Currently, 85 percent of our country’s persistent poverty counties are in rural America. More than one third of rural Americans, and one in four rural children live in poverty. Kids growing up in families earning twice the poverty threshold are nearly three times as likely as other children to have poor health, are more likely to finish two fewer years of school, and are more likely to earn half as much money in their adult lives.

Growing the economy by investing in rural communities and increasing opportunities for families is key to our Nation’s future. In 2010, Secretary Vilsack established USDA’s StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity to address the specific challenges associated with rural poverty. Since then, StrikeForce teams have collaborated with more than 1,500 community partners and public entities to bring targeted assistance to rural areas experiencing chronic poverty.

These efforts have invested more than $23.5 billion to create jobs, build homes, feed kids, assist farmers and conserve natural resources across more than twenty states. In 2016, StrikeForce expanded to include Florida, Missouri, Montana, and Ohio. Now, USDA StrikeForce teams will operate in 970 counties in 25 states and Puerto Rico. Each StrikeForce project is a commitment to America’s economic future.

Some of Our StrikeForce Community Partners

American Federation of Teachers
GROW Appalachia
Hatfield-McCoy Trail Association
Reconnecting McDowell
West Virginia Development Office
West Virginia Community Development HUB
West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition
Regional Planning & Development Councils (11 in WV)
West Virginia Department of Agriculture
West Virginia Department of Education – Office of Child Nutrition

StrikeForce Initiative Impacting Local Foods in WV

In West Virginia, the StrikeForce initiative has made a positive difference statewide with the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development (RD). One example of all three agencies working together is the Heart & Hand House located in the small town of Philippi.

According to Executive Director Brenda Hunt, the Heart & Hand House’s Community Garden Market “promotes the health and well-being of our community in more ways than one. Its impact can be measured not only in terms of the financial capital generated within the local economy, but also in terms of intellectual capital that comes from the sharing of ideas and education about how to grow and prepare local foods, as well as social capital resulting from the interaction among community members who come to the market.”

To support the Market Place and Community Garden Market, RD provided a $50,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG). Specifically, funds were used to upgrade the HVAC system, complete structural improvements, and purchase equipment required to operate “The Market Place,” a local foods Café and Aggregation Center. The project allows local producers to increase capacity and participate in sales to local schools and other institutions in West Virginia. This follows another $23,700 Community Facilities Grant to support the structural upgrades, new flooring and a new sign.

Updated January 2016
1,169 Projects in 2015 = $82.5 Million Invested

- 42 Jobs Created or Saved
- 670,150 Summer Meals for Kids
- 281 Farmers Assisted
- 2,962 Home Investments
- 360 Conservation Efforts

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www.usda.gov/assistance

Map Produced - January 14, 2014
USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer