



# Local Food Linkages Project

## Producer Survey Results

### Survey Purpose & Goal

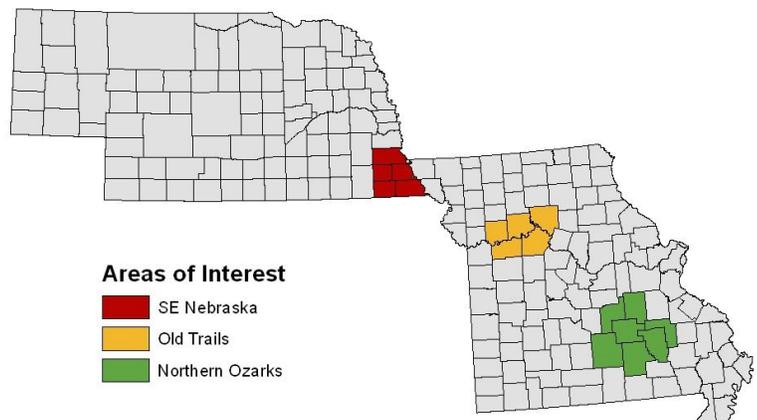
The Producer Survey is the first of three parts of a project that aims to understand how to better align the prosperity of local food producers with consumer desire for, and access to, locally produced foods in rural areas. The rural areas of interest in this study include Southeast Nebraska, the Old Trails region in west-central Missouri, and the Northern Ozarks in south-central Missouri.

The long-term goal of this project is to fully realize the potential of local foods in rural economic development strategy by providing research-based guidance to rural communities on how regional food systems can be developed that bring together the interests of both producers and consumers – in ways that mutually benefit them in the rural communities in which they live.

**Southeast Nebraska** includes the counties of Otoe, Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee, and Richardson

**Old Trails Region** includes the counties of Ray, Lafayette, Carroll, Saline, and Chariton

**Northern Ozarks** includes the counties of Dent, Phelps, Iron, Crawford, Reynolds, Shannon, and Texas.



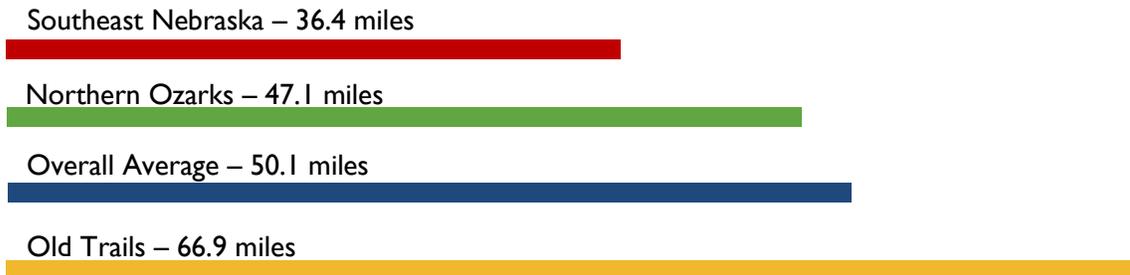
### Survey Response

#### We had a great response to the Survey – Thank You!

- High response rate of 44%. We sent 282 surveys sent to producers in our three areas of interest, and 122 were completed and returned.
- Respondents ranged in age from 25 to 80, with an average age of 54. A third of respondents were 60 or older, while only 13% were younger than 40.
- Even numbers of women and men responded.
- Nearly 60% of respondents had an associate's degree or higher, while another 20% had some college.
- Some respondents have been selling into their local market for almost 30 years while others have been participating for less than 2 years.

## How Far is Local?

When asked **how far away is the furthest place considered a local or regional market**, producers gave a wide range of answers, including “0 miles” and “the U.S.” It turns out there is a significant difference between regions when the average “local” distance is considered.

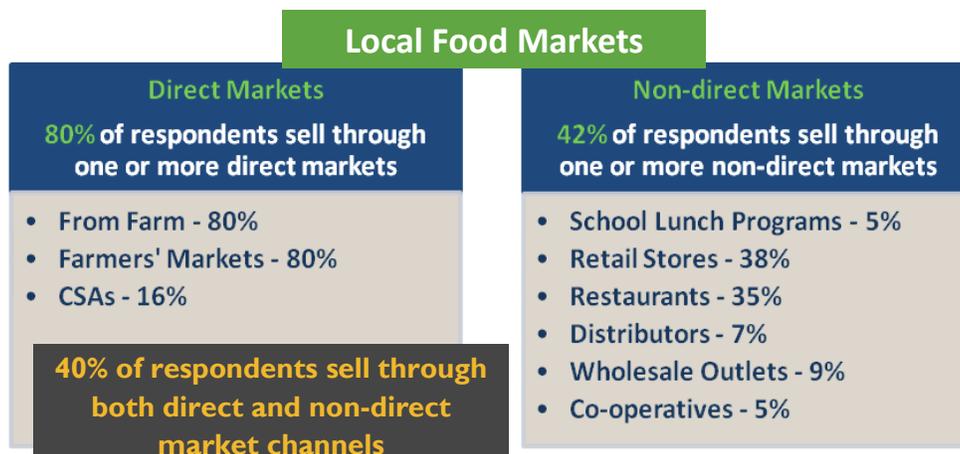


Additionally, **producers who sell into non-direct markets, such as retail stores and wholesale outlets consider larger local market distances** than producers who sell only into direct markets.

## Local Market Participation

**Farmers' markets and direct from farm sales** are the most popular markets for local food sales.

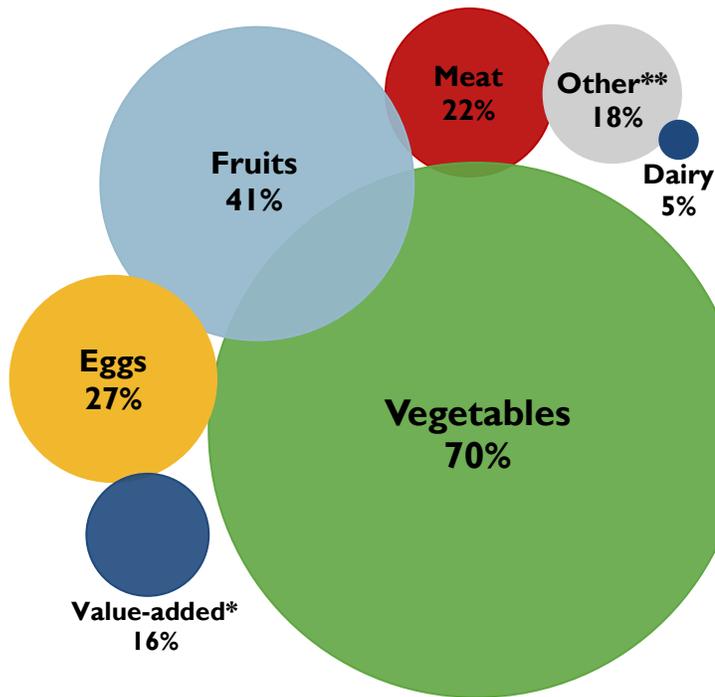
When compared to all other local food market channels, **producers are most likely to continue or begin selling at farmers' markets or direct from their farm.**



**Producers can be split into two groups based on where they sell**

- **Direct** - sell *only* through direct markets
- **Non-Direct** - sell through non-direct markets, but often also sell through direct markets

## What Foods Are Local Producers Selling?



A wide variety of food and food products are produced for sale in our rural areas. Most producers are selling vegetables and fruits into their local food markets and many others offer eggs and meats. Note that 11% of survey takers did not respond to questions about what they produce for local sale.

\*Value-added foods include but are not limited to canned jams, jellies and sauces; breads and pastas; and prepared meats such as sausage.

\*\*Other foods include but are not limited to herbs and spices; mushrooms and gathered foods; honey and nuts.

## Local Food Advantages

Survey respondents overwhelmingly agreed that local foods offer following advantages:

- Freshness (97.5%)
- Quality (94%)
- Short shipping distances (89%)
- Free of Additives or preservatives (84%)

The majority of respondents also agreed that local foods offer the following advantages:

- Heirloom or heritage varieties (71%)
- Free of chemical residues (70%)
- Free of genetic modification (65%)
- Convenience (63%)
- Price (58%)
- Organically grown (52%)



## Producer Motivations

Survey respondents identified many **motivations for producing local foods**:

Farmers surveyed indicate that producing food and food products for their local market **provides an additional level of pride in their products (91.3%) and provides an added level of satisfaction (88.7%)**.

A high number of respondents are motivated by their **contribution to the quality of life in their community (78.6%)** and by the **additional income local foods provides to their operation (79%) and to family members (63.7%)**.

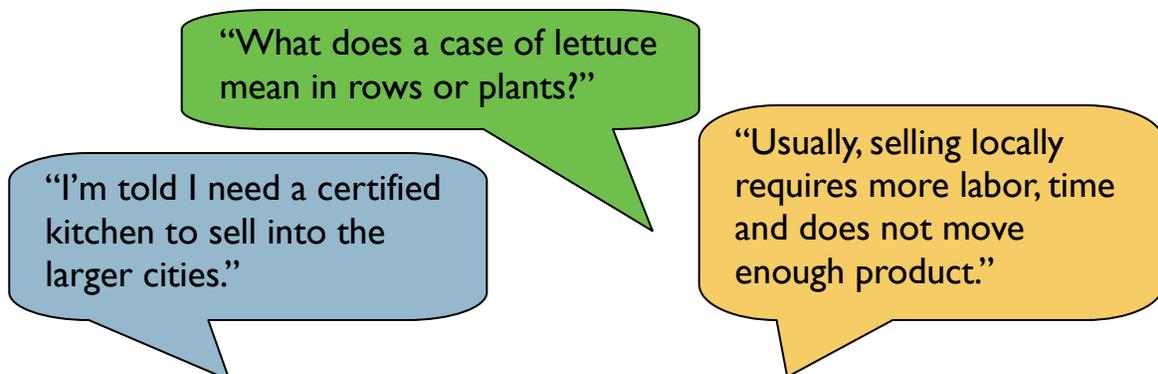
Many respondents agree that local food markets **provide an added level of independence for agricultural producers (79.1%), provides for a better working environment for themselves, their families and workers (64.1%), and allows them to concentrate on high quality products (77.2%)**.

## Producer Challenges

Certain challenges and concerns echoed through survey answers and comments. Challenges most identified by producers can be grouped into three categories: **Challenges to Scaling Up, Challenges to Producing Other Foods, and Market Challenges**.

### Challenges to Scaling Up

- Transportation and delivery costs and logistics
- Production capacity limitations, including access to land
- Off-farm work (supports and hinders production)
- Regulatory hurdles
- Finding new buyers
- Access to processing facilities, especially for meat
- Cost of inputs, including fuel and animal feed
- Lack of help at peak times
- Competition with larger growers or growers with a longer production history



## Producer Challenges, continued...

### **Challenges to Producing other Foods** (and food products, especially organic and prepared foods)

- Certification costs including GAP, kitchen and organic
- Liability concerns
- Regulatory hurdles, including kitchen certification and local laws
- Buyer required insurance
- Takes additional time, effort and paperwork
- Lack of buyers

“We often don’t speak the same language – they buy by the case lot while we sell by the pound.”

### **Market challenges**

- Distance to market, usually to Farmers’ Market
- Farmers’ Market Schedules
- Customer attendance at Farmers’ Markets
- Processing and packaging needs of retailers, restaurants, and institutions
- Lead time to grow what will be needed, especially for restaurants and institutions
- Translation of buyer needs - Buyer volume specifications vs. grower metrics
- Pricing issues - Wholesale vs. retail pricing, expected profit margins for retailers
- Facilitation of sales to institutions

## What’s Next? – Input/Output Interviews/Surveys

We are about to kick off **the most important part of our project, the Input/Output Interviews/Surveys.**

While some data has been collected on the value of direct-to-consumer food sales at the county, state, and national level, this data does not describe how local food systems operate or how their operations and economics vary from place to place. **The existing data also does not include information about challenges or opportunities for local food systems at the community level.**

Real data, obtained directly from local food producers will help us understand the local economic impacts of local food producers. **Moreover, real data informs relevant and effective Extension programming and supports arguments for local food production policy support or change.**

The anonymous information you share will be aggregated with other local food producer information to develop Producer Profiles. Producer Profiles not only remove the identity of producers who contribute their data, it also helps us to best estimate impacts of future producers, very small producers, and producers whose data is not collected through this effort. Producer Profiles will be used to calibrate models used by economists to describe the local impacts of local food producers.

**The data you provide is vital realistically define the impact that small to medium producers like you have on your local economies.**

## Please Participate in an Input/Output Interviews/Surveys!

Data provided by local food producers can help us answer questions like these:

- Are producers selling local foods in a position to increase the local food and economic security of their local community?
- How do different markets impact the incomes of local food producers selling local foods and their expenses, inputs and outputs?
- What is the advantage of investing in local foods vs. investing in another type of economic development in rural areas?

We hope you will share your business input and output information with us. You can contribute your data several ways:

- Schedule a time to complete the Input/Output survey in person in a one-on-one interview – we would appreciate and enjoy the opportunity to talk to you in person. Call Jessica Scott and the number below.
- Call or e-mail to schedule a time to complete the survey over the phone. *Calling also allows you to ask questions of us directly as you fill out the survey.*
- Contact Jessica Scott to receive an Input/Output survey in the mail. Fill out and return in a postage-paid envelope.
- Visit our project website and fill out the secure form. We will contact you to set up an interview: <http://localfoodlinkages.wordpress.com/iointerviews/>

Participating producers can receive \$100 for their time and effort in sharing their data with us.

Jessica Scott, Extension Research Associate is responsible for collecting data from local foods producers. Please contact her at the phone or email below. Please contact any member of the research team if you have questions about our project. Because we know spring gets busy, our goal is to complete the interviews by March 1st.

**Jessica Scott, Extension Research Associate**

Department of Rural Sociology  
206 Gentry Hall  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, MO 65211  
(855) 270-0742 (toll free)  
[ScottJR@missouri.edu](mailto:ScottJR@missouri.edu)

**Tom Johnson, Professor of Ag Economics**

Department of Agricultural Economics  
215 Middlebush Hall  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, MO 65211  
(573) 882-2157  
[JohnsonTG@missouri.edu](mailto:JohnsonTG@missouri.edu)

**Mary Hendrickson, Assistant Professor**

Director, Food Circles Networking Project  
Department of Rural Sociology  
University of Missouri  
200 B Gentry Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211  
(573) 882-7463  
[HendricksonM@missouri.edu](mailto:HendricksonM@missouri.edu)

**Randy Cantrell, Extension Professor**

Community Development Specialist  
Nebraska Rural Initiative  
103 Miller Hall  
Lincoln, NE 68583  
(402) 472-0919  
[RCantrellI@unl.edu](mailto:RCantrellI@unl.edu)

**Thank You. We couldn't do this project without you.**

