

RFSI

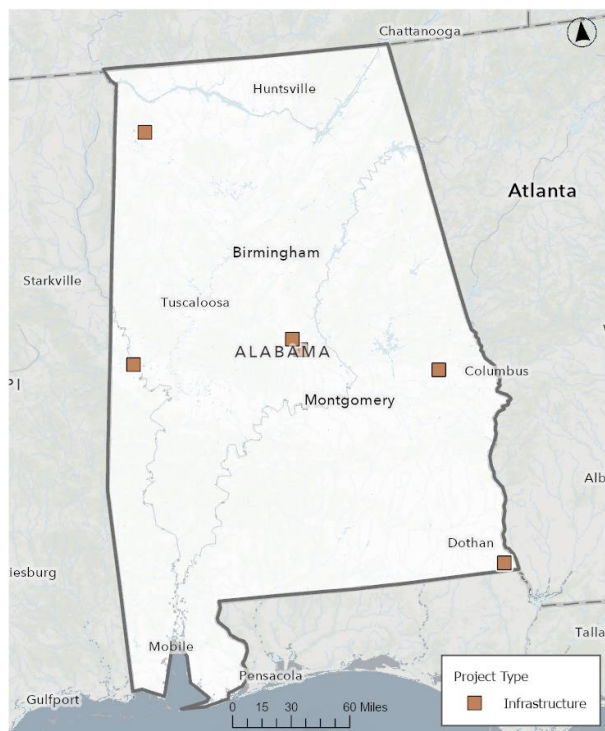
Resilient Food Systems
Infrastructure Program

Alabama



State Overview

USDA awarded the Alabama Department of Agriculture **\$6.4 million** through the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program. The objective of RFSI is to expand capacity for aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced agricultural food products. These federal funds will support six Alabama infrastructure projects increasing access to new market opportunities, benefiting local and regional producers and processors.



Project Highlights

- **Invest in cold chain and processing infrastructure at strategic sites** across the region to support aggregation activities, modernize facilities for food safety, and increase local food in schools and grocery stores, benefiting at least 50 local and regional producers.
- **Construct a warehousing and processing facility** where fresh cut and frozen items are produced from locally grown fruits and vegetables, including squash fries, ready-to-cook okra, and precision diced cantaloupe, for use by Alabama's school districts in child nutrition programs.
- **Develop streamlined logistics and sophisticated technological capabilities** for sales of produce, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, strawberries, and satsumas, grown by 15 local producers to reach an estimated 20 schools in Lee, Macon, and Tallapoosa Counties.

Anticipated Outcomes*

155

Local/Regional
Producers Benefited

73

New Market Outlets
Established

55

New Value-Added
Products Developed

4

New
Facilities
Constructed

42

Storage/Aggregation
Units Purchased

12

Distribution
Vehicles Purchased

30

Processing Equipment
Purchased

81

Jobs Created

**These numbers are reported by states and subawardees.*

RFSI was awarded to the 56 States and Territories in May 2023. Each state conducted a competitive grant review and selection process. States identified their funding priorities through extensive outreach with key industry stakeholders, which guided their selection process to ensure a robust state and local food system representation. Selected projects fund locally and regionally produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

Infrastructure Projects: Snapshot

Infrastructure Grant projects can involve facility and equipment expansion and upgrades, new construction, and modernized information technology systems.

Alabama has invested more than **\$6 million** across six infrastructure projects. The State's awardees are collectively building resilience within the middle of the food supply chain by constructing 4 new facilities, modernizing 6 existing facilities, and purchasing and installing more than 72 pieces of equipment to increase capacity for processing, packaging, labeling, and related operations. The state expects projects will train at least 54 employees on specialized equipment and worker safety, providing workforce development benefits.

Of the six projects:

- All increase packaging and labeling capacities to meet product merchandising standards and compliance requirements, enabling new market channel opportunities.
- One establishes the state's first new dairy processing facility in over 20 years—with a pasteurizer, homogenizer, and other equipment to produce fluid bottled milk, cream, butter, cheeses, and other value-added dairy products for grocery stores and schools across the region, benefiting at least 40 local dairy farmers;
- Another project expands value-added processing by installing an Individual Quick Freeze (IQF) processing line to produce five new frozen fruit products for schools, restaurants, retail establishments, and military commissaries across Central Alabama; and
- All expand cold storage capacity, such as the renovation of an existing facility to produce healthy popsicles and other value-added products from cosmetically-imperfect, locally sourced strawberries, peaches, and other produce.

Statewide Standouts



More than 80 percent of Alabama's projects expand processing capacities for new types of value-added products, such as frozen purees, diced vegetables, and flavored milk, to increase sales opportunities with wholesale and institutional buyers.



All of Alabama's projects are farmer-led or led by a farmer-owned cooperative.



Over 60 percent of Alabama's projects help producers access new facilities for distributing local fruits, vegetables, and dairy.



Each of Alabama's six projects scale up aggregation, processing, and/or logistics to improve access to farm-to-school markets.