

This handbook focuses on the integral role that U.S. farmers play in creating sustainable food projects that are at the heart of community food security.

Foreword

The *Food Security Begins at Home Handbook* is a new tool for use in a national initiative that has been gaining momentum in America the past decade. The U.S. Community Food Security Movement unites the forces of traditional anti-hunger organizations, that operate emergency programs such as food banks and soup kitchens, with coalitions of people intent on re-building America's community food systems. The nation's family farmers are at the forefront of this movement that views food as a right and not a luxury for all Americans, and promotes the sustainable production of local, nutritious food at economical rates which even low-income people can afford.

Funded by the USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program and compiled by the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG), this handbook is meant to serve as an instructional guide for communities seeking to improve their local food systems by creating food coalitions, food policy councils and food projects. The handbook ushers readers through the process of forming diverse community collaborations, conducting community food assessments, addressing food policy issues and conducting profitable projects that are the driving force of Community Food Security programs. Along the way, readers will find numerous references to community food system organizations and sources of free and low-cost informational resources they provide, as well as many examples and bits of wisdom from food coalitions and policy councils currently at work.

Because the handbook was compiled by Southern SAWG, an organization founded to serve family farmers in the 13 Southern states, it focuses on the integral role that farmers play in creating sustainable food projects that ensure a community's food security.

For that reason, we hope that organizations involved in the U.S. Community Food Security Movement view the handbook as a special tool that will help them form even stronger links with farmers in their locations in order to create an even wider variety of

successful food projects. For Southern farmers and their counterparts nationwide, the handbook is meant to spark their imaginations about the array of profitable CFS projects they can help to create that, in turn, will make their farms more economically sustainable.

In preparing the handbook, we studied the operations of more than 30 community food coalitions and food policy councils currently operating in the U.S., and reviewed a host of informational resources prepared by CFS organizations across the nation. The *Food Security Begins at Home* handbook is part of an initiative by Southern SAWG to provide informational resources, trainings, and technical assistance to individuals and organizations in developing community food systems. While a limited number of print copies of the handbook will be made available, the handbook will be offered as an instructional CD and as a “living document” on the SSAWG website at www.sawg.org. Additions will be made to the handbook as new developments occur in America’s community food systems initiative.

In addition to the creation of this handbook, Southern SAWG as part of this project will:

- Provide educational tracks in community food systems at its annual conferences which are held each January in the South;
- Host leadership trainings for individuals in the South who will assist communities to develop community food projects and proposals;
- Operate a telecommunications-based consulting service to meet the emerging needs of community food project organizers in the South; and
- Offer technical assistance to communities that will help them to develop and conduct successful Community Food Project programs.