

Virginia Agriculture Food Assistance Program

Virginia Food for Virginia Families

Senate Bill 1188 / House Bill 2203

Why Now?

Empty grocery store shelves, disrupted supply chains, and the longest pantry lines in recent memory - the interconnectedness of our ag economy, regional food system, and household food security has never been clearer.



Agriculture is the Commonwealth's largest private industry, but **more than one million Virginians are at risk of hunger**. In 2020, food banks distributed **48 million more pounds** to households in need compared to 2019 (41% increase), and collectively spent **\$31 million** on food purchasing just to keep pace with the need – more than three times as much as last year.

We can help ensure all Virginians have access to nutritious foods while supporting Virginia growers by creating the VA Agriculture Food Assistance Program (VFAP).

WHY VFAP?

Modeled after successful state programs in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and others, VFAP would help mitigate the economic hardships of COVID-19, and expand the food rescue infrastructure for growers long after the pandemic. It would work in tandem with Virginia's food crop donation tax credit by making funds available up front to pay the fixed costs associated with donating excess product. It may also leverage additional federal support from the USDA's Farms to Food Banks program.

How it Works



Governor Northam's proposed budget includes the allocation of \$600,000 to establish VFAP in FY22. Through VFAP, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services would provide funding to charitable food assistance organizations, like food banks, to cover the costs associated with harvesting, processing, packaging, and transporting surplus products including fruits, vegetables, eggs, dairy, poultry, pork, beef, and grains.