

Kerr Tar Regional Food Council Meeting

Oct 29th 2025 (10-11:30 am)

Kerr Tar Regional Council of Governments

The Food Council Meetings are funded by the Triangle North Healthcare Foundation

Attendees:

Gabriel Cumming (Working Landscapes Warrenton), Marth Mobley Franklin (County Cooperative Extension), Ebony Mitchell (Vance County DSS), Cassandra Hart (Interim director Vance County DSS), Ardis Crews (GRRO), Tracey Sexton, Wendy Tatum (Granville County Cooperative Extension), Thomas Blaine (Strong Arms Baking Oxford), Michael Ellington [Representing Dr. Wykia Macon] (Vance County Cooperative Extension), Alejandra Martinez (Franklin County Cooperative Extension), Phylicia Barker Outreach Director, Vancie Peacock (Doctorate Student at Duke), Juniper (Research Intern), Judith Burnett-Arrington [Virtual] (Outreach specialist Warren, Vance and Granville counties), Mike Peterson [Virtual] (Blue Cross), Dorothy Barker [Virtual] (Operation Spring Plant), Allison Satterfield [Virtual] (Butchers daughter market & deli), Laila Abed (Kerr Tar Regional Council of Governments).

Key Discussion Points

Survey Updates and Participation (Gabe, Vancie and Juniper)

- Survey extended to January/February to increase responses.
- Target participation estimated at 50 institutions, 100 food businesses, and 200 farmers.
- Total of 74 responses including farmers, food businesses, and institutions.
- Distribution of responses across counties: Warren, Vance, Granville, Person, Franklin.
- Strategies to increase participation include leveraging existing events and meetings.
- Minor changes to the survey questions but maintaining question consistency for data compatibility emphasized.

From the Survey: Farmers' Needs and Support (Juniper)

- Farmers seek grants and funding opportunities.
- Desire for networking with markets, stores, and processors to sell products.
- Advocacy for supportive policies and infrastructure resources (tractors, hoop houses).
- Interest in workshops on marketing, healthy soil, estate/farm transition planning, cover crop breeding.
- Resource sharing such as co-ops, bulk purchasing, equipment sharing, and shared labor discussed.

From the Survey: Food Businesses and Institutions (Juniper)

- Challenges in sourcing locally include limited supply/volume, vendor relationships, storage, staffing, and payment terms.
- Institutions and businesses expressed interest in starting local purchasing.
- Coordination by the Food Council to facilitate multiple sources for institutions suggested.

Regional Food System Modeling Project (Vancie)

- Collaborative project with Working Landscapes to build a system dynamics model of the regional food system.

- Model aims to help understand system components, relationships, and test policy interventions.
- Workshops planned to co-create the model with stakeholders including farmers, businesses, institutions, and educators.
- Workshops structured in three iterative sessions/workshops with participation incentives (stipends, childcare, food).
- Goal to enhance systems thinking, consensus, and informed decision-making within the council.

Committee Updates (Gabe, Alejandra, Judith)

- Agriculture Committee: Focus on listening to farmers' needs, planning a listening event on farmer wellness and health, meeting dates to be scheduled, objective completion by May 2026.
- Food Security and Access Committee: Mapping regional food distribution, updating pantry information, identifying distribution gaps, next meeting scheduled for November 5th at 2 p.m. at Kerr-Tar office.
- Assessment Committee: The details discussed above provided about the food survey.

Food Pantry and Food Hub Activities Granville County (Wendy)

- Updates on Right for Revival nonprofit and food distribution events in Butner, Oxford, and Granville County.
- Farm to Fridge project collecting and redistributing excess food to food insecure populations, with significant partnerships and grant support.
- Collaboration with local farmers, restaurants, and food pantries to support local food sourcing and reduce waste.
- Increase in demand for food assistance noted, especially among seniors, veterans, and homeless populations.
- Discussion on funding mechanisms, grant sources (Blue Cross Blue Shield, USDA, ARPA, local government), and payment processes for farmers.
- Emphasis on community collaboration and volunteer involvement.

Upcoming Events and Announcements (Ardis, Martha, Phylcia)

- Rural Health Day Fair GRRO in collaboration with the Vance County Farmers' Market and Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina on November 20th, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Farmers Market.
- Annual fundraising event (Dinner in the Meadow) supporting small farmers, scheduled for Sunday Sep 13th 2026.
- OSP 23rd Annual Small Farm Conference, Dec 04, 2025, 8:00 AM – Dec 06, 2025, 12:30 PM, Henderson, 945 W Andrews Ave, Henderson, NC 27536, USA.
- Encouragement to share event information widely and update contact information for council communications.

Administrative Notes

- Committee meeting dates to be finalized and communicated via survey.
- Policy update postponed to next meeting.

- Emphasis on updating contact information for effective communication.
- Encouragement for council members to participate in the modeling workshops.