailers, institutions, restaurants and households. At every stage of this chain, the reliability of infrastructure and coordination determines how efficiently food can move from the field to the consumer.

Seasonality shapes this entire system. Indiana's climate supports abundant summer and fall harvests, and crops like sweet corn, tomatoes, melons, peppers, apples, pumpkins and leafy greens are at their peak during warm months. The state is a major producer of watermelons, cantaloupes, tomatoes and sweet corn, generating significant seasonal volume. Livestock and grain production function year-round, though they still face seasonal pressures, including fluctuating feed costs, weather disruptions and winter slowdowns in outdoor operations.

For specialty crop farmers, seasonality brings both opportunity and constraint. Peak-season abundance often overwhelms the limited processing and storage capacity available, pushing farms to rely heavily on short-term, direct-to-consumer sales. Once winter arrives, local availability decreases sharply unless farms have invested in season-extension systems that can extend production but are costly for smaller operations. This variability affects market access, particularly for wholesale buyers like schools, hospitals and grocery stores that expect consistent year-round supply.

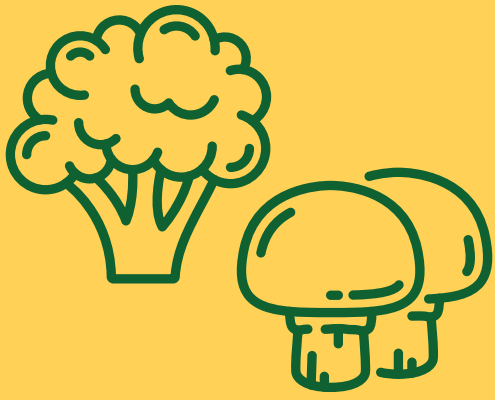
As food moves beyond the farm gate, differences in processing and aggregation infrastructure further influence how effectively farmers can access markets.

Together, Indiana's growing conditions, seasonal rhythms and uneven infrastructure create a food system with strong potential but distinct limitations. The recommendation as part of this study is to repurpose and provide support to the ISDA agricultural-market development fund, which will allow a dedicated investment in storage, processing, coordination and regional market access. More farms could stabilize their revenue, meet year-round demand, and expand their reach strengthening the flow of food from Indiana growers to the consumers they serve.



SECTION IV.

CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR AND MARKET TRENDS



PUBLIC AWARENESS AND INTEREST IN LOCAL FOODS USING CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER CHOICES

Indiana consumers strongly value local food in principle and show high awareness of where to find it. However, practical barriers, especially price and access, limit how often they buy it. A survey, based on 488 Hoosier grocery decision-makers surveyed in early 2026, explores awareness, behaviors, motivations and barriers related to local food, as well as perceptions of Indiana farmers.

Most Hoosiers do their primary grocery shopping at supermarkets (82%) and large retailers (61%), with fewer than one-in-four regularly visiting farmers markets (24%).

Awareness of local food channels is high, with over 90% recognizing farmers markets and local products in grocery stores. However, frequent usage is much lower across all channels, particularly direct-from-farm options (12%) and institutional settings (8%).

Local products in grocery stores are the most commonly and frequently used local channel (33%), followed by farmers markets (21%).

When purchasing food and beverages in general, price (79%) and taste (71%) dominate decision-making, with nutrition (51%) as the next tier. Fewer than 1-in-5 place “supporting local producers” (18%) or “sustainability” (17%) in their top three factors.

At the same time, nearly two-thirds say it is at least somewhat important that their food comes from local producers (63%), and over 40% say knowing the farmer matters (43%), indicating that local is meaningful but rarely overrides core value drivers like cost and flavor.



Freshness is the single strongest motivator to buy local (63%), followed closely by better taste (55%) and a desire to support the local economy (42%). However, price (51%) and availability (50%) deter.

In open-ended comments, respondents describe “buying local” primarily as purchasing food grown or produced within their town, county or state – often within a defined radius – and emphasize freshness, community support and small businesses as central to that idea.

Supporting local farmers and communities emerges as a consistent value across questions, reinforced by top-of-mind images of Indiana farmers as hard-working, community-oriented and often operating family farms that grow corn and soybeans.

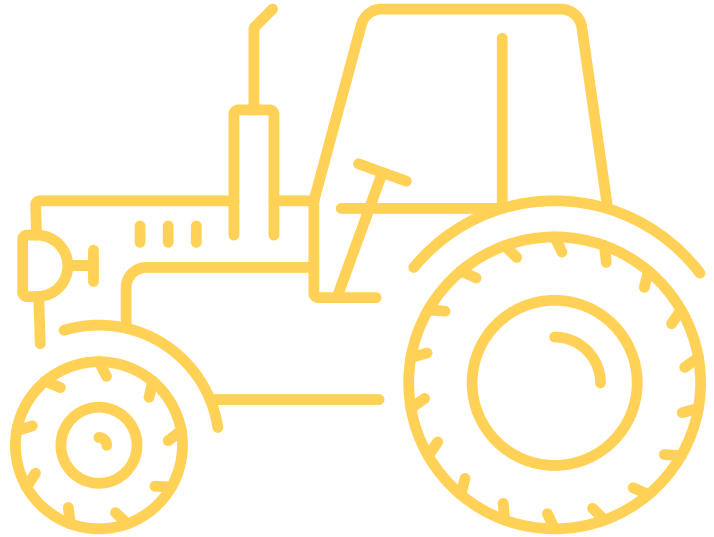
Many respondents see farmers as the “backbone” of the state and express pride in their work, even as they acknowledge economic pressures, consolidation and concerns about conventional practices and sustainability.

Despite these positive attitudes, 90% of Hoosiers report at least one barrier to buying local, with “higher prices” and “limited availability” each cited by about half.

The vast majority do buy local at least occasionally – primarily through farmers markets (63%) and grocery stores with local sections (55%) – and more than half say they would be willing to pay up to 10–25% more for local products (53%), yet cost remains a major constraint for many households.

Convenience also plays a significant role. Many consumers do not want to visit multiple stores or travel long distances, and relatively few regularly use online or delivery platforms for local foods.

Looking ahead, nearly two-thirds of Hoosiers say they are at least somewhat likely to



increase their purchases from local producers in the next year (63%), signaling growth potential if key barriers are addressed.

When asked what would encourage them to buy more local, respondents prioritize lower prices (63%), better availability in mainstream stores (55%) and stronger marketing and awareness campaigns (32%), followed by delivery or subscription options (22%).

Open-ended suggestions reinforce these themes. Consumers call for clearer local labeling and dedicated in-store sections, more variety (including ethnic foods and year-round options), better storytelling about where products come from and more convenient ways to access local foods, such as expanded farmers market hours, mobile markets and delivery.

Together, the findings suggest a clear opportunity for ISDA's Indiana Grown program to shift local food from a niche, values-driven choice to a more everyday, default option by making it easier to find, easier to understand, and easier to afford – without losing the freshness, quality, and farmer connections that Hoosiers already associate with local.



CONSUMER EDUCATION BENEFITS

Local food continues to gain traction because it aligns with what modern consumers value most: freshness, quality, community and authenticity. For shoppers, local signals quality they can trust with food that is harvested at peak ripeness, travels fewer miles and comes from producers whose practices feel closer to home. For retailers and producers alike, local sourcing is no longer a niche differentiator. It is a strategic lever for growth, resilience and shared value.



WHY LOCAL MOVES THE RETAIL NEEDLE

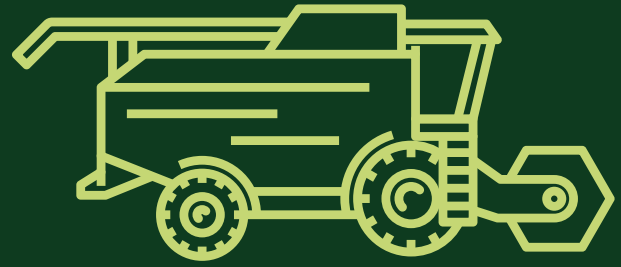
Grocers that invest in local food programs consistently see measurable sales lift. When local products are prominently merchandised, supported by point-of-purchase signage, storytelling about the farms and farmers and identity-preserved branding, produce departments have reported 15–20% sales increases. Local sourcing also reinforces customer loyalty. Shoppers perceive local offerings as fresher and more community-minded, and they reward stores that make those choices visible.

Beyond sales performance, local sourcing helps grocers mitigate supply chain risks. Working with regional suppliers shortens logistics paths and reduces exposure to disruptions that plague long, national networks. If transportation challenges arise, local partnerships give retailers more dependable access to products, especially in highly-perishable categories.

WHY LOCAL MATTERS FOR QUALITY

Quality is one of the strongest drivers of consumer preference for local food. Shorter supply chains allow producers to prioritize ripeness, shelf life and production practices that customers increasingly care about. Local growers can pick closer to peak maturity and deliver to stores within hours.

Retailers working with regional growers and food hubs have demonstrated that produce harvested and shipped within approximately 24 hours reaches shelves with freshness and taste.



WHY LOCAL MATTERS FOR FARMER LIVELIHOODS

For farmers, the economic benefits of local food systems are substantial. In conventional, lengthy supply chains, producers retain just about 17.4 cents of the consumer food dollar on average. By contrast, short supply chains direct to consumer, community-supported agriculture programs, farmers markets, food hubs and select retail partnerships can return up to seven times the share of the retail price to the farmer.

Food hubs demonstrate powerful economic impact, often returning 75%–85% of wholesale revenue back to producers. Successful models across nearby states throughout the Midwest and Great Lakes region illustrate how identity-preserved branding, shared logistics and verified sustainable practices can significantly increase producer income while expanding access to retail markets that were previously out of reach.

When consumers choose local, they respond to freshness, flavor and trust. When retailers source local, they see higher engagement, differentiated offerings and improved supply resilience. And when farmers sell local they retain more value, build stronger regional markets and keep more dollars circulating within their communities.



COMPARISON WITH OTHER STATES’ SUCCESSFUL MODELS

Many states currently operate local food program models with success. Included in the chart below are Indiana’s surrounding states as well as a few other notable examples.

STATE	LOCAL FOODS-BASED PROGRAM(S)	PROGRAM FUNDING	KEY FUNCTIONS OF STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OHIO	Ohio Proud <i>Farm to School Initiative</i> <i>Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program</i> <i>Ohio Food Program</i>	Ohio Proud is a membership fee-based program which also receives both dedicated and general appropriations. The Ohio Proud membership fee is \$50 annually. The Ohio Proud program is comprised of 348 members across 160 farms. The Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program and the Ohio Food Program totaled about \$31 million in 2024.	The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) is a full-service regulatory and market-development agency that spans administration, fairs, animal health, auctioneers, communications, dairy, enforcement, dog breeding, farmland stewardship, food safety, hemp, laboratories, legal, livestock environmental permitting, market development, meat inspection, plant health, soil and water stewardship, and weights and measures. Together, ODA’s market development and meat inspection units complement regulatory divisions to promote Ohio products while safeguarding public health across the farm-to-consumer chain.

STATE	LOCAL FOODS-BASED PROGRAM(S)	PROGRAM FUNDING	KEY FUNCTIONS OF STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
ILLINOIS	Illinois Product Illinois Grown <i>Illinois Grocery Initiative</i>	Illinois Product and Illinois Grown membership and program funding are not disclosed. The Illinois Grocery Initiative reported about \$10 million in fiscal year 2025 awards. Additionally, the Local Foods Infrastructure Grant launches in fiscal year 2026 with \$1.8 million.	Illinois' agriculture agency pairs traditional inspection and certification roles with marketing and events functions. Divisions cover egg inspection, meat and poultry inspection, weights and measures certification, motor fuel quality testing, agricultural statistics and market news, state and county fair promotion, horse racing administration, animal health and welfare (testing), bees and apiaries, environmental programs, land and water resources, agricultural products inspection, grain dealer and warehouse licensure, and cannabis regulation.



STATE	LOCAL FOODS-BASED PROGRAM(S)	PROGRAM FUNDING	KEY FUNCTIONS OF STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
KENTUCKY	Kentucky Proud	Kentucky Proud is a free membership program which reports more than 6,600 members spanning around 5,000 farms. Kentucky Proud is backed by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund (KADF). The KADF is financed through the 1998 Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement and allocates nearly \$50 million annually to the KADF in support of statewide grant and finance programming.	The Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) is organized around service, marketing, policy, consumer and environmental protection, and clinical oversight through the Office of the State Veterinarian. The Office of Agricultural Marketing steers branding and demand generation, while the Office of Agricultural Policy administers major funding streams — such as Tobacco Settlement-backed programs — that flow to county and state initiatives. Regulatory reach spans a Division of Regulation and Inspection that touches eggs, gas pumps, amusement rides, grain buyers and produce safety. This reflects the KDA's dual role in consumer protection and market facilitation.





STATE	LOCAL FOODS-BASED PROGRAM(S)	PROGRAM FUNDING	KEY FUNCTIONS OF STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MICHIGAN	Michigan GROWN, Michigan GREAT	Operating under the Michigan Ag Council, a 501 (c)(6) nonprofit, Michigan GROWN, Michigan GREAT has a tiered membership program with a \$250 annual fee.	Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) consists of four bureaus designed to grow the agricultural economy: The Agricultural Development Bureau, Bureau of Environment and Sustainability, Bureau of Food Safety and Animal Health, and Laboratory and Consumer Protection Bureau. The Bureau of Food Safety and Animal Health houses three divisions — Human Food; Dairy, Feed and Produce; and Animal Industry — that enforce food and feed safety laws, respond to complaints, recalls and emergencies, and ensure humane livestock treatment through education and outreach. The Laboratory and Consumer Protection Bureau safeguards Michigan residents via pathogen testing, pesticide regulation and metrological diagnostics. Additionally, it ensures fuel quality and prevents economic fraud (e.g., credit card skimmers) through weights and measures enforcement, protecting public health and consumer confidence statewide.

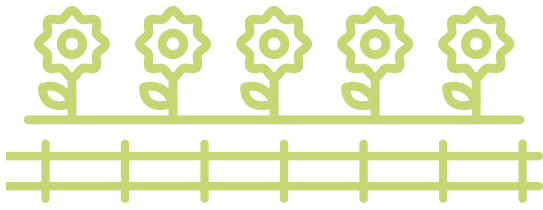
STATE	LOCAL FOODS-BASED PROGRAM(S)	PROGRAM FUNDING	KEY FUNCTIONS OF STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WISCONSIN	Something Special from Wisconsin <i>Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin</i> <i>Food Security & Wisconsin Products</i>	The Something Special from Wisconsin marketing program offers tiered memberships ranging from free to \$200 for their more than 500 members. This program receives about \$57,000 annually. The state offers grant programs which directly support the growth of local markets such as the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program which provides grants up to \$50,000 with a 50% match. Additionally, the Food Security & Wisconsin Products grant program is reimbursement-based and is allocated \$5 million annually.	The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) integrates agricultural development and consumer protection under one roof. Its divisions include agricultural resource management, animal health, food and recreational safety, agricultural development, trade and consumer protection, management services and the Office of the Secretary. Produce safety is situated in the Food & Recreational Safety division. Wisconsin's retail food establishments are licensed and inspected by the Division of Food and Recreational Safety, often in partnership with local agencies, forming a statewide network that addresses food safety from production and processing to retail and consumers. Inspection frequency is risk-based. High-risk establishments are typically inspected once or twice annually, medium-risk about once per year and low-risk on a longer cycle, such as every two years. The cadence is designed to maintain compliance and protect public health.





STATE	LOCAL FOODS-BASED PROGRAM(S)	PROGRAM FUNDING	KEY FUNCTIONS OF STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MISSOURI	Missouri Grown <i>Missouri Agricultural and Small Business Development Authority (MASBDA)</i> <i>Farm to Table program</i>	The Missouri Grown marketing program is solely funded through membership fees, which is an annual fee of \$50. Currently, Missouri Grown reports 620 members. Missouri invests state allocations to MASBDA for industry-specific grants. MASBDA receives \$1 million for dairy and beef competitive grants respectively, \$600,000 for farmers markets and food insecurity, and \$2 million in loan guarantees. Further, biofuel infrastructure and entrepreneurial agricultural grants are offered through MASBDA as well.	The Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA) is organized into five divisions: Agricultural Business Development, Animal Health, Grain Inspection and Warehousing, Plant Industries, and Weights, Measures and Consumer Protection. Plant Industries covers the pesticide control program, produce safety, feed and seed, and plant pests, while Animal Health oversees diagnostic labs, poultry, meat inspection, and milk and dairy, aligning regulatory science with frontline inspection. Food safety responsibilities include dairy programs, feed and seed inspection, produce safety, egg law, meat and poultry inspection, training and a Farmers' Market Handbook for compliance. Notably, retail food establishments are inspected by the Department of Health and Senior Services, not the MDA.

STATE	LOCAL FOODS-BASED PROGRAM(S)	PROGRAM FUNDING	KEY FUNCTIONS OF STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NORTH CAROLINA	Got to Be NC <i>North Carolina Agricultural Finance Authority</i> <i>North Carolina Agriculture Manufacturing and Processing Initiative</i>	Got to Be NC is a free membership-based program solely for North Carolina producers and processors. Currently Got to Be NC has around 2,100 members with membership focusing on agricultural and food products. The North Carolina Agricultural Finance Authority supports local food efforts through low-interest loans for farming real estate, beginning farmers and agricultural start-ups. The North Carolina Agriculture Manufacturing and Processing initiative offers matching grants of up to \$5 million for building or expanding processing capacity.	The North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) organizes its work across marketing, consumer and grower programs. It supplements these core functions with guides and publications that serve producers and buyers. Marketing spans international and livestock marketing, market news, Farm to School, state farmers markets and the statewide Got to Be NC initiative, linking production with domestic and export demand. Consumer programs protect buyers through fuel quality and pump inspections, weights and measures accuracy, and food safety (including meat and poultry inspection, veterinary services, produce safety, GAP reimbursement and retail food establishment inspections). It also handles control programs for red imported fire ants, sleep products, soil testing and termite/pest information. Grower programs advance farm viability with the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, organic certification reimbursement, and dedicated resources for small and minority farmers, tying land stewardship and technical assistance to market access.



STATE LISTENING SESSION FEEDBACK

To engage stakeholders across Indiana, we organized a series of regionally hosted listening sessions. Each session grouped counties to reflect shared markets, logistics and policy environments. Sessions were scheduled to maximize participation.

NORTHEAST INDIANA

Counties: Adams, Allen, Blackford, DeKalb, Elkhart, Grant, Howard, Huntington, Jay, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Miami, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells and Whitley

NORTHWEST INDIANA

Counties: Benton, Carroll, Cass, Clinton, Fulton, Howard, Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Newton, Porter, Pulaski, Starke, St. Joseph, Tippecanoe, Tipton, Warren and White

CENTRAL INDIANA

Counties: Boone, Delaware, Fountain, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Henry, Johnson, Madison, Marion, Montgomery, Morgan, Parke, Putnam, Randolph, Rush, Shelby, Vermillion and Wayne

SOUTHEAST INDIANA

Counties: Bartholomew, Clark, Dearborn, Decatur, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Jennings, Ohio, Ripley, Scott, Switzerland, Union and Washington

SOUTHWEST INDIANA

Counties: Brown, Clay, Crawford, Daviess, Dubois, Gibson, Greene, Knox, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, Orange, Owen, Perry, Pike, Posey, Spencer, Sullivan, Vanderburgh, Vigo and Warrick



STATEWIDE THEMES: WHAT'S WORKING WELL, WHAT BARRIERS EXIST

REGIONAL NARRATIVES

NORTHEAST INDIANA (SESSION #1)

STRENGTHS & MOMENTUM

Farmers markets and direct-to-consumer channels are strong statewide, with year-round market activity in central Indiana and robust summer access across regions. These markets serve as reliable access points, informal distribution hubs and community spaces.

Institutional purchasing and food-as-medicine continue to gain traction. Allen County and hospital partners were highlighted, and multiple counties are integrating local products into nutrition initiatives.

Organizations highlighted as key partners, such as Purdue Extension, Indiana Grown and local food councils, provide technical assistance, vendor training, SNAP-Ed classes and market promotion, consistently connecting families to local food.

BARRIERS & GAPS

Regulatory confusion and county inconsistency, such as home-based vendor regulations, create uncertainty and slow innovation for small businesses. Stakeholders reported mixed interpretations across agencies and counties. Procurement capacity loss due to the discontinuation of the Local Food Purchase Assistance program and cuts to nutrition-education of LFPA and reductions in nutrition-education staffing weakened the connective tissue between farms and families or institutions. Regions asked for state-backed local procurement to restore reach.

Middle-mile logistics and processing gaps persist, such as aggregation hubs, refrigerated routes and vehicles, cold storage, light processing like slicing and packing, ultimately limiting the ability to serve schools, hospitals and retailers.





NORTHEAST INDIANA (SESSION #2)

STRENGTHS AND MOMENTUM

Farm-to-school progress, strong farmers markets, Double Up Food Bucks improving affordability, food-as-medicine collaborations, and broad support from Purdue Extension, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, FARMWISE and the Northeast Indiana Local Food Network. Producers are eager to expand sales to institutions beyond direct-to-consumer.

BARRIERS AND GAPS

Significant last-mile logistics and the absence of pre-processing capacity, such as for sliced apples and diced vegetables, for institutional buyers; land-access costs plus zoning and development pressure; limited USDA-inspected small-livestock processing; and calls for K-12 food literacy and expanded grant support.

Create co-op cold storage, support local food councils, define “local,” accelerate food-as-medicine initiatives, seed exchanges, and develop a Northeast food hub to shorten food miles and stabilize supply.

NORTHWEST INDIANA STRENGTHS AND MOMENTUM

The initiatives include cross-sector collaboration via the Northwest Indiana Food Council; a partnership between Region Roots and the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana to focus on food-as-medicine programs; and a community supported agriculture aggregation model coordinating 20 farms and more than 100 shares across the summer and winter seasons. Culinary education (Ivy Tech) ties local food to workforce skills.

BARRIERS AND GAPS

Vendor mix at markets toward crafts instead of a focus on fresh foods and/or prepared foods; competition from larger Chicago/Indy markets; insufficient cold storage/transport; need for regional hubs that add light processing/packaging; weak retail access due to pricing caps/low offers; and thin risk management/insurance tools for small farms.



CENTRAL INDIANA

STRENGTHS AND MOMENTUM

The community's local food network features chef-farmer partnerships, with some restaurants working with more than 15 farms. It relies on year-round farmers markets — including the Garfield Park, Broad Ripple and Indy Winter Market — and strong collaborations with groups like Indiana Grown, Purdue Extension and Fresh Bucks. A farm stop in Indianapolis is a widely shared goal.

BARRIERS AND GAPS

Good Agricultural Process certification costs/navigation and buyer requirements; distribution/middle-mile logistics; need for a communications platform and potentially a Farmers Market Association; food recovery liability concerns; staffing constraints and cuts to nutrition-education capacity.

SOUTHEAST INDIANA

STRENGTHS AND MOMENTUM

A tight-knit producer collaboration, strong cross-border demand and agritourism are generating measurable gains from digital marketing, such as a website funded by a Value-Added Producer Grant. Economic development activity shows momentum across the region, including projects like Whitewater Processing, dairy expansion and the Interstate 74 corridor strategy.

BARRIERS AND GAPS

Large projects should keep products local and support small producers. The plan promotes institutional consistency through cooperative models, such as the Berry Center. It provides grant-finding and grant-writing support. It also creates clearer pathways for meat and dairy processing. Additionally, the plan addresses affordability and transportation barriers, while expanding food-as-medicine programming.



SOUTHWEST INDIANA

STRENGTHS AND MOMENTUM

Abundant farms; Bloomington/Bethel Lane farm stops; 9–12 regional markets; mobile stands; collaborative aggregation (Local Source); Amish networks; SNAP/WIC acceptance; restaurant sourcing local through distribution channels; and households setting 10% local-purchase goals.

BARRIERS AND GAPS

Regulatory overlap with the Department of Health and the BOAH; unclear rules for wholesale versus retail licensing; restrictions on egg deliveries; processing options are limited for specialty animals, such as rabbits and quail; producers want mobile and on-farm processing options; county health regulations vary too much and need consistency; the state needs a dedicated producer liaison to help farmers; and funding should target new processors, rather than just upgrading old facilities. Stakeholders asked state leaders to support local food by purchasing from these producers.



ALL REGIONS

STRENGTHS AND MOMENTUM

Farmer innovation; consignment farm stop models; strong farmers markets activities; progressing farm-to-institution efforts; and robust Purdue Extension.

BARRIERS AND GAPS

Regulatory Department of Health inconsistencies, the loss of LFPA and SNAP-Ed expansions, aggregation and distribution gaps, scarce community kitchens, institutional equipment and staff limitations, winter-season access challenges, consumer awareness campaigns and the promotion of Indiana's food and farming businesses.





COMMON PRIORITIES FROM ALL STAKEHOLDERS EMERGED:

COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CONSISTENCY

Provides support, standardizes training for local health departments, and adds an appeals process and reciprocity for inspection inconsistencies.

FOOD HUBS & MIDDLE-MILE SUPPORT

Prioritize regional hubs, fund refrigerated vehicles, shared routes, cold storage and processing equipment to meet institutional specifications, such as slicing and packing.

SHARED USE KITCHEN ACCELERATOR & LIGHT PROCESSING

Expand affordable commercial kitchen access and fund mid-supply chain equipment statewide.

PRODUCE SAFETY CERTIFICATION & ALTERNATIVE CERTIFIED PATHWAYS

Reduce certification barriers for farms and educate buyers on acceptable safety options beyond Good Agricultural Practices when appropriate.

BEGINNING-FARMER TOOLS

Develop Northeast land-transition incentives, mentorships, incubator and land-link programs, and zoning navigation to help shift acreage into specialty crops.

CONSUMER AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS AND EDUCATION

Funding consumer campaigns to raise awareness of Indiana's food and farming businesses, enhancing the Indiana Grown initiative and creating the agricultural-market development fund.



SECTION V.

ECONOMIC IMPACT AND GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

ECONOMIC IMPACT & GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding local food systems strengthens communities in ways that reach far beyond the farm. By increasing the production, processing and distribution of food close to home, local food expansion keeps more dollars circulating within the regional economy, supporting farmers, food entrepreneurs and the small businesses connected to them. These shorter supply chains help protect communities from disruptions by ensuring a steady, diverse source of food. Perhaps most importantly, they deepen the connections between producers and consumers, bridging rural and urban communities, fostering trust in how food is grown and building a stronger sense of regional identity. Together, these benefits make local food expansion an engine for economic vitality, environmental sustainability and community well-being.

Indiana's agriculture sector plays a far broader economic role than the farm fields, livestock barns and processing plants that define its direct activity. Its true influence is seen in the extensive indirect and induced contributions that ripple across the state's economy.

According to the 2019 *Value of Indiana Agriculture* report, primary agriculture and forestry support more than 108,000 direct jobs and generate roughly \$8.6 billion in direct GDP. However, the sector's impact nearly doubles when accounting for upstream suppliers, transportation, manufacturing, retail, services and household spending. In total, agriculture supports about 200,070 jobs statewide, meaning that for every job inside the farm gate, almost one additional job is created elsewhere in Indiana's economy through indirect and induced effects. These spillover impacts add another \$8.8 billion



to the state economy, effectively matching the sector's direct GDP contribution dollar for dollar. The livestock industries offer a powerful example of this multiplier effect.

For instance, Indiana's pork industry produces \$1.38 billion in direct economic value, but it also drives an additional \$1.55 billion in indirect and induced output as farms purchase feed, equipment, veterinary services, transportation and as employees spend their wages in local communities. Poultry production yields a similar pattern — \$806.6 million in direct value but another \$933 million in ripple effects. Dairy adds \$453 million beyond its \$533 million direct output, and beef adds \$143 million on top of its \$174 million direct activity. Altogether, the combined livestock sectors contribute nearly \$6 billion, with roughly half of that impact coming from the indirect and induced economic activity they stimulate across rural and urban Indiana.

These effects extend even further when agricultural processing and manufacturing are included. Industries like grain milling, meat processing, ethanol production, food manufacturing, and fiber and wood products amplify agriculture's reach by linking raw products with value-added markets.

While these processing industries directly employ about 33,000 Hoosiers, they contribute to the sector's broader 200,070-job footprint by creating deep supply-chain ties and supporting tens of thousands of additional jobs in logistics, distribution, packaging, retail and associated services.

Taken together, these figures show that agriculture is more than a foundational sector in Indiana; it is a powerful economic engine. By driving demand for a wide range of goods and services, agriculture generates nearly as much economic activity outside the farm gate as within it, sustaining communities, supporting manufacturing and strengthening the state's overall economic resilience.

Indiana's agricultural economy can be strengthened by focusing on strategies that deepen its competitiveness, expand market development and access, improve resilience,

and support farm and community prosperity. The foundation lies in reinforcing the entire value chain from production and processing to distribution, workforce and innovation.

Long-term growth depends on creating strong and diverse markets for Indiana-produced food. Expanding in-state processing capacity for meat, dairy, grains and specialty foods ensures that more of the value created in agriculture stays in Indiana, multiplying economic activity across logistics, equipment manufacturing and services.

Together, these strategies include innovation, processing expansion, consumer awareness, institutional procurement, market-development funding, regulatory support, improved business onboarding, regional planning and food safety education to create a comprehensive path for strengthening Indiana's agricultural economy. When coordinated across producers, processors, agencies and communities, these efforts enhance competitiveness, resilience and long-term prosperity for Indiana's food and farming system.





SECTION VI.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

This Access to Local Food study makes clear that Indiana stands at an important moment in strengthening its local food system. Across the state, a shared vision emphasizes a food economy where Hoosiers have reliable access to fresh, locally grown foods and Indiana farms are positioned to thrive. This study reflects that collective commitment and provides the foundation for coordinated action.

This study confirms that Indiana has significant assets — productive farmland, an engaged consumer base and established programs — yet also faces the structural challenges that limit market access, processing capacity and supply chain resilience. At the same time, the opportunity is clear. Consumer demand for local food continues to rise, national examples demonstrate replicable models for success and economic analyses show strong return on investment when states build local supply chains that keep more value in local communities.

Through this process, stakeholders consistently emphasized a core set of priorities: strengthening regional processing and distribution, expanding market opportunities for farms, improving the affordability and accessibility of fresh foods for all Hoosiers, and providing clear, coordination across state agencies. The recommendations offered in this report respond directly to those priorities. They balance actions such as improving regulatory clarity, scaling up retail partnerships and enhancing program coordination with strategies to build infrastructure, diversify production and grow regional markets.

In closing, the executive order's goal was not merely to study the problem but to chart a clear path forward. This report fulfills that mandate. More importantly, it positions Indiana to move confidently into an implementation phase that can strengthen local agriculture, improve food access and generate economic benefits.

Indiana has an opportunity to build a food system that is thriving, locally grounded, economically vibrant and reflective of the values Hoosiers hold. The insights and recommendations developed through this effort create a strong foundation for that vision, offering a clear roadmap for strengthening the middle of the supply chain, expanding market access and ensuring that more Indiana-grown food reaches Indiana families, institutions and communities. With a shared understanding of both the barriers and the strengths ahead, the next essential step is turning strategy into action. Indiana's food system will only reach its full potential if the state commits to long-term, coordinated investment—treating this work not as a temporary initiative, but as a sustained priority that supports farms. By advancing these findings with intention and targeted support, we can create a thriving, robust, Indiana agriculture-first system that delivers lasting economic and quality-of-life benefits across every region of the state.

