

Alison Maynard

Economic Impacts of the Transdisciplinary Research Initiative on the Vermont Food System

This presentation of proposed research examines the question of whether the strategic research priorities at the University of Vermont (UVM) impact economic outcomes in the state and why it is important to make that link. To determine the relationship between research in higher education on the food system and statewide economic development in the food system sector, the author will undertake a thorough exploration of the literature, including the history of Extension to catalog different outcome based research efforts and provide a set of options for UVM to consider regarding food systems work now and into the future. The author proposes to undertake a survey with a broad sample of professionals working within the food system sector in Vermont about their degree of engagement with UVM since the start of the Food Systems Transdisciplinary Research Initiative in 2010. The author will compare the survey results with state economic indicators and measures of human capital in Vermont and other states with local food clusters for 2010 and 2015. The survey results are hypothesized to reveal frequent interactions between food system sector professionals and UVM, and economic data to show strength and growth in the Vermont food system during the period. Other states with strong measures of human capital also are expected to show positive economic indicators though not as robust as Vermont's. The anticipated results are expected to indicate that the commitment of UVM to the food system sector does indeed support the growth of that sector in an otherwise difficult economic climate.