Turning Food Systems Research into Action

Tricia Kovacs

Local and Regional Food Systems
AMS Transportation Services Division experts support domestic and international agribusinesses by providing market reports, economic analysis, transportation disruption reports, technical assistance, and outreach to various industry stakeholders.

AMS provides information and analysis on the four major modes of moving food from farm to table, port to market, tracking developments in truck, rail, barge, and ocean transportation.
AgTransport 2.0

Making data more Usable, Shareable, Discoverable, and Accessible

Welcome to USDA’s Agricultural Transportation Open Data Platform. This site is a continually growing catalog of publicly available agricultural transportation datasets, visualizations, stories, and more!

Truck Data
Rail Data
Barge Data
Ocean Data

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AgTransport 2.0

Dashboards

1. **Refrigerated Truck**
   - Dig into the latest Refrigerated Truck Rate, Availability, and Volume data

2. **Fuel**
   - Dive into the latest multimodal fuel data

3. **Barge**
   - Explore the latest barge rate and volume data

4. **Bulk Grain Ocean**
   - Examine the latest vessel loadings, rates, and port spreads

5. **Grain Transportation Costs and Competitiveness**
   - Analyze the latest grain transportation cost data

6. **Grain Exports**
   - Get an update on the latest grain inspection, ocean vessel, and export sales data

7. **Rail**
   - Interact with the latest Carloadings, Railcar Auction Market, and Rail Performance Data

8. **Grain Prices, Basis, and Transportation**
   - Check the latest grain price and basis data

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Interactive Transportation Reports

- Ethanol and Distillers' Dried Grain Transportation Dashboard
- Transportation of U.S. Grains: A Modal Share Analysis
- U.S. Waterborne Containerized Grain Exports
- Bulk Vessel Fleet

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Example: Refrigerated Truck Data – AMS Market News

Rolling 30-Day Windows of the Top 20 Commodities and Districts by Volume

For more information on AgTransport 2.0:
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AgTransport 2.0

COVID-19 Effects on Refrigerated Trucking Volumes, Rates, and Availability

- Nationally
- Regionally
- Commodity Volumes
- Refrigerated Truck Rates and Availability

USDA

Local and Regional Food Systems
Agricultural Transportation Research

Cooperative Studies

In-depth research and analysis helps provide an efficient and reliable transportation system that benefits agricultural and other shippers.
AMS Marketing Services Division (MSD) works to improve market access for producers and develop new markets through its three main roles as a researcher, a convener, and a technical assistance provider.

MSD provides research and data that supports market access and transparency, working with USDA agencies and external partners to explore challenges and opportunities related to market access and development in the local and regional food system community.
Local Food Systems Response to Covid
Building Better Beyond

Project Partners

Local and Regional Food Systems
# Local Food Systems Response to COVID

## AMS Goals And Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Support and enhance the ongoing work of LRFS communities of practice as they adapt to the COVID disruption</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leverage</td>
<td>Leverage the diversity of LRFS sectors as a source of innovation and resilience</td>
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<td>Capture</td>
<td>Capture both financial and non-financial impacts of the COVID disruption on LRFS</td>
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<td>Foster</td>
<td>Foster cross sector collaboration across LRFS market sectors towards the long-term goal of coalescing a robust and centralized network of stakeholders for LRFS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educate</td>
<td>Educate farmers about available federal COVID-response programs and assist them to apply to the programs as feasible and appropriate</td>
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**Local and Regional Food Systems**
Local Food Systems Response to COVID

What have we accomplished so far!

- Sector Listening Sessions
- Impact Assessment
- Innovation Briefs
- Webinar Series
- Monthly COPCO Meetings
- Resource Hub
- Social Network Analysis
- Consumer Research

Local and Regional Food Systems
Local Food Systems Response to COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health and social distancing mandates caused unprecedented shifts and disruptions for Local and Regional Food Systems (LRFS). Impacts go from altering value chain stakeholders, market channels and communities of practice who provide essential support to an nation’s local food production and distribution systems. USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) along with the cooperating research team led by the University of Kentucky seek to enrich existing efforts within LRFS communities of practice who provide essential support to an nation’s local food production and distribution systems.
Local Food Systems Response to COVID

- Easily digestible ideas, best practices, and readily adoptable approaches to COVID adaptation
- Short briefs are designed to be easily shared by LRFS stakeholders to support timely innovation.
- Sample Topics:
  - Virtual CSA Fairs
  - FRESHFARM Market Tracker
  - Maine Oyster Trail – “Pick Your Own”
Local Food Systems Response to COVID

Innovation Briefs

Virtual CSA Fairs

ISSUE
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Fairs allow for people to interact with farms and gain insight into the kinds of products that farms will offer in the coming year. CSAs allow farms to share the risk and benefits of growing food with consumers in the area. Fairs often feature tables or booths of farms, where customers can meet farmers and learn about the upcoming CSA season. With social distancing guidelines, many CSA Fairs were no longer possible this season.

INNOVATION
Several states were able to combine various CSA Fairs to create state-wide virtual CSA Fairs that featured farmers from around the region or state. In order to allow time and space for customers to get a similar experience as an in-person fair, virtual CSA Fairs featured meet-and-greets with farmers, social media posts highlighting various aspects of the farms, and opportunities for customers to ask questions about the availability of produce and other details about this year’s CSA share from each farm.

OUTCOME
Organizers from each state reported positive impacts of the Virtual CSA Fairs and plan to move forward in the coming years with adaptations of the events. Significantly, organizers also explained the presence of first-time CSA customers. This creates the potential for a strong positive impact on local food systems. In addition, organizers reported positive feedback from farmers, who appreciated the time to potential benefit ratio of the online events, as compared to in-person CSA fairs.

Download Virtual CSA Fairs Brief

Local and Regional Food Systems

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Local Food Systems Response to COVID

Impact Assessments

Topics Covered:

- Overall Positive and Negative Impacts of COVID-19
- Obstacles to Sector Response
- Successful Marketing Adaptations in Response to COVID-19
- Economic Impact on Sector
- Impact on Sector Members
- Data and Technical Assistance Needs
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<td>Marketing Innovations</td>
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<td>When Communities Eat</td>
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<td>Next Steps to Support the Local Food System in Times of Uncertain Consumer Behavior</td>
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Local Food Systems Response to COVID

Cross-Sector Learning

Commonalities

• Both housed within universities
• Both focus on creating local markets for specific food products that are not produced by farmers/ranchers

New Connections and Idea-Sharing

• How each worked within their host university
• Lessons from the Approachable Loaf and The Bread Lab Collective
Local Food Systems Response to COVID

Impact Assessment Highlights

- Unprecedented consumer demand and over-booked processing facilities
- Meat destined for restaurant/food services needed to be redirected. Many meat producers have launched direct-to-consumer sales.
- Cutting for wholesale markets (primals, sub-primals) and cutting for retail are very different, require different equipment, skillsets, etc.
- Producers and processors struggling to determine how they should structure their businesses to meet new demand or if this demand is here to stay.
Local Food Systems Response to COVID

Impact Assessment Highlights

Desired Data:

• Consumer meat purchasing behavior during COVID and predictions for consumer behavior post-COVID (or if COVID drags on for another year or two).

• What parts of the country truly have a significant shortage of slaughter capacity?

• How has lack of competition (and monopolization) harmed mid-scale and small-scale meat producers and processors? And what could be done about that.

• Best practices for preventing COVID outbreaks in small meat plants (based on scientific evidence).
AMS Local Food Research and Development

Turning Research into Action

- NMPAN analyzed 35 AMS Grant funded projects most relevant to meat and poultry processing totaling $2,113,983 in grant funds. The grants were awarded between 1999-2015.
- Initial assessment used to inform more strategic decisions by AMS, policymakers and interested stakeholders.
- 6 case studies and 4 research briefs written for external stakeholders to learn from previous grant projects and implement lessons learned.

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Local and Regional Food Systems

University of Kentucky Food Connection (cooperator)
Farm to Institution New England
Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems
Center for Good Food Purchasing
Health Care Without Harm

National Farm to School Network
Community Health Improvement Partners (San Diego)
Real Food Generation
USDA FNS
USDA AMS

National Farm to INSTITUTION METRICS COLLABORATIVE
Good Food, Good Data, Big Impact
Local and Regional Food Systems

National Farm to Institution Metrics Collaborative

Our plan of work

- Create **harmonized metrics** for local food that are consistent with existing national standards
- Start with **Farm Impact**
- **Road-test** metrics with the broad F2I stakeholder community
- **Develop tools** and protocols to help with adoption and implementation
- **Values-neutral** (does not define ‘local’ or ‘good food’)
In the fall of 2019, the National Farm to Institution Collaborative launched a 1-year pilot project, sponsored by USDA AMS, to identify key farm impact metrics that can be used by farm to institution practitioners across the country. Through this project our consortium of farm to institution leaders from across the supply chain has identified the following metrics:
National Farm to Institution Metrics Collaborative

Tools and Resources

- Bite sized video: The pitch for shared metrics
- Metrics overview and glossary
- Video: Deep dive into metrics and how to use them (see attached slide deck)
- Metrics FAQ
- Guide: How to Measure your Farm to Institution Purchasing
- Tracking template and reporting calculator

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Local and Regional Food Systems
2019 National Farmers Market Manager Survey
2019 National Farmers Market Manager Survey

Partnership with NASS

• General Market Characteristics and Attributes
• Agricultural Business Development and Support
• Farmers Market Development Activities
• Farmers Market Governance
• Farmers Market Budget and Fees
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NASS Research

Local Food Marketing Practices Survey

Local Food Marketing Practices Survey Marketing Channels

Direct to Consumers

Direct to Retailers

Direct Marketing Channels

Direct to Institutions

Intermediates who Locally Brand Products

www.agcensus.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service

USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Local and Regional Food Systems
AMS Grants Division supports economic development for communities and commodities by funding projects that enhance the marketability and competitiveness of U.S. agricultural products locally, nationally and internationally.

AMS grant programs focus on local and regional food systems, and the specialty crops, dairy and sheep industries.

In 2020, AMS awarded two new grants: Regional Food Systems Partnership Grants and Micro Grants for Food Security.
AMS Grants Performance

Grants as Food Systems Research

New Performance Measures Development
• Stakeholder Engagement Listening Sessions
• Online Survey
• Expert and Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

Performance Reporting Enhancement
• Collect data in a way that can be analyzed and reported efficiently
Reach out to learn more and to share your work with us!

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