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## DIGEST

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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.