

Kansas Specialty Crop Growers' News

March 2021

KSCGA Sets Ambitious Goals to Serve Kansas Growers

The last year has been filled with challenges as growers navigate through changing markets, new sales practices and platforms, and evolving ways of connecting and interacting with our customers—and with each other. [Recent consumer research](#) highlights what many have come to see in these changing times: more people are shopping online, and more people are looking for local and regional foods in their shopping and in their diets. Taking a closer look at these trends on page two of our Winter 2021 newsletter, we see that these trends will likely continue into the future and do present opportunities for local and regional growers and producers.

As we steadily approach something of a “new normal,” Kansas Specialty Crop Growers Association is working to expand our member outreach, grower directory capabilities, and the reach of your local produce and foods in our Kansas economy.

Many members have told us that being able to connect and share information and

ideas with their fellow growers is an important reason they've joined KSCGA. Our vision for 2021 includes implementing a user-friendly online directory not only connecting customers with Kansas growers (visit [Illinois Specialty Growers' Shop Local](#) site for a great example), but also connecting our grower community with an expanded directory and archive to share and support each other in exploring possibilities in what we plant, how we grow and cultivate, and how we market and sell our products.

Thanks to all of our new members and those renewing your membership for 2021. If you've not yet taken the initiative to join us and support the good work ahead, please visit our website at kscga.org/membership or print, complete, and mail in the membership form found on page five of this newsletter.

We look forward to working with our members through what are dynamic times for Kansas growers—and beyond.



Opportunities for Growers in Changing Times

Among the highlights of the recent 2021 Great Plains Growers Conference are revelations found in research in market trends and approaches in the local foods arena. Presenters and panelists in the conference's *Marketing in the New Normalcy* track affirmed what many have come to realize over the past year that: 1) there have been remarkable changes in how people shop for their food, and 2) there are opportunities for growers/producers of local foods to reach a rapidly changing and expanding market.

Research done through Colorado State University affirms a trend that many growers are adapting to: More people are now shopping for their food online. In the surveys conducted in the CSU research, nearly half of respondents were shopping for their food needs online toward the end of 2020, up from just 33% a year before. Researchers also suggest that this will be a long-term trend as younger generations are more apt to shop online and new online shoppers report they will likely continue to shop online once COVID restrictions and precautions ease (Edmondson).

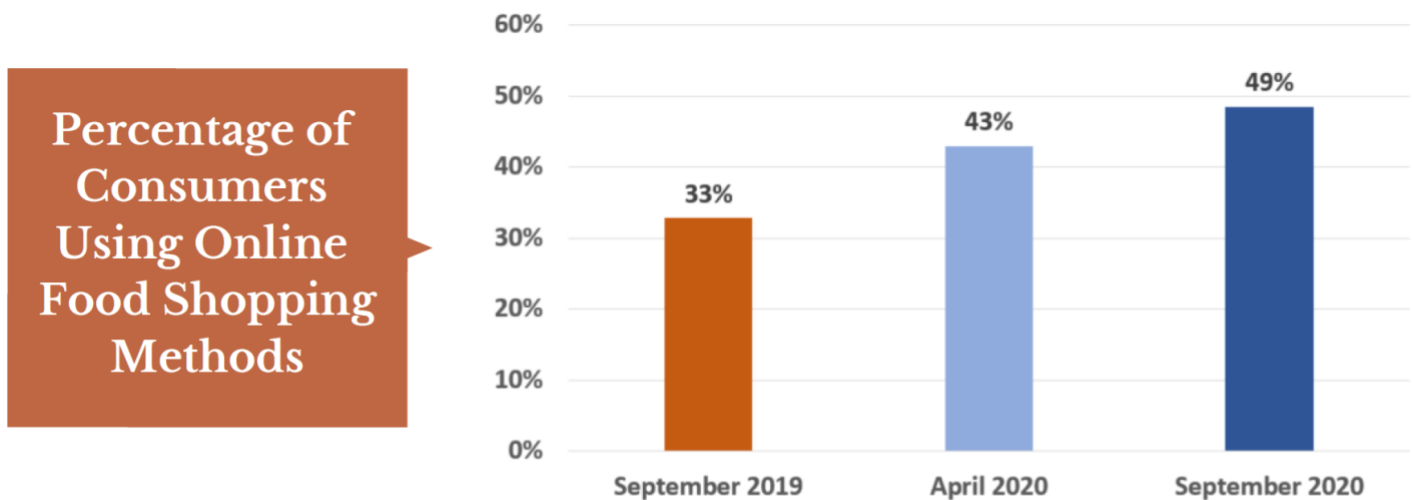


Figure 1

Graphic from Edmondson, Hailey. *Local Food Systems Response to COVID-19*

While these trends have certainly benefited large distribution systems such as Amazon and Walmart, other research shows that there are opportunities for smaller growers to tap into what is a growing market for local and regional foods. As we watched early in the days of COVID, many producers destroyed untold tons and gallons of produce, meat and poultry, and dairy products as our principal distribution systems failed to adapt to the changing times. Smaller regional and local producers have, however, shown an ability to respond and adapt to the quickly changing markets seen over the past year (Woods).

People have picked up on this and have, for a number of reasons, shown a greater preference for things local. Over 70% of survey respondents across population demographics reported that "supporting the local economy is" is important to them in their food purchases, and roughly 60%

report that whether the “product is locally grown” influences their choices. 60-70% of respondents also report that “options about my purchasing method”—curbside pick-up, CSA’s, delivery, etc.—have also influenced their purchasing decisions this past year (Rossi).



Graphic from Rossi, Jairus. *Local Food Systems Response to COVID-19*

For more on the research on changing markets and consumer decision making in the local foods arena, visit: lfscovid.localfoodeconomics.com/consumer-food-insights/

References:

- Edmondson, Hailey (Colorado State University). *Local Food Systems Response to COVID-19*. Consumer Food Insights Series, LFS-CFI-04. Local Food Economics. localfoodeconomics.com/consumer-food-insights/.
- Nixon, Katie (Green Gate Family Farm), Thellman, Scott (Juniper Hill Farms), Velez, Karin (Wolf Creek Family Farm). *Online/ Delivery Adaptations*. Panel Presentation at 2021 Great Plains Growers Conference. February 12, 2021.
- Rossi, Jairus (University of Kentucky). *Local Food Systems Response to COVID-19*. Consumer Food Insights Series, LFS-CFI-05. Local Food Economics. [Localfoodeconomics.com/consumer-food-insights/](https://localfoodeconomics.com/consumer-food-insights/).
- Woods, Tim (University of Kentucky). *COVID Adaptations for Local Products: Building Better Beyond*. Presentation at 2021 Great Plains Growers Conference. February 12, 2021.



While we all hope to see a return to in-person shopping for local produce this coming season, other shopping and purchasing options are going to continue to play an increasing role in how growers operate. Kansas Specialty Crop Growers Association is working to build our capacity to work with Kansas growers and local food producers and negotiate the constantly changing arenas of sales and marketing platforms, growing portfolios and practices, and the growing markets for all things local.

KSCGA Partnering in 2021 Kansas Buy Local Campaign

Gaining a foothold in commercial distribution and sales networks can often be a challenging endeavor for local growers and producers of vegetables, fruits, and other products. Scale, consistency in availability, and efficiency are often obstacles to full and fair participation of smaller growers in our established distribution networks. KSCGA is currently working with the Retail Grocers Association of Kansas City, Liberty Fruit Co, and member growers in planning and implementing a Buy Local program that will give Kansas specialty crop growers entry in markets that can greatly increase their sales potential.

Retail Grocers Association will be highlighting local produce, and local farms and farmers, with advertising campaigns and in-store display and signage drawing awareness and connecting local farmers with consumers. Liberty is working with KSCGA to develop cooperative shipping strategies that can help networks of local growers reach economies of scale needed to participate in the larger distribution systems.

KSCGA is reaching out to our grower members to generate interest in the upcoming Buy Local program. If you are interested—no commitment at this stage—please [visit our website and submit the short form](#) provided.

While KSCGA continues to explore collaborative programs to bring down the cost surrounding produce certification, participating farms will be required to be GAP certified in this first year of the program.

Meet
Your Local
Farmer

**Your
farm
featured
here!**



**Look for this logo in the
produce department to
buy from local farmers.**

KSCGA Membership Form

To join or renew your membership with KSCGA, please complete and submit membership form online at www.kscga.org/membership; or print and complete the form below and return it with a \$10 membership contribution to:

Kansas Specialty Crop Growers Association
35230 W 135th St.
Olathe, KS 66061

Farm Name _____

First and Last Name _____

Additional People with your Farm:

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip/Postal Code** _____

County _____

Email _____ **Phone** _____

Website _____

Crops

What specialty crops do you grow? (heirloom tomatoes, apples, tree nuts, etc.)

Acres in Specialty Crop Production _____

How do you market? (*Farmer's Markets, CSA, Online, Restaurants, Grocery Stores, Food Hub, etc.*)

Do you want to receive mailed paper newsletters and correspondence? (Circle One) Yes No

Tell us a bit about why you're a KSCGA member? What are your hopes and vision for your growing operations? How might KSCGA serve you in reaching your goals?

Kansas Specialty Crop Growers Association
35230 W 135th St.
Olathe, KS 66061