

Beyond the Farmers' Market:

Planning for Local Food Systems in Illinois



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For more information and for electronic copies of this document:
<http://asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu/food-sys>.

How to Use This Guide

Each element of the food system—from production to processing, distribution and marketing, through consumption and waste disposal—has significant issues, challenges, and opportunities that must be addressed to build a successful local food system. In this guide, Part I provides some first steps for getting started in building or improving your community's food system. Parts II-IV provide specific actions that your community can take within each component of the food system to support local projects. Part V concludes with additional tools to help you develop a local food system. While each element of the food system can be addressed independently or in tandem, we suggest that you begin by working through Part I, and then use the remaining sections in the order that best serves your community's needs.

Overview

The idea of developing local food systems is an attractive one, but the “how to” of developing local sources and markets for food is often a stumbling block. Even as consumers are shopping at farmers' markets, subscribing to community supported agriculture operations, dining at restaurants that buy locally, and developing new relationships with farmers, more would be better. This guide describes factors that contribute to the success or challenges of local food system projects. As Illinois communities develop local food systems and support existing projects, what can others learn from their experiences? This guide provides some of the answers that farmers, consumers and communities can use to develop local food systems.

In 2004, the Laboratory for Community and Economic Development at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign began studying local food systems and locally-grown food initiatives in Central Illinois to document their potential as a strategy for community and economic development. This guide employs the key findings from that research to provide action steps and strategies to help community organizers develop successful local food system projects that benefit farmers, consumers and their communities. Mayors, planning staff, community and economic development professionals, and Extension educators, among others, can all play critical roles in developing local food systems. Case studies and data from Central Illinois provide examples for the suggested strategies.

Detailed information about the Central Illinois Local Food System project methodology and results can be found in the supplemental document “Local Food Systems in Central Illinois 2004–2007” available at <http://asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu/food-sys>.

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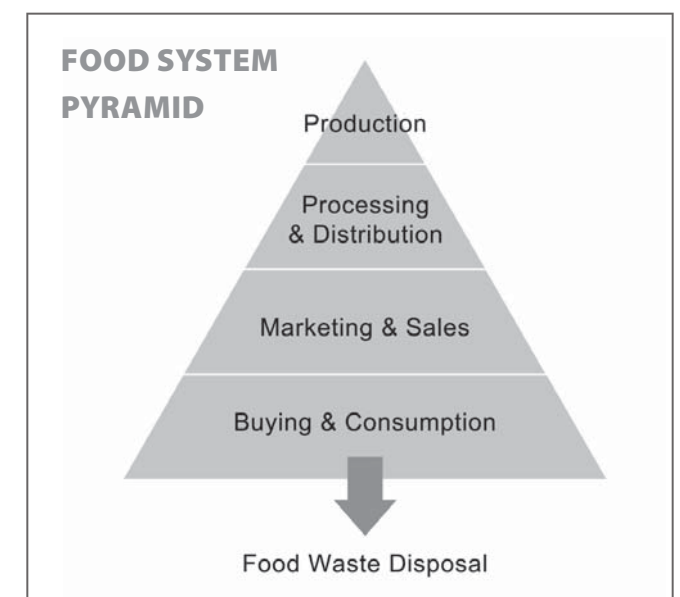
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Part I: First Steps

In most of the United States, food is plentiful, available year-round from all over the world and relatively inexpensive. U.S. citizens, on average, spend only 9% of their income on food (including food prepared outside of the home), the lowest percentage in the world. In contrast, in developing countries such as India and Venezuela, consumers spend 53% and 34% respectively, while in developed countries such as Italy, Japan, France and the United Kingdom, consumers spend 12–26% of their income on food. Our plentiful, convenient and inexpensive food retail outlets have created an environment where consumers rarely think about food as a system.

The food system comprises all aspects of food production, food processing, transportation and distribution of food to the market place, food marketing, food consumption and even disposal of food wastes. The pyramid graphic on this page depicts our current food system. There are a small number of producers or farmers engaged in the actual growing and harvesting of food, who receive a small portion of the food dollar for their commodity. There are a larger number of individuals and companies engaged in processing these raw foods into value-added products, and then another group of entities engaged in transporting and distributing these foods to the market place. They receive a larger portion of the consumer's food dollar than the food producers. Then, there are the companies engaged in convincing consumers to purchase these foods—the marketers. They receive an even larger portion of every dollar spent on food. The largest population in the food pyramid is that engaged in consuming foods—we are all “eaters.” Lastly, some portion of the foods that are produced, processed, sold and consumed end up as waste. Most food wastes end up in our wastewater treatment facilities or our landfills. This current food system is global—raw products can be raised in one country, processed in another and then sold back to the same or different country in a form that barely resembles the raw product. As such, consumers rarely know or pay attention to where their food is produced or even what practices are used to produce it and deliver it to the local supermarket.

Local food systems contrast sharply with our current global food system by tying all aspects of the system to a defined geographic region. Each element of the local food system makes an important contribution to its community, including business development and expansion, the development of new business relationships, providing fresh wholesome food to consumers, and more. Community members interested in developing a local food system could begin with just one aspect of the food system, but it is critical that they consider each of the elements—production, processing, distribution and consumption—and how they are linked to create the most viable and sustainable local food system possible. Part I of this guide recommends several first steps in developing a local food system.



A. WHY LOCAL, WHY NOW?

Before beginning the process of developing a local food system project or activity, your community will need to gather some information about definitions, motivations and goals for your project. Worksheet I-1 will guide you through these steps.

Step 1: Defining "Local"

Local food systems encompass the production, processing and consumption of food within a specified geographic area, and are characterized by shorter transportation distances, knowledge of the farmer and production methods, viable small family farms, and food policies that promote access to affordable, healthy food choices. Local food systems promote the goals of environmental sustainability, economic viability for farmers and communities, and socially just food security for all.¹ In contrast, the current U.S. food system typically produces food for long storage and transportation times, using vertically integrated processes of production and distribution, large commodity farms, heavy reliance on pesticides and other chemicals, and limited consumer knowledge of production methods or food origins.

Communities that develop around local food systems often have overlapping geographic boundaries and build networks of people between and within communities. There is no single definition of "local," thus a first step will be defining what "local" means to your community. Building successful local food systems will require an appreciation of the needs and assets of each community, and flexibility in approaches.

Step 2: Why Local? Know the Issues

Local food systems reflect and address many important issues for economic developers, elected officials and other community leaders. It is important to identify the issues that can build a compelling case for building a locally based food system for those in positions of influence in your community. Local economies, social networks, health, and environmental protection are just a few of the issues that attract interest in local food systems and that can serve as angles from which to make the case for local food system projects. This section briefly discusses several issues involved in creating local food systems. Your goal will be to discuss how

these issues and others reflect and integrate the needs of your community, and form a short summary of the motivations to develop your local food system.

Economic Issues. In 2001, Ken Meter of the Crossroads Resource Center analyzed the agricultural economy in Southeastern Minnesota, and found that the region "lost" \$800 million in the production and consumption of food.² In other words, the region spent \$800 million on food and food products that were not produced locally. This economic loss was exacerbating the decline of rural agricultural communities in Minnesota, as is the case throughout the Midwest. The 2002 Census of Agriculture estimated that nearly 27,000 Illinois farms (37 percent of all farms in the state) had net losses during the year.³ Many farmers are not serving local markets, which would help keep revenue circulating within a community. Instead, they are growing crops that are not consumed locally, and are marketed for non-food uses such as animal feeds or biofuels.

Other studies have focused on conventional and alternative agricultural production. To enhance local economies, economists recommend diversifying agriculture at the regional scale, promoting value-added products, and building "community-scaled" agriculture.⁴ Local food systems can provide economic opportunities by employing local residents, drawing customers to other local businesses, and circulating money through the local community as residents purchase local food or goods and services used to grow that food. As a highly productive agricultural state, Illinois has a significant opportunity to direct more of its agricultural production toward products that support community-based food systems.

Community Networks and Civic Engagement. Communities are using local food systems to develop new traditions, teach new skills, and create a sense of community. The opportunity to build new relationships among stakeholders in local food system projects is a benefit of community-based food systems.

***Making Connections.** The Community Food Security Coalition (<http://www.foodsecurity.org>) provides case studies of organizations and communities which have used local food systems to improve their communities. One example is the Just Food program of New York,*

which provides community gardens for residents. One participant noted that "we are not just raising food, we are raising people".⁵ This sense of community relationship-building is also a strong component in the Central Illinois case studies discussed throughout this guide.

Environmental Concerns. In our current U.S. food system, food travels an average of 1,500 miles from the farm to the consumer.⁶ Transporting food adds processing, shipping, and packaging costs, which increases the cost to consumers without contributing to the value of farm sales. Transporting food increases fuel consumption, waste, and pollution. In a local food system, food is marketed directly to consumers by producers or with few intermediaries, which reduces the distance between producer and customer, thus reducing associated costs.

Local food systems can help preserve farmland. Between 1997 and 2002, more than 360,000 acres of Illinois farmland were taken out of production.⁷ Local food systems provide an opportunity for communities to support small family farms, enabling more farmers to stay in the business of farming. Consumers can buy organic or "sustainably-raised" food, which increases demand for food produced using methods that promote environmental stewardship and conservation of farmland.

Food System Planning. Only recently have food system issues been given significant attention in the field of planning. A 2001 study of professional planners in southeastern Pennsylvania found that 70 percent of respondents said their agency's participation in local food system activities was minimal.⁸

***Food System Planning: Finding More Information.** Journal of Planning Education and Research (Vol. 23, 2004) and Progressive Planning (Winter 2004) address issues such as: farm-to-school programs, food security needs, farmland preservation. See also Gallagher (2006) and Proscio (2006) in the bibliography for more information on: public health, food deserts, affordable and nutritious food choices.*

Planners can work toward ensuring that all community residents—but especially low-income residents—have access to healthy, affordable food by thinking creatively about

the opportunities for providing food to neighborhoods. Farmers' markets, community supported agriculture farms, farm stands and farmer-retailer relationships can increase residents' access to locally grown food, while building new markets for local producers.

Step 3: Why Now?

What does your community hope to accomplish by beginning to build a local food system? What are your priorities in creating a successful project? Outline your priority goals for several time periods: what would you like to see within six months, a year, and after five years? What are some realistic measurements by which you will gauge your success and which can help to identify additional needs or address challenges as they arise? What will help you to evaluate the success of your local food system projects?

B. KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY: AN INVENTORY

Begin an inventory of agricultural resources in your community. Identify existing resources in each element of the food system in your community—production, processing and distribution, consumption and disposal—to help understand the current state of your community's food system and identify next steps in building the local food system. Worksheet I-2 will help you begin the inventory process, and the following sections will allow you to add more detailed information as you work through the guide. As part of your community resource inventory, you may also need to conduct surveys of consumers, institutional food buyers (schools, hospitals, nursing homes, restaurants, public agencies) and individual consumers. See Appendix A for sample survey questions for producers, institutional food buyers and consumers.

¹ Allen et al. 2003; Berry 1996; Campbell 1997; Imhoff 1996; Kloppenburg, Hendrickson and Stevenson 1996; Kloppenburg et al. 2000

² Meter and Rosales 2001

³ NASS 2002

⁴ Allen et al. 2003; Bills 2001; Gandee 2002; Gottwals and Mennito 2004; Meter and Rosales 2001

⁵ Tauber and Fisher. 2002

⁶ Halweil 2002

⁷ NASS 2002

⁸ Able and Thompson 2001

Worksheet I-1: First Steps

STEP 1. DEFINING LOCAL

How will you define your local food system? Your community, county or within a certain driving distance? Mark the general boundaries of your local food system on a regional map of your area, and attach to the description below.

Our Local Food System

STEP 2. WHY LOCAL?

Describe the motivations that encouraged your community to engage in building your local food system.

STEP 3. WHY NOW?

What are key priorities that you hope to address with your local food system?

Examples:

- We want our local government offices to source 10% of their food from local farmers over a three year period.
- We would like to get x number of restaurants, grocery stores and other retail food venues to purchase 20% of their food from local producers in two years.
- We would like to develop a training program for beginning and transitioning farmers to increase the supply of locally grown foods in our area.

STEP 4. OUTLINING GOALS/ CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

Provide at least three key goals that your community would like to achieve with its local food system projects, and suggest several criteria that will help you to evaluate your local food projects based on these goals.

STEP 5. OUTLINING GOALS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Local Food System Goals	Within 6 Months	Within 1 Year	Within 2 Years	After 5 Years
A.				
B.				
C.				
D.				

Worksheet I-2: Comprehensive Food System Inventory

1. PRODUCTION

Farmers	Crops Produced	Markets	Types of Production (conventional, organic...)	Support Businesses (seeds, machinery...)	Other

2. PROCESSING/DISTRIBUTION

Meat Processing Facilities	Kitchen Incubators	Certified Kitchens	Other Processing Businesses	Other

3. MARKETING

Local Farm Stands	Local Farmers' Markets	Restaurants/Stores Buying Locally	Institutional Purchasing	Alternative Markets	Other

Part II: Local Food Production

A. WHY LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION?

Farmers face significant challenges from fluctuating commodity prices, rising production costs, and pressures from non-farm land development. To counter those challenges, farmers who change their practices can sell locally grown food directly to consumers or to retail food buyers. The increased consumer demand for organic products and food produced using sustainable methods is creating new market options. This section will help you identify existing resources and potential opportunities for local food production.

Step 1: Assessing Production Capacity

This step will fill in the gaps in your agricultural inventory for production, using Worksheet II-1. Questions to answer:

Farmers:

- What products are local farmers currently producing? If consumers were interested in buying food products grown locally, what assistance would farmers need to produce and market these requested products?

- How many farmers and product amounts would be required to meet community goals for local food purchasing? See Tables 1 and 2 in the appendix for comments provided by Central Illinois farmers about their information and assistance needs.

Markets:

- Where do farmers sell their products? Why did they choose their current markets?
- Have farmers tried other types of markets? What challenges do they face with community supported agriculture (CSAs), u-pick farms or other local markets?
- What can the community do to promote new markets for local foods—such as provide liability insurance, incentives, or promotional materials?

Step 2: Marketing Local Food

Interested in spreading the word about local food products available in your community? Identify the most valuable venues for information in your community. There are many low-cost opportunities to advertise your local

The survey of producers conducted by the University of Illinois illustrated the challenges of conventional agriculture and the opportunities for diversification: 36 percent of Central Illinois direct-market farmers surveyed in 2004 were also growing commodity products (including conventionally raised corn and soybeans, organic grains and contracted livestock) along with local direct-marketed food products. Two-thirds of those farmers used more than half of their total acreage for their commodity products, yet only 50 percent or less of their total gross farm sales were from those commodity sales. Direct marketed sales within local markets made up the rest of the farm sales for nearly

all of those farmers (the others have wholesale products or sell in Chicago). In these examples, farm sales were higher on smaller acreages of locally grown food products.



farmers and markets. Consider simple strategies as well: give a presentation at the monthly chamber of commerce meeting, or an interview for the local paper or radio program. Describe seasonal products which are available and how the community benefits from local purchasing to recruit new customers and supporters. See Worksheet II-2 to complete this step.

In Central Illinois, 91 percent of farmers ranked “word of mouth” as an effective promotional method, with newspaper or local media advertisements (37 percent) and road signs/billboards (32 percent) following.

Step 3: Identify and Address Potential Challenges for Local Food Production

Producers in Central Illinois provided significant insight into issues facing Illinois farmers. Several of their comments are included as examples in Worksheet II-3. Interviewing local farmers can help you understand the difficulties for local food production in your region, and brainstorm opportunities and resources that community leaders can use to address these challenges.

Who will grow the food for local markets as demand grows for local foods?

During workshops held for Extension and community leaders interested in building local food systems, participants identified insufficient production in Illinois as a barrier to building local food systems. Highlights from those discussions follow:

1. The success of any local foods initiative is highly dependent on producers. Currently it seems like we have too few producers to meet demand so they need to be front and center in any discussion of local foods. Expanding produc-

tion could be achieved by either increasing production at existing farms or recruiting new producers. Both of these strategies have potential but it seems little has been done to develop an understanding of how to accomplish these objectives. Some believe that this problem will go away as demand and prices increase, which in turn increases profitability and provides production incentives.

2. Educational programs should be expanded to reach not only the seasoned farmer but those who are ‘thinking about’ producing for a local market. The Farm Beginnings™ program, a training program for new and transitioning farmers, needs to be more accessible. University of Illinois Extension is well positioned to assume leadership for educational programming but many other institutions including high schools, community colleges, not-for-profits, producer organizations and others are active. More coordination is needed.

3. Technical assistance is needed at all levels for producers and organizations that are proponents of local food systems. The enormous diversity of products and production practices makes this a complex challenge. The Internet offers the most realistic method for delivering information and creating forums for discussing production issues, along with mentoring or creating networks among producers to share information and experiences. Extension could provide technical support for production practices (organic, sustainable) as well as marketing (e.g., tools such as Farm Doc to conduct economic analyses of local food production enterprises and systems).

4. Access to capital is potentially a problem, although many traditional agricultural lenders are becoming more familiar with local foods producers’ business models

and financial needs. There are some low interest loan programs through the Illinois State Treasurer’s Office and the Illinois Finance Authority that direct market farmers could use.

5. Despite the abundance of high quality farmland in Illinois, there is some concern that in many regions, small acreage parcels may not be available. High land costs may also be a barrier. There may be an opportunity to work with the larger commodity farm units on lease arrangements in some locations. For example, some commodity farmers may be willing to lease acres to someone who wants to grow sweet corn or fresh produce for an institutional food buyer.

6. The lack of market information is a problem for many local food producers. Market information includes the types of products available, pricing, quantities available, quality standards, distribution systems, and other characteristics of producers and consumers. The lack of market information is particularly troublesome for institutional buyers who are increasingly interested in purchasing local foods.

7. Illinois lacks a statewide organization representing the interests of local foods producers. As the local foods movement grows it will be increasingly important to have a unified voice in state government to advocate policy that supports local foods systems.

8. Farm tours are a popular and effective method to increase interest in local foods and share knowledge and experience.

9. Without a plan to address succession of ownership, retiring producers may not be replaced. Succession planning is probably an unfamiliar topic for most local foods producers but may be an option that provides economic benefits to the producer and sustains a local business.

10. Food production is labor intensive. Availability and cost of labor are emerging as potential problems for some producers.

11. Farm scale for different local food venues needs to be addressed. Small, intensively managed diversified farms serve farmers’ markets, CSAs, farm stands or other direct market venues well; there are few medium to large produce or livestock farms that could sell wholesale to institutional food buyers—the so called “agriculture in the middle.” We need to find out if these medium sized

farms exist; and if so, where and to which markets are they selling and then determine if they could grow for local or regional institutional food buyers.

12. If there are commodity farmers interested in converting some of their acres to local food production, there is a need to reduce risk for conversion or entry into local food markets. Several suggestions for reducing risk would be creating secure and large markets, developing contractual arrangements between producers and food buyers, convincing traditional agricultural lenders to provide capital for local foods type enterprises and developing public awareness to get consumers to VALUE food (i.e., know the difference between locally grown and conventionally grown and be willing to pay more for it). Woodbury County, Iowa was cited as an example of the local government establishing a mandate for publicly funded institutions to buy as much locally grown foods as are available.

SURVEYING DIRECT MARKET FARMERS

Central Illinois direct-market farmers were selling their products primarily on their farms or at farmers’ markets. Fewer than 25 percent of the direct market farmers surveyed sold to restaurants, grocery stores or other institutions. However, in the two years since the survey was completed, the level of interest from restaurant chefs and grocery store owners in Central Illinois has grown, and there are expanding opportunities for local food sales to these outlets. Nearly a quarter

of the farmers surveyed said they were interested in selling to restaurants and grocery stores in their communities. Only 10 percent of farmers had a community supported agriculture (CSA) operation in 2003 or 2004. One-third of farmers offered a “pick-your-own” option, with strawberries, apples, and pumpkins as the most common u-pick crops. Several farmers who did not offer u-pick mentioned liability and insurance issues as a barrier to this option.

Worksheet II-1: Local Food Production Inventory

Farmers	Crops Produced	Markets	Types of Production (conventional, organic...)

Support Businesses (seeds, machinery...)	Educational Assistance	Financial Resources	Other

Worksheet II-2: Marketing Local Food

	Contact Information	News Release Deadlines
Newspapers		
Radio		
Membership in Local Service Organization		
Other Publicity Resources		

Worksheet II-3: Identify and Address Potential Challenges for Local Food Production

Concern / Issue	Potential Strategy	Organizations / Resources for Assistance
<p>Example: Retirement and Farm Transition.</p> <p><i>Explanation:</i> Statistics from Central Illinois followed the trend for all U.S. agriculture, demonstrating that a significant number of farmers have been farming for many years and were considering retirement. Producers said: "We are getting older, no young family members want to take over. We'll probably be out of business in 4-5 years;" "We are not changing things much, we are near retirement."</p>	<p>Education/Training for New or Transitioning Farmers, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Business planning assistance; * Access to financial resources; * Agri-tourism; * Entrepreneurship 	<p>Illinois Farm Beginnings¹</p>
<p>Example: Access to Capital for Business Development or Certification.</p> <p><i>Explanation:</i> Very few Central Illinois producers surveyed were certified organic. The complexity of the organic certification processes, the time period for transitioning farmland, and the variety of programs available make certification a challenge for many growers.</p>	<p>Local Policy or Economic Development Tools, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * small-business loan funds; * agricultural grant programs; * local policies that encourage local government institutions to purchase food locally. 	<p>Woodbury County, Iowa</p>

¹ More details about organizations and resources can be found in the appendix.

Part III: Adding Value Through Processing and Distribution Networks

Although many of the fruits and vegetables produced in Illinois could be sold fresh directly to consumers, processing plays an important role in the food system, most critically for the production and consumption of locally raised livestock or dairy products. Processing locally grown food can create additional wealth for communities by supporting businesses that add value to locally grown food by baking, canning, curing or otherwise preserving local products.

A. SMALL-SCALE PROCESSING

In Illinois and throughout the Midwest, many small-scale meat processing facilities have closed. Illinois has only one poultry processing facility, and many large processors for red meat have minimum quantity levels that smaller producers are unable to meet. Only two processing facilities can process organic meats in Illinois, forcing organic livestock producers to find facilities outside of the state. Limited processing creates a significant limitation to the amount of locally produced meat that is available to consumers. The side bar on page 14 describes one farmer's attempt to develop a new meat processing plant in Central Illinois.



Step 1: Processing Inventory

Complete the agricultural inventory on page 16.

Do producers have access to a processing facility in your region? Can these processors make a business case for expansion? Do they have needs that could be supported by the community? Are there opportunities to develop or attract new processing businesses to your community? What support businesses could serve farmers or food buyers in your community? Could you support a certified kitchen, canning facility, or other processing businesses that would add value to locally raised products? What strategies can your community implement to attract and retain processing operations? Are public health officials or information about health regulations readily available? Are local health department policies viewed as hurdles to on-farm processing or selling processed foods at local food venues? Does your community have a small business development center, programs to support business start-ups, or a business incubator?



B. DISTRIBUTION ISSUES

One of the biggest challenges for farmers selling to local markets is arranging regular deliveries of their freshly harvested products. Trucking schedules, harvesting times, travel times and other distribution issues require farmers to develop creative solutions to address local food buyers' needs. Following are two examples of farmers who are working to solve distribution challenges.

SMALL-SCALE MEAT PROCESSING: A CENTRAL ILLINOIS CASE STUDY

"To do what I love to do – farming – I've had to look at new opportunities," commented a Central Illinois farmer who diversified his farming operation and is leading the effort to develop a new small-scale multi-species meat processing facility in Central Illinois.⁹ This facility will serve small producers raising both organic and conventional livestock, including turkeys, chickens, cattle and hogs. The facility will be owned and managed by a limited liability company, with many local producers investing in the business. A retail shop will be open to consumers and the business will create its own brand label to market some products collectively, while still processing individual farm orders. When the facility is completed, the board anticipates that it will employ approximately 50 people. It will be certified to process organic meats, federally inspected, and process multiple species, making it one of only a few processing facilities of its type in the nation. Most processing facilities are state-inspected only, which means products can be sold only within the state. The facility expects to attract producers from a 100-mile radius of the plant and will be located near interstate highways for access to markets in Chicago, St. Louis and Indianapolis. Local elected officials have provided incentives and political support to the project. This relationship with local officials, as well as the support of residents within the community who are customers of many of the farmers involved in the project, has fostered additional support for the plant. Board members worked with local professionals to develop the facility, hiring a local engineer and contractor, and working with a local bank. Benefits of the facility are its potential to create local jobs, increase sales of locally raised meat products, and keep food dollars circulating locally.

BUILDING A NEW BUSINESS: THE FAIRBURY EXAMPLE

For the past two years, several producers have worked with Dave's Supermarket in Fairbury, Illinois to provide a "farmers' market" section within the grocery store. As they prepared for their third season of local food sales inside Dave's Supermarket, the Fairbury farmers discussed forming a cooperative to address potential issues with pricing and the admin-

istration and management of the farmers' group. Several farmers met with a University of Illinois Extension Educator who has experience with co-op formation and legal issues. As a result of this meeting, the farmers organized a limited liability company (LLC) rather than a cooperative. Cooperatives require stocks, dividends, taxes, a minimum number of producing members, and a significant amount of paperwork. The farmers appreciate the flexibility of an LLC which would allow new members to join easily and start on a small scale. The farmers discussed the individual liability protection provided by an LLC, along with a smaller membership fee, no minimum limits on production quantities or members, and the ability to allow non-producing members to participate in the organization. These characteristics of an LLC are discussed thoroughly in a report by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs.¹⁰ Most fitting for the broader goals of the Fairbury farmers, the report suggests that "an LLC may be a better way to organize the business if the objective is to create wealth for the rural community as a whole." During several producer meetings, the farmers outlined their vision and core values for the group. The group registered their LLC for the 2007 growing season.

istration and management of the farmers' group. Several farmers met with a University of Illinois Extension Educator who has experience with co-op formation and legal issues. As a result of this meeting, the farmers organized a limited liability company (LLC) rather than a cooperative. Cooperatives require stocks, dividends, taxes, a minimum number of producing members, and a significant amount of paperwork. The farmers appreciate the flexibility of an LLC which would allow new members to join easily and start on a small scale. The farmers discussed the individual liability protection provided by an LLC, along with a smaller membership fee, no minimum limits on production quantities or members, and the ability to allow non-producing members to participate in the organization. These characteristics of an LLC are discussed thoroughly in a report by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs.¹⁰ Most fitting for the broader goals of the Fairbury farmers, the report suggests that "an LLC may be a better way to organize the business if the objective is to create wealth for the rural community as a whole." During several producer meetings, the farmers outlined their vision and core values for the group. The group registered their LLC for the 2007 growing season.

SUPPLYING CHICAGO MARKETS

The demand for locally grown food is exploding in the Chicago region. Because of the limited number of working farms near Chicago, the Chicago foodshed extends to farms in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan, in addition to Illinois. Farmers are finding markets in the growing number of farmers' markets, as well as buying clubs and restaurants. While this region provides a high-value market, several challenges arise in transporting products to Chicago. To sell at a suburban farmers' market requires a farmer in Central Illinois to be on the road between 1–3 a.m. so they can be set up by the 7 a.m. market opening. Several farmers are working together to transport their products to the Chicago area markets. Some Chicago restaurants and buying clubs are reacting to these challenges by sending a truck to the farms to pick up products. The Chicago market is important for Illinois farmers, but coordinating and creating efficient distribution networks will make it more feasible for farmers to serve these urban customers with Illinois grown products.

grown foods. On page 15 is the story that was aired on National Public Radio in January 2008. For more information about Cherry Capital Foods, LLC, visit their website: www.cherrycapitalfoods.com

MICHIGAN FOOD BUYER STARTS LOCAL FOOD DISTRIBUTOR BUSINESS

Story reported by Peter Payette from Interlochen Public Radio.

More and more consumers are demanding produce grown near their homes, and small farmers are happy to oblige. The problem is how to get locally grown fruits and vegetables into local kitchens. Produce distribution in the U.S. is still dominated by big companies that buy and sell in huge volumes, trucking goods across state and international lines. But in a corner of northern Michigan, one entrepreneur is using his experience as a chef and wholesaler to solve one



problem facing small farmers. Eric Hahn grew up in Charlevoix, Michigan, at the northern end of a cherry-growing region that produces at least 100 million pounds of cherries a year. Hahn was the sales representative for a national food distributor out of Detroit. The sweet cherries he trucked to nearby stores were brought from Washington state because the cherries ripen earlier there, and the growing season is longer.

INCREASING DEMAND

But the stores and restaurants Hahn supplied were constantly asking for local cherries. "I had grocery stores, some of my chefs were interested in them, and one of them one day said, 'Run down to Friske's and bring me back a box of cherries—I don't have time to do it,'" Hahn recalled. "So I did and sent him an invoice. That was the start of it all." At one point, Hahn convinced his company to work with some small growers on a pilot distribution project, but the fruit and vegetables still had to go through the warehouse in Detroit. There were also some other logistical problems, so the company stopped the program. But when asparagus season

rolled around last spring, farmers started calling Hahn looking to sell their produce. "The farmers I was working with were people I'd known for a long time going back to grade school, and I knew they grew great peaches, great strawberries," Hahn said. So, Hahn quit his job, took \$5,000 out of his savings account, traded in his Volvo for a van and started Cherry Capital Foods. Now, he distributes food grown on about 60 local farms to more than 100 nearby restaurants, resorts, stores and schools. As Hahn dropped off a load of potatoes at the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, executive chef Ted Cizma said it used to be a chore for him to get a bag of locally grown potatoes. "I bought from a lot of the people that he brings from, but it would require a phone call to each of those purveyors. It required really being creative to get it (the produce) here because most of the smaller producers aren't set up to deliver," Cizma said. "I was actually having to send somebody out to the different areas to pick stuff up. And, quite frankly, we weren't getting the variety or consistency that we have now."

There is some debate about the environmental benefits of buying food locally, but Cizma said it's just the right thing to do. He said there's no reason for him to buy food from California or China when he has a local alternative. "Let's think about Michigan's economy for a minute. We need it here more than they need it there," he said.

LOCAL DISTRIBUTION

Hahn said he spent nearly every day this summer in his van, and his revenues have grown to \$250,000. The profit margins in this business are slim, though, especially since Hahn often competes with produce grown in countries with cheap and abundant labor. Farmer Dick Zenner said it's a win-win situation for him. At Cherry Capital Food's warehouse, Zenner dropped off the last of his hothouse tomatoes for the year. Hahn will deliver Zenner's tomatoes to a delicatessen later this morning, marking the travel time from the vine to the shelf in hours, not days. Zenner sold half of his tomato crop through Cherry Capital Foods. "That saved me driving around," Zenner said. "And with the gas prices the way they are, that's money in my pocket." Zenner said he'll be putting in some more greenhouses for lettuce, and Hahn said he'll contract to buy every head of lettuce Zenner can grow. Hahn said he expects sales will top \$1 million next year, once more farmers like Zenner see the markets that are opening up.

⁹ livestock farmer interview, 3/14/07.

¹⁰ Brown and Merrett 2000

Worksheet III-1: Processing

Meat Processing Facilities	Kitchen Incubators	Certified Kitchens	Other Processing Businesses

Opportunities for Expansion	Opportunities for New Business Development	Local Support Programs

Part IV: Buying and Selling Locally Grown Food

Information presented in this section will help you identify the needs and preferences of food consumers from a variety of potential venues for local food, including restaurants, hospitals, farmers' markets, and grocery stores. Anecdotal and quantitative evidence, presented in the sidebars, demonstrates the importance of increasing awareness about locally grown food and building relationships among farmers, food buyers and consumers.

A. INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMERCIAL FOOD BUYERS

Institutional food buyers include nursing homes and hospitals, schools, and governmental agencies. Commercial food buyers—restaurants and grocery stores—provide additional markets for local food. Typically, they use consolidated distribution systems (one stop shopping), need large quantities of food and diversity of products, are not sensitive to seasonality of foods, require wholesale pricing and often must adhere to various levels of bureaucracy for procuring food. Working with these buyers to address their various needs and concerns can open up new markets for local food and create additional proponents for locally grown foods.

An Iowa example of institutional purchasing illustrates the opportunities and challenges for forging new relationships between producer and buyer. The Practical Farmers of Iowa developed their "All-Iowa meal" along with a food brokering project that supplies food for conferences at the Iowa State Center conference building.¹¹ Additional projects include sales to the Farm Bureau Federation, University of Northern Iowa, and to county offices in Johnson County.

Step 1: Who Buys from Local Farmers?

Use Worksheet IV-1 to identify local institutions and food businesses which are purchasing locally grown food.

Only 39 percent of businesses surveyed in Central Illinois had purchased locally grown food for their business in 2003–2004. None of the schools, nursing homes or hospitals in the survey had purchased locally grown food. Of those who had purchased local food, more than half bought fresh vegetables in season.

¹¹ Huber and Woldridge 2004

Step 2: What Motivates Local Purchasing?

Why do businesses in your community buy food from local farmers? Understanding the motivations and priorities for purchasing locally grown food can help you promote local food purchases to other institutions and businesses. Figure 1 provides examples of why Central Illinois businesses purchase locally grown food.

Step 3: Understand Why Businesses Aren't Buying Locally and What You Can Do About It

Common concerns among Central Illinois food buyers about buying locally grown food include: regulations for certification and insurance, variety, price, quality and convenience. To address these concerns, local food producers and proponents of local food buying must work with local health departments and improve public awareness of the benefits of buying locally produced food. Worksheet IV-2 will help you address food buyer concerns and Appendix D will help you design a survey for institutional food buyers.

Building local food system workshop participants identified the following roadblocks to increasing institutional local food buying:

1. There are not enough producers and/or producers with enough volume to meet institutional needs or even needs of individuals who want to process raw products into value added products.
2. Public schools are required to award contracts for food procurement to the lowest bidder and must adhere to a very limited food budget per child (this almost always excludes the local food vendors who typically charge more than conventional food distributors).

3. There is a need for someone (e.g., a processor) to do some minimal processing of raw foods—precut, ready to serve; e.g., you can't just sell corn in the husk to schools; it needs to be husked and kernels cut off the cob.

4. Institutional food buyers either perceive or have received notification from their local health departments that the food vendor needs some sort of certification before the institution can purchase from them.

5. Institutional buyers need help in identifying medium sized produce and livestock producers in the state or region who are growing the quantities that institutions need—better data in Market Maker (www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu) or some on-line source for identifying wholesale produce or livestock farmers would be helpful.

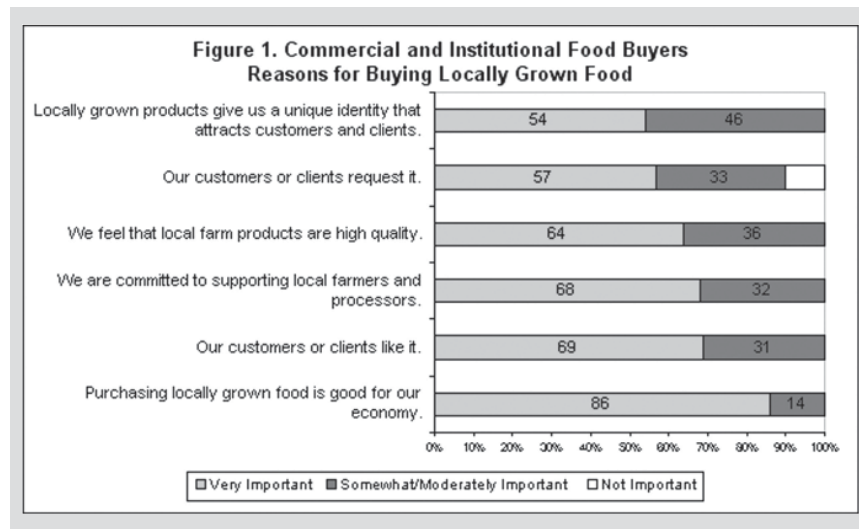
6. There is a need for an intermediary business (i.e., a distributor specializing in local foods) who institutions could work with instead of having to work with each farmer. Many restaurants, caterers and other institutional food buyers have expressed concern and frustration about having to contact many producers with different products, different payment structures, etc. There is a need for good communication and development of a set of expectations for both food buyers and producers.

7. There is a need to educate food buyers about seasonality of foods in Illinois, so they know when products will be at their peak and when they could stock up on in-season products and preserve them (canning, freezing, etc).

8. There is a need to develop a business structure regionally that increases farmer (producer) capacity and increases consumer awareness about local foods.

Step 4: Advertise Local Food Purchases

Food related businesses can advertise their local products and their reasons for supporting local farmers on their menus, through servers and staff, or with pamphlets. This support shows residents that business owners are committed to maintaining and strengthening a strong,



vibrant and diverse local economy. How can you demonstrate your community's support for local food purchasing? Use Worksheet IV-3 for brainstorming in steps 4-5.

Step 5: Other Ways to Encourage Institutional and Commercial Food Purchasing

In the survey, many commercial and institutional buyers not purchasing locally grown foods expressed interest in buying local products, but they need additional information regarding the types of products available, seasonality of products, new recipes and uses for unusual products, and methods for accessing the various sources and availability of locally produced food.

B. HOUSEHOLD CONSUMERS

Household consumers constitute an important market for locally grown food. A key to increasing local food purchases will be to develop products, advertising and modes of access for locally grown food that serve the preferences and needs of households in the community.

Step 1: Understand Priorities

Understanding household consumers' preferences about food and shopping is an important task for building local food systems. In the Central Illinois survey, almost every respondent, regardless of local purchasing, agreed that buying locally grown food supports local farmers (98 percent) and that consumers should have more locally grown food available to them (95 percent). Shoppers who

purchased locally grown food were more likely to have their own vegetable garden, be concerned about where food came from, and look at store information on produce and processed food. For consumers who purchase local food, "quality of product" and "flavor and taste" were the most influential reasons for buying local food, followed by "to support local farmers." Use Worksheet IV-4 to question local consumers about their preferences for food shopping. Also see <http://asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu/food-sys> for sample survey questions for consumers.

Step 2: Encouraging Household Purchases of Local Food

Understanding why consumers don't purchase locally grown products for their households can help address buyer preferences and develop new markets for local foods. Of the consumers surveyed in Central Illinois, 36 percent of those who did not purchase local food were unaware that they could

buy locally grown food, and another 36 percent preferred to complete all their food shopping at grocery stores. To increase local food sales, consumers need to know where to buy local foods and to have venues that are convenient to them, including their grocery stores. Ensuring that local food venues accept WIC (women, infant and children) coupons and food stamps will provide better access to locally grown food for lower-income residents. Price, providing weekend hours, and increasing the variety of products available were the top three factors to encourage shopping at local food venues among those who weren't currently purchasing locally grown foods.

Step 3: Marketing Local Food to Households

Survey respondents recommended word of mouth, newspapers and radio to increase awareness of locally grown food. Other strategies suggested by consumers were advertising in local businesses and restaurants, working with the Farm Bureaus to market local food venues, and television commercials.

STEERING INSTITUTIONS IN THE LOCAL DIRECTION: BARTELS LUTHERAN RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

By Kamyar Enshayan, originally published in Edible Iowa River Valley (available online at www.edibleiowa.com)

After reading the New York Times bestseller *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, or seeing the PBS Frontline documentary *Modern Meat* (in which you learn how a pound of hamburger could have bits from 4000 global cows!), you will realize that food from a global supermarket is becoming more and more troublesome, and that strengthening local food connections is a practical necessity. Robin Gaines and her staff at Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community in Waverly, Iowa, realize this reality and have been champions for creating a stronger local food economy. "Purchasing food from reputable suppliers is one of the top priorities for food service managers. Many food service managers use the excuse that they have to buy from big suppliers to ensure the food they are getting is safe. Realistically, the safest food to buy is food that comes from a farmer known to the food service manager." Bartels has been buying fruits and vegetables, meats, baked goods, and dairy products all grown locally since 1999. In 2005, they purchased nearly \$75,000 in local foods from 17 local vendors and through farmers markets, roughly 25 percent of the total food budget.

Robin and her staff have perfected the art of buying locally raised meats in an institutional setting. They purchase whole animals (beef and pork) from local farmer Craig Clausing of

rural Waverly who raises them on a diet that includes no antibiotics and no animal by-products in the feed. The animals are processed at Janesville Locker and delivered to Bartels. For example, the total cost to Bartels for a whole beef is \$1484. But if the same amount of beef, in various cuts, were purchased separately through a distributor (with beef from unknown sources), the cost would have been \$1657. So Bartels saves money and buys high quality, highly traceable beef from a local farm. In that process, the dollars spent on the meat and the processing all stay local.

University of Northern Iowa's Dining Services have also been buying whole animals on a monthly basis with similar rewards. Robin Gaines and her staff have demonstrated that it is possible to serve highest quality meats and save dollars, that local meats are cost competitive, that local vendors offer excellent service, and the whole process builds the local food economy. Bartels has signed the Health Care Without Harm's "Healthy Food in Health Care Pledge" (available at www.NoHarm.org/us/food/issue), which outlines steps to be taken by the health care industry to improve the health of patients, communities and environment.

To see the full study of "Documenting the costs and benefits of whole animal local meat purchases by three northeast Iowa institutions" visit, www.UNI.edu/ceee/FoodProject/index and then click on Resources.

CENTRAL ILLINOIS FARMERS' MARKETS

METAMORA

The Metamora Farmers' Market was created in 2002, with the intention of drawing people to Metamora's downtown square and attracting customers to downtown businesses. The manager was a Metamora native who had returned to the community after college, and managed the market as a volunteer. He worked with several local farmers to gain the support of the town council. The market is located on a blocked-off street on the downtown square, next to a small park, and across the street from the historic courthouse museum. The museum manager



include a restaurant and craft store, gas station and McDonald's restaurant. For the 2007 season, the manager is attempting to find a volunteer manager, as she feels her time would be better spent on other projects for the Chamber.

TAYLORVILLE

The Taylorville Main Street organization, Christian County Farm Bureau, and the Christian County Ag Group started the Taylorville Farmers' Market in 2003, located on the courthouse square in downtown Taylorville. At least once a month, the Taylorville Main Street organization hosts a special event in conjunction with the farmers' market, such as an art show or health fair. Several local businesses are open during market hours.



The market is managed by a downtown business owner, who volunteers his time. The first few years of this market have been a struggle to attract vendors and customers, but the manager is optimistic that the market will grow.



opened the museum during the farmers' market, drawing visitors to the museum, and providing a public restroom. The market customers often stop for their morning coffee at the locally-owned restaurant on the square. A local musician performs weekly during market hours.

SULLIVAN

The Sullivan Farmers' Market was started in 2004 by the Sullivan Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development. Several community members had approached the chamber with the idea of starting a market, and were helpful in developing the market the first year. The manager is an employee of the Chamber of Commerce and is compensated for her time managing the market. After two years on the downtown square, the market was moved to a vacant lot on a busy intersection in the north part of town. Despite this location, the market has difficulty attracting vendors and customers, and the future of the market is in question. Other businesses nearby

EFFINGHAM

The Effingham Farmers' Market started downtown in 1995, and moved to the Village Square mall parking lot in 2003. Village Square Mall is on the south side of town off a state highway, currently has many empty stores, and is attached to a vacant grocery store. The



farmers' market is allowed to use the parking lot at no cost, with the condition that if a grocery store re-opens there, the market would leave that site. The only advertising for the market is a sign on the edge of the road. A majority of the vendors who sell at the farmers' market are over 60 years old, and the volunteer manager is a retired farmer. The vendors enjoy their weekly opportunity to socialize with the other vendors and their customers, although they are concerned that the market may disband when they retire if no new farmers begin selling there.

URBANA

The Urbana Market at the Square originated in 1978, and is located in the parking lot of the Lincoln Square Mall in downtown Urbana. The City of



Urbana organizes the market, and provides a paid staff member to manage the needs of the market. At the end of the summer season, the market moves inside the mall for a "holiday" market that ends in December. Several non-profit organizations also maintain booths at the market. Several musicians perform during market hours.

BLOOMINGTON

The Uniquely Downtown Bloomington Association (UDBA) started the Bloomington Farmers' Market in 1998, now held in the downtown center of the city. Several non-profit organizations have booths at the market. Vendors commented that the market benefits from the students and staff from the two universities, and highly educated employees from local businesses such as State Farm Insurance. They suggested that these customers already have a high level of awareness of the benefits of buying locally grown food, which increases demand within the



community. The market manager is a very committed volunteer, and UDBA provides a student intern to assist the manager. Gift certificates are available to spend at the farmers' market. The market has a website that lists many of the vendors, market information, recipes and nearby businesses to visit while at the market. Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) coupons are accepted at the market, and the manager has applied to participate in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), although there is currently a waiting list for the program. A nearby coffee shop provides coffee for sale at the market, and many unique stores are open during market hours.

C. FARMERS' MARKETS

Farmers' markets are one of the most widely known strategies for buying and selling locally grown food. There were 203 farmers' markets in Illinois in 2006.¹² In Central Illinois, six farmers' markets were studied to estimate weekly attendance and sales of local products, document the goals of the managers and vendors, and provide examples of the strategies that each market employs to attract customers and support a viable farmers' market. These six markets were chosen to illustrate differences in the size of the communities' populations, age of market and rural versus urban communities. Table 3 in Appendix B compares the organizational characteristics of each of the Central Illinois markets described in the sidebar.

Step 1: Will a Farmers' Market Be Successful in Your Community?

Success of the farmers' market depends on one's perspective. Farmers who are trying to make a living from the farmers' market define success mostly in terms of sales, but farmers who have other income sources may be there for social as well as financial reasons. Market managers, especially those who want the market to draw people downtown and increase economic activity, define success by the number of vendors, the number of shoppers, and more foot traffic and sales generated for nearby businesses. Consumers usually define success in terms of product quality, diversity, price and availability. There may be community-building or social dimensions to the market that enhance the experience for shoppers. It is important to develop indicators of success and assess these indicators from various perspectives.

Results from consumer surveys at both rural and urban farmers' markets in Central Illinois indicate that rural consumers are

more likely to visit a farmers' market strictly to purchase food, while urban consumers appreciate the social atmosphere of the markets. While there are many similarities between urban and rural consumers, rural consumers are more likely to purchase locally-grown food from a variety of venues, while urban consumers are more likely to get local foods only at a farmers' market (see Figure 2). This poses a challenge for rural farmers' markets, as rural consumers spend less of their food dollars at any one local food venue. Rural consumers often have access to farm stands, other farmers' markets and closer relationships with farmers, so rural communities will need to take this into account as they consider developing a farmers' market. Rural communities may need to consider alternative venues for selling locally grown food in their communities.

Step 2: Tips for Creating a Successful Farmers' Market

Use *Worksheet IV-5* to guide you through each of the tips.

1. Identify goals for the market. Is the market meant to draw customers to other downtown businesses and contribute to the economy of the community? Provide a profit for vendors? Serve as a social event? Understanding the goals and values of the vendors and managers, as well as the impressions of the community about the value of the market will help to address issues and evaluate success based on those specific goals.

The Effingham farmers' market would not be considered very successful in terms of fostering economic activity, but the vendors feel that the market provides an opportunity to earn extra money and visit with their neighbors and customers. While this may not be the long-term goal of community leaders interested in building local food systems, this benefit for certain farmers should be considered.

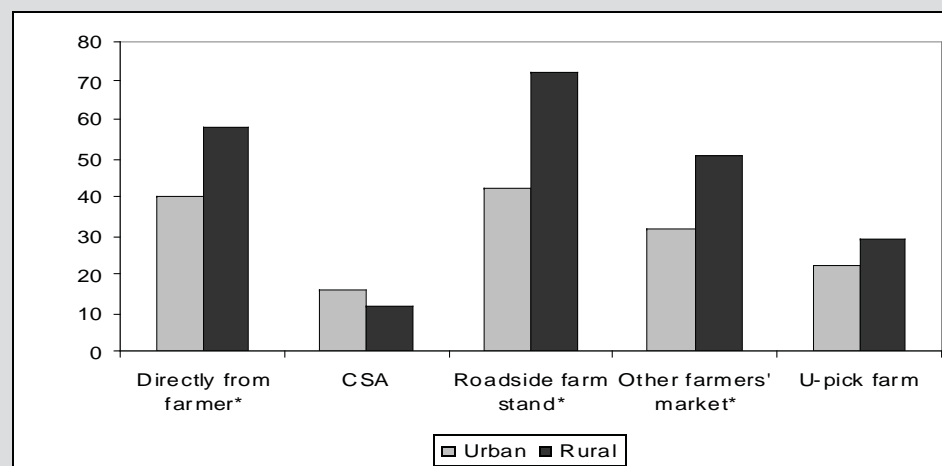


Figure 2.

Venues for locally grown food purchases utilized by farmers' market consumers. Part of the challenge for rural farmers' markets is that rural consumers are more likely to purchase locally grown food from a wider variety of local food venues compared to urban consumers, so less of rural consumers' food dollars are spent at one specific market. An asterisk * highlights differences significant at the .01 level.

2. Ensure variety. Managers at the rural farmers' markets worried about finding enough vendors with a variety of products to sell. Attracting a variety of vendors, or encouraging smaller producers to diversify the products they grow, can draw customers. Booths for artists and non-profit organizations increase the variety of products and experiences available at the market.

3. Develop an educational role. Cooking demonstrations, recipes or other information encourage customers to try unfamiliar products. Information about the benefits of locally grown food can inform consumers who appreciate the products and farmers in their communities, and are willing to spend their money on local products. Teaching consumers about local food production in Illinois can encourage shoppers to eat seasonally. Farmers' markets can bring producers together for educational opportunities such as conferences or workshops to increase their knowledge of production techniques or marketing strategies.

4. Support the social atmosphere of a market. While farmers' market consumers suggested that entertainment was not a critical factor in deciding to visit a farmers' market, the importance of developing relationships between farmers and consumers, and providing an opportunity for residents to socialize does play an important role. Building relationships between the market and other local businesses can help build a place for the market within the framework of community businesses.

5. Work with the health department and local officials to ensure compliance with regulations. A common concern among vendors and managers was county health department regulations. Communication between the market manager and the health department will help ensure that regulations are met and farmers have the information they need to comply with health department regulations.

6. Outline the role of the market manager. Market managers for the six Central Illinois markets suggested key responsibilities for a market manager. Managing logistics of the market—timing, permits, recruiting vendors, and advertising—is crucial to the success of a market. Compiling newsletters, planning special events, and improving the aesthetics of the market can be important value-added tasks.

One Central Illinois manager commented: "There's a fine balance needed for being engaged with interactions between vendors and customers, but we can learn a lot from

vendors about their observations and ideas." Managers also presented concerns for smaller markets which can't afford a paid manager. "The risk of having a volunteer manager is: what happens [to the market] if they leave?" Small communities could work together to share management responsibilities, and student interns can support market management.

7. Incorporate vendor input in decision-making. The diversity of vendors who participate in a farmers' market assures that there will be a variety of opinions and ideas about decisions integral to the market. Creating forums for vendors to share their opinions demonstrates an appreciation of the knowledge and experiences that they can contribute, and supports their continued participation in the market.

8. Be strategic about promotion. The most successful markets used several marketing strategies to draw customers to the market. Word of mouth, newspaper articles, and posters are inexpensive and effective methods for creating a customer base. Radio advertisements and billboards are less effective. Hosting special events at the markets can attract new attendees.

9. Recruit and acknowledge local government support. Even in Illinois communities where the market was managed or supported by a local government or non-profit entity, many respondents were unsure about the role that local leaders played in supporting the market. If community leaders (mayor, planning department, etc.) are involved in the organization or management of the market, or provide tangible support, make sure their role or contribution is clearly visible for community residents. Support from local leadership can add an additional level of validity, significance and stability to local food markets.



¹² Illinois Farm Direct, www.illinoisfarmdirect.org, accessed 2/26/07.

THE FAIRBURY LOCAL FOOD PROJECT

In 2004, a small group of farmers in Fairbury, Illinois, approached the owners of the only grocery store in Fairbury with the idea of providing locally grown food inside the store. Dave's Supermarket is an independently owned, full-service grocery store that serves as a strong anchor for the downtown business district.

The farmers were interested in providing healthy, locally grown food for their community, while developing a new market for their products that would decrease their transportation costs. The nearest farmers' market is in Pontiac (approximately 15 miles from Fairbury), followed by Bloomington (45 miles), Champaign/Urbana (60 miles), and Chicago (115 miles). These markets were important



for several of the farmers as they received a premium price for their products; yet the costs for travel, time, and market fees were significant.

The farmers and store owners worked out an arrangement to create an "indoor farmers' market" inside the store. The store provides shelf space, advertising, and accounting (including barcode numbers for checkout). The farmers stock the shelves, price their products, and maintain the display of products. The farmers market their products as naturally grown and chemical-free; the farmers have all agreed to use organic production methods, although they are not certified organic. The grocery store receives 20 percent of any purchase of the farmers' products inside the store. The remaining 80 percent of the sale goes directly to the farmer.

In the first year, three farms sold their products through the supermarket. In 2005, five farmers participated in the project. The producer group expanded to 11 farmers by

2006 and 16 farms in 2007. Only four of the producers are full-time farmers. The rest are hobby farmers or small market gardeners, with off-farm income. The producers meet regularly to discuss their goals for the project, and share production and marketing advice.

The store owners have supported the local food project, even during the drought year of 2005 when they stated that "the sky's the limit on this – the problems right now are due to the weather." They appreciate this opportunity to collaborate with the farmers for several reasons. First, supporting local farmers demonstrates the store's commitment to the community. Secondly, and most importantly, the owners of Dave's see the collaboration, along with the uniqueness of the local food products, as an opportunity to compete with big-box stores in the region. A new Walmart and Meijer in nearby communities threaten the smaller, independently owned store. The local food products are unique items not available at chain stores, thus giving Dave's a competitive advantage. The store's 20 percent cut is less than the profit on non-local produce, but they believe that the benefits from the public relations gained by working with the farmers are worth the investment, and it is in the store's best interest to be innovative and provide unique items. With the development of the limited liability company (discussed in detail in Part III) to support the producer group, Dave's has agreed to buy local products exclusively from the LLC, and will refer any farmers who are interested in selling to the store to meet with the LLC. This willingness to give the producer LLC an exclusive opportunity for store sales demonstrates the transition to a more formal business relationship between the store and the producers.

One of the biggest challenges that the local food project faced was effective communication between the farmers and the store owners and managers. This problem was recognized during interviews with the supermarket owner – many of the owner's comments reflected a lack of understanding regarding farmers' decisions during the season. In subsequent seasons, the producers and store owners have increased their communication, and have overcome the challenges of the first season. Differing goals for the producers also posed minor problems during the first two years, but the more regular producer meetings have helped to address issues among producers.

A survey of customers in Dave's Supermarket found that 65 percent of respondents had purchased products from the local farmers' shelves. Those shoppers agreed that the products available from the local farmers at Dave's were fresh and high quality (90 percent) and 85 percent said they would buy more products from the local farmers if they were available in the store. Eighty-five percent said the business relationship between Dave's Supermarket and the local farmers was good for the Fairbury community.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE FAIRBURY LOCAL FOOD PROJECT

In 2004, sales of locally-grown products in the supermarket totaled \$850. By the end of 2005 sales had increased by 136 percent, to \$2,009. In 2006, the farmers sold \$4,251 of locally grown food in Dave's Supermarket.

Currently, producers in the group try to buy their production inputs within the county, but are limited by a lack of necessary inputs available within the county. If the infrastructure necessary to support direct-market and organic agriculture was available in the county, more of the farmers' inputs could be purchased locally. Organic seeds are ordered over the internet. A chicken processing plant is located several counties away. Local government leaders and economic development staff in the county could build infrastructure by providing small business loans or tax incentives for agriculture enterprises, including more small farms, processing plants, certified kitchens, and organic supplies stores.

The Fairbury local food project now includes students in high school. In 2005, several students raised products for the supermarket with their families, and in 2006 two more students participated. The Fairbury farmers are incorporating as a limited liability company in 2007 to better address new markets. The farmers waive the membership fee to the LLC for participants under 18. The farmers see this as an opportunity to

D. BEYOND FARMERS' MARKETS: ALTERNATIVE VENUES FOR LOCAL FOOD

While farmers' markets are a popular strategy for building local food systems, not all communities can host a successful farmers' market. If your community isn't ready to support a farmers' market, there are other opportunities to sell local food locally. Rural communities are becoming creative in their attempts to connect local consumers with local producers.

encourage young people to develop business skills, learn about sustainable agriculture and local food systems, and become more involved in the community.

ADVICE FROM THE MANAGER OF DAVE'S SUPERMARKET, FAIRBURY

How to work with producers who want to sell locally grown products in a grocery store steffen@gridcom.net

The supermarket must be able to utilize a PLU number to track the products. Most stores today have that capability. There is less room for error when this system is used and it eliminates cashiers guessing what the items are and their prices.

The items should be displayed together to get a synergy effect, both refrigerated and non-refrigerated. It is also important to have good signage.

The grocer must agree with the farmers on what percentage will be taken for gross profit and could be reminded that they have no labor costs or shrink costs with product. In other words, most could work on a lower mark-up.

It is important to educate the consumer. We have a quarterly newsletter called 'Keeping In Touch' and have run several articles about the locally grown products. Information about the product is interesting, but also most local customers will recognize the farmers' names, which give the products credibility. We also run ads in our flyer. The farmers sampled products a couple of times in the store.

There should be an understanding right 'up front' with the grocer and the farmers that flexibility is a must with allocated space.

The store should educate their Team. They are the best salespeople for word of mouth advertising.

There should be a 'go to' person that can communicate to all the farmers. "Marty and Kris (Spence Farm) are our people." We have each other's e-mail addresses and phone numbers and have had good communication. That is important!

The Fairbury local food project is an example of a creative strategy for building local food systems, especially in small rural communities.

Step 1: Brainstorm Creative Ideas for Alternative Markets

Developing successful local food markets will involve some creative thinking about alternatives that could serve the needs of your community. Is there an empty storefront that could

be turned into a market, or a festival that could feature local food products? Buying clubs, restaurants that grow their own produce and community and school gardens offer opportunities to build local food systems. Are schools or hospitals in the community interested in sourcing locally grown foods to improve nutrition? Would local government commit to buying local foods for special events? While the case studies presented in this guide describe strategies for success, there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to building local food systems. Each community will need to identify local opportunities and participants to develop creative and feasible initiatives.

Step 2: Estimate Economic Contributions of Alternative Markets

The economic contributions of a local food system can be estimated by documenting the portion of farmers' inputs that are purchased locally and the price of food sold locally. Knowing how much is spent to produce and then purchase food can

identify ways that local food can bring money into your community while reducing the amount of money spent on food and production inputs outside the community.

The Willamette Farm and Food Coalition conducted a “Food System Assessment” of Lane County Oregon (Eugene, Oregon) to estimate the economic impact of local food systems (www.lanefood.org). Some of the highlights of their study:

- The Eugene Farmers' Market generated \$1.15 million in total sales for 2001. While produce was predominantly sold, baked goods, honey, meat products, and flowers are included as well.
- The Agricultural Census (1997) reported the value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption to be \$1,545,000 from 373 farms total.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH WILD LEEKS?

Using Local Food as a Community and Economic Development Tool: Advice from Fairbury Leaders

The mayor of Fairbury and the chair of the economic development committee (EDC) recognize the value of the Fairbury local food project as a strategy to showcase their community, and see opportunities for the community to benefit economically as the project grows. Although the project has garnered significant attention from local and state media, and continues to recruit new customers, some local residents haven't heard much about the project. The EDC chair heard the question “what can you do with wild leeks?” from Fairbury residents. Wild leeks or ramps, a member of the onion family and a native plant found in many woodlands throughout the Midwest, are one of the main products sold by a Fairbury farm. Wild leek sales enable the farmers to experiment with other crops and markets, and introduce a variety of products to Fairbury residents. Residents are learning about the variety of locally grown products (including wild leeks!), the seasonality of products, and cooking methods. For community leaders interested in building a local food system, Fairbury leaders suggest:

- Develop educational materials targeted to rural residents: “People don't appreciate the product they're getting locally—the concept of locally grown food is not the same in rural areas as in Chicago.”
- Create workshops for new business start-ups—including agricultural businesses.
- Encourage cooperation among growers to provide a wide variety of products for local consumers.
- Include rural businesses (including farms) within chambers of commerce.
- Encourage appreciation of and support for alternative opportunities for agricultural operations through educational programming and financial resources, such as grants or materials with information on local resources.
- Support relationships between producers and food buyers. Collaborations can help business owners see possibilities for expansion or development of new businesses.

Worksheet IV-1: Institutional and Commercial Purchasing

Name of Institution/ Business	Contact Information	Local Food Purchases	Market or Farmer	Additional Needs or Preferences	Motivations for Purchasing Locally

Worksheet IV-2: Why Aren't Businesses Buying Locally

Concern / Issue	Potential Strategy	Organizations / Resources for Assistance
<p>Example: Retirement and Farm Transition.</p> <p><i>Explanation:</i> Statistics from Central Illinois followed the trend for all U.S. agriculture, demonstrating that a significant number of farmers have been farming for many years and were considering retirement. Producers said: "We are getting older, no young family members want to take over. We'll probably be out of business in 4-5 years;" "We are not changing things much, we are near retirement."</p>	<p>Clarify Health Codes and Create Informational Brochures</p>	<p>County and City Health Departments</p>
<p>Example: Convenience.</p> <p><i>Explanation:</i> Food businesses have become accustomed to buying prepared food products. Comments include: "We use a lot of pre-packaged items;" "Small producers can't produce 'ready-to-use' products like Tyson, which has 15 different types of products."</p>	<p>Kitchen Incubators, Additional Processing Facilities, that could add value to farmers' raw products while creating products that better fit the needs of food businesses</p>	

Worksheet IV-3: Brainstorming for Business

Promotion Strategies	Educational Materials	Improving Access to Locally Grown
<p>Chamber of Commerce website Local Merchant Publications/ brochures</p>	<p>Farm brochures</p>	<p>website of available products Illinois Farm Direct (www.illinoisfarmdirect.org) networking opportunities with farmers</p>

Worksheet IV-4: Encouraging Household Purchasing of Local Food

Motivations for Local Purchases	Advertising Strategies	Improving Access to Locally Grown
Quality of product, flavor/taste to support local farmers	Advertising through Farm Bureaus	Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) coupons accepted

Worksheet IV-5: Creating a Successful Farmers' Market

Step 1: Identify Goals for the Market	Step 6: Outline Role of Market Manager
Notes/Ideas:	Notes/Ideas:
Step 2: Ensure Variety	Step 7: Incorporate Vendor Input
Notes/Ideas:	Notes/Ideas:
Step 3: Develop an Educational Role	Step 8: Be Strategic about Promotion
Notes/Ideas:	Notes/Ideas:
Step 4: Support the Social Atmosphere	Step 9: Recruit Local Government Support
Notes/Ideas:	Notes/Ideas:
Step 5: Work with Health Department	Other Ideas:
Notes/Ideas:	Notes/Ideas:

Part V: Pulling It All Together

The case studies and examples from Central Illinois provided throughout this guide are intended to give you some ideas and tools to bring to your own community. The Fairbury local food project, as well as the farmers' markets, illustrated several elements which are important to the success of a local food project. The final worksheet outlines these nine key assets to identify strengths in your community that can help to build a stable foundation for your local food projects.

A. NINE KEY ASSETS THAT FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL LOCAL FOOD PROJECTS

Use the following nine key assets to identify the existing strengths in your community as you design your approach to creating local food system projects. There are two copies of Worksheet V-1: the first provides suggestions and questions to ask, and the second is a blank worksheet to complete as you find answers and solutions.

Asset 1: Catalyst Farmers. The farmers who initiated the local food project in Dave's Supermarket were motivated, persistent entrepreneurs willing to take risks and grow the project over time. These farmers were willing to step beyond their own farming operations to play an active role in the development and maintenance of the relationship with Dave's Supermarket. It will be important for emerging local food markets in rural communities to recruit farmers who are energetic and enthusiastic, and to use the input and experience of farmers as markets develop.

Asset 2: Independent Retail Outlet. An independently owned retail outlet—such as Dave's Supermarket—where owners are community members and decisions are made locally can provide a better opportunity for farmers and business owners to build a strong business relationship. The opportunity to develop business relationships among farmers and other locally-owned businesses, from grocery stores to restaurants to specialty stores, is another method for strengthening local food systems while building wealth in the community.

Asset 3: Communication. Communication must extend beyond the producer and business owner or food buyer. Consumers and the community must know the benefits and goals of the project. Communication with local government and other community leaders can increase their support for the project. While more formal interactions between producers and business owners can enhance the business relationship, using a variety of techniques for communicating the marketing message can be important as well. While more formal methods of communication, such as radio and newspaper announcements or chamber of commerce presentations can be an effective strategy, informal communication—word of mouth, for example—is also effective.

Asset 4: Long Time Horizon to Achieve Success. In the Fairbury local food project, the participants could forgo short-term profits because they had other sources of income. Farmers made an effort to not only develop a new market for their local food, but also to advance the goals of building community relationships and drawing customers to other downtown businesses. While the Taylorville Farmers' Market faced some difficulties in attracting both vendors and customers in its first few years, the manager is optimistic that with small steps, the market can develop into a successful long-term project for the community. If stakeholders can establish long-term goals or visions for local food projects¹³ and appreciate small successes in the short-term, the project participants have a greater opportunity to experiment and build on lessons learned as the

¹³Meter 2003

project grows. Feenstra¹⁴ suggests that for local food system projects to maintain their spaces in a community, stakeholders must “allow time [for projects] to grow roots.”

Asset 5: Leadership. Collaborative, positive leaders can provide local food projects with a strong sense of direction and stability. An enthusiastic and knowledgeable manager or leader who is committed to the project will draw support and develop positive relationships within the community. Throughout the evolution of the Fairbury local food project, participants have been willing to take and share responsibility for leading the group in decision-making, coordinating accounts and convening planning meetings. The Bloomington Farmers' Market has a volunteer manager and student interns who have collaborated with local businesses and with other area farmers' market managers to create new marketing strategies and programs for the markets.

Asset 6: Community Cohesiveness and Pride. The Fairbury mayor commented that community pride among Fairbury residents was one reason for the support of the downtown business district and the local food project. Communities that place an emphasis on strengthening relationships among community members and promoting the positive aspects of their community may be more willing to support new markets for locally grown food. Vibrant downtown business districts demonstrate that local residents are willing to support local businesses and are likely to support new ventures within their community. Community members who appreciate their community provide additional promotion for local food projects by sharing their recommendations with others.

Asset 7: Supportive Local Officials. Fairbury leaders gave highly enthusiastic and supportive comments about the Fairbury local food project. They see the project as an opportunity to enhance Fairbury's image, draw in tourists, and promote business in the community. In Metamora, the mayor's support of the farmers' market has helped to build a customer base from the city council members, and the market has a prominent link on the village's website. There are many ways for local government leaders to support local food system projects, ranging from promoting the project within the local community, to providing business incentives such as low-interest loans, grants, or other small business funds. Engaging local government leaders as stakeholders in local food system projects can add credibility to a new project.

Asset 8: Invested Consumers. The farmers and store owners in Fairbury made an effort to address the concerns and interests of consumers in their community. Consumers with preferences for organic or locally grown produce, who speak highly of their community, are the best proponents for locally grown food, and their continued support through purchases and recommendations can build the customer base for local producers. Understanding the shopping behaviors and preferences of local consumers can help local food system projects to promote aspects of their businesses and products that address consumers' demands. Consumers who are invested in their communities and willing to support local businesses are vital to the success of local food system projects.

Asset 9: Location. In Fairbury, Dave's Supermarket has the benefit of a centralized downtown location and an established reputation as a high quality food store. Finding an attractive and competitive location with high consumer traffic—from farmers' markets to retail businesses—is a key to attracting customers. Central downtown locations can be successful if they serve as a draw for consumers, yet are not necessarily the best option for a market if residents visit other areas of town more regularly. The Metamora Farmers' Market is in a shaded downtown park, and attracts customers who frequent the local restaurants and businesses near the park. Making connections between the local food market and other local businesses or organizations—such as hosting promotional events or sharing advertising—is another opportunity to enhance the location aspects of a market.

B. DEVELOPING POLICIES THAT SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

The Illinois Food, Farm and Jobs Act of 2007 is a state legislative initiative aimed at promoting greater production and consumption of locally grown foods in Illinois. One provision of the Act is the formation of the Illinois Local and Organic, Food and Farm Task Force. This group will be the first to address local foods policy issues in Illinois. More information about the Task Force is available at www.agr.state.il.us/marketing/Mkt_ILOFFTaskForce.html. There are currently many local foods councils, organizations and advocates at the local level. This is a unique strength but presents many challenges to development of a local foods policy. Creating a “collective voice”

for local foods will require a degree of coordination and collaboration that does not currently exist. Gaining a political voice for local foods will require development of clear, consistent messages that inform and inspire.

Policy addressing producers is a particular concern. Creating new regulatory burdens could suppress interest and slow growth in the number of producers. Producers are perhaps the least well organized of all constituents in the local foods system. Identifying collective priorities for such a diverse group will require a rigorous effort.

Local foods supporters need to be vocal advocates even if the message is a simple one. Politicians are more likely to pay attention to issues when they receive input from their constituents. Local foods policy advocacy should be sensitive to the broader agricultural policy environment dominated by commodity oriented agriculture. Working with these organizations has obvious advantages while conflict could create serious obstacles.

C. EVALUATING SUCCESS

- How do you define your outcomes so that they are measurable?
- How do you know if you are measuring the right indicators?
- When do you use surveys?
- What information is currently available from public sources as baseline data?
- How do you define success?

Assessments are useful when you need information that can only be gathered first hand using methods such as surveys or discussion groups and when the cost of doing the data collection is justified.

Often, when a new local foods project is under discussion, it is likely that information gaps exist. Because producers are the most important part of a local food system, it is particularly important to understand what is important to them. How many producers/growers are in the county? What do they produce? Are they interested in selling at a farmers' market? Are educational programs or technical assistance needed?

Poorly designed assessments can waste resources and culminate in limited or useless data. Always involve a few stakeholders and someone who has applied research skills early in the process. It is a good idea to look at examples of other

surveys/approaches but be careful about just adopting an approach that was used in another place. The best questions for surveys and discussion will reflect unique local characteristics of the food system.

Assessments can also have positive public relations benefits because they encourage sharing and create interest in the local foods issue. Keep your assessment efforts in public view. Press releases can be used to alert people that the assessment is taking place to generate interest and give potential respondents/participants a heads-up. The results should be widely distributed.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Developing a local food system provides opportunities to create local jobs, protect farmland, build wealth within the community, create new community networks, and provide residents with sources of fresh, locally produced food. The case studies and examples provided in this guide show that the community and economic impacts—however small or long-term—can provide significant benefits to local communities. Rather than suggesting a generalized approach, the examples in this guide are intended to provide strategies and ideas as you work with your own communities to build your local food system. In the end, building on the strengths and unique identity of each community will create the most successful local food systems.

¹⁴ Feenstra 2002

Worksheet V-1A: Matrix of Key Assets for Building Successful Local Food Projects

Questions serve only as guidelines for communities to begin evaluating their community assets, and should not limit the types of information collected. A blank copy of this worksheet is included on the next page.

	Existing Resources	Potential Resources	Strategies for Improvement
Catalyst Farmers	Who are farmers in the community? What are their business goals and what are opportunities for business development?	Are there opportunities for encouraging market gardeners, building community gardens, etc?	Training programs such as Farm Beginnings, workshops to facilitate entrepreneurship
Independent Retail Outlet	What locally owned businesses would be interested in collaborating on local food projects? What resources could they contribute?	What other local businesses might be resources for collaborations?	Community programs that support local business creation, utilization of local talent and skills
Communication	What are current communication methods in the community? How can they be utilized to develop and promote local food projects?	What additional advertising or communication channels would connect stakeholders and draw in new participants?	Networking opportunities between farmers and local community, local festivals or programs that build community relationships
Long Time Horizon to Achieve Success	How can local food projects serve the long-term vision of the community? What would be short-term goals that would demonstrate success of new local food projects?	What are future projects for the community? What are community visions for the future?	Focus groups to identify projects and goals, planning resources
Leadership	Who are stakeholders who could provide leadership in developing local food projects?	Does your community have leadership training workshops? Who are potential leaders not yet identified?	Leadership training workshops, youth programs for leadership development
Community Cohesiveness and Pride	What are unique aspects of your community that residents are most proud of? How can local food projects support or build on these unique community attributes?	Are there other unique resources in your community that are underappreciated or underutilized, such as residents' talents, history, etc?	Festivals, community programs, media promotion of history and events
Supportive Local Officials	Are local officials supportive of agriculture or local food systems? What programs exist to support agricultural businesses?	What other local programs promote small business development?	Tax incentives, local purchasing policies, business development workshops
Invested Consumers	What local businesses are most popular with consumers? What are needs of residents that are unmet within the community?	Are there challenges for groups of residents in acquiring food that could be met by building local food projects? (senior citizens without transportation, WIC or food stamp holders)	Educational and awareness campaigns for community residents about benefits of local food
Location	What are active community spaces? Are there locations with adequate parking, restrooms, space for entertainment?	Are there underutilized spaces that would be attractive locations for local food projects?	Parks, community gardens, empty storefronts

Worksheet V-1B: Blank Matrix of Key Assets for Building Successful Local Food Projects

	Existing Resources	Potential Resources	Strategies for Improvement
Catalyst Farmers			
Independent Retail Outlet			
Communication			
Long Time Horizon to Achieve Success			
Leadership			
Community Cohesiveness and Pride			
Supportive Local Officials			
Invested Consumers			
Location			

Appendix

SECTION A. RESOURCES

Laboratory for Community and Economic Development (LCED), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

<http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu>

Since 2004, LCED has worked with farmers, community leaders, businesses, and University researchers to document local food system activities in Illinois. Resources based on this local food systems research are available through LCED. LCED provides services and research for community and economic development programs throughout the state. For more information, contact:

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Urbana, IL 61801

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Illinois Farm Beginnings

<http://www.illinoisfarmbeginnings.org>

The Illinois Farm Beginnings Program provides new and transitioning farmers with resources and training to develop a sustainable farming operation. The 12-month training program concludes with a summer mentoring/internship process that allows participants to observe and work with established farmer mentors. The Illinois program was created through a program developed by The Land Stewardship Project in Minnesota (www.landstewardship-project.org). In 2005, the first year of the Illinois program, 39 new farmers graduated from the course, and 78 percent were growing and selling their own farm products by the 2006 growing season. There are two programs offered in Illinois—Stateline Farm Beginnings attracts potential farmers in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin and Central Illinois Farm Beginnings attracts students from central and southern Illinois. Scholarships are available.

University of Illinois Extension

<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/state>

University of Illinois Extension provides outreach for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, offering educational programs to residents of all of Illinois' 102 counties – and far beyond. Through learning partnerships that put knowledge to work, U of I Extension's programs are aimed at making life better, healthier, safer and more profitable for individuals and their communities. U of I Extension offers educational programs in five broad areas: healthy society, food security and safety, environmental stewardship, sustainable and profitable food production and marketing systems, and enhancing youth, family and community well-being.

University of Illinois Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture Program

<http://asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu>

The Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture Program (ASAP) was established in 1988 at the University of Illinois. Its mission is to “facilitate and promote research and education which protects Illinois’ natural and human resources while sustaining agricultural production forever.” Their new website is interactive and houses a section on local food systems (where this resource guide will be available for download).

Illinois Farm Direct

<http://www.illinoisfarmdirect.org>

A statewide directory of farmers and local foods producers that helps connect consumers with local food farmers. Farm Direct features 600 growers and processors and 200 farmers markets who sell directly to consumers. The website has a database that is searchable by zip code or by types of locally grown products.

University of Illinois Extension Small Farms Program

<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm>

Illinois Small Farms provides information for both the commercial small farmer as well as the small acreage landowner. The purpose of this website is to provide easy access to information for small-scale farmers and those who work with them. For more information contact:

Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant

Extension Specialist, Small Farm & Sustainable Agriculture

West Central Regional Office

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Greenville, Illinois 62642

217-968-5512

cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu

University of Illinois Market Maker

<http://www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu>

An interactive mapping system that locates businesses and markets of agricultural products in Illinois, providing an important link between producers and consumers.

For more information:

Sandy Shetler

Extension Specialist, Educational Technology

University of Illinois Extension, Quad Cities Center

309-792-2500 or 815-441-0300 (cell)

sshetler@uiuc.edu

Illinois Stewardship Alliance (ISA)

<http://www.illinoisstewardshipalliance.org>

ISA is a citizens' organization that promotes a safe and nutritious food system, family farming, and healthy communities by advocating diverse, humane, and socially just and ecologically sustainable production and marketing practices.

The Land Connection

<http://www.thelandconnection.org>

The Land Connection is a non-profit organization working to save farmland from suburban sprawl, train farmers in sustainable production methods, and educate the public about the many benefits of growing and eating local organic food. Along with Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, University of Illinois Extension, The Land Connection facilitates the Central Illinois Farm Beginnings Program. For more information, contact:

Terra Brockman

The Land Connection

1227 Dodge Ave., Suite 200

Evanston, IL 60202

Email: info@thelandconnection.org

Phone: 847-570-0701

Fax: 847-570-0711

Woodbury County, Iowa

<http://www.woodbury-ia.com>

Woodbury County, Iowa, gained national recognition for its innovative tax policies that encourage county farmers to transition their farming operations to organic. In 2005, the Woodbury County council approved a tax rebate on agricultural land that is converted to organic. In January 2006, the county also approved a local purchase policy that gave priority for county food purchasing contracts for locally grown organic food. The impact of these policies has extended beyond the environmental improvement to agricultural land and financial benefits to local farmers. The local community college in their community has developed an organic farming curriculum, new food related businesses and restaurants are developing, among other new opportunities created by the innovative goals of the Woodbury County government.

USDA-SARE

<http://www.sare.org>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture funds the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE), which provides educational resources, funding for research projects, and grants to promote the economic viability and capacity for sustainable agriculture throughout the nation.

American Planning Association

<http://www.planning.org>

Although food planning is a relatively new issue for planners, the American Planning Association is becoming a central resource for planners interested in building local food systems, working with farmers and consumers, and protecting farmland, among other issues. A special issue of the Journal of Planning Education and Research (23:4, June 2004) focused specifically on food systems planning. At the annual APA conference in 2007, the board will vote to accept a food planning policy guide that will provide APA's position on the planning profession's role in building local food systems.

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

<http://www.leopold.iastate.edu>

The Leopold Center at Iowa State University researches and promotes sustainable alternatives for agriculture and food production. Projects include: studies to measure the costs and benefits of transitioning to an organic production system; test plots for a variety of crops; grant funding to new farmers' markets and local food system projects; and policy initiatives that encourage changes to the Farm Bill to promote sustainable agriculture.

Additional survey instruments are available online at:

<http://asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu/food-sys>.

SECTION B. FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 1. **Information Needs of Central Illinois Direct-Market Farmers.** Percent represents farmers rating the information as a medium or high priority need.

Information Needs	% of Farmers
Crop Selection and production practices	61
Marketing and public relations	57
Greenhouse growing and management	40
Business plan development	37
Organic or other certification	31
Livestock production practices	29
Other	13

Table 2. **Methods to Distribute Information.** Percent represents farmers ranking method as effective or very effective.

Method	% of Farmers
By mail, as monthly newsletter or bulletin	77
On farm demonstrations or field days	66
Workshop or training program	61
Website	40
Email	40
Telephone or conference calls	23

Table 3. **Organizational Characteristics of Central Illinois Farmers' Markets**

	Metamora	Sullivan	Taylorville	Effingham	Urbana/Champaign	Bloomington/Normal
Population	2,700	4,326	11,427	12,384	103,913	110,194
Year Market Started	2002	2004	2003	1995	1978	1998
Average # of Food Vendors	6	4	4	5	55	40
Estimated Weekly Customers (peak)	300	100	100	100	3,000	3,000
Location of Market	downtown square	off downtown, stoplight intersection on state route	downtown square	southern edge of town, on highway	downtown	downtown square
Market Manager	volunteer	Chamber of Commerce staff	volunteer	volunteer	City of Urbana staff	volunteer
Market Day/ Hours	Sat 8-11AM	Fri 3-6 PM	Sat 9AM-1PM	Fri/Sat 9AM-1PM	Sat 7AM-noon	Sat 6:45-11AM
Vendor Fee	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
\$ Spent at Market/ Patron (Survey Day)	\$10	\$7	\$2	\$6.50	\$20	\$12

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