



**GROWERS • MAKERS • FOOD SYSTEM LEADERS
BRINGING TOGETHER EVERYONE
WORKING WITH LOCAL FOOD**

**WEDNESDAY, NOV 4 – THURSDAY, NOV 5
THE VINES 4-H CENTER | LITTLE ROCK, AR**

UofA **DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE**
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

**LOCAL, REGIONAL
& SAFE FOODS**



CONFERENCE AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

8:00 a.m. **Registration**

8:45 a.m. **Welcome & Opening Remarks** | Auditorium

Deacue Fields (UADA), Wes Ward (Arkansas Department of Agriculture) and Nina Roofe (UADA)

9:00 a.m. **Setting the Table for After the Harvest** | Auditorium

Amanda Perez (UADA)

9:15 a.m. **Local Food Sourcing for Retail Markets** | Auditorium

Jenny Doty (Kansas State University Rural Grocery Initiative)

10:00 a.m. **Food is Medicine in Arkansas: Growing Healthy Communities** | Auditorium

Moderator: Austin Sublett (Arkansas Foodbank)

Panelists: Michael Thomsen (UAMS); Sam Stadter (Baptist Health Community Outreach);

Tonya Johnson (CHI St. Vincent); Lisa Stafford (Community Clinic)

10:45 a.m. **BREAK**

11:00 a.m. **BREAKOUT BLOCK #1**

Understanding Aggregation: Models and Lessons from Across Arkansas | Auditorium

Moderator: Stefanie Jaeger (Local Food Marketplace)

Panelists: Sandra Leyva (Conway Locally Grown); Nena Hammer (Spring Creek Food Hub);

Loretta Smith (Farindale Farms)

Identifying Community Partners: Who's in Your Local Food Network? | Rm 7

Hunter Goodman (UADA)

Processing Bootcamp Pt. 1 | Clover Lounge

Jennifer Acuff, Bill Potter, Craig Bacon (UADA)

12:15 p.m. **BREAK**

12:30 p.m. **Lunch**

1:30 p.m. **BREAK**

1:45 p.m. **BREAKOUT BLOCK #2**

Food Safety Across the Supply Chain | Auditorium

Amanda Perez (UADA)

Farm to Clinic: Connecting Arkansas Farmers to Food is Medicine Programs | Rm 7

Emily English (Northwest Arkansas Food Systems / Walton Personal Philanthropy Group);

Alex Hendrickson (Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance)

Processing Bootcamp Pt. 2 | Clover Lounge

Jennifer Acuff, Bill Potter, Craig Bacon (UADA)

2:45 p.m. **BREAK**

3:00 p.m. **BREAKOUT BLOCK #3**

Arkansas Initiatives and What They Mean | Auditorium

Moderator: Emily English (Northwest Arkansas Food Systems / Walton Personal Philanthropy Group)

Panelists: Erin Killeen (Market Center of the Ozarks); John McMinn (Arkansas Farm Bureau);

Leslee Tell (Arkansas Department of Agriculture)

Market Ready: Packaging, Labeling, and Product Presentation | Rm 7

Renee Threlfall (UADA)

Successful Waste Management through Compost | Clover Lounge

Matt Bertucci (UADA)

4:00 p.m. **BREAK**

4:15 p.m. **The Microdairy: A Food Hub in a Food Desert** | Auditorium

Ruth Pepler (Dogwood Hills Guest Farm)

4:30 p.m. **Selling Local Food: Choosing the Right Market for Your Business** | Auditorium

Moderator: Angie Bailey (End of the Road Farms, Best in Class Suppliers)

Panelists: Rob Shaunfield (The Farmers Table / Performance Food Group); Wynn Peterson (Walmart);

Kent Krause (Ferndale Market), Josh Hardin (Healthy Flavors AR, FRESH Network)

5:15 p.m. **Networking Break**

5:45 p.m. **Brief Welcome to Reception** | Auditorium

6:00 p.m. **Evening Reception**

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5

8:00 a.m. **Registration**

8:30 a.m. **Welcome Back** | Auditorium

John Anderson (UADA) and Shane Gadberry (UADA)

8:45 a.m. **Food Insecurity in Arkansas Panel Discussion** | Auditorium

Sylvia Blain (Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance); Eric Shelby (Arkansas Foodbank), others TBD

9:30 a.m. **Mapping Arkansas' Food System** | Auditorium

Sylvia Blain & Alex Hendrickson (Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance)

10:15 a.m. **BREAK**

10:30 a.m. **BREAKOUT BLOCK #4**

Farmers Market Bootcamp | Auditorium

Speakers: Jeff Jackson (Arkansas Department of Health); Kristen Gibson (UADA)

Panelists: Representative from Fayetteville Farmers Market, Miranda Reynolds (Paragould Farmers Market); Jaymie Pedigo (West Little Rock Farmers Market)

Following the Product: Mapping Your Operation for Greater Efficiency | Rm 7

Sarah Bakker (UADA); Danielle Dozier (GSS Group / Farm Stop)

Home Preservation 101 | Clover Lounge

Lida Araghi (UADA), Christie Wagley (UADA), & Terrie James (UADA)

11:45 a.m. **BREAK**

noon **Lunch & Resource Marketplace**

1:30 p.m. **BREAK**

1:45 p.m. **BREAKOUT BLOCK #5**

Social Media Bootcamp | Auditorium

Moderator: Local Foods Team

Panelists: Lizzy Herrera (UADA); Jill Ragan (Whispering Willows Farm); Melissa Millsap (Turnbuckle Farms)

Managing Your Operation: Systems for Managing Orders, Inventory, and Deliveries | Rm 7

Nena Hammer (Spring Creek Food Hub); Stefanie Jaeger (Local Food Marketplace);

Scott Shellabarger (St. Joseph Center)

Food Freedom Bootcamp | Clover Lounge

Jeff Jackson (Arkansas Department of Health), Sungil Ferreira (UADA)

3:00 p.m. **BREAK**

3:15 p.m. **BREAKOUT BLOCK #6**

Postharvest in Practice: Equipment, Infrastructure, and Lessons from the Field | Auditorium

Facilitator: Sarah Bakker (UADA)

Speakers: Chloe Cox (Mator Farms); Nena Hammer (Spring Creek Food Hub)

Finding Common Bottlenecks Across Arkansas' Food System | Rm 7

Hunter Goodman (UADA)

Animal Products at the Farmers Market | Clover Lounge

Dan Quadros (UADA); Bill Potter (UADA);

4:15 p.m. **BREAK**

4:30 p.m. **Closing Session: Evaluation, Strategic Impact, Next Steps** | Auditorium

Local Foods Team; Mary Savin (UADA)

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

SETTING THE TABLE FOR AFTER THE HARVEST

Speaker: Amanda Perez (UADA)

Begin the conference with an introduction to the purpose of After the Harvest, the challenges and opportunities facing Arkansas' local food system, and the ideas that will connect the sessions throughout the event.

LOCAL FOOD SOURCING FOR RETAIL MARKETS

Speaker: Jenny Doty (Kansas State University Rural Grocery Initiative)

Explore the role rural grocery stores play in supporting food access, local economies, and community vitality. Learn about the work of the Rural Grocery Initiative, different business and ownership models, and strategies for establishing and sustaining rural retail operations. The session will also examine opportunities for sourcing locally produced foods, building relationships between producers and retailers, and building stronger local and regional food systems.

FOOD IS MEDICINE IN ARKANSAS: GROWING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Moderator: Austin Sublett (Arkansas Foodbank)

Panelists: Michael Thomsen (UAMS), Sam Stadter (Baptist Health Community Outreach), Tonya Johnson (CHI St. Vincent); Lisa Stafford (Community Clinic)

Food is Medicine (FIM) is transforming how healthcare and community organizations improve health by increasing access to nutritious food to prevent and manage diet-related chronic disease. As these programs expand across Arkansas, they also create new opportunities for local farmers while strengthening local food systems.

This session will provide an overview of the Food is Medicine movement and Arkansas' growing FIM landscape, followed by a panel of Arkansas Food is Medicine leaders who will share research, implementation best practices, lessons learned, and experiences sourcing Arkansas-grown foods. Together, we'll explore how stronger partnerships between agriculture and healthcare will improve community health.

UNDERSTANDING AGGREGATION: MODELS AND LESSONS FROM ACROSS ARKANSAS

Moderator: Stefanie Jaeger (Local Food Marketplace)

Panelists: Sandra Leyva (Conway Locally Grown); Nena Hammer (Spring Creek Food Hub); Loretta Smith (Farindale Farms)

Aggregation brings products from multiple producers together to reach markets that may be difficult to serve individually, but how that coordination happens can look very different from one operation to another. In this panel discussion, representatives of three different Arkansas aggregation models will share how their operations work and what it takes to coordinate products across multiple farms and markets. Panelists will explore how responsibilities for ordering, pickup, storage, transportation, pricing, and communication are divided, along with managing product quality, building relationships with producers and buyers, and navigating the challenges and tradeoffs of each approach.

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY PARTNERS: WHO'S IN YOUR LOCAL FOOD NETWORK?

Facilitator: Hunter Goodman (UADA)

Building a resilient local food system takes a network of people and organizations working together. Through an interactive mapping activity, participants will identify the individuals and organizations that support local food in their communities, including schools, healthcare providers, food-access organizations, food hubs, funders, Extension, and technical-assistance providers. Attendees will explore existing relationships, identify gaps in their local networks, and consider opportunities to build stronger partnerships that support local food production, distribution, and access.

PROCESSING BOOTCAMP (PARTS 1 & 2)

Speakers: Jennifer Acuff, Bill Potter, Craig Bacon (UADA)

Moving from small-scale food production into commercial processing or manufacturing brings new considerations for facilities, equipment, food safety, and regulatory requirements. This two-part bootcamp will explore how these considerations change as operations grow, progressing from commercial kitchen requirements and foundational food-safety practices to larger-scale production environments, including wholesale produce packing sheds and food manufacturing facilities. Speakers will discuss the practical and technical considerations involved in scaling production and help participants better understand the requirements and decisions they may encounter as their operations expand.

FOOD SAFETY ACROSS THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Speaker: Amanda Perez (UADA)

Follow fresh produce from harvest to market and explore how food-safety risks and responsibilities change as products move through washing, packing, storage, transportation, and sale. This session will examine common opportunities for contamination, the importance of maintaining safe handling practices throughout the supply chain, and practical steps producers, aggregators, distributors, and buyers can take to reduce food-safety risks as products move between operations.

FARM TO CLINIC: CONNECTING ARKANSAS FARMERS TO FOOD IS MEDICINE PROGRAMS

Facilitators: Emily English (Northwest Arkansas Food Systems / Walton Personal Philanthropy Group); Alex Hendrickson (Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance)

Continue the conversation in this interactive workshop designed to bring farmers, producers, FIM implementers, healthcare organizations, researchers, and community partners together. Through facilitated discussion, participants will identify challenges to sourcing local food for healthcare and nutrition interventions and work collaboratively to develop practical solutions. Topics will include improving local procurement, building partnerships, and creating new opportunities for farmers to sell into these programs. Together, we'll explore how stronger farm-to-clinic partnerships can improve community health while creating sustainable markets for Arkansas agriculture.

ARKANSAS INITIATIVES AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR LOCAL FOOD

Moderator: Emily English (Northwest Arkansas Food Systems / Walton Personal Philanthropy Group);

Panelists: Erin Killeen (Market Center of the Ozarks); John McMinn (Arkansas Farm Bureau); Leslee Tell (Arkansas Department of Agriculture)

Across Arkansas, programs and partnerships are working to strengthen connections between local food producers, schools, early childhood settings, nutrition programs, and the communities they serve. This session will highlight initiatives underway across the state, exploring their goals, the partnerships supporting them, and how they connect to Arkansas' local food system. Attendees will learn about current efforts, opportunities for involvement, and ways producers, organizations, and community partners can connect with these initiatives.

MARKET READY: PACKAGING, LABELING, AND PRODUCT PRESENTATION

Speaker: Renee Threlfall (UADA)

How a product is packaged, labeled, and presented affects more than its appearance. These decisions can influence product quality, food safety, customer expectations, and access to different markets. This session will explore practical considerations for preparing individually packaged products for sale, including packaging materials, package and unit size, durability, shelf life, pricing displays, basic labeling requirements, and product claims. Attendees will learn how to make packaging and presentation decisions that protect their products, communicate important information, and meet customer expectations across different markets.

SUCCESSFUL WASTE MANAGEMENT THROUGH COMPOST

Speaker: Matt Bertucci (UADA)

What happens to the organic materials left behind after harvest, handling, and food production? Composting offers an opportunity to turn suitable agricultural and food waste into a valuable resource for future production. Drawing on his research, Matt Bertucci will explore how composting practices affect food safety, nutrient retention, and the quality of finished compost. Participants will learn about managing compost materials and conditions, reducing potential biological risks and nutrient loss, and producing compost that can be used safely and effectively in agricultural operations.

THE MICRODAIRY: A FOOD HUB IN A FOOD DESERT

Speaker: Ruth Pepler (Dogwood Hills Guest Farm)

In rural communities with limited access to fresh, locally produced food, small farms can play an important role in connecting residents with local agriculture. Ruth Pepler of Dogwood Hills Guest Farm will share how she is using her microdairy to help address food access challenges by providing a local pickup point for farm products and creating opportunities for collaboration with area farmers and growers. She will also discuss how agritourism can bring visitors to the farm, strengthen connections between producers and consumers, and support the local food economy.

SELLING LOCAL FOOD: CHOOSING THE RIGHT MARKET FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Moderator: Angie Bailey;

Panelists: Rob Shaunfield (The Farmers Table / Performance Food Group); Wynn Peterson (Walmart); Kent Krause (Ferndale Market); Josh Hardin (Healthy Flavors AR, FRESH Network)

Selling to restaurants, retailers, institutions, distributors, and other wholesale buyers presents opportunities for local food businesses, but each market has different purchasing requirements and expectations. In this panel discussion, buyers representing different market channels will share what they look for in local vendors, what they need to purchase consistently, and the practical challenges they encounter when sourcing local food. The discussion will explore product quality and availability, volume, pricing, packaging, ordering, delivery, invoicing, payment, and communication. Attendees will gain a better understanding of how these markets operate, what it takes to develop purchasing relationships, and what to consider when evaluating wholesale opportunities for their own businesses.

FOOD INSECURITY IN ARKANSAS

Speakers: Sylvia Blain (Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance); Eric Shelby (Arkansas Foodbank), others TBD

Food insecurity remains a pressing challenge for communities across Arkansas, but food banks throughout the state are pioneering new approaches to meet the need. This session brings together Sylvia Blain, CEO of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Eric Shelby of the Arkansas Foodbank, and other food bank leaders from around the state to share the most current data on the state of hunger in Arkansas.

Panelists will discuss how Arkansas food banks are building innovative partnerships with local farmers, strengthening the state's agricultural economy while increasing access to fresh, nutritious food for food-insecure Arkansans. Attendees will leave with a clearer picture of where the state stands on food security and practical examples of collaboration between the agricultural and hunger-relief sectors.

MAPPING ARKANSAS' FOOD SYSTEM

Speakers: Sylvia Blain (Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance) & Alex Hendrickson (Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance)

This session will provide a shared look at Arkansas' food system, introduce the Food Atlas as a resource for visualizing food assets and needs, and help participants identify the stakeholders and partners essential to building a more connected and resilient food ecosystem.

FARMERS MARKET BOOTCAMP

Speakers: Jeff Jackson (Arkansas Department of Health); Kristen Gibson (UADA)

Panelists: Representative from Fayetteville Farmers Market, Miranda Reynolds (Paragould Farmers Market); Jaymie Pedigo (West Little Rock Farmers Market)

Designed for farmers market managers, vendors, and those interested in starting or strengthening a market, this bootcamp combines guidance on Arkansas farmers market requirements with practical

approaches to market management and operations. Participants will explore the Arkansas Farmers Market Guidelines, the Market Set Go farmers market food safety app, management and vendor best practices, and potential sources of market funding and support, including grants, sponsorships, and community partnerships. A panel of farmers market managers and vendors will share their experiences, challenges, and lessons learned from operating and growing markets across Arkansas.

FOLLOWING THE PRODUCT: MAPPING YOUR OPERATION FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY

Facilitators: Sarah Bakker (UADA); Danielle Dozier (GSS Group / Farm Stop)

Every operation has its own way of moving products from one step to the next. In this interactive workshop, participants will work through real-world scenarios from farms and food businesses to explore how products move through handling, packing, storage, transportation, and delivery. Using simple mapping exercises, small groups will identify bottlenecks, unnecessary handling, food safety concerns, infrastructure gaps, and opportunities to improve efficiency. Participants will gain practical tools and ideas they can apply to evaluating product flow and making improvements in their own operations.

HOME PRESERVATION 101

Speakers: Lida Araghi (UADA), Christie Wagley (UADA), & Terrie James (UADA)

Learn about commonly used methods for preserving food at home, including canning, freezing, and drying. This introductory session will explore the food-safety considerations associated with different preservation methods, the importance of using tested recipes and procedures, and reliable resources for preserving food safely. This session focuses on food preservation for personal and household use, not the production of food products for sale. Attendees interested in making and selling homemade food products are encouraged to attend the Food Freedom Bootcamp.

SOCIAL MEDIA BOOTCAMP

Moderator: Local Foods Team;

Panelists: Lizzy Herrera (UADA); Jill Ragan (Whispering Willows Farm); Melissa Millsap (Turnbuckle Farms)

Learn practical ways to use social media to share the story behind your farm, food business, market, or organization and connect with the people you want to reach. This session will explore choosing platforms that fit your audience, planning manageable content, using photos and visual storytelling, engaging with customers and community members, and promoting products, events, and services. Attendees will gain ideas for making social media a more effective and manageable part of their outreach and marketing efforts.

MANAGING YOUR OPERATION: SYSTEMS FOR MANAGING ORDERS, INVENTORY, AND DELIVERIES

Speakers: Nena Hammer (Spring Creek Food Hub); Stefanie Jaeger (Local Food Marketplace); Scott Shellabarger (St. Joseph Center)

As an operation grows, keeping track of what is available, what has been ordered, what needs to be packed, and where it needs to go can quickly become complicated. This session will explore some of the tools and systems producers and food businesses use to manage product availability, inventory, orders, fulfillment, deliveries, and customer communication. Speakers will share practical approaches ranging from paper forms and spreadsheets to specialized software, discussing how different tools work in practice and how to choose systems that fit an operation's size, needs, and capacity.

FOOD FREEDOM BOOTCAMP

Speakers: Jeff Jackson (Arkansas Department of Health); Sungil Ferreira (UADA)

Interested in making and selling homemade food products in Arkansas? Understanding which products qualify under the Arkansas Food Freedom Act and what requirements apply can be challenging. In this hands-on session, participants will receive a copy of the Arkansas Homemade Food Production Guidelines and work through them with experts from the Arkansas Department of Health and the University of Arkansas. The session will explore which products are eligible under Food Freedom, the food-safety principles behind the guidance, labeling and disclosure requirements, and common misconceptions. Participants will also learn when a product may require additional testing, process review, or a different regulatory pathway before it can be sold.

POSTHARVEST IN PRACTICE: EQUIPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

Facilitator: Sarah Bakker (UADA)

Speakers: Chloe Cox (Mator Farms); Nena Hammer (Spring Creek Food Hub)

Postharvest infrastructure can look very different depending on an operation's products, markets, scale, and resources. Through examples from Arkansas farms and food businesses, this session will explore the equipment and infrastructure used to handle, pack, store, and transport products after harvest. Speakers will share how they selected and incorporated equipment into their operations, what has worked, what they would change, and lessons learned along the way. Attendees will gain practical considerations for planning infrastructure investments that fit their own operations. At the end of the session, attendees will also have an opportunity to view examples of refrigerated vehicles in person and ask questions about their use in local food operations.

FINDING COMMON BOTTLENECKS ACROSS ARKANSAS' FOOD SYSTEM

Facilitator: Hunter Goodman (UADA)

Many of the challenges facing Arkansas' local food system are shared across producers, food businesses, buyers, and community organizations. In this facilitated workshop, participants will draw on their own experiences to identify barriers related to storage, transportation, aggregation, processing, purchasing, regulations, technology, labor, and infrastructure. Together, the group will explore where these challenges overlap, identify common priorities, and discuss opportunities for collaboration and coordinated solutions.

ANIMAL PRODUCTS AT THE FARMERS MARKET

Speakers: Dan Quadros (UADA); Bill Potter (UADA);

Ruth Pepler (Dogwood Hills Guest Farm)

Selling meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, and other animal products directly to consumers comes with product-specific food-safety and regulatory considerations. This session will explore the requirements and practical realities of selling animal products at Arkansas farmers markets and through other direct-sales channels. Speakers will discuss processing and inspection requirements, applicable exemptions, storage and temperature control, labeling, as well as challenges producers face in accessing processing facilities and bringing their products to market. Attendees will gain a better understanding of the requirements that may apply to their products, the challenges involved in meeting them, and considerations for developing direct-market sales.