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# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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## **The Arkansas Department of Agriculture Hosts Local Conversations to Promote Local Procurement**

LITTLE ROCK, AR – The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is hosting a Local Conversations event on Friday, March 12, to help connect Arkansas farmers, producers, and farmers market managers. The free, virtual event will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Local Conversations is sponsored by the Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas.

“Our Local Conversations events are designed to bring producers together to learn from each other so consumers can ultimately have more access to locally produced food and products,” said Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward. “These events have been well-received in the past, and we are looking forward to another successful event this year.”

Local Conversations 2021 will feature a panel of four farmers and market managers for discussion of alternative selling methods, innovations, and adaptations made to address issues created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Presentations on Selling Online, Social Media Marketing, and Pricing Your Products will follow the panel discussion.

Funding for the Alternative Selling Methods Campaign is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program that was developed to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. The USDA defines specialty crops as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops.

Partners that will be on hand for presentations and discussion include representatives from the Arkansas Department of Health, the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center, the Arkansas Economic Development Institute, Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas, and the Arkansas Farmers Market Association.

Event registration is available at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckcuqqTooH9YsOokokAlexRe-kYTN7iRI>. For more information, contact Karen Reynolds at [karen.reynolds@agriculture.arkansas.gov](mailto:karen.reynolds@agriculture.arkansas.gov).

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit [agriculture.arkansas.gov/](http://agriculture.arkansas.gov/). The Arkansas Department of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

With more than \$3.7 billion in assets, AgHeritage Farm Credit Services, Farm Credit Midsouth, and Farm Credit of Western Arkansas support rural communities and agriculture across Arkansas with reliable, consistent credit and financial services today and tomorrow. In Arkansas, Farm Credit associations are owned by the more than 11,000 customer-owners they serve. Through the cooperative structure, customer-owners have a voice and vote in the associations’ governance. Members also share in the cooperatives’ financial success through cooperative returns which total more than \$243 million since 1997.