

Feeding Wisconsin: Applauds state effort to support hunger relief and Wisconsin's agriculture industry through COVID-19 response and recovery

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WISCONSIN STATEWIDE- Feeding Wisconsin, the state association of six Feeding America member food banks and 1,000 local food programs serving all 72 counties in the state, is grateful to receive two grant awards through the Food Security Initiative administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's (DATCP).

Feeding Wisconsin's network was awarded \$2.2 Million via the COVID-19 Food Security Network Support Grant and just over \$5 Million via the COVID-19 Food Security and Wisconsin Products Grant.

Governor Tony Evers created the Food Security Initiative in May, directing Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act funds to support families experiencing food insecurity as well as food producers and processors facing new challenges as a result of the pandemic.

In Wisconsin alone, it is estimated that over 800,000 people may face hunger this year, many for the first time—an increase of around 300,000 people due to the pandemic. This would increase the rate of food insecurity in Wisconsin from 8.9 percent of the population to 13.9 percent of the population and would mean that about 1 in 4 Wisconsin children are experiencing food insecurity.

Feeding Wisconsin's network will use these funds to support the infrastructure, equipment, and supply needs of food banks and pantries to support food distribution across the state and purchase nearly 3 million pounds of WI food product to meet the growing, and likely sustained, need during COVID-19 response and recovery. A small amount of funding will also support a point-in-time pantry participant survey conducted in partnership with University of Wisconsin-Madison researchers that will provide a better understanding of food insecurity and unique barriers Wisconsin households are facing during COVID-19.

During the grant application process, Feeding Wisconsin worked directly with Wisconsin producers, processors, aggregators, and commodity associations to source WI food products to purchase and distribute through its statewide network of food pantries and programs through the end of the year.

Feeding Wisconsin's Executive Director, Stephanie Jung Dorfman, expressed, "We thank Governor Tony Evers for creating the Food Security Initiative, which will address needs at all points in the emergency food system from farmers, to processors, to food pantry and food bank distribution efforts, to those utilizing food pantries and distribution points."

"Feeding Wisconsin and our network of food banks are grateful for the awarded funding. At a time when we are seeing an increased demand for our services and our food banks are purchasing more food than ever before, these funds are enabling us to source great Wisconsin products to distribute to our friends and neighbors during this challenging time."