

FARMERS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM AND CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES OF MODERN FARMING

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There is a growing demand for local food and support for local and regional farmers markets. However, the average age of the American farmer is 59 years old. Policies and programs to support new farmers are important to the future of the local food system. Farmers must adapt to seasons, climate change and weather patterns, market demand for their crops and products, and find processing and distribution channels. The farm may also be seen as educational opportunities for youths and for agri-tourism. Use of the internet and other social media to advertise is now common. This symposium will focus on local farmers' perspectives on the local food system in and around York County, SC, as well as the successes and challenges of being a farmer in the New South. The goals of this symposium are to 1) highlight local farmers and their history in farming, 2) discuss their role in the local food system and how they use their farm to connect people to their food, 3) describe successes and challenges of farming, and 4) identify strategies and policies that would further their success and potentially develop new farms. By the end of the session, learners should be able to describe how local farms contribute to the local food system and how local farms are adapting to an ever-changing local market.

Key words: farming, local food, farmers markets, food systems, agri-tourism