

Local Food, Lasting Returns: What Texas Gains When We Invest in Farmers



These days people call not having enough to eat “food insecurity.” But when Jeremy Logan was growing up, he knew that situation by a word more plain and blunt: hunger. “My mom only half-joked that we were going shopping at the ‘used food’ store,” Jeremy says, her term for the pantry based on produce that looked wilted, spotted, shriveled. Those pantry memories, and the feelings of less-than, shape his work four decades later—and the small farmers and hungry families of Texas benefit.

Jeremy now serves as executive director of the Texas division of The Common Market, one of the nation’s pre-

mier food hub organizations, with hubs in four regions—Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Texas, and Great Lakes. The Texas hub contracts with more than 30 farms to provide for food-insecure families in Houston, Austin, and San Antonio.

Those purchases also help keep farmers solvent and expand their businesses. A federal program titled USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA), provided part of the funds to purchase locally produced food and distribute it to people who need it. The Texas food hub also sells to institutions, like K–12 schools, colleges, universities, food service management companies, hospitals, health clinics, and more. The Texas hub has purchased more than 4 million pounds of locally grown food with LFPA funds, and the number of contracted farms has increased by 50% during the program.

DIGNITY, NUTRITION, AND ACCESS: HOW LOCAL FOOD REACHES TEXAS FAMILIES

Covering urban areas and serving diverse clients, the hub operation is vast and complex, and rewarding to manage, but there’s one part of Jeremy’s job in particular that brings his emotions close to the surface. Lots of the locally grown food goes out for free to families in individually packed “Farm-Fresh Boxes” (picture a Community Supported Agriculture box). It’s Jeremy who de-





cides which six-to-eight food items will go into the boxes each week. "We want the boxes to have nutritional value. We want them to have balance, but we also want them to be very appealing," he says. So he insists that the foods going in the boxes are fresh, high quality—just plain beautiful. "The strawberries are the best!" he says.

He wants the people on the packing line to understand the sense of pride and duty that goes into each box, and the customer dignity that results. When he checks in with the people on the packing line—most speak Spanish—he says, "Es para tu abuela." The message: Pack this box as if it's for your grandmother.



RELIABLE MARKETS, STRONGER FARMS: WHY PUBLIC INVESTMENT DELIVERS RESULTS

On the farmer side, what's so valuable is the scale and reliability of the food hub contracts. Called "future purchase orders," these contracts promise farmers that The Common Market will purchase guaranteed pounds of specific crops at a specific time in the near future. The reliability of these contracts enables farmers to invest in their farm or go to a bank for a business loan. Jeremy has "any number of stories where farmers have been able to buy a tractor, put in a new cooler, hire more labor, purchase or lease more land." The farmers receive payment every Tuesday, like clockwork. "We take great pride in our ability to make timely and efficient payments to our producers," Jeremy says.

The food hub also offers pro bono technical advice and marketing assistance. "We don't want to be the only customer that these farms have," Jeremy says. "That's not a good business."

The LFPA funds have been central to expanding the local food economy in less visible but still powerful ways. "If you're a small farmer, you can sell locally and work at a farmer's market, and you can do some other things, but to really have access to the marketplace, you need enough infrastructure to have a third-party food safety audit and certification," Jeremy says. Those are expensive, and the steady business from LFPA funds has made the audits and certifications possible for many Common Market farmers. All of the hub's farmers have the certifications at this point, so they can sell to major retailers



By March 2025, it was announced that The Local Food Purchase Assistance 2025 Cooperative Agreement (LFPA25), the third in this series of federally funded programs that supported farmers, food banks and hungry families, had been terminated. By October 2025, the original LFPA-LFPA+ activity concluded. This discontinuation left some of The Common Market's farmer network, schools, and food access communities seeking additional support. This created a major gap to fill for farms – many of whom already had seeds in the ground and crop plans activated. The Common Market's farmer network, schools, and food access communities are now seeking additional support to keep consistent fresh food orders flowing.



*Interview with Jeremy Logan,
Executive Director, The Common
Market Texas*



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE COMMON MARKET

like Whole Foods or H-E-B stores, an iconic Texas grocer with 435 stores. "They would have never been able to spend their own money to do that without this kind of revenue," he says.

"At the end of the day, there is no substitute for local farming," Jeremy says. "But if our nation doesn't invest in the local food economy, it's going to lose out to Mexico, and it's going to lose out to Asia."

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These are not handouts. This is not a free ride. This is an investment in our local farms, an investment in small American farms.”

- JEREMY LOGAN, THE COMMON MARKET

In his view, such investment pays off quickly, sustains the local food system, and keeps the nation independent of other forces. "I don't know any argument against making that investment," he says.

BY THE NUMBERS

In January 2023, in partnership with the Texas Department of Agriculture, The Common Market Texas began sourcing and distributing local food through the LFPA program, generating the following impact:

\$9.7M in local food sales

116+ community sites, including churches, health clinics, pantries and more received local, healthy food

Children and households received Texas rice, citrus, Organic chicken, leafy greens, peaches, apples, onions, tomatoes, and more

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