

## Lesson 4

# The importance of partnerships for local food producers



## Module 2: Farming for the Kentucky Local Food System

Lesson activities adapted from a "A Feast of Terms: Security, Justice, and Sovereignty" in the Other Worlds (2013) curriculum, *Sowing Seeds for Learning and Action*.

### Lesson Overview

This lesson builds on lesson 3, digging deeper into the lives and experiences of a diverse collection of local food producers in Kentucky. It highlights the critical importance of teamwork and collaboration across producers who are trying to survive and grow the local food market. Youth will also become more fluent in the language of local food production and direct marketing. Finally, the lesson invites students to share their own stories or interview community members with experience in gardening/farming, further highlighting the plurality of lived experiences in this sector.

The goal of this lesson is to inspire youth and help them imagine a wide variety of pathways into farming. This is important because Kentucky farmers are aging, with an average of 56.2 years old. In the last few years, Kentucky has grown with respect to the number of female farmers as well as new and beginning producers, young farmers, and farmers with a military background. This is an important trend that makes the future of Kentucky agriculture much brighter, but we must continue to grow the interest and capacity of young people in both rural and urban parts of the state.

### Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define and differentiate key terms used when talking about local food production: urban agriculture, direct-to-consumer, CSAs, farmer's markets, and food deserts.
- Explain why a diverse array of new and beginning farmers is so important to the future of Kentucky agriculture.
- Describe why partnerships are critical for the health and sustainability of local food producers.
- Collect and share compelling stories of diverse farmers/growers in their community.

## **Time**

45 minutes

## **Materials**

- PowerPoint slide deck ([click here](#))
- Copies of a “Feast of Local Food Systems Terms” (divide the total number of students by 5; that is how many copies of the handout you will need)
- Copies of the “Worksheet for Episode 1/Lesson 4” handout for each youth
- Copies of the “Get to Know a Farmer/Gardener” storytelling/interviewing handout for each student (for the optional homework assignment)
- 5 pieces of butcher/flip chart paper + markers (1 for each group)
- “Episode 1: The Story of Kentucky Farmers and How Partnerships are Growing the Local Food System for Everyone,” streamed online and projected on a large screen.  
<https://vimeo.com/774080584/4390250c77>

## **Space & Participants**

- Any space that allows for group work, full class discussion, and watching a streamed 10-minute video.

## **Before the Lesson**

- Print out and copy the “Feast of Local Food Systems Terms” (divide the total number of students by 5; that is how many copies of the handout you will need). Cut each page in half and make five stacks, one stack for each group (group 1, group 2, etc). Each stack should have the same written instructions and prompts.
- Print out and copy the “Worksheet for Episode 1/Lesson 4” for all students
- Print out and copy the “Get to Know a Farmer/Gardener” storytelling/interviewing handout, one for each student
- Make sure Episode 1 is cued up at minute 11: 49 and ready to be streamed

## **Vocabulary**

- **Urban agriculture:** Growing plants or raising animals within a city or a suburb.
- **Direct-to-consumer:** A business model where farmers sell their products directly to customers, such as through a farm stand or a farmer’s market or a CSA.
- **CSA (community supported agriculture):** A direct-to-consumer model that consists of a group of people who sign up to support a particular farm. Oftentimes, the CSA customers agree to buy a weekly box of whatever fresh food the farmer has ready to harvest. The CSA customer shares the risks and benefits of food production.
- **Farmer’s market:** A market where farmers sell food directly to consumers.
- **Food desert:** An urban or rural area where there is limited availability of fresh and healthy whole foods, generally due to a lack of grocery stores or farmers markets.

## Lesson

### **Warm-Up: A Feast of Local Food Systems Terms [15 minutes]**

1. Before returning to the video, begin by introducing students to some key terms that will show up in the video.
2. Explain that the language used to talk about different aspects of local food systems is always evolving. Key terms that often show up in conversation are urban agriculture, direct-to-consumer, CSAs, farmer's markets, and food deserts. Although these definitions overlap in some ways, they have distinct differences.
3. Divide the youth in five groups, one for each term. Give each group the corresponding information/handout.

**Group 1: Urban agriculture:** Growing plants or raising animals within a city or a suburb. Common examples include: community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, or vertical production.

**Group 2: Direct-to-consumer:** A business model where farmers sell their products directly to customers, such as through a farm stand or a farmer's market or a CSA.

**Group 3: CSA (community supported agriculture):** One kind of direct marketing that consists of a group of individuals who pledge to support a farm operation. Often this involves individuals agreeing to buy a weekly box of whatever fresh food is ready to harvest, thus sharing the risks and benefits of food production.

**Group 4: Farmer's market:** A retail market intended to sell foods directly by farmers to consumers.

**Group 5: Food desert:** An urban or rural area where there is limited availability of fresh and healthy whole foods, generally due to a lack of grocery stores or farmers markets.

4. Give each group 3-4 minutes to discuss the definition of the term they have and write down on a big sheet of butcher paper/ the board (or just their handout, if preferred) the key features of that term. Some questions they should also consider: *What values might the term uphold? Who is involved in achieving it?*
5. Bring the whole group back together and have a member from each group present the main points of their conversation (1 minute for each group).
6. If there is time, discuss the following:
  - *What are the similarities and differences of these words?*
  - *How do they relate to each other and where do they overlap?*

### **Video Activity [20 minutes]**

1. Explain to students that they will now watch the second half of Episode 1.
2. Cue video to begin at minute 11:49 and pass out the video handout. Explain that students should answer the questions after watching the 12-minute video clip.
3. When the episode concludes, the teacher should then go through each of the questions and have the class share what they wrote down, crowd sourcing the correct answers.

## Discussion [10 minutes]

Discuss the implications of the second half of this video with the whole group. Ask the students:

- *What did you learn that was interesting or surprising from the second half of this video?*
- *Kentucky farmers are aging. The average age is 56.2 years old. Why might that be a problem?*
- *In the last few years, Kentucky has grown in female farmers as well as new and beginning producers, young farmers, and farmers with a military background. Why is it so important to see growth amongst these different groups?*
- *Why must farmers producing for the local food system work together and help each other? Do you have any examples or stories to share about this?*

## Homework: Get to Know a Farmer/Gardener

Explain the assignment: “With the help of your teacher or family, find a neighbor, relative, or friend with experience growing food or raising animals. Pick someone you feel comfortable with. Interview them and learn as much as you can about their experience. If you have produced food yourself, you can think about your own experience and tell your OWN story. Collect a story to share with the class.”

Then walk the students through the following questions to help them interview a farmer/gardening and develop a compelling story that includes a plot:

1. Set the scene: Who is the person you are sharing the story about? Paint a picture of the person – Where are they from? How old are they? What are some identifying features? (if you are the person that this story is about, find a creative way to introduce yourself!)
2. How did that person get into gardening/farming?
3. What were their favorite sights or smells or sounds from their time in the garden/on the farm?
4. Who did they depend on to get the work done, share resources, or grow their income?
5. Ask them about a moment when something really unexpected happened. Maybe all of their tomatoes mysteriously disappeared? Or they had a death in the family and had to leave the farm in the middle of calving season? Or they saw the ghost of their grandmother out in the garden? Or the school system canceled their contract right before the strawberries were delivered? How did they feel? What were the options for

how they might respond? What did they end up doing and what happened as a result? What was that like for them emotionally?

6. What lesson can you share with the class about farming based on this story?
7. What is their hope for the future of agriculture in Kentucky or this region more broadly?

Depending on time, have students share their stories with the class the following week, either orally or in a written form.

## Appendix A: Student Handout on Definitions

### A Feast of Local Food Systems Terms

**Instructions:** Discuss the definition of the term you have been assigned and write down on a big sheet of butcher paper (or on the board) the key features of the term. Assign one person to report back to the big group.

Some questions you should consider as you are first discussing your term:

- *What values might the term uphold?*
- *Who is involved in achieving it?*
- *Can you think of some specific examples you know about?*

**Group 1: Urban agriculture:** Growing plants or raising animals within a city or a suburb. Common examples include: community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, or vertical production.

### A Feast of Local Food Systems Terms

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Some questions you should consider as you are first discussing your term:

- *What values might the term uphold?*
- *Who is involved in achieving it?*
- *Can you think of some specific examples you know about?*

**Group 2: Direct-to-consumer:** A business model where farmers sell their products directly to customers, such as through a farm stand or a farmer's market or a CSA.

### A Feast of Local Food Systems Terms

Instructions: Discuss the definition of the term you have been assigned and write down on a big sheet of butcher paper (or on the board) the key features of the term. Assign one person to report back to the big group.

Some questions you should consider as you are first discussing your term:

- *What values might the term uphold?*
- *Who is involved in achieving it?*
- *Can you think of some specific examples you know about?*

**Group 3: CSA (community supported agriculture):** One kind of direct marketing that consists of a group of individuals who pledge to support a farm operation. Often this involves individuals agreeing to buy a weekly box of whatever fresh food is ready to harvest, thus sharing the risks and benefits of food production.

### A Feast of Local Food Systems Terms

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Some questions you should consider as you are first discussing your term:

- *What values might the term uphold?*
- *Who is involved in achieving it?*
- *Can you think of some specific examples you know about?*

**Group 4: Farmer's market:** A retail market intended to sell foods directly by farmers to consumers.

## A Feast of Local Food Systems Terms

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Some questions you should consider as you are first discussing your term:

- *What values might the term uphold?*
- *Who is involved in achieving it?*
- *Can you think of some specific examples you know about?*

**Group 5: Food desert:** An urban or rural area where there is limited availability of fresh and healthy whole foods, generally due to a lack of grocery stores or farmers markets.

Appendix B: Student Handout

**Worksheet for Episode 1/Lesson 4:**  
“The Story of Kentucky Farmers and How Partnerships  
Are Growing the Local Food System for Everyone”

1. Peer mentoring and sharing of resources/product is critical for local producers in Kentucky. Which examples of this were shared during the film?
  - a. Michelle got meat from Travis when consumers lost their food during the tornado.
  - b. Travis got a lot of information from Michelle and her husband on how to grow their business.
  - c. All of the above
2. Ashley Smith of Black Soil decided to go into agriculture in part because she was inspired by Michelle Howell's (Need More Acres) community-minded farm?
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Travis talks a lot about how he grew his customer base. What factors did he discuss?
  - a. Consistency – always showing up at the market.
  - b. Being honest and transparent with his customers.
  - c. Depending on his team, including Ashley, to help him succeed.
  - d. All of the above

Appendix C: Instructor's Key

**Worksheet for Episode 1/Lesson 3:**

**"The Story of Kentucky Farmers and How Partnerships  
Are Growing the Local Food System for Everyone"**

1. Peer mentoring and sharing of resources/product is critical for local producers in Kentucky. Which examples of this were shared during the film?
  - e. Michelle got meat from Travis when consumers lost their food during the tornado.
  - f. Travis got a lot of information from Michelle and her husband on how to grow their business.
  - g. **\*\*ANSWER\*\* All of the above**
2. Ashley Smith of Black Soil decided to go into agriculture in part because she was inspired by Michelle Howell's (Need More Acres) community-minded farm?
  - h. **\*\*ANSWER\*\* True**
  - i. False
3. Travis talks a lot about how he grew his customer base. What factors did he discuss?
  - j. Consistency – always showing up at the market.
  - k. Being honest and transparent with his customers.
  - l. Depending on his team, including Ashley, to help him succeed.
  - m. **\*\*ANSWER\*\* All of the above**

## Appendix D: Optional Homework Assignment

### **Get to Know a Farmer/Gardener Storytelling Assignment**

With the help of your teacher or family, find a neighbor, relative, or friend with experience growing food or raising animals. Pick someone you feel comfortable with. Interview them and learn as much as you can about their experience. Focus on listening carefully and ask thoughtful follow-up questions. If you have produced food yourself, you can think about your own experience and tell your OWN story. Write a story to share with the class.

The following questions might help you to develop an interesting story that includes a plot. You can also use these as interview prompts.

1. Set the scene: Who is the person you are sharing the story about? Paint a picture of the person – Where are they from? How old are they? What are some identifying features? (if you are the person that this story is about, find a creative way to introduce yourself!)
2. How did that person get into gardening/farming?
3. What were their favorite sights or smells or sounds from their time in the garden/on the farm?
4. Who did they depend on to get the work done, share resources, or grow their income?
5. Ask them about a moment when something really unexpected happened. Maybe all of their tomatoes mysteriously disappeared? Or they had a death in the family and had to leave the farm in the middle of calving season? Or they saw the ghost of their grandmother out in the garden? Or the school system canceled their contract right before the strawberries were delivered? How did they feel? What were the options for how they might respond? What did they end up doing and what happened as a result? What was that like for them emotionally?
6. What lesson about farming can be shared with the class based on this story?
7. What is their hope for the future of agriculture in Kentucky, or this region more broadly?