

Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Funded in State Budget

Compiled By Staff

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The newly passed state budget includes more than \$600,000 over two years for the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program, to be coordinated by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. The program will provide much needed financial and technical assistance for farmers, communities, non-profits, and businesses to develop and expand local food markets. The program is the first of its kind for the state.

"Wisconsin farmers and small food manufactures produce an abundance of wonderful food. Increasing access to local markets is a win-win solution for the farmer, retailer and consumer," says Mark Olson of Renaissance Farm, Spring Green. "Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin will help create the structure to link all of the players and will provide the producer training necessary to increase locally produced food in our schools, grocery stores and restaurants."

Over the course of many months, DATCP convened meetings with farm groups, business leaders, and non-profit groups to discuss barriers to bringing locally produced food to regional food markets in the state. The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program emerged out of the discussions and has since received broad support.

The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program will:

- Develop, expand and enhance regional food markets for Wisconsin farmers and processors
- Meet the increasing consumer demand for high quality, locally produced foods
- Expand regional agricultural tourism in Wisconsin
- Shift 10 percent of Wisconsin's \$20 billion annual food expenditures to regionally produced food

"By funding Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin the state is making a commitment to the health and well-being of our economy which includes food producers and food consumers," said Martha Davis Kipcak of the Kitchen Table Project in Milwaukee. "As the level of awareness grows, Wisconsinites are increasing their demand for fresh, local food to sustain our communities."

In February, Sen. Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point) introduced legislation to fund the program; the bill gained over 30 co-sponsors from rural and urban districts.

"Our goal is to improve Wisconsin's economy by reducing the distance from farm to table as a result of people, local businesses, schools and other institutions purchasing more foods directly from Wisconsin farms," says Lassa.

The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program is supported by a diverse coalition of organizations, including: 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Braise on the Go Traveling Culinary School, Crystal Infusion LLC, Eastern Wisconsin Sustainable Farmers Network, Farm Market Kitchen Incubator, Fountain Prairie Farm, Glacierland RC&D, Growing Home Farmers Fresh Food Cooperative, Growing Power, Heart of Wisconsin Business Alliance, Just Local Food Co-op, The Kitchen Table Project, L'Etoile Restaurant, Local Choice Farm Market LLC, Local Choice Marketing LLC, Madison Community Support Agriculture Coalition, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, Midwest Food Processors Association, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, Northwest Wisconsin Regional Food Network, PriceDirect, REAP Food Group, Renaissance Farm Inc., RP Pasta, SHARE of Wisconsin, Slow Food Wisconsin Southeast, West Waubesa Preservation Coalition, Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association, Wisconsin Apple Growers Association, Wisconsin Berry Growers Association, Wisconsin Farmer Chef Connection, Wisconsin Farmers Union, Wisconsin Fresh Market Vegetable Association, Wisconsin Grocers Association, Wisconsin Local Food Network, Wisconsin Organic Marketing Alliance Cooperative, Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, Wisconsin Rural Challenge, and Wisconsin Rural Partners.