

Five Months In: Reflections on Virginia Food Systems in the Pandemic

This reflection is part of our “Virginia Food Systems and COVID-19 Story Collection Project” that aims to highlight, collect, and share stories of hope and resilience in our food system amidst the pandemic. Find out more about this project and view our entire series on [our website](#).

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By Hunter Hilbert

Since early 2020, the world has watched the coronavirus outbreak unfold. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 a pandemic five months ago on March 11, 2020. Since the declaration, the global effects of the pandemic have been incalculable and have ranged from health and economic impacts, school and business closures, and increased food and resource insecurity.

Shortly following the declaration of the pandemic and while adjusting to the new normal of working and learning from home, the Virginia Tech Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation set out to collect, document, highlight, share, and curate examples of



Left-Duron Chavis of the Resiliency Garden Initiative, courtesy of Urban Views RVA. Middle-The Connors pose with their summer crisp lettuce, courtesy of the Roanoke Times. Right-a boys and girls club volunteer loading food into a recipient's car as the Cornoavirus first hit.

producers and consumers coming together and finding creative adaptations from across Virginia's food system. These adaptations have required determination and significant ingenuity and resources. Communities have met the challenges presented by the pandemic with grit and resiliency to keep neighbors fed and local businesses and organizations afloat, and often with a spirit of food sovereignty and mutual aid.

Throughout the development and evolution of our initiative to capture stories of food systems adaptations, the Center's core team has researched and collected relevant news pieces and conducted interviews to form a series of vignettes to share and document the essence of the time we are living through. From distributing pork in Mt. Jackson to growing and selling hydroponic lettuce in Franklin County, Virginia's farmers have proven to be dedicated and adaptable. As these vignettes have demonstrated with initiatives like 7 Weeks to Take Out Hunger, entities and enterprises such as University of Virginia Dining, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Jon Henry General Store, Apocalypse Ale Works, and other community-focused organizations have all stepped up to provide for their neighbors and communities.

As the pandemic continues to take its human and economic toll, we are committed as a University-affiliated Center to find and emphasize stories of hope and resilience within our food systems and communities during this trying time. Our aim is that this story collection project provides our readers and site visitors with the capacity to imagine the abundant possibilities emerging from community-based work to keep one another fed and nourished. In the interim, please continue checking [our website](#), reading [the latest vignettes](#), and engaging with us [on Facebook](#). We invite you to share our vignettes with your networks in whatever way you are inspired.