

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS & LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

REGIONAL PROFILE SERIES

US Census Geographic Division: East South Central



With support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and Michigan State University (MSU)'s Center for Regional Food Systems conducted a 2015 survey of local government activity around food systems. The survey sought to understand how local government policies, programs, plans, and other activities support food production, processing, distribution, access, or disposal. The survey was distributed to all counties and to all municipalities that are in ICMA's database, which generally includes those with populations of at least 2,500.

This series of briefings summarizes responses according to the nine geographic divisions as¹ defined by the US Census Bureau and provides complementary information from additional secondary data sources.

About the Region²

The East South Central region, comprised of Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee occupies 178,289 square miles of land in the southern United States to the east of the Mississippi River and contributes approximately \$841.3 million to the country's GDP. The region's 18.7 million residents account for 5.8% of the country's total population and are approximately 75% Caucasian, 12% African American, 8% Hispanic, and 3% Asian. Most are high school graduates (84.4%) and almost a third (23.3%) hold a Bachelor's degree or higher.

The region faces an unemployment rate of 8.9%. The median household income is lowest in the country at \$43,487 accompanied by a poverty rate of 19%. Aside from Tennessee (health care and social assistance), its main industry is manufacturing. With 38% of the region's land taken up by farms, just 1.8% of the civilian workforces works in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining industries.

Responses to 2015 ICMA-MSU Food Systems Survey



LEGEND

Survey response rate



¹ Note that while the Census defines "regions" as aggregated divisions/larger groups of states, we use the terms division and region interchangeably in this series.

² All demographic data from US Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, and US Bureau of Economic Analysis

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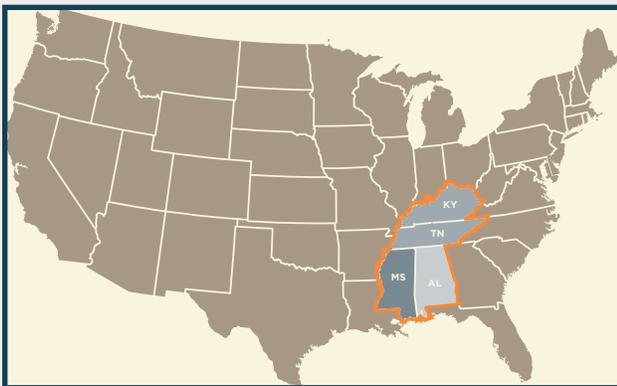
For more information: www.icma.org/food-system-profiles | www.foodsystems.msu.edu

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Overall Measures of Food Systems Support

While local governments may not necessarily consider food systems among their core responsibilities, there are innumerable opportunities for them to influence—intentionally or not—how food is produced, processed, distributed, accessed, and disposed in a community. Our survey included a list of 24 example activities local governments could support, such as farmers markets or other types of food retail, emergency food provision, agricultural or food-related economic development, or initiatives around health (see the subsequent “data by theme” discussion in this brief for the full set of activities). 73% of total local governments responding to this section of the survey indicated they support at least one, and an average of 3.44 of the 24 specific activities via policy, program, or matter of practice. In the East South Central region, the average number of activities supported by responding local governments in each state fell below the national average — except for Mississippi where local governments had the highest rate of support for at least one activity (80%) and supported an average of 4.4 activities.

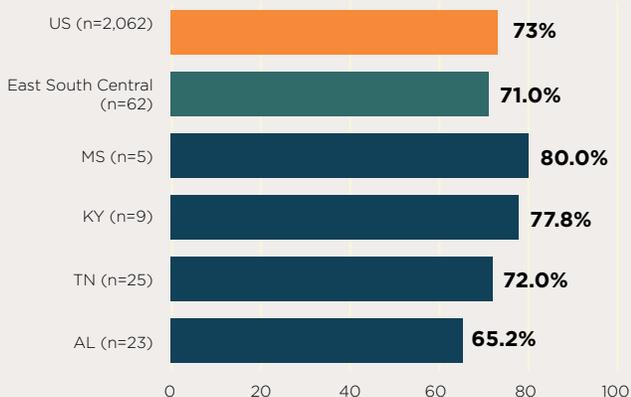
Rate of Local Governments Reporting Support for any Food Activity, 2015



LEGEND



Percentage of Local Governments Supporting Any Food Systems Activity



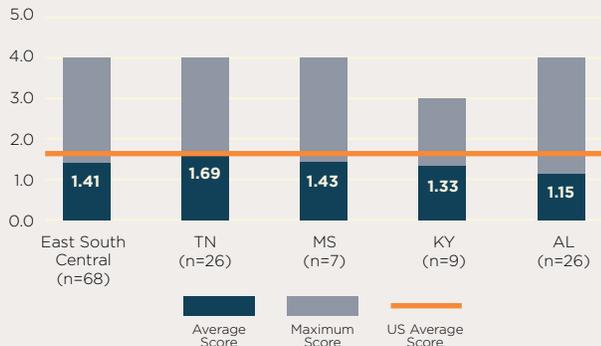
Average, Maximum Number of Food Activities Supported by Local Governments, 2015

	AVG NUMBER ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED	MAX NUMBER ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED
US (n=2,062)	3.44	24
East South Central (n=62)	2.31	11
AL (n=23)	1.70	8
KY (n=9)	2.00	5
MS (n=5)	4.40	10
TN (n=25)	2.56	11

We calculated an overall measurement, the **Support Score**, on a scale of 0-5 based on the local government’s responses indicating various forms of support for local food activities:

- Food systems are addressed in an official plan or strategy, such as a master plan, economic development plan, strategic plan, or other specific type (1 point)
- The local government participates in some form in a food council, commission or coalition (1 point)
- Local government staff provides at least informal, ad hoc support to local food efforts in the community or region (1 point)
- The local government provides policy or programmatic support to any of the 24 specific food systems activities included in our survey (up to 2 points, scaled to the total number of activities supported)

Average, Maximum Support Scores

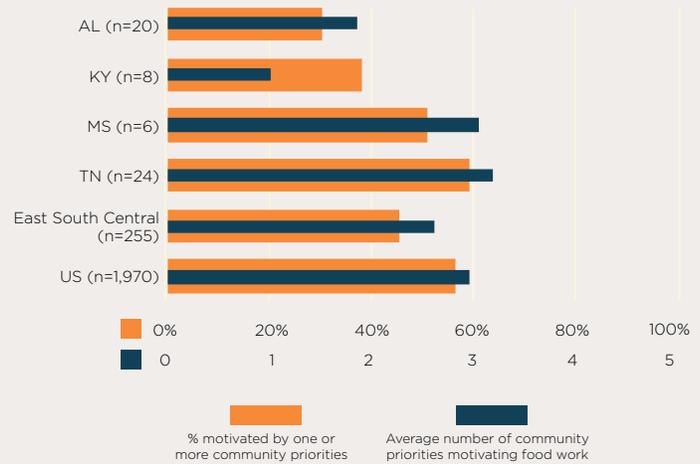


The average Support Score for the region and most of its states is below the national average of 1.69, except for Tennessee which matches the national average. The light green bars in the chart indicate the maximum score observed in each state and the region.

Local Government Motivations, Departments Responsible for Food Activity

Nationally, 56% of local governments associated their food-related plans, policies, and/or programs with at least one, and an average of 2.9 community priorities such as public health, community development, and economic development. This suggests that a majority of responding local governments see food as a topic that cuts across multiple community interests. In the East South Central region, only Tennessee's responses were similar to the national data. Generally though, East South Central's local governments were less motivated to address food issues. Additionally, only 44% of local governments in the region reported at least one department with responsibility for food issues, as compared to 55% nationwide.

Extent of Motivation to Address Food



The thick bars in this chart represent the rate of local governments in each state that indicated a motivation to address food issues. The thin bars indicate the average number of community priorities that local governments in each state linked to food systems.

	US	ESC
% local gov'ts where at least one dep't responsible for food programs or policies	55%	44%

IN PRACTICE

The City of Knoxville, Tennessee (2015 population: 183,066) formalized its attention to food systems and equity implications back in 1981, with a resolution to form an inter-agency task force that would become the Knoxville Food Policy Council in 1982—the first food policy council ever established in the country. In 2002, it was expanded by a resolution of the Knox County (2015 population: 444,348) Commission. Its current membership includes city and county elected officials, staff, and representatives from local nonprofits, the private sector, and the greater community. In 2013, the council presented research findings and recommendations regarding food access and food-related economic development to both administrative bodies. The local governments continue to work on implementing these recommendations, such as through the urban agriculture zoning ordinance passed by the city in 2015. For more information, see: <http://www.knoxfood.org/>.

DATA BY THEME

The following section contains primary and secondary data related to three thematic areas: community health and security, production and infrastructure, and economic development.

Within each theme, we developed an index reflecting the extent of local government support reported for related specific activities included in our survey. The specific activities included are listed under each theme; note that several appear in multiple themes (farmers markets, the most common activity supported overall, are included in all three). Average and maximum scores are provided for each index.



THEME: Community Health & Security^{2,3,4}

SECONDARY INDICATORS	US	ESC	AL	KY	MS	TN
% adults who are overweight or obese, 2015 ³	64.5%	n/a	68.7%	67.2%	70.1%	68.7%
% households receiving food stamps/ SNAP, 2015 ⁴	13.2%	17.1%	16.1%	17.3%	18.3%	17.1%
% household-level food insecurity and very low food security, average 2013–15 ⁵	13.7%	n/a	17.6%	17.6%	20.8%	15.1%
% children in households that were food insecure at some point during the year, 2014 ⁶	20%	24.1%	27.8%	22.3%	28.3%	20.5%
Estimated Children's Participation Rate in National School Lunch Program, 2015 ⁷	40.4%	51.9%	49.1%	53.9%	60.3%	48.6%

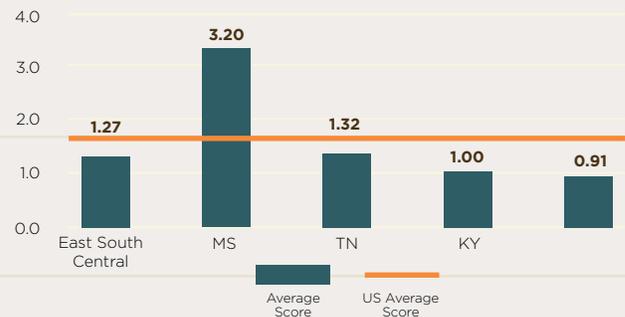
Index

This index is based on the following activities included in the ICMA-MSU survey:

- Establishing and maintaining farmers markets
- Establishing groceries in underserved areas
- Encouraging healthy food in corner stores
- Expanding acceptance of food assistance benefits
- Expanding purchasing power of food assistance benefits
- Providing healthy food in government facilities
- Promoting healthy eating, obesity prevention
- Restrictions on unhealthy food
- Emergency food provision
- Surplus food donation
- Providing land for community gardens
- Providing water for community gardens

Scores

A maximum score of 12 is possible for this index, and the national average is 1.67. While most states and the overall region score below the national average, Mississippi's average score of 3.2 exceeds the national average.



IN PRACTICE

In the City of Indianola, Mississippi (2015 population: 10,281), the local Main Street program—an arm of the Chamber of Commerce, of which the city is a member—received funding from the USDA to develop its farmers market. The funding allowed the market to accept food assistance benefits via vouchers and through an EBT terminal, improving healthy food access for all community residents. Both the city and Mississippi extension partnered in promoting the healthy eating campaign launched in conjunction with the new market.

5

3 Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts

4 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

5 USDA Economic Research Service, using data from the December 2013, 2014, and 2015 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements

6 Annie E. Casey National Kids Count Database

7 Calculated using USDA Food and Nutrition Service and US Census data



THEME: Production & Infrastructure

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SECONDARY INDICATORS	US	ESC	AL	KY	MS	TN
Land in square miles, 2010 ⁸	3,531,905	178,289	50,645	39,486	46,923	41,235
Number of farms, 2016 ⁹	2,060,000	222,800	44,000	76,000	36,200	66,600
% land in farms, 2012	40.3%	38%	27.5%	51.0%	35.6%	40.9%
Civilian workforce 16 years and over by industry: Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining, 2015 ¹⁰	2.0%	1.8%	1.7%	2.5%	2.9%	1.0%
% of principal farm operators classified as "beginning famers" (<10 years of operation), 2012 ¹¹	22.1%	22.1%	18.2%	23.8%	21.4%	22.4%
Market value of agricultural products directly sold for human consumption, 2012 ¹²	\$1.3 billion	n/a	\$9.1 million	\$16.4 million	\$4.2 million	\$19.1 million

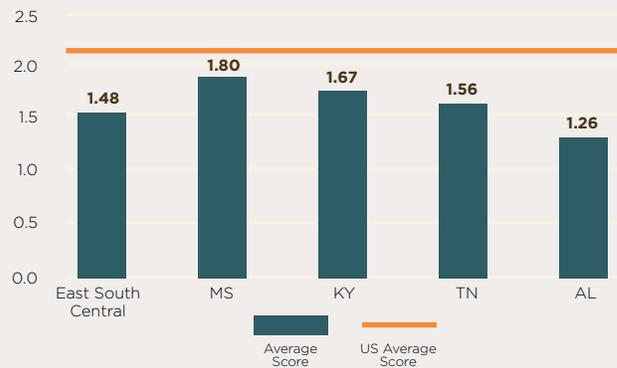
Index

This index is based on the following activities included in the ICMA-MSU survey:

- Establishing and maintaining farmers markets
- Providing land for community gardens
- Providing water for community gardens
- Encouraging green roofs, edible landscaping
- Farmland preservation
- Support for value-added processing
- Promoting composting
- Keeping of residential/urban livestock
- Allowing sales at farm stands, gardens, etc.
- Creating/operating food hubs
- Encouraging food trucks, mobile vending, pop-up food businesses

Scores

A maximum score of 11 is possible for this index, and the national average is 2.18. The entire region scores below the national average.



IN PRACTICE

The Town of Unicoi, TN (2015 population: 3,598) worked for approximately a decade to develop the Mountain Harvest Kitchen, which broke ground in 2015 and opened for business in 2017. This 4,000-square foot commercial kitchen and business incubator offers food processing, preparation and storage space, in addition to technical assistance and training for food entrepreneurs. It is also envisioned that the facility will be able to support farm to institution efforts in the region, helping to supply food to local schools, colleges, and correctional facilities. The town leveraged \$1.2 million in local, state, and federal funding to bring the project to fruition. For more information, see: <http://www.unicoitn.net/mountain-harvest-kitchen>.

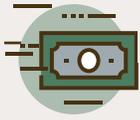
8 US Census Master Address File/Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing database

9 National Agricultural Statistics Service

10 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

11 Calculated using Census of Agriculture data, National Agricultural Statistics Service

12 Census of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service



THEME: Economic Development ²³⁴

SECONDARY INDICATORS	US	ESC	AL	KY	MS	TN
Median household income in the past 12 months (in 2015 Inflation-adjusted dollars), 2015 ¹³	53,889	43,487	43,623	43,740	39,665	45,219
People whose income in the past 12 months is below the poverty level, 2015 ¹⁴	15.5%	19.0%	18.8%	18.9%	22.5%	17.6%
Unemployment rate, 2015 ¹⁵	8.3%	8.9%	9.3%	8.4%	10.3%	8.4%
State minimum wage, 1/1/17 ¹⁶	\$7.25	n/a	none	\$7.25	none	none

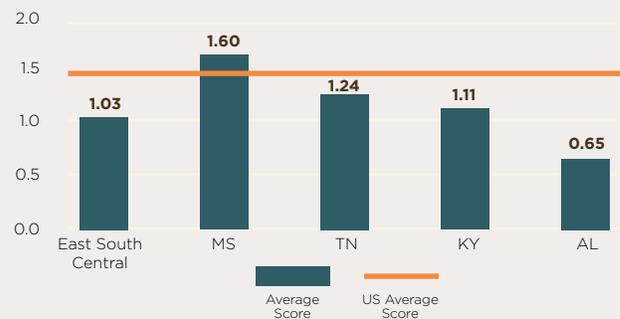
Index

This index is based on the following activities included in the ICMA-MSU survey:

- Establishing and maintaining farmers markets
- Buying local in government facilities
- Allowing sales at farm stands, gardens, etc.
- Creating/operating food hubs
- Food-related job creation
- Promoting agri- or food tourism
- Farmland preservation
- Support for value-added processing
- Encouraging food trucks, mobile vending, pop-up food businesses
- Food-related brownfield redevelopment

Scores

A maximum score of 10 is possible for this index, and the national average is 1.42. While most states and the overall region score below the national average, Mississippi's average score of 1.6 exceeds the national average.



13 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

14 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

15 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

16 National Conference of State Legislatures, from US Department of Labor and state web sites

IN PRACTICE

The Town of Bristol, Tennessee (2015 population: 26,674) launched a two-year pilot program to allow for and regulate food trucks and other mobile food vendors. The program is intended to help acquaint the city and the public with the benefits and challenges, including administrative needs, of allowing such businesses to operate in Bristol. Learnings are expected to inform future legislation. Food truck events held in the region have been touted as opportunities for both community celebration and promotion of small businesses, including local food producers and entrepreneurs.