

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE FOOD SYSTEM IN SHAWNEE COUNTY



Food, and food production are big business in Kansas, and have significant economic impacts on the state and local economies. Agriculture, food and food processing sectors (excluding food retail) in Shawnee County employ more than 7,600 people and contribute more than \$2 Billion to the County's economy. Shawnee County residents spend an estimated \$492 million annually on food purchases. Currently, most of the products produced by Shawnee County farms are sold outside of the community to commodity markets, and most of the food purchased and consumed by Shawnee County residents is produced elsewhere and transported into the community.

With the recent and continued growth in the demand for local foods, Shawnee County partners should continually investigate market characteristics, the capacity of local food systems to support economic development, and the economic aspects of production and consumption of local foods. The economic impact, both positive or negative, can be categorized and measured across the entire system:

- Food production,
- Food infrastructure such as processing, aggregation, packaging, distribution, marketing
- Food Retail such as grocery stores, restaurants, food service, and drinking establishments
- Consumption and purchasing
- Food waste

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Facts & Trends

- Average market value of products sold by Shawnee County farms in 2012 was \$60,843; however net farm income averaged only \$22,226.
- WIC and SNAP benefits redeemed in Shawnee County total about \$45 million per year.
- An estimated 51 million pounds of food are wasted annually in Shawnee County, with an value of \$65.5 million.

Successes

- Farmers' Markets
- Double Up Food Bucks
- Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- Fresh Farm HQ (Food Hub)
- 305 Commercial Kitchen
- Variety of processing, manufacturing, distribution, warehouse, wholesale and other food related businesses

Challenges

- Limited local food production
- Building and strengthening connections between local producers and retail or institutional purchasers
- Decreasing farm profitability
- Low wages in many food-sector jobs
- Confusing food safety regulations

Policy Needs

- Establishment of a Food and Farm Council
- Zoning, tax, and incentives for food retail and processing
- Comprehensive review of planning, licensing and zoning to ensure inclusivity of health, hunger and agriculture
- Investment in a Community Health Planner that leads food system planning

Community Needs

- Private sector buy-in for healthy guidelines and farm-to-fork food purchasing
- Increased agricultural production and increased number of farmers
- A local-minded approach to development
- A system-wide approach to healthy food
- Enhanced understanding of SNAP and WIC programs
- Better food purchase prediction tools for retail establishments