

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1194

BY REPRESENTATIVES TERRY LANDRY, BAYHAM, CHANCE HENRY, TRAVIS JOHNSON, MCMAHEN, AND WYBLE

AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES: Provides with respect to the Healthy Food Retail Act

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 3:296(B)(4) and (5), (C), (D)(1) through (3), (4)(a)(iii), (6)(a),
3 (7)(e), (9), and (10) and to enact R.S. 3:296(D)(11), relative to the Healthy Food
4 Retail Act; to expand and enhance the healthy food financing program to improve
5 access to affordable fresh food in underserved communities and food deserts; to
6 require the LSU AgCenter to identify and map food deserts and develop an
7 elimination plan with benchmarks; to provide for reporting requirements; to provide
8 for definitions; to provide for an effective date; and to provide for related matters.

9 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

10 Section 1. R.S. 3:296(B)(4) and (5), (C), (D)(1) through (3), (4)(a)(iii), (6)(a), (7)(e),
11 (9), and (10) are hereby amended and reenacted and R.S. 3:296(D)(11) is hereby enacted to
12 read as follows:

13 §296. Healthy Food Retail Act; definitions; purpose

14 * * *

15 B. The legislature finds the following:

16 * * *

17 (4) Limited food access constrains public health, neighborhood stability, and
18 local economic growth. Developing quality retail food outlets also creates jobs,
19 expands markets for Louisiana farmers, and supports economic vitality in
20 underserved communities and food deserts.

1 (5) The program established pursuant to this Chapter is intended to provide
2 a dedicated source of financing for healthy food retailers operating in underserved
3 communities and food deserts in Louisiana, in both urban and rural areas; to increase
4 access to affordable healthy food so as to improve diets and health; to promote the
5 sale and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, particularly those that are
6 Louisiana grown; and to support expanded economic opportunities in low-income
7 and rural communities.

8 C. As used in this Chapter, the following terms and phrases shall have the
9 meanings hereinafter ascribed to them:

10 (1) "Food desert" means a low-income census tract in which at least five
11 hundred persons or thirty-three percent of residents reside more than one mile from
12 a supermarket in an urban area or more than ten miles from a supermarket in a rural
13 area.

14 ~~(1)~~ (2) "Funding" means grants, loans, or a combination of grants and loans.

15 ~~(2)~~ (3) "Healthy food retailers" means for-profit or not-for-profit retailers
16 that sell high quality fresh fruits and vegetables at competitive prices including but
17 not limited to supermarkets, grocery stores, and farmers' markets.

18 ~~(3)~~ (4) "Program" means a public-private partnership established to provide
19 a dedicated source of financing for food retailers that increase access to fresh fruits
20 and vegetables and other affordable healthy food for Louisiana residents managed
21 by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

22 ~~(4)~~ (5) "Underserved community" means a geographic area that has limited
23 access to healthy food retailers and is located in a lower-income or high-poverty
24 area, or an area that is otherwise determined to have serious healthy food access
25 limitations.

26 D.(1) To the extent funds are available, the Louisiana Department of
27 Agriculture and Forestry, in cooperation with public and private sector partners, shall
28 ~~establish~~ administer a financing program that provides grants and loans to healthy
29 food retailers and related food access projects that increase access to fresh fruits and

1 vegetables and other affordable healthy food in underserved communities including
2 verified food deserts, with priority given to projects located in such areas. The
3 department shall also prioritize projects that increase access to affordable fresh food
4 and demonstrate community demand, implementation capacity, and long-term
5 sustainability, to the extent that funding is available.

6 (2) The department may contract with one or more qualified nonprofit
7 organizations or community development financial institutions to administer all or
8 portions of the program described in this Section through ~~a grants or public-private~~
9 ~~partnership partnerships, to raise~~ including raising matching funds, market marketing
10 the program statewide, ~~evaluate~~ evaluating applicants, ~~make~~ making award
11 decisions, ~~underwrite~~ underwriting loans, operating a revolving loan fund, and
12 ~~monitor~~ monitoring compliance and impact. The department and its partners shall
13 coordinate with complementary nutrition assistance and education programs.

14 (3) The program shall provide funding on a competitive, ~~one-time~~ basis as
15 appropriate for the eligible project.

16 (4)(a) The program may provide funding for projects such as:

17 * * *

18 (iii) Farmers' markets and public markets, food cooperatives, mobile markets
19 and delivery projects, and distribution projects that enable food retailers in
20 underserved communities or food deserts to regularly obtain fresh produce.

21 * * *

22 (6) In order to be considered for funding, an applicant shall meet the
23 following criteria:

24 (a) The project for which the applicant seeks funding shall benefit an
25 underserved community or a food desert.

26 * * *

27 (7) Applicants shall be evaluated on the following criteria in order to
28 determine the funding awarded:

29 * * *

1 (e) The degree to which the project will have a positive economic impact on
2 the underserved community or food desert, including ~~by~~ creating or retaining jobs
3 for local residents.

4 * * *

5 (9)(a) Within ninety days of the effective date of this Act, the LSU AgCenter
6 shall conduct a statewide study to identify and map food deserts.

7 (b) The LSU AgCenter shall implement or maintain a public database that
8 includes geospatial mapping, population and demographic information, and
9 indicators of food access and affordability, and shall update the database at least
10 biennially.

11 (c) Within eighteen months of the effective date of this Act, the LSU
12 AgCenter shall publish a ten-year food desert elimination plan with annual
13 benchmarks, financing strategies, and implementation priorities.

14 (d) The LSU AgCenter shall submit an annual report to the legislature that
15 includes a summary of any progress, barriers, outcomes, and any other
16 recommended statutory or budgetary changes.

17 ~~(9)~~ (10) The department shall prepare and submit an annual report to the
18 legislature on any projects funded and outcome data.

19 ~~(10)~~ (11) The department shall establish rules for the implementation of the
20 Chapter in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

21 * * *

22 Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not
23 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature
24 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If
25 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become
26 effective on the day following such approval.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 1194 Engrossed

2026 Regular Session

Terry Landry

Abstract: Provides for the expansion and enhancement of Louisiana's healthy food financing program to improve access to affordable fresh food in underserved communities and food deserts.

Present law provides for legislative findings.

Proposed law retains present law and adds findings that limited food access constrains public health, neighborhood stability, and local economic growth. Provides that the provisions of present law apply to food deserts.

Present law provides for definitions.

Proposed law retains present law and defines a "food desert" as a low-income census tract in which at least 500 persons or 33 percent of residents reside more than one mile from a supermarket in an urban area or more than 10 miles from a supermarket in a rural area.

Present law requires the La. Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) to establish a financing program that provides grants and loans to healthy food retailers that increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables and other affordable healthy food in underserved communities to the extent funds are available.

Proposed law modifies present law by including other related food access projects in the program and expanding coverage to include food deserts.

Proposed law requires the LDAF to prioritize projects that increase access to affordable fresh food and demonstrate community demand, implementation capacity, and long-term sustainability, to the extent funding is available.

Present law authorizes the LDAF to contract with one or more qualified nonprofit organizations or community development financial institutions to administer the program through a public-private partnership, to raise matching funds, market the program statewide, evaluate applicants, make award decisions, underwrite loans, and monitor compliance and impact. Requires the LDAF and its partners to coordinate with complementary nutrition assistance and education programs.

Proposed law modifies present law by providing that all or portion of the program be administered through grants, in addition to public-private partnerships. Authorizes the LDAF to operate a revolving loan fund to administer the program.

Present law requires the program to provide funding on a competitive, one-time basis for eligible projects.

Proposed law modifies present law to allow funding on a competitive basis without limiting it to a one-time award.

Present law authorizes the program to provide funding for farmers' markets and public markets, food cooperatives, mobile markets and delivery projects, and distribution projects that enable food retailers in underserved communities.

Proposed law retains present law and extends coverage to include food deserts.

Present law requires that, to be considered for funding, an applicant's project benefit an underserved community.

Proposed law retains present law and extends coverage to include food deserts.

Present law requires that applicants be evaluated on criteria to determine funding awarded, including the degree to which the project will have a positive economic impact on the underserved community by creating or retaining jobs for local residents.

Proposed law retains present law and extends coverage to include food deserts.

Proposed law requires that within 90 days of the effectiveness of proposed law, the LSU AgCenter conduct a statewide study to identify and map food deserts.

Proposed law requires that, within 18 months of the effectiveness of proposed law, the LSU AgCenter publish a 10-year food desert elimination plan, including annual benchmarks, financing strategies, and implementation priorities. Further requires the LSU AgCenter to submit an annual report to the legislature that includes any progress, barriers, outcomes, and any other recommended statutory or budgetary changes.

Present law requires the LDAF to prepare and submit an annual report to the legislature on projects funded and associated outcome data.

Proposed law retains present law.

Present law requires the LDAF to establish rules for the implementation of present law in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

Proposed law retains present law.

Effective upon signature of governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 3:296(B)(4) and (5), (C), (D)(1) through (3), (4)(a)(iii), (6)(a), (7)(e), (9), and (10); Adds R.S. 3:296(D)(11))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development to the original bill:

1. Transfer the requirement to conduct a statewide study to identify and map food deserts from the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to the LSU AgCenter.
2. Transfer the responsibility of implementing and updating a public database with certain geospatial mapping, population, and demographic information from the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to the LSU AgCenter.
3. Shift the responsibility of submitting an annual report to the legislature that includes a summary of any progress, barriers, outcomes, and any other recommended statutory or budgetary changes from the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to the LSU AgCenter.
4. Make technical changes.