



KANSAS FOOD FIRST

Fall 2019

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Center for Engagement and
Community Development



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“Supermarkets are critical — they’re one of the anchor institutions in small towns, and if they go away, it’s a serious blow to the sustainability of that town.”

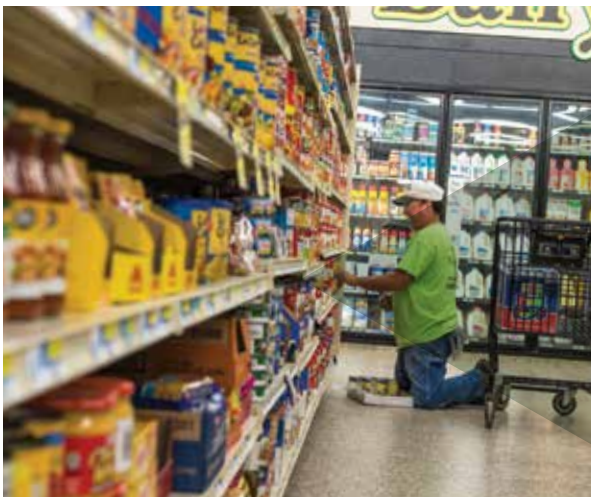
— David Procter



WORKING TO BRING HEALTHY FOOD TO RURAL AMERICA

Welcome to our latest issue of *Food First*. This publication is dedicated to putting a spotlight on food access in rural Kansas and rural areas across the United States. *Food First* covers a **spectrum of issues related to rural food access**. This edition highlights the very **tough challenges** faced when working to secure food access as well as the many **innovative strategies** rural residents use to bring healthy food to their communities. This issue of *Food First* is roughly divided into three sections.

Section one of this magazine highlights the breadth of **food access work happening across Kansas**. In this section, we begin by providing some data on the state of rural and independent grocery stores in Kansas: how many stores there are, how many have closed, and what size cities these stores are operating in. In this section, you will also read about statewide efforts to organize food and farm councils that strengthen local food systems as well as build local leadership capacity. A story from the *Western Prairie Food, Farm and Community Alliance* shows how this work looks on



the ground. This food and farm alliance is building community and county relationships by establishing action teams and volunteers across the region to strengthen healthy food access. Their produce distribution program – Simply Produce – is a wonderful model for getting healthy food into the hands of consumers. There is also a story highlighting statewide efforts by the Kansas Rural Center to strengthen rural community resilience by cultivating civic agriculture, an initiative that connects locally-based agriculture and food production to a community's social and economic development. Dr. Maureen Olewnik writes about Kansas State University's multidisciplinary global food systems work and how that work begins locally with food access in Kansas and extends across the globe. Finally, in this section we offer a summary of rural grocery work happening in other states.

In 2017, the Center for Engagement and Community Development joined in partnership with the Kansas Health Foundation, NetWork Kansas, and IFF (a community development financial institution) to launch the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative (KHFI). **KHFI is a public-private partnership that aims to increase access to affordable, healthy food to improve the health and economic development of Kansans and their communities.** The KHFI provides technical assistance to those seeking to strengthen access to healthy foods as well as financing through a mix of loans and grants to develop or renovate healthy food retail in low resource and underserved communities. In this section of *Food First*, we highlight several Kansas healthy food access projects that have received funding from KHFI. As you will see, KHFI has funded healthy food businesses across the state ranging from St. Francis in northwest Kansas to Moran in southeast Kansas, from urban Hispanic supermarkets to rural convenience stores and small-town grocery stores.

The final section of *Food First* focuses on **work carried out by our staff at the Center for Engagement and Community Development**. Since 2007, we have been working to support rural grocery stores, and in this section, we highlight just a few of our research projects. Over the years, we have partnered with many departments on campus in our effort to strengthen rural grocery operations. One of the more unique and enjoyable partnerships was with students from Kansas State University's computer science department, who completed an efficiency modeling study of rural food distribution. We also conducted a study on the importance of social capital to rural grocery patronage in partnership with faculty from the university's rural sociology program. Finally, we have written a number of success stories about amazing rural grocery operations. In this issue of *Food First*, we share some of the best practices that we have learned from grocery owners.

Great food access work is happening at Kansas State University and among committed individuals and organizations across Kansas and beyond. We are happy to share some of that work in *Food First*.

Please enjoy.

**David Procter, Director
Center for Engagement and Community Development**

FOOD ACCESS INITIATIVES

STATE OF RURAL AND INDEPENDENT

Types of Grocery Stores in Kansas



Of **814** total grocery retail stores, **237** stores are **independent.**



Nearly **4 in 10** grocery retail stores are **dollar stores or discount retailers** (Dollar General, Family Dollar, etc.).¹

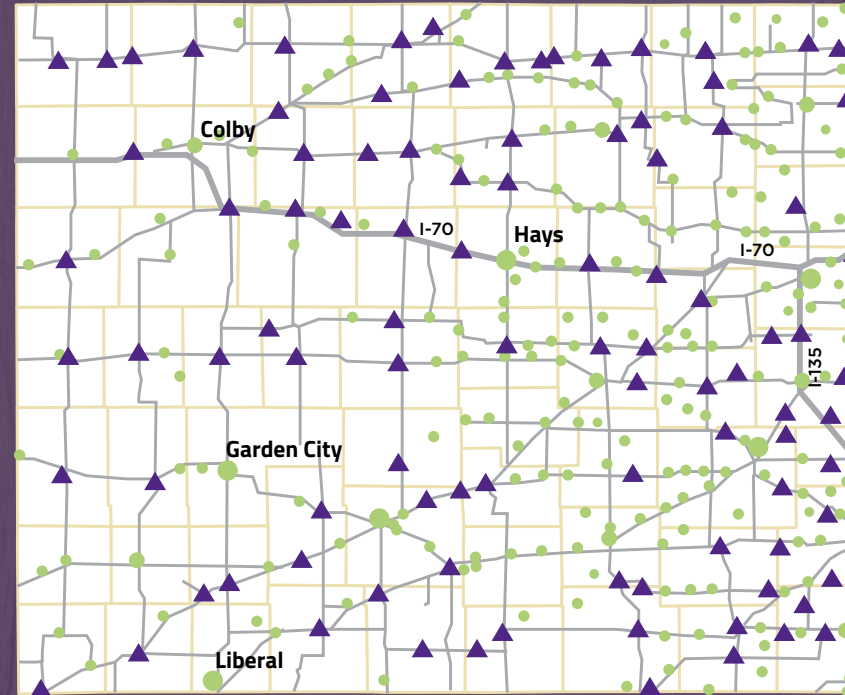
Location of Rural and Independent Grocery Stores in Kansas

83.1% of independent grocery stores exist in cities with populations of **20,000** or less.²

74.2% of independent grocery stores exist in cities with populations of **5,000** or less.²

△ Rural and Independent Groceries

Rural Grocery Database (CECD, 2019), which tracks stores in cities with populations below 5,000.



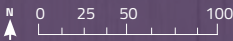
Cities by population

- 0 - 5,000
- 5,001 - 20,000
- 20,001 - 50,000
- Greater than 50,000

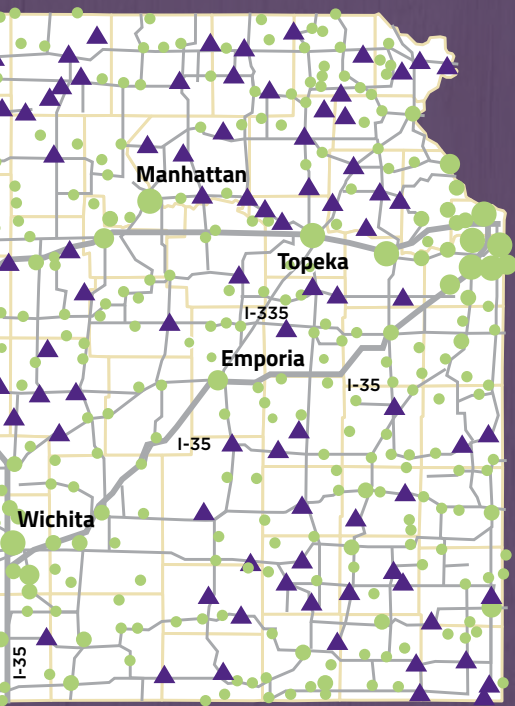
ACS 2013-2017

— Counties

— Roads



INDEPENDENT GROCERY IN KANSAS



Note: This chart is based on Food Retail License registration information provided to the Rural Grocery Initiative by the Kansas Department of Agriculture. This represents the best approximation of closed rural grocery stores.

Store Closures

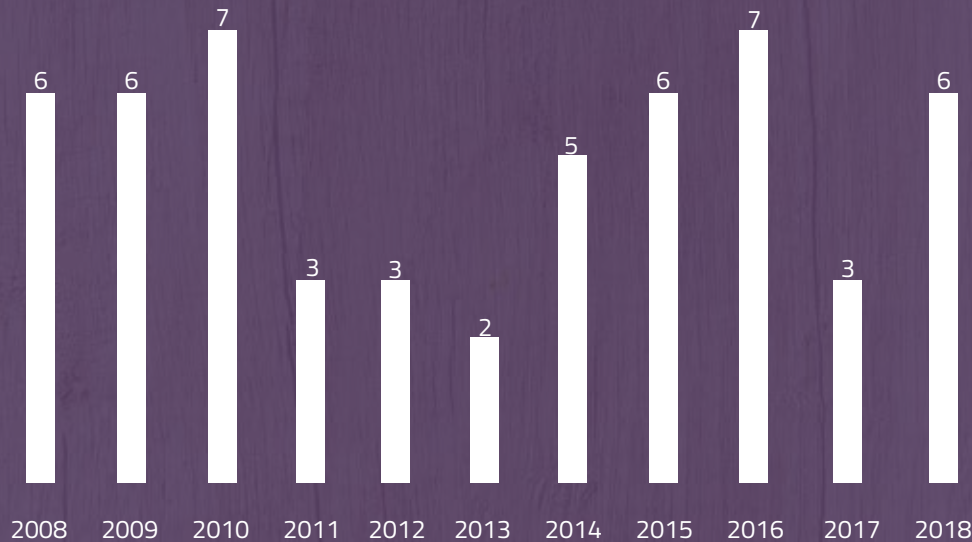
From 2008-2018,

54 Rural Grocery Stores have closed.³

Since 2016,

16 Dollar General Stores have opened in Kansas.⁴

Kansas Rural Grocery Store Closures by Year



Distributors

Distributors working with Rural and Independent Grocers in Kansas

- Affiliated Foods Inc. – Amarillo, TX
- Associated Wholesale Grocers Inc. – Kansas City, KS
- Associated Wholesale Grocers Inc. – Oklahoma, City, OK
- Associated Wholesale Grocers Inc. – Springfield, MO
- Cash-Wa Distributing – Kearney, NE
- Spartan Nash – Omaha, NE

¹Nielsen TDLinx. *Grocery Retail Locations*. (2016). PolicyMap. <https://www.policymap.com/maps>. (27 September 2018).

²United States Census Bureau. *2013 – 2017 American Community Survey*, (2017). HYPERLINK "<https://factfinder.census.gov/>" <https://factfinder.census.gov/>. (1 July 2019). and Nielsen TDLinx. *Grocery Retail Locations*. (2016). PolicyMap. <https://www.policymap.com/maps>. (27 September 2018).

³Center for Engagement and Community Development. *Rural Grocery Store Database*.2019. Unpublished raw data.

⁴*All The Places*. (2019). <https://www.alltheplaces.xyz/>. (31 July 2019).



FOOD ACCESS INITIATIVES

KANSAS FOOD POLICY COUNCILS: MOBILIZING FOR STATEWIDE COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Tina Khan & Kolia Souza, Kansas Alliance for Wellness

Food system development is complex and adaptive in nature, necessitating collaboration amongst diverse community stakeholders to identify priorities, develop and coordinate interventions, and navigate critical relationships that sustain initiatives. Food policy councils often serve as the nucleus of such locally driven efforts. In the state of Kansas, 45 counties are represented by emerging or appointed food policy councils and the number continues to grow. Activating and connecting statewide food policy councils represents a prime opportunity for large-scale food system development. In 2013, the American Heart Association established

the Kansas Alliance for Wellness as the statewide network of communities, organizations and individuals committed to improving the health of Kansas by creating healthy food and beverage environments — and food policy councils are leading the charge.

Recognizing that engaging and mobilizing others for food system change is an act of leadership, the Kansas Alliance for Wellness set out to develop a collective impact approach to local food system development among councils. With critical funding support for capacity



and implementation mini-grants from the Kansas Health Foundation, the two-phase Peer Learning Network program emerged in Spring of 2018 as a pilot food policy council leadership capacity building program. The Peer Learning Network utilized a 4 x 4 x 4 structure: A cohort of four councils with a shared policy interest were brought together to accomplish four objectives through an intense four-module policy campaign training program. Through this program, participants developed leadership skills to assess their local food procurement landscape, develop strategic communication plans, practice stakeholder and decision-maker engagement strategies, and prepare final campaign logistics for a grant proposal submission.

The first phase of the program focused on developing a Policy Campaign and indicated that not only were the four objectives met but participants also gained critical leadership skills. Participants indicated that they developed better decision-making processes; were better able to focus their priorities and connect the dots between small policy wins and the larger system-based goals; and came to understand the level of commitment necessary to create policy, systems and environmental change. Furthermore, the Peer Learning Network encouraged leadership behaviors such as the development of a sense of identity and purpose, commitment to and ownership of the work, and a shift from technical to adaptive problem-solving approaches.

Kansas food policy councils have stepped up to address some of the most challenging issues facing our local food system. During Phase 2 of the program, councils are using their newly acquired leadership skills to implement the Policy Campaign they developed during Phase 1. The inclusive, collaborative partnerships among food policy councils and their communities are a testament that change starts at the local level and is most successful when working alongside one another to maximize efforts.

The Peer Learning

Peer Learning Network Approach

Program Participants

1. Allen County GROW
2. Franklin County Food Policy Council
3. Western Prairie , Food Farm and Community or (Northwest) Alliance
4. Reno County Food Policy Council

Objectives

1. Foster learning and sharing between communities
2. Develop councils' organizational structure and capacity
3. Create communications plans for stakeholder engagement
4. Draft a strategic policy plan for food procurement

Program Structure

- Module 1: Organizational capacity
- Module 2: Communications planning
- Module 3: Stakeholder and decision-maker engagement
- Module 4: Final campaign logistics





“1,500 pounds of produce in the community every two weeks is pretty powerful for our community members.”

— JoEllyn Argabright

FOOD ACCESS INITIATIVES

NORTHWEST KANSAS INNOVATES WITH SIMPLY PRODUCE

Gabrielle Meeds, Center for Engagement and Community Development

Simply Produce, a bulk produce distribution program, aims to provide rural grocery stores and community members with increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The program originated with Leoti Foods, in Wichita County, in 2017. Jamboree Foods in Rawlins County is the second store to participate in the program. The grocery stores purchase produce in bulk quantities, allowing them to provide 15-pound baskets of fresh produce for \$15 each. Community members order a basket ahead of time so that the grocer knows how much to order. These baskets include unique recipes that feature other products in the grocery store intended to complement the produce to increase the store sales. In order for Simply Produce to be sustainable for local grocers, the grocery store owners utilize coupons and email blasts from distributors. JoEllyn Argabright, extension specialist, reported that this program has shown a 22% revenue increase for Jamboree Foods on basket distribution days.

Simply Produce is a partnership between the local extension office, the local grocery store and additional volunteer support. The extension office provides training, marketing materials and educational tools to help Simply Produce run effectively in these rural Kansas communities. **“We have funding to implement this program in 10 more counties this year and our goal is to reach five to 10 counties next year,”** says Argabright. In addition, Simply Produce plans to discover a way to get locally grown produce as the primary source of the basket content within the next three years. This program is meant to be an uncomplicated, efficient way to provide access to healthy foods and has shown to be easily maintained by grocery store owners. Argabright reported that local businesses want to keep this program around for the long run and that community members fully support it.

The *Western Prairie Food, Farm and Community Alliance*, also known as the *Alliance*, has assisted in establishing community relationships, action teams and volunteer members to embrace Simply Produce in rural grocery stores. “The idea that we have *Alliance* members who know their communities and have established relationships within these communities has given this program so much success. To be able to utilize 1,500 pounds of produce in the community every two weeks is pretty powerful for our community members,” Argabright explained. State-level and regional support from the *Alliance* has been crucial in the advancement of this program.





FOOD ACCESS INITIATIVES



LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS: THE POTENTIAL TO REVITALIZE COMMUNITIES

Natalie Fullerton, Kansas Rural Center

Rural counties and communities in Kansas are facing challenges. Population loss and closures of key amenities like hospitals, schools, social service offices and banks are just a few examples. These challenges can lead to a lack of resilience to increasingly common natural disasters and extreme weather like flooding, drought and fire. However, it's our belief at the Kansas Rural Center that supporting a local and regional food system can help address the overall health of communities and people around the state. Community-supported projects focused on building a local and regional food system can strengthen Kansas communities.

For the past few years, the Kansas Rural Center's Civic Agriculture for Civic Health Initiative has worked toward cultivating civic agriculture in Kansas. **Civic agriculture encourages locally based agriculture and food production that is tightly linked to a community's social and economic development.** The Kansas Rural Center's approach has been to host regional and statewide public policy and community

dialogue through town halls and producer networking events aimed at growing awareness of barriers, opportunities and policies needed to advance a future local and regional food system in Kansas.

The recently published video, "Voices from Southwest Kansas: Immigrant Perspectives," tells the stories of people living and working in southwest Kansas and offering their perspective on the future of our states' food and farm system. The video is the first part of a broader southwest Kansas food system assessment. A better understanding of production, management and marketing methods for key vegetables and fruits well-suited to Kansas regions can lead to more successful specialty crop farms. "Lessons Learned from Specialty Crop Growers Across Kansas," published in 2019, lends direct insight and peer-to-peer education from experienced and beginning specialty crop farmers in Kansas. Transitioning existing farms to the next generation is essential to advancing the future of local and regional food systems in

Kansas. The Kansas Rural Center participated in a multistate, two-year research project to better link retiring farmers with beginning farmer successors, and continues to explore alternative ways to help beginning farmers access land and resources.

The Kansas Rural Center's future focus will involve developing civic agriculture within the context of a changing climate. Kansans are already responding to shifting climate and increased weather extremes whether we realize it or not. From changing farm production practices, shifting travel modes, or considering energy efficiency in cars and homes, it's clear that climate change and energy issues are integrally tied to our food system.

The Kansas Rural Center is leading town halls over the next year that will be focused on conversations around a vision for the future, addressing the challenges our communities face through adapting to climate change and adopting renewable energy. Visit kansasruralcenter.org to learn more.



FOOD ACCESS INITIATIVES

FOOD SYSTEMS: FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL

Maureen Olewnik, K-State Global Food Systems Initiative

The Global Food Systems Initiative at Kansas State University has a mission of “Solving global food challenges through innovation, outreach and talent development.” A lofty mission, with an equally lofty vision of creating and deploying multidisciplinary, multi-institutional, and multinational teams of subject matter experts to tackle challenges in sustainably feeding the growing world population in the next 50 years.

With the projected increase in world population to hit 10 billion by 2050, current approaches to food production and resource management are not sustainable. Key challenges facing food systems worldwide include changing food production conditions, decreasing water availability, and lessening of plant diversity worldwide.

These challenges cannot be addressed with single focus methodologies, rather, the complex food system requires multifaceted approaches to tackling, solving and changing the way in which food is made available in a sustainable and healthful manner.

The complexity of our food system is not simply a global challenge. The issue of access to healthy food is most certainly regional and even local to the state of Kansas. Closing grocery stores in rural areas, loss of diversity in planting crops locally, expansion of single-crop farming practices and dwindling knowledge in small farming techniques are challenges facing rural Kansas right now.

Barriers to the availability of healthy food vary broadly and many areas of research carried out at K-State speak to these obstacles. Some examples include:

- Logistics and supply chain management to farms, rural grocery stores and customers in a cost effective and timely manner are studied in the departments of Industrial and Manufacturing Systems Engineering, Biological and Agricultural Engineering, and Economics.
- Water use and availability for crop production is studied in multiple areas of the university including departments of Geology, Geography and Geospatial Sciences, Agronomy, and Civil Engineering.
- Small and urban farming practices are studied in the Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources, both at the Manhattan and Olathe campuses.
- Social pressures are often a driving force in the availability of food and are studied in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work.

More importantly than one-off areas of research, the ability to form multidisciplinary teams is key to providing solutions. The complexity of any given challenge requires multiple perspectives to understand and define possible solutions. The focus of Kansas State University’s Global Food Systems Initiative is to help align those disparate interests in the identification of solutions to complex global food challenges.



“Small-town grocers
provide a public good.”

— University of Minnesota Extension
Regional Sustainable Development
Partnerships

FOOD ACCESS INITIATIVES

THE GROWING FIELD OF RURAL GROCERY INITIATIVES

Rural communities in Kansas have long supported their local grocery stores for the economic benefits, sense of community, and access to healthy food. Since 2007, the Rural Grocery Initiative at Kansas State University has actively engaged with rural communities to facilitate discussion, share information, and serve as a repository for rural grocery resources.

The Rural Grocery Initiative leads multiple research projects on various topics from distribution to social capital to healthy food access. Partnering with universities and state-wide networks across the country, we are collecting data and providing assistance to rural communities and grocery

stores to broaden the support across the country for rural grocery stores. This growing field of rural grocery experts offers the opportunity for collaboration and resource sharing.

This ongoing partnership is working to assess and evaluate informational resources and to identify information resource gaps. Each organization looks similar, but has varying backgrounds, values and skillsets. As a whole, this cohort of organizations is able to provide assistance to address a breadth of rural grocery challenges.



Illinois

Western Illinois University, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs Value-Added Sustainable Development Center www.value-added.org

The Value-Added Sustainable Development Center, housed at the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University, specializes in supporting small-town businesses, especially grocery stores. The center provides a start-up guide for grocery stores and works alongside business owners to determine the ideal store layout and product mix.



Minnesota

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships www.extension.umn.edu/community-development/rural-grocery-stores

The University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships focuses on rural grocery stores as one component of its mission. The partnership has identified challenges and needs of rural grocers in Minnesota towns with a population of 2,500 or less. The partnership provides technical assistance related to the Minnesota Good Food Access Fund, the USDA Rural Energy for America Program, and through its Produce Toolkit. Its Farm to Rural Grocery to Wholesale project explores potential links between local producers, local groceries and regional produce wholesalers.



Iowa

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach — Community & Economic Development www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/iri

The Community and Economic Development program through Iowa State University Extension and Outreach serves Iowa communities with a breadth of programs. The Iowa Retail Initiative provides resources for communities to assess their retail environment and prioritize areas of growth. Coaching assists retailers in store design and business operations. The Iowa Retail Initiative provides support to immigrant entrepreneurs and explores the connection between Hispanic groceries and rural communities.



North Dakota

North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives www.ndarec.com/ruralgrocery

The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives supports rural grocery stores by gathering information and exploring alternative distribution models to meet the needs of rural groceries. North Dakota passed state legislation in 2019 to study grocery distribution throughout the state based on the work of the Association.



After a Decade of Food Access Work, Are People Eating Any Healthier?

From “food deserts” to “food apartheid,” four experts whose work spans the nation survey the past 10 years of the food access landscape.

“I hope people would come to recognize that in rural communities, there is real power in small groups of people.”

— David Procter





FOOD ACCESS INITIATIVES

RURAL GROCERY AND RURAL FOOD ACCESS IN THE NEWS

The Center for Engagement and Community Development and the Rural Grocery Initiative have spent more than a decade learning about the challenges facing rural grocery stores. With every challenge rural grocers and communities face, a new innovative solution emerges. **The Rural Grocery Initiative aims to connect people and information pertaining to rural grocery stores.** This knowledge built from years of being deeply involved in the topic of rural groceries and food access means that the Rural Grocery Initiative is called upon by local, regional and national news organizations to discuss the unique challenges rural groceries and communities are facing. Here is a snapshot of a few of the stories that the Rural Grocery Initiative has contributed to over the last few years.



THE KANSAS HEALTHY FOOD INITIATIVE

The Kansas Healthy Food Initiative (KHFI) was launched in November 2017 with funding from the Kansas Health Foundation. KHFI is a partnership between the Center for Engagement and Community Development, NetWork Kansas, IFF (a community development financial institution), The Food Trust, and the Kansas Health Foundation. The Center for Engagement and Community Development at Kansas State University provides technical assistance and determines project eligibility for funding. NetWork Kansas provides business development technical assistance. NetWork Kansas and IFF determine financing packages for eligible projects. The Food Trust provides consulting support to the KHFI.

Through June 2019, the KHFI responded to 262 instances of technical assistance from food access stakeholders in 51 Kansas counties and 28 out-of-state requests. Almost one-third of the requests came from existing business owners interested in sustaining healthy food access in their communities.

The KHFI received 33 applications for funding through June 2019. Fourteen projects received funding approval totaling almost \$1.1 million in loans and \$370,000 in grants. The following section highlights profiles of 10 projects funded in part by the KHFI. To learn more about the initiative, visit kansashealthyfood.org.



PROJECT: **KCK FARMERS MARKET**
COMMUNITY: **KANSAS CITY, KANSAS**
COUNTY: **WYANDOTTE COUNTY**
REGION: **NORTHEAST**
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **URBAN**
DATE FUNDED: **NOVEMBER 2018**

The KCK Farmers Market operates three weekly farmers markets from June to October in Wyandotte County and Kansas City. Each farmers market is comprised of producers and growers who are based in Wyandotte County. The markets are co-located at community centers like schools and religious institutions. KCK Farmers Market received a grant from the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative for \$5,000 to facilitate the strategic development of business and marketing plans and the purchase of equipment in 2018. The market projects a 10% increase in sales from these improvements.

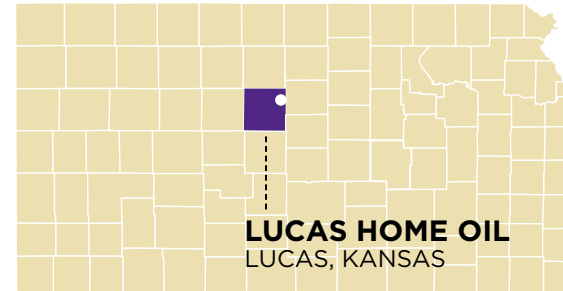
“Healthy food makes our neighbors strong.”

- KCK Farmers Market



KHFI PROFILES

PROJECT: **LUCAS HOME OIL**
COMMUNITY: **LUCAS, KANSAS**
COUNTY: **RUSSELL**
REGION: **NORTHWEST**
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **RURAL**
DATE FUNDED: **APRIL 2018**



Lucas Home Oil is a convenience store in Lucas. The owners, Marc and Coleen Lovin, have operated the store for 30 years. When their local grocery store in Lucas closed, the Lovins decided to expand the grocery offerings of their convenience store. This project received \$25,000 of grant funding from the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative to support their 1,500-square-foot expansion and purchase of new equipment to increase the store's healthy food options by 30%. In addition to offering bread, milk, and eggs, they now sell fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and grocery items to Lucas and five surrounding communities.





PROJECT: **MARMATON MARKET**
COMMUNITY: **MORAN, KANSAS**
COUNTY: **ALLEN COUNTY**
REGION: **SOUTHEAST**
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **RURAL**
DATE FUNDED: **JUNE 2018**



Marmaton Market is a cooperatively owned grocery store that opened in 2018 in Moran in place of Stub's Market. The owners of Stub's Market were interested in retiring, but could not find a buyer for the store. The rural community did not want to lose the store, so residents banded together to pursue reopening the store as a cooperative. Upon transfer of ownership, the store was in need of equipment and refrigeration upgrades. A loan of \$167,000 and a grant of \$50,000 were approved for purchase of equipment and working capital to modernize and renovate the existing store. The funding also helped the store fulfill its commitment of offering healthy foods to its community. Since receiving Kansas Healthy Food Initiative funding, the Marmaton Market celebrated its first anniversary and store membership has grown to more than 130 members. The store layout has been updated to include a bulk spice section and a "gathering place for free-flowing coffee", shares board member Debbie Bearden. Completed renovations include painting, equipment repairs and new signage.

"The people of the community are supporting one another by shopping locally."

- Debbie Bearden,
Marmaton Market Board Member





KHFI PROFILES

PROJECT: **MCCUNE FARM TO MARKET**

COMMUNITY: **MCCUNE, KANSAS**

COUNTY: **CRAWFORD**

REGION: **SOUTHEAST**

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **RURAL**

DATE FUNDED: **AUGUST 2018**



In 2017, **McCune Farm to Market** opened its doors. The owners, who operate Schenker Family Farms, have been raising and selling organic meats and eggs in southeast Kansas for generations. The McCune Farm to Market sources local products from the Schenker farms and others, including a partnership with a local K-12 school that teaches students how to grow vegetables in a high tunnel. Since opening, McCune Farm to Market has seen an increase in demand for fresh produce and the development of a line of frozen healthy meals. The McCune Farm to Market received a \$12,000 grant and a \$6,000 loan from the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative to assist with the addition of a freezer for its take-and-bake items and coolers for fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products and eggs. Future plans include installing a freezer for their local meats.

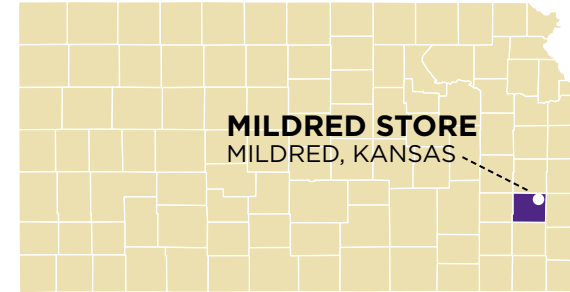
“This has been a blessing to our community and the region. We are able to offer fresh, local produce. We currently offer classes on healthy cooking, food preservation and more.”

- Cherie Schenker, McCune Farm to Market



KHFI PROFILES

PROJECT: **MILDRED STORE**
COMMUNITY: **MILDRED, KANSAS**
COUNTY: **ALLEN**
REGION: **SOUTHEAST**
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **RURAL**
DATE FUNDED: **APRIL 2018**



The Mildred Store has been in operation for over 100 years. It is one of the only buildings still standing in the unincorporated town of Mildred. This local grocery store is a landmark for the Allen County community and for its current owner, Regena Lance, who remembers visiting the store as a child. Regena and her husband, Loren, have owned the Mildred Store for almost four years and are interested in updating the longstanding store to better serve their community. The Mildred Store received a \$13,300 grant and a \$6,700 loan to upgrade insulation, windows, wiring, lighting and coolers to preserve the historic building, lower utility costs, and improve the overall sustainability of the store. Kansas Healthy Food Initiative funding was leveraged to secure energy efficiency funding from the USDA Rural Energy for America Program. In addition to selling groceries, the Mildred Store hosts a monthly music night that attracts out-of-town visitors for an evening of festivity.

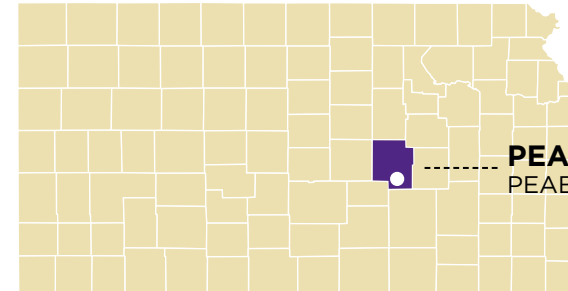
“The community is good, the community wants this store.”

- Loren Lance, Mildred Store





PROJECT: **PEABODY MARKET**
COMMUNITY: **PEABODY, KANSAS**
COUNTY: **MARION**
REGION: **SOUTH-CENTRAL**
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **RURAL**
DATE FUNDED: **MAY 2019**



PEABODY MARKET
PEABODY, KANSAS

The Peabody Market has been in operation for more than 40 years. The store offers fresh produce and freshly cut meats. The new owner of Peabody Market, Catherine Gilley, took over the store in 2018 when the previous owner wanted to retire. Gilley brings decades of experience in banking, finance, business management and administration. The Kansas Healthy Food Initiative provided the Peabody Market with a \$331,000 loan and a \$50,000 grant to help with operational costs, increasing fresh food options and replacement of old freezers. Through this funding, the Peabody Market will continue to provide healthy food options to the city of Peabody and Marion County.

“The store is a valuable asset to the small community of Peabody. If the store were to close, the start-up cost of a brand-new market would likely be cost prohibitive.”

- Catherine Gilley, Peabody Market



KHFI PROFILES

PROJECT: **PROTECTION COMMUNITY VENTURE**

COMMUNITY: **PROTECTION, KANSAS**

COUNTY: **COMANCHE**

REGION: **SOUTH-CENTRAL**

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **RURAL**

DATE FUNDED: **MARCH 2019**



PROTECTION COMMUNITY VENTURE
PROTECTION, KANSAS

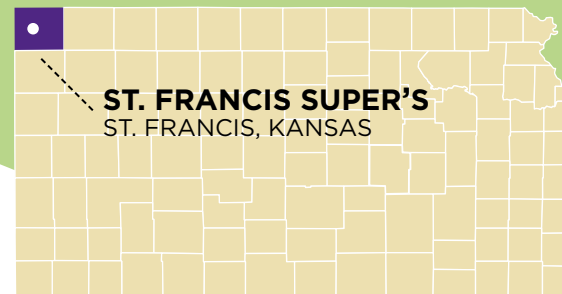
Protection Community Venture is a grocery store that reopened in 2010 as a community-owned store after the previous owners retired. Community members are shareholders of the store and its board of directors is made up of local business owners who operate manufacturing, retail and production agriculture businesses in the area. When the community purchased the store, it included outdated refrigeration and cooling equipment. Protection Community Venture received a \$7,500 grant from the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative in addition to USDA Rural Energy for America Program funding to upgrade freezers and coolers and to install energy efficient lighting. Through this grant, the Protection Community Venture store will decrease utility costs and product loss, and also provide its customers a reliable source of fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products.

“The state of Kansas benefits when Protection Community Venture and other local businesses are able to collaborate efforts to make their community function in a viable manner.”

- Protection Community Venture



PROJECT: **ST. FRANCIS SUPER'S**
COMMUNITY: **ST. FRANCIS, KANSAS**
COUNTY: **CHEYENNE**
REGION: **NORTHWEST**
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **RURAL**
DATE FUNDED: **MARCH 2019**



St. Francis Super's is owned by Perk and Beth O'Dell. The O'Dell family has been serving rural communities in 11 locations as local grocers for more than 60 years. This project aims to expand the St. Francis Super's store to allow for a larger capacity of fresh, healthy food for the community. Through this project, a \$15,000 grant from the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative was awarded to increase store space by 15%, with most of the increased space going toward a larger produce section and new refrigeration.

“The community of St. Francis knows firsthand what it's like to not have access to a local grocery store. Now that the store is once again owned and operated by a community-minded family, the goal is to continue to increase access to healthy food choices while continuing to keep them affordable for all.”

- St. Francis Super's



KHFI PROFILES

PROJECT: **ST. JOHN GROCERY**
COMMUNITY: **ST. JOHN, KANSAS**
COUNTY: **STAFFORD COUNTY**
REGION: **SOUTH-CENTRAL**
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **RURAL**
DATE FUNDED: **MARCH 2018**

When the Dillon's Food Store closed in St. John, the city appointed six community members to a Grocery Store Task Force to consider the community's options. Stafford County Economic Development played a key role in identifying funding options for building a new grocery store in St. John. "Having a grocery store is a critical part of keeping your town viable," says Carolyn Dunn, executive director of Stafford County Economic Development. In addition to several other funding partners, the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative provided a \$75,000 challenge grant to support the initiative. The store, owned by the city of St. John and operated by **White's Foodliner**, opened in October 2018. The full-service store has a wide variety of produce, fresh meat and refrigerated fresh food. It also has a deli and shares space with Stafford County Drug. One unique contribution to the community is the grocery store's conference room that is open and available for community groups to use.

"The big picture is not the cost of (building) the store in the first place. It's the economic benefit to the town."

- Carolyn Dunn,

Stafford County Economic Development





PROJECT: **SUPERMART EL TORITO**
COMMUNITY: **TOPEKA, KANSAS**
COUNTY: **SHAWNEE**
REGION: **NORTHEAST**
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: **URBAN**
DATE FUNDED: **DEC. 2018**



Supermart El Torito opened in North Topeka in 2018 with a full line of authentic Hispanic goods, including produce, fresh meat and bakery items. This store supplies an underserved market segment in the Topeka area with goods and foods specific to the Hispanic population. Though this store is located near larger food retailers, it increases accessibility to affordable, healthy and traditional products that aren't readily available in the community. El Torito Restaurant is attached to the grocery store, providing community members a way to experience foods prepared from the fresh ingredients stocked in the store. The project received a \$455,000 loan and a \$52,000 grant from the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative. These funds helped the store complete construction, purchase inventory and open its doors. The store provides quality employment opportunities and access to healthy, culturally appropriate foods for the region.



RURAL GROCERY HIGHLIGHTS

LESSONS LEARNED FROM KANSAS GROCERY STORES

The Rural Grocery Initiative and the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative have embarked on a journey to hear from rural grocery store owners and share their success stories. These stories showcase unique ways that communities and stores have overcome challenges. To read more, visit www.ruralgrocery.org.



City: **Chapman, Kansas**
Store Name: **Chapman Food Mart**
Business Owner: **Doug Thompson**

Pick the right team

When opening Chapman Food Mart, owner Doug Thompson struggled to find the right store manager. The Bush family, who owns and manages a grocery store in Solomon, Kansas, showed an interest. They said, "Never in our lives did we ever think we'd be able to manage a store as nice as this one."

Work with local partners

Chapman city government supported the Chapman Food Mart through a matching grant made possible by partners in the local government and Chapman city commissioners. Thompson knew that "the council, the city staff and the mayor would be shopping at his store because they would be absolutely conspicuous by their absence."

Continue to make a good first impression

On opening day of Chapman Food Mart, community volunteers provided a pleasant, friendly and welcoming experience. The store's deli department also offers catering, which broadens the store's marketing reach and provides services to the broader community.



City: **Mildred, Kansas**
Store Name: **Mildred Store**
Business Owners: **Regena and Loren Lance**

Think outside of the box

The Lances like to think outside of the box. Monthly music night, birthday parties, weddings and grocery delivery service are examples of these big ideas. "The intent was to save the store and provide a service to our community," Regena Lance says. So far, the Lances have done that and more.

Be consistent and persevere

Before the Lances, the store hours were inconsistent. With the Lances at the helm, consistency is a priority. Community members know they can call on the Lances; they even have their phone numbers posted on the door. Through the ups and downs of learning the grocery business, the Lances consider every day an opportunity to continue improving their store.

Build on historical legacy

The previous owners left behind a rich legacy. Lucille, the previous store owner, would give kids candy when they came in. Today, the store has a stash of candy for kids when they visit. One wall in the store pays tribute to its history over the past century.



City: **Conway Springs, Kansas**
Store Name: **Hired Man's Grocery & Grill Inc.**
Business Owners: **Jenny and Clint Osner**

Diversify and transition income streams

When Clint and Jenny Osner opened Hired Man's Grocery & Grill Inc., they had full-time jobs. Jenny Osner's mother, Nancy Koester, helped to serve as their daytime manager, and Clint Osner's parents, George and Donna Osner, helped in the butcher room.

Find experts and use them

When the Osners were building the store, their distributor suggested square-footage beyond what Jenny and Clint dreamed. Ten years later, Hired Man's Grocery & Grill, Inc. has achieved those projections.

Community, Community, Community

The Osners are proud of their connection to the community. They know nearly everyone that comes into the store. They participate in an annual food drive competition, celebrate their store's anniversary with the community, enter a float in the Fall Festival parade, and have many customer giveaways throughout the year. They also send care packages to community members who are deployed. Jenny Osner says, "We all have to help each other... these are our neighbors, it's our community, it's our kids, so we all help each other. We like to say we are 'homegrown.'"



City: **Little River, Kansas**
Store Name: **Garden of Eden**
Business Owners: **Dave and Debra Nelson**

Go beyond groceries

The Garden of Eden contributes to its community in more ways than providing groceries. The Nelsons and their employees enjoy working with students from the USD 405 Special Needs program. The Garden of Eden teaches on-site life skills that will aid in the future employment of these students. Garden of Eden also sells handmade organic dog biscuits made by the students.

Embrace your community

The Garden of Eden sells items to the local restaurant, nursing home and day care. The store supplies items to local businesses, churches, social clubs, school fundraisers, charities and the chamber of commerce. The store sells pizza to a local program that provides a safe place for high schoolers to socialize. Many products are locally sourced, including cookie dough, popcorn, alpaca products, raw honey, vegetables, and more. The Nelsons feel strongly that supporting one's community, in turn, supports the store.

Focus on customer service

Creating a stress-free environment is important to the Nelsons. They take pride in knowing the names of everyone who walks through the door. Their meat department will cut, slice or grind fresh meats at customer request. Customer service is a huge priority at the Garden of Eden.



City: **St. John, Kansas**
Store Name: **White's Foodliner**
Business Operators: **Pat and Jordan White**

Know the numbers

A market feasibility study showed that a grocery store could be viable in St. John, and Carolyn Dunn, executive director of Stafford County Economic Development, felt the initial study was critical to the success of the project. The study suggested opening the store along the highway and also laid the groundwork for adding gas pumps.

Seek strategic external partners

The financing for the new grocery store was complicated. It involved technical documentation for a newly established district and development agreements with the city and other potential partners. Stafford County Economic Development hired a lawyer to draft technical documentation and provide expertise in implementing these financing mechanisms.

Be persistent

Being successful in opening a new grocery store requires persistence. The city and Stafford County Economic Development were able to fit many puzzle pieces of financing, fundraising, store siting and operator recruitment together for this unique project to come to life.

RURAL GROCERY HIGHLIGHTS

STUDENTS WORK TO SOLVE RURAL GROCERY DISTRIBUTION CHALLENGES

Isabelle Busenitz,
Center for Engagement and Community Development

Communities seeking to bring a grocery store to town are often faced with the challenge of finding a wholesale grocery distributor that will deliver products to their store. Independent grocery stores face many operating hurdles that they must clear to stay in the race to compete in the retail grocery environment. Existing wholesalers are limited and many have minimum buying requirements or higher prices for smaller deliveries. In 2019, the Center for Engagement and Community Development began partnering with the Department of Computer Science at Kansas State University to investigate possible routing software development that could assist grocers and communities with the distribution challenges.

The Spring 2019 computer science student team of Nils Peterson and Jan Jirman developed a software proposal that addressed the optimization of routing to deliver food from distribution hubs to grocery stores. Through meetings with the Center for Engagement and Community Development staff, they customized the software product to include mapping, size of distribution in pallets, refrigeration needs and refrigeration constraints. The Center for Engagement and Community Development conducted a survey of 18 stores in the southwest Region to provide baseline data for testing the newly developed application. From the 16 stores that participated in the phone survey, information was gained about the distribution company, weekly purchase dollar amount, number of deliveries per week (from one to three), and logistics of delivery receipt such as the availability of a loading dock (only two out of 16 stores).

Possible applications of this software in the future include optimized distribution scenarios, utilization of empty trucks on their return trip to distribute products from the region, and determination of feasibility for siting new distribution hubs. The computer science students have developed a strong framework that can be shared and expanded by future computer science students to assist communities as they strive to improve access to healthy foods and provide economic development opportunities to local businesses.





SOCIAL CAPITAL BEST PRACTICES FOR RURAL GROCERY STORES

In 2017, the Rural Grocery Initiative at Kansas State University conducted a study exploring relationships between rural grocery stores and their local communities, also known as their social capital. The study sought to understand how grocery stores become vested in the local community and what difference it makes if a grocery store is connected to the life of the community.

This study evaluated grocery store practices and customer preferences to establish best practices for leveraging community social capital to increase grocery store patronage. The following best practices were identified from the study.

Capitalize on community assets and leverage social networks

Each community has a unique identity and a network of social relationships. Network relationships provide access to resources, which may foster community loyalty. Developing coalitions and partnerships have proved to be successful strategies for rural business enterprises.

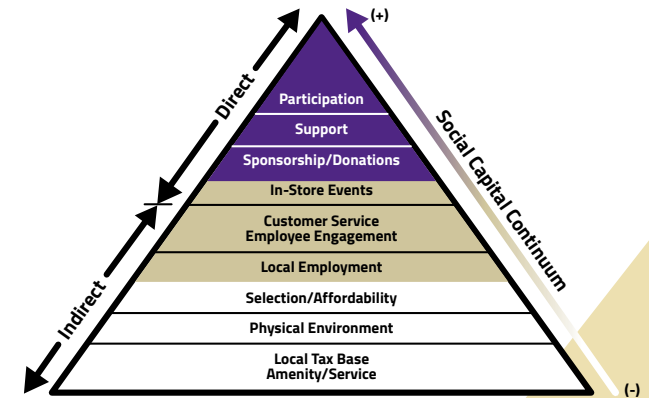
Develop a comprehensive communications plan

Building social capital requires access to information. Developing advertising campaigns (i.e., price matching, buy local) and using multiple communications platforms (i.e., social media, print and radio ads, community events) are strategies the local grocery store can leverage. Social media pages can be used for multiple functions including advertising in-store specials

and promoting community-based events. Such communications not only keep the store connected to the community, but also keep the grocery store top of mind.

Create a shopping experience

Technology has enabled consumers to shop comfortably from home, so consumers need a compelling reason to patronize brick and mortar stores. Consumer research shows that customer service plays a role in patronage, but store aesthetics and social atmosphere also contribute to the overall shopping experience. Create space in your store where customers can interact, chat or even have a meeting. Satisfying shopping experiences foster community loyalty.



Establish a brand identity

Identity is an important aspect of social relationships, and positioning the store as a distinct loyalty brand can be an effective approach for building identity. Brand the products that are unique to your store.

Expand specialized and personalized services

Personal relationships are the local grocery store's competitive advantage over chain stores. Offering carryout and delivery service, accommodating special requests, and responding to customer buying requests are a few ways to expand service capacity. Offer to carry groceries to the car, and maybe even walk groceries home for older adults who live in town and walk to the store. This above-and-beyond service encourages customer loyalty.

Move higher on the Social Capital Engagement Continuum

The Social Capital Engagement Continuum (above) identifies ways that grocery stores can more effectively connect with their community. The opportunity for sustained loyalty with customers increases as stores implement strategies that are higher on the Social Capital Engagement Continuum. While contributing to the local tax base positively impacts the local community, the citizen engagement is low and the impact is indirect. In contrast, stores that host community events are supporting and participating in town life. This directly builds community relationships and ensures that the local grocery store is interwoven into the community identity.

JOIN US

NATIONAL RURAL GROCERY SUMMIT VII

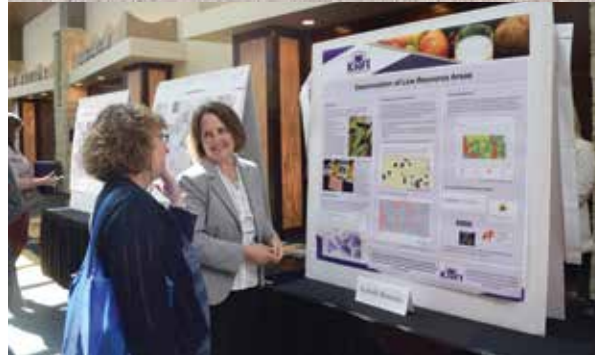
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES • STRENGTHENING HEALTH • THE RURAL GROCERY STORE

Rural grocery stores are an anchor business in rural communities. They are a primary source of local jobs and represent a significant source of local sales tax. Rural grocery stores serve as community gathering spaces, building bonds of local community, and attracting and retaining residents. Rural grocery stores also offer more healthy food than rural discount retailers.

We are proud to announce that on **June 8-9, 2020**, we will host the 7th National Rural Grocery Summit at the Hilton Garden Inn in Manhattan, Kansas. At this biennial summit, we will bring together store owners, citizen leaders, food suppliers, academic researchers, healthy food access stakeholders, policymakers and funders to talk with one another about how best to sustain this critical small business and improve rural access to healthy foods.

Please plan to join us in Manhattan as we work to strengthen rural grocery stores, the cornerstones of our rural communities.

Kansas State University's Center for Engagement and Community Development
Rural Grocery Initiative ■ ruralgrocery.org
cecd@ksu.edu ■ 785-532-6868



National Rural Grocery Summit VII

Save the Date

June 8-9, 2020

Hilton Garden Inn
Manhattan, Kansas

Register here: www.ruralgrocery.org

 *Rural Grocery Initiative*

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