



THE KENTUCKY HUNGER INITIATIVE: *How the Kentucky Department of Agriculture is Fighting Hunger*



“It is an unfortunate reality that 1 in 7 Kentuckians are food insecure. In a state like ours, blessed with agricultural abundance, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture launched the Kentucky Hunger Initiative to bring together all parts of the food distribution network to reduce hunger.” – Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles

THE PROBLEM: According to a 2017 Feeding America study, 1 in 7 Kentuckians are food insecure, meaning there is some doubt where they will get their next meal. This problem is even worse among children, where 1 in 5 suffer from food insecurity.

THE SOLUTION: In 2016, Commissioner Ryan Quarles launched the **Kentucky Hunger Initiative** as a first-of-its-kind effort in the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) to bring together all parts of the food chain to reduce hunger in Kentucky.

RESULTS

- Commissioner Quarles and the General Assembly passed **House Bill 237**, the Food Immunity Bill, which provides the strongest legal protections in the nation for individuals and businesses seeking to donate to food pantries.
- Commissioner Quarles secured a donation from agricultural lenders Farm Credit Mid-America and CoBank to donate more than **150 chest freezers** to Kentucky food banks, helping fulfill a need for cold storage.
- KDA has adopted a strategy to encourage farmers' markets to enroll in Double Dollars, a program that allows SNAP participants to **double their purchasing power** of fresh produce at qualified markets.
- Two “Serving Up Solutions” dinners that together raised more than **\$85,000** for Feeding Kentucky, Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry, and Glean KY.
- Commissioner Quarles helped secure a **\$30,000 grant** from The Dairy Alliance to God's Pantry Food Bank for a Milk To My Plate program, providing four food pantries the ability to serve nutritious, local milk to those in need.
- KDA secured a **\$5,000 donation** to Feeding Kentucky to offset meat-processing costs faced by food pantries.
- KDA provided a **\$9,793 grant** to Feeding Kentucky for the purchase of 16 coolers and 9 freezers in 25 food pantries across the Commonwealth.
- A Beef Month partnership with the Kentucky Cattlemen that has resulted in a donation of **2,000 pounds** of KY Cattlemen's Ground Beef and two T-shirt Campaigns to raise funds for and awareness about hunger relief efforts.
- The acquisition of nearly **315,000 surplus meal kits** from the federal government for Kentucky food banks.
- Developed the **Kentucky Vegetable Incentive Program (K-VIP)** with Feeding Kentucky and the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund. Administered by Feeding Kentucky with support from KDA and the Kentucky Department of Education, K-VIP increases access for Kentucky students to locally sourced fruit and vegetables after school and during the summer. K-VIP has been recognized as an innovative model by national hunger organizations Share Our Strengths and the No Kid Hungry Campaign.
- Kentucky hosted **the first-ever No Kid Hungry Rural Child Hunger Summit**, where the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and its partners were recognized for the Hunger Initiative's efforts to reduce hunger.
- As part of the Kentucky Hunger Initiative, Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance raised **\$107,100** in its inaugural “Clays for a Cause” fundraising event for Feeding Kentucky, Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry, and Glean KY.
- Supported Cook Wild Kentucky, a partnership of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, the UK Cooperative Extension Service, Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry, and Feeding Kentucky. Cook Wild Kentucky provides **17 unique recipe cards** to help Kentuckians cook wild game donated to food banks.