APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
ABINGDON, VA
A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION WITH ITS OWN OPERATING FOOD HUB CALLED APPALACHIAN HARVEST, ASD HAS BEEN REVITALIZING RURAL ECONOMIES AND INCREASING HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS IN CENTRAL APPALACHIA FOR OVER 20 YEARS.

BEYOND LOCAL TO REGIONAL
Since 1995, Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD), a 501(c)3 nonprofit, has created economic opportunities in the agriculture sector by increasing the viability of the regional food system. Their diverse levers for change include education and technical assistance, market development, distribution strategy, and convening regional partners to find common ground. ASD uses its large number of personal and institutional relationships to assist farmers with accessing markets that are scale appropriate, including farmer’s markets, restaurants, small retailers and large wholesalers such as regional grocery store chains and produce brokers.

VALUE CHAIN NETWORKS
Under Food LINC, ASD is working with partners in Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Ohio to establish a food hub trading network that connects Central Appalachian farmers with large East Coast markets. This project will focus on the development of a distribution corridor that connects a variety of food hubs, aggregators, farmers and distributors. The model will consider complex business and equity variables, including total corridor distribution costs, shared ownership models, backhauls, conventional distributors, and deep regional planning around long term strategic implementation and leveraging of critical food systems infrastructure.

TREMENDOUS IMPACT
ASD’s largest program, Appalachian Harvest, is a food hub established in 2000 that connects produce farmers with large wholesale markets. Despite Appalachian Harvest’s location in a very rural county in Appalachian Virginia, it has generated over $11MM in revenue and has reduced its grant dependency from 37% in 2012 to only 8.75% in 2015. Currently Appalachian Harvest works with 65 farmers in Tennessee, Virginia, and the Carolinas and is in the process of providing West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky farmers with access to the markets it has developed - which have demand for 3 times the current supply.

EMPHASIS ON SMALL AND UNDER RESOUCECED FARMS
In 2004 ASD recognized that serving large wholesale markets results in the production of significant quantities of “seconds” produce, for which there are limited markets in the region, meaning less profit for the farmer – a critical concern for small, beginning and limited resource farmers whose profit margins are often extremely small. ASD also recognized that food banks and pantries in the region had a great need for fresh, healthy food, given the highly processed nature of the foods they are generally able to provide. ASD’s Healthy Families – Family Farms program raises funds to buy seconds at a reduced rate from local farmers, which ASD then donates to food hubs and food banks – to date over 1 million pounds of fresh produce. ASD provides the farmer with an incentive to harvest these products, provides income for what is often a waste product and provides those in need with access to fresh, healthy food.
COMMON MARKET GEORGIA

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED IN 2015 AS A NEW HUB IN THE COMMON MARKET NETWORK, COMMON MARKET GEORGIA (CMGA) IS A MISSION-DRIVEN DISTRIBUTOR OF LOCAL FOOD TO THE GREATER ATLANTA REGION

FROM LOCAL TO REGIONAL

Common Market Georgia is the second in a network of new, local hubs under The Common Market umbrella. It joins Common Market Mid-Atlantic, which has been in operation for over seven years aggregating and distributing more than $3 million in sustainably-grown and locally-produced food annually. With a focus on institutional markets such as schools, hospitals and universities, The Common Market works with food service companies and others to ensure that high-quality affordable foods reach all communities.

VALUE CHAINS AND ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

Under Food LINC, Common Market Georgia will use a “connect the dots” strategy to link diverse farmers and processors, wholesale market opportunities, capital investment, capacity building resources. By targeting infrastructure and systems investment opportunities, this project will support small farm producers and food manufactures as they reach appropriate scale and diversify their businesses to meet the high, and increasing demand of local and sustainable wholesale procurement. CMGA will also be targeting farmers in the Promise Zone region of South Carolina to link commercial operations to Atlanta’s market opportunities, strengthening regional supply chains.

TREMENDOUS IMPACT

“During 2016, we have worked steadily with two farm networks – Global Growers, which coordinates production and sales for a group of refugee/immigrant farmers; and The West Georgia Farmer’s Cooperative, a revitalized African-American and Veteran-led cooperative that was first established in 1969. We have been able to secure philanthropic funds to assist in the build-out of post-harvest handling facilities, cold storage, and cold transportation, and to develop packing and pricing strategies that have supported entry into wholesale markets. In just the first month of wholesale sales (starting late April 2016), The Common Market has ensured almost $15,000 in sales – surpassing last years’ wholesale sales for each organization.” – Susan Pavlin, Executive Director, CMGA

INCREASING EQUITY

More than 50% of the farmers that are in The Common Market Georgia’s network are farmers of color, immigrants and veterans and CMGA prioritizes creating access to markets for these farmers. With an eye toward lasting, systemic change, CMGA works closely with cooperatives, farm service organizations and others that serve these groups. Additionally, CMGA aims to scale their local aggregation and distribution operations appropriately to ensure affordable access to healthy foods – reaching all people where they eat. CMGA leads community access programs to provide fresh farm foods at cost to qualifying organizations that are providing food in underserved communities.
COMMUNITIES UNLIMITED
MEMPHIS, TN

AN INNOVATIVE NONPROFIT HELPING COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE SOUTH PROSPER BY PROVIDING EXPERTISE AND LENDING PROGRAMS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES, ENTREPRENEURS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES.

MOVING COMMUNITIES TOWARD PROSPERITY

Communities Unlimited, Inc. (CU) was founded in 1975 to provide clean drinking water to individuals in low-wealth rural communities, first in Arkansas, and now Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Alabama. A Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) with fifty full-time professionals, CU provides intensive capacity building and capital to entrepreneurs, water systems and communities. Its mission is to move persistently poor communities and under-resourced places toward sustainable prosperity. Through Food LINC, CU is building a food economy across a rural-urban landscape via a value chain that connects farmers in Arkansas-Mississippi Delta to consumers in Memphis, TN.

CREATING WEALTH THROUGH VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

CU is a regional hub for WealthWorks, a national network of organizations that have built wealth creating value chains on the ground and provide training to others interested in developing value chains. Since the launch of Food LINC, CU has identified over 100 organizations, farmers and small businesses engaged in the healthy foods sector in Memphis and surrounding Delta counties in Eastern Arkansas, Northern Mississippi, and West Tennessee. We have had in-depth meetings with over twenty dozen entities interested in actively participating in the value chain. CU has also identified institutional consumers in Memphis who can serve as anchor demand for the value chain. Negotiations around specific vegetables and quantities are underway. Three communities in the Delta have asked to join in our value chain in order to build and expand their local farmer’s markets and address healthy food access issues.

TREMENDOUS COMMUNITY IMPACT

In the small Delta town of DeWitt, AR twenty partners - from farmers to entrepreneurs, town leadership, the community college, the university, non-profit organizations, and state policy groups - have raised over $800,000 to turn an eyesore with multiple environmental citations into a mini-industrial complex. The value chain partners collect waste vegetable oil from restaurants and care-facilities in 10 counties, while small scale and family farms grow a new winter-energy crop called Camelina. Both the waste vegetable oil and the Camelina oil are used to produce biofuel that is purchased locally. This project has created 40 new jobs – a major impact on a town with a population of only 3,200.

VCC in Action

In the process of identifying key value chain partners, the Arkansas Extension Service offered to develop detailed enterprise plans for crops in order to demonstrate the Return on Investment (ROI) for farmers. Having this data will reduce farmers’ perception of market risk involved in growing vegetables – considered a “developing market”. Vegetables, which do not require large-scale processing, keeps more money in the local economy.

INCREASING EQUITY

In line with CU’s mission, Mid-South Food LINC is designed to create an equitable food economy by engaging small scale and minority farmers, encouraging the start-up of minority-owned businesses to fill gaps in the value chain, create access to healthy food options in low-income food deserts in Memphis, and developing a scalable grocery store/mini-market model to create access to healthy foods in low-income rural communities which have no grocery store. Three technical assistance providers will work with small scale and minority farmers to grow food for their local farmer’s market, local grocery store and the institutional customer in Memphis.
BEYOND CONSERVATION

The Conservation Fund (TCF) is a national nonprofit dedicated to conserving working lands, advancing sustainable economic development, and supporting rural leaders in developing community-driven solutions. TCF’s Resourceful Communities Program (RCP) team has worked for 25 years to support community- and faith-based groups in addressing the inter-related economic, social and environmental challenges in under-served communities. RCP works nationally, with a focus on the South and Appalachia. In keeping with its mission and priorities, RCP works to leverage resources (funding, technical assistance, connections) to help under-served communities carry out triple bottom line efforts that advance sustainable economic development, social justice and environmental stewardship.

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

The RCP network provides the social infrastructure for the Food LINC project with the project area encompassing 42 counties in eastern North Carolina’s Coastal Plain and Sandhills regions. Under Food LINC, TCF is working with over 250 farmers, processors, farmers markets, schools, and churches in the North Carolina coastal plains region to identify market needs and opportunities, and help community and faith groups create new markets for fruits and vegetables, dairy products, pasture-raised meats, and fresh North Carolina seafood. The primary goals are to grow and strengthen food value chains that enhance access to healthy foods for low-income communities and increase income for food producers and processors.

TREMENDOUS IMPACT

Conetoe Family Life Center (CFLC) is a faith-based nonprofit in Conetoe, NC that was established to address chronic health problems in the congregation. After burying 30 people under the age of 32 for chronic health problems, Reverend Richard Joyner launched Healthy Sunday sermons. He engaged congregants in nutrition classes to raise awareness about healthy eating habits, and started a 2-acre garden that was tended by youth participants in afterschool and summer day camp programs operated by CFLC. The garden has grown to 25 acres that is planned, planted, weeded, and harvested by 64 youth and dozens of adult volunteers. Dozens of beehives pollinate the garden crops and several youths are certified beekeepers, selling honey in multiple markets. Through TCF value chain activities, CFLC recently made a deal to provide produce and honey to one local restaurant, and is negotiating with other restaurants, two hospitals and the local school system.

INCREASING EQUITY

“The majority of our Food LINC partners are community- and faith-based groups working with low-income communities, communities of color, and limited-resource farmers and business owners. By leveraging our Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIF) will be able to provide to farmers and business owners of color in eastern North Carolina with loan capital and technical assistance. A US Treasury-certified CDFI, we recently received $1.6 million from Wells Fargo to provide technical assistance and loan capital to the target populations.” – Mikki Sager, Vice President, Resourceful Communities Director, The Conservation Fund
FAIR FOOD

PHILADELPHIA, PA

A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION, ESTABLISHED IN 2000, DEDICATED TO BRINGING HEALTHY LOCAL FOOD TO THE MARKETPLACE, AND CREATING HIGH-TRUST RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FARMERS AND WHOLESALE BUYERS TO BUILD A ROBUST LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM IN THE MID- ATLANTIC REGION.

CREATING TWO LUCRATIVE VALUE CHAINS

Fair Food is rebuilding the regional grain economy by assessing the market demand and capacity of regional producers to grow high-yield, high-value, and/or value-added grain products. Fair Food is also developing a new regional brand that highlights environmentally sound farm management practices for local artisan cheeses. Fair Food will then market that brand to consumers and wholesale customers, and incubate a social enterprise to support existing distribution infrastructure for the region.

CREATING A VALUES BASED VALUE CHAIN

Over 16 years, Fair Food has played a primary role in creating the farmer-buyer relationships that have made Philadelphia a recognized national leader in the farm to table movement. Fair Food’s trailblazing successes have helped to define the very role of the value chain coordinator as recently acknowledged in USDA’s publication “Food Value Chains: Creating Shared Value to Enhance Marketing Success.” Their dynamic network of producers and buyers and market-based approach are essential to maintaining the area’s local natural resources and preserving productive farmland while benefitting consumers of all communities in the Philadelphia metro area.

TREMENDOUS IMPACT

As a result of Fair Food’s VCC efforts with b.Good, in 2015, 40% of their purchasing at their Marlton, PA and Wynnwood, PA locations was from within 120 miles and included 12,770 lbs. of beef, 913 lbs. of pork, 13,632 lbs. of vegetables, 2,094 lbs of cheese, and 652 gallons of milk. Mike Brannon from Roseda Beef in Monkton, MD explains, “The challenge for small beef producers is to sell all the parts and pieces. When Fair Food connected us with b.Good, we found a consistent wholesale buyer for our ground beef, which helps us balance our sales with the middle meats like sirloin, strip steaks, and rib eyes. This is the difference between surviving and failure in this business.”

INCREASING EQUITY

The Fair Food Farmstand in Reading Terminal Market, Center City, Philadelphia, plays an important role in significantly increasing access to fresh healthy local, fruits and vegetables, as well as all-natural dairy and meats, to low-income Philadelphians from all reaches of the city, year-round, 7 days/week. Fair Food’s privately funded Double Dollars program doubles the value of SNAP participants’ purchases at the Farmstand, up to $20 every 2 weeks. Over 1,500 SNAP participants have visited the Farmstand since 2010. Another mechanism Fair Food utilizes to strengthen local access to fair food is through ongoing work with the City of Philadelphia’s Food Policy Advisory Council. Through Fair Food’s influence, procurement policies and purchasing practices now benefit local farmers, local businesses, and the health of those individuals that are dependent on city feeding programs.
LA MONTAÑITA  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

A 40-YEAR-OLD COOPERATIVE FOOD MARKET THAT WORKS TO PROMOTE AND EXPAND NEW MEXICO AGRICULTURE, INCLUDING SERVING AS A MARKET IN THEIR 6 RETAIL STORES.

BEYOND RETAIL

La Montañita was founded in 1976 in Albuquerque, NM by 300 families who shared the vision of a community-based, member-owned food market. La Montañita Co-op now includes six retail stores and a distribution center, serving its 17,000 member-owners and food producers throughout New Mexico. The co-op specializes in organic and local foods, sourcing many of its offerings from the surrounding 300-mile foodshed. Keeping consumer dollars in the local economy is one of the founding principles of the co-op.

VALUE CHAIN

La Montañita’s member-owners expect local food procurement and value chain work to be the guiding principle of the business. By helping farmers grow their businesses, they ensure that the New Mexico agricultural sector is strong and will thrive both today and into the future. The co-op often acts as a market itself, but La Montañita’s value chain work can range from providing technical assistance –thereby increasing growers’ capacity to serve wholesale markets – to connecting food producers to bigger markets and other buyers. Under Food LINC, La Montanita’s enterprise development team is working with diverse farm operations to find new markets for locally-grown products, including pumpkins, apples, carrots, and cucumbers, as well as working to scale, brand and market value-added products beyond the State, such as New Mexico ristras (dried chili peppers), yogurt and milled corn. Through producer meetings and market research, La Montanita is also exploring the feasibility of increasing local chicken, egg, and buffalo production and marketing in New Mexico.

TREMENDOUS IMPACT

La Montañita is working to realize a 5 to 1 return on the Food LINC investment through both sales/ transactions and secured resources for local food producers.

INCREASING EQUITY

New Mexico suffers from some of the highest poverty rates in the United States. La Montañita’s work actively promotes equity throughout the value chain, beginning with the co-op sourcing from limited-resourced farmers, to marketing New Mexican-grown produce at a 50% discount to SNAP beneficiaries. La Montañita also provides microloans to food producers at below-market rates through the LaM FUND, and contributes thousands of dollars per month to local charities through the Donate-A-Dime bag program.
LOUISVILLE FARM TO TABLE
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

LOUISVILLE FARM TO TABLE, CREATED IN 2009, IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF THE LOUISVILLE METRO GOVERNMENT THAT CONNECTS KENTUCKY'S FARMLANDS WITH MARKET OPPORTUNITIES, BREAKS DOWN MARKET BARRIERS, AND EXPANDS CONSUMER DEMAND FOR LOCAL FOODS.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGING VALUE CHAINS

Louisville Farm to Table (LFT) grew from a collaborative effort of elected officials from several area counties to help regional farmers replace tobacco with alternative edible crops that could be sold close to home. LFT connects farmers to buyers, improves buyers’ capacity to purchase Kentucky-raised foods, and supports the development of a more robust infrastructure for the local food economy. The Program has facilitated over $5 million in known sales (though likely far more) since 2011, and has provided education for over 1000 individuals, including over 300 farmers. LFT has been highly effective in catalyzing a strong and nationally-recognized local food movement in Louisville, generating interest in the purchase of Kentucky-raised foods by some of the largest institutional buyers in the state, and in raising awareness and capacity among Kentucky farmers to serve diverse markets with their products.

BUILDING THE SUPPLY, AND BUILDING THE MARKET

Under Food LINC, LFT is focused on two food value chains. First, in partnership with the Organic Association of Kentucky and other organizations, technical assistance and education will be provided to support the development of more organic farmers in Kentucky. Louisville Farm to Table will serve as a market matchmaker between new and existing organic farmers and a wide variety of businesses interested in purchasing organic produce, meat, dairy and grains. Second, Louisville Farm to Table will target farmers in the Promise Zone region of Eastern Kentucky to help them scale and commercialize farm operation through hoop house production, and assist in linking these farmers to fresh produce buyers in urban markets.

TREMENDOUS IMPACT AND EQUITY

Louisville Farm to Table sits in residence with the Jefferson County Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services Division, responsible for feeding 96,000 meals a day during the school year. As a result of this relationship, JCPS contracts directly with more than 15 farmers for produce purchases. JCPS also contracts with distributors who sell Kentucky-raised foods, which affects another 15 farmers. JCPS has purchased 12,000 pounds of dark meat chicken and wings from Marksbury Farm, a local small-scale USDA-certified processor, in the 2014-2015 school year, 1,500 pounds of Kentucky beef in April/May 2014, and plans to make a substantial commitment to local beef purchases in the 2016-17 school year. JCPS has steadily increased its local food purchases since 2012, and developed creative strategies for incorporating more local foods into School Lunch as a result of support received through Louisville Farm to Table.

VCC in Action

Louisville Farm to Table connected with a small farmer in Central Kentucky who was planning to raise 1,000 ducks for sale to restaurants. As a result of research conducted by Louisville Farm to Table, this farmer now has relationships with restaurateurs for the purchase of 10,000 ducks in 2016.
COG’s membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 22 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress. COG was created in 1957 by 40 officials from across the region who saw value in working together on metropolitan problems associated with the rapid growth of the region. COG has helped tackle the region’s biggest challenges, such as revitalizing the Potomac River, ensuring the Metro system was fully built, and strengthening emergency preparedness after 9/11. From its inner core to outer suburbs, more than 5 million people call the metropolitan Washington region home.

**Policy and Value Chain Coordination**

COG is well placed to provide policy thought leadership and serve a strategic convening role. For example, COG plans to bring together nonprofit partners working to connect local farmers with restaurants in the metro area. Direct to consumer markets, as well as intermediated markets like restaurants, are hugely important for small to midscale growers in the COG region; but at the same time, some producers are reporting that direct to consumer market sales seem to be leveling off or even declining. By providing a forum for key supply chain agents and experts to come together and encouraging non-competitive information sharing around restaurant sales in this case, COG hopes to: elevate the roles that key organizations and businesses have long been playing to support farmers and chefs; look for opportunities for greater collective impact; determine the feasibility of establishing a baseline metric for local food sales to restaurants; and identify any near term opportunities to grow the sales and supply of local food in this sector.

**Impact**

Currently the Value Chain Coordinator is primarily focused on increasing market opportunities and revenue from local food sales from the region’s farmers. Additionally, COG is actively creating an environment for increased cooperation between local food distributors, logistics companies, food hubs, and local producers, as well as identifying existing infrastructure that can be used for aggregation and distribution of local food.

**Increasing Equity**

The Washington D.C. Metro region contends with some of the highest poverty rates in the United States. COG offers assistance to minority farmers in applying for USDA funds, most recently, through the Value Added Producer Grant. COG is also focused on female and minority farmers in all proposed work items involving producer participation. COG expects to provide ad hoc technical assistance and advising to other council of government committees and initiatives in the region to enhance access to healthy food for underserved communities.
ROCKY MOUNTAIN FARMERS UNION

DENVER, CO

ROCKY MOUNTAIN FARMERS UNION IS A PROGRESSIVE GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION WHOSE MEMBERS DETERMINE THE PRIORITIES: ADVOCATING FOR FAMILY FARMERS AND RANCHERS, LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND CONSUMER.

A LONG HISTORY OF SUPPORTING FARMER INTERESTS

In 1907 a small group of farmers, ranchers and reformers banded together to protect producers’ interests against speculators and wholesalers, to improve the quality of rural life and, with their consumers in mind, to promote the common good. The group established what is now known as the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union (RMFU). Since its inception the RMFU has operated through three programmatic instruments: cooperation, education, and legislation. In 1992 the RMFU, a 501c5 agricultural and labor nonprofit, created the RMFU Education and Charitable Foundation as a 501c3 charitable nonprofit. The RMFU Foundation now seeks and administers all gifts and grants in support of RMFU’s education and cooperative programs in Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming. Its principal activity is the Cooperative Development Center, one of twenty-five such projects nationwide started with, and still supported in part by, USDA Rural Development.

TOWARDS A COOPERATIVE FOOD HUB NETWORK

Under Food LINC, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union (RMFU) will be involved in three separate but connected value chain development efforts. First, RMFU is developing a business network of 16 food hubs based on shared priorities that include production planning across the diverse farming zones of the region, cooperative delivery and distribution services, and developing a shared software platform. Second, RMFU will provide direct assistance to three farmer-led food hubs in southern Colorado by strengthening their production, distribution, and marketing capacities. Third, RMFU will help launch a heritage grain project, including conducting variety and milling trials, and building infrastructure to produce, process, and deliver grain products to local millers, bakers, and breweries.

VCC in Action

RMFU and food hub partners launched the Southern Colorado Food Hub trading network this summer in which a pilot distribution project will delivery pallet quantities of produce and other value added goods between five food hubs for marketing in their local communities.

IMPACT

The Rocky Mountain Food Hub Network, founded in 2015 unites sixteen food hubs of a variety of business forms and in various stages of development. Together they are identifying training and education needs, forming cooperative agreements, and exchanging products. Although new, this unprecedented interstate network promises to create tremendous efficiencies, a requirement of food hub success.

INCREASING EQUITY

RMFU specializes in working in rural and remote areas in Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming. The main beneficiary groups are small and mid-scale family farms and ranches. Over the past several years there has been a marked increase in focus on providing services to beginning farmers and ranchers, women farmers and ranchers, resource-limited farmers and ranchers and Hispanic farmers and ranchers. Under LINC, RMFU is principally concerned with stabilizing young farmer-led food hubs so that they can deliver long-term benefits to farmer members, all of whom fit in one or all of the categories listed above. RMFU’s work strongly leans towards issues of parity and the viability and profitability of family farms and cooperative businesses.
SOUL CITY HOSPITALITY

JACKSON, MS

DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING BUSINESSES FOR A RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM IN MISSISSIPPI, CONTRIBUTING TO THE HEALTH AND WEALTH OF ALL ITS CITIZENS, STARTING WITH THE UP IN FARMS FOOD HUB.

REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Up in Farms Food Hub (UIF) is a regional produce hub based in Jackson, MS. Through Up in Farms, small and medium-sized farmers can access new commercial and community markets, participate in new supply-chain efficiencies, get training and technical assistance on the business of farming, and learn the details of federal and state food safety regulations. UIF will soon feature a premiere facility in the region for aggregating and handling produce—addressing crucial post-harvest concerns for perishability and safety. Still in its pilot, UIF currently has three full-time employees, supports 10 producers, and regularly delivers to 10 grocery stores.

TREMENDOUS IMPACT

Soul City partnered with its landlord (University of MS Medical Center) to secure $1.3 million in construction grants from Delta Regional Authority and the State of Mississippi to develop an unused produce warehouse into Up in Farms Food Hub. Renovation begins in July 2016 and will finish in January 2017. The completed 16,000-sq-ft facility will have sorting/grading lines, precooling systems, two fresh-cut lines, and plenty of cold storage.

During renovation, Soul City remains active conducting value chain coordination activities. For example, Soul City Hospitality partner Nick Wallace recently launched a program with Jackson Public Schools (JPS) called Creativity Kitchen, through which he trains students and food service workers in preparing foods that are both tasty and healthy. Through Nick’s work on Creativity Kitchen, JPS and Up in Farms have worked together to design the specs for the fresh-cut facility at the hub so that they may process and deliver the exact types of goods in the correct pack size and cuts required by Mississippi’s public schools.

INCREASING EQUITY

The partners within Soul City are on a mission to improve the health, wealth, and environmental outlook of the state. Mississippi leads the nation in both rates of hunger and obesity; has the highest rate of unemployment in the country; and has 1.3 million acres of existing cropland NOT in production. These problems are endemic and cannot be solved without a strategic approach that involves collaborations across business sectors and funding silos.

Soul City Hospitality sits at the intersection of food and health specifically to draw disparate groups into new opportunities. “Our aim is to help farmers make an economically sustainable living growing food that is affordable by and accessible to ALL the people in Mississippi. That means developing people, markets, and jobs.” – David Watkins, Jr., Food Hub Manager
FAMILYFARMED
CHICAGO, IL

FAMILYFARMED IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO EXPANDING THE PRODUCTION, MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION OF LOCALLY GROWN AND RESPONSIBLY PRODUCED FOOD, IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OF OUR COMMUNITIES.

BEYOND TRADESHOWS TO REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Over the past 15 years, FamilyFarmed has established itself as a lead innovator in promoting Good Food: delicious, healthy, accessible food, grown as close to home as possible, by family farmers and producers using sustainable, humane, and fair practices. FamilyFarmed has crafted a unique role as a facilitator for the Good Food business sector – building relationships among buyers (wholesalers, distributors, retailers), sellers (farmers and producers), investors and consumers to help build a dynamic Good Food cluster in our home Chicago region.

The Good Food Festival & Conference, a three day event held annually in Chicago, is the centerpiece of FamilyFarmed’s calendar and its highest profile program. Launched in 2004, as the nation’s first trade show focused on local and sustainably produced food, the GFFC is the biggest regional event of its type in America, drawing more than 7,500 attendees in 2017. Its features include the traditional trade show and marketplace, in which many of the types of operations that benefit from FF training programs participate, and a CSA Pavilion that enables community supported agriculture farms to promote their businesses and attract new customers. Yet this program is just a part of a FamilyFarmed agenda that also includes extensive farmer training. The program, built around their Wholesale Success: A Farmers’ Guide to Food Safety, Selling, Postharvest Handling, and Packing Produce Manual has been used to directly train more than 12,500 farmers in 40 states. In Addition, FamilyFarmed created and manages the OnFarmFoodSafety.org website, which provides user friendly templates that enable farmers to create their own on-farm food safety plans.

ACCELERATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOOD FOOD SECTOR

As the GFFC grew, FamilyFarmed recognized the need to facilitate connections between food and farm entrepreneurs, who are seeking to start or scale up, and investors and lenders who have shown increasing interest in the Good Food Sector. This spawned the creation of the Good Food Financing and Innovation Conference, which has resulted in more than $30 million in new funding for innovative good food businesses. In turn, the Financing conference spun off the Good Food Business Accelerator. Launched in 2014, the Accelerator program provides competitively selected fellows with an intensive six month curriculum, mentorship and networking opportunities with investors. By the end of the program, Fellows are better equipped to run their businesses, and those needing funding are better prepared to meet with investors to obtain initial or follow-on investments.

TREMENDOUS IMPACT

Since the second Accelerator cohort graduated, businesses reported a 239 percent market increase, with all Fellows saying they directly applied what they learned to their business practices. At the point of graduation, 89 percent of second cohort Fellows said they were already better prepared to launch or expand, and to increase their sales. More than half said they were better prepared to create new jobs. And all of the cohort Fellows reported they were better prepared to speak with investors about their offerings. Businesses that participated in the Accelerator’s first year averaged a 62 percent increase in sales, a 107 percent increase in the number of customers and a 68 percent increase in the number of employees.
FOOD COMMONS FRESNO

FRESNO, CA
CREATING A COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM IN CALIFORNIA’S SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY THAT FOSTERS HEALTH, STEWARDSHIP, EQUITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WEALTH CREATION THROUGH COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP OF FOOD ENTERPRISES

Food Commons Fresno (FCF) is the prototype of a concept developed by Jim Cochran, Larry Yee, Karen Schmidt, and other founders. It envisions a network of vertically integrated food businesses which are community and employee owned. The Food Commons model includes a non-profit trust to steward assets and act as the development arm, working in concert with a for-profit benefit corporation to perform business functions. Because the trust maintains majority ownership and governance control of the for-profit businesses, values are embedded in the operations and profits will remain in the community as opposed to being concentrated or extracted. Equity ownership of the for-profit businesses can receive community investment and be earned by employees.

FIRST VENTURE STARTED IN 2015 WITH CSA PURCHASE

FCF launched operations in May of 2015 with the purchase of the T&D Willey Farms CSA. Tom & Denesse Willey retired after four decades of production farming. They are pioneers in organic farming in the San Joaquin Valley and built a loyal CSA customer base of 500+ families. FCF rebranded the CSA as Ooooby (Out of Our Own Backyards) with fresh, organic produce being the primary focus. FCF has since expanded to cover six counties in the Central Valley, delivering to 22 pick-up locations each week. Customer service is offered in English and Spanish and EBT payments are accepted with discounted pricing from an “Everyone Eats” fund in order to further access to affordable healthy fruits and vegetables.

Also in mid-2015, FCF launched a wholesale distribution business that caters to professional chefs who want to include seasonal, locally grown fruits & vegetables on their menus. FCF wholesale customers include restaurants, farm CSAs, UC Merced, Fresno Community Regional Medical Center, Economic Opportunities Commission, and Fresno Chaffee Zoo. In August 2016, operations expanded to include a 5,000 sq. foot warehouse with office space and 1,300 feet of refrigeration.

PROTECTING FARMLAND AND ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

With the Willey’s retirement, FCF has taken on the operation of their 75-acre farm. It will remain certified organic, and eventually employ 40-50 full time farmworkers with Farm Manager David Silveira at the helm. Development and Operations Manager Kiel Schimdt is planning development of a “multifunctional foodhub” in SW Fresno that will provide 50-75 full wage jobs and give all employees the opportunity to participate in equity ownership of Food Commons Fresno. Later in 2017, FCF will launch its first direct public offering, working to raise $4-5 million in capital for expansion.

IMPACT ON SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

Food production in the San Joaquin Valley of California is export oriented and has developed infrastructure at the appropriate scale to support it. However, a regional food system made up of small farmers needs aggregation and processing infrastructure that will meet the needs of buyers that want to participate in this new, local food economy. Food Commons Fresno (FCF) is leading to an assessment of the processing and transportation infrastructure needed to create value. FCF also plans to work with landowners to secure long term leases for small & mid-sized farmers that are producing food using regenerative practices.
Texas Center for Local Food

Elgin, TX

We provide technical assistance and resources for market development to support family farm and ranch prosperity and enhance the vitality of our rural economic while improving healthy food access for all Texans.

Reconnecting Texas Family Agriculture with Community Economies

The Texas Center for Local Food (TCLF) is a tax exempt project of the Growers Alliance of Central Texas, a 501(c)(3), dedicated to supporting rural economic vitality based on Texas Agriculture. The Center supports creating and retaining quality jobs in processing, production, distribution, and marketing of Texas sustainably grown crops. Texas enjoys some of the most fertile farm and ranch land in the country, yet the vast majority of food eaten is grown outside the state. TCLF is working hard to reverse this dependence on imports by creating and supporting local food and agricultural enterprises. We collaborate to ‘connect the dots’ of the many exciting projects and substantial resources focused on local food in Texas.

A town of 8,000 people, Elgin is centrally located within a 200-mile radius of nearly 18 million Texans, making it an ideal production and transportation hub for the region. “When you look at a map of Texas, you see big cities, and around those are towns that have agricultural heritage that are becoming peri-urban or suburban bedroom communities and losing their community identity. Where we are now with Elgin is a tipping point of being a regional center for local food and agricultural enterprise... We believe we can bring back the farming middle class.” Sue Beckwith, Executive Director of TCLF

Creating an Equitable, Healthy, and Vibrant Food Systems for All Texans

TCLF employs four core strategies:

- Stimulate the development and retention of valuable jobs through strategic community alliances
- Increase access to healthy food by connecting the dots from farmer to the Texan table educating customers about the processing, packaging, and transportation steps their food requires before being consumed.
- Educate, cultivate, and empower customers who support local food and the environment
- And, most critically of all, support farmers and ranchers in expanding their markets in Texas

Strategic Community Alliances to Support Local Food Systems

Through strategic community alliances, TCLF improves the value of growing and consuming healthy food with sustainable, member-driven, farmer-driven programs:

- Business & Economic Development - matches buyers and sellers and increases value-added production in partnership with rural communities across Texas, such as the City of Elgin Economic Development Corporation
- Resource & Referral - collaborates with National Center for Appropriate Technology, Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association, USDA, Growers Alliance of Central Texas, Austin Foodshed Investors, Texas universities, and the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
- Public Education – designs, initiates and implements successful after-school programs with Elgin ISD, cooking classes in conjunction with the City of Elgin, and professional educational programs at Austin Community College