

Local Food Systems

The Situation

Kansas is one of the top 12 most overweight states in the U.S, and some of Kansas' most economically disadvantaged counties have child food insecurity rates above 25%. One potential solution to Kansans' lack of access to healthy food and to strengthen local farm economies is to produce more healthy food locally and strengthen the market for locally-grown Kansas food products. In addition to K-State Research and Extension (KSRE), numerous other organizations are working to strengthen local food systems in Kansas. However, there was limited opportunity for these organizations to connect, network, and learn from each other.

What We Did

KSRE established a Local Foods Transdisciplinary Team (TDT) in early 2020. The team works in the following areas: 1) Economic Opportunity; 2) Community Engagement; and 3) Internal Capacity Building. In October 2021, the team group began holding quarterly virtual statewide local food systems town halls to enable people working in local food systems across Kansas to network and share their local food systems work.

Outcomes

An average of 55 participants have attended each of the five town halls held so far, including 61 participants in October 2022. An additional 58 people have viewed the recordings of the town halls posted online. Attendees of the virtual town halls include KSRE and KSU personnel, state agencies, nonprofits, educational institutions, and others from across the state. These town halls have garnered a wide array of information on local food systems: they've provided opportunity to develop ideas and partnerships for relevant grant proposals and highlighted ongoing local foods initiatives in the state. They have had a high level of engagement and very favorable reviews in post-event evaluations. All (100%) of evaluation respondents indicated that they gained new knowledge or connections related to local food systems after participating in a town hall.

Success Story

As a result of these virtual town halls, the Local Foods TDT has formed new partnerships with groups working in local food systems across Kansas. Because of these new partnerships and information gained in these town halls, our TDT secured a three-year \$749,696 grant from the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service in October 2022. A number of other Kansas partners that have participated in the town halls also recently received federal grants in the area of local food systems to continue strengthening these efforts in Kansas.

Contact

Londa Nwadike

State Extension Food Safety Specialist, KSRE and University of Missouri
Olathe, Kansas; tel: 913 307 7391; lnwadike@ksu.edu

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, J. Ernest Minton, Director.