



Office of the Governor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Lujan Grisham administration proposes historic funding to combat hunger**

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Friday announced the proposal of the New Mexico Food, Farm, and Hunger Initiative, a funding plan that will revolutionize New Mexico’s food system and expand effective federal and state nutrition programs, ensuring that thousands of food insecure New Mexicans have access to healthy meals.

The largest investment increase in food and agriculture in recent state history, the initiative includes over \$24 million in the executive budget recommendation to support and expand statewide food and hunger initiatives administered across eight state agencies. The administration’s proposed funding will deliver critical support to food banks and hunger relief organizations throughout New Mexico, in addition to expanding the state food system by providing additional resources for state local agricultural producers to grow more food.

“Addressing hunger in our state has been a priority of this administration from day one,” and we’ve already seen meaningful progress,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “But there is more work to do, and this funding will fundamentally change the way our food distribution system works to get food on the tables of more New Mexicans.”

Under the proposal, the Department of Finance and Administration will administer funds distributed across state agencies for targeted investments in hunger relief efforts and local food production. The Food, Farm, and Hunger Initiative includes increased funding for:

- Meal Gap Funding, which will fund food bank assistance to an additional 127,000 New Mexicans across the state, including children and seniors experiencing food insecurity in high-need counties.
- New Mexico Grown, which will enable an additional 68,850 New Mexicans to eat locally produced fruits and vegetables, meat, nuts, and other foods in schools, senior centers, and preschools.

- Summer and Afterschool Nutrition Support, which provides start-up and expansion grants to help address child food insecurity during the summer months and at other times when school meals are not available.
- The College Food Security Initiative, which provides grab-and-go healthy meals, low cost or free access to campus dining plans, campus food pantries, and/or innovations to food distribution systems to support 15,500 food insecure students.
- Double Up Food Bucks, which provides dollar-for-dollar incentives for more than 46,000 SNAP participants to purchase New Mexico-grown fruits and vegetables at grocery stores, farmers' markets, farm stands, and mobile markets.
- The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program, which provides individuals in rural communities with weekly vouchers to buy fruits and vegetables from New Mexico producers.
- The Healthy Soils Program, which will promote and support an additional 64 land management projects that improve the health, yield, and profitability of the soils of the state.

The proposal also includes a \$10 million capital outlay proposal to invest in infrastructure improvements for New Mexico's food system, including cold storage, transportation, kitchen equipment for preparing and serving meals, and facility renovations.

"Last year, the state made meaningful gains to tackle food insecurity, but we're in a better position this year than ever before to back it with a significant amount of funding," said Department of Finance and Administration Secretary Debbie Romero. "DFA has the experienced staff and required mechanics to administer the funds in the most streamlined manner possible while tracking the spending and impact publicly."

"The New Mexico Department of Agriculture efforts related to food insecurity will continue through the Food, Farm and Hunger Initiative," said Department of Agriculture Secretary Jeff Witte. "We need to work together to help all New Mexicans bring home more locally-grown meat, dairy products, fruits and vegetables."

"Financial support through the governor's innovative Farm, Food and Hunger Initiative is essential to assist the emergency hunger relief network in expanding its efforts to reach the growing number of hungry New Mexicans across the state," said Mag Strittmatter, president of the New Mexico Association of Food Banks. "The members of the New Mexico Association of Food Banks are maxing out resources to address the growing food insecurity numbers in New Mexico. This initiative will provide the needed help to purchase and distribute millions of additional meals for our hungry neighbors."

"The New Mexico School Nutrition Association has been an active participant in the strategic work around the development of the Food, Farm and Hunger Initiative and are grateful we were invited to the table," said Marie Johnson, president of the New Mexico School Nutrition Association. "This initiative will continue to ensure every New Mexican child is thriving in school and at home and that our food system is supported."

The initiative was developed by the executive in partnership with the Food, Farm, and Hunger Steering Committee, which is made up of over 250 members from 25 New Mexico counties, including farmers, ranchers, nutrition professionals, community organizations, state legislators, state agency representatives, and other food system stakeholders.