



Michigan Farmers and Vendors Participating in the 10 Cents a Meal Supply Chain

10 CENTS A MEAL 2023–2024 EVALUATION RESULTS: DOUBLING INVESTMENT AND GROWING IMPACT

10 Cents a Meal for Michigan’s Kids and Farms, administered by the Michigan Department of Education, supplements funding for schools and other non-school sponsors to purchase Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans. This section is part of the [10 Cents a Meal 2023–2024 Evaluation Results: Doubling Investment and Growing Impact](#).

Michigan farmers and food suppliers, including those with small- and medium-scale operations, benefit from the 10 Cents a Meal program through market opportunities. Since the program provides matching reimbursement grant funds, the state investment generates at least double the spending.¹

State impact has also grown steadily over time, as shown by Table 1 with grant reimbursement amounts provided by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) over the past five years (2019–2020 through 2023–2024, the year of this evaluation).

*Table 1. Grant Reimbursement Amounts and State Impact of 10 Cents a Meal (2019–2020 through 2023–2024)**

Program Year	Grant Reimbursement Amounts	State Impact (Total Spending on Eligible Foods)
2023–2024	\$2,996,154	\$5,992,308
2022–2023	\$1,675,720	\$3,351,440
2021–2022	\$976,819	\$1,953,638
2020–2021	\$667,527	\$1,335,054
2019–2020	\$461,776	\$923,552

*Note: Total spending equals double the reimbursement amounts, per the program’s matching reimbursement grant design. Dollar amounts listed here were provided by the Michigan Department of Education, including for the 10 Cents a Meal annual legislative reports.

¹ Food Program Managers use existing funds and revenue streams, including federal reimbursements for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), to cover the upfront, matching costs of Michigan foods for 10 Cents a Meal grant reimbursements.

According to the Local Food Impact Calculator², approximately \$5,990,000 in spending on eligible Michigan foods through 10 Cents a Meal yielded over \$10.2 million in estimated economic impact for the state.



While this calculator does provide a precise dollar value (\$10,228,715), this should not be considered a precise measure of impact. Instead, it is an estimate of what is considered the upper limit of economic impact, including direct and indirect effects (such as purchases of supplies or equipment needed by farmers or other food vendors to produce or sell food) taken into account through the calculator’s multiplier. However, it should be considered in discussions about the program’s impact, as economic impact does encompass the broader effects of spending.

The remainder of this summary uses grantee-submitted purchase information between September 2023 and August 2024 to highlight the numerous farms and food suppliers that sold Michigan-grown fresh and minimally processed foods through the program. Note that the total amount of allowable, approved grantee purchases that is summarized here is \$5,889,451, more than \$100,000 less than noted in the chart above.³

It is also important to note that the results summarized below are representative of the 229 grantees (of 269) that reported purchase information, which was then reviewed by MDE staff as from allowable vendors for eligible products. Additionally, evaluators excluded instances in which invoice submission errors in information were submitted by some grantees, likely resulting in overall underreporting of the total dollars spent on purchases. Using information reviewed by MDE, evaluators then applied or adjusted names for food vendor types to the purchasing data to share about the farms and food businesses participating in 10 Cents a Meal in the 2023–2024 program year.⁴

The program connected approximately 268 Michigan farms across 58 of the state’s 83 counties to school and early care and education (ECE) centers, according to grantee purchasing data (n=229).

2 Developed by economists through the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and Colorado State University, the Local Food Impact Calculator was designed to “facilitate science-based analysis of food systems projects and initiatives”. It includes a multiplier, which “summarizes the economy-wide circulation of activity from an initial shock”; a shock may include growth in sales resulting from a matching grant reimbursement program like 10 Cents a Meal. Learn more at <https://calculator.localfoodeconomics.com>.

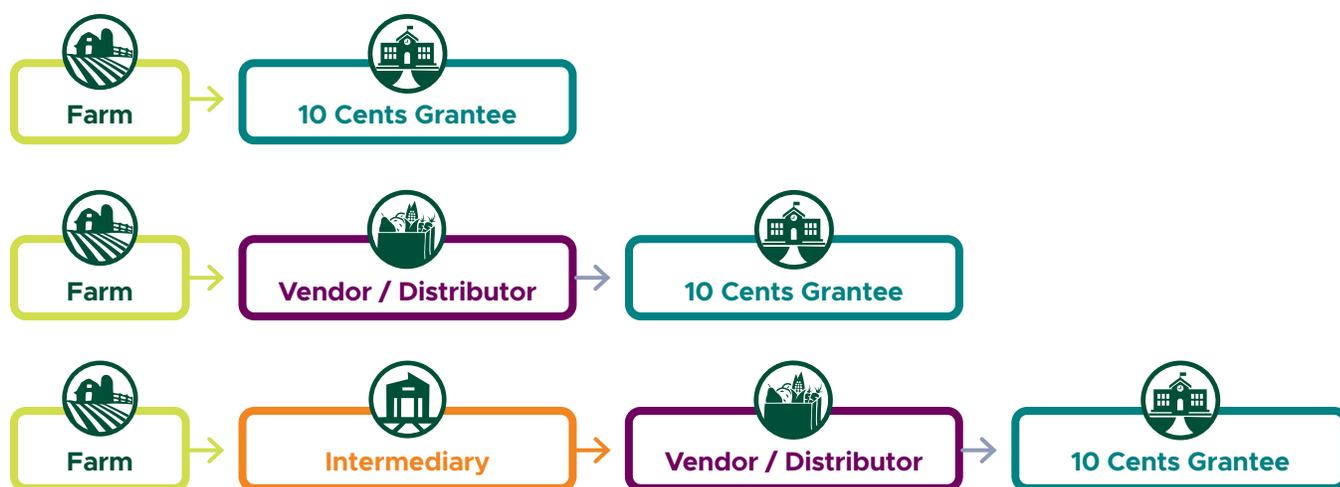
3 Per a personal communication with an MDE staff member (October 31, 2025), this discrepancy with the total amount from purchasing information from grantees is due to shifting some funds to cover September reimbursements for the 2024–2025 year from 2023–2024 funds, after the official program start changed from September to October in 2024–2025. They chose to pay as many grantees as possible from the previous year funding. This change also highlights the flexibility of the program and its administrators to meet the needs of grantees as much as possible.

4 The same naming guide for food vendor types has been in use by evaluators since the **What a Dime Can Do** evaluation report series in 2021, but entries in purchase data that have not appeared before are added as needed each year, including for consistency across years and future use. Food vendor types have been verified through various means, including websites and other online information from vendors directly, but vendor types have not been verified by vendors themselves so errors or misnaming may occur. See more about this naming guide in the **2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal Evaluation Report Appendix A: Technical Notes**.

Many farmers who participated in the 10 Cents a Meal supply chain sold through intermediaries (including food processors and specialty distributors), food hubs, and broadline distributors instead of or in addition to selling directly to grantees. Figure 1 illustrates the primary market channels through which food typically moves from the farm of origin to get to grantees.

Fifty-two other food businesses participated as intermediaries or other vendors across the program supply chain. In total, approximately 320 unique Michigan farms and food businesses were engaged in sales to grantees through this program.

Figure 1. Possible market channels for Michigan-grown products purchased by grantees



10 Cents a Meal can also leverage or increase the connection between school gardens, agricultural education, and the cafeteria. Grantees are able to purchase food at market value from gardens and farms located on-site, strengthening the financial sustainability of these educational spaces and allowing them to serve as direct, reimbursable sources of local foods for FPMs. From a cursory review of farm of origin names, it appears that between 5–10 on-site farms and gardens were reported by grantees. We cannot confirm these food sources as such; however, they are still included in the total number of 268 farms and for analysis of purchasing information.

Table 2 shows food vendor types, and descriptions of them, participating in the 10 Cents a Meal supply chain.⁵



5 Refer to [2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal Evaluation Report Appendix B: Key Terms and Definitions](#).

Table 2. Food Vendor Types Participating in the 10 Cents a Meal Supply Chain

Food Vendor Type	Description
Farm	A business that grows food, and in the case of 10 Cents a Meal, sells foods including fruits, vegetables, and dry beans grown in Michigan. These sales can include but do not consist entirely of “farm direct” sales, or when a grantee purchases food products directly from a farmer.
Farmer Cooperative	A group of farmers working together to cooperatively grow and sell their products.
Grocery Store	A retail business that sells food, including fresh produce, and household items.
Food Hub	A food business that manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of locally or regionally produced food products.
Food Processor	A food business that transforms raw agricultural products into a processed form (ex. frozen, chopped, etc.) and/or prepares products for distribution or delivery.
Specialty Distributor	A vendor that specializes in the aggregation and/or distribution of a certain product category, such as produce, in the case of 10 Cents a Meal.
Broadline Distributor	Also referred to as a “full-service distributor”, a vendor that carries large volumes of a diverse range of products such as cutlery and vegetables. In Michigan, public K–12 school districts typically source most of their food and other food service products from one primary broadline distributor.

The 2023–2024 year of 10 Cents a Meal marked the greatest reach and participation by Michigan’s food and agriculture sector than any previous year.

Table 3 uses results from previous evaluation reports to show growth in participation by farms and food businesses since 2020–2021.

Table 3. Participating Farms, Farm Counties, and Other Businesses Engaged in Sales to 10 Cents a Meal Grantees between 2020-2024

Program Year	Michigan farms supplying Michigan-grown products	Other businesses impacted*	Total farm and food businesses impacted	Counties of farm locations
2023–2024	268	52	320	58
2022–2023⁶	190	58	248	52
2021–2022⁷	174	48	222	45
2020–2021⁸	100	39	139	40

*Note: Other businesses include grocery stores, including food cooperatives, as well as food hubs, processors, and distributors.

6 McManus, M., & Tsupros, M. (2024). *Sustaining Momentum for Michigan’s Future: 10 Cents a Meal 2022–2023 Evaluation Results*. Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/sustaining-momentum-for-michigan-s-future-10-cents-a-meal-2022-2023-evaluation-results>

7 McManus, M. & Matts, C. (2023). *Amplifying Impact with More Michigan Farms and Foods: 10 Cents a Meal 2021–2022 Evaluation Results*. Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems. foodsystems.msu.edu/resources/10-cents-a-meal-2021-2022-evaluation-results

8 McManus, M., Matts, C. (2022). *10 Cents a Meal 2020–2021 Evaluation Results: Expanded Eligibility Increased Impacts*. Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems. Retrieved from <https://foodsystems.msu.edu/10-cents-eval-2022>

Unlike previous evaluation reports, we are not including in this summary a breakdown of market channels used for 10 Cents a Meal purchases for several reasons. First, not enough consistent information was provided by grantees in their purchase information, some of which is optional aside from farms of origin,⁹ and some of which may be unknown to them due to the lack of identifying information provided by intermediaries and/or distributors. Additionally, a variety of market channels are possible through the 10 Cents a Meal supply chain. In future years, MDE staff may consider building into the reporting platform a simple way (such as a checkbox) for grantees to affirm or confirm whether the farm of origin provided “farm direct” sales to them, to at least clarify this proportion of purchases for program reimbursements and the broader supply chain picture.

However, we can offer a breakdown of the product categories of eligible Michigan-grown foods sold to grantees through the program, representing the Michigan food and agriculture sector’s engagement in it. As Table 4 shows, fruits make up the majority of grantees’ total spending (nearly 86%). Though dry beans were the smallest product category purchased by grantees (.05% of purchases from just six farms), they still offer great market potential. Additionally, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) boxes are eligible purchases for 10 Cents a Meal, so they are included here.¹⁰ They were purchased from seven farms.

Table 4. Dollar Value of Purchases of Eligible Product Categories and the Percentage of Total Spending

Eligible Product Category	Total Dollar Amount Purchased by Grantees	Percentage of Total Spending
Fruits	\$5,094,840	86.51%
Vegetables	\$749,150	12.27%
CSA Produce Boxes	\$36,774	0.62%
Unidentifiable	\$5,627	0.10%
Dry Beans	\$3,060	0.05%

n=229

Table 5 that follows shows the eligible Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans purchased by grantees, with the range of total dollar amounts reported in purchase information from grantees. As in previous years, apples remain the top product purchased by dollar value (over \$4 million) as well as by number of grantees purchasing them (97% of grantees reporting purchases). The product forms are not included because they were not consistently provided by grantees. While it should be noted that many of these products were likely purchased fresh in season, there are significant market opportunities for more minimally processed products in the 10 Cents a Meal supply chain, including frozen and dried fruits and vegetables for increased availability across seasons.

9 See more details in [2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal Evaluation Report Appendix A: Technical Notes](#).

10 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) boxes are a local food purchasing option in which customers pay a farm, often up front, to access a share of their produce throughout the season. A variety of foods are typically included in CSA boxes, which can vary by farm and by the season. Some ECEs participating in 10 Cents a Meal have begun purchasing CSAs for their food programs. See more in [2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal Evaluation Report Appendix B: Key Terms and Definitions](#).

Table 5. Eligible Products Purchased by Dollar Value Range (listed in rank order)

Over \$4 million	\$103,000–\$70,000	\$69,999–\$30,000	\$29,999–\$10,000	\$9,999–\$1,000	Less than \$999
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Apples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Lettuce — Tomatoes — Blueberries — Carrots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Cucumbers — Salad Greens/Mix — Peppers (sweet & hot) — Cherries — Corn — Peaches — Strawberries — Sweet Potatoes — Potatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Asparagus — Plums — Pears — Summer Squash — Green Beans — Winter Squash — Spinach — Melons — Cauliflower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Grapes — Cabbage — Radishes — Watermelon — Shoots/Sprouts/Microgreens — Broccoli — Kale — Celery — Onions (mature & green) — Nectarines — Dry Beans — Kiwi Berries — Peas — Brussels Sprouts — Herbs — Raspberries — Cranberries — Greens, Cooking — Mushrooms — Eggplant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Beets — Parsnips — Rhubarb — Saskatoon Berries — Romanesco — Garlic — Kohlrabi — Pawpaw — Leeks — Turnips — Rutabaga — Jerusalem Artichokes — Apricots — Chestnuts¹¹

n=229

Influence of 10 Cents a Meal on Grantees’ Relationships with Farms and/or Food Suppliers

10 Cents a Meal also continues to strengthen connections within Michigan’s food system by deepening relationships between grantees and farmers and food businesses that supply to them.

In the final program survey (August), FPMs were asked questions related to their participation in 10 Cents a Meal and its perceived influence on farmers or local food vendors/suppliers. **This year’s survey results showed 59% of responding grantees (n=231) agreed that participation in 10 Cents a Meal allowed them to both make new connections with farmers and local food vendors/suppliers and to improve existing relationships.** Compared with the 2022–2023 survey results, this was an increase of 7% agreeing that participation in 10 Cents a Meal allowed for new connections with farmers and suppliers, and a 9% increase stating that program participation improved their existing relationships.

¹¹ MDE designated chestnuts as a fruit for the purposes of review of purchase information supported by MDE, so they are similarly included here.

Many FPMs mentioned by name the farms and food hubs, processors, and distributors that they had connected with or strengthened existing relationships. One FPM mentioned connecting with local farmers through farmers' markets, and another indicated "piggybacking" off relationships that another school district already had in place as a long-time grantee. Another mentioned "positive working relations," including being introduced to a local committee to help them increase community awareness.

Notably, the 2023–2024 10 Cents a Meal program marked the year that long-time local foods distributor, Cherry Capital Foods, closed. Since it ceased operations in November 2023, purchases from this food hub are still represented in purchase data for this program year, including through part of the peak harvest season for Michigan agriculture. Still, they had supplied to numerous grantees in all previous program years, so their closure may have led, or even required, some grantees to establish new relationships with farmers and/or local food vendors/suppliers in their place. As one public school grantee noted,



The closing of Cherry Capital has forced me to get more creative and contact growers directly to increase connections.

It will be important to monitor, through future evaluations and any longitudinal analyses of purchase data, whether the closure of Cherry Capital Foods may lead to additional adjustments by FPMs in their purchasing practices and/or in the channels for foods sold by Michigan farmers and vendors otherwise.

Food Program Managers in Their Own Words

NEW CONNECTIONS WITH FARMERS AND/OR LOCAL FOOD VENDORS/SUPPLIERS



I have been able to build a great relationship with a new local farm and post their connection on social media to show how we incorporate their farm food with our menus.



[Farmers] brought me seeds and plants for the garden, and they planted kale, greens, and okra.



We are working on having a farmer come out this fall to talk about apples to correspond with Apple Crunch Day.¹²



We made a connection with a new local farmer who has now made a delivery to our center.
— Early Care and Education (ECE) grantee



My food cooperative has grown and asked for input on products and wants feedback.



[I am] learning more about fruits and veggies, and loving the passion they have to make sure our kids are getting good food! Every one of our local farmers are excited to be part of this program.



I am so proud and excited for our relationship and the opportunities to grow with [a regional food hub]. [Our food hub contact] has been a blessing...[and] is allowing my passion for local produce to really ring true with my community.

¹² Michigan Apple Crunch Day is an annual event in October to celebrate Michigan apples and the state's peak agricultural harvest season. Michigan State University Extension and the Michigan Farm to Institution Network promote the event as part of National Farm to School Month and collect registrations to track and share about participation. Learn more on the [Michigan Apple Crunch website](#).

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXISTING FARMERS AND LOCAL FOOD VENDORS/SUPPLIERS

- “ It’s a win-win for us to receive more local produce, and the farmers get more business for their hard work.
- “ I love that our farmer partner has expanded his crops and business by partnering with us.
- “ I think more vendors are aware of the 10 Cents program now, and that has made it easier to purchase local produce.
- “ The 10 Cents program has allowed me to meet small business owners that really care about feeding our students. This relationship has been good for their small local businesses as well as our kids.
- “ This has allowed for greater purchasing quantity with existing contacts.
- “ Letting me buy large quantities, [so] we can serve fresh and freeze them.
- “ We are learning about plant cycles and what grows longer or second harvest/ planting that can be done [and have a] better understanding and expectations of availability of produce.
- “ A parent is a local farmer and has collaborated on future offerings.
- “ We have been working on this to promote the farmers when we can... so students know which farm some of their food comes from. We are working on networking to increase our sourcing.
- “ I can share my stories of taste testing with local farmers!

Evaluation of 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan’s Kids and Farms is led by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS). The work presented here is part of the [10 Cents a Meal 2023–2024 Evaluation Results: Doubling Investment and Growing Impact](#) by Colleen Matts, May Tsupros, Eva Nyerges, and Megan McManus, and was generously funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and 10 Cents administrative funds for partner organizations.

To learn more, visit tencentsmichigan.org, foodsystems.msu.edu, 10-cents-a-meal.msu.edu, and mifarmtoschool.msu.edu.