

Good News for Local Foods in the Farm Bill

Programs that Support Agricultural Production and Marketing

- **Farmers' Market Promotion Program:** Funding for this program was increased to \$33 million over five years which will go into one-year, competitively awarded grants of up to \$75,000 to promote farmers' markets. \$5 million will be available in the next fiscal year.
Contact: Debra Tropp at USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (202) 690-0031, www.ams.usda.gov, or the NM Farmers Marketing Association (505) 983-4010.
- **Value-added Agricultural Market Development Program:** This program focuses on enhancing a farmer and rancher's share of the final retail food dollar by adding value through product differentiation and packaging, processing, marketing, and distribution innovations, including renewable energy. Funding for the program was actually cut, however, a priority was established for projects that focus on marketing and distribution of locally produced agricultural goods. 10 percent of this funding has been earmarked to go to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and 10 percent for small/mid-sized producers. Individual producers and producer cooperatives are eligible for this funding.
Contact: Applications go through each state's Rural Development office. New Mexico Rural Development can be reached at (505) 761-4950 or www.rurdev.usda.gov/nm/. The USDA Rural Development Office can be reached at (202) 619-7980.
- **Specialty Crop Block Grants:** Funding for this program was increased to \$224 million over five years. Each state's Department of Agriculture receives a minimum of \$100,000 plus an additional amount according to its portion of specialty crop production. The Departments have discretion over how these funds are spent. Eligible uses include, but are not limited to, "buy local" and state product market campaigns, as well as the promotion of single commodities, research, food safety, education, environmental concerns, cooperative formation and development, and improvement of distribution systems.
Contact: Information on applying for Specialty Crop grants can be found at the NM Department of Agriculture site www.nmdaweb.nmsu.edu. Contact NMDA at (575) 646-4929 or Craig Mapel, NMDA at (505) 852-3088.
- **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program:** This new program provides \$75 million for grants to governmental and non-profit organizations that provide assistance to new and beginning farmers. Grants of up to \$250,000 can be used for activities such as helping new farmers acquire land, creating mentorship/apprentice programs, enterprise and financial training, and teaching basic livestock and crop production practices. A request for proposals is likely to be issued in January 2009. For more information see: the CSREES @ <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/reporting/stakeholder/bfrdp.html> & the Land Stewardship Project website http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/12_bfrdp_2008.pdf

Programs that Benefit Food Businesses

- **Financing for Local Food Enterprises:** gives priority to businesses, producers and non-profits involved in local food distribution and marketing for USDA-backed loans granted through the Rural Business and Industries Loan and Loan Guarantee program. These loan guarantees are only available for applicants in USDA-designated rural areas.
Contact: For more information contact the NM Rural Development Office at (505) 761-4950 or www.rurdev.usda.gov/nm.
- **Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Center:** This new program provides \$3 million in grants to non-profit organizations to promote development of enterprises that distribute and market healthy and locally produced foods to underserved urban, rural, and tribal communities. It also establishes a center within the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service to provide outreach, technical assistance, and feasibility study grants. For more information on this program contact the Northeast Midwest Institute at ahunt@nemw.org or (202)464-1016.
- **Rural Micro-enterprise Assistance Program:** Another new program, this provides \$15 million over four years for non-profits and local and state governmental agencies to support the development of new small businesses in rural sectors. The funding can be used to provide rural entrepreneurs with micro-financing loans of up to \$50,000 and/or to provide training, support and market development assistance to rural micro-entrepreneurs. The program will be administered by the USDA Rural Business Cooperative Service, www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/. For more information contact the NM Rural Development Office at (505) 761-4950.

Programs that Benefit Consumers

- **Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program:** Funding for this program was increased to \$20.6 million annually. The funding provides vouchers for low-income seniors to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets, CSA's, roadside stands and other direct-marketing venues. NM will receive \$337,000 annually. *Farmers and ranchers, expect new customers!*
Contact: Deanna Torres, Director of NM Department of Health WIC and Commodity Food Supplement Program, (505) 476-8814. The program is co-administered by the NM Farmers Marketing Association, (505) 983-4010 or www.farmersmarketsnm.org.
- **USDA "Food Desert" Study:** This provides at least \$500,000 in funding to the USDA Economic Research Service to study how many areas lack access to healthy and fresh food retail access and identify strategies to improve access. For more information contact Pam Roy at Farm to Table at (505) 473-1004 x11.
- **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations:** This provision allows (but does not mandate) the creation of a "Traditionally and locally-grown food fund" where 50% of the food provided through the FDPIR program should be produced by Native Americans. *A great opportunity for Native American farmers!*

- **Community Food Projects:** Funding for this program was maintained at \$5 million annually for ten years. Non-profit organizations may apply for this funding (with a 50% match) to develop innovative solutions to address local hunger, nutrition, and food access issues, often by connecting low-income people with fresh foods direct from farmers or community. *The Southwest Marketing Network can help your organization apply for this grant. Pre-proposals are usually due in January, so start planning now!*
Contact: Ilana Blankman, Farm to Table, (505) 473-1004 or info@farmtotablenm.org. Also see the Community Food Security website for help with applying, www.foodsecurity.org, or call (503) 954-2970. USDA Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service administers the program and you can contact Elizabeth Tuckermanty (202) 205-0241.

Programs that Benefit Children and Schools

- **Local Preference for School Food Purchases:** A big victory for Farm to School advocates, this rule allows local schools to give preference to locally grown foods when purchasing food for school meals will federal funds. Contact Marion Kalb, National Farm to School Program Director at (505) 474-5782 or marion@foodsecurity.org
- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program:** This program was expanded to all states to provide at least \$100,000 in funding for schools to provide additional fresh fruits and vegetables as a daily snack. New Mexico will receive \$707,123 in 2008-9 to increase up to \$2 million through 2011.
Contact: NM Public Education Department, Nutrition Service Bureau—Leonard Padilla (505) 827-1821.

Programs that Benefit the Land

- **Organic Conversion, Technical, and Education Assistance:** Allows producers to receive up to \$20,000 per year in payments and technical assistance for organic practices and practices related to the conversion to organic practices. The funding is made possible through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/EQIP.
- **Farmland Protection Program:** Funding was increased to \$743 million over five years to provide matching funds for states to help purchase working farmland (through conservation easements). Applications go through the NM Natural Resource Conservation Service office, (505) 761-4462 or www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov.

Thanks to Alan Hunt, Northeast Midwest Institute for the information contained in this fact sheet.

This fact sheet was produced by **Farm to Table** and the **New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council**. For more information on food and agriculture policy, see our website www.farmtotablenm.org/policy or call (505) 473-1004.