

Community, Local, and Regional Food Systems

Community, local, and regional food systems are complex and interconnected networks that comprise sustainable food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management to bring about social, economic, and ecological change that benefits all residents. A more community-focused food system must be cultivated and nurtured by local leadership and strong community ties that include a diversity of voices and ideas. This approach involves collaborations and partnerships to create more resilient, vibrant, and just food systems and economies.

Community, local, and regional food systems can include topics and issues such as

- Community gardens, farmers markets, and community supported agriculture
- Conservation agriculture
- Consumer food preparation and preservation
- Models of food distribution and aggregation (e.g., food hubs)
- Food processing and safety
- Food justice and food sovereignty
- Food security at the household and community level
- Food and agriculture policy
- Innovation in educational approaches, processes, and evaluation
- Institutional food procurement and preparation (e.g., farm-to-school, -university, and -hospital)
- Marketing and markets
- Nutrition education and health promotion
- Supporting producers/growers with startup and sustainability
- Resource and waste recovery
- Urban agriculture

Because food and agriculture are so fundamental and closely interconnected to the health, wealth, and capacity of a particular place, a more concerted, integrated effort is needed to develop much-needed infrastructure, strategies, programs, and policies to optimize the development of our community, local, and regional food systems. **Our overarching aim is to facilitate innovative and interdisciplinary approaches and collaborations in a comprehensive way to strengthen farms and communities, nourish healthy individuals and families, empower communities, revitalize local economies, and protect natural resources across Virginia and beyond.**