

**Project or Activity Number:** SERA-47

**Title:** Local and Regional Food Systems Extension and Research: network development, emerging issues and policy development

**Period Covered:** December 2022 – February 2024

**Annual Meeting Dates:** December 11, 2023

### **2023 Leadership**

**Chair:** Jayesh Samtani, Virginia Tech.

**Co-Chair:** Russ Garner, Communities Unlimited

**Secretary:** Kenrett Jefferson-Moore, North Carolina A & T State University

**Administrative Support:** Southern Rural Development Center

**Administrative Advisors:** Scott Senseman, Oklahoma State University; C. Dale Monks, North Carolina State University

**Active Listserv** – 208 members

**General Membership Virtual Meetings** – three (3) to discuss research and Extension interests and proposal development opportunities.

### **Activities.**

#### **Activity 1. HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center Webinar**

An overview of the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center at North Carolina A&T State University was presented by Kenrett Jefferson-Moore. The presentation provided the overall goal, objectives and expected outcomes of the center. Project partners include Alabama A&M University, Kentucky State University, and West Virginia State University with stakeholder, technical, and executive advisory board that covers four regional territories serving Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The webinar was held on September 7, 2023.

#### **Activity 2. SERA-47 Annual Meeting Overview**

SERA-47 Local & Regional Foods annual meeting allowed extension and research colleagues in the Southern region to come and share the great work they are doing and explore how it might be expanded throughout the region. The 2023 annual meeting for 'Local and Regional Food Systems' took place virtually via Zoom and was hosted by the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University.

The objectives of the 2023 Annual Meeting were to:

- Learn what is happening across the nation and region through lightning talks.
- Learn how colleagues can better collaborate across disciplinary and state lines through the USDA's Regional Food

Business Centers.

The institutions and organizations represented included:

- Communities Unlimited
- Kentucky State University
- Louisiana State University & LSU AgCenter
- Mississippi State University
- North Carolina State Extension, NC State, & NC A&T State University
- Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station
- Texas A&M University – AgriLife Research
- Southern Rural Development Center
- USDA Regional Food Business Center – Heartland
- USDA Regional Food Business Center – Delta
- USDA Regional Food Business Center – Rio Grande
- USDA Regional Food Business Center – Islands and Remote Areas
- U.S. Virgin Islands Good Food Coalition
- University of Kentucky
- University of Puerto Rico, Agricultural Experiment Station
- Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, & Virginia State University

Total registered for the conference: 32

The agenda for the annual meeting was as follows:

Monday, December 11	
10:00AM EST	<b>Welcome, Introductions &amp; SERA-47 Overview</b> Jayesh Samtani, Virginia Tech, Chair
	<b>Administrative Advisor Updates</b> Scott Senseman, Oklahoma State University
	<b>Southern Rural Development Center Updates</b> John Green, Director, SRDC

Russ Garner – Moderator, <i>Lightning Talks</i>	
11:00AM EST	<b>Donation stations: Supporting Local Farmers and Combating Food Insecurity</b> Morgan Marshall, Dara Bloom, Hannah Dankbar, NC State University
	<b>UnSuccessful Projects: Learning from Our Mistakes</b> Dara Bloom, Hannah Dankbar, Morgan Marshall, NC State University
	<b>Lessons from the Market: Growing a Brand Focused on Value Added Products Made from Sweet Potatoes and Blueberries</b> Eleanor Green, Mississippi State University
	<b>Strawberry Crop Production for Local Markets: Research and Outreach Efforts</b> Jayesh Samtani, Virginia Tech
	<b>Controlled Environment Agriculture and Local Food Systems</b> Kaylee South, Virginia Tech
	<b>Improving Our High Tunnel Production System with Less Impact on the Environment</b> Toktam Taghavi, Virginia State University
	<b>Climate Change, New Dust Bowl (Desertification), and Preparing Underserved Population for Its Reality</b> Cynthia Rice, Kentucky State University
	<b>Expanding Southern Highbush Blueberries to Underserved Regions in the Southeastern U.S.</b> Susha Ru, <i>unable to attend.</i>
Lunch Break – 11:30 AM to 12:00 Noon	
Kenrett Jefferson-Moore – Moderator, <i>Food Business Centers Panel</i>	
12:00 Noon – 1:00 PM	<b>Heartland</b> – Mary Emery
	<b>Delta</b> – Don Green
	<b>Rio Grande Colonias</b> – Beth Racine
	<b>Islands and Remote Areas</b> – Sommer Sibley-Brown
1:00 PM	Adjourn