

Farms to Food Banks Trust Fund Feeds Hungry Kentucky Families

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Agriculture Commissioner Ryan F. Quarles is encouraging Kentuckians to check the box for the Farms to Food Banks Trust Fund on their tax returns.

According to a statement from Commissioner Quarles and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture one in six Kentuckians is food insecure, which means they lack consistent access to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life. For Kentucky children, it's even worse – one in four. The people described in these statistics are our relatives, friends, and neighbors – people we see at work, at the ballgame, at church. Many of them have to decide whether to eat, pay the bills, or pay for medication.

This situation is unacceptable, especially in a state such as Kentucky with its rich agricultural heritage. Fortunately, there is an easy and inexpensive way we all can help. When you fill out your Kentucky income tax return, check the box to give a small portion

of your refund to the Farms to Food Banks Trust Fund.

Administered by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, the Farms to Food Banks Trust Fund awards grants to nonprofit organizations to enable them to purchase surplus agricultural commodities and distribute them to hungry Kentuckians. The food goes to people who need it, while farmers gain revenue for produce that otherwise would go to waste.

One nonprofit that benefits from the trust fund is the Farms to Food Banks Program, an initiative of the Kentucky Association of Food Banks that pays farmers just below wholesale prices for surplus and No. 2-grade produce. The Farms to Food Banks program received a grant of \$30,255 from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture in 2015 thanks to donations from individuals who designated a portion of their state income tax refund to the Farms to Food Banks Trust Fund.

In 2015, 300 Kentucky farmers from 57 counties were paid an average of \$1,530 for the produce they provided to the KAFB's Farms to Food Banks Program. Food banks distributed 2.6 million pounds of Kentucky-grown fruits and vegetables to struggling Kentuckians in all 120 counties – the equivalent of filling half a plate full of fruits and vegetables for 3.9 million meals.

Giving to the Farms to Food Banks Trust Fund will actually make you feel good about paying your taxes, and it's easy. Go to line 33 on your Kentucky income tax return and check one of the boxes to help Kentucky families enjoy fresh, nutritious local food. You also may donate to the trust fund by check. To find out more about how you can help (or, if you are a farmer, how you can participate), go to the Kentucky Farms to Food Banks website at www.kafb.org.