

# Arizona Department of Agriculture

1110 W. Washington Street, Suite 450 Phoenix, AZ 85007

(602) 542-4373

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*NEWS RELEASE DATE:* November 18, 2025

*MEDIA CONTACT:* Rachel Andrews < mail to: [randrews@azda.gov](mailto:randrews@azda.gov)  
Chief Legislative Liaison and Public Information Officer (602)531-3666

## **Arizona Department of Agriculture Grant Strengthens Local Food Supply Chain**

**Paulden, AZ** - Early on a crisp November morning, farmer Juan Aguiar-Bravo loads nearly 750 pounds of Arizona-grown produce into a new refrigerated van at Blooming Reed Farm. The vehicle—purchased with support from the Arizona Department of Agriculture’s Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) grant program—is already proving its worth. Working in partnership with nearby Reyes Farm, Juan is helping fill an urgent wholesale order for nutritious, shelf-stable produce destined for a mobile market and community kitchen in Tucson, AZ.

Earlier this year, the Arizona Department of Agriculture announced the recipients of the USDA-AMS RFSI grant program funding for 2025. Arizona food producers were awarded a total of \$2,829,995.00 in funding. These projects included infrastructure awards, and equipment-only awards aimed at strengthening the capacity and economic viability of a statewide resilient food system.

The quick, coordinated response comes at a critical time, as food assistance organizations were seeing increased demand amid the recent federal government shutdown. Thanks to strong local partnerships and forward-thinking investment, Arizona’s food system continues to meet community needs.

“We are in what I call the ‘shoulder season,’ when Southern Arizona farms are just starting to come into the fall seasonal crops,” explained Jenn Parlin, Director of The Garden Kitchen at the University of Arizona Pima County Cooperative Extension. “We’ve been building a North–South local food pipeline, and this week we were able to activate that network to source produce from our partners in Northern Arizona. It’s a great example of how collaboration strengthens the whole system.”

The Garden Kitchen operates the Promoting Local Arizona Agriculture (PLAZA) Mobile Market, which serves Southside Tucson neighborhoods on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The market accepts SNAP benefits, Double Up Food Bucks, and Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons for both seniors and WIC participants—making fresh, local food more accessible to those who need it most. Governor Hobbs recently announced the Food Bucks Now program to shore up food assistance for families who participate in SNAP.

These efforts demonstrate the value of investing in “middle-of-the-supply-chain” infrastructure, which supports farmers, distributors, and consumers alike. The program equips local producers with

tools such as cold storage, transportation, and aggregation capacity—helping ensure that Arizona’s food supply remains reliable and resilient in times of uncertainty.

“This type of support for our local food systems is exactly what I had in mind when I created the Agriculture and Food Systems Support Division,” said Paul Brierley, Director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture. “I am thrilled to see this funding making a difference during these challenging times for our citizens.”

The Arizona Department of Agriculture’s vision is clear: *Arizona is a leader in providing a safe and abundant food supply in a fair and equitable marketplace that supports a thriving economy and resilient environment.*

For more information about the RFSI program and other initiatives, visit <https://agriculture.az.gov/grants>.

For more information on The Garden Kitchen, visit <https://thegardenkitchen.org/>.