

**HEALTHY  
FAM**



# Upper Coastal Plain Healthy Food Access Mapping Project

Understanding and Improving Regional Healthy Food Access  
in the Upper Coastal Plain Region

# Goals

With support from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust **Healthy FAM:**

- Improves understanding of the region's local, healthy food system
- Describes how the challenges of accessing local, healthy foods impact the region's most underserved and under-resourced communities
- Supports an equitable food system that increases healthy eating in low-income and rural communities
- Identifies and increases strategic economic opportunities in the region's local, healthy food system
- Visualizes the regional value chain as a foundation for economic growth
- Develops a relevant, usable, sustainable database for targeted policy, investment, and resource decisions
- Helps groups interested in providing more local, healthy food find opportunities for impactful involvement
- Creates new community wealth and health by expanding and improving access to local, healthy foods



# Healthy FAM Coordinating Team

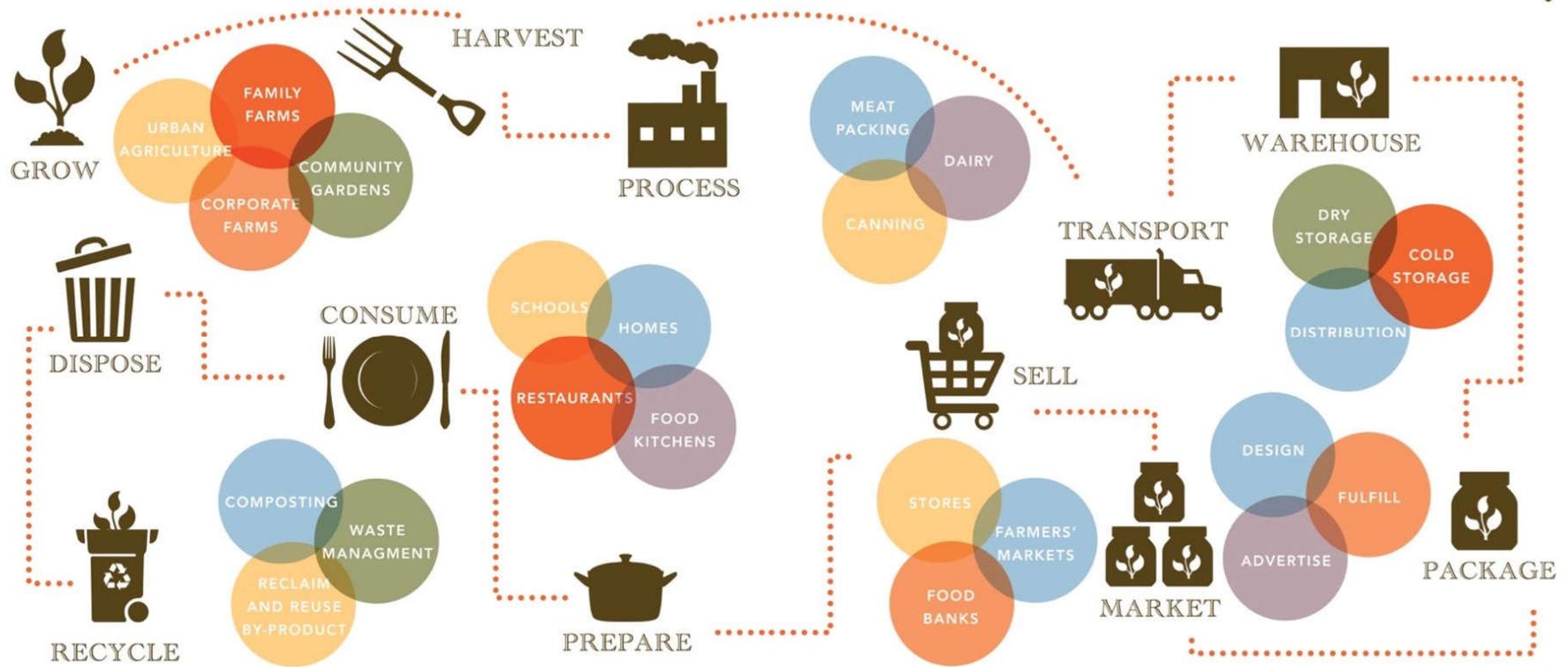


# Stakeholders



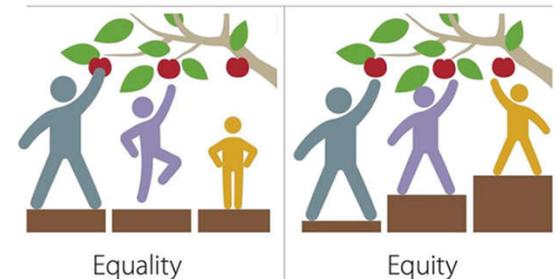
A Better Chance, A Better Community (ABC2)	NC Department of Health and Human Services
Albemarle Regional Health Services	NC Cooperative Extension
AMEXCAN NC	OIC of Rocky Mount
Area L AHEC	Project Momentum
Black Cotton	Seeds of Promise
Boys and Girls Club of Nash and Edgecombe Counties	Southeastern Halifax Coalition
Center for Environmental Farming Systems	The Harriet Tubman Freedom Farm
City of Rocky Mount	The Hen and the Hog
City of Wilson	Turning Point Workforce Development Board
Conetoe Family Life Center	Unite Us - NCCARE 360
Croatan Institute	Upper Coastal Plain Area Agency on Aging
Down East Partnership for Children	Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments
Franklinton Center at the Bricks, Inc.	Vidant Edgecombe Hospital
Golden Organic Farm	Vidant Health
Green Rural Redevelopment Organization (GRRO)	Weldon City Schools
Halifax Community College	Wilson Community Improvement Association
Harrison Family YMCA	Wilson County Government
Legal Aid of North Carolina	Wilson County Health Department
NC Association of Community Development Corporations	Wilson County Schools
NC Department of Agriculture	Wilson Forward
NC Department of Commerce	Working Landscapes

# “Does our region support a healthy and *sustainable, WHOLE*, food system?”



# What makes a healthy, whole food system?

1. **Just and Fair** – Food for all, dismantles injustices in the food system
2. **Strong Communities** – Civic participation, local leadership and empowerment, built on diverse collaborations and trust
3. **Vibrant Farms** – Sustainable and economically viable small and family farms, protects farmers and farm workers
4. **Healthy People** – Ensures health and wealth of all people, connects people to the land to promote wellness
5. **Sustainable Ecosystems** – Enhances biodiversity and promotes agricultural and distribution practices that mitigate climate change
6. **Thriving Local Economies** – Creates local jobs and includes infrastructure that supports community health and wealth



# Community Engagement

- Community Health Champions
- Virtual Engagement Sessions
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Consumer Surveys
  
- 400+ People engaged
- Efforts included the Spanish speaking and migrant farmers community



March 9th	Wilson 5:30 - 7:00pm
March 10th	Halifax/Northampton 5:30 - 7:00pm
March 18th	Edgecombe 5:30 - 8:00pm
TBD	Nash

The graphic for the H-FAM Consumer Survey features a background of a US dollar bill. The text "H-FAM CONSUMER SURVEY" is prominently displayed in white and blue. A circular emblem with a white dove and a red apple, surrounded by green leaves, is overlaid on the right side, with the text "Community Health Champions" above it. Below the main text, there are two bullet points: "Counties distributed to Wilson, Halifax, Edgecombe, Nash, and Northampton Counties" and "\$100 Visa card per county Surveys Completed by March 1, 2021 will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win \$100 Visa card per county". At the bottom left, there is a digital survey link: "Digital Survey link: https://forms.gle/gAkAnkwcq23wEz0n6".

# Data & Analysis

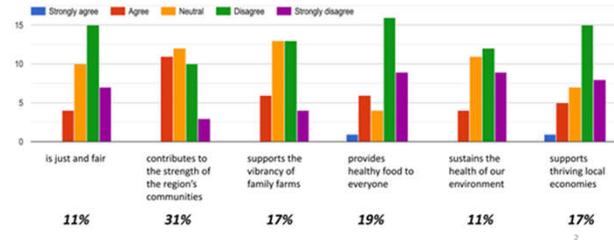
If you DO purchase/receive food from local farmers, where do you purchase/receive it? Please select all responses that apply.

- Directly from the farm
- Roadside stand
- Farmers' market
- Store
- Restaurant
- Cafeteria at school, daycare, hospital, workplace, etc.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

If you DO NOT purchase/receive food from local farmers, why not? Please select all responses that apply.

- I do not want locally-grown food
- It is not convenient
- It is too expensive
- I do not know where to find it
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate your agreement: our region's CURRENT food system...



% of respondents who agree/strongly agree:

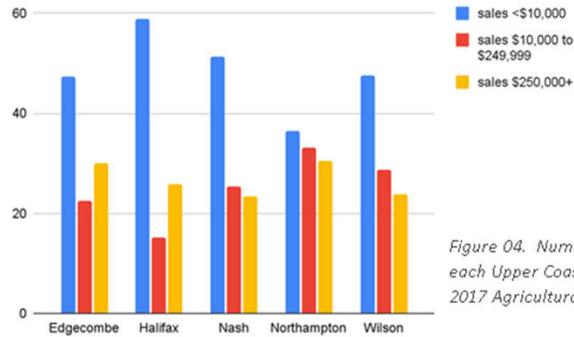
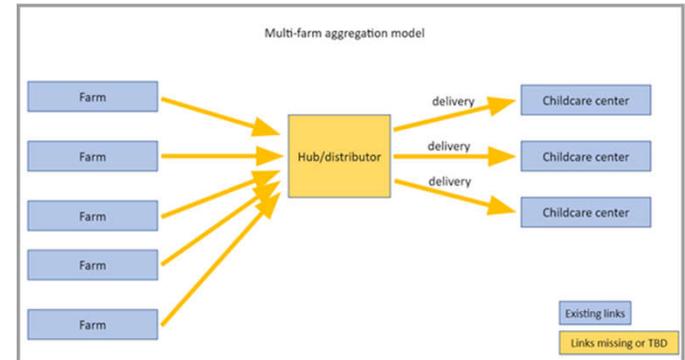
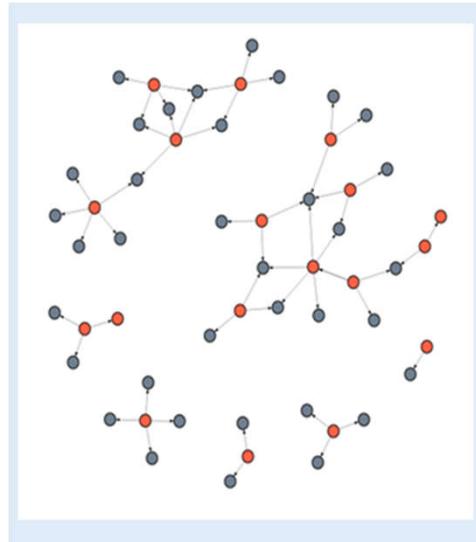


Figure 04. Number of farms by size class in each Upper Coastal Plain county. Source: 2017 Agricultural Census.



County	% Food Insecurity	Poverty Rate	Diabetes Prevalence	Overall Health Outcomes Ranking of NC Counties 1 (best) 100 (worst)
<b>NC</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>	
Edgecombe	24%	21%	16%	97
Halifax	24%	24%	22%	95
Nash	18%	16%	15%	76
Northampton	23%	22%	22%	90
Wilson	20%	22%	14%	86



# Key Findings

- Regional Food and Agriculture in Transition
- Fragmented Access to Healthy, Local Food
- Racial Disparities in Food Access Across the Region
- Farm to Foodservice Value Chains
- COVID-19 and the Upper Coastal Plain's Food System
- Food Policy Education & Information



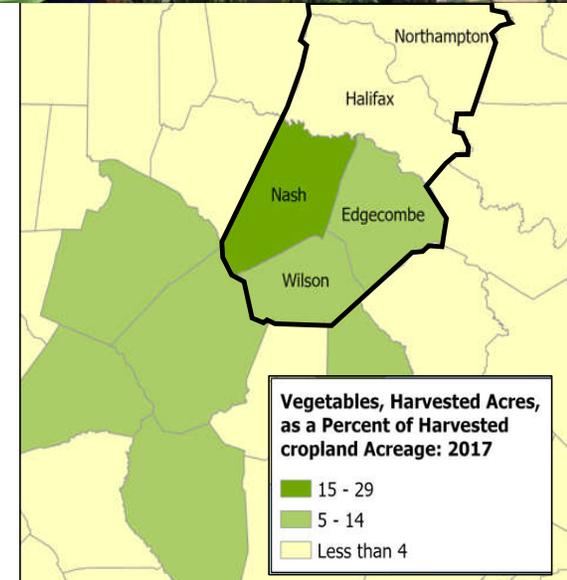
# Regional Food and Agriculture in Transition

From commodity cotton and tobacco farming in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries...



...to an increasing focus on food in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

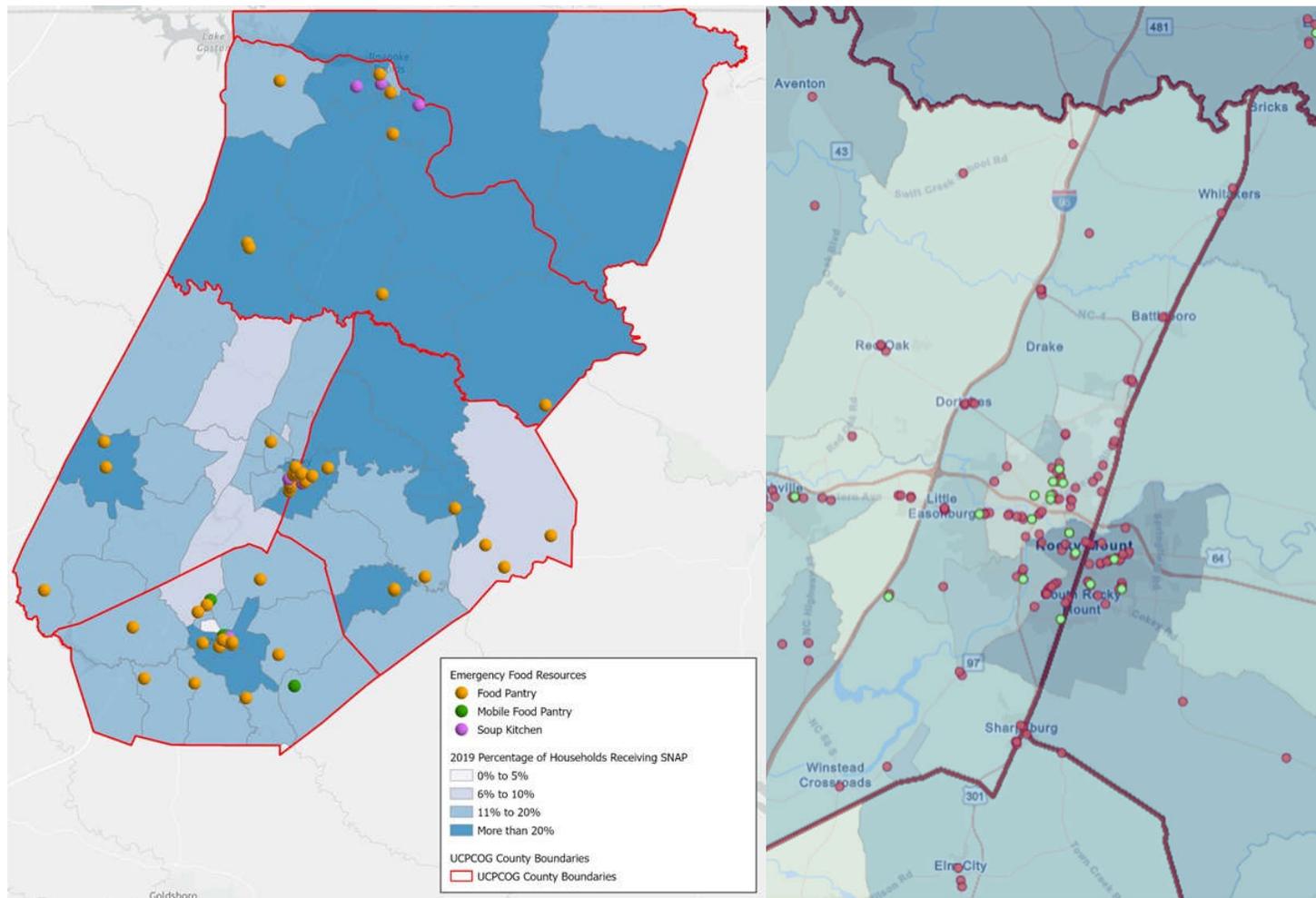
But with wide regional differences in land use



# Fragmented Access to Healthy, Local Food

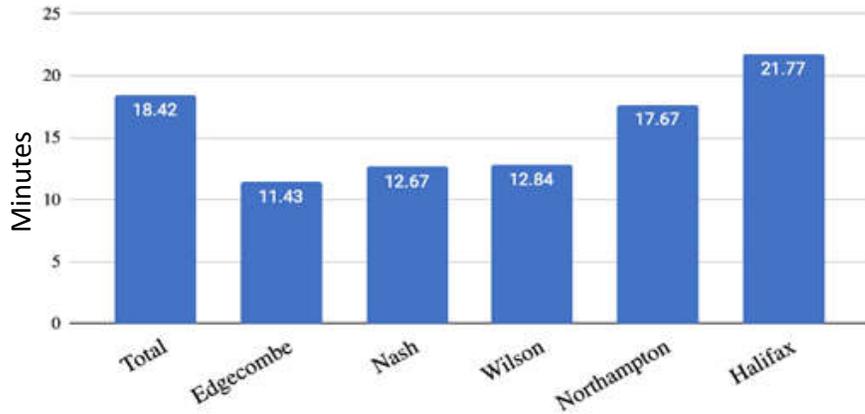
Correlations to socio-economic determinants, such as poverty, SNAP recipient rates, and racial stratification

Large majority of food organization leaders saw the region's food system as lagging on Whole Measures Framework indicators

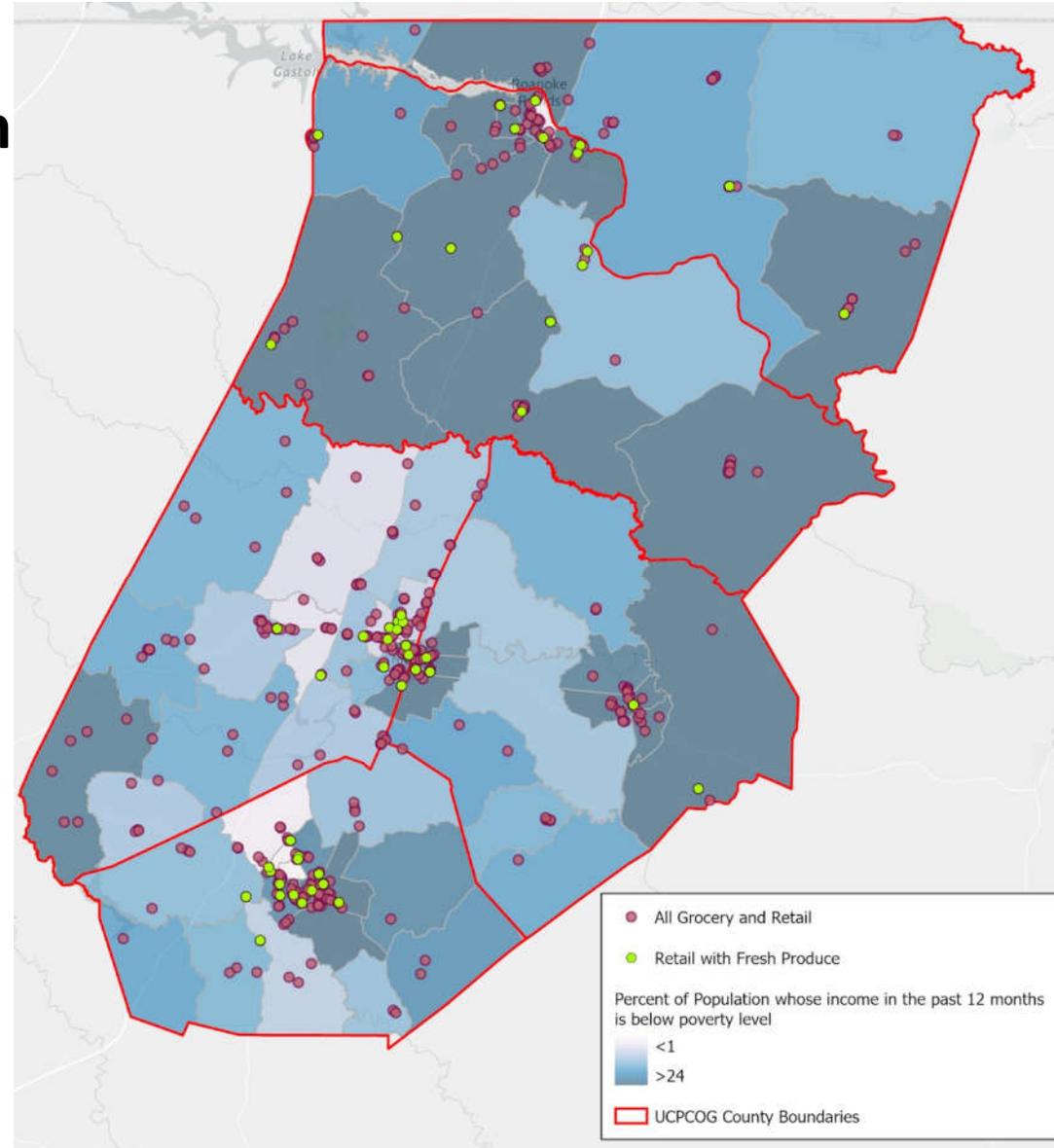


# Racial & Geographic Disparities in Healthy Food Access

Distances that consumers report traveling to shop for food differ widely by county.



Both rural and urban areas with high rates of poverty and concentrations of Black and Native American residents are underserved by fresh, healthy, local retail options

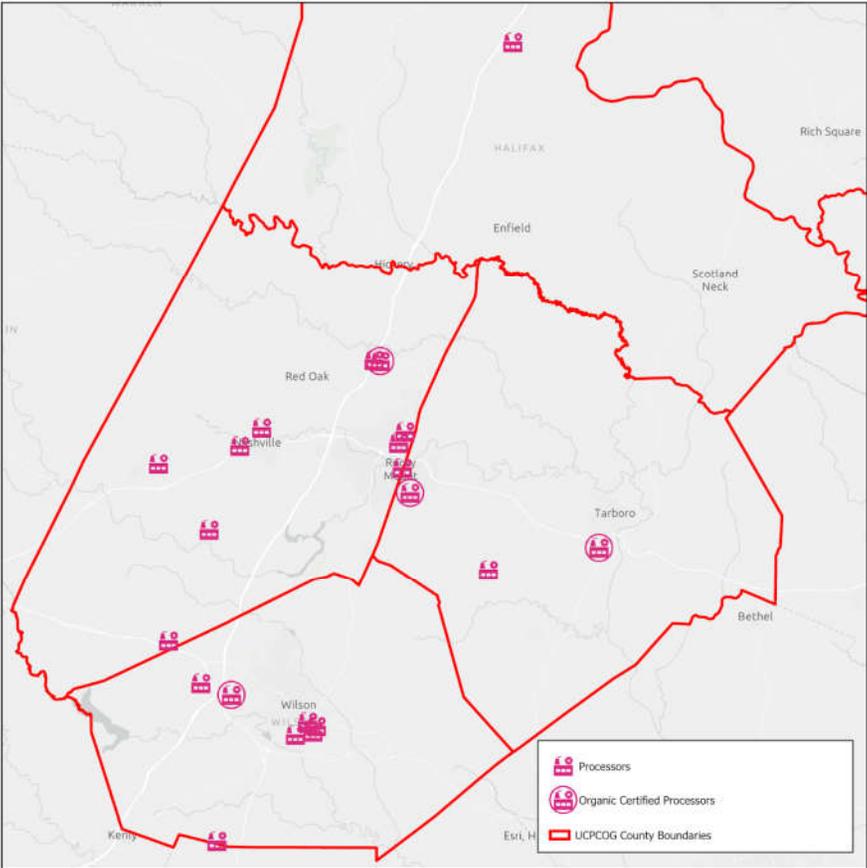
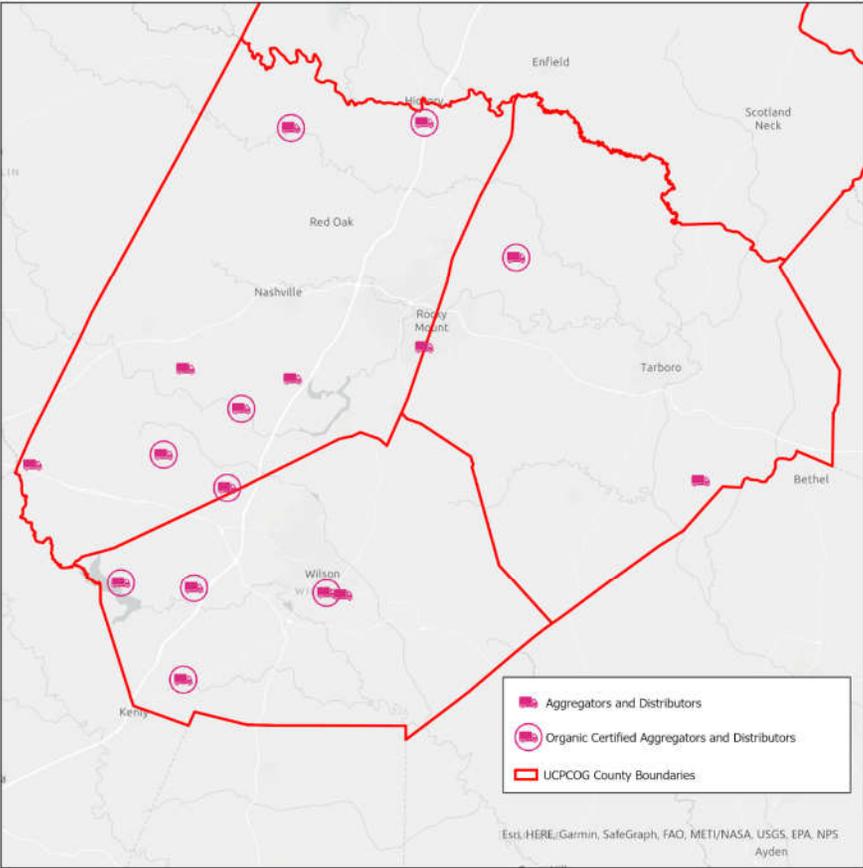


# COVID-19 Impacts on the Upper Coastal Plain's Food System

- Made food access more difficult for many consumers
- Restaurants were hit hard by the pandemic
- New food access channels emerged through food box programs, such as the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program and CFSA FarmsSHARE
- Free food distributed from non-local sources undermined the sales efforts of small Black farmers within the region



# Farm to Foodservice Value Chains



# Food Policy Education & Information



## Funding Allocations to Address Food Security from Governor Cooper's American Rescue

### Plan

Bolster Small Farms, Infrastructure, and Emergency Food Operations	\$ 28,000,000
Small and Minority Farm Program	\$ 5,000,000
Healthy Food Infrastructure at Farmers Markets and Certified Roadside Stands	\$ 3,000,000
Aid for Food Banks, Emergency Feeding Organizations	\$ 20,000,000
Strengthen Local Food Systems and Expand Nutrition Education	\$ 32,000,000
Extension Programs	\$ 12,000,000
Grants for Community Organizations	\$ 20,000,000
Reduce College Hunger	\$ 4,000,000
Funding for Higher Education Institutions	\$ 4,000,000

Grand Total \$ 64,000,000

# Healthy FAM Opportunities & Recommendations

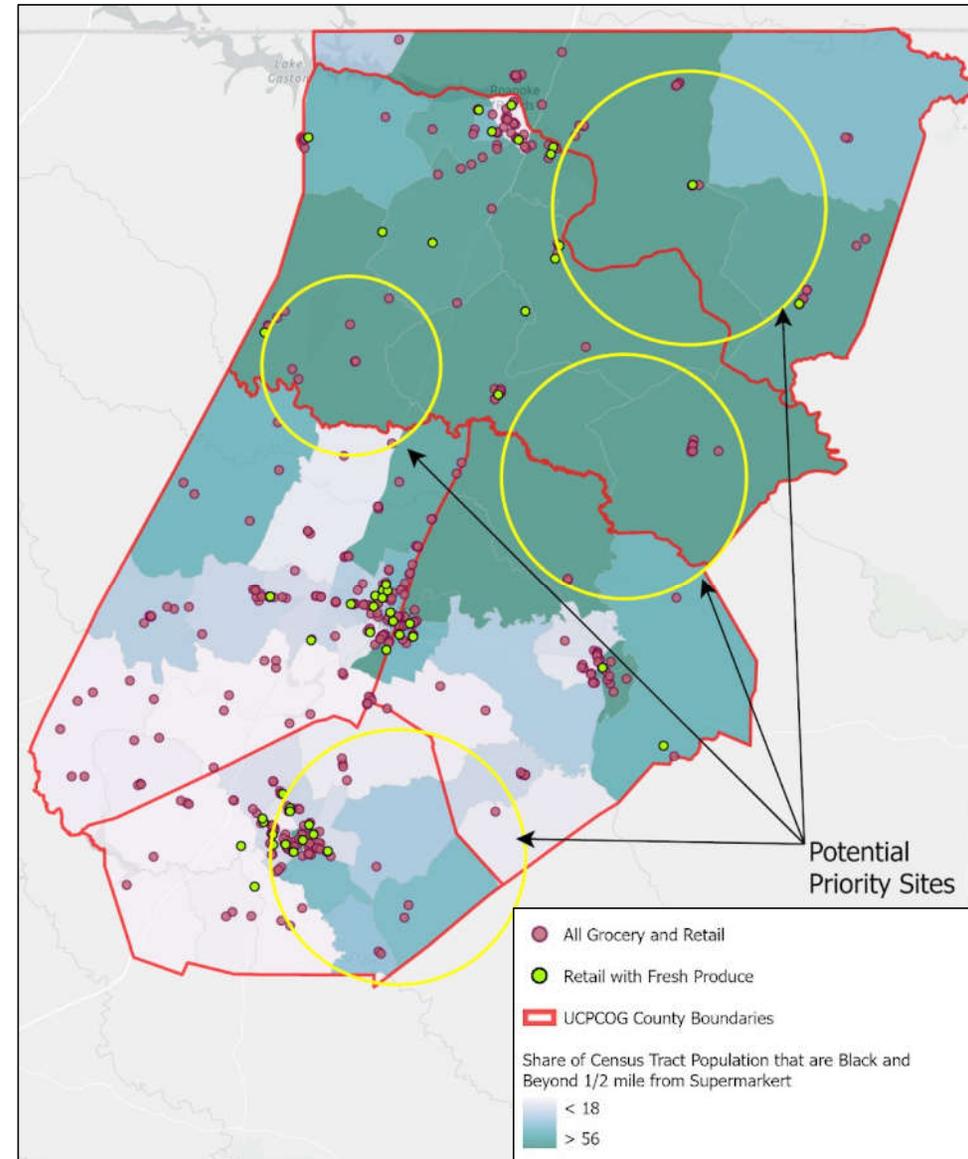
- Foster Outlets for Equitable Food Access
- Support Community-Based Food System Planning
- Strengthen Urban Agriculture
- Engage Farmers in the Food System
- Support Food Value Chain Business Development
- Creatively Finance the Regional Food System
- Facilitate Institutional Purchasing of Regionally Produced Food





## Foster Outlets for Equitable Food Access

- Expand on the success of the UCP Area Agency on Aging local food box program, a partnership with the Nash Co. Farmers Market
- Increase capacity of area farmers markets to accept SNAP benefits and Double Up Food Bucks
- Encourage the development of new farmers market and fresh retail outlets in underserved areas
- Facilitate healthy local food options at grocery and convenience stores



## Support Community-Based Food System Planning and Development

- Support the Just Foods Collaborative, the Roanoke Valley Community Health Initiative, Wilson Food Policy Council, and other community-based food groups
- Develop community-based food access plans at municipal and regional levels
- Encourage stronger networking and coordination among food system stakeholders, from farm to fork
- Fund a full-time regional planning coordinator who can facilitate collaborative, regional food systems development



# Strengthen Urban Agriculture

- Allow residents to tend gardens, chickens, and other small-scale livestock, within city limits and HOAs
- Encourage municipalities to develop programs to support community gardens, by integrating them into Parks and Recreation departments and making vacant public land available for urban agriculture
- Churches, nonprofits, and businesses with land can develop gardens for employee and community engagement
- Expand on recent recommendations from the 2021 report “Sowing the Seeds for Urban Agriculture in Rocky Mount” to other towns



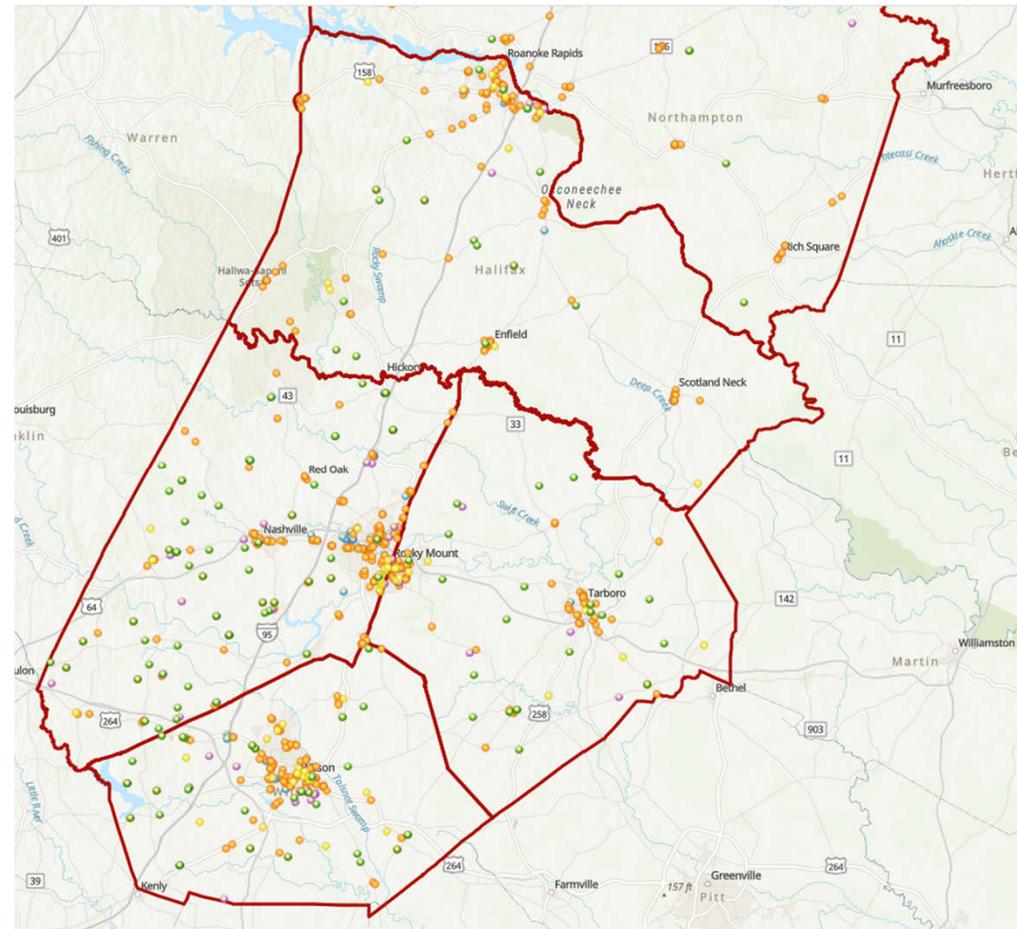
## Engage Farmers in the Food System

- Link local farmers to statewide and regional market opportunities, including to nearby urban markets
- Provide small and mid-size farmers greater access to processing and value-added facilities
- Encourage on-farm resilience and diversification from commodity crops to food production
- Support the region's larger-than-average population of Black farmers with well-resourced, culturally appropriate technical assistance
- Support the emerging cluster of USDA certified Organic farms within the region



# Support Food Value Chain Business Development

- Build food distribution capacity within the region and facilitate connections between local farmers and larger distributors
- Explore food hub feasibility within the region, while avoiding duplication of existing infrastructure in adjacent regions
- Assist in filling the need for a certified commercial kitchen in the Rocky Mount area, accessible to farmers and entrepreneurs
- Support regional workforce and agritourism opportunities
- Develop resources for small businesses sourcing or selling regional foods, including startup assistance and on-going support
- Integrate Healthy FAM recommendations into the next 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of the Upper Coastal Plain Economic Development District



# Creative Finance for the Regional Food System

- Develop financing to support farms producing fresh produce, pastured meats, and healthy grains, particularly small and mid-size farms
- Connect farms and value chains to “integrated capital” sources such as community development finance, Slow Money, impact investment, and philanthropy.
- Help regenerative, organic farmers and value-chain businesses connect with new financing being developed by the state’s new Regenerative Organic Agricultural Districts (ROADs), one of which will focus its activities on the Coastal Plain.
- Assist small and socially disadvantaged farmers and entrepreneurs take fuller advantage of USDA funding programs
- Develop new investment tools and programs to support community-led initiatives focused on BIPOC needs, especially healthy food outlets and enterprises that support historically disadvantaged, new and beginning farmers.
- Help landowners access conservation finance to transition land from commodity production and timber into conservation-oriented agriculture



# Facilitate Institutional Purchasing of Regionally Produced Food

- The region's institutions such as hospitals, schools, colleges, municipalities, churches, and nonprofit agencies can prioritize sourcing from farmers and food entrepreneurs in the region
- Support institutional adoption of the Good Food Purchasing Program and other local procurement policies
- Fill the identified need from childcare centers for mission-aligned aggregation and distribution businesses that intermediate between food service customers and local growers
- Incentivize public institutions in the region to purchase locally with upfront commitments to growers
- Encourage larger distributors actively serving the region to increase their regional offerings and proactively market those offerings to their wholesale customers
- Provide farmers with technical assistance to obtain Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and other certifications needed to sell wholesale to institutional purchasers
- Implement regional farm-to-food service recommendations from Working Landscapes' 2018 "Growing Opportunities" report



HFAM on the  
WEB

Slides  
Storyboard  
Assessment  
Videos  
Map

Submission Form

<https://healthy-food-access-mapping-ucpcog.hub.arcgis.com/>

Home Community Voices Mapping Assessment Report Partners

# Healthy Food Access Mapping Project

Search, Visualize, Download, Create



The **Healthy Food Access Mapping Project (Healthy FAM)** creates deep transparency into the Upper Coastal Plain region's local, healthy food systems.

Thanks to generous support from the **Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust**, over 40 stakeholder organizations engaged with 6 lead entities to gather unprecedented input from 400+ people in the Upper Coastal Plain Region. Input was combined with data to analyze and assess the region's local healthy food system and make over 65 recommendations in the areas of Access, Community Development & Planning, Community Gardens & Land-use & Urban Agriculture, Farms, Finance, Institutional Purchasing, and more.

Below is a Project Summary presentation, a "deep dive" story board, the detailed *Healthy FAM Assessment Report*, and a Food System Map. Work shows known assets in the region from fresh food growers, distributors, processors, outlets, business consumers and more. Key health and economic information is also included. Information is intended to be leveraged by anyone wanting to further study, improve, and/or develop the local, healthy food system in an equitable and sustainable way.



**Project Summary**

View presentation slides for the HFAM Project.

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**The Full Story**

View the Story Map for the HFAM Project.

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**HFAM Assessment Report**

View the Final HFAM Assessment Page

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**Food System Map**

View the Food System Map

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