



County Of Dane
Office Of The County Executive

Joe Parisi
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Dane County to Extend "Farm to Foodbank" Program to Aid in Pandemic Recovery, Meet Basic Needs

Innovative Partnership to Link Local Growers with Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin for Another Year

An innovative Dane County program that's stocked the coolers and shelves at local food pantries with locally grown produce and goods will be extended another year, County Executive Joe Parisi announced today. The county has agreed to a 12-month, \$10 million contract extension with Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin to ensure food security for those who struggle to meet basic needs as the community looks to rebound from the wide-ranging impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"This partnership recognizes that as we navigate the final phases of this difficult year gone by, recovery won't come as quickly for some and there are basic needs to be met for many families in the months ahead," Parisi said. "Few things done in the course of the past year rival the success we have seen by linking Second Harvest with our local farmers. These dollars will not only help keep people fed but also ensure markets remain as our local growers bounce back from this pandemic as well."

Dane County launched its partnership with Second Harvest last April to help meet emergency food needs during the Covid-19 pandemic. The county's original \$8 million program was extended in December with an additional \$4 million in funds—intended to support local food and produce purchasing until this summer. This newly announced agreement will run through July of 2022 and total an additional \$10 million. The county will allocate dollars from the recently adopted federal stimulus to sustain this work well into next year.

"We appreciate the trust that the Dane County Executive's office has placed in Second Harvest Foodbank to help those facing hunger while also supporting the network of food producers in Dane County," said Michelle Orge, President & CEO of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. "This funding has been an important part of our overall strategy to bring enough nutritious food to those in our community who don't always know where their next meal will come from. The economic recovery time will be long for many, and this extension of funding is critical as we continue to help Dane County residents and farmers."

Since May of 2020, the "Farm to Foodbank" program has sourced nearly 3 million pounds of produce, frozen meat, perishable products like yogurt, eggs, and cheese, and shelf-stable products like tuna, canned vegetables, and bread. Second Harvest has sourced food from more than two dozen Dane County farmers and producers, as well as other providers for products that could not be sourced in Dane County.

Scott Williams is the owner of Garden To Be, a family farm in Mount Horeb, and coordinator of a coalition of more than two dozen Wisconsin farmers. Together, the group has provided more than 600,000 pounds of produce to Second Harvest for the “Farm to Foodbank” program since June 2020.

“The hunger relief funding in Dane County has allowed us to continue our work as professional farm businesses, providing high quality fresh vegetables and fruits to those in our community who are most vulnerable, when many of our customers were not able to operate at normal capacities due to the pandemic,” said Williams. “We are grateful for the expansion of the program to show we are capable of providing much needed fresh produce, locally grown, for such large endeavors. It can be done, it's our responsibility to make sure it can continue, and as food producers, we are committed to being a part of it.”

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