

Community, Local, and Regional Food Systems

Interest in local, regional, and community-based food systems has grown with great interest for several decades. We define community, local, and regional food systems (CLRFS) as a complex and collaborative network that holistically integrates food production, processing, marketing, distribution, consumption, and waste management to sustain the ecological, cultural, economic, and social health of a particular place. This approach is interdisciplinary and values-driven and includes the goal of developing socially just, economically vibrant, and ecologically sound food and farming systems embedded in local needs, people, and places so that all may thrive today and for generations to come.

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

- Community gardens, farmers markets, and community supported agriculture
- Regenerative agriculture
- Home food preparation and preservation
- Models of food distribution and aggregation (e.g., food hubs, online sales platforms)
- Value-added food processing and safety
- Food justice and food sovereignty
- Food security at the household and community level
- Food system and agricultural policy
- Innovation in educational approaches, processes, and evaluation
- Institutional food procurement and preparation (e.g., farm-to-school, -university, and -hospital)
- Market development and value chain coordination
- Nutrition education and health promotion
- Supporting producers/growers with startup and sustainability
- Food recovery and waste reduction
- Urban agriculture and food innovation clusters

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.**

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