

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Joe Courtney today applauded Wholesome Wave after they secured a \$568,150 multi-agency Rural Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge grant by the US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Appalachian Regional Commission and Delta Regional Authority. Wholesome Wave's Healthy Food Commerce Initiative (HFCI) will use the funding to support local "healthy food hubs" by increasing capacity building; increasing access to financing; and providing technical business assistance and planning.

In Connecticut, Wholesome Wave plans work with FRESH New London, a nascent food hub that plans to source locally-grown and locally-processed food from rural areas in Connecticut.

“This targeted, competitively-secured investment will put fresh, locally-grown foods onto more tables, and will provide a boost to eastern Connecticut farmers,” **said Congressman Courtney.** “By increasing access to financing and business assistance, this funding will help farmers grow their small businesses, secure their futures, and, in the long run, protect jobs here at home.”

According to Wholesome Wave, food hubs like FRESH New London, when managed effectively, have the potential to be viable businesses that efficiently connect rural production with urban demand. The outcome of such commerce drives regional economic activity, raises farm incomes and preserves farmland acreage.

“This innovative, joint USDA/EDA funding to Wholesome Wave is especially helpful to New England farmers and food producers,” **said Gus Schumacher, Executive Vice President of Wholesome Wave.** “The demand for regional and local foods by schools, hospitals and colleges is growing exponentially. New food hubs are starting or expanding to meet this demand. Such hubs will generate additional revenue to the region's farmers and food producers through aggregating their products. This federal funding couldn't be more timely.”

“We are honored to have been selected by the USDA/EDA to help strengthen New England's regional food infrastructure,” **said Michel Nischan, CEO & Founder of Wholesome Wave.** “This critical and timely support will make it possible for our Healthy Food Commerce Initiative team to work with and invest in promising ‘healthy food hub’ enterprises, giving them opportunities to expand their operations and build strong networks in a way that both stimulates local and regional New England economies and makes fresh healthy locally grown food more accessible and affordable for all.”

Congressman Courtney is the founding co-chairman of the Congressional Dairy Farmers Caucus, and is the first member of the Connecticut House delegation to serve on the Agriculture Committee since Henry Stevens in the 59th Congress more than 100 years ago.

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