Resources, Tools & Technical Assistance
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**Gardening**

1. [Safety Guidelines for Youth Working in Gardens](#) from National Children’s Center for Rural and Agriculture.
2. [Tips for Starting an Organic Garden](#) Soil health, ecosystem conservation, and pest control tips by the USDA.

**Farming**

1. [Mapping Tool to Help Protect Drinking Water Sources](#) (EPA) Users can find out information about their water sources and identify polluted sources and potential water-contaminating agents.
2. [Farm Food Safety Planning Resources](#) (FamilyFarmed)
   a) [The Wholesale Success Manual](#)
   b) [Direct Market Success Manual](#)
   c) [Food Safety Training](#)
3. [Large Compilation of Farmer Resources](#) (Farm Commons)
4. [Farmer Veteran Coalition Referral and Support Connection](#) Resource library, career and legal services, and USDA technical assistance for members.
5. [How To Determine The Right Greenhouse Structure For Your Operation](#) (Growing Produce) When switching crops or adding a greenhouse to produce vegetables, experts say to start out small when investing in facilities.
6. [Orchard Trellis Tips](#) (Growing Produce) Tips include the following: don’t skimp on trellis materials; strengthen outside rows; get help with trellis design; develop a trellis support system that suits the geography.
7. [Illinois Organic Growers](#) (Illinois Stewardship Alliance) facilitates connections between organic growers in Illinois and provides a space to exchange knowledge and share resources for organic farmers and those interested in organic farming.
8. [Cropping Systems Calculator](#) (Land Stewardship Project) is an Excel-based tool that lets farmers plug in various planting and grazing scenarios and weigh financial pros/cons of each option.
9. [Cover Crops Resource Page](#) (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service) Resources with ‘Soils and Systems’ fact sheets, an ‘Ask an Organic Specialist’ section, as well as an extensive publications section.
10. [Chicken Tractor 101: What It is and The Basics of Building One](#) Guide to build a mobile chicken coop.
11. [How to Grow Microgreens](#) (Modern Farmer) Guide on planting, caring for, and harvesting microgreens.
13. [Food Safety Modernization Act Resources](#) (National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition) provides information to farmers and food businesses to comply with FSMA while still growing their business.
   a) [FSMA: Overview and background](#)
   b) [For Farmers and Processors: Who is affected?](#)
   c) [Critical Issues with proposed rules: Food safety training, facility registration and more](#)
   d) [Opportunities to provide feedback/public comment](#)
14. [Farmers’ Guide to Innovative USDA Programs and Resources](#) (National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition) This guide, published in January 2017, shares information about the dozens of USDA loan, grant, crop insurance, and other programs that help farmers to succeed.
15. [Sustainable Farming Resources](#) (New Entry Sustainable Farming Project) plain language guides about:
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a) Applying for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
b) Applying for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
c) Financing the Farm: Applying for an FSA Loan
d) Guide to USDA’s NASS End of Season Fruit and Vegetable Inquiry
e) Harvesting Crops for Market
f) How to Begin your Small Farm Dream
g) Managing Risks on the Small Farm
h) Selling at a Farmers Market
i) Wholesale Packing Resources Guide

16. New! Ohio Applicator Forecast (Ohio Department of Agriculture) This new nutrient management tool helps farmers to identify when to apply fertilizer. The Applicator Forecast takes data from the National Weather Service and predicts potential for runoff to occur in a given area.

17. Practical Farmer Videos (Practical Farmers of Iowa) How-to’s and informative demonstrations, recordings from field days/workshops, and conference session recordings. Topics include small grains, crop rotation, and other topics related to local, diverse production operations.

18. Soil Health Research Landscape Tool (Soil health Institute Research) This online library and search engine includes data, metadata, standards, and related economic impacts from more than 1,000 scientific research publications for soil scientists, researchers, and analysts to effectively manage soil health problems.

19. High Tunnel Resources (Southeast Michigan Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative) Compilation of resources as and financial/technical assistance to support installation and management of seasonal high tunnels.

20. Library of Cover Crop and Soil Health Images (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) Resources, database of cover crop images, and ready-made PowerPoint presentations on cover crop and soil health topics that educators can use to help farmers improve soil health.

21. Todd’s Farm Tools for crop planning and recordkeeping.

22. Veterans’ Transition to Farming Resources Assists veterans transitioning from active service to civilian life in agriculture. Programs include loans, grants, and training. Programs are facilitated by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, USDA Farm Service Agency, and the Department of Defense.

23. Cover Crop Chart (USDA-ARS) helps farmers identify which cover crops can function best given farm plot parameters.

24. Economics of Cover Crop Decisions Tool (USDA) helps farmers decide how to financially manage cover-cropping.

25. Local USDA Service Centers Directory/Locator (USDA) provides the addresses of local USDA Service Centers, which are single locations where customers can access the services provided by the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Rural Development agencies.


27. Assessing Soil Type (USDA-NRCS) This resource helps farmers to identify their soils based on geographic web survey data.

28. Why Go Organic and Where to Start (USDA) Guides, videos, resources, certification tips:
   a) The Road to Organic Certification Two farmers consider pursuing organic certification.
   b) What’s the Organic Value Proposition? Organic farmers talk about why to go organic.
   c) Organic Certification Made Simple Farmers describe simple steps of organic certification.
   d) Transitioning to Organic Producers explain in this interactive video why it may be worth it for viewers to transition to organic operations.
   f) Spanish-translated resources


30. Resources for Organic Farmers (USDA)

31. New! Agriculture Energy Consumption Tools (USDA NRCS) These tools can help farmers and ranchers identify where they can reduce their energy costs in four areas: animal housing, irrigation, nitrogen, and tillage.
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32. Expanded Crop Insurance Coverage for Organic Production (USDA RMA) In February, 2016, the USDA expanded the number of crops covered by organic crop insurance (57 crops) and increased the amount of insurance coverage. For example, a producer can now use a contract price for millet up to $7.34 per bushel (transitional) or $8.44 (certified organic), compared to past contract prices of $3.67 (for transitional) or $4.22 (certified organic).

33. New Farmer Guide (USDA)  
34. Tools, Resources, Grants, News (USDA) This USDA resource compiles tools, resources, grants, for farmers.  
35. Small and Mid-Sized Farmer Resources (USDA) Information about accessing capital, risk management, marketing, land management, food safety, and educational capacity.  
36. Ten Ways to Reduce Nitrogen Loads from Drained Cropland in the Midwest (University of Illinois)

Urban Agriculture

2. Urban Agriculture Resources (Michigan State University)  
3. Urban Agriculture Resources (Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food security (RUAF)) News, research, guidance, and reports.  
4. Urban Agriculture Resources (USDA National Agricultural Library) Best practices related to marketing and advocacy.

Food Systems

1. Bon Appetit, Appalachia! (Appalachian Regional Commission) Online tool that maps local food businesses operating from Northern Mississippi to southern New York Appalachian region. This tool was created with support from the USDA’s Local Food, Local Places and Food LINC programs.  
2. 2017 Chicagoland CSA Guide (Band of Farmers)  
3. State Health Departments can support farmers markets (CDC) This fact sheet, based on a CDC study, shows that state health departments can support farmers markets by working with existing markets, providing training and technical assistance, partnering with the agricultural sector, and partnering with nutrition assistance benefit programs. This guide, also by CDC, helps public health practitioners to support healthy retailers, including farmers markets.  
4. New Tools for Starting New Farmers Markets and Local Food Systems Radio broadcasts by Gary Crawford about starting a farmers market or other local food activity  
5. Food Sovereignty Assessment Tools Resources for indigenous governments to plan, implement, collect data, and evaluate community food sustainability.  
   a) Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool Published by the First Nations Development Institute and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.  
   b) The Power of the Tribal Dollar: Highlighting the Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project’s Food-Purchasing Program by the First Nations Development Institute and W.K. Kellogg Foundation.  
   c) Report on the Navajo Nation Food System and the Case to Rebuild a Self-Sufficient Food System for the Diné People by Diné Policy Institute, First Nations Development Institute, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation.  
6. Resource Library for Farmers Markets (Farmers Market Coalition) Webinars, graphics, SNAP guide, FAQs, and growing resource library for those interested in growing their farmers market.  
7. Videos for Farmers Markets (Farmers Market Coalition) In-depth videos about many aspects of maintaining, advertising, recordkeeping, implementing a SNAP farmers market, for farmers markets. This newest video is titled Success with SNAP: Equipment and Outreach Essentials for SNAP Programs.  
8. Good Food Organizations Guide 2015 (Food Tank and James Beard Foundation) Directory of 1000 good, clean, and fair food organizations.  
9. Up Up! and Our Land Film Collections (Greenhorns) Up Up! is a collection of young farmer stories. Our Land shares information about various topics related to local and regional food systems and urban farming.
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10. **Database of Food Policy (Growing Food Connections)** Searchable collection of local public policies that support community food systems.

11. **Illinois Food and Agribusiness Guide (Illinois Department of Agriculture)** List of companies or farms that produce, process, package, or have headquarters in Illinois. This guide can help connect producers to restaurants and buyers.

12. **Illinois Market Maker** is a new tool that helps Illinois farmers market vendors and managers to connect online and become advertised on ILFMA, University of Illinois Extension, and Illinois Department of Agriculture’s MarketMaker to expand their sales reach and connect to patrons. Register a free business profile on the tool today.


14. **Webinars for Farmers Markets and Growers (MIFMA)** These webinars cover various topics, including developing a strong SNAP farmers market, building partnerships with SNAP-Education programs, and producing food via hoop houses.

15. **Access to Markets: Managing a Farmers Market (National Farmers Union)** 5 major factors that contribute to a successful farmers market.

16. **Reports on Food Safety Modernization Act Rules (National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition)** These two reports on the FDA’s new Food Safety Modernization Act include information for small and mid-sized farms, new analysis on the recently finalized exemption for retail food, and updates to NSAC’s popular Am I Affected? Flowchart.

17. **Direct Marketing Webinars for Farm Stands, Agriculture Businesses, Food Hubs, Farmers Markets, and More (Ohio State University)**

18. **Tools to Estimate Economic Impact of Public Markets (Project for Public Spaces)**

19. **Food Hub Starter Kit Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group** Resources on infrastructure and logistics of food hubs.

20. **Resources on Building Local and Regional Food Systems (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education)** Resources on improving local food systems from: improving business capacity, marketing, distributing, food safety and processing, and building strong communities.

21. **Farmers Market and Local Food Systems Videos (University of Illinois-Extension)** In-depth videos and webinars about some aspects of farmers markets (food sampling certification and SNAP farmers markets); and local food systems.

22. **Power of Produce ToolKit (University of Minnesota)** The PoP Club is a farmers market incentive program for children. Each week children receive a $2 token to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables. The toolkit is free for farmers markets and partnering organizations and provides the guidance and tools to plan, implement, and evaluate the PoP Club.

23. **Food Cooperatives Research and Resources (University of Wisconsin-Madison)**

24. **Food Hub Tools and Resources (Wholesome Wave)** Business assessment, tech guide, business planning, and geographic placement suggestions.


26. **Local Food Resources (USDA AMS)** Research and development on farmers markets and direct marketing, food hubs, wholesale markets and facility design, and USDA grants.

27. **Mapping Out Farmers Market Success (USDA AMS)** is a new tool that helps farmers markets organize street market layout of vendors to boost sales.

28. **Local Food Directories (USDA AMS)**
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a) USDA’s National Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Enterprise Directory – A CSA is a farm or group of farms that offers regular delivery of locally-grown farm products during harvest.

b) USDA’s National Food Hub Directory – A Food Hub is a business that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of food products from many local producers to many local buyers.

c) USDA’s National On-Farm Market Directory – An On-Farm Market is a farm market managed by a single farm operator that sells agricultural products directly to consumers on-site or nearby.

d) USDA’s National Farmers Market Directory – Farmers markets feature two or more farm vendors selling agricultural products directly to customers at a common, recurrent physical location.

29. The Economics of Local Food Systems Toolkit to Guide Community Discussions, Assessments, and Choices (USDA AMS) 2016 guide that provides a data-driven roadmap for communities eager to join the rapidly expanding local food sector. This toolkit is made up of seven modules, which outline a path for community leaders to conduct impact assessment and data analysis to inform policymakers and economic development officials about the potential benefits of local food initiatives.

30. Updated SNAP at Farmers Markets Webpage (USDA FNS) Provides current info for farmers markets interested in getting authorized to receive SNAP. The new webpage now has a helpful instructional on how to get authorized to receive SNAP, how to apply for free Electronic Benefits Transfer equipment, and grants.

31. Locator Map of FINI grantees (USDA) to view locations and funded projects for grantees funded by USDA-NIFA’s Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant program.


33. Local Food Compass Map (USDA) Food hubs, wholesale markets, meat infrastructure, federal investments, federal partners, schools, institutions, and farmers markets.

34. Grantwriting Resource (USDA AMSTA) Covers local foods-related federal grants.

35. Do’s and Don’ts of Grantwriting (USDA) provides some general and specific tips on writing a USDA grant.

36. Cooperatives as a Tool for Community Solutions Webinar (USDA Rural Development)

37. Local Food Financing and Co-op Business Model Webinar (USDA Rural Development)

38. Good Food Economy Digest and Resources (Wallace Center)

39. Financial Fundamentals for Food Hubs (Wallace Center) 20-30-minute webinars on how to maintain a financially stable food hub.

40. Resources on Food Hub Economies (Wallace Center) Studies, recommendations, and support for food hubs.


42. Farmers Market Resources (Willimantic Farmers Market) Bilingual Market toolkit, business planning guide, website development guide, and How-To Videos.

Schools & Farm to School

1. Good, Clean, Fair School Garden Curriculum Webinars (Slow Food USA)

2. Toolkit for Good Food for Local Schools (UCLA) An online toolkit to assist education institutions and community organizations to support healthy and locally/regionally grown foods in schools.

3. Common Bytes web games and activities (Common Threads and Slow Food) takes students and families on a virtual journey to the garden, grocery store, kitchen, and table. On the way, participants learn to prepare and cook healthy recipes via interactive web games that incorporate science and math.

4. Farm to Early Child Care (ECE) Webinar Series (Michigan State University) Twelve 15-minute webinars that cover various topics in Farm to ECE.

5. Strategies for Beef to School (Montana State University) Case studies and best practices on how Montana integrated local beef into its public school system.

6. How to Partner with Farm Credit for Farm to School Fund Farm to School efforts with this opportunity from Farm Credit and the National Farm to School Network.

7. Farm to School Indiana has two farm to school resources with links to resources and videos:
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1. **Optimizing Prepackaged Salads & Serving Lines with Local Foods**
2. **Optimizing Salad Bars with Local Foods**
3. **Minneapolis Public Schools Farm to School Toolkit (Minneapolis Public Schools)**
4. **School Garden Webinars (National School Garden Network)** Best practices, case studies, tools, and resources about various topics related to school gardens.
5. **Youth Farm Stands Toolkit (Slow Food USA and Denver Urban Gardens)** This resource helps schools to implement youth farm stands (YFS), which promote life skills and traditional academics, and provide an opportunity for communities with limited grocery stores to access fresh produce.
6. **Farm to Pre-K Toolkit (South Carolina Farm to Institution)** This resource covers eight essential topics on how to plan and build a school garden and integrate garden curricula.
7. **Farm to School Garden Toolkit (Springfield Public Schools)** This resource is divided into twelve sections including topics ranging from recruiting volunteers to garden safety.
8. **School Gardens Video Resources (The Kitchen Community)** Videos that provide how-to’s on many school garden topics.
9. **Farm to School Resources (USDA) includes:**
   a) **Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs**
   b) **CACFP Best Practices**
   c) **Grow it, Try it, Like it!** Nutrition education kit featuring Myplate for child care center staff that introduces children to fruits and vegetables.
   d) **Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children**
   e) **Finding, Buying, and Serving Local Foods Webinar Series** covers topics including: finding local producers, working with distributors, using geographic preference, and using USDA Foods or DoD Fresh to purchase locally.
   f) **Fact Sheets**
10. **CACFP Meal Pattern Training Tools (USDA)** includes infographics and training tools to help child care providers to successfully update menus to align with the new meal patterns.
11. **USDA Resources for Kids (various USDA agencies)** compile science and nutrition-related information, resources, and games for students, parents, and teachers.
12. **School Garden Resources (USDA)**
   a) **USDA School Garden Fact Sheet** Provides guidance on using school garden produce in the cafeteria, planning for food safety needs, incorporating gardens into summer meal programs and early child care settings, staffing and funding gardens, and successfully sustaining garden efforts.
   b) **Farm to School and School Garden Expenses Q&As** USDA-FNS answers questions on using school food service funds for farm to school efforts.
   c) **USDA Team Nutrition resources** USDA-FNS farm to school curricula with materials for a nutrition education kit, scavenger hunts, taste-testing stickers, popular events, and the Great Garden Detective Adventure.
13. **USDA Farm to School Video Resources (USDA-FNS video)** Videos focus on various topics related to farm to school, including:
   a) **Local Foods and Enriching Activities in Summer Meal Programs**
   b) **Incorporating Traditional Foods in Child Nutrition Program Menus**
   c) **Planning for Farm to School Success – Curriculum Integration**
14. **How to Use Food Hubs to Create Sustainable Farm to School Program (Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets)** Report on how Vermont food hubs strengthened farm to school programs.

**Nutrition & Cooking**

1. **Livestock, Poultry, and Seed Program (USDA AMS)** Provides product grading and labeling, market news and analysis, research, and grant services. This program was highlighted in this **USDA blog post** about helping aspiring chefs to understand the importance of egg grading.
2. **What’s Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl** Interactive recipes and How-To’s on a budget for consumers, school food professionals, and community leaders.

4. **Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program Toolkit (Wholesome Wave)** Guide for healthcare providers interested in helping patients eat more fruits and vegetables. Through the program, providers prescribe the equivalent of $1/day/participant in vouchers for patients to redeem for fruits/vegetable. The toolkit uses data/lessons gathered from 6 years’ implementation by Wholesome Wave across 10 states. From 2011 to 2014, 69% of program users reported increased fruit and vegetable consumption; and 47% experienced a decrease in BMI.