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Kansas Food Bank

Second Harvest Community Food Bank

Testimony in support of HB 2564

Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of Harvesters—The Community Food Network, the Kansas Food Bank and Second Harvest Community Food Bank, which together provide food assistance to the food insecure in all 105 counties in the state.

We support HB 2564 which establishes a statewide Farm to Food Bank program. Kansas farmers feed the world. The Farm-to-Food Bank program will help them feed their neighbors.

FOOD BANKS

Last year, Kansas' three non-profit food banks together distributed more than 46 million pounds of food to a network of 555 charitable food pantries throughout the state, from our smallest rural communities to major metropolitan areas. More than 85% of the food we distribute is donated by producers, processors, distributors and retailers from Kansas and around the country, as part of our partnership with Feeding America.

HB 2564 will make it possible for Kansas' food banks to acquire food directly from Kansas farmers for distribution to food pantries around the state.

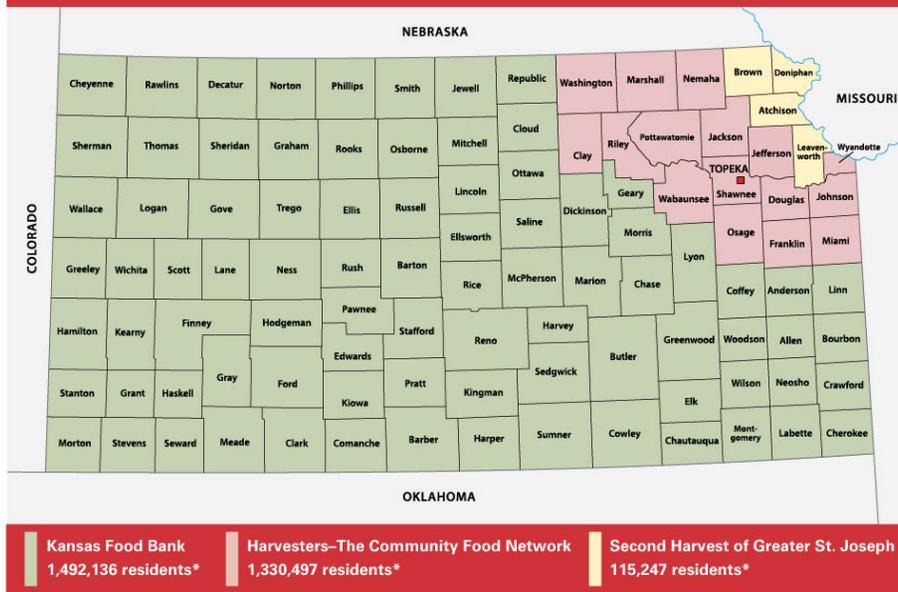
TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS

The Farm-to-Food Bank program builds on the success of the current Local Food Purchase Assistance program (LFPA), a short-term USDA-funded program managed by the Kansas Department of Agriculture and Kansas' food banks.

In 2023, the federally funded LPFA program in Kansas provided funds to food banks to purchase nearly \$2.5 million worth of locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, beef, pork, honey and cheese.

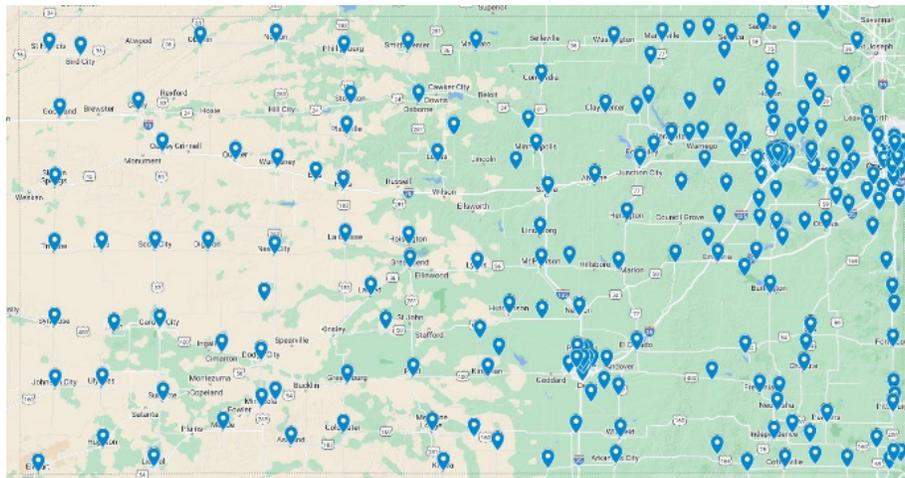
Kansas' food banks distributed those nutritious foods to 375 local food pantries and mobile distribution sites in 98 counties. Funding for the federal LPFA program ends in 2024.

State of Kansas Food Bank Service Areas



* Based on 2020 Census.

Food banks of Kansas service area map



LFPA distribution sites, 2023

HOW IT WORKS

Agriculture is Kansas’ biggest industry, and the resources each individual farmer pours into the land are significant. It is a loss for all of us when edible crops are plowed under because a farmer can’t find a buyer, the crop isn’t “market grade” or the farmer can’t afford to harvest the crop to donate it. The proposed Kansas Farm-to-Food Bank program would provide resources for food banks to purchase food or facilitate the donation of food by paying for harvesting, packing and transportation.

The program is designed to be very efficient, utilizing the current distribution systems of Kansas' three food banks to provide nutritious, Kansas grown and raised food to food pantries serving those in need throughout the state.

FOOD SECURITY

The Kansas Farm-to-Food Bank program is an investment in local and regional food production that will improve our state's self-sufficiency. We all experienced the food supply chain challenges during COVID and we realized how dependent we have become on national and multi-national food production. This program will help build the food security of our state by providing stability for Kansas' small and non-traditional crop farmers as they build capacity to feed their communities.

The program also helps the food security of our neighbors. The majority of food pantries in Kansas are run entirely by volunteers and they are stretched thin. Record-high grocery prices affect both low-income families and the pantries that serve them.

In the *Food Assistance and Hunger in the Heartland 2021* study, when Kansas food pantries were asked what was the most important thing the food banks could provide them that would allow them to better serve their clients, the top answer was "more fresh produce." This program helps meet many statewide needs.

INVESTING IN FARMERS AND FAMILIES

We know a Farm-to-Food Bank program can work well in Kansas because we've seen how successful the LFPA program has been for both Kansas farmers and the food pantries serving their communities. Some feedback we've received from producers and pantries:

"The program has been a great way to get local produce into the hands of those in our community who need it. It was a wonderful addition to our sales this year. What's difficult to say is that so often vegetable producers get the short end of the stick when it comes to government programs. We don't get the supplemental income that corn and soybean producers get. It's nice to feel appreciated. Programs like this allow us to grow and get a little income under our belts to make improvements."

- AGB Produce, Manhattan

"Our largest buyer did not take a single delivery this year and has filed for bankruptcy. We were so thankful for the opportunity to work with the Kansas Food Bank as we would have thrown out \$20,000.00 of produce otherwise. They were great to work with and I'm glad we could feed people! We are looking forward to continuing the program."

- C & C High Tunnel Farms, Scandia

"I can without reservation state that the LFPA program has been central in sustaining our organization. The opportunity given to our veterans, active-duty members, and Afghan refugees to learn new agricultural skills is simply outstanding. In addition to providing for needy persons, this program enables others to become members of our nation's agricultural workforce. To continue this program is of great benefit in all respects."

- Valor Honey, Manhattan

"The LFPA program has been a blessing to the mobile food pantry that distributes monthly in Garden City. We have been able to have fresh produce that is locally grown, to distribute to 275 households every

month. Our guests love receiving fresh items as they cannot afford to purchase this type of product in the grocery store due to the high cost. Additionally, many of our mobile pantry guests have medical issues such as diabetes and heart disease. The fresh produce is great for them health wise. Thank you for helping not only feed our neighbors but for providing them with healthy alternatives."

- The Community Church, Garden City

We hope you will support HB 2564, which is a win-win for Kansas.