

Building markets for local and regionally grown agricultural products makes great economic sense. Creating regional food systems with local businesses and producers is a great way to do this.

I'm Dallas Tonsager, Under Secretary for USDA's Rural Development – our mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans.

Our goal is to build a link between local production and local consumption. If you grow a product, add value through processing and packaging and then sell those products locally, you keep more of the revenue from all of those market opportunities in the local economy.

Rural Development has over a dozen business, cooperative and community facility loan and grant programs to assist communities and support local food initiatives.

For example, our Value Added Producer Grants provides opportunities to agricultural producers for projects that use existing products in non-traditional ways. Our Business & Industry Guaranteed Loan program can support production, distribution and consumption of locally grown foods.

USDA's *'Know Your Farmer Know Your Food'* is about keeping revenues in your local community and having access to locally-grown foods. It's a win-win for the producers, and for the consumers. We are working to provide the technical and financial assistance to connect consumers with local producers.