

Emerging markets for diversifying agriculture: Case studies in the U.S. Corn Belt

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Due to the lack of diversity in the U.S. agricultural system, Midwestern agricultural communities continue to face agronomic, environmental, and social challenges. This research is part of a USDA-NIFA-funded project focused on developing an evidence-based framework and vision of how to enable a more diverse agricultural landscape across the Corn Belt (Illinois, Iowa, and Indiana). This investigation aims to identify and describe opportunities and challenges for emerging markets, beyond the farm gate, with diversified agriculture, that can facilitate diversification in the value chain with three case studies (one per state). This work will be conducted in three stages; the screening stage will select the potential emerging markets of food products to work with. The description stage will be assembling the case studies through the collection and categorization of deep information. The categories will be agriculture and livestock, sociocultural, economic, policy, environment, and market regions. The last stage will be to select, based on the data obtained from the previous stage, what are the key challenges and opportunities that influence stakeholders to diversify. Overall, the research will produce suggestions for improving the markets for diversified products for a more sustainable agricultural ecosystem across the US Corn Belt.