

Routes, Relationships & Regional Reach: Designing the Next Generation of Food Distribution

(90 Minute Session)

We mapped the system. Now we're building it. Join the conversation on a shared route hub that connects partners

across West Virginia and into the Mid-Atlantic.



Thanks to Our Funders and Partners!



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"Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture."



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**Appalachian
Regional
Commission**

**Mountains to Metropolis: Connecting
West Virginia Value-Added Products to
Regional Markets**



Facilitators



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Facing Hunger
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Food and Farm
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Current Regional Food System Partnership Partners

- West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition
- Mountain State Co-Hop
- Facing Hunger Food Bank
- Garrett Growers Cooperative
- Project Healthy Kids
- West Virginia University – Institute for Community & Rural Health
- WV Maple Syrup Producers Association
- West Virginia University-Parkersburg
- JarHead Farms

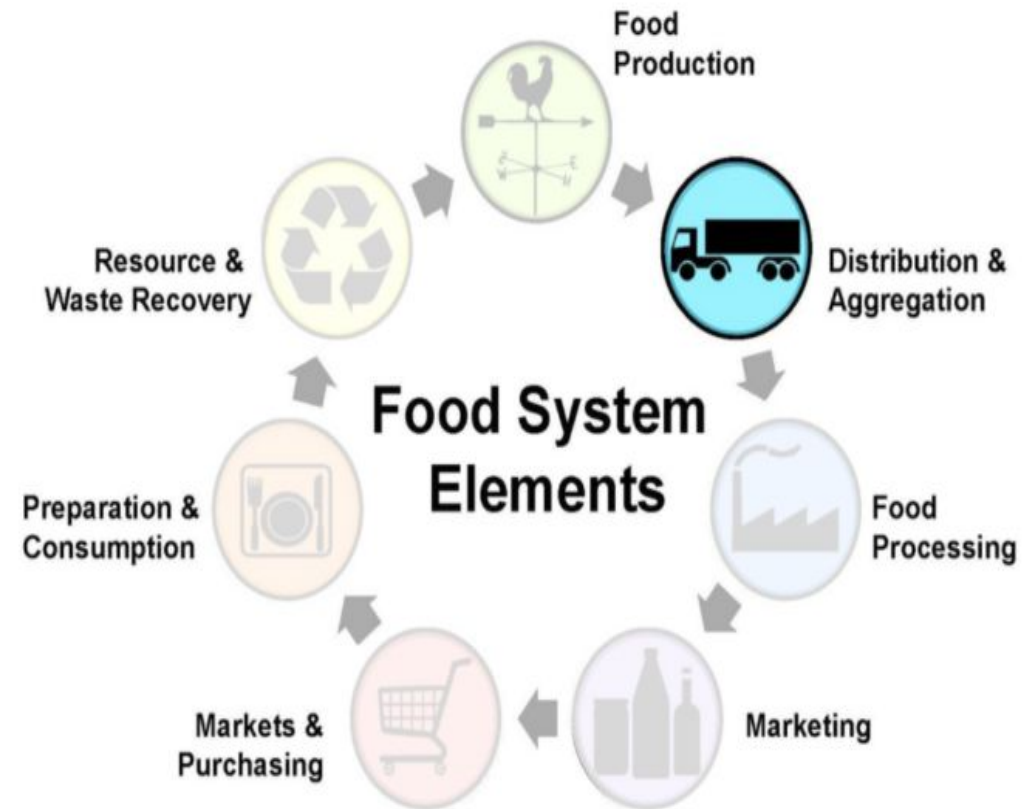
Presentation Roadmap

- Project Overview
- Understanding the Current Aggregation & Distribution Landscape in Region
- Breakout Groups!
- Big Takeaways

- Housekeeping
 - 90 minute session
 - Parking Lot

What is Aggregation & Distribution (A&D)?

- **Aggregation** refers to the process of collecting products from various producers into larger quantities.
- **Distribution** involves the logistics of delivering these aggregated products to retailers or consumers.



Adapted by Christy Shi, Center for Environmental Farming Systems.

From: Wilkins, J. and Eames-Sheavly, M. Discovering the Food System; An experiential learning program for young and inquiring minds. Cornell University, Departments of Nutritional Science and Horticulture. <http://www.discoverfoodsys.cornell.edu/>

Mountains to Metropolis

The Challenge Small-scale value-added producers in West Virginia lack the aggregation and distribution infrastructure needed to reach regional markets, a critical gap in mid-tier value-chain coordination.

Who We Bring Together Food and agriculture businesses, nonprofits, and charitable food organizations working as cross-sector partners.

What We Are Building A robust distribution system that increases the reach and competitiveness of WV value-added products across the Mid-Atlantic region.

Why It Matters Improved economic viability and long-term sustainability for small-scale producers as demand for WV-made products continues to grow.

Project Objectives

- Objective 1:** Identify, build, and leverage strategic partnerships and networks among value-added producers, distributors, and retail entities within West Virginia.
- Objective 2:** Plan distribution systems to efficiently handle, process, and transport shelf-stable value-added products across the state.
- Objective 3:** Expand aggregation and distribution partnerships established in West Virginia to include broader partnerships across the Mid-Atlantic region.
- Objective 4:** Plan for the aggregation and distribution of West Virginia made value-added products to markets in at least 5 Mid-Atlantic Cities.

Breakout Groups!

A&D Partnership Development and Recruitment

1. Brainstorm potential partnerships and/or collaborations in West Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic Region
 - a. Who are the food distributors across the region that we could glean best practices and/or lessons learned about logistics?
 - b. Think outside the box! Example: Organizations with warehouse space willing to allow shared-use and gleaning information about price points, whether space is climate-controlled, and other pertinent details.
2. Identify market access points that could procure local food. Examples:
 - a. Grocery Stores
 - b. Restaurants
 - c. Retailers
 - d. Food hubs

Breakout Groups!

Asset & Logistical Mapping

1. Identify mid-tier value chain enhancements that offer improved capacity to transport products to market. Examples include:
 - a. For organizations involved in the aggregation and distribution of local products, describe any enhancements that have made logistics more efficient such as: installed walk-in coolers or purchased cold-tainers to allow for temperature controlled transport.
 - b. What are some lessons learned and potential gaps in the aggregation and distribution space in West Virginia and in the Mid-Atlantic region?
2. Identify distribution systems development such as coordinated routing or asset sharing. Examples include:
 - a. Mapping current partners and delivery routes to identify potential crossover and ability to share transportation.

Breakout Groups!

Technical Assistance Needs & Technology Gaps

1. Discuss additional funding and support for technical assistance or improved aggregation and distribution. Examples include:
 - a. Funding to purchase improved transportation for local food products within West Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic region.
 - b. Partner knowledge and/or certification gained through technical assistance funds such as Better Process Control School (BPCS) or business plan development.
2. Identify and discuss potential stakeholders to engage around:
 - a. New strategies (i.e. HACCP, improved packaging),
 - b. Technical knowledge about resources within the regional food system,
 - c. Knowledge about more efficient and effective distribution systems, and/or
 - d. New technologies to improve distribution
- 3.

Collaboration & Cooperation

- **Interested in becoming a Mountain State Co-Hop member:** please contact Jenn Brown @ sales@appalachiancellar.com or 681.332.0707
- **Interested in scaling your product (including raw product):** please contact Audra O'Dell @ aodell@wvfoodandfarm.org or 304.669.8973
- **Interested in becoming an aggregation and distribution partner:** please contact Sierra Cox @ scox@wvfoodandfarm.org or 304.482.2214

Please Complete Our Survey - Thank you!

