



# Resilience CAP

## Policy for Resilient Agricultural Systems: Value Chain Recommendations

The Resilience CAP is a federally funded, multi-institution research project seeking to increase the resilience of U.S. agricultural systems. These policy recommendations were developed through several focus groups with experts throughout the agricultural sector. To learn more, visit [ag-resilience.org/policy-socioeconomic](https://ag-resilience.org/policy-socioeconomic).

### RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

- USDA reinvests in Regional Food Business Centers, supporting a popular program terminated in 2025 that funded coordination, technical assistance, and capacity building for supply chain development supporting emergent agricultural products.
- States collaborate to (1) increase intentional and strategic information sharing and idea exchange around value chain development, and (2) adapt successful programs across state lines. We encourage coordination around aligning regulations and licensing for crop and product handling and food safety, developing processing capacity, and strengthening markets.



## Strong, reliable value chains support farmers using resilient practices

Farmers using resilient practices lack sufficient processing and marketing options.

### Recommendations:

- USDA reinvests in Regional Food Business Centers. The Regional Food Business Centers [1], established in 2023, provided much needed support for coordination, technical assistance, and capacity building along the supply chain at twelve hubs across the nation. Funding for the program was terminated in 2025. These regional centers were uniquely positioned to provide essential farm business support, develop relationships among supply chain partners, and catalyze opportunities for small business development in rural communities. This hub model also facilitates regional collaboration across organizations and agencies offering agricultural technical assistance, business development, and other services. Reinvestment will allow the continuation of this popular and promising program.
- States collaborate to (1) increase intentional and strategic information sharing and idea exchange, and (2) adapt successful programs across state lines. Cross-state groups of legislators and other officials, such as the National Association of State Agriculture Departments [2] and the State Innovation Exchange Cohorts for Rural Opportunity and Prosperity (CROP) [3], are good examples of collaboration and information sharing across state lines, and may provide existing structure for increased activity. Cross-state collaboration can support value chain development by: coordinating and aligning state regulations and licensing for crop and product handling and food safety, developing processing capacity for emerging and specialty crops in multi-state regions, and strengthening markets for emerging products from more resilient farms. Beyond formal collaborations, states have benefited from learning about and adapting programs from each other. For example, the crop insurance premium rebate programs for planting cover crops [4] were originally implemented in Iowa and are now replicated in other states. Similarly, Minnesota's Developing Markets for Continuous Living Cover Crops program [5] has attracted attention and could be adapted to meet similar needs in other states.

[1] <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/rfbcp>

[2] <https://www.nasda.org/>

[3] <https://ag.stateinnovation.org/crop/>

[4] [https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/CropInsuranceRebatesforPlantingCoverCrops.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/CropInsuranceRebatesforPlantingCoverCrops.aspx)

[5] <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/developing-markets-clc-crops>

Agricultural supply chains are the integrated systems “from farm to fork” that include food production, processing, distribution, consumption, waste management, and various required inputs. These systems are often also called value chains when considering the added consumer value created by food producers, as well as the value to participating businesses and other stakeholders enmeshed in the supply chain. Additionally, some participants along the supply chain often struggle to glean value. Therefore, we employ both terms here.

Lack of secure markets and supply chains are barriers to farmers’ successful adoption of more resilient practices. Even in cases for which there is substantial public and philanthropic investment in research, field trials, and other technical aspects of resilient crop or livestock production, a similar investment in consumer education, market analysis, and supply chain development is often lacking.

It is largely understood that farmers require access to technical assistance and support to implement new agricultural practices or products. Similarly, supply chain partners also need ongoing support to develop products and production enterprises, including equipment for value-added processing of raw inputs; product development; packaging; storage; and marketing, sales, and distribution.

Specifically, **we find that many regions lack processing facilities sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of diverse growing systems and emerging products.** Key challenges include processors’ inability to efficiently scale capacity for smaller lots or to easily pivot between similar products with, for example, different grading criteria.

In addition to the challenges described above, state-to-state regulation and licensing variations create barriers to developing robust regional supply chains and markets for emerging crops and products.

