



## Local and Regional Food Systems in Kansas: Harvesting Opportunities to Build Momentum

In late May 2018, a group of Kansans convened at the University of Kansas School of Business in Lawrence to talk about local and regional food systems and how they relate to building community wealth.

Participants represented all four corners of the state, a significant feat given Kansas' diverse agriculture practices and existing market structures.

There were farmers, ranchers, processors, economic development professionals, people representing agriculture advocacy organizations, bankers, cooperative extension, local health and wellness groups, and more. There were people representing non-profits, foundations, and community development groups. There were residents of both rural and urban communities with all levels of knowledge and experience in food and agriculture issues.

These Kansans met new people, shared a meal sourced from local producers, learned from each other, and considered the information provided by speakers from states such as Colorado and North Carolina, as well as staff from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, DC.

After the symposium, participants reported that they made new connections that helped them with their work. Some even reported that they saw local and regional food system work through a new lens.

Over a year later: where are we now?

The Kansas Rural Center, along with Douglas County Extension and the Douglas County Food Policy Council, collaborated to put together a series of stories to follow up on the Symposium. The symposium's organizing team engaged Sarah Green, a writer based in Wichita with an interest in food, agriculture and community development issues, to report and write the stories, which were collected in the spring of 2019. They offer an in-depth look at the opportunities and challenges to building, maintaining and growing local and regional food systems in Kansas including:

- Diversifying agricultural operations to include more fruit and vegetable production to sell locally;
- Building relationships in the food system;
- Making good connections with community members and policymakers; and
- Opportunities for financing and investing to grow and expand Kansas food and agriculture businesses.

Over the next six weeks these stories will be sent out across the state, and be made available on KRC's website ([www.kansasruralcenter.org](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org)) and on other websites.

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Contact Mary Fund at the Kansas Rural Center for more information [mfund@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:mfund@kansasruralcenter.org) or 866-579-5469.