



COMMUNITY ASSETS

Oconee Food Council




MISSION STATEMENT

Our vision is a resilient and equitable food system for our communities that collectively make Oconee County, SC the magnificent place it is! We are working to bring together a diverse representation of Oconee residents and stakeholder groups to develop policies, systems, and environmental changes that enhance our local food system.

The Oconee Food Council will accomplish this by providing innovative solutions that:



Improve the economic, environmental, social, and nutritional health of the people of our county;



Ensure equitable access to nourishing and culturally diverse food;



Promote the rights of residents to define their own food and agricultural systems.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- 1 Invest in Ag Ed programs** and the retention of quality Ag Ed teachers.
- 2 Prioritize sustainable land use practices** and farmland preservation.
- 3 Increase options** for processing local agricultural products.
- 4 Establish a plan** for the marketing and coordination of area farmers markets.
- 5 Provide educational opportunities** around nutrition & cooking skills.

COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Utilized a combination of available data and community input to perform an in-depth county food systems assessment, the results of which will inform our council's strategic plans.



Worked with partner organizations to establish summer meals sites through the Summer Break Cafe program.



Provided one-on-one grant application assistance for farmers applying for the USDA RFSI grant.



Cultivated space for conversation, networking, and resource sharing among the Oconee agricultural community.



No land is safe. The more you drive around the more you see construction... it's alarming.

— Community Member

SUCCESS STORY

Oconee Food Council applied for, and was awarded, funds from the USDA Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure grant on behalf of the Blue Ridge Community Center (BRCC) Commissary Kitchen Project. These funds will be used to purchase equipment to further the progress of this project. The BRCC Community Kitchen has been a labor of love and hard work by OFC members Rodney Quick and Christian Thormose, who currently use the kitchen and cafeteria space to host weekly **culinary education classes** for community members. The purchase of additional equipment through the RFSI grant will be a huge step toward the goal of creating a **DHEC-certified kitchen space** that can be utilized by local producers and value-added producers as a certified processing space. It will also continue to serve as a **community food education venue**. We are excited for the next steps and to see where this journey leads.

Oconee County Agricultural Advisory Board

This board is intended to serve as a public forum for agriculture in Oconee County and draws support and advice from various associations, advocacy organizations, and federal and state agencies that provide crucial programs and services to our local farmers.

Healthy Oconee Coalition

This coalition of community partners works in spearheading policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change strategies to improve county health.

Oconee Cultivation Project

This local nonprofit maintains community gardens in Walhalla & Westminster, utilizing them as part of their CultivaTeen program. The program is centered around agriculture and culinary education for local youth, and is free of charge.

FARM Center

The Foothills Agricultural Resources and Marketing (FARM) Center serves as an agricultural event center in Oconee County, hosting the Foothills Heritage Farmers Market, Foothills Heritage Fair, rodeos, livestock shows, community events, and more. The center's plans for growth include a commercial kitchen space and indoor event/market venue.

Blue Ridge Community Center

This community center brings a variety of events and programming to the Seneca area and has partnered with Oconee Food Council to establish a DHEC-certified community kitchen to meet the needs of local value-added producers, in addition to offering programming centered around culinary and nutrition education.

Foothills YMCA

The Foothills YMCA provides a variety of educational and preventative health, nutrition, and fitness programs and resources to community members. Community members may use YMCA's Open Doors Application to apply for financial assistance for membership.

Feed&Seed Pickens & Oconee Counties

This organization utilizes the SC Healthy Bucks program to distribute low-cost produce boxes to SNAP recipients through the FoodShare SC program. They also operate a Crop Box program, selling boxes of locally-sourced produce to customers. In addition, Feed&Seed supports the community by using LFPA funds to purchase local foods for donation to area food pantries, helping both our farmers and our families.

C.A.F.E.

The Clemson Area Food Exchange (C.A.F.E.) is an online farmers market offering a convenient system for ordering a variety of local and regional products, with pick-up points across the county.

Community Food Access Resources

