

Sustainable Farms, Fibers, and Forests Act of 2023

Endorsements: The Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders, New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council, and Thornburg Foundation.

Background

Across the country, farmers, ranchers, and producers face a common challenge: adding value to their agricultural products and finding viable markets to sell their goods. To address this issue, Congress created the Local Agriculture Marketing Program (LAMP) in the 2018 Farm Bill by merging and expanding on several existing grant opportunities. For years, LAMP has provided funding to help producers support and promote a range of marketing activities, including direct-to-consumer marketing, farmers' markets and roadside stands, online sales, and more. This funding not only supports the development of value-added agricultural production, but it improves economic opportunities for producers and cultivates strong and stable regional food economies.

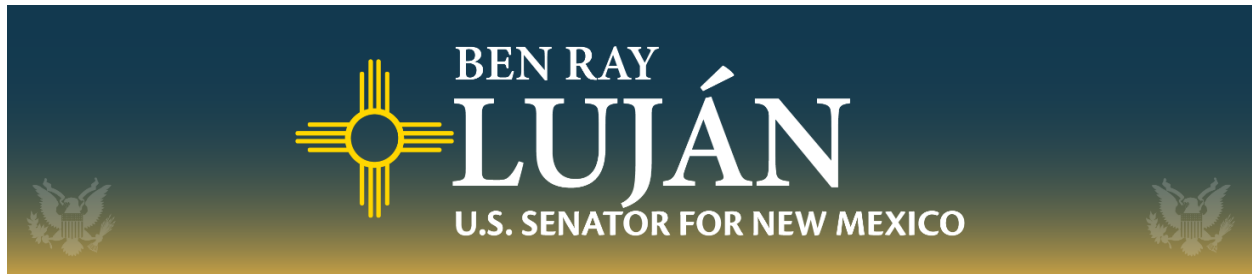
Despite its goal to expand agricultural market exposure, LAMP has primarily focused on traditional food products, overlooking two crucial components of sustainable agriculture: sustainable fibers and agroforestry. Sustainable fibers, such as those derived from renewable sources like hemp, cotton, or wool, have gained prominence due to their eco-friendly nature and versatility in various industries. Agroforestry, which integrates trees and shrubs into existing farming systems, can also have a range of benefits that include sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, increasing local biodiversity, and improving soil health. Excluding these industries from LAMP hinders their growth, restricting access to funds that could be used to modernize sustainable fiber production facilities, provide training opportunities for scaling production, or create business plans for marketing sustainable fiber products.

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This bill would add sustainable fibers under the definition of food under LAMP, ensuring these producers can access the support and market exposure provided by this program. It would also require grants available for the development of local or regional food systems to support diverse types of agricultural products, by including sustainable fibers in the Regional Food Partnerships Program.

Additionally, this bill would allow LAMP grants to be used for agroforestry marketing, including demonstration infrastructure for farmer or landowner learning, and allow USDA to partner with the National Agroforestry Center for technical assistance and outreach to LAMP stakeholders.

For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Jared Henderson and Ryan Ebrahimi at Jared_Henderson@lujan.senate.gov and Ryan_Ebrahimi@lujan.senate.gov.



This Act can address key industry needs and barriers by providing sustainable fiber and agroforestry producers and processors with explicit access to the funding opportunities housed under LAMP by:

- providing peer-to-peer relationship building and training opportunities on how to effectively grow sustainable fiber and agroforestry production;
- modernizing and increasing the size of production facilities;
- expanding processing capacity through the development and purchase of fiber-specific and higher volume processing equipment (i.e. farm and community-scale hemp textile processing equipment);
- helping growers develop business plans for processing and marketing value-added products such as blankets, pelts, etc.; and
- growing cultural and consumer awareness of the true costs of fast fashion and textile waste, including education on the critical importance of reshoring jobs and restoring ecosystems.

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