Southwest Virginia’s Community Food Security Assessment:
An Appalachian Foodshed Project Initiative

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Why do a community food security assessment?

To **develop strategic plans** for working together on food security issues in southwest Virginia

To **hold space for dialogue** around the issue of southwest Virginia’s food security
Who Worked on the Assessment?

Appalachian Foodshed Project (USDA-funded)
Montgomery County Cooperative Extension
Grayson LandCare
SO Fresh!
Appalachian Sustainable Development
Independence Farmers Market
SustainFloyd
What did the assessment look like?

*Working with a team of stakeholders*

A lot of conversations

- About what the assessment could look like
- About food systems work/food security in sw VA

Four stages

- Planning
- Interviews (with key informants)
- Community Work Sessions (3, hosted by our partners)
- Analysis/Reporting
Cooperative Extension’s Role

Extension has played a key role, facilitating this work
  • Lubell, Niles, and Hoffman (2014) Extension 3.0

Appalachian Virginia Food Systems Network (AVFSN)
  • Montgomery Co. Extension (Kelli Scott) has played a key role in making the AVFSN happen
    • Kelli has facilitated the space for this conversation.
      Key player in every stage of the assessment
What did we find?

**Synergy A**: Financial capital and the value of vibrant farms and thriving local economies.

**Synergy B**: Vibrant Farms and Social Capital

**Synergy C**: Cultural Capital and Justice & Fairness and Strong Communities

**Synergy D**: Human Capital across the Whole Measures
What are we recommending

1. Connect Human Capital across the Region

2. Develop alliances with additional organizations that are committed to similar core values

3. Institute evaluation processes for 1 & 2
Why this kind of work matters for food security

Food insecurity is highly complex
Complex

the relationship between cause and effect can only be perceived in retrospect

probe – sense - respond

emergent practice

Complicated

the relationship between cause and effect requires analysis or some other form of investigation and/or the application of expert knowledge

sense – analyze - respond

good practice

novel practice

no relationship between cause and effect at systems level

act – sense - respond

Chaotic

best practice

the relationship between cause and effect is obvious to all

sense – categorize - respond

Simple
Why this kind of work matters for food security

Food insecurity is highly complex.

Expert knowledges are a piece of the solution, as are local knowledges.

It requires a diversity of perspectives.

Nimbly coming together around emergent issues.
Takeaways for Extension

All of our partner groups are playing the role of facilitator (varying shapes, scales, and fashions)

Extension can be a **connector** and is positioned with the resources to be a **trusted partner** in food security/systems work.