FROM THE **EDITOR**

It seems that everywhere I go these days I am seeing, hearing, and reading about our food system. Whether it's the hundreds of ag-related tweets I receive each day, or stories in the news about farm subsidies and the plight of the small farmer, the skyrocketing obesity epidemic and how we're going to feed the world, or on TV like the recently-aired HBO documentary "The Weight of the Nation," or conversations with family and friends guffawing at the food industry's blatant obsession for profit over health. Our nation's preoccupation with food is growing and I am hopeful it is shifting from one of cheaper-the-better gluttonous consumption to one of locally grown, in-season, and healthily proportioned.

Food: we grow it, raise it, eat it, and savor it. It's the centerpiece of celebrations. It's vital to our existence and yet somehow, we as a nation, lost sight of the growers and producers, and food as a living, beneficial thing and became obsessed with increasing yields, extending shelf life, and lowering costs while in many cases sacrificing nutrient content and the land on which the food is grown and raised.

Today's discussions about our food system provide us with an opportunity to improve our approaches as we strive to feed the world's burgeoning population. There is a balance to be achieved: one that encourages continued research and advancement in agricultural sciences while also increasing local access to affordable, healthy fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy, and poultry. I am confident we will strike this balance and my confidence grew tenfold after reading the articles in this issue of *Rural Connections*. Our authors provide evidence of the increasing local-foods movement and provide us with practical information we can apply in our communities. This issue also includes a challenge from USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan for each of us to do more and I hope all of you will join with me in accepting her challenge.

Yours in the pursuit of healthy food access for all,

Betsy

Betsy H. Newman
Editor