

# The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program

Since its inception as a pilot program in the 2008 Farm Bill, the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) has proven to be a successful public-private partnership that has expanded healthy food options for families and sparked economic growth for farmers and communities across the country. In the upcoming Farm Bill, Congress has the opportunity to expand and improve this tried-and-true approach and help it reach even more farmers and families.

## How It Works

GusNIP invests in local nutrition incentive initiatives, which help Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants make their benefits go further when they buy fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets and grocery stores. GusNIP also includes the Produce Prescription program, which allows healthcare providers to issue produce vouchers to patients with low income and promote healthier diets.



**Helps Families Eat More Healthy Food:** People who utilize nutrition incentives eat more fruits and vegetables compared to the average American, while improving their food security.



**Helps People Lead Healthier Lives:** Produce prescriptions are helping to expand food as medicine, with impacts rivaling prescription therapies for cardiometabolic health and offering new hope for improved diabetes and glucose control.



**Puts More Money in Farmers' Pockets and Boosts Local Economies:** GusNIP generates a powerful ripple effect through local economies, benefiting farmers and businesses alike, and generating approximately \$85 million in incentive spending at local food retailers in 2022 – a 107% increase from 2021.

## Congress Can Help More People Benefit from GusNIP in the Farm Bill

In order to ensure that nutrition incentives and produce prescriptions can reach more families and help more farmers, Congress must take action in the Farm Bill to improve and expand GusNIP. **Over 600 farm, food, and health leaders** support changes in the Farm Bill to strengthen GusNIP, including:

**A significant investment in GusNIP** to expand the program across more food retailers and equip more people with low income with the purchase power to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables.

**The reduction or elimination of the non-government match requirement** to enable more partners to participate.

**Creation of a new USDA program to scale incentives statewide** and prioritize grants for fruit and vegetable incentive projects in diverse retail settings including farmers markets and independent retailers.

**Improvements to produce prescriptions** that boost scientific rigor and expedite their utilization in clinical and care management workflows.

Every dollar invested in GusNIP bolsters local food retailers and the agricultural economy while putting healthier food within reach for households with low income. Taking these steps in the Farm Bill will help ensure that more farmers markets and grocery stores across the country are able to offer nutrition incentives so that more families with low income can buy more fruits and vegetables. Increasing funding for the Farm Bill ensures GusNIP will operate at increased levels of investment, similar to that of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Current Marker Bills

Numerous lawmakers from both sides of the aisle and both sides of the Capitol have seen the potential to incorporate commonsense updates in the next Farm Bill that will help nutrition incentives and produce prescriptions benefit more farmers and families. Each bill represents an important piece of the puzzle to making nutrition incentives and produce prescriptions work better for the farmers, families, retailers, and local economies that benefit from expanded access to fruits and vegetables:

**GusNIP Improvement Act (S. 2577):** This comprehensive bill from U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI) would transform GusNIP with much-needed resources to scale up the program across the country and enable more partners to participate. Additionally, the bill provides win-win impacts for both public health and farmers with increased funding to \$150M annually and reductions to matching requirements to a 10% non-federal share.

**GusNIP Expansion Act (H.R. 4856):** This bipartisan bill from U.S. Representatives Rick Crawford (R-AR) and Dan Kildee (D-MI) will reduce program barriers to enable more partners to participate. It reduces the matching requirements to a 20% non-federal share, creates new cooperative agreements to scale incentives programs statewide, and prioritizes grants for fruits and vegetables incentives projects that work in a variety of retail settings such as farmers markets and independent retailers.

**Opt for Health with SNAP (OH SNAP) Act (S. 2015/H.R. 4149):** This bicameral legislation from U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and U.S. Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) provides significant investment (\$700M annually and elimination of non-federal match) to dramatically scale up the reach of nutrition incentives and eliminates the local cost share requirement. This legislation captures the projected funding needed to reach 80% of farmers markets and 60% of retailers nationally.

**Local Farms and Food Act of 2023 (S. 1205/H.R. 2323):** This bipartisan and bicameral bill from U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Tina Smith (D-MN), Peter Welch (D-VT), and John Fetterman (D-PA) and U.S. Representatives Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Dan Newhouse (R-WA), Jill N. Tokuda (D-HI), and Yadira Caraveo (D-CO) includes a number of provisions to improve local and regional food systems, including supporting the future of GusNIP with a reduction in the match requirements to 25% and improvements to the rigor of reviews for produce prescriptions applications.