

CRAFT to Collaborate with Rural Action on USDA-Funded Project to Support Appalachian Farms and Food Businesses

In September 2022, [USDA announced \\$400 million](#) to fund the USDA Regional Food Business Center initiative. Twelve organizations were selected to lead efforts in their region and together serve all areas of the country. The [Center for Regional Agriculture, Food and Transformation](#) (CRAFT) at Chatham University is partnering with Rural Action and other regional organizations to form the Appalachia Regional Food Business Center. The center will provide coordination, technical assistance, and capacity building to help farmers, ranchers and other food businesses access new markets and navigate federal, state, and local resources.

As a key partner on this grant, more than \$3 million in funding from the USDA will enable CRAFT to support the development and implementation of the Appalachia Regional Food Business Center (ARFBC) through 2027, building on an existing body of work led by the Central Appalachia Network to create resilient food systems.

CRAFT will advise and support the coordination, governance, and project management of the ARFBC for the 52 Appalachian counties in Pennsylvania, with a focus on social sustainability that supports diverse food and farm business owners in achieving their own articulated goals throughout their business' lifecycle. They'll do this through supporting technical assistance programs, the development of a consulting network, and the launch of the business builder subaward grant program.

The USDA Regional Food Business Centers work to support a more resilient, diverse, and competitive food system by providing localized assistance to support small to mid-sized producers, processors, and distributors. Resilient supply chains are built upon strong relationships. The approach of the USDA Regional Food Business Centers relies on the cultivation of those relationships—between individuals, communities, regions, sectors, and institutions—with an eye toward economic success and equitable social and financial benefits.