

Local Agriculture Market Program – Dear Colleague Letter
Led by Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (D-ME)

More information / sign-on to the letter contact: Kelliann Blazek in Congresswoman Pingree's office - Kelliann.Blazek@mail.house.gov or 202-225-6116

Dear Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, Chairman Conaway, and Ranking Member Peterson,

As you negotiate the 2018 Farm Bill, we urge you to include the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) in the final farm bill text.

As you know, the overall farm economy has been strained in recent years and this has necessitated the development of new markets for farmers. For example, the local and regional food industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, growing to a \$8.7 billion market in 2015, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Consumer demand for local food shows no sign of slowing down, as USDA predicts that local food will reach \$20 billion in sales by 2019. Especially as farmers cope with such extreme uncertainty around agricultural trade, we should do everything we can to cultivate promising domestic markets such as this.

We have seen the benefits of these new markets in our own districts, both in rural and urban communities. For example, in 2015, over 167,000 farmers across the country produced and sold food locally. The local and regional food industry has helped farmers support their local economies, preserve farmland, bridge urban and rural communities, and connect with consumers who are eager to learn more about food production. Federal efforts have been integral to the growth of these new markets, and we have the opportunity to build on these efforts in the next farm bill.

We fully support the language included in the 2018 Senate Farm Bill that would establish the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP). LAMP would consolidate numerous existing programs that support new market development into a single streamlined program, while maintaining the purpose and eligible entities for each existing program. For example, the Value Added Producer Grant Program would continue helping farmers launch products and expand marketing efforts in local, national, as well as international markets. LAMP would be a one-stop-shop for farmers, agricultural organizations, and other stakeholders that are seeking support for projects that help farmers reach new markets. It is critical to provide permanent mandatory funding for LAMP so that there is consistent federal investment in new and growing agricultural markets.

We ask that you support new economic opportunities for farmers by including LAMP in the final farm bill text.

Sincerely,

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