



# GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Shapiro Stands Up for Pennsylvania Farmers, Appeals USDA's Unlawful Decision to Cancel Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program**

*The USDA abruptly and unlawfully canceled Pennsylvania's agreement with the federal government under the Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program – which would have provided \$13 million in federal funding over the next three years to support 189 Pennsylvania farms.*

*The Shapiro Administration objects to and is filing a [direct administrative challenge](#) to the unlawful decision to cut this critical funding.*

*Governor Shapiro and Agriculture Secretary Redding announced the Administration's action after hosting a roundtable at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, bringing together farmers, food bank leaders, and stakeholders to discuss the impact of these cuts on Pennsylvania's agricultural economy.*



**Harrisburg, PA** – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** announced his Administration is appealing the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) unlawful termination of the **Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) Program**, which provides funds to Pennsylvania’s farmers who supply local food banks with fresh produce. The Governor has directed **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) Secretary Russell Redding** to [immediately challenge](#) USDA’s abrupt and irrational decision to cancel Pennsylvania’s \$13 million contract for the LFPA program – which supports 189 Pennsylvania farms and 14 food banks across the Commonwealth.

Over the past two and a half years, the PDA has driven out more than \$28 million in federal funding from the LFPA program to local farmers across the Commonwealth – and in return, food banks have gotten fresh, local food from Pennsylvania farmers to help them feed our most vulnerable neighbors. That same program was set to provide \$13 million over the next three years to support the purchase of more fresh, locally grown food for food banks. However, earlier this month, the **Shapiro Administration** received notice from the federal government that they were abruptly canceling Pennsylvania’s contract. This reckless cut comes amid increased strain the federal government is imposing on Pennsylvania farmers through reckless tariffs.

**Governor Shapiro** announced that his Administration is taking this action after hosting a roundtable discussion with local leaders and farmers from Adams, Cumberland, and Schuylkill counties at the Central PA Food Bank.

“Pennsylvania farmers do the noble work of putting food on our table – and for the last three years, they have been paid to provide fresh, local food to food banks across our

Commonwealth as part of a successful federal initiative,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “But earlier this month, we received notice from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that the Trump Administration had decided to cancel our agreement. As a result of this unlawful action, 189 Pennsylvania farms will lose a critical source of revenue – and 14 food banks across the Commonwealth will lose access to local, fresh food. I’ve directed Secretary Redding to immediately appeal the USDA’s decision to unlawfully terminate this agreement and demand that the federal government honor their obligations under the agreement we signed just four months ago.”

**Governor Shapiro** is committed to protecting Pennsylvania’s agricultural and food systems. If the USDA does not reverse its decision, the state is prepared to pursue further legal action to safeguard vital revenue streams for farmers and ensure uninterrupted food access for residents.

Pennsylvania is one of the only states in the nation that uses the LFPA Program to exclusively support in-state farmers, ensuring federal dollars stay in our Commonwealth and go directly to the Pennsylvania farmers. At a time when food banks are seeing record-high demand due to high costs and our farmers are facing some of the toughest market conditions in decades — we need to be supporting Pennsylvania farmers, not making it harder for them to get by.

"I am a dairy farmer, and three years ago, I started bottling and selling milk to bring fresh, nutritious food directly to my community. Agriculture is Pennsylvania’s top industry, with dairy leading the way, yet milk remains the most requested item at food banks. Nearly two years ago, thanks to a local food grant, the Central PA Food Bank connected me with Safe Harbour, a nonprofit in Carlisle. Since then, their team has picked up close-dated milk from my farm each week, providing it to their residents and the Salvation Army-Carlisle. That grant helped cover bottling costs, reduced food waste, and, most importantly, put nutritious whole milk into the hands of those who need it most,” said **dairy farmer Amy Brickner, who runs Destiny Dairy Bar in Carlisle, Pa.** “In January, I was told funding would be frozen, but I kept donating because I knew the impact. This winter was tough — I absorbed costs I can’t afford — but I’m proud of the work I do alongside my grandmother, mother, and sons. I’m grateful for the Shapiro Administration who is taking this action today.”

"As an eighth generation potato grower, it's been our privilege to work with 5 of our local food banks in distributing nutritiously dense potatoes to help feed those who otherwise wouldn't be able to access them at their local grocery stores. It's part of our farm's mission to ensure that no one goes hungry, and to continue to provide nutritious food, feeding one person at a time," said **Lela Reichart, vice president of new business development at Sterman Masser Inc., a 5,000-acre potato, hay, and cash grain farming operation in Sacramento, Pa.** "This federal funding is critical for us to continue to ensure our work with local food banks can be included in our market plans, and that a year round supply of potatoes to the food banks that make it to people who are food insecure."

## **Economic and Agricultural Impact of LFPA Cuts**

The USDA's abrupt termination of its contract with PDA, which was signed in December 2024, has left 14 food banks all across the Commonwealth facing severe financial gaps. For example, at the Central PA Food Bank, the unlawful termination of this program will mean a loss of \$120,000 per month for the food bank — equal to 500,000 fewer meals provided to hungry Pennsylvanians every month. These cuts affect both hunger relief efforts and the farmers who supply food banks with fresh, Pennsylvania-grown produce, dairy, and protein.

"Crops are not planted overnight, and neither are food bank budgets," said **Secretary Redding**. "Supplier and buyer contracts are sealed months in advance. Whether you're a farm or a food bank, you plan your operations based on what you have to spend. Losing operating dollars means losing crops and losing customers. Cancelled federal funding hurts Pennsylvania farmers, along with food bank customers — hungry families, children, military veterans, and seniors."

The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank serves 27 counties, distributing millions of pounds of food each year. Serving more than 253,000 people each month, the food bank partners with more than 1,130 local agencies to distribute millions of pounds of food annually.

"Governor Shapiro, I want to sincerely thank you for elevating this issue. Here at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, we've been deeply concerned about the funding cut to the Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program. For our food bank alone, that cut means losing \$1.8 million over 15 months—that's \$120,000 a month and 500,000 meals that won't reach the children and adults who rely on us," said **Joe Arthur, CEO of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank**. "It also means fewer resources for our local farmers, who supply the fresh, nutritious food that makes this program so impactful. This isn't just about meals—it's about families, communities, and our local economy. So, Governor, thank you for standing up and making this a priority."

**Governor Shapiro** will continue to take action to protect vital markets for our farmers and support the work they do to put food on Pennsylvanians' tables. **Governor Shapiro's [2025-26 budget proposal](#)** increases support by **\$4 million to PASS** and **\$4 million to the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP)**, crucial programs that connect low-income Pennsylvanians with healthy, local food. These increases would bring the total funding for these programs to **\$34.6 million**. The Governor is also championing initiatives that reduce food insecurity by tackling its root causes, including raising the minimum wage and cutting costs for Pennsylvanians.

"It is an honor to represent over 27,000 farmers across Pennsylvania — men and women whose job is to ensure our communities have access to nutritious, balanced meals. As we were discussing earlier, the reality that one in five children goes to bed hungry is something we simply cannot accept. We must find solutions to change that, and I appreciate Governor Shapiro, his Administration, and Secretary Redding for making agriculture a pillar of economic development and growth in Pennsylvania. We needed this focus, and the Governor's budgets have shown he is fully committed to

strengthening our agriculture industry,” said **Chris Hoffman, President of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau**. “I firmly believe we have the best farmers in the country, and I stand by that. Every day, they work tirelessly to prevent food insecurity and keep Pennsylvania’s families fed. Thanks to leadership that values and invests in agriculture, we have the opportunity to grow and innovate in this Commonwealth.”

**Representative Justin Fleming** expressed strong support for **Governor Shapiro’s** efforts to protect Pennsylvania’s farmers and food banks, advocating for federal lawmakers to take action to restore funding.

"What concerns me most is that the federal government’s actions are literally taking food out of the mouths of children across Pennsylvania and the nation. This is unacceptable. I want to thank Governor Shapiro for having the courage to stand up and say, ‘The federal government made a contract to support our farmers, growers, and producers, and you will honor that commitment, or there will be consequences.’ Governor, your leadership is vital because it’s important that we draw a firm line in the sand,” said **Representative Fleming**. “When you represent the federal government, you represent all of us — you are responsible for their interests. I simply cannot abide by the idea that feeding hungry people is not a priority for the federal government. Governor, I commend you for stepping up and showing the leadership we need in this critical moment.”

**Governor Shapiro** will continue to stand up for Pennsylvania interests. Last month, the **Governor [announced](#)** that all \$2.1 billion in Congressionally-appropriated federal funding owed to Pennsylvania identified at the time of filing his [lawsuit against the Trump Administration](#) has been unfrozen. This lawsuit remains ongoing to secure a final judgment that will ensure the federal government upholds its commitments to Pennsylvania’s agricultural and food systems.

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Pennsylvania’s economy, with over 53,000 farms generating \$132.5 billion annually and supporting 600,000 jobs. **Governor Shapiro’s [Economic Development Strategy](#)** places agriculture at the forefront, recognizing it as essential to the Commonwealth’s growth. Since taking office, he has prioritized funding to strengthen the industry and enhance Pennsylvania’s national agricultural reputation. The Governor’s investments, including the creation of the [nation’s first Agricultural Innovation Grant](#) and the revival of the Fresh Food Financing Initiative, are key to ensuring a stable, sustainable food system in Pennsylvania and [supporting Pennsylvania’s farmers](#).

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