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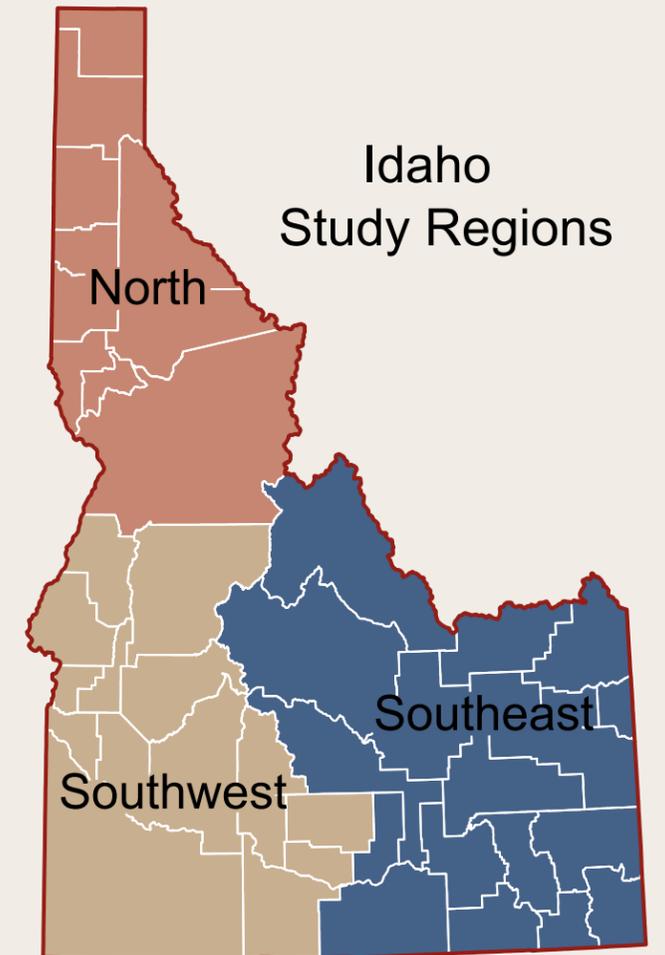
# INCREASING SALES TO LOCAL AND REGIONAL RETAIL AND RESTAURANT MARKETS IN IDAHO

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**In Idaho**, as in much of the Intermountain West, rural, low population densities and long transportation distances to urban markets present unique challenges for producers interested in selling their products direct or semi-direct to retail grocery stores and restaurants.

A team of **University of Idaho** researchers and extension educators were awarded a 3-year (2014-2017), \$500,000 grant to research and develop solutions to these challenges. The ultimate goal is to give Idaho's small and medium-sized vegetable, fruit, and livestock producers better access to local (within 100 miles) and regional (within 400 miles) retail and restaurant markets.



For project updates and more information visit our Facebook page  
**WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/IDAHO SMALL FARMS**



## Local and Regional Markets Research (Market Assessment)

The market assessment will provide information needed to develop a map of agricultural products available for sale to retailers and restaurants in three distinct regions of Idaho (north, southwest, and southeast) and the location of retailers and restaurants interested in buying specific products. To gather this information, we will conduct an online **producer survey** and an online retail/restaurant **buyers survey** in fall 2015.

### THE PRODUCER SURVEY WILL EXPLORE:

- ▶ Interest in and experiences with selling products to local buyers,
- ▶ Types and amounts of products producers currently supply, especially to local markets,
- ▶ Seasonality of locally grown products,
- ▶ Mechanisms of aggregation and distribution (for example, food hubs, distributors, individual delivery),
- ▶ Obstacles of selling products to local buyers,
- ▶ Potential opportunities, and
- ▶ Characteristics of participants and their operations (provides context for interpreting results, to determine how representative respondents are of the total population of producers in the area, and to compare data to secondary data).

### THE BUYERS SURVEY WILL EXPLORE:

- ▶ How local food products are accessed,
- ▶ The types of local food products they currently buy or are interested in buying,
- ▶ Interest in increasing the quantity and variety of local food products purchased,
- ▶ Requirements or preferences for certifications or special characteristics (for example, certified organic, grass fed, GAP audit) to purchase products, and
- ▶ Primary challenges of buying local food products.

**IMPACT:** We will learn if more of the products restaurants and retailers purchase could be provided by local producers and identify the best strategies for marketing and selling local products to local buyers. As a result of this research we will be able to share with producers an estimate of the demand for specific local products and key factors that influence retailers' and restaurants' interest and willingness to buy local products in each of the three regions.



## Regional Supply Chain Research and Models

We will use the data from the producer survey and interviews with Idaho distributors to fine-tune existing data sets and build a model of current distribution options and practices of small and mid-sized producers selling to restaurants and retailers.

**IMPACT:** This information, combined with results of the market assessment, will be the basis for modeling to identify the optimal location of food aggregators (for example, warehouses and central hubs), routes for product delivery, and volume of product sales needed to make these enterprises economically viable. The model will also identify opportunities to sell food among the three regions as a means to expand market access and extend the seasonal availability of regionally produced foods across Idaho.

## Identifying What to Grow, Where, and For Which Markets

Survey and interview data will also be used to determine where more production of specific crops and livestock products is needed to meet the existing market demand, and how these products can be brought to market via existing and new food aggregation and distribution systems (for example, regional food hubs or using existing distributors and warehouses).

**IMPACT:** This information will help producers determine the optimal mix of vegetable and livestock products for local markets.



## Regional and State-level Economic Impacts of Local Food Sales

To garner support and resources to further develop regional distribution systems, we will evaluate the economic impact of agricultural activities (production, aggregation, distribution, and retail/restaurant purchases) on the state's economy and the three sub-region's economies. The results will include the actual sales, value added, wages, unemployment, jobs, income distribution, and other measures of economic activity in each sector. We will also estimate the economic impacts of substituting regional consumption of locally-produced vegetable and livestock products for those produced out-of-region.

**IMPACT:** We will share the results of these economic impact analyses with producers, policy makers, and agricultural agencies across Idaho to inform decision making that supports local agriculture.

## Education and Outreach

The producer and buyer surveys will identify educational and other resource support that would help producers scale up, process food products, and access distributors, food hubs, and new markets.

**IMPACT:** We will use the data we collect to develop new extension resources and programs that will be offered in 2016 and 2017.

## EXPECTED PROJECT OUTCOMES

1. **Increased understanding** of the feasibility of different strategies for local aggregation, processing, storage, and distribution of vegetable and livestock products for local markets.
2. **Increased number** of local food aggregation and distribution options for Idaho's small and medium-sized farms.
3. **Increased knowledge and skills** among producers for accessing local retail and restaurant markets.
4. **Increased sales** from small and medium-sized farms to local retailers and restaurants.
5. **Improved access to local food** for Idaho retailers, restaurants, and consumers.