



# FULL TRUCKS, FULL TABLES

## How Wisconsin farmers are keeping local food moving

In early 2025, Wisconsin's local food supply chain was dealt an unexpected setback. The U.S. Department of Agriculture abruptly withdrew over \$5 million in funding previously dedicated to purchasing local produce for schools, food pantries,

and tribal communities.

Almost overnight, contracts for 108 Wisconsin family farmers were canceled, and deliveries to 254 food access sites ground to a halt, putting hard-won progress at risk across all 72 counties.



It was a jarring turn for a program that, in just two years, had delivered \$4.23 million worth of fresh, local food to Wisconsin families. The sudden end of these Local Food Purchase Assistance markets left both small farms and vulnerable families facing an uncertain future.

But in true Badger State spirit, Wisconsin's agricultural community didn't back down.

Instead, the farmer-led Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative (WFHC) sprang into action, launching a bold new solution: the Super Transportation Cooperative.

**Current and Opposite Page:** Through Tend & Table, Wisconsin-grown products, from seasonal vegetables to pasture-raised meats and dairy, are delivered to paying subscribers across the state.





## HOMEGROWN SOLUTION

The Super Transportation Cooperative (STC) is not just a stopgap. It's a collaborative, statewide logistics network that brings together farmers, food hubs, nonprofits, and food access organizations under a single, coordinated distribution system.

Built on a hub-and-spoke model, regional "sub-hubs" aggregate food, and shared refrigerated trucks carry those goods on planned routes across Wisconsin.

Most importantly, the trucks never run empty: every return trip is loaded with produce or supplies, eliminating wasted miles and slashing transportation costs by about 25%.

The culmination of orders from small-to-large farms for schools, pantries, and retail improves capacity, which, in turn, decreases transport costs for all and leads to lower prices for consumers.

According to the WFHC, this



innovative system has already proven to be more efficient, affordable, and resilient than anything that came before it, keeping Wisconsin-grown food on the move even after the loss of federal support.

## TEND & TABLE

Of course, keeping the trucks full is only half the battle. The other half is creating a stable, lasting market for all that local food. That's why the WFHC launched Tend & Table in the

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summer of 2025.

Tend & Table is a statewide farm-to-family subscription service that operates as a core part of the STC network.

Through Tend & Table, Wisconsin-grown products, from seasonal vegetables to pasture-raised meats and dairy, are delivered to paying subscribers across the state. Boxes are flexible, available weekly or monthly, and always packed with

the best of what Wisconsin's farms are harvesting.

But Tend & Table goes beyond just feeding subscribers. Every box sold also helps support local food pantries, thanks to a built-in donation model, and customers can even purchase boxes for families in need.

This means every delivery not only supports a local farm but also helps a neighbor facing food insecurity.

**Above:** Tend & Table is a statewide farm-to-family subscription service that operates as a core part of the Super Transportation Cooperative network.

For the 100+ small farms that lost their institutional contracts, Tend & Table is more than a marketplace, it's a lifeline. By connecting farms directly with households, the program ensures that no harvest goes to waste and provides a steady stream of orders that keeps the STC trucks rolling year-round.

"Tend & Table is more than just a subscription box, it's a community-powered way to connect families with the people who grow their food," says Tara Roberts-Turner, general manager of WFHC.

"We were bracing for a rough year after those contracts disappeared," says Amy Johnson, a pasture-raised livestock farmer with Misfits. "STC basically saved us. It makes sure our pastured-raised meats still get to the people who need them, and with Tend & Table, we're finding new customers who really appreciate local food."

"It's keeping our farm resilient," Johnson says, "and connecting us directly with Wisconsin families at the dinner table."

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## BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

While farmers and families rally to keep local food flowing, another group has stepped in behind the scenes: donors. To stabilize this new supply chain, WFHC is investing in infrastructure, including a major expansion of its cold storage capacity at the Waupaca hub.

This \$400,000 project is part of a larger \$861,500 bridge funding campaign to fully sustain STC and Tend & Table through the transition.

Wisconsin's agricultural community is answering the call. Local growers, distributors, family foundations, and produce industry partners are chipping in, as the campaign puts it, "to keep Wisconsin's food system on the road."

Donor recognition and naming opportunities at the new cold storage facility will honor those who make the expansion possible, ensuring their legacy is woven into the fabric of Wisconsin's local food future.

As another growing season approaches, there's a sense that something vital has been preserved. The loss of federal funds could have fractured Wisconsin's local food chain. Instead, it sparked a grassroots solution that's keeping full trucks, full tables, and full hearts across the state.

With the Super Transportation Cooperative and Tend & Table, more than 400 local farmers are still feeding families in every county, proving that innovation and cooperation can carry Wisconsin's farm community through even the toughest times, stronger and more connected than ever.

For more information, contact Tara Roberts-Turner, general manager, Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative, [tara@wifoodhub.com](mailto:tara@wifoodhub.com), 715-227-1990 (office), or 920-896-3663 (cell.) **BCT**

*"Tend & Table is more than just a subscription box, it's a community-powered way to connect families with the people who grow their food."*

**– Tara Roberts-Turner,**

general manager, Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative

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