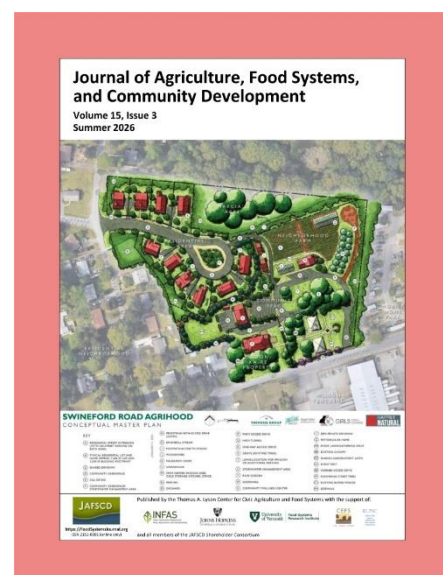


IN THIS ISSUE DUNCAN HILCHEY

Food systems and community well-being



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The summer 2026 issue of the *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* presents a diverse collection of scholarship and commentary spanning food security, food safety, entrepreneurship, markets, governance, resilience, climate adaptation, Indigenous food sovereignty, and community development. Together, these contributions illustrate both the complexity of contemporary food systems, and the wide range of approaches researchers and practitioners are advancing to address persistent social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Our cover features the proposed Swineford Road Agrihood outside Richmond, Virginia, U.S., an ambitious collaboration among affordable housing, food justice, and community development organizations seeking to create a neighborhood centered on affordable homes, urban agriculture, and shared community space. As the project moved through the zoning process, however, it encountered repeated delays, shifting requirements, and growing conflict with local officials, leading project leaders to argue that the proposal had become entangled in broader questions of race, exclusionary land-use practices, and community self-determination. The case illustrates how efforts to integrate housing, farming, and social infrastructure into a single community vision can expose deeper tensions surrounding equity, governance, and the future of local development. (Planview image was provided by Duron Chavis.)

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AI Use Declaration

I produced this editorial with assistance from ChatGPT (ver. GPT-5.5) to analyze themes and improve syntax and grammar.

On Our Cover

The proposed Swineford Road Agrihood outside Richmond, Virginia, U.S. Planning image courtesy of Duron Chavis.

We begin this issue with another insightful contribution from senior JAFSCD columnist **John Ikerd**. In *The need for radical changes in community development policies*, Ikerd argues that sustainable communities cannot be built through fragmented, program-specific government initiatives. Instead, he calls for a fundamental restructuring of community development policy that shifts decision-making authority and flexible public investment to communities that—since they are locally governed—are capable of integrating food systems, housing, health, economic development, and environmental stewardship into comprehensive place-based strategies.

Next, we have the second installment of the Value Chain Coordination Editorial Circle column, by **Anaya Hall** and **Laura Edwards-Orr**, who examine the role of relationship-based coordination in strengthening regional food systems. In *Adaptive by design: Flexibility and resilience in regional food systems*, they make the case that value chain coordination constitutes the "soft infrastructure" of regional food systems, including the trust, technical assistance, place-based knowledge, and collaborative relationships that enable markets to respond to changing economic, environmental, and policy conditions. They further point out that these essential contributions are often overlooked by conventional performance metrics, making the development of more appropriate evaluation frameworks critical to demonstrating the long-term value of coordination in building resilient regional food economies.

JAFSCD's Value Chain Coordination Editorial Circle has also produced its first two-page VCC Program, Policy, and Practice Brief! In *Unlocking institutional food purchasing: Contract strategies for values-based sourcing*, **Anaya Hall**, **Heather ("H") Nieto-Friga**, **Kathryn Barr**, **Elliott Smith**, **Ashton Potter**, and **Jodee Smith** translate complex contracting systems into practical guidance for practitioners by highlighting four key levers for expanding local food procurement. See the standalone brief at the JAFSCD website:

<https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.briefs.vcc01>

The columns are followed by three timely viewpoints that explore important policy questions from complementary perspectives. In *Four points to reframe the debate on public supermarkets in New York City*, **Valerie Imbruce** argues that proposals for publicly owned supermarkets should build upon existing neighborhood food businesses and community food infrastructure rather than relying primarily on large-scale public retail solutions. In *What is the role of national policies in fostering local food supply chains?*, **Chyi-Lyi (Kathleen) Liang** and **Timothy Mulrooney** examine how national policies can strengthen local food systems through better coordination among federal, state, and local initiatives. In *Improving nutrition in Massachusetts emergency food systems: A tiered tax credit and distribution standards approach*, **Bo Wang** proposes combining targeted tax incentives with nutrition standards to improve the *quality*, rather than simply the *quantity*, of food distributed through emergency food systems. Collectively, these viewpoints illustrate how thoughtful public policy and institutional innovation can strengthen food access, public health, and the resilience of local and regional food systems.

Across diverse geographies and disciplines, the following open-call papers demonstrate that resilient food systems depend not only on sound policies and technological innovation, but also on trust, collaboration, cultural knowledge, and community capacity.

Rachel Kelly, **Rich Pirog**, and **Jahi Johnson-Chappell** open this section with *Reflections on 10 years of "An Annotated Bibliography on Structural Racism Present in the U.S. Food System,"* a reflective essay documenting how the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems has developed and applied this widely used resource over the past decade.

Next, in *Understanding demand for agriculturally integrated neighborhoods: Characteristics, health behaviors, and design preferences among prospective homebuyers*, **Renée Umstattd Meyer**, **Emma Lewis**, **Kathryn Janda-Thomte**, **Meg Patterson**, **Rebecca Seguin-Fowler**, **Jason Carter**, and **Jay Maddock** find that prospective agrihood buyers are largely middle-income, educated, and diverse, with suboptimal health behaviors but strong interest in nature- and food-integrated living environments. These findings suggest that agrihoods may attract both health-conscious residents and those seeking environments that could support healthier lifestyles.

Natalie Minton, Robbie Pollard, Cameron Brown, Anne Cafer, and Meagen Rosenthal, in *A farmer-designed food assistance pilot program*, describe a community-based participatory research project in the U.S. Mississippi Delta that partnered with a cooperative of BIPOC farmers to co-design and deliver culturally appropriate food boxes to homebound older adults. Their findings demonstrate how farmer-led food assistance programs can simultaneously improve healthy food access, strengthen local agricultural livelihoods, and deepen community connections.

Next, **Garrett Broad, Yvette Ng, Jeanine Cava, Mahbubur Meenar, Kathia Ramirez, and Jose Spellman-Lopez**, in *Understanding caregiver perspectives to improve food security screening in healthcare settings: A focus group study*, explore how low-income caregivers experience food insecurity screening within healthcare settings, revealing how trust, communication, and community relationships shape participation in food is/as medicine initiatives.

Cassandra Nguyen and Laura Held, in *Food bank member agencies' orders change after implementation of culturally responsive labels and procuring practices*, show that relatively simple changes in food bank procurement policies and online ordering systems significantly increased the selection of culturally responsive foods by member agencies, illustrating how upstream institutional changes can improve food access for diverse communities.

Michelle Zuñiga, Mohsin Raza, Tara Bengle, Colleen Hammelman, and Elliott Royal, in *"It's not just about groceries": Understanding perspectives on a planned food co-op in West Charlotte, North Carolina*, demonstrate that residents view a proposed cooperative as far more than a grocery store, but as a potential hub for community life, education, and neighborhood revitalization.

Next, in *Atsalugpiaq awareness: Food agency of cloudberry subsistence to support Indigenous food sovereignty*, **Claire Friedrichsen, Lynn Marie Church, Jacqueline Cleveland, Sean Gleason, Sire Kassama, Mary Church, Willard Church, Frank Mathew, Miles Bavilla, Grace Hill, Eleanor Merrit, Warron Jones, Grace Hunter, Lucille Mark, Jonathon Hunter, Dorothy Mark, Margaret Roberts, Mathew Roberts, Catherine Beebee, and Jonathon Mark** expand the concept of food agency through participatory research with the Yup'ik community of Kuinerraq, Alaska, U.S., demonstrating how Indigenous food sovereignty depends upon cultural knowledge, ethics, autonomy, and lived relationships with the land.

We offer two studies on food safety, examined from both producer and institutional perspectives. **Elma Kontor-Manu, Maria Marshall, Renee Wiatt, and Yaohua Feng**, in *Impacts of the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule exemptions and behavioral insights among small-scale produce growers*, investigate how exempt produce growers understand and navigate food safety requirements, emphasizing the importance of trust-based outreach and practical education. And in *Strengthening institutional capacity for fresh food safety governance: Evidence from Indonesia's regional food safety authorities*, **Dhany Hermansyah, Machfud, Muhammad Romli, and Muslich** identify institutional strategies needed to strengthen regional food safety governance, while reinforcing traditional markets as trusted channels for fresh food distribution.

Markets, entrepreneurship, and value chain development form another major theme in this issue. **Kristin Krokowski**, in *Farmers market manager networks for sustainability, support, and innovation*, demonstrates how regional farmers market manager networks foster collaboration, mentoring, innovation, and organizational resilience. In *Agri-food entrepreneurs' perceptions of the infrastructure to support their business: A West of Ireland analysis*, **Maria McDonagh, Maria Staunton, and Lisa Ryan** explore the financial, social, and institutional infrastructure supporting rural agri-food entrepreneurs. **Mitsuhito Hosaka, Mitsuyo Uematsu, and Hironori Yagi**, in *Real-time image sharing system: Urban farm stand management facilitated by information resources and market orientation*, show how digital technologies strengthen direct marketing and operational decision-making among urban farm stands. **Pratyosh Kashyap, Justin McElderry, Kim Niewolny, and Weslynn Ashton**, in *Advancing wholesale market access: Technical assistance to support Black, Hispanic, and Tribal Producers*, identify the culturally responsive technical assistance needed to expand wholesale market opportunities for

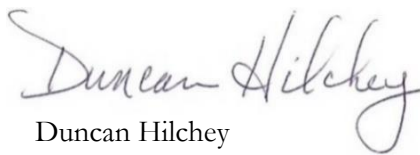
historically underserved producers. **Andile Nomfundo Samkelisiwe Ngubane** and **Mfundo Mandla Masuku**, in *Promises and pitfalls: Small-scale farmers' perspectives on market access initiatives in Jozini, South Africa*, examine why many market access interventions fail to overcome structural barriers confronting small-scale farmers. And in *Improving USDA's public price and volume data for an equitable organic food value chain*, **Katie Butterfield**, **Ryan Galt**, and **Houston Wilson** assess how public market information can better support equitable organic value chains.

Resilience, adaptation, and community capacity emerge as unifying themes across the final group of papers. **Cathy Rozel Farnworth**, **Anne Rietveld**, **Rachel Voss**, and **Angela Meentzen**, in *How gender norms shape opportunities for building resilience to climate change in low- and middle-income countries*, demonstrate how gender norms influence resilience pathways and argue for gender-transformative approaches that strengthen women's agency. **Lindsay Harris**, **Damon Chouinard**, and **Sarah-Patricia Breen**, in *Potential, precarity and persistence: What British Columbia's food hub network tells us about resilient food systems*, examine how food hubs simultaneously embody promise, precarity, and persistence in regional food systems. Finally, **Chiwoneso Tinago**, **Geoffrey Anguyo**, **Madison Scalleat**, **Naya Weeks**, **Kamugisha Arnold**, **Gopal Sankaran**, **Kimberly Johnson**, **Zeinab Baba**, **Patricia Davidson**, and **Whitney Katirai** illustrate how small animal husbandry can strengthen household nutrition, livelihoods, and food security while building local community capacity in "Rabbit farming is easy": *Perspectives from rabbit farmers in Kabale, Uganda*.

We conclude the issue with five thoughtful book reviews that explore topics ranging from small-scale fisheries to pastoralism, sustainability, ranching culture, and community food growing. **Hannah Lewis** reviews *Climate Change, Small-Scale Fisheries, and Blue Justice: Fishscapes and Alternative Worldviews* by Sunil Santha. **Katie Mason** reviews *Hoofprints on the Land: How Traditional Herders and Grazing Animals Hold the Key to Restoring the World's Grasslands* by Ilse Köhler-Rollefson. **Obed Boitshepo Masege** reviews *We Are Eating the Earth: The Race to Fix Our Food System and Save Our Climate* by Michael Grunwald. **Alexandre Rehbinder** reviews *Cow Talk: Work, Ecology, and Range Cattle Ranchers in the Postwar Mountain West* by Michelle K. Berry. **Rose Jennings** reviews *The Practice of Collective Escape: Politics, Justice and Community in Urban Growing Projects* by Helen Traill. Together, these book reviews continue our commitment to introducing readers to important new scholarship from across the broad interdisciplinary landscape of agriculture, food systems, and community development.

Although this issue was assembled through our regular open-call submission process rather than around a single theme, the contributions collectively underscore the importance of institutions, relationships, and place in shaping resilient food systems. Across diverse settings, the authors demonstrate that resilient food systems are built not only through sound policies and technological innovation, but also through trust, collaboration, and cultural knowledge, which provide the foundation for enduring community capacity. 

Yours for food systems that contribute to community well-being,



Duncan Hilchey

Publisher and editor-in-chief