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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**How Does Western North Carolina Shop for Food?**

*ASAP's Local Food Research Center has released a survey on consumer food shopping habits.*

**ASHEVILLE, NC (April 24, 2024)**—ASAP (Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project) has released a survey to learn more about how people in Western North Carolina shop for food and why they choose the food they do. The survey, part of a three-year project by ASAP's Local Food Research Center, is for any resident of Western North Carolina over the age of 18, no matter where or how they shop for food. It can be completed online at [surveymonkey.com/r/WNCFoodASAP](https://surveymonkey.com/r/WNCFoodASAP) or over the phone by calling ASAP at 828-236-1282. It should take approximately 8 to 12 minutes to complete and will be open through Oct. 31, 2024. Respondents are encouraged to share the survey widely with families, friends, and co-workers.

"By completing this survey, you are helping local farmers understand and connect with consumers," said Amy Marion, ASAP Associate Director and lead researcher. "The challenges of our food system are constantly evolving. Improving it requires active participation from all community members. With this research we can better understand consumer values and the barriers they face, and help farmers and food producers improve communications with their customers and their communities."

The survey is part of a three-year research project, "Connections in Direct Markets: Assessing the feedback loop between consumer values and farmers' marketing strategies," which will examine and improve communication and alignment between farmers and consumers in Western North Carolina. The research phase will also employ consumer focus groups, farmer interviews and case studies, and more targeted surveying. The broad consumer survey provides an update to the last consumer survey conducted by the Local Food Research Center in 2014. Results from the current research project will be shared in 2025.

ASAP founded the Local Food Research Center in 2011 to study the economic, environmental, and social impacts of localizing food systems. From its inception, ASAP's programs and services have been grounded in research and evaluation, adjusting based on a strong feedback loop and observation of current conditions in the food system.

This project is supported in part by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2022-38640-37488 through the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number LS23-382. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.

*[High-resolution photos available [at the link](#). Contact Sarah Hart at [sarah@asapconnections.org](mailto:sarah@asapconnections.org) for more.]*

**ABOUT ASAP (APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT)**

ASAP's mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. To learn more, visit [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org).

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