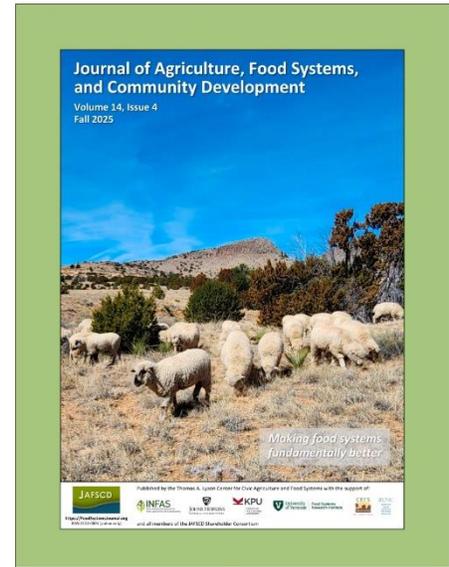


IN THIS ISSUE
DUNCAN HILCHEY

Making food systems fundamentally better



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On the cover of our fall issue (completing our 14th year of publication) is a photo by Timothy Willms, owner of Talus Wind Ranch. Willms participated in the New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program reported in the article in this issue, *Farm-to-institution in the Southwest: An evaluation of the New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program*, by **Kathryn Coakley, Acadia W. Buro, Caitlyn Sandoval, Bryan Crawford-Garrett, and Francisco Soto Mas**. Willms’ heritage sheep are well-suited to the high desert, so their grazing is a fitting use of the land—which can be traced back centuries under Navajo stewardship. Moreover, Talus Wind Ranch’s commitment to local food security is laudable. JAFSCD applauds the return of appropriate-scale raising of heritage sheep in this region, among the poorest in the United States. We hope to see its expansion in the coming years with increased livelihood opportunities, sustainable grazing practices, and place identity branding, especially for Pueblo communities.

In his Economic Pamphleteer column, *The case for radical changes in U.S. farm policies*, **John Ikerd** argues that Americans have largely focused on how to make the food system less bad, rather than fundamentally better. To that end, he once again proffers a thoughtful proposal: sustainable farm tax credits for producers making the transition to more environmentally benign practices.

This is followed by two viewpoints and a commentary. In their viewpoints, **Lilly Zeitler** explores food sharing as a valuable measure of social capital, while **Arsene Mushagalusa Balasha** suggests that there may

On our cover: Sheep graze peacefully on a golden fall afternoon at Talus Wind Ranch, which overlooks the Galisteo Basin in northern New Mexico, USA. The ranch participated in the New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program reported in the article in this issue, *Farm-to-institution in the Southwest: An evaluation of the New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program*. Learn more about [Talus Wind Ranch](#).

— Photo by Timothy Willms, Owner, Talus Wind Ranch

be a better way to farm fragile ecosystems for the benefit of people. In her commentary, **Ann Charles Vegdahl** reflects on her engagement with youth in food safety training, offer a rich set of good practices for other research scientists who are starting to promote their work with school-aged children.

Once again, we have accepted papers across the three domains of the food system. In the production domain, all four papers are about addressing the needs of small farmers in the Global South. In *Exploring the Bangladesh smallholder livestock sector through network analysis: Insights, assessment results, and future directions*, **Christian Kelly Scott, Jennifer Himmelstein, Jini Kades, and Arlinda Hajzeri** find that while connectivity among youth and women helped them succeed, more targeted technical assistance may be required to help them overcome structural barriers to development. In *Adapting to climate change on the farm: Experiences of small-scale ecological farmers in two regions of China*, **Qihua Feng, Zhenzhong Si, and Steffanie Scott** find that, while there are appreciation and capacity for climate adaptation among small growers, doing so will require significant grassroots organizing and public support. In *Strategic mix priorities as drivers of agripreneurial performance: Evidence from smallholder organic vegetable farmers in Tamil Nadu State of India*, **K Raman, Rani J., Anubhuti Dwivedi, and Maroof Ahmad Mir** find that focusing on product quality, diversity, and differentiation are likely to yield more benefit than cost reduction strategies alone. And **Milena Almeida Vaz, Hemerson dos Santos Vitorino, Natacha Oliveira de Souza, Jéssica Aretz Cunha Rodrigues da Silva, and Denise Dias da Cruz** explore the scope of grassroots stakeholder knowledge and use of natural resources in *Family farmers' environmental perception of ecosystem services in the Brazilian semi-arid region*.

Turning to marketing and supply chains, **Kathryn Coakley, Acadia W. Buro, Caitlyn Sandoval, Bryan Crawford-Garrett, and Francisco Soto Mas** provide an early evaluation of an innovative initiative to bridge livestock producers and buyers in *Farm-to-institution in the Southwest: An evaluation of the New Mexico Grown Meat Pilot Program*. Next, **Kristen Becker, Khush Bakht Aalia, Olufolajimi Talabi, Youri Dijkxhoorn, Emma Termeer, Archie Jarman, Bart de Steenhuijsen PETERS, and Erin McGuire** use an informal tomato value chain in Nigeria to identify barriers and potentials for small producers in *Leveraging the innovation potential of informal midstream actors to enhance food systems outcomes*. In *Beyond self-report surveys: Leveraging multimodal large language models (MLLMs) for farmers market data harvesting from public digital resources*, **Huy Pham and Yue Cui** share the development of their cost-saving AI system that automatically harvests data about farmers markets for use by market managers and policy-makers. In *"Not a siloed effort": Partnership strategies supporting regional grain value chains in the Upper Northeast, USA*, **Elise Neidecker, Thomas Safford, Matthew Hoffman, Michelle Miller, Heather Darby, and Analena Bruce** explore the fundamentals of trust and transparency in building successful business relationships. And in *Local food system resilience in discourse and community practice: Findings from southern Wisconsin*, **Jules Reynolds** offer a case study of a farm-to-table program with a focus on how farmers' "relational autonomy" (freedom to act) within a local network, as well as within a rigid neoliberal economic system, is important part of its sustainability.

In the food security domain, we publish seven papers. In *Realizing nutrition equity in urban food systems: Insights from food justice leaders about mechanisms of implementation*, **Darcy Freedman, Morgan Taggart, Michael Walton, Linea Webb, Ismail Samad, Don Gaddis, Carol White, Shirley Bell-Wheeler, Dawn Glasco, Owusua Yamoah, and Emily Nelson** get to the crux of what matters most in realizing equitable urban food systems in the context of gentrification. Similarly, in *Assessing access and use of nutrition support programs, food insecurity, and health status in urban Native American families with young children in Montana: A case study*, **Thomas McClure, Kim Gilchrist, Alexandra Erin Manuel, Christian Goes-Ahead Lopez, Cherith Smith, Jonathan Graham, Sarah Black, and Blakely Brown** explore the lived experience of Indigenous households with children living in cities and identify the unique barriers to this underserved group.

Then, in *Adaptation of the U.S. Food Security Survey Module in a small rural Dominican Republic community: A pilot to assess food insecurity*, **Mesfin Bezuneh, Zelealem Yiheyis, Frank Dadzie, Pedro-Juan Del Rosario, and Luis Ortiz** describe their novel use of a Global North tool to measure a Global South problem. Similarly,

Samuel Ikendi, Francis Owusu, Dorothy Masinde, Carmen Bain, and Ann Oberhauser explore the impact of a land-grant university's livelihood education program on the food security of a Global South target group in *Food insecurity coping strategies among households with average dietary diversity and caloric intake scores in rural Uganda*.

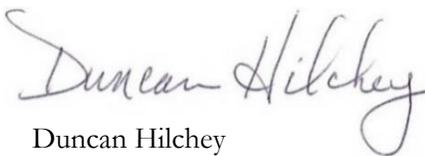
Next, we offer three papers focused on food pantries as critical emergency food system infrastructure. In *Evaluating school-based food pantries using a health equity perspective*, **Kaitlyn Harper, Nichole Espineli, Roni Neff, and Taz Shah** study pantries in the primary and secondary school context. In *Exploring college student experiences with little pantries: A qualitative study addressing campus food insecurity*, **Youngmi Kim, Jennifer Murphy, Jessica Hoy, and John C. Jones** study unique un-personed pantries in the higher education context. And in *Food insecurity and social connections among university food pantry users before and during COVID-19*, **Anthony Campbell, Jennifer F. Jettner, and Katherine Crawford** explore the experience of college students in the context of the onset of a pandemic.

In this issue we also offer two transdomain papers. In *Buying into waste: The role of consumer food purchasing behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, and opinions concerning food date labels*, **Jelili A. Adebisi, Noleen R. Chikowore, and Angel S. Forde** find that U.S. consumers' fundamental misunderstanding of expiration dates is unintentionally leading to food waste in the American food system. Finally, in their paper entitled *Implementing the systems-based breeding approach: Lessons learned from the European Union LIVESEED project* (submitted to our call for papers on "fostering socially and ecologically resilient food and farm systems through research networks" back in 2023), **Edwin Nuijten, Monika M. Messmer, Pedro Mendes-Moreira, Adrián Rodríguez-Burruezo, Véronique Chable, and Edith T. Lammerts van Bueren** identify the key ingredients to fostering transformative food system change in the context of organic plant breeding.

We wrap the issue with five book reviews: **Stacey F. Stearns** reviews *Dodge County, Incorporated: Big Ag and the Undoing of Rural America*, by Sonja Trom Eayrs; **Kevin John Morgan** reviews *Transforming School Food Politics Around the World*, edited by Jennifer E. Gaddis and Sarah A. Robert; **Noelle Elizabeth Beecroft** reviews *How the World Eats: A Global Food Philosophy*, by Julian Baggini; **Megan Knight** reviews *Food in a Just World*, by Tracey Harris and Terry Gibbs; and **Maegan Krajewski** reviews *Gardens of Hope: Cultivating Food and the Future in a Post-Disaster City*, by Yuki Kato.

I would like to conclude that as I write this overview of the fall 2025 issue, the U.S. federal government is shutting down for its 11th time since 1980. The resulting furloughs of public employees who fund, study, and regulate the American food system is devastating to workers, to the viability of family farmers, and to the safety and affordability of the food supply. JAFSCD stands with the farmers, organizations, and agencies that are affected by the shutdown in calling for our leaders to quickly find a way forward that protects family farmers and our most vulnerable citizens. 

Yours in resilience,



Duncan Hilchey
Publisher and editor-in-chief