




Case Study (#2 of 5) in southwest Iowa: Innovative Local Foods Access

This case study series highlights an innovative local foods access initiative happening in southwest Iowa. It includes a variety of initiatives and projects that can serve as idea-starters to incorporate in other communities. The Center for Rural Affairs is able to assist in developing local food access plans across the region. Visit cfra.org for more information.



-  Tyler Bartley
-  Sown Local Foods
-  Malvern, Iowa



2017

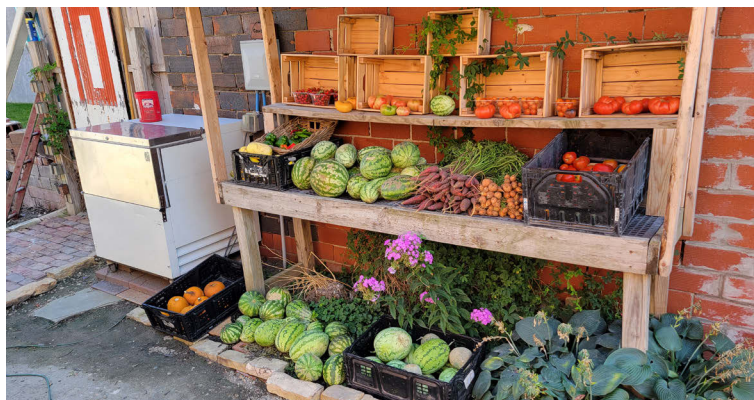
Tyler and his business partner were struggling to find a career they enjoyed. They decided to see if there was an opportunity to buy and sell locally and bolster the local economy, while making a modest living. In 2017, the pair piloted their farm business idea and officially started selling their Sown Local Foods produce the year after that. The farm is located on the edge of Malvern, Iowa.

Innovative ways to sell


In addition to selling produce at various farmers markets, Sown Local Foods sells to restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska, and surrounding areas.

Tyler also sells his produce through a farm stand on Main Street in Malvern. He has an old barn he hopes to use as a year-round farmers market stand in the future.

The local grocery store recently burned down, and is in the process of being rebuilt. Sown Local Foods hopes to sell directly into the grocery store someday.



“ If you are going to sell to restaurants you need to focus your whole calendar around the delivery structure. There are a lot of aspects to think about when it comes to working with restaurants. You can build reliable sales, though. We worked with Lone Tree Foods, an area wholesale aggregator that sources and distributes local produce. It helps when you don't have to do all the delivering and organizing.

-Tyler 



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Determining prices

Sown Local Foods believes there is room for all farmers, and coordination between producers improves the local food system and community.

“ *It's a sensitive issue. There is a demand for local produce but very difficult to connect on pricing, availability, and getting products to the actual customer.*

It can be challenging to educate people on what is in season and keep up with expectations set by grocery stores.

We are committed to working on solutions to improve issues like food insecurity.

-Tyler ”

Q: What do your rural customers enjoy most?



A: Radishes!



Leaning into agricultural tourism

Malvern is known for ag and art tourism. In 2023, Tyler plans to pivot and sell at the Malvern Farmers Market and concert series to bring more awareness of his farm business and improve opportunities to connect with local customers.

Do community members want to eat more local food?

“ *I am sensitive toward how I speak about this because I don't want to offend people. I want to give people the chance to eat more locally because you can taste it; quality ingredients get me excited. I am blown away when I see how beautiful the produce from the field is, and then when it is made into something beautifully.*

We are known for growing our salad blends and our \$5 salad sacks and radishes. I've had a lot of heartache growing things like sweet corn, watermelons, and tomatoes.

-Tyler ”



“ *Our dream when we started was to be effective enough growing the food that we could still have an enjoyable lifestyle and offer it in a way that bettered our community.*

This is still the goal, any way I can get there. We need to bring back the balance of supplying food and not burning yourself out; it is not impossible.

-Tyler ”

Impact in the community

Tyler would love to start connecting with local schools, employ high school students, and create more jobs in his community through Sown Local Foods.

He remembers his childhood community connections fondly, and wants to build up that connection in his local community today.



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