



Project Summaries



KNOW YOUR FARMER
KNOW YOUR FOOD

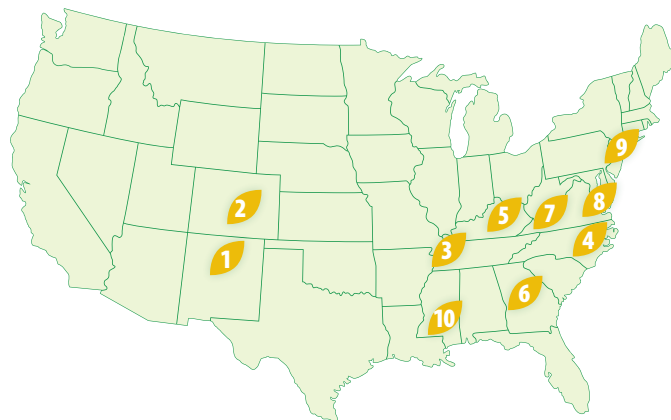
1 La Montanita Co-op, a consumer-owned cooperative with 17,000 members and six grocery store locations in Albuquerque, Gallup and Santa Fe, established its Regional Foodshed Initiative in 2007 to expand purchases by the Co-op's stores of sustainably grown regional products and to assist regional producers in accessing other wholesale market channels for its products. Under Food LINC, La Montanita's enterprise development team is working with diverse farm operations to find new markets for locally-grown products, including pumpkins, apples, carrots, and cucumbers, as well as working to scale, brand and market value-added products beyond the State, such as New Mexico *ristras* (dried chili peppers), yogurt and milled corn. Through producer meetings and market research, La Montanita is also exploring the feasibility of increasing local chicken, egg, and buffalo production and marketing in New Mexico.

2 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, founded in 1907 to represent agriculture in Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming, offers leadership training, youth education opportunities, funds and expertise to groups and individuals involved in cooperative enterprises, local food initiatives, and hometown community initiatives. Under Food LINC, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union (RMFU) will be involved in two separate but connected value chain development efforts. First, RMFU is developing a business network of 16 food hubs based on shared priorities that include production planning across the diverse farming zones of the region, cooperative delivery and distribution services, and developing a shared software platform. Second, RMFU will provide direct assistance to three farmer-led food hubs in southern Colorado by strengthening their production, distribution, and marketing capacities.

3 Communities Unlimited (CU), a community economic development organization with a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), has been providing technical assistance and capital to small businesses since 2001. Under Food LINC, CU will integrate local food initiatives in Memphis with producers and organizations across the Mid-South Delta region in a coordinated food value chain that meets the growing demand for affordable, local healthy foods while increasing producer revenues, enhancing farm enterprise viability, and creating new food systems-related jobs.

4 The Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit dedicated to conserving working lands and advancing sustainable economic development, has supported rural leaders in developing community-driven solutions through its Resourceful Communities Program since 1991. Under Food LINC, the Conservation Fund is working with over 250 farmers, processors, farmers markets, schools, and churches in the North Carolina coastal plains region to identify market needs and opportunities, and help community and faith groups create new markets for fruits and vegetables, dairy products, pasture-raised meats, and fresh seafood. The primary goals are to grow and strengthen food value chains that enhance access to healthy foods for low-income communities and increase income for food producers and processors.

5 Louisville Farm to Table, an economic development program of the Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government since 2009, has aimed at connecting Kentucky's farmers with market opportunities, breaking down barriers that prevent more locally-produced foods from entering local markets, and expanding consumer awareness of and demand for local foods. Under Food LINC, Louisville Farm to Table is focusing on two food value chain strategies. First, they are partnering with the Organic Association of Kentucky and other organizations to provide technical assistance and education to support the development of more organic farmers in Kentucky, and will serve as a market matchmaker between new and existing organic farmers and a wide variety of businesses interested in purchasing organic produce, meat, dairy and grains. Second, they will be targeting farmers in the Promise Zone region of Eastern Kentucky to help them scale and commercialize farm operation through hoop house production, and assist in linking these farmers to fresh produce buyers.



6 Common Market Georgia, a nonprofit organization established in 2015 based on a similar model in Philadelphia, focuses on the aggregation and distribution of sustainably-grown and locally-produced food for institutional and other wholesale markets. Under Food LINC, Common Market Georgia will be utilizing a "connect the dots" strategy to link diverse farmers and processors, wholesale market opportunities, capital investment, capacity building resources. By targeting infrastructure and systems investment opportunities, this project will support small farm producers and food manufacturers as they reach appropriate scale and diversify their businesses to meet the emerging demand of local and sustainable wholesale procurement. Common Market Georgia will also be targeting farmers in the Promise Zone region of South Carolina to help link commercial operations to Atlanta's marketplaces with the end goal of strengthening regional supply chains of sustainably-grown food products.

7 Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD), a nonprofit organization based in Abingdon, VA with its own operating food hub called Appalachian Harvest, has been working to revitalize rural economies and increase healthy food access in Central Appalachia since 1995. Under Food LINC, ASD is working with partners in VA, KY, WV and OH to establish a food hub trading network that connects Central Appalachian farmers with large East Coast markets. This project will focus on the development of a distribution corridor that connects a variety of food hubs, aggregators, farmers and distributors. The model will consider total corridor distribution costs, shared ownership models, backhauls, conventional distributors, and deep regional planning around long term strategic implementation and leveraging of critical food systems infrastructure.

8 The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), an independent, nonprofit association that brings together leaders from 22 member jurisdictions to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia, is guided in part by Region Forward – a vision plan that includes food systems goals, such as farmland protection and increasing the amount of locally-sourced food grown and consumed in urban, suburban, and rural communities. Under Food LINC, COG will build on its food systems plan and expertise by developing local food supply chains that connect rural and suburban farmers and ranchers to urban-based marketplaces in the wider DC metro region, with the goal of improving the bottom line for farm businesses and increasing access to healthy, sustainable, local food for consumers.

9 Fair Food, a nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia dedicated to bringing healthy local food to the marketplace, has created trusting relationships between farmers and wholesale buyers to build a robust local food system in the Mid-Atlantic Region since 2000. Under Food LINC, Fair Food plans to develop two distinct food value chains. The first is to start the process of rebuilding the regional grain economy by assessing the market demand and production capacity of regional producers to grow high-yield, high-value, and/or value-added grain products. The second is to build off their existing work with small dairy farms by developing a regional brand for artisan cheeses, market that brand to consumers and wholesale customers, and incubate a social enterprise to support existing distribution infrastructure for the region.

10 Soul City Hospitality, a socially-driven for profit enterprise based in Jackson, MS, has a mission to develop a resilient, socially-just, and economically-viable supply chain for food production in Mississippi. Under Food LINC, Soul City is partnering with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Services to promote environmental stewardship and conservation practices that will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Delta region's land, water, air, and other natural resources. Taking a systems approach, they will meet these conservation objectives by creating the physical infrastructure, market coordination, and long-term public-private partnerships to support a self-sustaining food economy in which all parts of the supply chain are ecologically sound and financially viable.