

WV Appalachian Foodshed Project participants make change through the WV Food and Farm Coalition Working Groups

Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP) participants from West Virginia decided to focus WV AFP energy towards the strong momentum of the [WV Food and Farm Coalition \(WVFFC\)](#) Working Groups in order to leverage resources and enhance collective impact. Future AFP initiatives will complement and build on these groups' work. Read on to learn more about the WVFFC Working Group Projects!

Processing Infrastructure Working Group:

Objective of Project: Research and evaluate the current status of meat processing businesses in West Virginia with the following interests in mind: 1.) availability to W.V. livestock farmers/producers and 2.) support for existing processing plants in improving and/or expanding businesses.

Description of Project: This working group is focused on assisting new and existing farmers understand what is required for processing animals for a variety of markets (on-farm sales, farmers markets, restaurants and institutions) and what resources (processors) are currently available. Additionally, we want to support existing processing plants in response to their needs and challenges.

Three projects have been identified:

- 1.) Create a complete list of meat processors, including info on what they process and what services they offer
- 2.) Assess producer and processor challenges/needs with a survey
- 3.) Clarify regulations for producers & processors regarding different types of marketing outlets

Aggregation and Distribution Working Group:

Objective of Project: To enrich the conversation about local food aggregation and distribution so that working group members and other attendees have a better understanding of current aggregation and distribution activities in WV, understand how supply chains work, recognize what barriers exist to building local supply chains, and see what needs the working group could meet.

Description of Project: The project began with a field trip to a Monroe Farm Market Cooperative aggregation day, followed by presentations on topics identified by the Working Group members: (1) an Introduction to Co-ops by Tom McConnell of the WV Small Farm Center, (2) a presentation on how to legally form a co-op by the WV Secretary of State's office, and (3) a presentation of "lessons learned" from The Pepper Project, a former WVU Extension-sponsored effort at aggregation and brokerage from WV pepper farmers, presented by working group member Brandy Brabham.

The Next Generation of Farmers Working Group:

Objective of Project: To identify and develop ways to integrate agriculture into K-12 curricula while meeting WV Department of Education Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs).

Description of Project: This project will create a toolkit to help teachers and educators use gardening to reinforce WV Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs). Focused primarily on elementary school and middle school gardens, this group is working to match the complete calendar year of gardening activities with popular school garden curricula, Extension resources on gardening, and West Virginia CSOs. This information will be made available for use by teachers through various means, ideally to include a searchable web database of garden activities and CSO categories.

Improving Access to Healthy Local Food Working Group:

Objective of Project: To provide the state with a knowledge of which SNAP promotion strategies offer the best return on investment of promotional dollars for farmers markets.

Description of Project: This group is spearheading a small pilot program, supported by the McDonough Foundation, to test and compare the effectiveness of various outreach strategies in attracting SNAP (Food Stamp) customers at four farmers markets. Four farmers markets were nominated by Working Group members to participate in the pilot program. Each market will utilize a unique outreach strategy, using a small grant of \$250 to implement the strategy.