

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS & LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

REGIONAL PROFILE SERIES

US Census Geographic Division: South Atlantic



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.

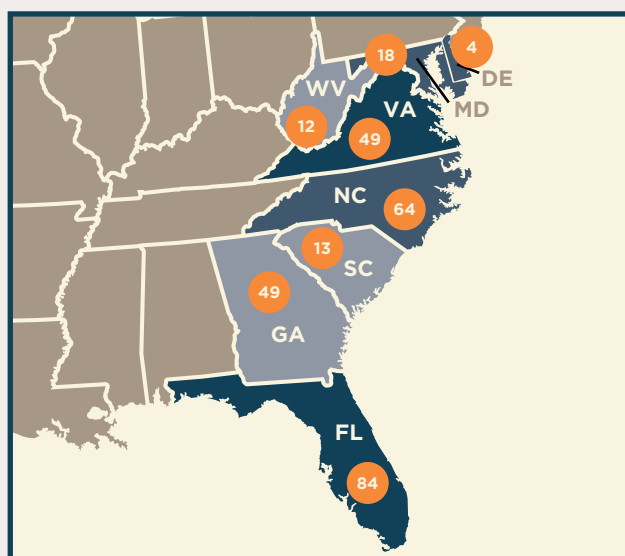
About the Region²

The South Atlantic region, comprised of Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, occupies 265,062 square miles of land in the southern United States on its east coast and contributes approximately \$3.4 billion to the country's GDP. The region's 61.9 million residents account for 19.3% of the country's total population and are approximately 59% Caucasian, 22% African American, 13% Hispanic, and 3% Asian. Most are high school graduates (86.8%) and almost a third (29.9%) hold a Bachelor's degree or higher.

The region faces an unemployment rate of 8.8% which is only slightly higher than the national rate at 8.3%. The region's median household income is lower than the national median (\$53,889) at \$51,670, accompanied by a poverty rate of 15.8%. Aside from the District of Columbia (professional & technical services), its main industries are health care and social assistance, and retail trade. Only 1.1% of the civilian workforce works in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining industries despite 27% of the region's land is taken up by farms.

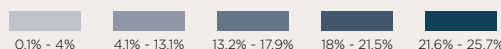
Note that because we did not receive a completed survey from the District of Columbia, it is excluded from the state by state comparisons covered in this brief.

Responses to 2015 ICMA-MSU Food Systems Survey



LEGEND

Survey response rate



= Total responses to survey

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

Contact: surveyresearch@icma.org

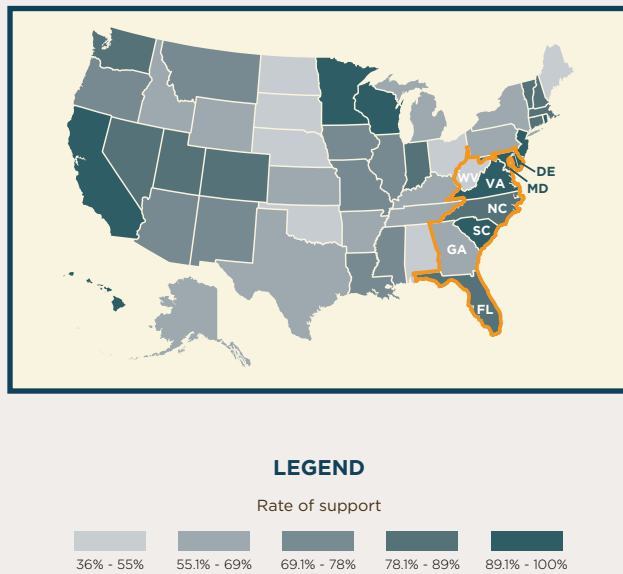
For more information: www.icma.org/food-system-profiles | www.foodsystems.msu.edu

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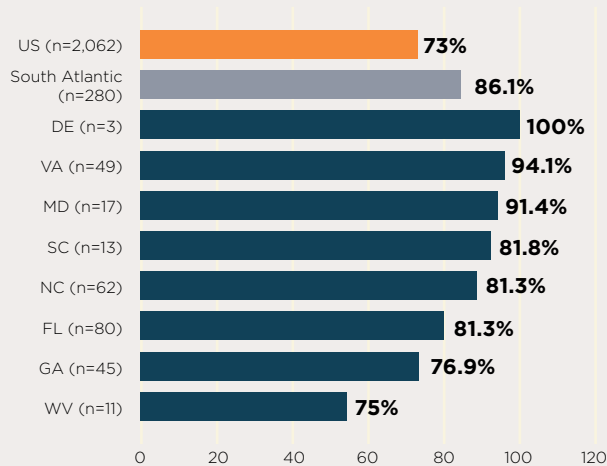
Overall Measures of Food Systems Support

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. Support was more even commonly reported in the South Atlantic region in every state except West Virginia. Virginia and Maryland were among the top five states overall with respect to average number of food system activities supported by their local governments, both nearly doubling the national average.

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



Percentage of Local Governments Supporting Any Food Systems Activity



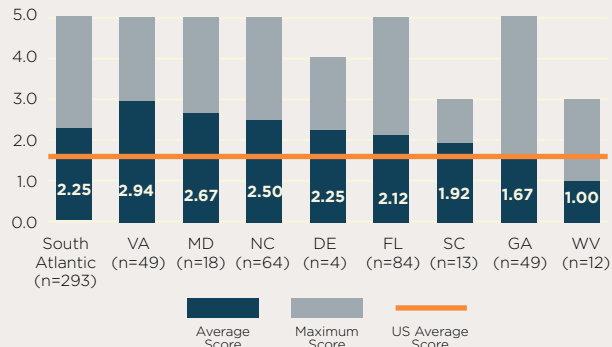
Average, Maximum Number of Food Activities Supported by Local Governments, 2015

	AVG NUMBER ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED	MAX NUMBER ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED
US (n=2,062)	3.44	24
South Atlantic (n=280)	4.81	21
VA (n=49)	6.63	21
MD (n=17)	6.41	11
NC (n=62)	5.05	17
DE (n=3)	4.67	7
FL (n=80)	4.54	19
GA (n=45)	3.64	15
SC (n=13)	3.31	7
WV (n=11)	1.55	7

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

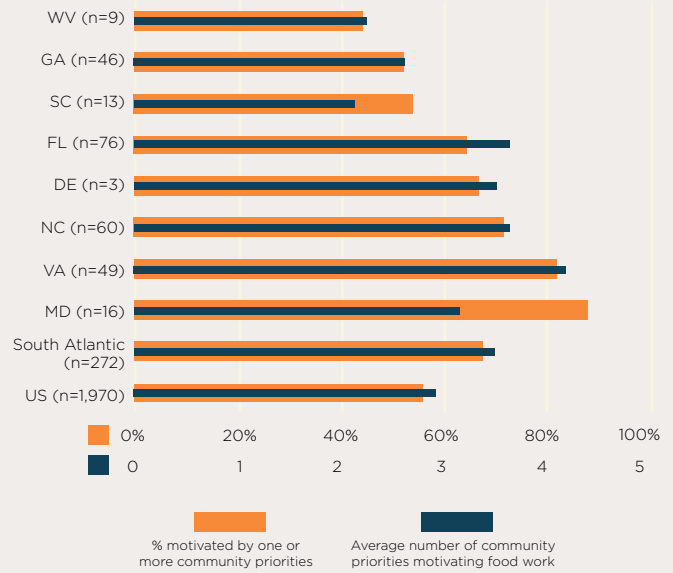


The overall average South Atlantic Support Score of 2.25 exceeds the national average Support Score of 1.69, and is the second-highest of all nine Census divisions. Virginia leads the region with an average Support Score of 2.94, which is among the top 5 state averages nationwide. With the exceptions of Georgia and West Virginia, all other states in the region also exceeded the national average Support Score. 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 South Atlantic region overall, we observed increased levels of motivation and activity: 67% of local governments reported a motivation to address food systems, and 68% indicated at least one municipal department with responsibility for food systems issues, which exceeds the national rate of 55%. In several South Atlantic states—Maryland, Delaware, Florida, North Carolina, and especially Virginia—local governments were more likely to link food activities with at least three different priorities.

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	SA
% local gov'ts where at least one dep't responsible for food programs or policies	55%	68%

IN PRACTICE

Loudoun County, Virginia (2015 population: 351,129) achieved the maximum support score of 5. The county references food systems and the rural economy in various planning and economic development strategies, and staff of multiple departments coordinate with nonprofits, the faith community, other nearby local governments on activities related to food and agriculture. Loudoun reported a particular interest in promoting food access among its most vulnerable residents, including through farmers markets which accept and match the value of food assistance benefits.

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	SA	DE	FL	GA	MD	NC	SC	VA	WV	DC
% adults who are overweight or obese, 2015 ³	64.5%	n/a	66.8%	64.1%	65.5%	65.0%	65.8%	66.2%	64.1%	71.1%	54.4%
% households receiving food stamps/ SNAP, 2015 ⁴	13.2%	13.9%	13.0%	14.8%	15.5%	10.9%	14.6%	15.1%	9.7%	16.1%	14.9%
% household-level food insecurity and very low food security, average 2013-15 ⁵	13.7%	n/a	11.9%	12.7%	14.9%	10.7%	15.9%	13.2%	9.8%	15.0%	13.2%
% children in households that were food insecure at some point during the year, 2014 ⁶	20%	19.8%	19.6%	20.6%	21.3%	17.3%	22.2%	17.4%	15.6%	21.5%	21.7%
Estimated Children's Participation Rate in National School Lunch Program, 2015 ⁷	40.4%	43.2%	44.9%	46.0%	51.3%	31.5%	41.5%	46.2%	32.4%	47.2%	61.8%

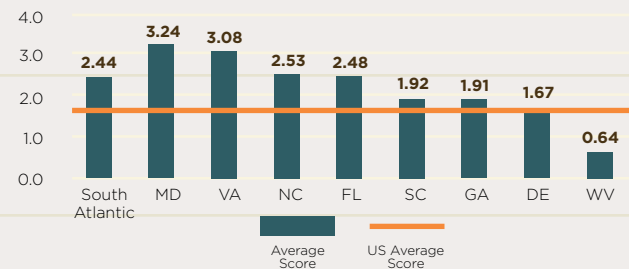
Index

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 the Community Health & Security Index and the national average is 1.67. Overall, the South Atlantic score of 2.44 is the second-highest of all nine Census divisions. Nearly all South Atlantic states meet or exceed the national average for this index, with just West Virginia falling below. Though the state's survey response sample size is limited, West Virginia's secondary data indicators suggest there could be opportunities realized from increased local government attention to activities included in this index.



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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

IN PRACTICE

The city of Salisbury, North Carolina (2015 population: 33,653) identified healthy food access as a priority in a community development plan for its West End neighborhood. Strategies recommended by the plan to improve food access include expanding the community garden on city-owned property, partnering to position a mobile market operating out of a repurposed city bus at key city locations, and pursuing opportunities for regional collaboration on healthy living initiatives. For more information, see: <https://salisburync.gov/Government/Community-Planning-Services/Plans-and-Studies>.



THEME: Production & Infrastructure

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SECONDARY INDICATORS	US	SA	DE	FL	GA	MD	NC	SC	VA	WV	DC
Land in square miles, 2010 ⁸	3.5 million	265,062	1,949	53,625	57,513	9,707	48,618	30,061	39,490	24,038	61
Number of farms, 2016 ⁹	2 million	241,600	2,500	47,100	41,800	12,300	48,000	24,500	44,800	20,600	n/a
% land in farms, 2012	40.3%	27%	40.1%	27.4%	25.8%	32.7%	26.4%	26.0%	32.0%	23.4%	0.0%
Civilian workforce 16 years and over by industry: Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining, 2015 ¹⁰	2.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.0%	1.0%	4.2%	0.1%
% of principal farm operators classified as "beginning famers" (<10 years of operation), 2012 ¹¹	22.1%	19.3%	16.7%	29.2%	24.7%	19.4%	2.6%	22.5%	22.3%	22.0%	n/a
Market value of agricultural products directly sold for human consumption, 2012 ¹²	\$1.3 billion	n/a	\$4.3 million	\$19 million	\$13.2 million	\$28 million	\$31.8 million	\$27.4 million	\$41.7 million	\$10.9 million	n/a

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

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

9 National Agricultural Statistics Service

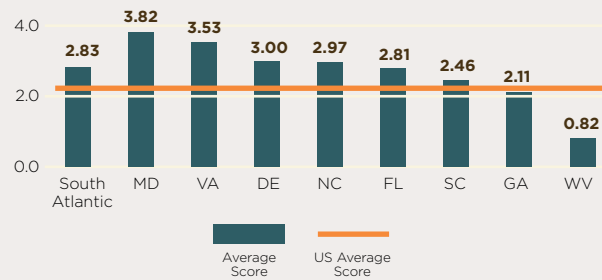
10 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

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

12 Census of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

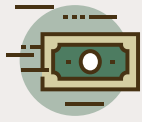
Scores

A maximum score of 11 is possible for the Production & Infrastructure Index, and the national average is 2.18. Overall, the South Atlantic score of 2.83 is the third-highest of all nine Census divisions. All South Atlantic states except Georgia and West Virginia exceed the national average for this index. Maryland's score of 3.82 is among the top five Production & Infrastructure scores in the entire country.



IN PRACTICE

Since the mid-1970s, Hernando County, Florida (2015 population 174,809), has owned and operated the Little Rock Cannery, a facility where members of the public—even non-residents—can pay for daily or annual access to its commercial-grade equipment and staff resources for processing of fruits, vegetables, meat and seafood. Users supply the ingredients, jars and lids. Housed in a Works Progress Administration building that has also housed at times a school, orphanage, and library, The Cannery is operated by the County's Parks and Recreation Department and also solicits donations to offset expenses.



THEME: Economic Development ¹²³⁴

SECONDARY INDICATORS	US	SA	DE	FL	GA	MD	NC	SC	VA	WV	DC
Median household income in the past 12 months (in 2015 Inflation-adjusted dollars), 2015 ¹³	53,889	51,670	60,509	47,507	49,620	74,551	46,868	45,483	65,915	41,751	70,848
People whose income in the past 12 months is below the poverty level, 2015 ¹⁴	15.5%	15.8%	12.0%	16.5%	18.4%	10.0%	17.4%	17.9%	11.5%	18.0%	18.0%
Unemployment rate, 2015 ¹⁵	8.3%	8.8%	7.7%	9.7%	9.7%	7.4%	9.4%	9.5%	6.5%	7.8%	9.6%
State minimum wage, 1/1/17 ¹⁶	\$7.25	n/a	\$8.25	\$8.10	\$5.15	\$8.75	\$7.25	none	\$7.25	\$8.75	\$11.50

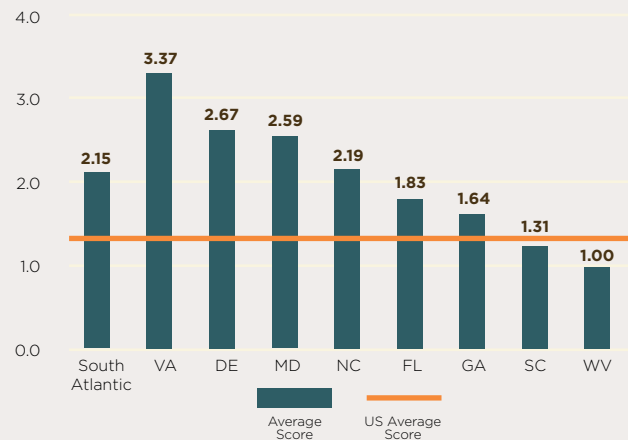
Index

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 the Economic Development index, and the national average is 1.42. Overall, the South Atlantic score of 2.15 is the second-highest of all nine Census divisions. All South Atlantic states except South Carolina and West Virginia exceed the national average for this index, with Virginia, Delaware and Maryland all ranking among the top 5 nationally.



IN PRACTICE

Numerous local governments in North Carolina view agriculture and food as an economic development opportunity. The Polk County (2015 population: 20,510) Agricultural Economic Development Office coordinates a wide range of activities to protect the viability of local food production. Examples include networking and training opportunities to build capacity of food and farm businesses, promotion of new market opportunities through direct to consumer sales or other channels, and the administration of two farmland preservation programs. Orange County (2015 population: 138,644) is one of several to sign on to a statewide 10% local purchasing campaign.

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