



United States Department of Agriculture

# USDA Accomplishments 2009-2011

Secretary Tom Vilsack

## Local and Regional Food Systems

The Obama Administration and USDA support efforts to strengthen local and regional food systems – helping farmers of all types and sizes take advantage of new opportunities and succeed in today's diverse marketplace. The dramatic growth of local food markets over the past few years has spurred job growth in local food production and related industries, keeping more wealth in rural communities and more farmers on their land.

The Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF) initiative is the face of USDA's commitment to serving this growing sector of agriculture. An innovative management initiative with no dedicated funding and no fulltime staff, KYF encourages collaboration across agencies to improve our response to congressional mandates related to local and regional food; to increase the transparency and effectiveness with which we implement existing programs; and to foster a national conversation about the importance of agriculture to our communities and lives. In three years, the KYF initiative has help expand local food sales and direct farmer-to-consumer sales – worth \$4.8 billion and \$1.2 billion respectively in 2008.

### Helping producers and businesses pursue new opportunities in local and regional food

- USDA released the KYF Compass, an electronic resource to showcase USDA's resources and accomplishments related to local and regional food systems over the last three years. The Compass consists of an interactive U.S. map showing local and regional food projects – from farm to school, to infrastructure development, to farmers markets and local distribution – funded by USDA, and an accompanying narrative containing resources, case studies, photos and video documenting the impacts of this work.
- The KYF website – [www.USDA.gov/KnowYourFarmer](http://www.USDA.gov/KnowYourFarmer) – provides a one-stop shop for information on the more than 25 programs at USDA that support local and regional agriculture.
- Through KYF, USDA has improved the way our programs work for local food producers and businesses. We have supported a new food safety tool for farms interested in becoming certified to sell to new markets, clarified rules to help entrepreneurs develop mobile slaughter facilities for small meat producers, and engaged in other efforts to help farmers and ranchers operate safe, successful businesses.

### Supporting new technologies to increase marketing opportunities

- USDA is connecting low-income consumers with local farmers and ranchers through the installation

of electronic benefit terminals at farmers markets and farm stands. Over 2,400 farmers markets and farm stands are now authorized to accept EBT, an increase of 51% over last year. It means increased revenues for farmers and improved access to fresh foods.

- To help connect farmers and consumers, USDA has improved its data collection related to the growing local food market. Web developers have used our data to develop apps, virtual sales platforms, maps and other high-tech tools.
- USDA continues to support research and technology for farmers and ranchers improving production efficiency. In two years, our successful High Tunnel program helped producers across the country install nearly 4,500 greenhouses on their land to extend the growing season, reduce input costs and preserve natural resources.

### Improving infrastructure to connect producers with new markets

- USDA programs like the Farmers Market Promotion Program, Specialty Crop Block Grants and Community Facilities program are supporting new local food infrastructure, including retail outlets, processing facilities, school kitchens, and farmers markets. We have seen a 54% increase in the number of farmers markets since 2008 to over 7,200 in 2011.
- Winter farmers markets are also on the rise, even in northern states. Over 1,200 markets operate through the winter nationwide, an increase of nearly 40% since 2010. Winter markets help reduce some of the volatility in farmers' seasonal incomes while improving consumer access to fresh, local food year-round.
- In addition to farmers markets, communities are also developing innovative models of food storage, distribution and marketing and USDA is proud to support these efforts. Nationwide, there are now at least 170 food hubs: places where local farmers can aggregate and collectively market their produce and wares to large wholesalers and other buyers. USDA is helping disseminate information and best practices between and across communities, reaching out to thousands of interested Americans.

- To address a lack of local meat processing infrastructure that hampers opportunities for livestock and poultry producers, USDA is supporting the construction of new plants, facilitating the development of mobile slaughter units, and providing technical support. In FY11, our Small Plant Help Desk responded to 2,300 inquiries, assisting small and very small processing plants in meeting food safety requirements.

### Improving access to healthy, local food

- In FY11, \$40 million was appropriated to the WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs, which help mothers, young children and the elderly access fresh, local fruits and vegetables at farmers markets and other eligible direct-market locations. Through partnerships with foundations and community organizations we have been able to leverage millions of dollars of philanthropic funding to multiply our impact.

### More collaboration and better coordination of resources

- The KYF task force has reduced longtime bureaucratic barriers to provide more effective support and expand marketing opportunities in the local foods arena. Many of the issues we work on bridge multiple agencies; for example, farm-to-school advocates must navigate the Agricultural Marketing Service's school food procurement guidelines and the Food and Nutrition Service's rules on implementation of school meal programs. As part of the KYF initiative, these two agencies launched a joint Farm-to-School Team to coordinate efforts.
- The KYF task force also encourages new relationships with other Federal agencies working on related issues. In 2011, USDA partnered with the Centers for Disease Control to help it incorporate the agricultural perspective into its work on local and regional food issues.

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