





# Southern Rural Development Center Repository: Readership Snapshot Update

In January 2025, the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) Repository collection had a total of 330 full-text downloads from 36 different institutions in 16 different countries.

The repository is hosted on Mississippi State University Library's platform, Scholars Junction, which allows users to explore published content from the SRDC and its partners. View the SRDC's repository

# Follow the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) on Facebook, LinkedIn, and X









Stay informed with posts on Southern Rural Development Center staff, programs, and webinars.

Follow, share, and engage as the SRDC seeks to strengthen the capacity of the region's 30 land-grant institutions to address critical contemporary rural development issues impacting the well-being of people and communities in the rural South.

Facebook: @Southern Rural Development Center LinkedIn: @southern-rural-development-center

X (formerly Twitter): @so\_dev\_center

YouTube: Southern Rural Development Center

### Webinars:

Check back for future updates.

### Regional Spotlight

### Strengthening Mississippi's Local Food Industry

Mississippi State University Extension (MSU-ES) has been at the forefront of efforts to strengthen the state's local food industry, leveraging expertise from multiple departments and collaborating with a diverse network of stakeholders. In response to requests from community markets, state agencies and non-profits, and producers, MSU-ES decided to focus on strategies to strengthen industry through increased education, promotion, relationship building, and technical assistance. In 2019, MSU-ES received funding from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service to increase farmers market and local food capacity in Northeast Mississippi. The project team involved partners from Mississippi Main Street, local Main Street Associations, farmers market managers, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, the Northeast Mississippi Hills Heritage Area, and multiple departments at Mississippi State University. These stakeholders formed a team of cross collaboration and provided education and support to farmers markets and food businesses as they adapted the covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

Workshops were held on food safety, business planning, marketing, digital media, and agritourism. The team worked to help existing markets improve their marketing and branding, and in the development of 3 new markets in the region. Project results can be found on various social media pages for farmers markets in Columbus, Noxubee County, Aberdeen, and West Point.

"This project was about more than just growing markets—it was about growing communities. By strengthening local food systems, we're not only supporting farmers and small businesses, but also creating vibrant spaces where people connect, local economies thrive, and fresh, healthy food is more accessible. The collaboration between partners made a real impact, and we're excited to see how these efforts continue to shape the region's food and agritourism landscape." Lauren Colby Nickels, Mississippi State University Extension Specialist, Center for Government and Community Development.

#### Farm to Fork Foodie Trail

A major achievement of the initiative was the creation of the **Farm to Fork Foodie Trail**, developed in partnership with marketing and branding experts. Now hosted by the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, this trail highlights local food destinations attracting both tourists and regional customers. Within just four weeks, the marketing campaign reached 1.4 million. <u>View the Mississippi Hills website and take a virtual trip on the trail</u>.

Additionally, you can view <u>a series of videos sharing the region's local food stories</u> on Facebook, created by the Mississippi State University TV Center.

#### **Youth Curriculum**

The project team also developed a youth curriculum designed to educate high school students on starting and managing a local food business. Used in vocational education programs and local food workshops, the curriculum was created by a team of MSU faculty and specialists, including Dr. Elizabeth Canales, Dr. Rachael Carter, Dr. Courtney Crist, Ms. Leah Eubank, Mr. Martin Hegwood, Dr. Lauren Colby Nickels, and Mr. Terence Norwood.

Extension faculty, specialists, and agents can download resources to support local food development and farmers markets at MSU-ES's website. For access to digital curriculum and additional resources, contact Dr. Rachael Carter at rdm1@msstate.edu.

### Job Opportunities

# Current Job Opportunities at the Community and Economic Development Unit of Prairie View A&M University Extension

The <u>Community and Economic Development Department (CED) at Prairie View A&M University</u> in Texas is dedicated to supporting limited resource families and individuals in achieving a higher standard of living through various means, such as small business development, youth entrepreneurship, community program involvement, home ownership, government assistance programs, non-profit assistance, and workforce development. Our team of professionals is ready to offer consultation and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and community organizations who wish to start or expand their operations.

CED Extension Agent positions are still currently available. **To learn more about the available positions visit** the Prairie View A&M University job postings web page.

## Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

### 2025 Public Issues Leadership Development Conference (PILD)

In-Person: April 7-8, 2025, Arlington, Virginia

Save the date and the location of the 2025 PILD Conference.

**REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE** 

## 2025 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Conference

In-Person: June 9-12, 2025, The Embassy Suites, Charleston, West Virginia

Join the West Virginia State University Extension Service and West Virginia Extension Service in Charleston for the 2025 NACDEP Conference: Country Roads, Connecting the Farm to the Country.

Registration will open March 1, 2025.

**REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE** 

### 2025 Community Development Society (CDS) Conference

In-Person: July 6-9, 2025, Geneva, New York

The conference theme is *Innovative Pathways to Thriving Communities: People, Technology, and Place-based Collaboration*.

**REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE** 

### 2025 Rural Sociological Society (RSS) Annual Meeting

In-Person: July 30 - August 2, 2025, Hilton Salt Lake City Center, Salt Lake City, Utah

Theme: Nourishing the Future of Rural Sociology: Using Sociological Insights and Interventions to Secure Our Legacy.

View Annual Meeting Information

#### 2025 NETtra Conference

#### In-person: October 7-10, 2025, Mill Falls at the Lake Resort, Meredith, New Hampshire

Tourism is all about making connections – between people, places, cultures, and time. The 2025 NETtra Conference will connect two organizations comprised of tourism researchers, educators, and practitioners in a first-time collaboration between the Northeast Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association (NETTRA) and the National Extension Tourism (NET) Network, hosted by the University of New Hampshire.

**ACCESS CONFERENCE INFORMATION** 

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