

RFSI

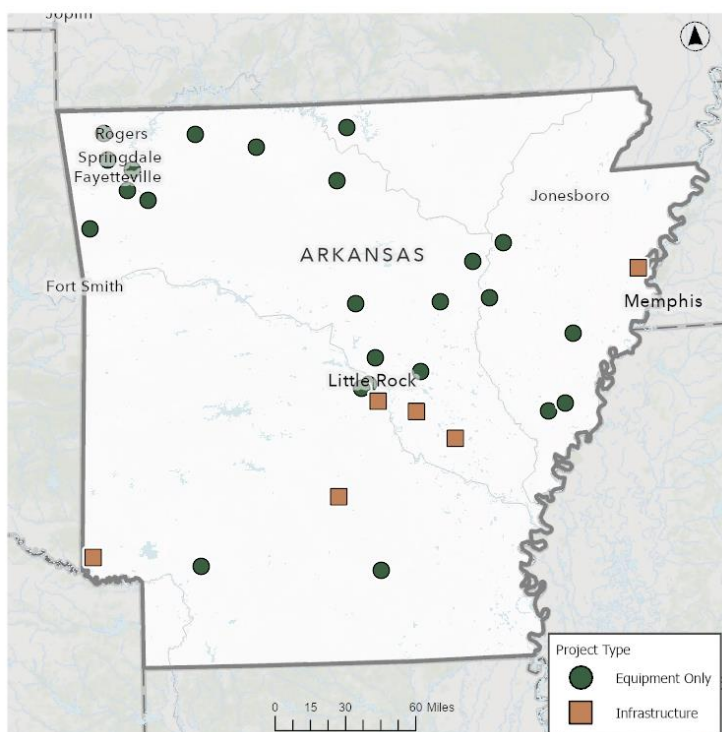
Resilient Food Systems
Infrastructure Program

Arkansas



State Overview

USDA awarded the Arkansas Department of Agriculture **\$5.6 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 34 Arkansas infrastructure and equipment projects increasing access to new market opportunities, benefiting local and regional producers and processors.



Project Highlights

- **Critical upgrades to grain milling facilities and equipment** to process locally sourced, specialty rice varieties into culinary rice flour and Japanese sake, benefiting five farmers across Arkansas.
- **Delivery and refrigeration vehicle purchases**, coupled with specialized equipment to process and distribute southern staples, such as collard greens, okra, and pecans for Arkansas food banks, schools, and produce distributors.
- **Increasing cold storage and aggregation capacity with new walk-in coolers** that enable farms and food businesses to expand production of value-added products, benefiting more than 200 local and regional producers.

Anticipated Outcomes*

214

Local/Regional
Producers Benefited

114

New Market Outlets
Established

8

New Value-Added
Products Developed

2

New
Facilities
Constructed

39

Storage/Aggregation
Units Purchased

2

Distribution
Vehicles Purchased

33

Processing Equipment
Purchased

16

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.

Arkansas invested more than **\$1.8 million** across 6 Infrastructure projects benefiting more than 102 local and regional agricultural producers. These projects include:

- Constructing a new commercial production and teaching kitchen to expand the production of value-added products;
- Establishing fruit and vegetable washing stations to make preparation more efficient and safer while ensuring quality standards are met for retail markets; and
- Installing a new walk-in cooler to increase cold storage capacity for finished products from in-shell pecans, increasing access to wholesale, retail, and restaurant markets.

Equipment Only Projects: Snapshot

Equipment Only projects are intended to purchase special purpose equipment such as cold/dry storage, distribution vehicles, and processing and packaging equipment.

Arkansas invested more than **\$700,000** across 28 Equipment Only projects, purchasing 28 pieces of on-farm cold storage equipment. The state expects 112 local and regional producers are benefiting from reduced harvest loss, improved product quality and extended shelf life, and access to 80 new markets.

Statewide Standouts



More than 90 percent of Arkansas projects purchase cold storage equipment, such as walk-in coolers and refrigerators to ensure product quality and to meet food safety standards.



Arkansas is investing over \$800,000 in pecan-related equipment and infrastructure, including pecan shellers, cleaning and sorting machinery, and cold storage.



Thirty of Arkansas' projects invest in vegetables, improving the storage, processing, and distribution of produce, such as sweet potatoes, leafy greens, and okra.



Arkansas is investing more than \$1 million in equipment and infrastructure to produce unique, shelf-stable products, including freeze-dried produce, rice flour, and pickled vegetables.