



# 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 **U**sable, **S**hareable, **D**iscoverable, and **A**ccessible

## Agricultural Transportation Open Data Platform

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

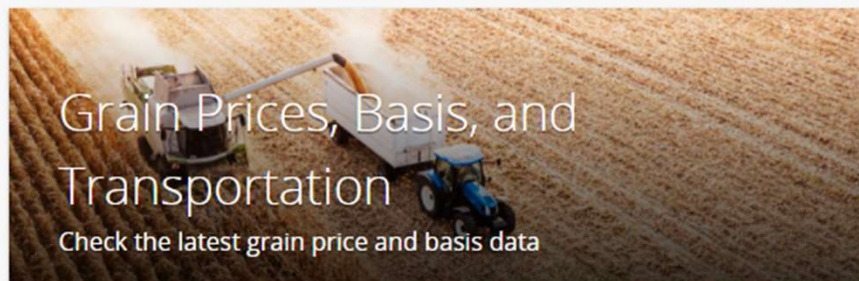
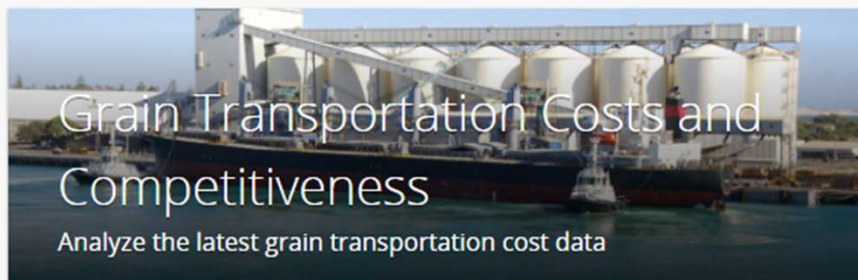
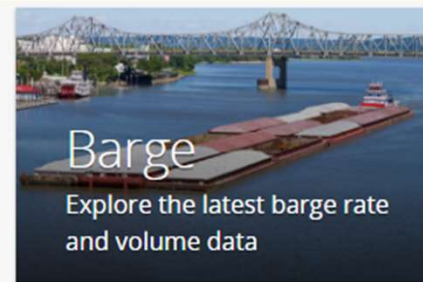
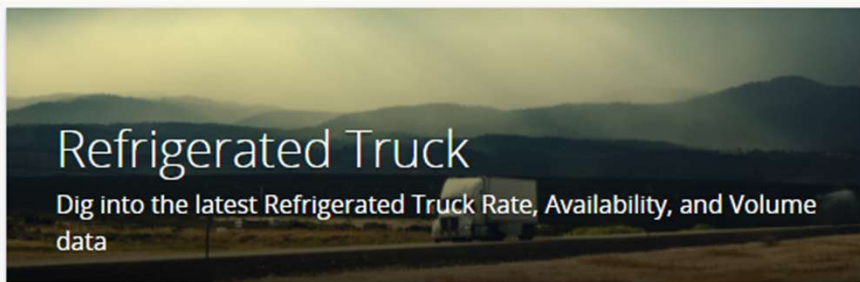


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# AgTransport 2.0

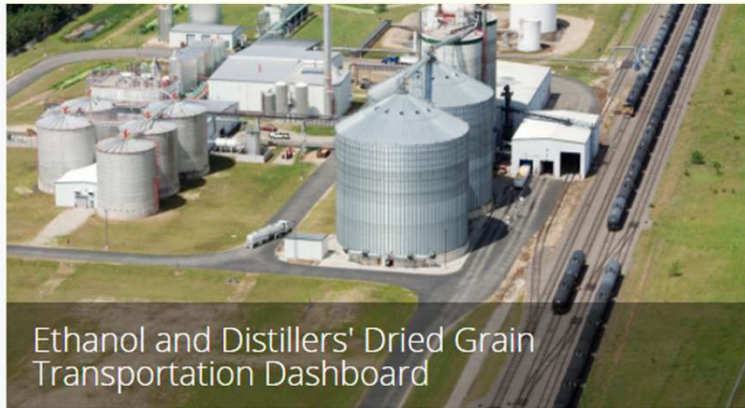
## Dashboards



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# AgTransport 2.0

## Interactive Transportation Reports



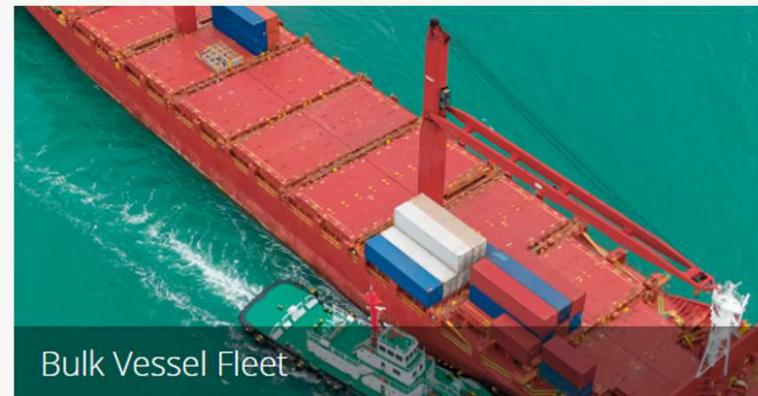
Ethanol and Distillers' Dried Grain  
Transportation Dashboard



Transportation of U.S. Grains: A Modal Share  
Analysis



U.S. Waterborne Containerized Grain Exports



Bulk Vessel Fleet

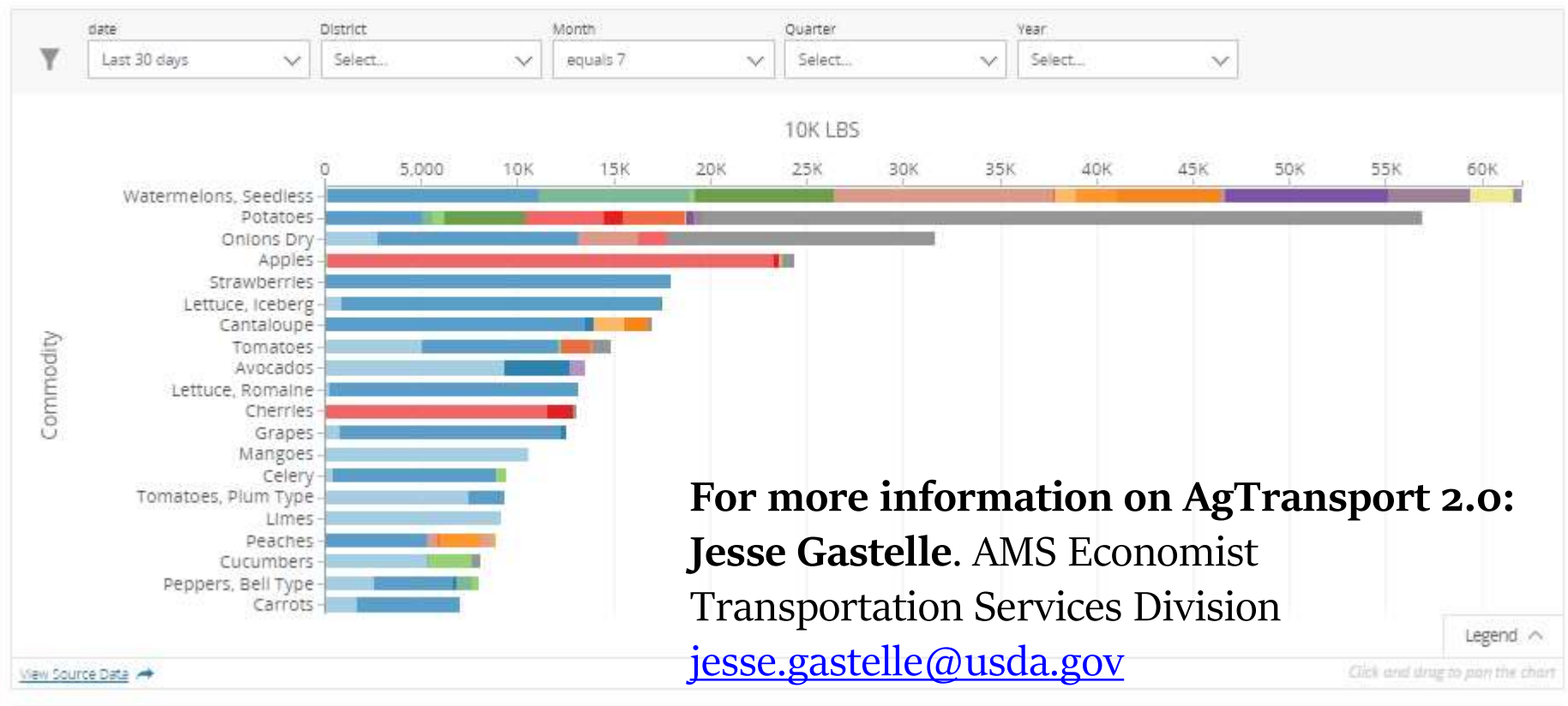


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# AgTransport 2.0

## Example: Refrigerated Truck Data – AMS Market News

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



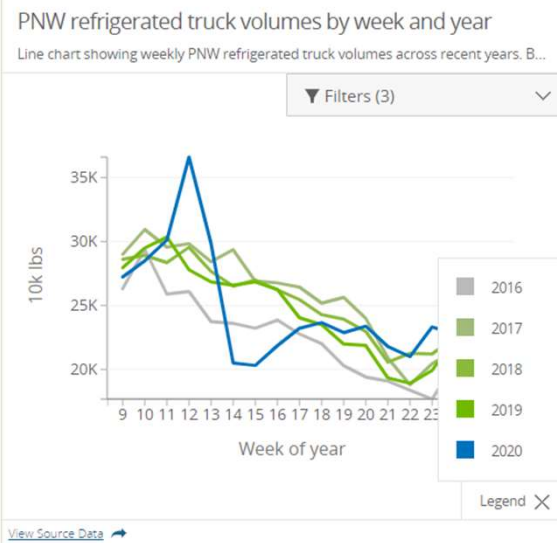
**For more information on AgTransport 2.0:**  
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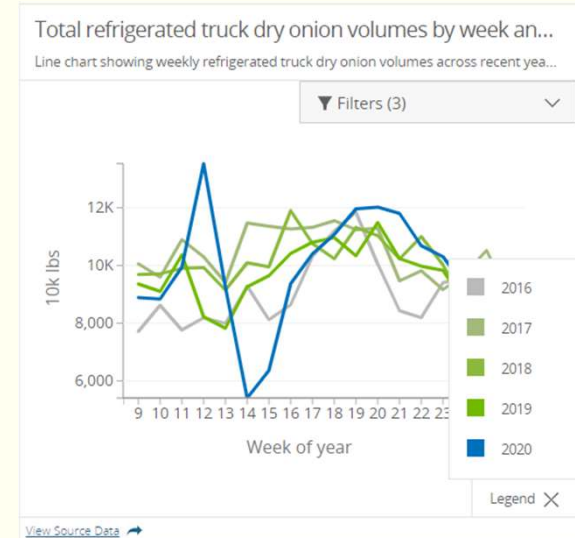
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# AgTransport 2.0



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



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# Agricultural Transportation Research

## Cooperative Studies

In-depth research and analysis helps provide an efficient and reliable transportation system that benefits agricultural and other shippers.



## Local and Regional Food Systems





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.





PennState

## Project Partners



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# Local Food Systems Response to COVID

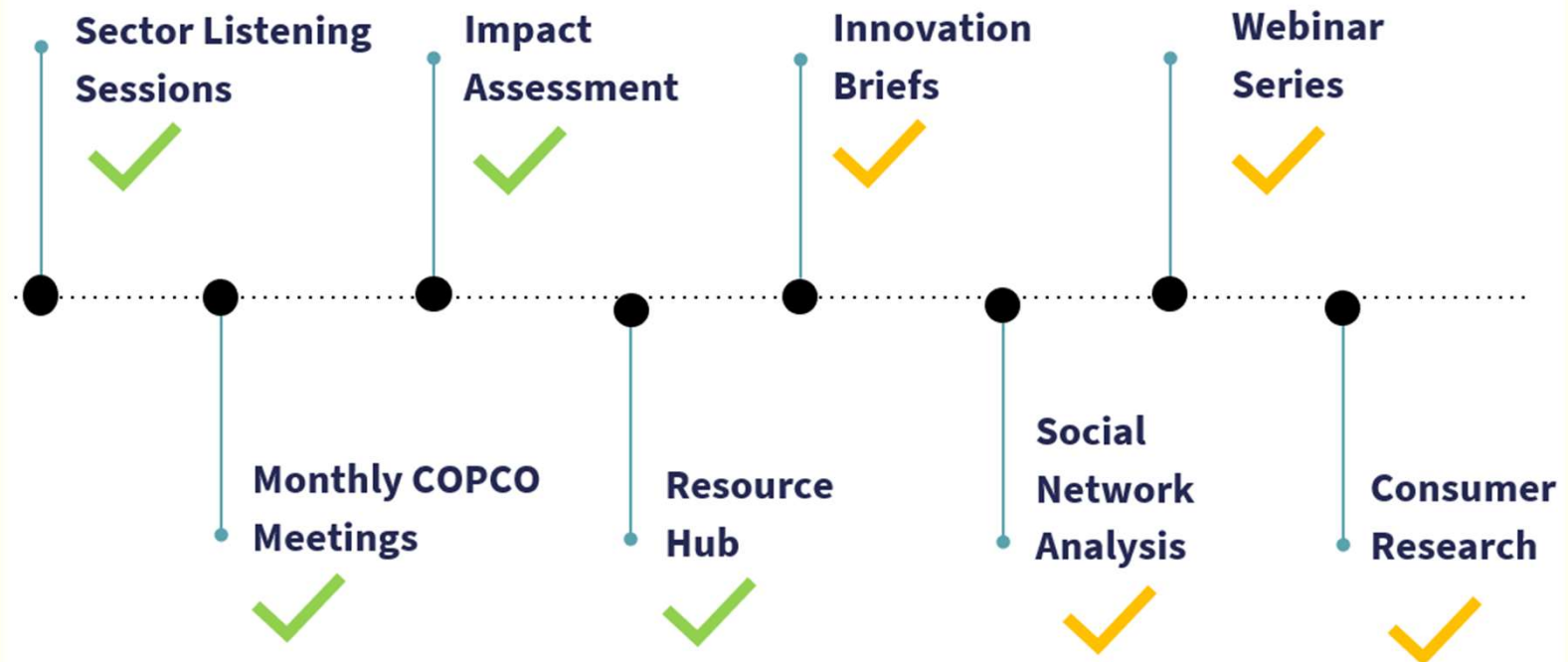
## AMS Goals And Vision

Support	Support and enhance the ongoing work of LRFS communities of practice as they adapt to the COVID disruption
Leverage	Leverage the diversity of LRFS sectors as a source of innovation and resilience
Capture	Capture both financial and non-financial impacts of the COVID disruption on LRFS
Foster	Foster cross sector collaboration across LRFS market sectors towards the long-term goal of coalescing a robust and centralized network of stakeholders for LRFS
Educate	Educate farmers about available federal COVID-response programs and assist them to apply to the programs as feasible and appropriate



# Local Food Systems Response to COVID

## What have we accomplished so far!





# 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 on farm enterprises, value chain stakeholders, market channels, and

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 our nation's local food



## Local and Regional Food 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



Local Food Systems Response to Covid  
Building Better Beyond

[Resource Hub](#) [Innovation Briefs](#) [Partners](#) [About](#)

## Innovation Briefs

Focusing on collecting and disseminating easily digestible ideas, best practices, and readily adoptable approaches to COVID adaptation, these 1-2 page briefs are designed to be easily shared by LRFS stakeholders to support timely innovation.

[Virtual CSA Fairs](#)

[FRESHFARM's Market Tracker](#)



## 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 event. 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](#)



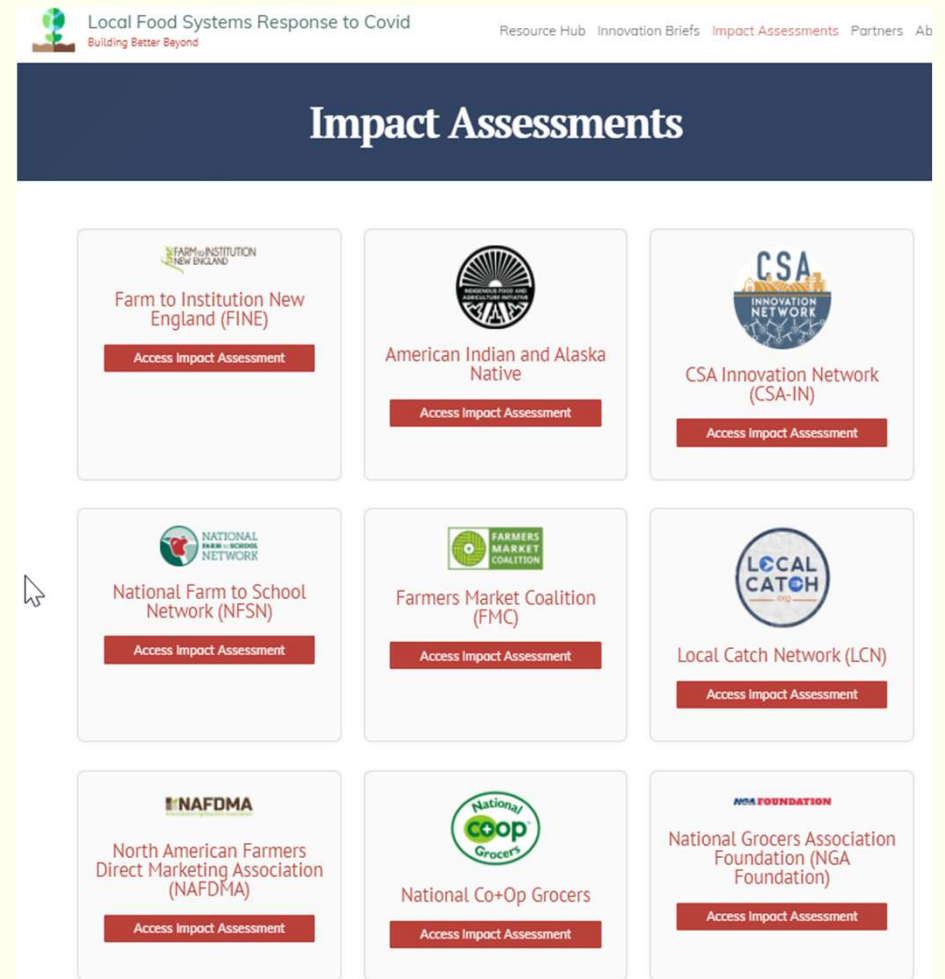
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# Local Food Systems Response to COVID

## 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





**WEBINAR SERIES**

# **LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**BUILDING BETTER BEYOND**

**MARKETING INNOVATIONS  
WHEN COMMUNITIES EAT  
AT HOME**

**October 19 | 1 PM EST**

**FORMAL AND INFORMAL  
COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT  
TO SUPPORT LOCAL AND  
REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS**

**February 15 | 1 PM EST**

**RETAINING & ENGAGING  
NEW LOCAL CUSTOMERS:  
TENSIONS AND  
OPPORTUNITIES**

**November 16th | 1 PM EST**

**ONLINE PLATFORMS:  
PIVOTS AND PLANNING FOR  
THE FUTURE**

**March 15 | 1 PM EST**

**EMERGENCY FOOD,  
CHARITY, AND THE LOCAL  
FOOD SYSTEM**

**December 21 | 1 PM EST**

**INTEGRATING NATIONAL  
CONSUMER SURVEY  
RESULTS INTO FUTURE  
PLANNING**

**April 19 | 1 PM EST**

**INNOVATIONS IN STATE  
POLICIES AND  
IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL  
AND REGIONAL FOOD  
SECTORS**

**January 25 | 1 PM EST**

**NEXT STEPS TO SUPPORT  
THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM  
IN TIMES OF UNCERTAIN  
CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

**May 17 | 1 PM EST**



## **Local and Regional Food Systems**

# Local Food Systems Response to COVID

## Cross-Sector Learning

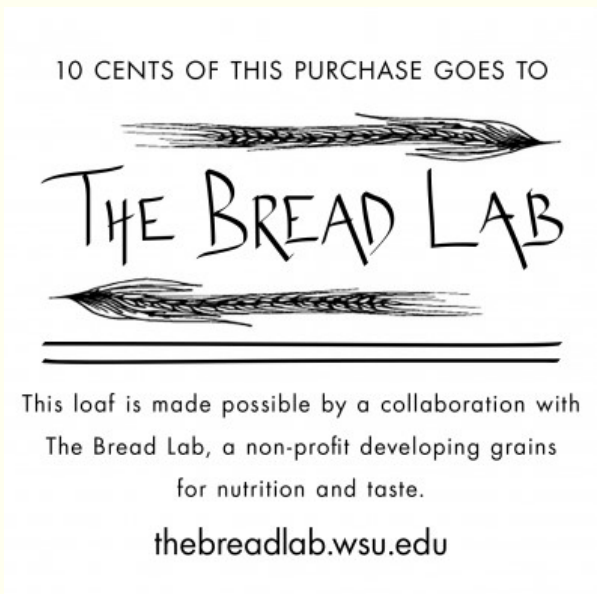


## Commonalities

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

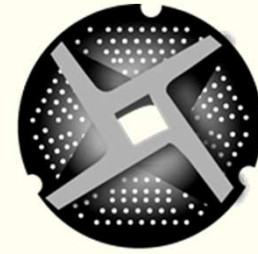
## New Connections and Idea-Sharing

- 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



NICHE MEAT PROCESSOR  
ASSISTANCE NETWORK

- 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.

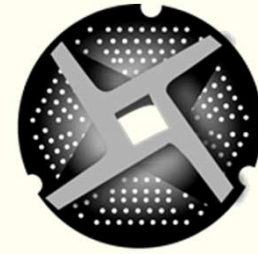


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# Local Food Systems Response to COVID

## Impact Assessment Highlights



NICHE MEAT PROCESSOR  
ASSISTANCE NETWORK

### 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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[About the Collaborative](#)

[Shared Metrics and Collaborative Research](#)

[Tools and Resources](#)

[Join Us!](#)

# National FARM *to* INSTITUTION METRICS COLLABORATIVE

Good Food, Good Data, Big Impact

- 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



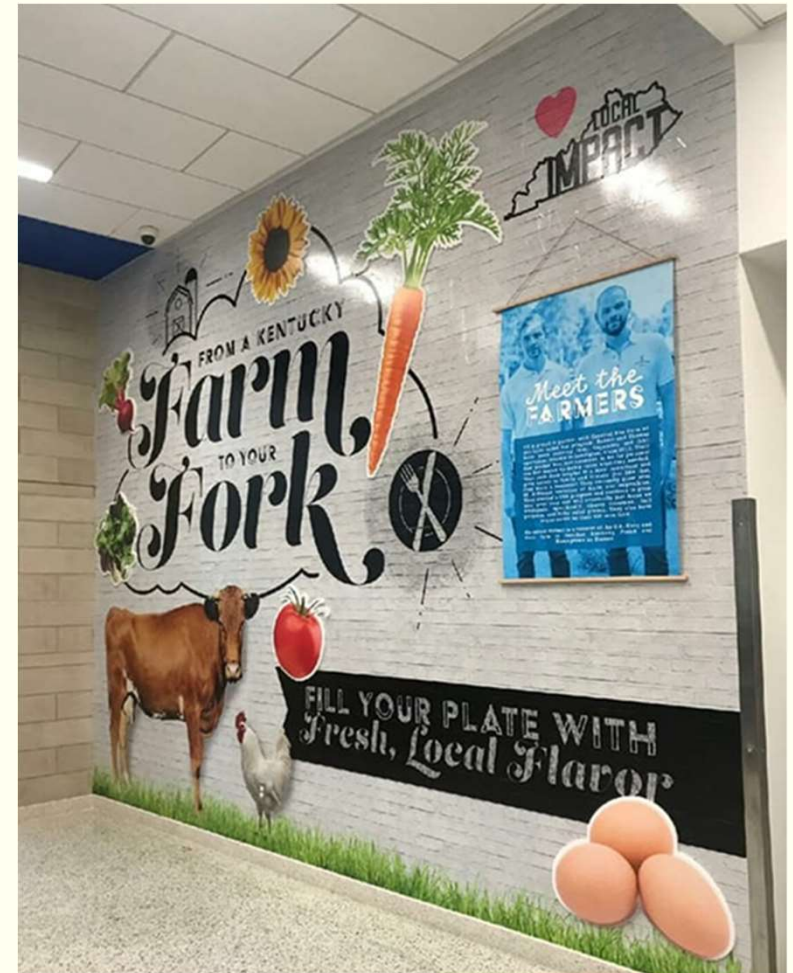
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# National Farm to Institution Metrics Collaborative

## 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')



# National Farm to Institution Metrics Collaborative

## Pilot Project 2019-2020

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:



**Business  
Type**



**Ownership**



**Farm  
Impact**



**Farm  
Identity  
Preserved**



**Product  
Type**



**Market  
Channel**



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# National Farm to Institution Metrics Collaborative

## Tools and Resources



Bite sized video: The pitch for shared metrics



Metrics FAQ



Metrics overview and glossary



Video: Deep dive into metrics and how to use them (see attached slide deck)



Guide: How to Measure your Farm to Institution Purchasing



Tracking template and reporting calculator

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# 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







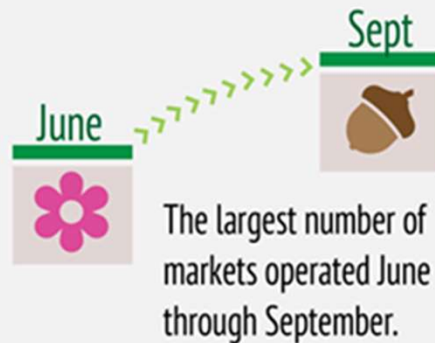
United States Department of Agriculture

## National Farmers Market Managers Survey Results

# 2019



Fruits and vegetables were the most common food category sold. 99.6% of markets sold fruits and vegetables.



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### National Farmer Market Managers Survey

<https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/pz5ohd694/gx41n598k/jd473j98z/nfar0820.pdf>



## Local and Regional Food Systems



NASS Research

## Local Food Marketing Practices Survey



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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.



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# 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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