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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Increasing Food Access through Farmers Market Implementation and Education with Underserved Community Focus: 1890 University Partnership between the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and the Farmers Market Coalition

[12/22/2022] - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the [Farmers Market Coalition](#) (FMC) are excited to announce their cooperative agreement partnership to support the establishment of farmers markets at 1890 land-grant universities. The first phase of this project, our team is partnering with [Southern University](#) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, [Tennessee State University](#) in Nashville, Tennessee, and [Virginia State University](#) in Petersburg, Virginia to develop and pilot an on-campus farmers markets.

These three universities come to this pilot with varied experience in on-campus direct marketing activities but a shared passion for this work and for promoting agricultural studies and the importance of viable local food systems to students and the surrounding community. Project staff from AMS and FMC will work directly with university faculty and cooperative extension staff to help support development of new markets to serve students and the broader university communities.

Farmers markets¹ have become a critical ingredient to our nation's economy, food systems, and communities. These direct marketing outlets serve as small business incubators and spur new economic development. They provide opportunities for small farmers to sell their products and help meet demand for locally produced food, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables. Though fruits and vegetables are a key component to a healthy diet, many college students rely on fast food and other unhealthy food options due to affordability and ease of access. Poor eating is associated with lower grades, susceptibility to illness, and increased fatigue. The [2020 Hope Center #RealCollege survey](#)² indicates 29% of students at four-year colleges, 70% of Black students, 70% of American Indian or Alaska Native students, and 75% of Indigenous students experience food insecurity, a crisis

¹ For the purposes of this document, a farmers market will be defined as: "two or more farmer-producers that sell their own agricultural products directly to the general public at a fixed location, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, and grains"

²The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (2021). #RealCollege 2021: Basic Needs Insecurity During the Ongoing Pandemic. Philadelphia, PA.

further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A key objective of this project is to help address food insecurity at these three universities by increasing student access to fresh, locally produced foods.

This pilot project will focus on evaluating barriers, creating trust, and providing technical assistance to university partners. This work requires intention—taking time, space, and care to thoughtfully execute project objectives. The pilot will be divided into two phases. Phase one will focus on education, data gathering, design, and operating procedures and will convene the three universities in a [community of practice](#) with the Farmers Market Coalition and the USDA Farmers Market Team. Phase two will take the information gathered from phase one to perform prototyping and implementation of market activities. The goal is for each university to be able to test operating a small farmers market on (or near) their campus in the next 12-18 months. Simple data points will be collected to help evaluate market activities and lessons learned throughout the pilot process will be incorporated into a set of “best practices” for organizing farmers markets on land-grant university campuses. We hope outcomes of this pilot will also inform future rounds of the project involving [1994 land-grant Institutions](#) (tribally-owned colleges and universities with land-grant status) and [Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#) (HSIs).

The USDA Farmers Market Team and FMC are grateful to have the opportunity to work with these universities and to help support development of new farmers markets which will serve campus communities, provide new marketing opportunities for small farmers, and engage students in the importance of local food and agriculture. The knowledge, experience, and dedication each university brings to this project is of tremendous value and we are thankful for the commitment of time and intellectual resources from each team. We look forward to sharing more about this work as the pilot moves forward.

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The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to strengthening farmers markets for the benefit of farmers, consumers, and communities. For more information about the national Farmers Market Coalition, visit www.farmersmarketcoalition.org.