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**Local FARMS Act Puts Farmers Markets Front and Center**  
*Farmers Market Coalition Praises Bipartisan Effort*

Washington, DC, October 13, 2017 – This month, a bipartisan coalition led by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Representatives Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), and Sean Maloney (D-NY), introduced the [Local Food and Regional Market Supply Act](#) (the “Local FARMS Act”) to drive the 2018 Farm Bill’s promise to spur economic growth in rural communities while connecting all Americans to fresh, regionally-grown food. The [Farmers Market Coalition](#) (FMC), a national nonprofit dedicated to supporting farmers markets, joined [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#) (NSAC), in praising the bipartisan coalition for prioritizing the development of new markets for farmers and expanded healthy food access for American families.

"The Local FARMS Act streamlines and enhances programs that are critical to the ongoing development of the farmers market industry" said Farmers Market Coalition Executive Director, Jen Cheek. "The Act helps to ensure, small scale american farmers have access to viable markets for the fruits of their labor."

The Local FARMS Act supports the expansion of new market opportunities for American family farmers by expanding the [Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program](#) (FMPP). Since FMPP’s creation, the number of farmers markets in America has more than doubled from 3,137 to over 8,684 today. These markets, along with other direct-to-consumer marketing opportunities, represent a \$3 billion market and provide a livelihood for roughly 110,000 American farmers and ranchers.

Farmers from across the country have been quick to praise the Local FARMS Act, including Will Reed of [Native Son Farm](#), a certified Naturally Grown operation out of Tupelo, MS, and chairman of the board for the [Mississippi Sustainable Agriculture Network](#).

“From economic development to community health, local food production is key to solving many of the challenges facing Mississippi,” said Reed. “The Local FARMS Act will work to strengthen our local food system by helping to bridge the gaps that exist between local farmers and larger institutional buyers such as schools and hospitals.”

As the American farm economy struggles through a multi-year downturn, family farmers have increasingly turned to opportunities in the local and regional food markets as a way of sustaining

and even growing their businesses. USDA's Economic Research Service has found that farmers' bets on local have paid off – farmers who market food directly to consumers have a greater chance of remaining in business than similarly sized farms that market through traditional channels.

For more information, a [summary](#) and [detailed outline](#) of the Local FARMS Act are available on the NSAC website.

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*The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to strengthening farmers markets for the benefit of farmers, consumers, and communities. For more information about the Farmers Market Coalition, visit [www.farmersmarketcoalition.org](http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org)*

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## Extras

“From economic development to community health, local food production is key to solving many of the challenges facing Mississippi,” said Will Reed of [Native Son Farm](#), a certified Naturally Grown operation out of Tupelo, MS, and chairman of the board for the [Mississippi Sustainable Agriculture Network](#). “The Local FARMS Act will work to strengthen our local food system by helping to bridge the gaps that exist between local farmers and larger institutional buyers such as schools and hospitals. Continuing the growth and success of our state’s farm to school program is an essential step toward curbing childhood obesity and ensuring that we have another generation of farmers interested in growing food.”

“Programs that support local and regional food systems are essential to the success of our emerging generation of farmers,” said Jennifer Silveri, Director of Field Operations at [Michigan Food & Farming Systems](#) (MIFFS). “They are also vital for the security and integrity of our food system, and for ensuring equitable access to fresh, nutrient dense foods. The farmers and organizations that rely on these programs to support farm and food systems across the country have spent a lot of their time, energy and resources on advocating for Congress’ support. We hope that Congress will take up the measures of the Local FARMS Act and that time and energy will have been well spent.”

“Times are tight right now, a farmer has to be a jack of all trades to get by,” said Andy Heck, Owner and Operator of [Heck’s Harvest](#) in Springfield, Illinois and board president of [Illinois Stewardship Alliance](#). “You’ve got to not only grow the best food, but also have a smart business plan, savvy marketing, the right training. We’re not looking for a handout, we’re looking for a hand up – and that’s what the Local FARMS Act does. This bill gives us an opportunity to reach new markets so that we can make a decent living and keep our farms in business.”

“The Local FARMS Act will provide small family farmers with the tools they need to transition to value-added enterprises, higher value consumer-driven markets and create valuable linkages to grow a more vibrant regional food economy,” said Cherie Schenker of McCune, Kansas’ [Schenker Family Farms, Inc.](#) Over the years, Schenker Family Farms has received three USDA Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG), which have

helped them to develop and launch their value-added product line. Value-added products, which include things like bread, apple cider, and honey, bring in added income for farmers and also help them to diversify their risk and revenue. Schenker is also a member of the [Kansas Rural Center](#).

As the American farm economy struggles through a multi-year downturn, family farmers have increasingly turned to opportunities in the local and regional food markets as a way of sustaining and even growing their businesses. USDA's Economic Research Service has found that farmers' bets on local have paid off – farmers who market food directly to consumers have a greater chance of remaining in business than similarly sized farms that market through traditional channels.

“The local food market has clearly matured into an economic driver of real significance for American farmers and rural communities,” said NSAC Policy Specialist Wes King. “The historic investments made by the 2014 Farm Bill were a major factor in driving that growth, and as Congress begins work on the next farm bill we hope that they will continue to support America’s family farmers by including the Local FARMS act in the next farm bill.”

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