

Theme Overview: Developing Local Food Systems in the South

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JEL Classifications: Q10, Q13, Q18, Q19

Keywords: Consumer Demand, Local Foods, Market Supply Chain, Risk Management

Local foods and local food systems (LFS) have garnered much attention in the recent past, including in a previous issue of *Choices* with a theme entitled “Local Food—Perceptions, Prospects, and Policies.” Acknowledging that local food systems have developed at varying rates dependent upon regional differences across the United States, the Southern Experiment station directors and Extension directors commissioned a concerted effort to develop meaningful collaborations among Southern land grant faculty. The South has the largest numbers of historically underserved producers and small farmers in the United States. Given the South’s traditionally rural character and generally lower incomes than other regions of the United States, a number of challenges must be addressed.

The Southern Risk Management Education Center (SRMEC) identified the top 10 LFS opportunities, as identified by state workshop representatives sent by 1862 and 1890 LGUs. These research and extension priorities will guide future program needs and collaborative opportunities.

This issue of *Choice* identifies the five most important issues related to Local Food System development in the South as identified by agricultural economists. The first article, “Risk Management Issues within Local Food Systems” by Kenesha Reynolds-Allie, Deacue Fields, and Ron Rainey, lays out the primary areas of risk management for all producers, but importantly frames risk management in terms of how different types and sizes of producers are availing themselves of a variety of approaches in each area.

Marco A. Palma, Kim Morgan, Timothy Woods and Sean McCoy discuss general concepts in consumer demand

Articles in this Theme:

Risk Management Issues for Small Farms within Local Food Systems

Response of Land Grant Universities to the Increase in Consumer Demand for Local Foods in the South

Local Food Systems Markets and Supply Chains

Food Safety Policies and Implications for Local Food Systems

Local Food Systems in the South: A Call for a Collaborative Approach to Assessment

that are critical to local food systems. They identify current trends impacting this sector and how producers may be best positioned for local foods demand. Article three, “Local Food Systems Markets and Supply Chains” by Timothy Woods, Margarita M. Velandia, Rodney B. Holcomb, Rebecca Dunning and Eric Bendfeldt, highlights unique attributes of local food supply chains, focusing on aggregation and distribution and the operation of food hubs as LFS market supply chains.

The fourth article, by Rodney B. Holcomb, Marco A. Palma, and Margarita M. Velandia, addresses food safety issues facing local food suppliers as they evaluate marketing options. In “Food Safety Policies and Implications for Local Food Systems”, the authors examine recently enacted food safety legislation and international movements

towards food safety verification throughout the food industry. In article five, “Local Food Systems: A Collaborative Approach to Assessment and Common Metrics”, by Dave Lamie, Rebecca Dunning, Eric Bendfeldt, Johanna Lelekacs, Margarita M. Velandia and Lee Meyer, contend that communities can achieve a broad range of various benefits by adopting strategies that encourage success of local food systems. In addition, they assert that collaborative and systems-based approaches which utilize a set of research-based tools and common metrics, increases the likelihood that such broad-based outcomes occur.

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