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Local food tastes great. It's good for the local economy, and helps keep farm fields, orchards, and pastures in agriculture. For many of us, an added plus is the pleasure of knowing the people who grow our food. Recently, I was reminded that this benefit applies to wholesale buyers as well as individual shoppers.



Participants in CISA and the FCCDC's workshop, "Helping Food Businesses Go Local," enjoy animated conversation and a local lunch from Hillside Pizza.

Last month, CISA and the [Franklin County](#)

[Community Development Corporation](#) (home of the Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center, a shared-use kitchen) held a training for agencies and consultants that provide support to small businesses -- everything from business planning, to financing, to workforce training and accounting services. We asked several local food business owners to talk about why their businesses focus on locally grown ingredients, what challenges that decision presents, and what advantages it brings.

For each business owner, relationships with their farmer suppliers are an important part of what makes buying local work. Their relationships bring pleasure to their business day -- in many cases, they've become friends with their suppliers -- but they also make the business run more smoothly. For example, if bad weather cuts into the tomato crop of one of the growers supplying Steve Nelson of [Hedgie's Hot Stuff](#), the grower often finds local replacement tomatoes, instead of just calling Steve and saying, "Sorry, can't help you this year." When [GoBerry](#) lost power in last year's October snowstorm, farmers from [Mapleline Farm](#) showed up in the store, ready to carry the inventory of milk, cream and yogurt back to their generator-powered coolers. "They saved us a lot of money," owner Molly Feinstein remembers. "And we've become friends. They were the first people we called, after our families, when we had a baby."

Evelyn Wulfkuhl, co-owner and buyer at [Hope & Olive](#) and [Magpie](#) restaurants in Greenfield, concurs. "Our farmers are our customers," she says, describing the balancing act of building a thriving local economy. "We need to pay them enough that they can come in and eat in our restaurants."

It's a pretty good mix of business and pleasure.

Margaret Christie