



Agricultural Marketing Service

Supporting Local & Regional Food Systems

Helping American Farmers Feed the Country

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) works to improve opportunities for U.S. growers and producers, including those involved in local and regional systems. Each year, AMS conducts research and provides technical services and grants that help thousands of agricultural food producers and businesses enhance their local food marketing efforts.

America’s hunger for locally and regionally grown food is a \$6.1-billion-per-year market. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, 50,000 farmers and ranchers nationwide are now selling to local retailers, and 150,000 farmers and ranchers are selling their products directly to consumers.

That means more consumers are seeking farm-fresh food, and more farmers—especially small- and mid-size operations—are profiting from these new markets.



Marketing Resources, Opportunities and Certifications

USDA Local Food Directories
AMS manages the USDA’s Local Food Directories to support the local food sector. In addition to the popular National Farmers Market Directory, the three additional directories (launched in 2014) provide the most current information on community-supported agriculture enterprises, food hubs, and on-farm markets. The Local Food Directories gives customers easy, one-stop access to services offered by local food businesses, while helping these businesses connect with more customers.

The Local Food Directories are an important marketing tool used by consumers, app developers, policymakers, and businesses to identify local and regional food sources.

Each directory is voluntary, relying on managers of food hubs, community-supported agriculture (CSAs) operations, and on-farm sales operations to list their businesses by visiting www.usdalocalfooddirectories.com

USDA Grass-Fed Program for Small and Very Small Producers

This program is designed as a marketing tool for small and very small-scale producers to certify that animals meet the requirements of the grass-fed marketing claim standard. Producers who are certified under the program receive certificates that allow them to market their cattle or sheep as USDA-certified grass fed, increasing demand for their products and creating access to new economic opportunities for these producers. Additional information is available at www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/grass-fed-SVS

Selling Food to USDA

Federal food and nutrition programs include the AMS small business set-aside program, which allows small businesses to participate in the Federal purchase program by having them compete against other similarly sized businesses. Visit www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food to learn more about selling your products to USDA or contact the Commodity Procurement Division at (202) 720-4517.

AMS offers several grant programs that support local and regional food systems. Visit www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants for more information

USDA Market News

For 100 years, USDA Market News reports have given farmers, producers, and other agricultural businesses the information they need to evaluate market conditions, identify trends, make purchasing decisions, monitor price patterns, evaluate transportation equipment needs, and accurately assess movement.

USDA now has more market information available on local and regional markets. The new Local and Regional Food Marketing Market News reports provide producers and consumers a one-stop shop for reports on local and regional food outlets.

To learn more, visit www.ams.usda.gov/MarketNews

Technical Assistance and Research

An interdisciplinary staff of agricultural marketing specialists, economists, and facility design experts study direct marketing practices and opportunities, including farmers markets. They also provide technical assistance to small- and mid-scale agricultural producers, handlers, and distributors.

Local/Regional Resource Publications

USDA maintains an extensive archive of publications and presentations on farmers market and direct-to-consumer farm marketing activities, authored both by staff member and research partners.

View the archive at www.ams.usda.gov/MarketingServicesPublications

Local Food Distribution Research, Findings, and Support

AMS offers a variety of publications that examine emerging distribution systems for producers of locally and regionally grown food. These systems offer critical support services for small- and mid-sized producers who may be interested in supplying food to larger volume customers, but often have difficulty meeting the requirements of these market channels on their own.

Find out more by visiting www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional

Wholesale Markets and Facility Design

The Wholesale Market and Facility Design team provides technical assistance and support to customers regarding the construction of new structures or the remodeling of existing ones. These facilities include wholesale market, farmers markets, public markets, and food hubs, all of which are important parts of the national food distribution network. The facilities may be indoors or outdoors, a single building, or an industrial complex.

USDA National Farmers Market Managers Survey

Periodically AMS assesses the operations, management, sales, and organization of farmers markets based on the real experience of farmers market managers through a farmers market managers survey.

According to the last farmers market manager survey (2014 season), 85 percent of surveyed market managers wanted to add vendors to their current roster, and 64 percent reported increased customer traffic. Nearly 75 percent of reporting markets had at least one vendor accepting federal nutrition benefits as payment.



People's Garden Initiative

The People's Garden Initiative was launched by Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack on February 12, 2009, the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birthday. When Lincoln founded USDA in 1862, he referred to it as "The People's Department" because it affected the lives of so many Americans.

The Initiative embodies this sentiment as it works with partners to create school gardens, community gardens, urban farming, and small-scale agriculture projects around the country and overseas. There are more than 2,100 gardens registered as People's Gardens.

The People's Garden Initiative highlights how local food can support surrounding communities by improving access to fresh, healthy foods.

All food grown at a People's Garden on a USDA-owned or leased facility is donated. We also encourage producers of non-USDA gardens to donate a portion of their harvest. More than 3.9 million pounds of fresh produce has been donated from all People's Gardens since 2009.

Learn more at peoplesgarden.usda.gov

