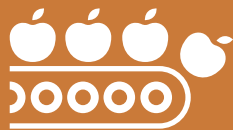


# Community Food Systems: A Tool for Building Wealth in Kansas Communities

In recent years, consumers have become increasingly interested in where their food comes from and how their food dollars can support local businesses and farmers. Innovative farmers across Kansas are introducing diverse products and opening new market channels.

This comes at a critical time for the U.S. farm economy and for many rural Kansas communities. With the current volatility in commodity markets, producers are struggling and looking for new opportunities. The small and mid-sized farms that often produce food for local markets are disappearing, and with the average Kansas farmer now older than 58, the need to encourage farming as a career choice has never been greater.



“ We have learned that regional food systems represent a promising avenue for economic growth for both rural and urban communities through the creation of new or the enhancement of existing jobs and businesses. We also learned that, with appropriately targeted policies and support, the attendant opportunities can advance the economic and financial security of low-to-moderate-income households and communities. ”

—Lael Brainard, Governor of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, and James Bullard, CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, in *Harvesting Opportunity*

## WHAT DO INVESTMENTS IN COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS LOOK LIKE?

- A commodity producer who works with a local bank to take out a small business loan. He uses it to add a pumpkin patch and a hay-bale maze to diversify his operation and collaborate with his kids.
- A grocery store owner who secures a USDA grant and upgrades her cooler space to sell locally grown produce and cater lunches for local businesses.
- A rural hospital food-service director who adds a “buy local” preference into her purchasing policies so she can buy locally grown watermelons and cantaloupes from a nearby farmer. Her patients and staff love the fresh, tasty food.
- A vegetable producer who applies for a USDA microloan to purchase a refrigerated truck. He starts picking up produce from neighbors and selling to restaurants and school districts in the KC metro area.
- A local 4H-er who takes her award-winning salsa recipe and starts a small business. She uses the community’s commercial kitchen supported by their local community foundation.
- A small Kansas town that invests its local tax dollars to match funds from the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative and revitalizes their struggling grocery store.



## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM?

It is a system in which the food is produced, processed and distributed near its point of consumption. The shorter supply chain can ensure that more dollars flow directly to producers and can provide better transparency for consumers wanting to know where their food comes from.

## HOW CAN LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS BENEFIT COMMUNITIES IN AN EVOLVING FARM ECONOMY?

Investing in our food system not only contributes direct economic benefits to the community, but can also support:

- Improved community health
- Enhanced conservation of natural resources
- Strengthened community vitality

# HOW DO I GET STARTED IN MY COMMUNITY?

- Connect with your local Food and Farm Council, [Kansas Farm Bureau](#), [Kansas Farmers Union](#), [K-State Research & Extension](#) and other agriculture organizations to learn about what they're working on in this area.
- Visit your community's farmers market and talk to the entrepreneurs to find out what challenges they're facing as they grow their businesses.
- Talk to the institutions in your community (hospitals, school districts, etc.) about the opportunity to set local food-purchasing goals.
- Talk to your food retail sector (grocery store owners, restaurants) and find out what they need to grow and thrive.
- Start the conversation with your local banking community. They'll know who's expanding and growing in this area and what some of the investment challenges may be.

# WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES MY COMMUNITY CAN TAP INTO?

Building community food system enterprises and supply chain connections may require some innovative financing. There are several federal, state, and private initiatives providing loans, grants, and technical assistance available to Kansas communities:

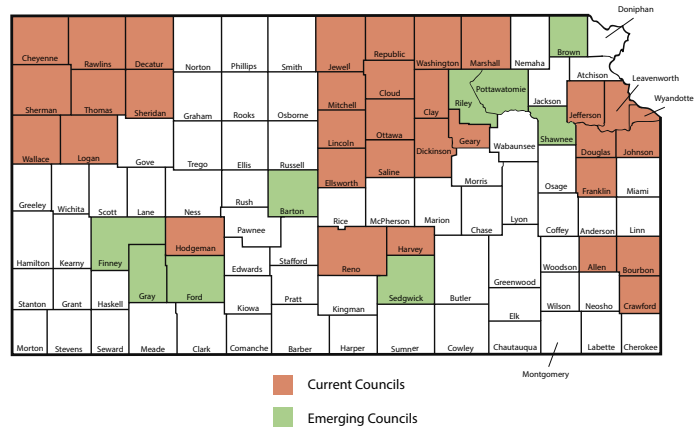
The [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#) offers more than 30 grant, loan and cost-share programs to support community food systems throughout the supply chain. These range from energy efficiency loans for grocery stores to add cooler space to grants for community farmers markets. [Check out this overview](#) of USDA programs in the Local Food Supply Chain.

The [Kansas Healthy Food Initiative \(KHFI\)](#) is a public-private partnership that aims to increase access to affordable fresh food to improve the health and economic development of Kansans and their communities. The KHFI provides technical assistance for those seeking to strengthen access to healthy foods as well as financing through a mix of loans and grants to develop new or renovate fresh food retail in underserved communities throughout Kansas.

[Network Kansas](#) supports an entrepreneurial environment in Kansas by providing a central portal that connects entrepreneurs and small business owners with expertise, education, and resources to grow their businesses and communities.



Map of Kansas Food and Farm Councils



# HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- The Federal Reserve and U.S. Department of Agriculture collaborated to study regional food systems as a means for enhancing economic opportunity. The resultant publication, [Harvesting Opportunity: The Power of Regional Food System Investments to Transform Communities](#), highlights recent findings and opportunities in this sector.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service convened a team of regional economists and food system specialists to develop a best practice toolkit for evaluating the economic impacts of local food system activities. Visit [localfoodeconomics.com](http://localfoodeconomics.com)
- Tap into a conversation about how these national resources can be adapted to work best in Kansas communities. This launched in May 2018 at the Harvesting Opportunity in Kansas Symposium, organized by the [Douglas County Food Policy Council](#). Check out the summary, resources, and next steps at [douglas.k-state.edu/community/harvesting-opportunities.html](http://douglas.k-state.edu/community/harvesting-opportunities.html)



Innovative community food system investment in action! At Cottin's Hardware Farmers Market in Lawrence, KS, a shopper uses Double Up Food Bucks tokens to buy fresh, healthy local food. The program allows shoppers using SNAP (food stamps) to get twice the value of their benefit thanks to public-private funding. [doubleupheartland.org](http://doubleupheartland.org)



# Kansas Examples of Community Food System Investments



Tom Parker for Kansas Farmers Union

## Cedar Valley Farms (Anderson County, KS)

Rosanna Bauman and her family own Bauman's Cedar Valley Farms and related agribusinesses in Anderson County, Kansas. It's a family operation, with Rosanna and her siblings each responsible for different elements of the operation. Today they farm 1,000 acres of non-GMO crops and raise cattle, sheep, and poultry.

In addition to the home place, Cedar Valley Farms, they now have ANCO Processing (for poultry), Bauman's Butcher Block in Ottawa, Bauman's Farm Feeds, Bauman Brothers Custom Ag Services, and Bauman Pet Products which uses animal byproducts for pet food. Other than the butcher shop with its retail outlet in Ottawa, all these businesses are based on the family farm.

To diversify their operation, the Bauman's had to look for innovative financing. They tapped into grant programs including the USDA Value Added Producer Grant, the USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). They also received loans from the KS Department of Commerce, their local bank, and the Slow Money network, a network of individuals that loan money for local food system projects.



Tom Parker for Kansas Farmers Union

## C&C High Tunnels (Republic County, KS)

Chris and Christi Janssen own C&C High Tunnels, a small family farm in the city limits of Scandia, KS. They grow a variety of produce, ranging from cantaloupe to kale. Their markets include several area farmers markets and wholesale buyers. Christi also operates a retail store and CSA (community supported agriculture) in downtown Scandia, where she sells directly to consumers.

When the Janssens got started, they took out two loans – one from a local bank, and one through the Republic County Rural Economic Development revolving loan fund.



Regena Lance

## Mildred Store (Allen County, KS)

Loren and Regena Lance are the owners of the Mildred Store in Mildred, Kansas. The Lances purchased the store in 2014, and have begun rehabilitating the former grocery store in that location. The store offers general grocery items and a deli and meat market.

The Mildred store is located in a 100 year-old building, so the Lances knew they needed to invest in building improvements. A USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grant provided an initial energy audit that recommended installing insulation, wiring, and an energy efficient cooler. To fund these improvements, the Lances received support from the Kansas Healthy Food initiative.

Their vision just doesn't end with selling groceries, though. They host a monthly live music night that draws hundreds, and their deli provides a gathering place for the community. They also participate in Double Up Food Bucks, a USDA-funded program that provides a \$1:\$1 match on local produce for SNAP (food stamps) recipients.