

## **Working with State and Local Agencies to Build Community Food Systems**

An educational session at the 2007 Southern SAWG Annual Conference  
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### **Presenters**

Bill Hodge  
Hodge Ranch & Carroll County Extension  
Carrollton, GA  
770-836-8546  
[bhodge@uga.edu](mailto:bhodge@uga.edu)

Kaycie Len Carter, Organizer  
Community Farm Alliance  
Frankfort, KY  
502-223-3655  
[cfarma@bellsouth.net](mailto:cfarma@bellsouth.net)  
[www.communityfarmalliance.org](http://www.communityfarmalliance.org)

### **Summary and Highlights**

The purpose of this session was to showcase some programs implemented at the state and local level that support community foods work. The two types of projects described were in Georgia and Kentucky.

**Bill Hodge**, the owner of Hodge Ranch, is also an extension agent in Carroll County, GA. Carroll County is about an hour west of Atlanta with around 1195 operating farms. In this county, farmland is a positive generator. Two of the initiatives currently in place are the Farmland Preservation Initiative and the Farmland to Rural Preservation Partnership. The purpose of the Farmland to Rural Preservation Partnership is to protect local farmland. Partners of the program include local citizens, farmers, extension services, and the Farm Bureau, among others.

The Cotton Mill Farmer's Market, in its 5<sup>th</sup> season, is a successful project that came out of the Farmland Preservation Initiative. This market has received funding from by the Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program and runs from April-October. The city supplies the space for the Farmer's Market and the weekly event has live music and chef demonstrations. Another program discussed by Hodge was the Farmers Fresh Food Network, founded in 2004. In 2006, there were approximately 22 members, 2 contract employees, and 5 paid positions. The network received support from Southern SAWG and the University of Georgia.

The Sustainable Growers School, taught through continuing education at the University of West Georgia, is the newest initiative that Hodge spoke about. The purpose of this school is to help people who want to reconnect with the land and gain growing knowledge. There are eight sessions, taught by farmers. For more information about the course and any other initiatives, contact Mr. Hodge.

**Kaycie Len Carter** is the rural policy organizer for the Community Food Alliance. CFA is a statewide, grassroots, non-profit organization. It began with a small group of farmers who met in a church in the 1980s. Currently, there are over 2,000 members. Carter's main point that she impressed on the audience was to think big. CFA has been intricately involved in Kentucky state legislation dealing with farm issues, and especially issues affecting tobacco farmers. At one time, tobacco represented over 1/3 of farming income in the state. House Bill 611 designated money from the tobacco settlement to go to former tobacco growers to diversify their crops and promote sustainable initiatives. CFA helped to educate farmers about the bill and lobby on the state level for a portion of the money to go into programs developed by farmers at the county level.

CFA has also established a new plan aimed at building the local food economy in urban centers. After all, 38% of Kentucky's population resides in Louisville. CFA sponsors Farmers Markets in areas with few grocery stores and works to build the power of people in communities. CFA has also helped to lobby for other initiatives including House Bill 669, which mandates that state agencies purchase food from local farmers.