

California State Senate

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SENATOR
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THIRTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT



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March 6, 2026

The Honorable John Laird, Chair
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Capitol Office, 1020 N. Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Eloise Gómez Reyes, Chair
Senate Budget Committee, Sub. 2 on
Resources, Environmental Protection and Energy
Capitol Office, 1020 N. Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Establish a continuous appropriation for the California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP)

Dear Chair Laird and Chair Gómez Reyes:

As Members of the California State Senate, we write to request that the 2026-27 Budget include budget bill and trailer bill language to establish a permanent, ongoing General Fund appropriation for the California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP), administered through the Office of Farm to Fork at the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).

Specifically, we request the following phased appropriation to scale up to a \$50 million annual ongoing appropriation in the California Department of Food and Agriculture budget as follow:

- FY 2026-27: \$20 million
- FY 2027-28: \$30 million
- FY 2028-29 and ongoing each fiscal year : \$50 million

This continuous appropriation will allow CNIP to fund every Certified Farmers' Market in the state to match CalFresh spending on fresh fruits and vegetables, and increase the match from \$15 to \$20 per shopper per visit. Additionally, CNIP funding would help meet the unmet demand for state-funded nutrition incentives that support Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) fruit and vegetable benefits, as well as the WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs, in purchasing California-grown fresh fruits and vegetables at Certified Farmers' Markets.

Background & Need

Assembly Bill 1321 (Chapter 442, Statutes of 2015) established CNIP and created a statewide framework for California to draw down federal matching funds for nutrition incentive programs that help CalFresh shoppers purchase California-grown fruits and vegetables. In the decade since, CNIP-together with Market Match and aligned local incentive programs-has built a proven, community-based model that makes healthy food more affordable while strengthening California's small and mid-scale farms and ranches.

CNIP has proven its value and its return on investment. By leveraging nearly \$30 million in federal matching funds, California has generated nearly \$100 million to expand healthy food access and strengthen local agriculture, reaching more than 650,000 low-income shoppers at nearly 300 farmers' markets each year. In 2024 alone, CNIP generated nearly \$25 million in sales for small family farmers, with 95% going directly to farmers and delivering a demonstrated 3-to-1 economic multiplier in many of California's most economically challenged rural communities. Since 2015, CNIP has helped 4.2 million shoppers purchase over \$130 million in fresh fruits and vegetables—more than a quarter-billion servings—catalyzing nearly \$400 million in small-farm economic activity. Yet with current resources, CNIP can only reach about 40% of California's 650 certified farmers' markets. The time has come to fully scale this program that does so much for California farmers and families.

Why permanent funding is needed now

CNIP has succeeded because the legislature has provided increasing General Fund allocations in two-year budget cycles. Current funding will be depleted in FY 2026-27 and without additional funding California will eliminate a proven 10-year-old program, leave federal matching dollars on the table, and increase food insecurity as inflation and rising food prices further strain families and farmers.

Protecting CNIP is even more urgent in the context of the cuts to CalFresh included in H.R. 1 that will reduce monthly benefits for nearly half a million Californians. CNIP can help offset these reductions by stretching households' dollars for fresh fruits and vegetables, helping families choose fresh local California produce rather than unhealthy ultraprocessed foods. Now is the time to get out in front by funding a program that leverages federal funds to incentivize healthy eating.

CNIP remains one of the State's most effective strategies to strengthen local agriculture while improving health and nutrition outcomes for low-income Californians. We respectfully urge your support to establish CNIP as a permanent item in CDFA's annual budget, ramping to an ongoing level of \$50 million by FY 2028–29.

Thank you for your consideration. Our offices are available to provide additional information and to work with committee staff on the appropriate budget and trailer bill language to implement this request.

Sincerely,



JOSH BECKER
Senator, District 13



MEGAN DAHLE
Senator, District 1



SASHA PEREZ
Senator, District 25



CHRISTOPHER CABALDON
Senator, District 3



MARIA ELENA DURAZO
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