Farm-to-School (FTS) activity by holding a School-Farm Conference and an Imperial Valley Agriculture Tour.

**Use of Research:** My county is a rural county with large agricultural lands. However, its community has to pay more to purchase locally produced fresh vegetables through supermarkets because of a shortcoming in direct marketing and food supply chain. School and food pantries play important roles in supporting under-resourced families. Research showed Farm-to-School activities benefit all partners in a way to build a healthy food system.

**Target Audience:** Teachers, nutrition educators, school food service directors and staff, food bank and food pantry staff, farm bureau director and growers were recruited through flyers, social media posts, direct emails, and personal contacts.

**Program Description:** Conference workshops topics and agricultural tour sites were decided by stakeholder advisory committee and participants survey results. Conference provided experiential learning opportunities for participants to engage in nutrition curriculum exploring, gardening, and increase their agricultural and food literacy.

**Evaluation Methods:** Post-workshop and post-agricultural tour evaluation surveys were administered.

**Results:** We had 40 participants in our county’s first farm-to-school conference representing teachers, food service directors, and administrators from 7 school districts, 7 organizations, 2 state government representatives, and 2 ag industry representatives. According to our post-conference survey, 96% of participants felt their FTS knowledge increased; 88% learnt a variety of curriculums; 96% felt more resourceful; 84% feel confident in engaging and facilitating farm-to-school activities; 88% said they plan to start integrate what they learnt to work; 66% indicated they planned to apply for a farm-to-school grant; 87% better understood local agriculture after the tour and 93% learned a variety of crops and research, and 72% increased confidence in finding community partners to collaborate.

**Conclusion:** We achieved our goal of bringing together stakeholders from the distinct parts of the food system to increase the capacity for farm-to-school activities.

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**Resilient Rural Food Access**

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*Background:* Food insecurity significantly threatens individual health and community economic vitality. Rates of food insecurity increased across all communities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pryor & Dietz, 2022). Local organizations that provide families with food support are potentially critical in supporting resilient rural food systems. Limited research has explored how these organizations in rural communities navigated pandemic-related food systems stressors.

**Objective:** To identify factors rural community key informants (CKI) use towards resilient rural food systems in rural communities in times of stress.

**Study Design, Settings, Participants:** CKI from family and food serving organizations in rural (RUCA 7+) communities across 13 states throughout the US were identified by local partners and recruited by the data collection team. Forty-three CKI participated in audio-recorded, open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Kansas State University’s IRB approved this study.

**Measurable Outcome/Analysis:** Interview questions and sample selection were informed by Food Systems Theory (Misselhorn et al., 2012) and Social Organizational Theory of Action and Change (Mancini & Bowen, 2013). Transcript analysis used the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) focusing on axial codes identifying resilient food system navigation. Codes were used to identify themes explaining resilient rural food systems under stress. County Health Rankings data provided further context and linkage to themes identified in data.

**Results:** Preliminary findings indicate rural food serving organizations experienced the following changes to functioning that supported resilience in their rural food systems during COVID-19: new collaboration strategies and community capacity building with existing and previous partners, uniquely influenced by relationships, rural community factors, and the nationwide influx of funding resources and increased focus on wrap-around supports (WAS) including partner organization or resource referral, and direct education opportunities.

**Conclusion:** Some organizations formed new partnerships and many with extant connections pivoted partnership strategies. Partnerships proved critical to connecting clients to WAS necessary for navigating community stressors. Community stressors resist complete identification yet building partnerships in advance helped food systems resiliently adapt. We will include a list of partners with whom rural organizations found value.

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