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Kane County Secures USDA Funding to Explore Connections Between Local Farmers and Food Buyers

Kane County has received a $250,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant to explore ways to connect local farmers with larger food buyers, including community colleges, schools and other institutions.

Kane County was the only recipient in Illinois to receive the regional food system partnership grant from the USDA.

The grant will fund a two-year initiative with Waubonsee Community College and Elgin Community College to bring farmers, food service professionals and institutional buyers together to identify opportunities to procure locally grown products.

"Waubonsee is excited to partner with Kane County and Elgin Community College on an initiative that supports the economic vitality of the communities we serve while building stronger connections across our region and creating opportunities for a more sustainable local food system," said Brian Knetl, EdD President of Waubonsee Community College.

The project builds on Kane County's Growing for Kane initiative and its commitment to farmland preservation and agricultural economic development. Kane County is home to more than 500 farms covering approximately 146,000 acres, but many smaller and mid-sized farmers face challenges reaching larger markets.

“Community colleges are committed to supporting the economic development, health, and vitality of our region, and that includes our local agricultural industry,” said Peggy Heinrich, EdD, President of Elgin Community College. “This project will play an important role in bringing stakeholders together to foster meaningful dialogue and explore the benefits, challenges, and opportunities associated with local food procurement. We look forward to working with Kane County and our regional partners on this important initiative.”

Farmers and others interested in participating can contact Project Director Ellen Kamps at ksustainableag@gmail.com.