



NC GROWING TOGETHER

Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets

Center for Environmental Farming Systems' New Local Food Economies Initiative Will Support Local Governments in Local Food Systems Work

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Raleigh, NC: The Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) has launched a new initiative to engage local governments in the work of building local food systems. Local Food Economies (LFE) is part of NC Growing Together (NCGT), a project that aims to bring more locally-produced foods into mainstream markets. The LFE initiative was developed to support the work of local government and economic development agencies as they seek to expand the capacity and potential of businesses within the local food value chain.

"NC Growing Together has three main focus areas," explains NCGT Project Manager Rebecca Dunning. "*Building capacity* for businesses to participate in the local food supply chain, *networking* business entities across the chain, and *creating enabling environments* that support food value chain creation and growth. LFE is part of the work to create those environments."

Local Food Economies has produced a set of resources to assist planners, economic and business developers, entrepreneurs, and others in building local food economies across the state. The resources include:

- [Case Studies](#) – these statewide examples of “what’s working” in local food economic development highlight the range of unique, place-based and asset-based solutions emerging across the state to meet the need for jobs and investment in rural and urban communities alike.
- [A Government Guide on Building Local Food Economies](#)- a resource for information about planning and economic development issues that impact the success of farms and food businesses. The guide’s online, indexed format makes it easy for planners, economic developers, and local government administrators to quickly and easily access the information they need.
- [Webinars, Research and Tools](#) – featuring topics of interest to planners, developers, and elected officials.

Additionally, a set of 116 [Agricultural Infographics](#) -- one for each county plus one for each of the state’s 16 Councils of Government – were developed with support from the USDA’s Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. “The infographics serve as a starting point for place-based conversations about local agriculture,” says Laura Lauffer, NCGT Food and Farms Coordinator at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, who was involved in

creating the infographics. “They can help local and regional governments and community groups identify particular areas to focus upon.”

Emily Edmonds, NCGT Project Extension & Outreach Program Manager, will spend the fall and winter reaching out to the state’s governmental, planning, and business development agencies to talk with agency staff and local officials about how NC Growing Together and the LFE initiative can support their work to build thriving local food economies.

Says Edmonds, “Local government and business development agencies are ready to begin working to expand their local food economies, and we are excited to help them begin! This kind of work is what makes our local communities desirable places to live and do business in.”

Please visit the CEFS website to learn more about the [Local Food Economies](#) initiative.

The Center for Environmental Farming Systems is a partnership of NC State University, NC Agricultural and Technical State University and the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. CEFS develops and promotes just and equitable food and farming systems that conserve natural resources, strengthen communities, improve health outcomes, and provide economic opportunities in North Carolina and beyond. For more information, visit www.cefs.ncsu.edu.