



Missouri Economy Indicators

Farms Selling Local Foods

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Given their short supply chains and local marketing focus, local food systems may be able to respond more nimbly to marketplace needs. Producers who sell food locally are a small and slowly growing share of the U.S. agriculture industry. In 2020, 147,307 farmers nationwide produced and sold \$9 billion of local food — a 3% increase in total sales from 2015 — according to USDA’s [Local Food Marketing Practices Survey](#). Of these sales, 33% originated from direct-to-consumer transactions, 21% from retailers and 46% from institutions and intermediaries. In Missouri, 5,175 producers sold local food in 2020, a 7% increase in producers from 2015.

In 2020, the majority (57%) of U.S. farms marketing local food directly to consumers operated in metropolitan counties. These farms generated 62% of all direct food sales. Roughly four in five farms making direct sales sold all their food within 100 miles of their farms. U.S. farm producers who sold local food directly were more likely to be female and younger than 34.

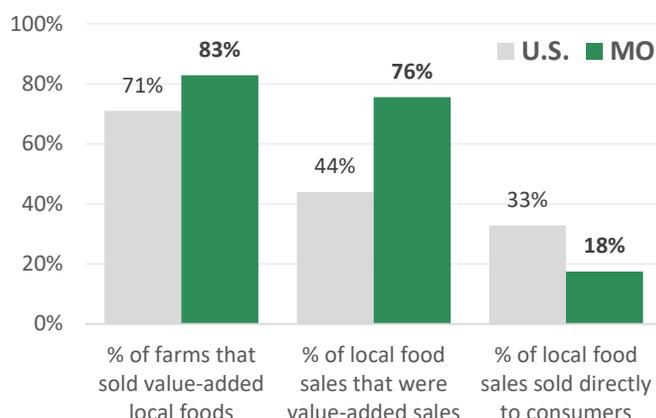
Missouri Farms Often Sell Value-Added Foods Locally

Compared with all U.S. farms that sold food locally in 2020, a greater share of locally focused Missouri farms added value through processing or packaging foods. (See figure.) Value-added goods represented 76% of Missouri local food sales, compared to 44% for the U.S.

Missouri farmers sell local food through direct-to-consumer transactions and other channels such as retailers, institutions, and intermediaries. These other channels accounted for more than 80% of all Missouri local food sales in 2020.

Nationally, California and states in the Northeast had the highest local food sales in 2020. Within the Midwest, Missouri had more farms selling local food than neighboring states that had known totals. (See table.) Comparing average 2020 local food sales per farm, Missouri ranked second highest in the region behind Illinois. It ranked higher than Iowa, Kentucky, and Tennessee. On average, Missouri producers selling local foods reported \$39,000 in annual 2020 sales.

U.S. and Missouri Local Food Sales, 2020



Source: MU Extension graphic using data from USDA NASS, 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey

Farms Selling Local Foods in 2020 by Midwestern State

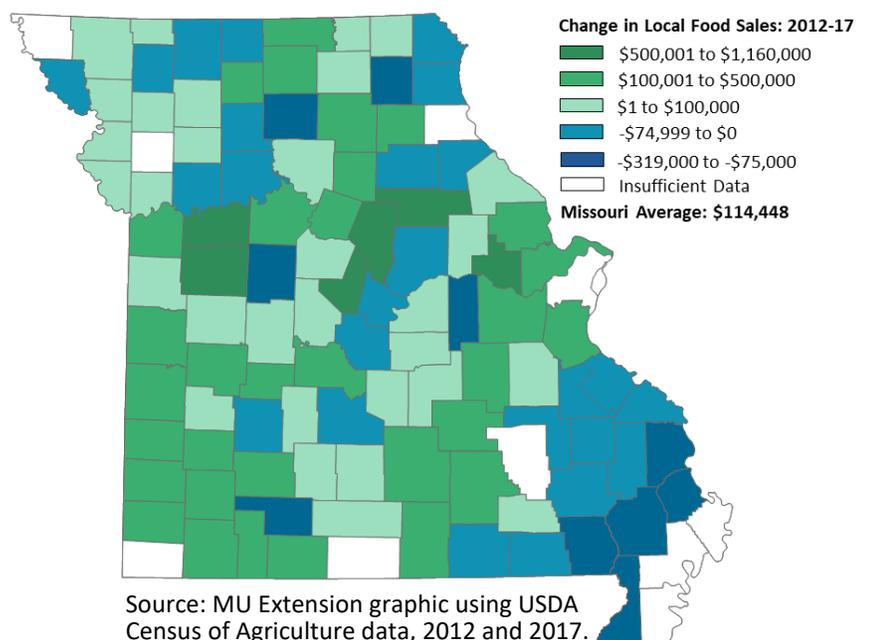
State	Farms	Sales (\$)	Average Sales/Farm
Illinois	2,626	\$236,293,479	\$89,982
Missouri	5,175	\$201,889,122	\$39,012
Iowa	3,642	\$106,785,076	\$29,320
Tennessee	4,234	\$ 57,118,118	\$13,490
Kentucky	4,110	\$54,175,037	\$13,181
U.S. Total	147,307	\$8,979,616,564	\$60,959

Source: USDA NASS 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey

Direct Sales of Local Foods Vary Greatly Throughout the State

According to USDA, farms in Missouri's metropolitan counties saw the largest increases in local food sales between 2012 and 2017 — the most recent years with county data available. (See map.) Warren County (\$1.16M) and Moniteau County (\$1.14M) saw the largest increases. Johnson (\$741K), Boone (\$696K) and Audrain (\$592K) counties followed. Because of their proximity to large metropolitan areas, farms in these counties benefit from greater population density and demand for locally grown products. Knox County saw the largest decline (-\$319K) in local food sales. Several counties in southeast Missouri also experienced weaker sales: Cape Girardeau (-\$103K), Stoddard (-\$108K) and Dunklin (-\$172K).

Metropolitan Counties Drive Increases in Local Food Sales



The 2022 Census of Agriculture will collect data to show how local food producers adapted their production and marketing methods to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic forced local foods-focused farmers to connect with customers in innovative ways as some institutional buyers closed. For example, MU Extension [research](#) revealed that national online local food sales increased by 360% between April and May 2020. Web traffic to e-commerce platforms also increased by 247% during this period. These trends highlight the importance of broadband access for local food economy participation.

Definitions

USDA defines “local” as a locally or regionally produced agricultural food product that is transported less than 400 miles or purchased within the state it is produced. Direct-to-consumer sales include sales through farmers markets, roadside stands, community supported agriculture (CSA), online sales, pick-your-own operations and other means. Direct farm sales include fresh foods and processed or “value-added” products such as milk, cheese, meat, wine and jams.

Additional Resources

- [Missouri Ag Intel](#) helps producers to explore local markets where they could sell the goods they produce.
- [Missouri Grown USA](#) and the [Missouri Food Finder](#) connect consumers with farmers, ranchers, food pantries and farmers markets.
- Missouri's [Farmers Market Report](#) shares 2016-21 price trends for food products sold at farmers markets.

All Missouri Economy Indicators briefs in this series are available at tinyurl.com/ExceedEconomyIndicators

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