

Lincoln, NE -- Congressman Jeff Fortenberry today commented on a recently announced United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) plan to help schools use more fresh, locally raised food. The plan stems from an amendment Fortenberry helped add to the most recent Farm Bill.

“Local foods systems reconnect farmers to families and rural to urban,” Fortenberry said. “I was pleased to help change the way schools can improve nutrition programs by using fresh, locally raised foods. This is increasingly important as we work to address childhood obesity concerns.

“Emerging local and regional food economies also present exciting opportunities in agricultural entrepreneurship. They help generate new income for farmers, increase the availability of fresh, nutritious foods for consumers, and promote environmental stewardship by reducing transportation miles.”

Fortenberry, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, introduced a successful amendment to the 2008 Farm Bill that allows public institutions to exercise “geographic preference” in sourcing local foods for nutrition programs. In a Federal Register notice earlier this week, USDA announced its plans to implement the “geographic preference” rule for use in schools and other public institutions, such as the Department of Defense Fresh Program.

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