USDA **Agricultural Marketing Service**
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA AMS Marketing Services Division Agreement Summary

September 30, 2021

AMS' Marketing Services Division (MSD) works to improve market access for producers and develop new markets through its three main roles as a researcher, convener, and technical assistance provider. In USDA's vision, local food producers, markets, and communities have easy access to ideas, innovations, and research in order to grow and sustain a productive business. This information ensures that opportunities for U.S. food producers are readily available and communities are equipped to successfully grow and sell regionally produced foods, while also supporting increased access to locally produced foods. MSD accomplishes much of its work through cooperative and interagency agreements. For more information on MSD's work, visit our webpage.

Fiscal Year 2021 Cooperative Agreements

Education and Outreach: Removing Barriers in USDA GAP Programs

Partner: National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Foundation

Through this project, NASDA Foundation will further USDA's efforts to garner more participation in USDA Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) Programs. The NASDA Foundation will use the information collected through the Buyer Acceptance Project to develop and pilot an outreach and education program to address barriers, including impacts on diverse local food markets nationwide, with an emphasis on underserved small farmers and the Group GAP Program.

Empowering Local and Regional Protein Processing in the Upper Midwest

Partner: Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI)

This project will help ensure a viable small and local protein processing industry through various support mechanisms. Using the upper Midwest as a learning laboratory, the project will develop resources and training to increase the competitiveness of small and mid-sized meat processing plants across the country.

List-Frame Development to Implement a Survey of Wild-Catch Fishers Selling Direct to Customers

Partner: University of Maine

This project aims to develop a comprehensive list of fishers that sell wild-caught seafood direct to customers, which will become the list-frame for a survey of the direct to customer wild-caught seafood marketing channel. Data collected by the survey will be analogous to the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey that USDA performs for farms and ranches and will be instrumental in assessing the importance of the sector and for justifying resources for program support.

Local Food Directories Platform Update

Partner: Michigan State University

Through this agreement, AMS will launch an agritourism directory, improve the USDA Local Food Directories platform security, enable batch updates, update the programming language, redesign the website, and promote the Directories. With these improvements, the USDA Local Food Directories will better serve the local and regional food systems sector, allowing organizations to easily market their products and consumers to easily find local foods through a variety of market channels.

Local and Regional Food Systems Recovery and Resilience

Partners: Colorado State University, University of Kentucky, University of Maine

This project will build on the innovation and success found in the Local and Regional Food Systems (LRFS) Response to COVID-19 project through the following activities:

- Harmonize data, metrics collection, analysis and member training opportunities across Community of Practice Coordinating Organizations (COPCOs) to support the effective implementation and evaluation of sector-level activities, Federal programs and initiatives, and cross-sectoral analysis of LRFS.
- Continue to develop and disseminate timely cross sector research and analysis to support the efforts of policy makers, program developers, funders, and other key LRFS stakeholders.
- Support continuing education and professional development for network weavers, LRFS project and grant administrators and evaluators, and others.

For more information, visit the Local and Regional Food Systems Response to COVID-19 Resource Hub.

Local Food, Local Places

Partner: Environmental Protection Agency

Local Foods, Local Places helps cities and towns across the country protect the environment and human health by engaging with local partners to reinvest in existing neighborhoods as they develop local food systems. Local Foods, Local Places supports locally led, community-driven efforts to protect air and water quality, preserve open space and farmland, boost economic opportunities for local farmers and businesses, improve access to healthy local food, and promote childhood wellness. For more information, visit the EPA's Local Food, Local Places site.

USDA AMS Grant Applicant Technical Assistance with Underserved Community Focus

Partners: University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and Florida A&M University (FAMU)

It is important to understand the history and context of relations between USDA and black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) populations which has led to a lack of trust between these communities and the agency. To address this, FAMU, UMES, and AMS will 1) thoroughly evaluate barriers to AMS grant opportunities for BIPOC and other underserved communities, 2) invest in rebuilding confidence between these communities and the USDA to overcome historic tensions and mistrust, and 3) take action to rectify inequalities in program access through targeted outreach, training, and technical assistance.

Continuing Agreements Started in Previous Fiscal Years

Buyer Acceptance of USDA GAP and Group Certifications: Retailer Relations, Research, Recommendations, and Marketing

Partner: Michigan State University (MSU)

To improve and increase acceptance of USDA HGAP, HGAP+, and GroupGAP, as well as other harmonized and group food safety certifications, MSU conducted research and pilots with retailers and other buyers. This project includes 1) designing and conducting national research into buyer reluctance to accept the identified food safety certifications; 2) designing and facilitating a pilot process to explore and test options to address buyer hesitation; 3) recommending possible changes to USDA certification standards/models; and 4) building and delivering a marketing and communications plan regarding the AMS' commitment to farmers and buyers and the outcomes of the project.

Exploring the 2019 National Farmers Market Managers Survey

Partner: Wheaton College

Wheaton College provided an analytic overview of the presence, performance, and sustainability of farmers markets across the United States using the survey data. The analysis will be used to discover the organizational, social, and economic factors that influence successful markets versus unsuccessful markets, and to offer a list of actions and/or strategies that markets could implement to make themselves more successful. The cooperator is also analyzing how markets organize themselves and deliver their goods based on geographic location. For more information, visit the National Farmers Market Managers Survey website.

Exploring the Market Dynamics and Economic Implications of Regional Food Start-Ups and Their Supporting Food Business Ecosystem

Partner: Colorado State University

Based on initial research on food manufacturing dynamics and policies to lower barriers to entry for food entrepreneurs, this project is exploring whether increased visibility and demand for local foods, together with business-friendly policies and programs are influencing the entry and growth of food businesses in the United States. The main activities of this research project are a national survey of food incubators and community kitchens and the development of four case studies of food businesses focused on how policies, grants, supply chain networks, and economic fundamentals affect their decisions.

Local and Regional Food Systems Response to COVID-19

Partner: University of Kentucky

AMS, along with a cooperating research team led by the University of Kentucky, seek to enrich existing efforts within local and regional food systems (LRFS) communities of practice who provide essential support to our nation's local food producers. This project documents and disseminates innovations and best practices developed on the ground and draws on LRFS thought leaders to frame research on COVID-related shifts in LRFS markets with the aim of supporting long term resilience. For more information, visit the Local and Regional Food Systems Response to COVID-19 Resource Hub.

Local Food, Local Places: Evaluating Processes, Outcomes and Future Directions

Partner: Washington State University (WSU)

WSU is performing a program evaluation of the Local Food, Local Places (LFLP) technical assistance program. The intent of the project is to better understand how the current LFLP process and program work for communities, steps that can be taken to improve the process and program, and community related outcomes from the program. WSU will assess impact using Ripple Effects Mapping (REM), develop a framework to collect data for future analysis and program evaluation, suggest program improvements and find program successes.

Realizing the Promise of Urban Agriculture through New Educational Resources and Approaches

Partner: Cornell University and Rooted, WI

Through a collaboration between researchers, practitioners, and planners, this project is turning the *Promise of Urban Agriculture (PUA)* recommendations into meaningful and practical training and educational resources. The project objectives are to 1) Develop new training educational material derived from the PUA report recommendations and supplemented by content provided by the cooperator and the project's advisory group, 2) Pilot test materials with each audience in online and, if possible, in-person formats, and 3) Distribute the training and educational material via webinars, workshops, and professional associations and conferences.