



Memphis and Shelby County Office of Sustainability

A 4-STAR Sustainable Community

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Delta Roots, the Mid-South Regional Food System Plan Released

Tri-state regional food system assessment was conducted as a joint effort of East Arkansas Planning and Development District and Memphis-Shelby County Office of Sustainability

This week, the East Arkansas Planning and Development District (EAPDD) and the Memphis-Shelby County Office of Sustainability released *Delta Roots*, a Mid-South Regional Food System Plan aimed at improving healthy food access and the local food economy over the next 20 years.

The plan was initiated in January 2015 as an outcome of two independent three-year U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants. Both regional plans – reNew East Arkansas and the Mid-South Regional Greenprint – identified the bolstering of local food systems as core to increasing regional sustainability and livability.

The resulting regional food plan prioritizes critical strategies to support food business growth, improve healthy food access, and promote environmental sustainability throughout the Mid-South region. The analysis and recommendations within this report have been vetted extensively with stakeholders throughout the region, including industry members at all parts of the food value chain.

John Zeanah, Administrator of the Memphis-Shelby County Office of Sustainability found the partnership of with EAPDD for this project to be mutually beneficial. “Both regional initiatives saw increasing access to healthy foods as an important goal,” said Zeanah. “Working together, we were able to think broadly about improving the regional food system across urban and rural areas.”

“The regional food system assessment gives East Arkansas and the Mid-South region a blueprint for how our food economy can grow, particularly in the areas of local produce and meat and value added agriculture,” said Melissa Rivers, Executive Director of East Arkansas Planning and Development District.

The plan defines regional strategies spanning 15 counties across Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi and recommends focus of regional investment on the highest priority food business growth, access, and sustainability strategies. Today, local produce, meats, and poultry account for a small fraction of the Mid-South’s food system activity. The Mid-South region’s relatively low concentration of small farms challenges local produce or specialty crop strategies. However, the plan builds how ongoing enabling activity focusing on supporting produce farmers and low income consumers.

The vision of *Delta Roots* centers on healthy local crops, livestock, and value-added foods for family-sustaining income and nutrition. In 2035, the plan envisions a Mid-South Region where: specialty crops, livestock, and local food processing offer family-sustaining income for our residents; fresh and healthfully preserved local produce is accessible to, and chosen by, individuals at all income levels; and waste is recovered for productive reuse throughout our food system.

The final document can be seen: <http://midsouthgreenprint.org/resources/mid-south-regional-food-system-plan/>

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