

Local Foods Resource Mapping Project

Arkansas Local Food Meetups

Regional Findings Report

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OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the information gathered during five regional meetings with local food system stakeholders in Arkansas to better understand the scope of the local food system and the needs for supporting local food value-chain development.

PURPOSE

The University of Arkansas' Community and Economic Development Unit of the Cooperative Extension Service (UACES) participated in a multi-state partnership sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to investigate efforts around local foods. AMS is seeking to develop a web-enabled public directory and map to provide a comprehensive picture of the local food system and understand barriers to local foods system development. Six states were selected to be part of the project (Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, Kentucky, Mississippi, and North Carolina).

To help us better understand the current scope of local food efforts and the needs of the local food system players, we conducted a series of five regional "Local Food Meetups." The objectives of the Meetups were to:

- Assess current local foods efforts and infrastructure within each region.
- Create regional directories of local food system stakeholders.
- Identify the needs and challenges with supporting a local food value-chain.
- Offer regional and state-wide networking.

The major objective of the LFRM project is "to provide user friendly data resources needed to guide investments that can strengthen a regional food system, including the types and levels of information emerging food system entrepreneurs will need to objectively identify the assets and challenges of a proposed food-related venture, the resources needed to launch such venture, and the likelihood of its long-term success." By collecting information across value-chain sectors, this creates opportunities for:

- Development of technical programming and curriculum related to production, markets, business development, and the connections between businesses
- Research and evaluation of strategies and practices
- Regional, state and national planning
- Economic impacts
- Policy making

METHODS

The UACES team hosted five regional Meetups in Arkansas with events held in North Little Rock, Jonesboro, Fayetteville, Hope and Monticello over the summer of 2016. At each Meetup, several facilitated working sessions were held over a six hour program.



The program consisted of information sharing sessions and information gathering sessions throughout the day. During working sessions, participants organized by their sector (producers, direct markets, retail buyers, institutions, coordinators, and technical support providers) and discussed among peers responding to questions and sharing information collected on flipcharts.

Program activities included:

1. Overview of the background and purpose of the project.
2. Discussion on the food value-chain sectors and the reason for inviting participants across sectors.
3. Review of resources available to participants such as Market Maker; Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food; other USDA resources for grants and technical information; and how to engage with the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

4. Identification of other stakeholders across the local food value-chain sectors.
5. Sharing of big ideas for changing the regional food system.
6. Listing of needs and challenges being faced within and across the local food value-chain.
7. Offering open space networking and consultations to participants by representatives from multiple state and local agencies, organizations, and not-for-profits.

Liberating Structures methodology was used to organize attendees into small working groups and provide them with a structure for interacting with each other to elicit desired information (see www.liberatingstructures.com for details on this method). Specific methods for data collection program activities are described in the following paragraphs.

Stakeholder Identification

In the stakeholder identification session, participants were arranged by their sector (producers, direct markets, retail buyers, institutions, coordinators, and technical support providers) and the asked to identify other stakeholders not in attendance at the Meetups that fit within each of the sectors. For example, producers would have a few minutes to create a list of other producers in the region. Producers would then move to another flip chart to create a list of the known direct markets or market managers. Each group of participants went around the room moving to each sector-specific flip chart and added names of individuals, businesses or

organizations to the list current or possible food system stakeholders.

Need to Succeed by Region

This segment of the program aimed to collect a broad range of information from participants regarding their role in the local food value-chain and what they need from other sectors to be more successful with fostering growth in their local food system. Participants were organized by sector (producers, direct markets, retail buyers, institutions, coordinators, and technical support providers). Each sector discussed their role in the food system and then shared information on what they need from one another to be successful with supporting the local food value-chain. Each sector then provided information about what they need from each of the other sectors to be successful. For example, producers shared that they need to work cooperatively with other producers to ensure that they have less competition at markets, producers needed to know what direct markets are available in their region to be able to expand their market reach, and that they need to understand the rules for selling produce to local schools.

Due to low representation from some sectors at the Southern Arkansas meetups, information was provided about the needs across each sector rather than from specific sector input. That is, the information gathered was based on the anticipated needs for each sector from the perspective of attendees working in the region.

Open Space Consulting

Several supporting partners offered to serve as technical consultants to participants during the final session of the day. Partners

included Horticulture Faculty with the University of Arkansas, Arkansas Agriculture Department, Heifer International, Arkansas Farm to School, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Arkansas Women’s Business Center, National Center for Appropriate Technology, and Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group. One or more representatives from each partner organization shared the types of resources and technical support that could be provided by their organization. Participants were given up to 40 minutes to meet with representatives to ask questions, plan future activities, and discuss the opportunities for providing technical assistance with local food system development.

Participation

A total of **206 participants** attend the five regional meetups. Meetings were held July 6 (Little Rock - C), July 7 (Hope - SW), July 12 (Jonesboro - NE), July 14 (Fayetteville - NW) and August 9 (Monticello -SE). See Table 1 for participation by region.

Central	65
Northwest	69
Southwest	22
Southeast	23
Northeast	27
Total	206

The Central and Northwest regions had the largest participation and currently have the greatest development in local foods for Arkansas. The Southwest, Southeast, and Northeast lacked representation from all of the sectors, but participants did discuss the emerging activities and

current efforts to create some local food projects and initiatives.

RESULTS

Response to Existing Resources

In reviewing existing resources, facilitators walked participants through the Arkansas Market Maker website and USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food website. Handouts containing other available resources were also provided to participants.

Regarding MarketMaker, some participants who have tried to use the tool in the past expressed frustration that business profiles were often not current. It was suggested some that entity be assigned to follow up with businesses annually to update profiles. Regarding the secondary data mapping features, there was very little comment from participants. From the facilitators' perspective, it appears that few producers or other local food business representatives understand how to use these data in any meaningful way to inform their business decisions.

A relatively small percentage of participants (based on show of hands) were familiar with the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food website. Response to the website was generally favorable, with a number of participants expressing interest in and appreciation for the site.

Stakeholder Identification

Across the state, participants identified **992 other stakeholders or stakeholder groups** that should be engaged in regional planning efforts to support addressing the needs along the local food value-chain. Stakeholders are categorized by six major sectors: Producers, Direct Markets, Retail Buyers, Institutions, Coordinators and Technical Support Providers. Table 2 below shows the numbers of other stakeholders that were identified by sector and region subgroups under these majors sectors include, but are not limited to:

- Producers / Farmers
- Direct Markets
 - Cooperatives
 - Farmers Markets
- Coordination
 - Distributor
 - Aggregator
 - Processor
 - Wholesale Buyer
 - Value-Added Business
- Institutional Buyer
 - Public Schools
 - College/University
 - Hospital/Medical
- Retail Buyer
 - Restaurant/Catering
 - Grocer
- Technical Support
 - University
 - Government
 - Non-profit
 - For-profit

Table 2: Identified local food stakeholders.

Stakeholders	Producers	Direct Markets	Retail Buyers	Institutions	Coordinators	Technical Support	All
Central	73	47	63	42	21	37	283
Northwest	73	35	50	41	32	54	285
Southwest	29	16	48	61	20	31	205
Southeast	24	23	25	28	21	37	158
Northeast	14	5	12	14	3	13	61
Totals	213	126	198	186	97	172	992

Regional directories are being prepared with the contact information for these stakeholders and will be shared with the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service and with the participants of the Meetups.

Need to Succeed by Region

Attendees provided **1060 statements** about specific types of needs for support or challenges faced in the regional food system. These statements have been reviewed and synthesized by region and sector.

Because all sectors were not represented in the two Southern regional meetings, the data collection was modified to fit the stage of local food system development for each region. The Southwest group discussed as a whole rather than within sectors what was needed from each sector to be successful. The Southeast group discussed as a whole rather than by sectors the opportunities for developing local foods, because little food system development is in place to date. This information is intended to be used to inform the development of training and technical assistance to help address some of the identified needs.



Central PRODUCERS

What *PRODUCERS* need from *PRODUCERS*

1. Set up a system for seed sharing between producers.
2. Referrals from other producers to them for their products.
3. Shared workforce.
4. Producer-to-producer consulting on specific practices and experience.
5. Cooperative efforts for marketing & distribution of products.
6. Local or regional shared-use cold storage and approved processing facilities.

What *PRODUCERS* need from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. A directory of local, county or regional markets.
2. Communicate the demand of produce or products requests to producers.
3. Establish a system or infrastructure to support packing for buyers, market bags or boxes would be helpful.
4. Offer cold storage on site.
5. Provide advertising and marketing for producers.

6. Offer education about what producers need to know when working with a market.

What *PRODUCERS* need from *INSTIUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Create a directory of institutional buyers.
2. Share information on the food safety regulations that institutions require for procurement.
3. Support for developing a plan of action for working with an institution to get what they want and to get to the scale they need.
4. Provide a forecast for what they are interested in buying so that producers can plan growing seasons.
5. Share the specific demand for specific products.
6. Share the menus of institutions so that producers can plan for what to grow.
7. Institutions need to better understand their customers to know what is likely to be purchased, consumed or requested in the institution.
8. Institutions have the resources to provide transportation to acquire the products.
9. Institutions should work to promote the producers through branding the products in the institutions.
10. Share the specific procurement processes that are required for purchasing from local producers.
11. Provide information about how they purchase food, is a third party buyer involved or do they buy direct?
12. Share their institutional values related to food, health, the environment, etc.

What *PRODUCERS* need from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Establish a face-to-face relationship with the producers.
2. Buyers should plan to visit the farm to learn about the production process and the availability of food products.
3. Retail buyers should create purchasing terms that are shared with the producers up front.
4. Create a directory of interested retail buyers would be helpful to producers interested in this market.
5. Producers and retail buyers need to make time to create plans of action.
6. Producers need to understand the demand for specific products or for local food in general.
7. Buyers should help producers to forecast what buyers are demanding for the next growing season.
8. Buyers should create a way to give the grower credit for producing the food through some type of branding on signs or menus.
9. Buyers should communicate the margin requirements.
10. Producers are willing to work with buyers to provide supply samples for buyers interested in testing products first.
11. Buyers should agree to pay producers within 30 days, net 30.
12. Producers could agree to provide a buyer discount for upfront payment or early pay (less than 30 days).

What *PRODUCERS* need from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Producers need support for how to apply for funding, grants and other resources streams.
2. Provide help with actually writing grants to support producers.
3. Assistance or training for website, social media and other online presence.
4. Keep producers up-to-date on regulations and requirements.
5. Provide assistance with branding, marketing and advertising.
6. Conduct training on the USDA Good Agricultural Practices.
7. Provide training and technical assistance with business plan development and management.
8. Provide information on how to connect with additional funding options such as the Farm Credit Service, local investors or resources, and crowd funding supports.
9. Provide training and technical assistance on how to recruit and maintain a farm labor force.
10. Provide training and technical assistance on development of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).
11. Help producers develop internship programs.
12. Provide workshops or training on how to develop agritourism.
13. Producers would like the University of Arkansas to restart the Horticulture Growers Meetings.
14. Producers would like to see more involvement from Cooperative Extension Service in local food system

development and sustainable agriculture.

Central DIRECT MARKETS

What DIRECT MARKETS need from PRODUCERS

1. Markets need more participation from producers.
2. Producers should have more peer-to-peer accountability.
3. More cooperation is needed among producers to plan for what should be available at markets rather than so much competition over similar items.
4. Producers should be open to new market ideas that could bring more business and traffic to the markets.

What DIRECT MARKETS need from DIRECT MARKETS

1. Markets need to have a way to share ideas and resources for what's working or not.
2. Markets could help one another navigate the ways to manage accepting nutritional program funds from programs like WIC and SNAP.
3. Provide regional market meetings for all area markets to plan and collaborate.

What DIRECT MARKETS need from INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS

1. Markets would like a list of products that institutions would be interested in purchasing and may be able to

coordinate among producers to meet that demand.

2. Establish a network for institutions and farmers markets working together to support regional buying.
3. Provide an opportunity for markets to be open on institutional campuses.
4. Institutions should provide product specifications on how to pack products for institutional buyer preferences.

What DIRECT MARKETS need from RETAIL BUYERS

1. Markets need lists of what retail buyers would like to purchase.
2. Markets need information about how to work specifically with retail buyers, what are the specifications, pricing, preferences, past purchasing, menus and regulations.
3. Specifications about how to pick produce for them; sizes, quantities, ripeness, etc.
4. Online systems should be developed to present the information mentioned above to reduce travel time and make more accessible to markets.

What DIRECT MARKETS need from TECHNICAL SUPPORT

1. Share information about the availability of grants and other funding resources.
2. Create training and technical assistance to provide program supports to markets.
3. Create ways to support market advertising.

4. Develop a resource guide or best market practices toolkit for market managers.
5. Develop training on using social media for markets.
6. Provide educational workshops on how to accept SNAP and WIC assistance.
7. Need new market development in communities that want markets.
8. Develop food literacy programs and help educate consumers about local foods.

Central RETAIL BUYERS

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *PRODUCERS*

1. Would like to know the production schedule related to growing seasons so that they could plan menus.
2. Want to know what volume of products could be available to them.
3. Need to know how the food is being transported and distributed, what type of transportation, cooling, etc.
4. Want pricing and payment information upfront.
5. Want a commitment to a certain quality of products.
6. Would like to have references from other buyers to verify credibility of the products.
7. Want to visit the farms to have access to how the food is produced.
8. Need information related to how the food is being produced such as the use of pesticides, GMO's, etc.
9. Create a weekly product list to help with seasonal purchasing.

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Markets should provide information regarding available hours of operation.
2. Create a list or other resource document of what is seasonally available would be helpful.
3. Need information related to how the food is being produced such as the use of pesticides, GMO's, organic, locally grown, etc.
4. Share information about all of the points of distribution for the market products to make it easier for buyers to access those products.
5. Directories that provide information of the location of farms and how far produce is being transported to their retail outlet.
6. A website mapping out all markets in the area.

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Want to understand the purpose and mission of the institution.
2. Would like to know if the institution would be open to providing retail outlet space for lease, sub-lease.
3. Interested in developing partner opportunities for cooperative purchasing or establishing a buying group with several producers.

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Buyer networks to share customer contacts.

2. Buyer coordination of menus and food options as to not compete for products or customers.
3. Buyer cooperative to share, lease or sell equipment.
4. Buyer support network for concepts and design services.
5. Buyer purchasing coalition for competitive purchasing.
6. Coordinate putting in retail stores in specific locations to create retail districts.
7. Buyers that can create references for one another to and from producers.
8. Opportunities to share expertise to help others develop a local food product line or menu items.

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Creation of an online support system that has website mapping of production, distribution, contact information, industry news, and more.
2. Offer educational opportunities for safe-food handling.
3. Help with developing a scrap-recycling management program to deal with food waste.
4. Provide training on proper walk-in cooler stocking techniques.
5. Help buyers secure the appropriate equipment needed for storing, processing, or cooking local products.
6. Develop a digital food hub to connect buyers with local products.
7. Help buyers with their social media presence.

Central INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *PRODUCERS*

1. Create a producer directory.
2. Create a product directory of what, how much and when foods are available. It could also include information about how food is distributed or delivered.
3. Assistance with food safety certifications, food safety rules and Good Agricultural Practices.
4. Producers and buyers need to share information on billing terms, time for payment, etc.
5. Producers could offer farm tours and educational programs on how they produce the food.
6. Establish a contract forwarding agreement with producers to setup future purchasing and assure price points and availability of products.
7. Producers need to provide marketing material to buyers so they can share this information with consumers.
8. Producers need to work with buyers on the food specifications such as packaging, volume, case count, etc.

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Create a directory of local direct markets.
2. Education provided by market managers on how the buyer can utilize the market.
3. Create a product directory of what is available to the buyers.

4. Information on the times of operation.
5. An ability to make a connection with the farmer to understand how the food was produced.
6. Offer opportunities for institutional gardens at schools and universities to sell to local markets.
7. Have markets express a willingness to work with institutions.

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Institutional peer training for how they were able to buy local products.
2. Offer networking opportunities so that institutions can learn from one another.
3. Institutions can share best practices of what has worked with local products.
4. Create a listserv to communicate between institutions about emerging issues, challenges and solutions.
5. Establish a system for communicating up-to-date information.

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Establish cooperative buying networks.

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Provide education support on how to do local institutional buying.
2. Provide technical assistance and guidance as institutions start to implement local buying.
3. Distribute clear information as to provide an understanding of regulations that would influence institutions.

4. Provide some financial help to address the cost difference between local and conventional purchasing.
5. Dissemination of up-to-date information relevant to local purchasing.
6. Provide demonstrations or training workshops on best practices or techniques.
7. Share information that motivates institutions to see the benefits of local purchasing over conventional purchasing.
8. Provide technical assistance to help us through the pit falls of local purchasing.

Central COORDINATION

What *COORDINATION* needs from *PRODUCERS*

1. Producers need to create a forecast of what will be available giving a lead-time for planning for coordination and wholesale and retail distribution.
2. Planning of production and the specifications of what will be available is critical.
3. After the growing season has begun, producers need to provide weekly production updates so that food coordinators can plan the distribution accordingly.
4. Producers should develop an on-farm grading system for quality so that coordinators can label and market the grade.
5. Producers need to get educated on Good Agriculture Practices and food safe handling.

What *COORDINATION* needs from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Markets can help coordinators connect to growers.
2. Markets can partner with coordination to promote the local food system.

What *COORDINATION* needs from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Data on what buyers want to purchase, volume, case units, packing requirements, etc.
2. Know when buyers want to purchase and have them understand seasonality.
3. Buyers need to communicate what they are paying currently for non-local so that producers can understand how to set wholesale pricing.
4. Create an institutional buyer contact directory.
5. Information on what food safety practices or specific regulatory requirements are in place for buyers.

What *COORDINATION* needs from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Data on what buyers want to purchase, volume, forecast menus, case units, packing requirements, etc.
2. Buyers need to understand lead-time for producers and aggregators.
3. Willingness to embrace seasonal production over conventional production.
4. Understanding of how to avoid food waste.

What *COORDINATION* needs from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Support organizations to collect sales and purchase data from institutions, retail outlets and food service organizations.
2. Create a directory of refrigerated transport companies for purchasing, leasing or coordinating transport.
3. Develop a system to connect producers with aggregator services.
4. Develop a training and technical assistance program to educate institutional and retail buyers on good local buying practices.

Central TECHNICAL SUPPORT

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *PRODUCERS*

1. Producers to develop consistent prices for easier marketing and sales to retail buyers.
2. Development of producer associations or cooperatives.
3. Provide a list of what technical assistance, research programs, or resources they need.
4. Create a producer directory with inventories of crops or products.
5. Need to report issues related to pest, disease, water, markets to technical support providers as soon as they arise.
6. Get to know the county extension agents.
7. Be willing to try new things.
8. Seek help or information before planting, especially new growers.

9. Establish an email account and get familiar with using electronic forms of communication.
10. Learn about crop planning, record keeping, and data collection methods to keep track of production, sales and expenses.
11. Share opportunities for donating to hunger relief through gleaning.
12. Establish the average input costs for each crop type so that they can be advised on markets and profit.
13. Establish a complete database of producer information for periodic contracting with buyers.
14. Share the specific type of technical support or assistance that is needed and what time of year they need it.
15. Share preferred methods of communication between producers and technical support providers.
16. Determine how to attract more people to the profession of farming.
17. Understand and address gaps in production throughout the year.
18. Understand producers specific workforce needs.
19. Share more information about specific production practices beyond just saying organic, like what inputs do they use, how do they grow, water use, safety practices, etc.
20. Share what their specific challenges are with customer education.
21. Participate in the trainings that are being offered or share reasons why they are not attending.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Markets to communicate specific goals, priorities, needs, training and resource requests, etc.
2. Create a directory and online presence of markets so people can be referred to them.
3. Track sales and expenses to measure market success.
4. Create a directory or list of crops by week or season.
5. Share best practices for success.
6. Coordinate and communicate among each other to have increased success.
7. Advise the development of professional practices and businesses plans to share with other markets or future market managers.
8. Understand their need for volunteers and their capacity for recruiting volunteers.
9. Develop education programming (cooking demo, nutrition, canning, composting) to attract more patrons.
10. Identify markets that want to sell to schools.
11. Identify what training or workshops markets need and what time of year is best to host.
12. Become a member of the Arkansas Farmers Market Association and AR Grown program.
13. Learn how to sign up to accept SNAP and WIC benefits.
14. Plan to donate to hunger relief following market days.
15. Host cooking and nutrition demonstrations.

16. Share challenges with capital constraints that are keeping the market from growing.
17. Work with other markets to create a farmers market collaborative to share ideas, successes challenges, and solutions.
18. Accept assistance and training.
19. Collect and share data.
20. Create lines of communication utilizing people who farmers trust.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Establish a high level marketing campaign to educate consumers about local foods to create awareness and engagement.
2. Have buyers to provide a list of farms they currently source from.
3. Share their guidelines and requirements for purchasing.
4. Identify a target audience for marketing local foods.
5. Share institutional priorities.
6. Exhibit flexibility and understand the nature of local farming.
7. Educate their consumers, constituents, and employees.
8. Conduct surveys to measure demand.
9. Provide guidance on how institutions want to receive produce or products from producers.
10. Share how to partner on cooking and nutrition education.
11. Be flexible with local growers as systems are developed.
12. Highlight farm products on menus or in marketing.

13. Understand what costs specifically are keeping you from buying local (supply chain analysis).
14. Share factors that would facilitate more local buying.
15. Assess policies that inhibit donations to food banks.
16. Understand the natural efficiencies of longer and lasting produce and a lower carbon foot print.
17. Share food safety requirements and regulations for local purchasing.
18. Plan to have certain days focused on local production.
19. Understand how farm-to-school could impact labor.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Create a means for fast communication about needs for orders.
2. Understand the value of supporting local, such as economic growth, health, taste, quality of life.
3. Use branding and marketing to promote use of local and increase consumer demand; telling the story of local food.
4. Be transparent about local food products.
5. Prepare seasonal specials.
6. Understand food safety and agriculture production practices.
7. Learn how to communicate with farmers about what is available when, how much and at what price points.
8. Set expectations that are the same for buyers and sellers.
9. Be flexible.

10. Partner to offer cooking and chopping classes.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from
TECHNICAL SUPPORT

1. Communicate priorities, goals, resources and set a unified set of objectives across supporting organizations.
2. Collaborate rather than replicate.
3. Develop a process to make it easy for consumers to access information.
4. Share data across organizations.
5. Create centralized communication platform across agencies and organizations like a Facebook group.
6. Collect the dollar value data on economic benefit of local food to different sectors.
7. Create a hub of resources across organizations.
8. Create a standard for evaluation that all organizations can use to measure and report success.
9. Think long-term.



Northwest PRODUCERS

What *PRODUCERS* need from *PRODUCERS*

1. Develop a system to share information and communicate among producers about best practices, lessons learned, techniques, challenges, and solutions.
2. Work together on developing more aggregation and coordination.
3. Support more producers to start using sustainable and organic products.
4. Establish a bulk purchasing group or cooperative to buy supplies or other inputs.
5. Create on-site farm education and technical support for farmer-to-farmer learning.
6. Work together to cooperatively plan for production, crop planning and production market coordination.
7. Work together to cooperatively plan for aggregation, storage, distribution and processing.
8. Develop a way to tell the local food story together.
9. Open a local farm coop supply store that supports the smaller scale farmer with specific products that they need.
10. Work collaboratively to set up competitive price sharing.
11. Work as a group to secure funding and grants.
12. Establish a local foods lobby to advocate for what is need in the local food system.
13. Develop an internship program that is simple and easy to access by farmers.
14. Offer COC positions to be held by producers.
15. Establish a relationship with the Farm Service Agency.
16. Develop in-person, periodic producer meetings to share information among one another.

What *PRODUCERS* need from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Have flexibility with the market rules to attract producers.
2. Directly manage booths for producers.
3. Help with revision on food policy (sampling, food handling, and agritourism).
4. Take on the role of promotion for the market and producers.
5. Create shared-use space with a three basin sink washing station, freezer, refrigerator, push cart and more.
6. Secure market level liability insurance for producers.
7. Serve as advocates on legal and political issues and feedback to politicians about market needs.
8. Consider more centralized locations for markets.
9. Work to establish a relationship with local chefs and restaurants to coordinate market purchases.
10. Develop activities/raffles, etc. to draw people out.

What *PRODUCERS* need from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Lessen the margin demanded for local products.
2. Adopt local products.
3. Value the premium product and the local food story with less value placed on price alone.
4. Educate consumers to create demand.
5. Educate retail buyers to accept producers in a group.
6. Create a list of products that buyers would like to purchase.
7. Educate consumers that 'ugly' produce is edible or can be canned.
8. Have nutritionists or other educators in stores to showcase products to customers.
9. Create identification or labeling system for farms that have supplied products in stores.

What *PRODUCERS* need from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Increase the demand for local or fresh products and have the ability to utilize products.
2. Provide guidance on the specific regulations, rules, or procedures that influence local purchasing.
3. Make a commitment to prioritize nutrition.
4. Have a willingness to buy local.
5. Develop a wish-list with prices they will accept for local products.
6. Know the institutional buyer.
7. Willingness to open the institutional facilities to process products (i.e. schools and hospitals).

What *PRODUCERS* need from *COORDINATION*

1. Development of processing, distribution, cold storage for small production.
2. Development of an ordering system that is easy for producers and buyers to use.
3. Development of a reliable, consistent USDA approved animal processing facility.
4. Offer a reasonable rent to process products.
5. Hire paid coordinators for managing Community Supported Agriculture and other local food for-profit entities.
6. Create a regional or local wish-list for markets to inform production.

What *PRODUCERS* need from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Understand the local food and sustainable agriculture business better.
2. Provide more information about issues and resources available (where to get insurance, financing, techniques, taxes, and regulations).
3. Offer more coordination between technical support providers and the resources they each have available.
4. Establish more resources for small, local, organic, sustainable producers and businesses.
5. Utilize more information from producers and establish a way to get more information from farmer-to-farmer rather than just from technical supporters.

6. Provide Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) training for refrigeration and food safety.
7. Create a directory of buyers.
8. Establish a policy advocacy or lobbying group for local foods.
9. Conduct more specialized training related to sustainable agriculture.
10. Disseminate more information on policies and available programs.
11. Pay farmers for being speakers at trainings or workshops.
12. Establish an operations and on-farm management training program.

Northwest DIRECT MARKETS

What *DIRECT MARKETS* need from *PRODUCERS*

1. Develop producer brands for their products or farms.
2. Have more consistency with production.
3. Understand technology and be open to embracing new technology.
4. Make an effort to reduce waste and distribute remaining foods to the food pantries.
5. Learn about having product diversity and to plan for succession planting.
6. Understand the public's demand and create a diversified farming system to offer more products.
7. Set up the market retail space attractively.
8. Work on customer service skills.
9. Understand and communicate the difference between retail and wholesale pricing.
10. Educate more producers about business plans to ensure profits.

11. Educate more farmers on land and water stewardship that promotes biodiversity.
12. Establish a marketing campaign.

What *DIRECT MARKETS* need from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Develop a way for markets to collaborate and have open communication across markets, host a locally grown conference.
2. Be involved during the National Farmers Market Week.
3. Develop strategies or materials to share with customers to educate on the market.
4. Work to update the North West Arkansas Food Guide, periodically.
5. Share best practices through the North West Arkansas Farmers Market Alliance.
6. Collectively market a "Buy Local" campaign.
7. Create a print map with all market locations and times in the region.
8. Promote the use of the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) programs for SNAP and WIC benefits and other state programs with the Arkansas Department of Human Services local branches.
9. Develop a train-the-trainer program on market rules and regulations using the state Arkansas Farmers Market Association for guidance.
10. Provide farmer training for market production.
11. Understand and comply with health codes and work with inspectors.

What *DIRECT MARKETS* need from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Share the expected price points and the bidding process for products.
2. Create a desired products list.
3. Set local product goals for the institution.
4. Provide information regarding the specifications for the presentation and packaging of products.
5. Establish a relationship with markets to learn about what food products are available and when.
6. Create a food waste program that distributes to food banks.
7. Create an institutional marketing effort to feature farm profiles or “Know Your Farmer” posters in public spaces.
8. Participate in a farmer’s market field trip.

What *DIRECT MARKETS* need from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Provide information about what products, what volume, and the price points they need for those products.
2. Understand seasonal availability.
3. Advertise local products.
4. Use markets as a viable shopping outlet for high quality products.
5. Partner with markets to host chef demonstrations.
6. Partner with food trucks to buy from markets and showcase local products by letting customers know which products are local.
7. Promote local foods and producers on buyers’ social media pages.

What *DIRECT MARKETS* need from *COORDINATION*

1. Provide access to the information about the specifications needed to get producers to connect with or scale-up production for coordination.
2. Provide information to markets about the rules and regulations required for food safety and Good Agriculture Practices, consider hosting training with markets.
3. Develop cooperatives so that farmers can pool production together to fill larger orders.
4. Use farmers’ market groups as a social or logistical network for growers to brainstorm enterprise development.
5. Use the Arkansas Grown and Arkansas Made labeling program.

What *DIRECT MARKETS* need from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Provide information from the Health Department about market regulations.
2. Provide clarification and consistency of health codes.
3. Build collaborative relationship with inspectors by inviting them to market and producer meetings.
4. Provide clear information about the state tax code and cottage food law.
5. Work with the Department of Human Services to encourage Electronic Benefit Transfer programs to be put in place for SNAP and WIC.
6. Establish a relationship with the Cooperation Extension Service.

7. Provide training and technical assistance on production, soil health, and Good Agriculture Practices.
 8. Help producers get access to quality seeds, fertilizer, pesticide applicator training.
 9. Assist producers with understanding post-harvest handling.
 10. Create a technical support specialization focused on developing local foods systems.
 11. Develop policy councils to work on local policy development for local food, farmers markets, and value-added product development.
 12. Provide continued support with helping markets know and understand how to apply for grants.
 13. Have the Arkansas Farmers Market Association provide more assistance with public policy at the state level for markets and local food system development.
 14. Provide training and technical assistance for developing a non-profit.
4. Provide availability of second grade produce.
 5. Make a commitment of plots to specific buyers.
 6. Create an online ordering system that includes information about over production availability.
 7. Create compost exchange programs between buyers and producers.
 8. Create products units in price per pound versus by quart, bushel, etc.
 9. Develop a centralized website or Facebook announcement to connect producers and buyers.

Northwest RETAIL BUYERS

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *PRODUCERS*

1. Provide schedules of food production with projected yields and harvest times.
2. Develop aggregation systems rather than having individual deliveries from multiple producers.
3. Establish a food hub with a group of centralized producers and utilize a database for online ordering and distribution.

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Create a directory of farmers markets with location and time of operation.
2. Develop better market signage that features the local producers.
3. Develop a food aggregation system to speed up shopping for chefs and restaurants and offer delivery.
4. Create retail buyer incentives for purchasing from markets.
5. Develop a sponsorship program.
6. Create a system of notification for surpluses of inventory at the end of markets to sell wholesale to buyers.
7. Provide education of purpose or benefits of buying local or direct regarding health, the economy, strengthening the community, carbon footprint, and environmental sustainability.

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Use retail buyers for events for catering or other services.
2. Form buying cooperatives for retail and institutions to work toward regional planning for purchasing.

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Provide feedback on the benefits of using local products.
2. Form buying cooperatives or club for retail and institutions to work toward regional planning for purchasing with the option for wholesale availability, sharing information and lessons learned and to help promote one another.
3. Host retail buyer “Think Tanks” or “Meetups” to plan coordinated efforts.
4. Develop a group storage center that offers dry or cold storage for extra space, particularly important for food trucks.
5. Develop a certified shared kitchen space for retail outlets to use for processing.

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *COORDINATION*

1. Create a network to connect groups for purchasing.
2. Establish a system for bulk purchasing with wholesale prices or other incentives.
3. Offer delivery.
4. Develop a system or resource for showcasing the availability, surplus, and upcoming products.
5. Provide assistance with pricing.

What *RETAIL BUYERS* need from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Provide more resources for marketing.
2. Develop an educational program on information technology needed for buyers.
3. Provide information on state government programs, funds or incentives.
4. Develop education programs for internships, 4-H, FFA and gardening programs.
5. Create an online database for product availability.
6. Offer technical support by connecting all entities resources.

Northwest INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *PRODUCERS*

1. Commit to having a consistent supply of product at least three weeks in advance.
2. Work with buyers on planning to align crop planting with menus.
3. Share the producers’ food safety plan and liability insurance with buyers.
4. Create an order guide of available products and the estimated availability.
5. Use institutionally appropriate packaging.
6. Commit to having open lines of communication with buyers, be proactive and available.
7. Recognize the need for high quality produce.
8. Offer opportunities to educate public through farm visits, events, speaking, and outreach.

9. Consider pricing adjustments for wholesale and bulk purchasing.
10. Have patience as institutions establish local procurement programs.
11. Educate buyers on what is available seasonally.

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Assist with educating the consumer.
2. Facilitate communications from farmers to buyers.
3. Help match growers with interested buyers.
4. Share farmer stories through marketing, social media, radio and TV to build a buzz around the products.
5. Establish buyer and market partnerships.

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Commit to more institutions buying to create more demand and to keep prices affordable.
2. Share processes for getting started.
3. Communicate with each other and develop cooperative buying.
4. Develop collaborative projects through culinary schools to teach hospital or school cafeteria staff to prepare local.

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Small buyers to educate large buyers about how they started with local food.

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *COORDINATION*

1. Develop cold storage facilities.
2. Create an online ordering system as a one stop shop with a delivery system that offers wholesale prices.
3. Communicate availability of products to buyers.
4. Offer a variety of products with consistent availability.
5. Provide incentives for institutional buyers to get into the local foods marketplace.

What *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS* need from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Assist with developing student projects to lead some of these local food initiatives.
2. Establish food recovery collaborations with non-profit organizations to provide food recovery.
3. Assist institutions with creating marketing campaigns.
4. Provide data to help institutional buyers understand costs.
5. Offer funding to start local food projects within institutions.
6. Provide information for educating consumers about institutional local food.

Northwest COORDINATION

What *COORDINATION* needs from *PRODUCERS*

1. Forecast product availability and quantity.

2. Identify aggregation points that coordinators can collect from multiple producers in rural communities.
3. Provide evidence of food safety, certifications, farming practices, and insurance.
4. Develop specifications and packing requirements size, volume, weight, etc.
5. Show record keeping and product plans.
6. Develop contracts or pledges.

What *COORDINATION* needs from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Create a directory of farmers who have surplus or ability to scale up for wholesale markets.
2. Establish training and planning programs for producers to create production growth.
3. Set up a system to collect end of market products or seconds to use for processing and value-added development.
4. Establish a facility or system for packaging, storage, and aggregation.
5. Explore new opportunities.
6. Identify farmers that are on a waiting list for the market that could sell to other outlets.
7. Producers to forecast product availability and quantity.
8. Develop capacity to fill orders.
9. Initiate record keeping and data collection.

What *COORDINATION* needs from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Work with local foods for food service and cafeterias.

2. Develop purchase orders.
3. Offer local food as a benefit for working with the institution, include local food in benefits package or provide vouchers for a CSA (examples like gym memberships).

What *COORDINATION* needs from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Create order forms and standing orders.
2. Share specific needs related to variety, size, price, volume, packaging.
3. Establish a relationship with purchaser.
4. Develop a payment mechanism.

What *COORDINATION* needs from *COORDINATION*

1. Collaborate on aggregation gaps in area coverage.
2. Work with support partners to network coordination across institutions.
3. Assist with getting grant funds for school projects.
4. Share ideas and best practices.

What *COORDINATION* needs from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Provide resources and training to support business development such as insurance, marketing, funding, grants, connection to producers.
2. Collect data regarding what is being bought and sold.
3. Assist with working through the logistics.
4. Create opportunities for connecting with stakeholders.

5. Conduct training on HACCP, FSMA, and GAP.
6. Provide support to farmers to help them prepare for coordination.

15. Share the best ways to keep in touch and to provide education (workshops, videos, demonstrations, etc.)
16. Be open to new things such as on-farm research and new techniques.

Northwest TECHNICAL SUPPORT

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *PRODUCERS*

1. Share specific needs for assistance, threats to production, and best methods for delivering this information.
2. Provide information on what is working.
3. Join producer or grower associations.
4. Plan to work with support providers in the off-season.
5. Share dreams and long-term goals so that technical programs can be developed to support efforts.
6. Provide updated contact information.
7. Share anticipated production outputs.
8. Provide information on what is being produced and how it is produced.
9. Educate the supporters on new skills, knowledge and use of technology that can be shared with others.
10. Be open to creating training program for youth, student, or beginning farmers.
11. Seek advice on waste utilization, gleaning, selling seconds, and providing donations.
12. Offer to host educational farm field trips and educational collaborations for kids.
13. Establish or participate in producer associations to better communicate needs
14. Provide critical feedback on what current programs, publications, and websites are useful or not useful.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Share major issues or roadblocks.
2. Share long-term goals.
3. Develop a regional organization for communication.
4. Develop market by-laws, structure, and rules for operations.
5. Provide information for market websites and social media accounts.
6. Express interest in receiving assistance to diversify markets to other sectors.
7. Request information on how to start a market, be sustainable, and promote the market.
8. Identify a contact to share information with the NWA Farmers Market Alliance to provide input on the market needs.
9. Prepare a market information guide for new producers.
10. Share opportunities and limitations of gleaning.
11. Provide data on product pricing and availability.
12. Share barriers for producers selling at markets.
13. Develop a group GAP partnership to plan for food safety and share equipment and storage.
14. Create opportunities for collaboration with technical supporters.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Develop a purchasing schedule for what will be needed, how much and when.
2. Share barriers for buying local.
3. Help educate buyers and consumers.
4. Create transparency of requirements and regulations of food and products.
5. Have transparent bidding process and pricing of products.
6. Educate consumers through cooking demos, taste test or garden projects.
7. Collaborate across sectors.
8. Create a payment period for products.
9. Make managing food waste an institutional practice.
10. Share requirements for GAP certification or other food safety needs.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Develop a purchasing schedule for what will be needed, how much and when including any specific regulations to be followed.
2. Commit to take small risk to start buying local products.
3. Share what is working and how this can be scaled-up or used as best practices.
4. Share barriers, long-term goals, and dreams.
5. Provide information about how current marketing is supporting of local foods.
6. Share food safety and packaging requirements.
7. Create a directory of buyers interested in local purchasing.

8. Share opportunities for gleaning and waste reduction
9. Communicate deficiencies in knowledge and skill base of growers.
10. Communicate produce quality issues.
11. Identify food safety needs.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *COORDINATION*

1. Identify coordination companies that want to work or would like to work with local foods.
2. Develop processing facilities to work with small farmers.
3. Identify coordinators who are interested in building or expanding existing pilot plant programs.
4. Express a desire for using local food.
5. Understand dreams and long-term goals.
6. Understand the specific infrastructure needs.
7. Offer information about the capability and interest in moving local food.
8. Understand the cost to aggregate and use existing facilities.
9. Help stakeholders communicate their needs to technical support agencies.
10. Create more open communication and call us back.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Create better lines of communication and coordination to know what everyone is doing and to plan together.
2. Establish a state or regional listserv.
3. Share what is going well and best practices.

4. Create a directory of technical supporters and their capacity of support.
5. Establish working groups and shared topics.
6. Establish a system to share technical support materials more easily.
7. Create living documents and resources with other agencies.
8. Host networking opportunities, meetups, and resource or asset mapping events at least annually.
9. Create joint programs that nurture beginning, young farmer, and internship opportunities.



Northeast PRODUCERS

What PRODUCERS need from PRODUCERS

1. Have consistent participation at local farmers markets to make markets attractive for the consumers.
2. Make a commitment and have a positive attitude toward a local sustainable agriculture program on a local level.
3. Offer vendor support and networking with producers and community.
4. Use internships through local colleges for harvesting produce.

What PRODUCERS need from DIRECT MARKETS

1. Increase participation from growers.
2. Advertise farmers markets and coop.
3. Form a coop for growers to support pricing and marketing.
4. Educate on market procedures and policies.

What PRODUCERS need from COORDINATION

1. Secure grants and funding to develop methods for coordination.

2. Form a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program that goes beyond the farmers market to reach more people.
3. Establish relationship and cooperation from schools with working through the procurement challenges.
4. Have schools educate producers on what the school requires related to size, quantity, packaging and more.
5. Contact distributors or buyers and plan for coordination to mom-and-pop stores, restaurants, hospitals, schools, and flea markets.
6. Identify or develop local suppliers of agricultural inputs, seed, fertilizer, equipment, supplies and more.

What PRODUCERS need from INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS

1. Determine what foods are needed and when are they needed so that producers can plan production schedules accordingly.
2. Identify needs from school, rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes, hospitals and other institutions.
3. Provide support to think outside of their business box and to learn about something new that they can try to expand their business.
4. Conduct nutritional education and taste test on the agricultural products that they have available so they people can understand how to use the foods and that they taste good.
5. Learn to turn their agricultural products into value-added businesses, stating that it

would be helpful to have ingredients lists and how to get orders for the products.

What PRODUCERS need from RETAIL BUYERS

1. Collect menus from restaurants so that they can plan for production for the items that buyers need.
2. Educate buyers about local products.
3. Partner with local retailers to feature local dishes and the local growers as a tourism strategy.
4. Have catering to feature locally grown foods.
5. Identify health food stores that could feature locally grown produce.
6. Identify other retailers that could feature locally grown produce.
7. Open up the lines of communication with local retailers.

What PRODUCERS need from TECHNICAL SUPPORT

1. Collect resources from the Agriculture Department as to different types of specialty crops that can be grown in the region and sold at local markets.
2. Recognize that the region has issues with water quality and quantity.
3. Secure funding to set up irrigation systems.
4. Provide assistance with cooperative development, education and training for how to get started and maintain operations.
5. Provide information about how to create internship programs for people to work on the farm.
6. Educate on how to secure funding, grants, or even donations.

7. Educate on the programs offered by the NRCS, such as EQIP.
8. Educate on production and promotion.
9. Assist and educate on pest management, particularly related to sustainable methods.
10. Develop local and statewide marketing and advertising campaigns that focuses on local buying.
11. Educate and offer technical assistance and training for production management using sustainable agricultural practices.
12. Develop education programs and technical assistance for creating hydroponic systems.
13. Develop education programs and technical assistance for aquaponics systems.
14. Establish local laboratories that can conduct quick testing on water, chemicals, minerals, wells and PH balance.
15. Create more cooperation from local and state offices, rather than individual programs from each of them.
16. Develop a resource supply list of sources of seeds, plants, trees, fertilizers and pest control methods for sustainable agriculture, difficult to find local sources or suppliers.
17. Offer more opportunities for networking in the region.
18. Host workshops on how to market agricultural products.

Northeast DIRECT MARKETS

What DIRECT MARKETS need from PRODUCERS

1. Create a list of what produce is available to be sold at the market.
2. Create a system to share the type and number of plans for the seasons, including

fall crops, summer crops, early springs crops, and year-round available.

3. Show consistent participation at the market by producers.
4. Recognize the need for a better system of communication so it is know what producers will have to sell. Not everyone does Facebook, email, phone and need alternative approaches to communication.
5. Collect vendor photos and their stories to incorporate it into advertising.

What DIRECT MARKETS need from DIRECT MARKETS

1. Identify how other markets keep regular vendors and attract more vendors.
2. Understand how to increase the variety of produce available at the market.
3. Educate customers about the differences between the market and a retail supermarket.
4. Learn strategies for advertising.
5. Establish support from local leaders for the market.
6. Identify the best ways to set up the market as to protect from the sun and other weather related issues.

What DIRECT MARKETS need from COORDINATION

1. Hire a CSA manager to manage shares being sold and distributed through the markets.
2. Develop a cooperative for the producers.
3. Establish coordination for the market to be able to have enough food to fill weekly CSA boxes.

4. Establish an account to hold the CSA money so that when customers are not satisfied they can be reimbursed.

What DIRECT MARKETS need from INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS

1. Lessen strict regulations and lower cost of insurance for producers and market managers to be able to sell to institutions.
2. Educate institutional buyers about coming to the market or letting market managers or producers know what they need.
3. Persuade institutions to purchase food from small to medium farms.
4. Recruit more vendors to see to institutional markets.
5. Establish a process of coordination to assist farmers with selling to institutional buyers.
6. Develop a list of contacts interested in buying from farmers would help with increasing institutional sells.

What DIRECT MARKETS need from RETAIL BUYERS

1. Encourage retail buyers to come to the market.
2. Encourage retail buyers to talk with farmers and set up a plan to buy from the farmers.
3. Work to reduce regulations that influence the relationship between producers, markets and retail buyers and should be lessened to support more sells.
4. Create a general awareness campaign to support Farm to Table through restaurants in the region.
5. Conduct education to change the habits of how retail buys and cooks their food.

6. Encourage buyers to try new recipes using ingredients from the local farmers market rather than from a can.

What DIRECT MARKETS need from TECHNICAL SUPPORT

1. Educate markets and managers of any services that can help them to operate better.
2. Establish an easier process for communicating and providing technical information to markets.
3. Plan for technical service providers to think through the annual schedule and work in the winter before or after the market season to increase participation.
4. Have technical support providers update their websites to ensure they work.
5. Help markets be more aware of grants and other funding opportunities.
6. Assist with the design of signage, marketing, advertising information, and communication support in general.
7. Share a calendar of events with markets so they can plan their schedules around multiple events and the production seasons.

Northeast RETAIL BUYERS

What RETAIL BUYERS need from...

No retail buyers were in attendance at the Northeast regional Meetup.

Northeast INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS

What INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS need from...

No institutional buyers were in attendance at the Northeast regional Meetup.

Northeast COORDINATION

What COORDINATORS need from...

No coordinators were in attendance at the Northeast regional Meetup.

Northeast TECHNICAL SUPPORT

What TECHNICAL SUPPORT needs from PRODUCERS

1. Help more producers need to become vendors at local farmers markets to support the increasing demand.
2. Ensure farms have a visible web presence and contact information.
3. Collect information about farm businesses and their needs.
4. Engage the local health authority prior to establishing food retail endeavors.
5. Provide information about what you are growing and when as to help with connecting to buyers.
6. Join producer and grower associations.
7. Share your farm stories for media.
8. Provide information about how to access the producers for scheduling of workshops, events, and availability of farm products.
9. Identify producer priorities.

What TECHNICAL SUPPORT needs from DIRECT MARKETS

1. Create uniform standards of operation.

2. Cooperate with chamber of commerce.
3. Sign up with Arkansas Farmers Market Association.
4. Determine if groups of market producers are interested in aggregating and selling to institutional buyers such as schools.
5. Have market managers serve as the point of contact and have detailed information about the markets.
6. Have pricing information available to share with potential buyers.
7. Share input on what is helpful or harmful policy to the operations of the market.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *COORDINATION*

1. Establish some type of regional shared aggregation and processing facility for producers, no current operations.
2. Identify funding needs to get coordination supports in place.
3. Offer information on how to assist the community with planning and facilitation for coordination development.
4. Provide information on fair pricing for wholesale.
5. Identify those interested in learning about GAP certification.
6. Identify those interested in learning about product liability insurance and challenges faced with liability.
7. Create more regional coordination points and information about existing infrastructure to support development.
8. Identify who is willing to expand and work specifically with farm to school.

9. Identify barriers to developing coordination in the region.
10. Identify vendor requirements from processors or distributors.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Create online information and data resource of what institutions would like to buy and when.
2. Assist with engagement and cooperation from school districts and school wellness committees.
3. Influence hospitals to recognize the need for healthy food (nutrition prescription) as opposed to only medicinal.
4. Share needs and work through challenges with quantity, quality and quotas.
5. Have more community involvement from institutions in the local food system.
6. Be open to taking small steps first rather than only being interested when the quantity needs are met.
7. Encourage institutions to provide more education to their consumers about the food they are purchasing.
8. Allow students to be hands-on with food and gardens.
9. Publicize their purchasing and availability of local items in the institution.
10. Invest in the community through local purchasing.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Purchase and sell local produce.

2. Market and promote the sales of local produce.
3. Share information about the specific products they are interested in buying or selling.
4. Provide information on their goals for being involved in the local food movement.
5. Share pricing information so that connections can be made with interested producers.
6. Provide information about what would make it easier and the volume needed for institutions to buy local.
7. Identify buying and certifications requirements up front to reduce later challenges with procurement.
8. Share opportunities to be flexible with purchasing.
9. Feature local on menus.
7. Create a career pipeline for food system gaps by working across agencies.
8. Create collaborative training programs to respond to the food system gaps.

What *TECHNICAL SUPPORT* needs from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Encourage technical providers to do better job at communication across support providers to work collaboratively.
2. Know who else is providing technical support.
3. Establish collaborate on events and educational materials development as a group rather than individual organizations.
4. Share information across organizations so that data is not collected by everyone.
5. Work together to create an asset map to share with stakeholders.
6. Work collaboratively on financial case studies and feasibility studies.

As a reminder:

Due to low participation at the Southern Arkansas meetups, the information was provided about the needs across each sector rather than from specific sector input. Thus, the information will be arranged by the anticipated needs for each sector based on the experience of the attendees working in the region.



Southwest PRODUCERS

What *is* needed from *Producers*

1. Have producers share general production information about what is grown and when it is available.
2. Understand how best to communicate with local producers.
3. Have producers be willing to cooperate with others interested in local foods.
4. Participate when education or training is made available.
5. Be reliable, consistent and on-time vendors at markets.

Southwest DIRECT MARKETS

What *is* needed from *DIRECT MARKETS*

1. Provide contact information for market managers.
2. Offer group buying for schools with one invoice from several farmers to meet the scale needed by schools.
3. Set up bid requirements with schools.
4. Establish a producer cooperative to help producers meet the local demand.
5. Advertise the markets ability to provide products to institutions.
6. Develop a directory of supplies needed for markets to share with others interested in creating markets.
7. Hire or recruit a volunteer market manager or organizer.
8. Develop marketing materials, social media pages and use the local media.
9. Create a list of what is needed for inventory.
10. Share resources through platforms like Google docs.

Southwest COORDINATION

What *is* needed from *COORDINATION*

1. Open lines of communication with local distribution companies.
2. Provide information about the specific regulatory compliance requirements.
3. Coordination is limited in the region and efforts need to be made to develop this further.

4. Efforts need to be made to educate current producers about the demand and need for coordination.

5. Promote the use of seasonal products.

Southwest INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS

What is needed from *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Educated workers interested in purchasing local foods.
2. Provide opportunities to store and use equipment in institutions to allow for local food processing.
3. Develop a method for sharing practices between buyers.
4. Create a marketing campaign to get kids at schools to try products.
5. Specific needs for products should be communicated with producers such as dark leafy greens for school meals.
6. Create opportunities to expose youth to local foods.
7. Openness to going back to food preparation.

Southwest TECHNICAL SUPPORT

What is needed from *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Provide education on food safety regulations, marketing, food preparation, and funding opportunities for communities.
2. Offer computer classes on how to manage and promote markets.
3. Create an online shopping program or CSA and promote to the region.
4. Hire someone to write grants for the region.
5. Provide education for restaurants on local buying and food safety regulations.
6. Create an approved vendor directory.

Southwest RETAIL BUYERS

What is needed from *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Express a need or interests in featuring local foods.
2. Share and market local foods to the public.
3. Offer education to consumers about local foods through demonstrations, recipes, or taste test.
4. Start selling seasonings and herbs so that people can buy them to use to prepare these local products.



Southeast PRODUCERS

What is needed to develop *Producers*

1. Identify buyers and their wants and needs for local foods.
2. Help with setting up distribution systems and markets.
3. Provide support and information for getting started with production.
4. Connect producers to other cities to get started with interested buyers.
5. Help them create CSA boxes to sell to locals.
6. Provide production education about varieties, methods, chemicals, technology.
7. Identify a labor force to help with harvest.
8. Create a startup program and offer incentives.
9. Educate potential producers on production timing and scheduling for distribution.
10. Provide pricing information.
11. Offer education to deal with pest and weather.
12. Provide training on dealing with pesticide drift protection for existing producers interested in transitioning from row crops.
13. Start with existing row crop farmers.
14. Develop transportation and cold storage infrastructure.

15. Provide financial planning, credit and insurance information for people to get started.
16. Provide education on how to create value-added products.
17. Create a list of resources for producers to get started including NRCS, Farm Credit, Ag Heritage and FSA.

Southeast DIRECT MARKETS

What is needed to develop *Direct Markets*

1. Create social events to attract people to markets.
2. Help markets develop comforts or amenities like shade, seating, and restrooms.
3. Assist markets with creating promotional campaigns through email, social media, a directory of products and partnering with other businesses.
4. Help vendors create value-added products and use local chefs to teach them.
5. Offer consistent times and operating hours for local markets.
6. Help markets establish policies and operating protocols.
7. Markets need better quality products, with more availability and variety of products to keep people attending.
8. Offer cooking classes.
9. Create year round activities so people keep in the habit of attending the market during the off season (sewing, upholstery).
10. Make the market a summer feeding site for school district.

11. Recruit more vendors, open a community garden, and create a partnership with other markets.
12. Pursue grant funding.
13. Add a vintage flea market to attract more patrons.
14. Provide training on coordinating markets for more economic development.
15. Help market become SNAP and WIC Vendor approved.
16. Help develop consumer education about production practices and the importance.
17. Help markets plan for special events such as cooking demonstrations, music, and festivals.
18. Offer children's programming at markets.
19. Offer electronic payments
20. Maintain balance of food and nonfood vendors.
21. Create a verification process for locally grown.

Southeast COORDINATION

What is needed to develop *COORDINATION*

1. Create Community Supported Agriculture programs
2. Establish communication between growers and merchants.
3. Develop affordable distribution and processing.
4. Assist with getting food safety certified.
5. Little infrastructure exist for transportation, processing, storage, and distribution.

6. Less regulation related to labor because producers cannot find a workforce other than through seasonal workers, youth under 18 can't work, adults will not work, and the government restricts work visas and requires strict conditions.
7. Gain the attention of the next generation of workers.
8. Provide training on the regulations.
9. Educate on the potential for profits and the pricing for urban markets.
10. Work with existing infrastructure and help communities establish facility use agreements with churches, schools and other facilities.
11. Help develop brokers.

Southeast INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS

What is needed to develop *INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS*

1. Help institutions understand production costs.
2. Create transparency with farm visits and use of social media.
3. Educate institutional food staff about how to prepare local food.
4. Provide a production calendar.
5. Educate on the new varieties of usual foods (ex: purple cauliflower).
6. Offer marketing, sales, distribution, coordination support for producers.
7. Create information on the procurement rules for protein.
8. Develop a system for processing to get the volume and storage needed for institutions.
9. Educate producers on the cost of scaling up and on food safety.

10. Recognize that it is hard to manage a large farm and a small scale direct or small wholesale is easier.
11. Create dependability and adequate pricing from producers.
12. Create payment terms and contracts.

Southeast RETAIL BUYERS

What *is* needed to develop *RETAIL BUYERS*

1. Create a market demand for local foods.
2. Establish some consistency, increase availability, and educate on seasonality.
3. Educate on pricing and appearance.
4. Develop coordination and aggregation.
5. Assist with marketing, branding (AR Grown), advertising, and social media.
6. Establish an online inventory.
7. Educate on the importance of being flexible on product availability.
8. Find consumers willing to pay a premium for local.

Southeast TECHNICAL SUPPORT

What *is* needed to develop *TECHNICAL SUPPORT*

1. Identify knowledgeable local support.
2. Understand the producers' needs and tracking the information from existing producers.
3. Create a pathway to provide the knowledge.
4. Speak the same language, recognize the education levels.
5. Create a farmer-to-farmer network to disseminate information among peers rather than through experts.

6. Recognize that information must be delivered face-to-face.
7. Understand that technical assistance needs to be flexible.
8. Realize that it is necessary to establish social capital and trust with the community.
9. Understand that many producers feel that Extension needs to know more than the farmer, some producers expressed that Extension is not knowledgeable about issues producers are facing (seeds, chemicals, plants, disease) in real time.
10. Recognize that research lab results have not been helpful at identifying diseases issues for some producers.
11. Offer grant writing support.
12. Provide connection to urban markets.
13. Know that some producers have found Extension to be knowledgeable and very helpful with issues, this may be county specific.
14. Establish regional specialists to address specific issues rather than broad base agents.
15. Establish producer associations with annual meetings.
16. Provided education on how to get loans.
17. Offer grant reporting and management for the communities.
18. Educate on government policies.
19. Coordinate field days to help farmers learn what to do.
20. Provide education on health and nutrition to get people to understand the value of local foods.
21. Start with community building.
22. Offer workshops and more education programs.

CONCLUSIONS

Arkansas' Local Food Meetups provided a wealth of information specific to each region of Arkansas and helped to highlight the different stages of local food system development across the state. From the identified needs, it is clear that the Northwest and Central regions of Arkansas need technical assistance and training to help expand the current capacity and work through specific value-chain challenges. The Northeast region is working on some local food system initiatives, but needs support to make more progress and establish a stronger supply chain. The Southern regions are at very early stages of development and need assistance with preliminary work to get people educated about the importance of a local food system and the opportunities available to their communities.

Findings are limited by the participation in the Meetups and may not be reflective of the

entire local food system within each region. While limited, this information provides perspective on how to target training and technical assistance. These data will be combined with online survey results conducted as part of this project to paint a clearer picture of the local foods landscape in Arkansas.

OUTCOMES

These project findings will provide the foundation for regional planning efforts to tackle some of the identified issues by working collaboratively with interested community stakeholders and partner organizations and agencies.