

Local Food Advisory Council

2021 Annual Report



Prepared by:

The Local Food Advisory Council
The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food

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Letter from Local Food Advisory Council Co-Chairs



November 16th, 2021

Dear Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food, Craig Buttars, Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee, and Agriculture Advisory Board members:

Since forming in 2017, the Local Food Advisory Council has worked to strengthen Utah's local food economy, promote locally-owned farms, strong communities, and healthy eating, and improve food access for all Utahns.

The Council is made up of a diverse group of members from across the state representing the Utah Senate and House of Representatives, urban and rural agricultural producers, health professionals, retail and distribution representatives, as well as higher education. The formation of the council unified these diverse voices for the common purpose of promoting, supporting, and building our local food community, culture, supply chain, and infrastructure.

Today, more than a year and a half after its onset, COVID-19 continues to increase the public's awareness of the need for a secure, healthy, and sustainable local food supply. The Local Food Advisory Council has experienced success in creating and maintaining a social media site with 186 followers, and Senator Davis successfully petitioned the legislature for funding of two Utah Food Hub Startup Grants. In addition, the Double Up Food Bucks program continues to grow in participation. See details for these program successes in the attached report.

In 2021 the Council met publicly four times, April 22nd, June 17th, August 26th, and December 1st. In addition to the four required public meetings, we have hosted regular Local Food Advisory Council workgroup meetings.

Work continues in the five Council workgroups; Innovation in Distribution, Innovation in Production, Agricultural Land Preservation, Regulation, and Statewide Community Food Assessment. You will find reports from each of these workgroups in the 2021 Local Food Advisory Council Annual Report.

We would also like to thank the leadership at the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) and the Marketing & Economic Development Division for providing staff for the preparation and submission of this document.

Sincerely,

Senator Gene Davis
Senator Gene Davis Nov 18, 2021 1:58 MST 11/19/2021

Senator Gene Davis, LFAC Co-Chair

Stephen G Handy
Stephen G Handy Nov 18, 2021 1:45 MST 11/19/2021

Representative Steve Handy, LFAC Co-Chair

Purpose of the Local Food Advisory Council:

The Local Food Advisory Council (LFAC) was created by state statute (4-2-6) to contribute to:

- Building a local food economy
- Benefitting the state by creating jobs
- Stimulating statewide economic development
- Circulating money from local food sales within local communities
- Preserving open space
- Fostering the viability of family-owned farms
- Preserving and protecting the natural environment
- Increasing consumer access to fresh and nutritious food
- Providing greater food security for state residents

Local Food Advisory Council 2021 Membership

Co-Chair, Senate (D)

Senator Gene Davis

Email: gdavis@utahsenate.org

Co-Chair, House of Representatives (R)

Representative Steve Handy

Email: stevehandy@le.utah.gov

House of Representatives, Appointed (D)

Representative Clare Collard

Email: ccollard@le.utah.gov

Ex-officio: Utah Department of Agriculture & Food Designee

Commissioner Craig Buttars

Utah Department of Agriculture & Food

Email: craigbuttars@utah.gov

Ex-officio: Utah Department of Health Designee

Janae Duncan

Utah Department of Health

Email: janaeduncan@utah.gov

Animal Direct-to-consumer Producer

Bjorn Carlson

Blue Tree Farms

Email: info@bluetreefarms.com

Animal Direct-to-consumer Producer

Tamra Jorgenson

Cherry Creek Farms LLC

Email: etccfarms@gmail.com

Crop Direct-to-consumer Producer

Jack Wilbur

3 Squares Produce

Email: jack@3squaresproduce.com

Crop Direct-to-consumer Producer

Jordan Riley

Riley Farms

Email: jordandri@gmail.com

At-large: Urban Farming Representative

Alison Einerson

Urban Food Connections of Utah

Email: alison@downtownslc.org

At-large: Member of a Local Agriculture Organization

Garrick Hall

Utah Farm Bureau

Email: garrickahall@gmail.com

At-large: Anti-hunger Advocate

Gina Cornia

Utahns Against Hunger

Email: cornia@uah.org

At-large: Academic with Expertise in Agriculture

Dr. Kelsey Hall

Utah State University

Email: kelsey.hall@usu.edu

UDAF Staff for LFAC

Calli Forsyth

Marketing Specialist

Email: callinielsen@utah.gov

Linda Clark Gillmor

Director, Marketing & Economic Development

Email: Lgillmor@utah.gov

Local Food Advisory Council Workgroup Reports:

Agriculture Land Preservation Workgroup

Led by Council Member Bjorn Carlson from Blue Tree Farms, the overall purpose of this workgroup is to identify ways for the Local Food Advisory Council to support agriculture land preservation. 2021 meetings centered on identifying agriculture land preservation priorities and potential action items to pursue.

Agriculture land preservation is a complicated topic to define and address. This year the group identified the need to approach this topic from two angles - 1.) urban agriculture land preservation and 2.) rural agriculture land preservation. Workgroup efforts moving into 2022 will look at both urban and rural preservation. For 2022 the group plans to explore the following topics:

- Mapping primary agriculture ground in Utah
- City and County long-term commitment to community gardens
- Reducing regulation that inhibits farmers from being economically viable
- Development of agricultural land

Innovations in Distribution Workgroup

Led by non-voting Council Member Ruby Ward from Utah State University, this workgroup is our most established. Throughout 2021, this group has focused on finding ways to support and promote innovations in food distribution and access. This year, workgroup discussions and activities focused on Food Hubs and the opportunities and challenges of Hubs as an innovative distribution method. This year we:

- 1.) Our October Distribution meeting was held in partnership with the Salt Lake City Food Policy Council. We heard a presentation on the Food Hub Study Salt Lake City has commissioned for the past few years.
- 2.) We had guest speakers from several of the organizations who have expressed interest in/are working on a Food Hub. They spoke to the group about their efforts, and the challenges and opportunities they have faced.

Innovations in Production Workgroup

The Innovations in Production workgroup of the Local Food Advisory Council is one of four original workgroups formed by the Council to inform them on innovative ways to get more locally produced food to local consumers.

The Production workgroup was revamped in 2020. Councilmember Jack Wilbur volunteered to be the workgroup chair. Like all of the workgroups, membership in the production group is open to anyone and informal.

The Council has looked at innovative ways to produce more local food for local consumption including season extension and year-round growing techniques, new or high-value crops, and ways to add extra value to existing crops.

The work group's major effort in 2021 has been to support an introductory study completed and financed by Utah State University and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food's Utah's Own program to identify co-packing companies and opportunities for growers to add value to their products.

Statewide Community Food Assessment Workgroup

Led by Natalie Loots and Brad Belnap from the Utah Department of Health, this group was established in 2020 in response to many requests received from Local Food Advisory Council members and attendees. The workgroup held a full-day listening session in late 2020 that included a wide range of stakeholders from the Council, nonprofits, and other state agencies. The purpose of the listening session was to engage stakeholders in the process and to gain an understanding of the relevant data needs that a state-wide food assessment might explore.

Since then, there has been the creation of the Food Security Taskforce and other agency/state-level groups working to collect data on food security and the Utah food system. Salt Lake City Food Policy Council is also actively working on updating the Community Food System Assessment from over 10 years ago. There may be an opportunity to adapt this assessment for other local municipalities across the state. Given these developments, we decided to pause efforts in pursuing a statewide food system assessment for the time being until data needs and the scope of the assessment are determined.

Regulations Workgroup

Led by Symbria Patterson with Red Acre Farm CSA, the purpose of this group is to identify potential legislation that addresses the area of regulation in connection to the local agriculture & food industries. Any recommended legislation or concerns would be presented to the Local Food Advisory Council for review. This group also discusses current agriculture and food regulations and makes suggestions for potential changes that could positively impact our local food system.

In 2021 we hosted a meeting to hear from local agriculture & food producers regarding their comments and feedback surrounding Utah Department of Agriculture & Food regulations and inspections. As a result, Utah Department of Agriculture & Food leadership is committed to helping businesses understand the regulatory pathways more clearly.

Local Food Advisory Council Successes:

SNAP & Double Up Food Bucks

2021 has been another successful year for the SNAP & Double Up Food Bucks programs. As you can see in **Figure 1** below, provided by Hannah Martin from the Utah Department of Health (UDOH), there has been a continued increase in SNAP and Double Up distribution and redemption as compared to 2020. For reference, we have included the statistics from 2019 & 2020 (**Figure 2**) to show the increase from 2019 to 2021.

FIGURE 1

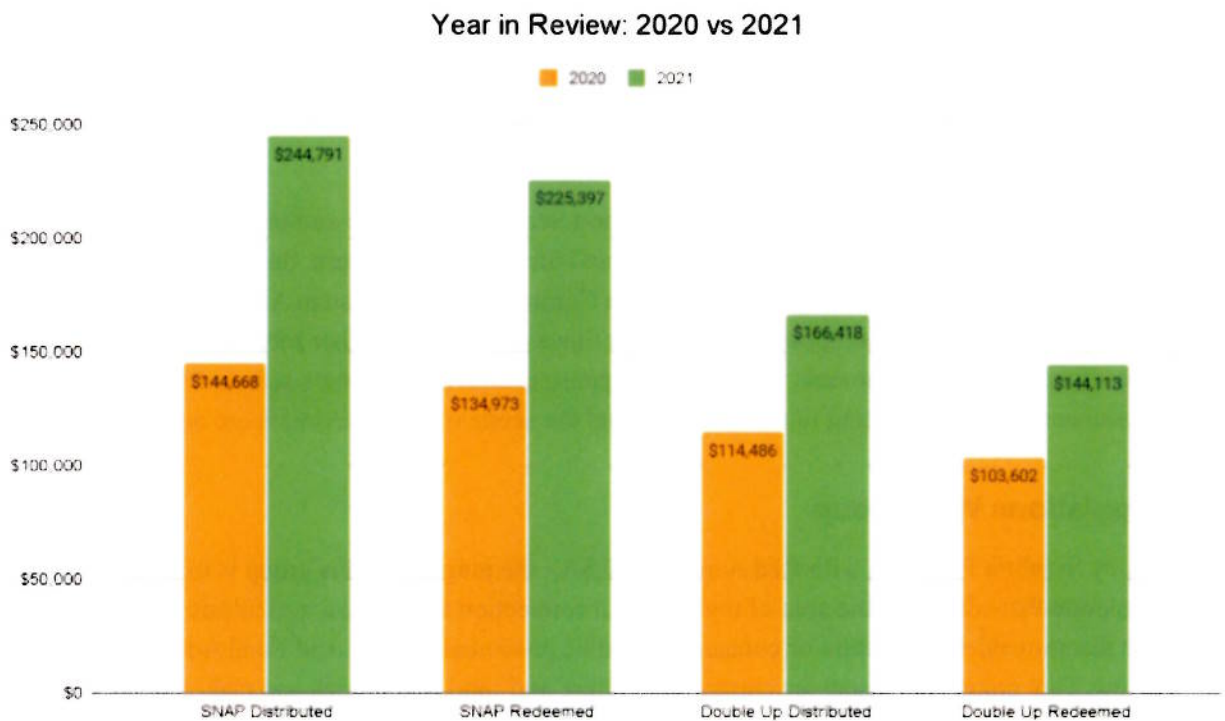


FIGURE 2



In 2021 the Utah Department of Health expanded these programs into two additional counties, while also adding five farmers markets and two farm stands to their network. They also added three year-round locations and launched four SNAP/Double Up for Community Shared Agriculture programs. They also saw a 39% increase in unique customers reached between 2020 and 2021. **(Figure 3).**

Please note, these numbers reflect a report provided in November 2021. These numbers are expected to change before the end of the year final reporting is completed.

FIGURE 3



Local Food Hub Startup and Development Grant Funding

Senator Davis was successful in his appropriation request for the Local Food Hub Startup and Development Grant Funding (\$112,500). The competitive review process for this grant was managed by the Utah Department of Agriculture & Food.

The Utah Department of Agriculture & Food received six eligible applications for a total of \$366,701 in requests, with only \$112,500 being available for consideration. Each of these applications was reviewed by a committee, based on the following criteria which were published on Ag.Utah.gov/foodhubgrant :

- Cost match by the applicant
- Readiness of project (i.e. own or lease building and/or land, plumbing or utilities available, square footage of storage, processing, or refrigeration space, have financing, etc.)
- Understanding of “food hub” concept
- Understanding of food production and market demand
- Demonstration of ability to increase profit for agricultural producers
- Demonstration of available sales markets
- Demonstration of ability to meet state law and local regulations
- Innovative method(s) of gathering, storing, and distributing locally grown foods

The two highest-ranking applications have been awarded funding from the Local Food Hub Startup and Development Grant and are in the process of entering into an agreement with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food.

Local Food Advisory Council Facebook Page

Our [Local Food Advisory Council Facebook](#) page was created in January of 2021. As of November 16th, we have 144 likes on the page and 186 followers. This is an 8% increase in followers since August of 2021. On average during our second quarter, we were able to reach 723 people over 28 days. Moving into 2022 we are exploring the possibility of allocating funding for our social media efforts to increase our outreach and engagement. Content posted on this page spans a variety of local food system topics; including, council and workgroup activities and discussion, agriculture & food tips, instructions, and stories, and other agriculture & food-focused posts. We use graphics, images, videos, website and article links, and page mentions to share our content. Below are some examples of our posts:



Utah Local Food Advisory Council

Posted by Kelsey Hall
Wednesday at 4:00 PM · 🌐

With the amount of farmland in Utah decreasing and a growing population, as well as being in the midst of extreme drought, we need innovative farming solutions. Luke Petersen, the director and editor of the Salt Lake Tribune Innovation Lab, explored how a greenhouse in Mona, Utah is using vertical farming to grow 750 acres worth of tomatoes with a fraction of land and water that would normally be required. Find out more about this innovative farming method at the link below. [#Utah #Agriculture](#)



SLTRIB.COM

This Utah greenhouse can grow 750 acres worth of tomatoes using a fraction of the land and water



Utah Local Food Advisory Council

Posted by Kelsey Hall
Thursday at 4:00 PM · 🌐

Farmers and ranchers: do you want get involved in farm to school but aren't sure where to start? Or just curious about what it's all about? [Utah Farm to Fork](#), Utah's arm of farm to school, has a 30-minute online course that covers the basics. Start the course here: <https://usbe.instructure.com/courses/74>. [#UTFarm2Fork](#)





Utah Local Food Advisory Council

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Posted by Kelsey Hall
Tuesday at 4:00 PM

The 2021 Apple Crunch was a success! Kate Wheeler from [Utah Farm to Fork](#) shared the results with us. Thirty-nine organizations across the state celebrated Farm to School Month in October by crunching into locally grown apples. There were 78,848 participants including children, k-12 students, and adults. Overall, \$24,802 was spent on Utah-grown apples. Learn more about the Apple Crunch and Utah Farm to Fork at: <https://www.utfarmtofork.org/>. #UTFarm2Fork #AppleCrunch



Virtual Meetings

Finally, all meetings during the 2021 Local Food Advisory Council season were held virtually. In holding these meetings virtually we were able to comply with COVID-19 guidelines to ensure the safety and health of our Council members. We were also able to keep the meeting accessible to the public by streaming on Facebook Live through the Utah Department of Agriculture & Food Facebook page and by providing meeting minutes and a video recording of each meeting on the Public Notice Website.

Statement of the Local Food Advisory Council's Top 2022 Legislative Priorities:

Farm-to-School Legislation

Representative Handy and the Utah State Board of Education are seeking an appropriation for designated farm-to-school staff at the Utah Department of Agriculture & Food, Utah Department of Health, and the Utah State Board of Education.

The goal of this bill is to institutionalize farm-to-school at the state level by providing state-level support for farm-to-school by creating farm-to-school staff positions and by formalizing the state farm-to-school network and the Utah Farm to Fork Taskforce. Research shows a strong correlation between state farm-to-school positions and school district participation in farm-to-school activities. Currently, the Utah State Board of Education is the only state agency with a full-time employee dedicated to farm-to-school activities, making it challenging to establish cross-sector collaboration.

The state network is an essential piece of this because farm-to-school sits at the intersection of multiple sectors, including education, public health, economic development, and the environment. The structure and coordination that a farm-to-school network creates allows stakeholders to leverage their organizational capacity and resources to work towards common goals and reduces the duplication of efforts.

5-Year Reauthorization of the Local Food Advisory Council

During the upcoming session, Representative Handy and Senator Davis will seek a 5-year reauthorization of the Local Food Advisory Council. We look forward to continuing the work we have started, a summary of which has been provided in this report. With the advent of the Salt Lake Food Policy Council and Ogden Food Policy Council, increased consumer awareness of our local food system due to the complications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and a statewide increase in agriculture & food system support, we are moving into 2022 poised for continued success as we work through local food system issues and identify solutions to strengthen Utah's local food economy, promote locally-owned farms, strong communities, and healthy eating, and improve food access for all Utahns.

Support for Agriculture and Food Infrastructure Legislation

Much of the Council discussion held throughout 2020 and 2021 has centered on the need for agriculture & food infrastructure. The Local Food Advisory Council supports the Utah Department of Agriculture & Food request for ARPA funding of nearly \$31 million to fund agriculture infrastructure (including an amount for food hubs as well as funding for new and expanded infrastructure of meat, poultry, and fruit and vegetable processing facilities.) The Utah Department of Agriculture & Food has not yet heard how and whether these requests have been prioritized.

