

# New Mexico Grown:

## FY23-FY25 Evaluation Report Summary

Prepared by  
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the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEW MEXICO.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents key findings and recommendations from a multi-year evaluation of New Mexico Grown (NM Grown), the state's local food procurement program. The evaluation, conducted by the University of New Mexico (UNM) with support from the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA), found that in FY23 through FY25 NM Grown positively impacted New Mexico's most vulnerable communities, food producers and distributors, and local economies.

Food producer participation increased from 217 total producers in FY23 to 253 total producers in FY25. Similarly, buyer participation increased from 114 buyers in FY23 to 144 buyers in FY25, while total buyer spending increased from \$1.93 million in FY23 to \$5.41 million in FY25. In FY25 alone, NM Grown generated an estimated \$7.05 million in total economic output, supporting approximately 139 jobs and \$2.41 million in labor income across New Mexico. The evaluation further revealed that NM Grown excels in quality and cultural relevance of products, improving recipients' food variety and diet quality, expanding markets and revenue for producers, providing strong and supportive leadership at Administering Agencies, and fostering community collaborations and relationships.

Key areas for future growth include: i) expanding buyer and producer participation, especially in rural and Tribal areas; ii) reducing program administrative burdens; iii) improving funding cycles to prevent spending gaps and better align with the producer growing season; iv) promoting regular buyer spending throughout the fiscal year; v) implementing group purchasing models for buyers in rural areas; and vi) strengthening outreach and technical assistance to support current producers and buyers as well as those interested in participating in the future.

Certain challenges facing NM Grown are programmatic in nature whereas others are more systemic. Solutions will need to be tailored accordingly. Securing recurring funding to sustain the program and the many food producers and communities that rely on NM Grown is a critical next step.

## INTRODUCTION

NM Grown provides resources to institutions (K-12 schools, early childhood and senior centers, and food banks) to purchase locally produced food from New Mexican farmers, ranchers, food hubs, distributors, and other food businesses. As an integral part of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's Food Initiative, NM Grown seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of New Mexico communities by providing access to nutritious, local food while also supporting the economic resilience of local food producers.

Participating NM Grown Administering Agencies during the FY23-FY25 period included ALTSD, ECECD, OIEA, and PED - each of which provided grants to individual buyers based on enrollment and interest - as well as the NMDA, which provided a sub-grant to The Food Depot to manage food bank purchasing on behalf of all food banks across the state. All producers that sell to NM Grown buyers are part of the Approved Supplier Program, a food quality assurance program administered by the NMFMA that provides producers access to institutional purchasing while also ensuring food safety and quality. As of FY25, eligible food products for NM Grown purchases included fruits and vegetables, nuts, grains, and legumes (Produce+) and meat products (beef, bison, lamb/ mutton, pork).

Given local, state, and federal investments in NM Grown and growing participation, the NMFMA commissioned a multi-year evaluation of the program. The goal of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness, strengths, and weaknesses of the NM Grown program from FY23 through FY25 (July 2022 through June 2025) to identify potential ways to improve NM Grown in the future.

## KEY TERMINOLOGY

- ALTSD:** Aging and Long-Term Services Department
- ECECD:** Early Childhood Education and Care Department
- FY:** Fiscal Year (July through June)
- LFDP:** Local Food Data Portal
- NMDA:** New Mexico Department of Agriculture
- NMFMA:** New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association
- OIEA:** Office of Indian Elder Affairs
- PED:** Public Education Department
- UNM:** The University of New Mexico



## METHODS

The NMFMA partnered with UNM to conduct this evaluation, including defining data sources and developing the evaluation plan, participant recruitment methods, and data collection tools. One buyer and one Approved Supplier reviewed and provided feedback on data collection tools. The evaluation was reviewed and approved by the UNM Health Sciences Center Institutional Review Board. All participants provided consent to participate.

The evaluation included the following data sources for the three-year evaluation period (July 2022 – June 2025):

- **Desk review** of 35 documents and media provided by the NMFMA, reviewed by the evaluation team to understand existing evidence and inform the development of data collection tools.
- **Administrative data** (participation, budget allocations, purchases) for New Mexico ALTSD, ECECD, OIEA, PED, The Food Depot, and the NMFMA, provided by each agency at the end of FY25. In addition, Local Food Data Portal (LFDP) data (supplier sales and buyer purchases) were extracted in October 2025 to conduct an economic impact analysis by county for FY25 (LFDP data were missing or incomplete for FY23 and FY24).
- **Online surveys, interviews, and site visits** conducted with NM Grown buyers and Approved Suppliers in summer-fall 2025 to assess program perceptions, strengths, challenges, and impacts.
- **Focus groups** conducted with Administering Agencies and food hubs in fall 2025 to similarly assess program perceptions, strengths, challenges, and impacts. All administering agencies, the NMFMA, and three food hubs participated.
- **An online survey** of New Mexico-based food producers that did not participate in NM Grown in FY23- FY25 conducted to identify characteristics of non-participating producers and participation barriers.

## RESULTS

### NM GROWN PARTICIPATION

During the three-year evaluation period (July 2022 – June 2025), NM Grown participants included:

**187** buyers:



**285+** farms, ranches, food hubs, and other food businesses:



NM Grown participation increased over the three-year evaluation period among buyers (114 in FY23 to 144 in FY25) and Approved Suppliers (217 in FY23 to 253 in FY25). Spending increased tremendously, from \$1.9 million in FY23 to \$5.4 million in FY25 with buyers utilizing nearly all of their local food purchasing budget in FY24 (98%) and FY25 (97%). By FY25, NM Grown products contributed to more than 1.8 million meals served.



## NM GROWN ECONOMIC IMPACTS

According to evaluation data, in FY25:

### Approved Suppliers:

Represented **28** counties

Had an average revenue of

**\$62,180**

(range = \$0 to \$840,890)

### NM Grown Buyers:

Represented **30** counties

Spent an average of

**\$41,617**

(range = \$0 to \$806,983)

### Top five food product categories purchased:

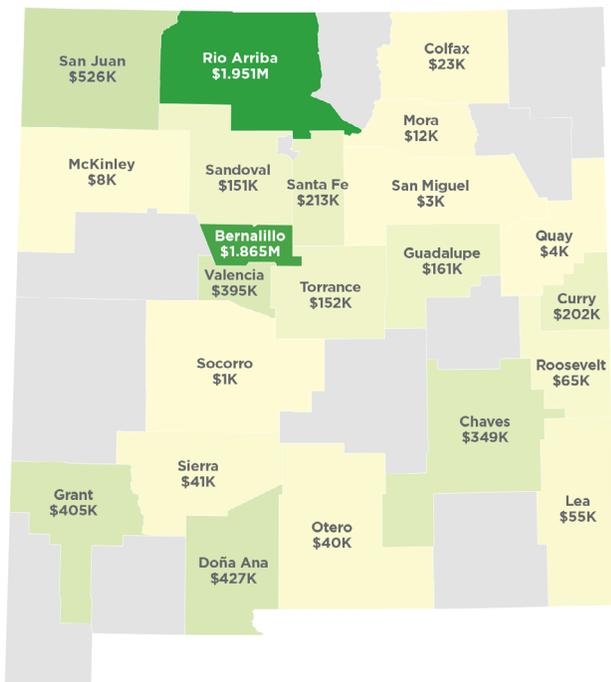


\*Eggs were not an eligible product for standard NM Grown programs but were allowed for food bank purchasing through two pilot initiatives



Spent 58% of funds on Produce+ and 42% on meat

## NM Grown Economic Impacts FISCAL YEAR 2025



Estimated using IMPLAN input-output software from fiscal year 2025 NM Grown supplier sales data.

Map: The University of New Mexico (UNM) Assessment, Planning, and Evaluation Lab (APEL), and the UNM Evaluation Lab

Source: Local Food Data Portal | Created with Datawrapper

To estimate statewide and county-level economic impacts of NM Grown, we used IMPLAN, a widely used economic modelling tool for input-output analysis. Aggregated county product sales from suppliers were mapped to IMPLAN sectors to estimate economic impacts. Statewide, in FY25, NM Grown generated an estimated \$7.05 million in total economic output, supporting approximately 139 jobs and \$2.41 million in labor income across New Mexico.

At the county level, it is important to note that many NM Grown sales were made by food hubs, processors, and other food businesses that aggregate product from numerous farmers and ranchers, many of whom are located in neighboring counties to aggregator businesses. However, the LFDP does not track that level of detail. As a result, the county-level economic impacts for farmers and ranchers who were based in a different county from the aggregator they sold their products to are not reflected in this analysis.



NM Grown purchases totaled approximately **\$12.0 million**, resulting in nearly **4 million meals** served over the three-year evaluation period.

## PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES

According to a survey of NM Grown buyers (n = 88) and Approved Suppliers (n = 58) conducted in summer and fall 2025, NM Grown is positively impacting operations, organizations, and vulnerable populations.

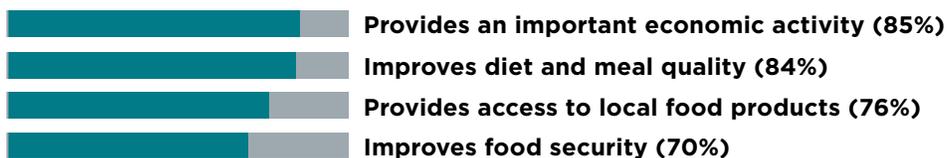
### Most Approved Suppliers report NM Grown:



# 85%

of buyers agreed NM Grown provides Approved Suppliers with an important economic opportunity.

### Most buyers report NM Grown:



Supporting the local economy was the

# #1 buyer motivation

for participating in NM Grown.

The top 5 motivations for participating in NM Grown were:

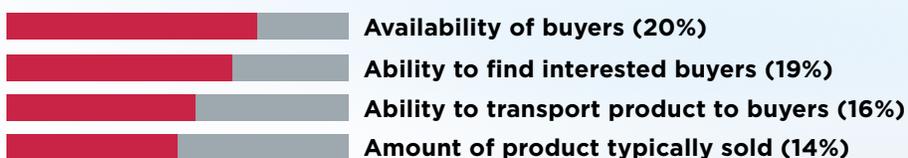
APPROVED SUPPLIERS	%
Connecting with the community	88%
Increasing sales	82%
Building new relationships with buyers	82%
Improving interest in agriculture/local food procurement	75%
Improving health	73%

BUYERS	%
Supporting the local economy	90%
Expanding local food offerings	78%
Improving recipients' health	73%
Building new relationships with suppliers	72%
Offering more culturally relevant foods	64%

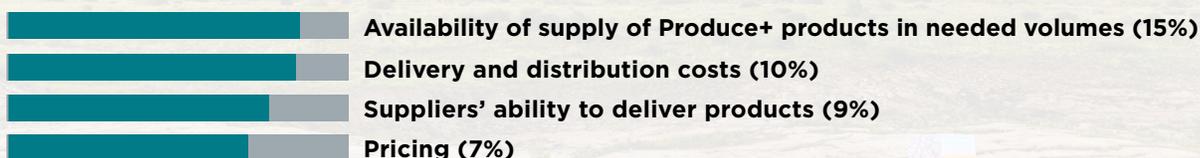
96% of buyers and 94% of Approved Suppliers said they would participate in NM Grown in the future.

The survey also revealed NM Grown challenges.

### Some Approved Suppliers were dissatisfied with:



### Some buyers were dissatisfied with:





## QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS

Qualitative data collected through 14 interviews, 6 site visits, and 3 focus groups with Approved Suppliers, buyers, and Administering Agencies identified NM Grown strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth.

### NM Grown Strengths

NM Grown positively impacts food producers, buyers, vulnerable populations, communities, and the local economy. Products are high-quality, culturally-relevant, and fresh, improving menu variety and nutritional value. Strong local relationships and collaboration, community and administrative support, and alignment with values and traditions promote program success. Specific strengths and impacts mentioned by participants include:

- **Approved Suppliers:** new markets, increased revenue, new certifications and training, new opportunities for leadership and advocacy
- **Buyers:** product quality and shelf-life, diversified and appealing menus, marketing and education opportunity
- **Vulnerable Populations:** improved diet quality and variety, stronger relationships with food and agriculture, excitement about new and familiar culturally-relevant products
- **Administrative Agencies:** responsive, supportive, knowledgeable program leaders and champions
- **Communities:** new connections and networks; impacts extend to youth, buyer staff, and recipients' families
- **Local Economy:** local food procurement, essential revenue stream, production and staff expansion



### Quotes:

“And it is great investment to have a program like this. It’s not just throwing money out into the wind. And there is a guarantee of return financially. And I feel like that’s a huge incentive to continue this type of program into the future.”  
*- Small-scale Tribal producer*

“The farm wouldn’t be where it is today if it wasn’t for—we might not exist if it weren’t for New Mexico Grown.”  
*- Small-scale urban producer*

“Having a local food that was harvested within 24 to 36 hours of top-quality nutritious produce or a high-quality protein, which is also very difficult to have consistent access to for food banks—these are deeply coveted.”  
*-Administering Agency*



### NM Grown Challenges

Buyers and Approved Suppliers acknowledge barriers related to capacity, staffing and labor shortages and turnover, product prices, inconsistent timing in the rollout of funds (and gaps in ability to spend) and funding award misalignment with sowing and growing seasons, inability to guarantee sales, delivery and distribution feasibility and costs, and administrative burden (requirements, paperwork, regulations, inspections). Certain NM Grown participants have more challenges:

- **Small-scale, Rural, and Tribal Approved Suppliers:** production capacity and labor, ability to find buyers, generating revenue to sustain operations, land and water.

Many are already operating at maximum capacity and depend on timely payment to continue operating.





- **Buyers:** high staff turnover and training needs, lack of kitchen infrastructure and staff capacity for processing, finding enough Produce+ products to fulfill 60% of budgets
- **Large School Districts:** finding nearby suppliers with capacity to produce and/or deliver volume of products needed, particularly Produce+, exacerbated by delays due to bidding processes
- **Rural Buyers:** delivery and distribution costs and logistics, sometimes unable to find any Approved Suppliers

**Quotes:**

“The funding ends up being okay every year, but it’s not always secure in the time when producers are planting, so in January. So the funding cycle at the state agencies has been-- I don’t know if precarious is the right word, but it hasn’t been secure. And so that hasn’t created as much market stability as there could be...”  
 —Administering Agency

“...producers are kind of left to know like, ‘Well, I don’t know who to talk to now,’ and then on the other end, when a new person comes on board, it just isn’t really handed over.” —Administering Agency



**BARRIERS TO PRODUCER PARTICIPATION**

During this evaluation, NM Grown buyers and Approved Suppliers reported knowing local food producers and buyers that are not participating. A survey of 58 local food producers who did not participate in NM Grown in FY23-FY25 found the top five reasons for not participating are:

- 36%** **1. NOT KNOWING ABOUT NM GROWN**
- 28%** **2. PAPERWORK AND ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN**
- 21%** **3. NOT HAVING ENOUGH SUPPLY**
- 10%** **4. ALREADY HAVING ENOUGH MARKETS**
- 10%** **5. NOT ABLE TO MEET REQUIREMENTS**

Moreover, many producers that do not participate sell products that are not currently on the eligible product list such as value-added products, baked goods, jams/jellies, and cooked meals.



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Based on results of this comprehensive evaluation, there are both NM Grown program-focused as well as more systemic opportunities for growth, including:

- Secure adequate recurring funding, distributed and approved for spending in a timely manner that aligns with planning for the growing season, to sustain the program and support Approved Suppliers.
- Enhance infrastructure statewide for food production, processing, and distribution to coordinate and meet buyer and supplier needs alike.
- Recruit more buyers and Approved Suppliers statewide to ensure all communities are benefiting equitably. Provide technical assistance to food producers and buyers interested in participating.
- Provide information to new and returning buyers on producer capacity; planting/growing season; product variety, seasonality, availability, and pricing; and distribution capabilities to align expectations.
- Strengthen connections between new and returning buyers and Approved Suppliers through in-person events, networking, a map of participants, and new technological solutions.
- Encourage regular buyer spending throughout the fiscal year. Forecast buyer requests (product type and volume) and consider guaranteed funding for agreed upon sales with ample time to grow desired products.
- Develop a collaborative purchasing model for buyers in rural areas or in areas with a lack of nearby Approved Suppliers.



## LIMITATIONS

This evaluation assessed perceived NM Grown impacts. Due to limitations in time and funding, outcomes such as dietary intake, nutrition status, and meal participation among the direct recipients of NM Grown food products were not directly measured. Tribal voices, particularly buyers, are not fully represented due to recruitment difficulties. An economic impact analysis was only conducted for FY25 due to limited LFDP data availability; purchasing data were also missing for OIEA for FY25. Finally, NM Grown reach and impacts on local food producers selling products to NM Grown buyers solely through food hubs and distributors could not be assessed since these individual producers are not on the Approved Supplier list.

Find a full list of evaluation results, conclusions, and recommendations in the full NM Grown evaluation report here:



NM Grown website: <https://newmexicogrown.org/>

Interested in becoming an Approved Supplier?  
<https://newmexicogrown.org/asp/apply/>

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