

Mapping the Way to Local Food Systems for North Carolina's Cities and Counties

By

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Executive Summary

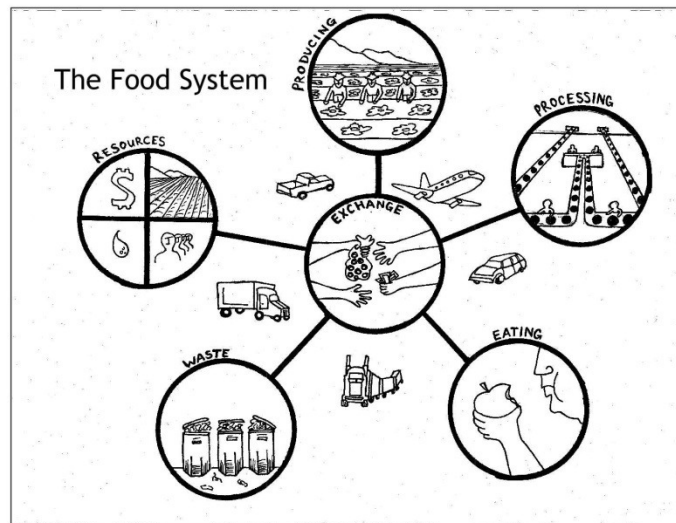
"How can North Carolina's cities and counties develop local food systems?" This document uses information gathered from four case studies to illustrate policies that cities and counties have used to develop local food systems. The research shows that there are economic development opportunities for urban, urban-fringe and rural jurisdictions and provides policies that may be useful in exploiting these opportunities.

This paper discusses how North Carolina's cities and counties can develop local food systems. From interviews and a literature review, four profiles of local food systems developed (Appendix A). The local food systems examined were chosen for their breadth of jurisdiction type – one rural town (Hardwick, VT), one county (Cabarrus County, NC), one region (Western NC) and one state (Illinois) program.

This paper provides a starting point for sustainability coordinators, city and county managers, planners, economic development directors and other government officials who want to develop local food systems in their jurisdictions.

What is a food system? Why a *local* food system?

A food system is the means by which food arrives on the plates of consumers. A complete food system includes resources, production, processing, consumption and the disposal of food, which are linked together by distribution and markets (Exhibit 1). Resources include land and soils, water, seeds/breeds and labor. Production is most often associated with farmers. Processing refers to preparing food for consumption. Consumption and disposal, of course, refer to eating and what happens to leftovers. As with any system, a deficiency in one area can affect the entire system.



The Food System - Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems Social Issues Team and Elliott Kuhn (graphic artist), 2004. <http://www.msu.edu/~howardp/foodsystem.html>

Overwhelmingly, the majority of the food we eat is delivered via a global, commercial food system. The efforts to create local food systems are not aimed at supplanting the current system, but rather, diversifying it. Local food systems improve the local economy; preserve open space; promote locally adapted seeds and breeds that conserve water, energy and labor; train and support the next generation of farmers; reduce air pollution; provide more nutritious foods and create social capital.¹ Furthermore, as local governments embrace sustainability, they may find that developing a local food system is an important piece of the larger puzzle.

First steps for developing a local food system

A gathering of food system stakeholders began the local food system efforts in Cabarrus County, Illinois and the town of Hardwick. From this initial meeting, residents from Cabarrus and Illinois formed food policy councils. Members of a food policy council can have a variety of backgrounds from an eater to an agricultural extension agent. (Appendix B provides examples of the variety of backgrounds members might have). A food policy council works directly with a jurisdiction's government, making recommendations about food system concerns and opportunities. The residents of Hardwick formed a non-profit organization, The Center for an Agricultural Economy, to guide their movement. The non-profit, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, orchestrated the effort in Western North Carolina

¹ Soil Association. (2007, March 3). *The benefits of developing local food links*. Retrieved March 14, 2009, from <http://www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/d39dda83e1f3c019802570ad005b4516/49996b05710d16978025729900499a67?OpenDocument>

(WNC). Once the movement is institutionalized through a food policy council or a non-profit, participants must understand the jurisdiction’s food system’s needs. Both Cabarrus and Western NC used a food assessment to take stock of the demand and willingness of institutions, individuals and retailers to purchase local foods. With the food policy council and the assessment in place, the council can identify barriers and determine suitable policy solutions.

Local food system barriers and policy/program solutions

Some of the most common barriers include a shortage of land and producers; insufficient local food processing businesses; and a lack of guaranteed markets (Appendix C lists additional barriers). All of the local food systems profiled confront these barriers. Exhibit 2 presents the policies encountered during the literature review, profile interviews and expert interviews that were used to move beyond these common barriers (Appendix D lists additional solutions). The following discussion focuses on how the four profiled local food systems are using various policies and programs to handle these common barriers.

Shortage of land and producers

Cabarrus County, NC faced a shortage of the land and producers necessary to increase production for their local food system. The County struggled to build the infrastructure necessary to keep up with growth. As a result, the county promoted additional growth in areas that already had expensive infrastructure investments. To this end, Cabarrus negotiated an urban growth boundary with the Town of Concord, established voluntary agricultural districts and a non-utility zone.

Cabarrus County also realized that in order to preserve farmland, it would need to train the next generation of farmers. Using State grant funds, the county is developing an incubator farm where new farmers can practice their farming skills on small plots before they purchase their own

land. Combined, these farmland protection policies might be described as “planning for food systems.” This illustrates a way in which local governments might use farmland protection policies to increase food production for a local food system.

Exhibit 2. Common Local Food System Barriers and Policies/ Programs

Local Food System Barriers	Potential Solutions
Shortage of land and producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voluntary agricultural district (VAD) • urban growth boundaries • non-utility zones • food system impact assessments • agricultural TIF district • planning for food systems • farmer succession planning • economic development resources and grants • technical assistance • incubator farms • education from agricultural extension/transition programs
Insufficient food processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating/removing regulations • community kitchens • economic development resources and grants • technical assistance • rural/urban roundtables/conferences
Lack of markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requiring percentage of institutional purchases are local • providing space and support for farmer’s markets • economic development resources and grants • technical assistance • tailgate markets • collaborative marketing campaigns • coop restaurants

Insufficient local food processing businesses

All four profiles provide examples of policy solutions that address the lack of local processors. Cabarrus received State grant monies to build a local beef kill floor; WNC hosts a restaurant/farmer conference to help producers and potential processors understand retailers' needs; and Illinois plans to offer technical and financial assistance to new agricultural processing businesses. However, Hardwick, VT, offers the most striking example of a local food system that has overcome the lack of processors.

In Hardwick, a vision of an "agricultural economy" has inspired five new agricultural processing businesses and created 75 new jobs in a town with a population of less than 3200.² Hardwick's success is due to extraordinary entrepreneurial leadership; support from the University of Vermont and the town's local government; and a strong sense of community pride. A Town official explained the Town's role in such an entrepreneurial movement by saying, "Governments could best serve the local food movement as facilitators for grant money, providing publicity (i.e., Buy Local campaigns) and making sure regulations support development of small businesses."³ In sum, Hardwick has made local food systems part of its economic development strategy.

Lack of markets

Convenient, affordable markets for buyers and efficient, guaranteed markets for farmers are critical for promoting local food systems. In WNC, tailgate markets have proven to be a successful means for small towns to access local produce. At a tailgate market, food is sold straight from the back of the farmer's truck. There are no infrastructure costs or rental fees for the farmers and many of the tailgate markets are held at the town's community center, which is convenient for residents.

All of the jurisdictions profiled had Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs or food clubs. CSA's require that consumers buy a farm membership in the winter and in return they receive a basket of produce during the growing season. Baskets are dropped-off at convenient locations for consumers to pick-up. Many variations of the CSA model exist. For example, in WNC, a group of farms is collaborating to grow and distribute CSA produce, thereby reducing distribution costs. An entrepreneur pools produce from Cabarrus' farms for CSA baskets, then businesses interested in improving their employees' health pay the CSA's distribution costs.

Finally, Illinois' food policy council (The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force) is making a recommendation to the Illinois General Assembly that would open one of the biggest markets in the State – Illinois State institutions (prisons, schools, nursing homes, etc). The State's food policy council has recommended that the State pass legislation requiring State institutions to purchase 20% local foods by 2020.⁴ A local government is also a potential institutional buyer and may find it useful to test an institutional purchasing program on itself.

Policy considerations for urban, urban fringe and rural jurisdictions

Although barriers to developing local food systems are often the same, economic opportunities vary based on population density. However, local food systems create economic development opportunities for all of NC's jurisdictions. Understanding the economic opportunities available to each type of jurisdiction may help local officials determine which policy tools to implement.

² Meyer, A. (2009, January 26). On local foods changing a town's economy. (J. Lindholm, Interviewer)

³ Anonymous interview. (2009, January 9). (S. Tate, Interviewer)

⁴ The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force. (2009). *Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy*. Chicago.

Urban

Demand for local foods outstrips supply, especially in urban areas where individuals, retailers and institutional purchasers are concentrated.⁵ Therefore, the farmers that remain in urban jurisdictions have a competitive advantage, in that they are located near a high demand area. These farmers will be able to leverage low-distribution costs and consumer convenience that their competitors in urban fringe and rural counties cannot.⁶ Urban farmers may also be able to market educational services to schools and individuals. For example, farmers could partner with a farm-to-school program to provide field trips or offer gardening workshops for individuals. Educational elements, such as culinary schools, may also provide economic development opportunities. In order to maximize these economic opportunities, urban areas should inventory remaining farmland and use policy tools, such as voluntary agricultural districts (VAD) and planning for food systems, to preserve farm land. In addition, urban jurisdictions may be interested in preserving open space and requiring new developments to conduct food impact assessments or create neighborhood plans that include community gardens. A study from the City of Portland, Oregon, “Diggable City,” suggests inventorying vacant lots and incorporating them into a long-term, urban agriculture plan.⁷

Urban governments can also host Farmer’s Markets and use economic development resources to encourage food retailers and processing businesses. In order to maintain demand for these new markets, cities will need to conduct local foods marketing campaigns and encourage and institutionalize educational programs, such as school and community gardens.

Urban Fringe

Urban fringe jurisdictions are also well-positioned to take advantage of the high demand for local foods from NC’s urban centers. In urban fringe areas, a coordinated distribution system is necessary to enable farmers to serve a nearby municipality. The cost of distribution to the nearby city or to suburban consumers is high; therefore, a cooperative model will reduce distribution costs and allow farmers to provide consistent varieties and amounts of produce.

During interviews with Cabarrus County, the notion of “creating a distribution and processing ring around the City of Charlotte in urban fringe counties” was presented as a possible solution to accessing the city’s consumers, restaurants and institutions.⁸ However, it is important to note that any centralized distribution system eliminates the relationship between farmer and consumer. If the farmer-consumer relationship is important, as in the case of farm-to-school programs, the consumer may not want to rely solely on a distributor. In order to maximize these economic opportunities, urban fringe jurisdictions may offer technical assistance and funding to new distribution businesses and host urban/urban-fringe meetings to help producers and distributors understand consumer demand and coordinate distribution.

Urban fringe jurisdictions concerned with sprawl may need to use farmland preservation tools similar to those recommended for urban counties. Finally, demand from consumers living in urban fringe areas provides another economic opportunity. In order to optimize this opportunity, urban fringe jurisdictions may need to offer economic development or technical assistance to create a CSA or farmer’s markets.

⁵ Finley, B. (2007, 7 23). *Denver Post*. Retrieved March 13, 2009, from Denver Post: http://www.denverpost.com/colleges/ci_6439647

⁶ Anonymous interview. (2009, January 8). (S. Tate, Interviewer)

⁷ Balmer, K. G., et al. (2005). *The Diggable City: Making Urban Agriculture a Planning Priority*. Portland: Toulan School of Urban Studies and Planning. http://www.diggablecity.org/dcp_finalreport_PSU.pdf

⁸ Anonymous interview. (2009, January 8). (S. Tate, Interviewer)

The CSA market model may be more efficient than a farmer's market in urban fringe areas because it is more convenient for dispersed consumers and guarantees a market for farmers.

Rural

A local food system presents many economic development opportunities for rural counties and towns, since the majority of food is produced in these areas. In addition to food sales, processing and distribution operations are needed to prepare foods and connect rural farms to urban consumers, restaurants and institutional purchasing programs. Value-added agricultural businesses present further opportunities. For example, Vermont Natural Coatings in Hardwick, VT uses whey, a dairy by-product, to produce wood finishes. In order to take advantage of these economic opportunities, rural jurisdictions will need to provide economic development assistance to agricultural entrepreneurs. Finally, during the interview process, rural residents stated that rural areas should also take advantage of the economic opportunity of "feeding themselves."⁹ While this market may be small, rural counties and towns could optimize this opportunity with tailgate markets, farm stands and restaurant coops.

Recommendations

This paper is a qualitative analysis, not necessarily transferable to all cities and counties. It is not a comprehensive survey of all possible policies that may be used to create local food systems. It focuses on policies encountered through the profiles. However, it can serve as a starting point for local government officials to begin identifying local food systems barriers and solutions.

Reaping the economic, health, environmental and social benefits of a local food system is a long-term endeavor and requires city and county government support. All of the local food systems profiled in this report relied on local governments to some degree. Cities and counties interested in developing local food systems should consider the following:

- Create a food policy council and conduct an assessment to gain insight into the barriers that the local food system is facing and possible solutions.
- Incorporate local food system development into the land-use, community economic development and long-term strategic planning process.
- Consider proximity to urban areas and population density when determining which economic development strategies to use.
- Focus on economic opportunities initially, incorporating social, health and environmental programs as the market stabilizes.
- Provide opportunities for local food system stakeholders to communicate. Hosting regional, rural-urban summits with buyers and sellers may be a good starting point for building relationships and identifying gaps and niches in the market.

⁹ Anonymous interview. (2009, February 11). (S. Tate, Interviewer)

Appendix A - Food System Profiles

Town of Hardwick, Caledonia County, VT – “An Entrepreneurial Base”

Population of Town of Hardwick: 3,174

Median income: \$33,636

Poverty rate: 14.0%

Number of farms in Caledonia County: 505

Percentage of small farms (<49 acres): 31%

No. 1 agricultural product in terms of sales (includes Caledonia County): livestock, poultry and their products

Number of organic farms in Caledonia County: 14

Value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption: \$461,000

Date local food system effort began: 2004

Community Overview:

Hardwick is a small town with a strong history of independent farmers and community members, who place a high value on preserving Vermont’s natural beauty and resources. This value is reflected in the fact that Vermont has the highest per capita organic farms in the country and strict pro-environment and agriculture laws. The State’s Act 250 (Land Use and Development Act) gives the Environmental Commission the power to permit or deny large-scale developments using ten criteria that are based on safeguarding the environment, community life, and aesthetic character of the state. Act 250 is one of the strictest environmental planning laws in the country. It has been blamed for deterring development, increasing poverty and unemployment and credited with preserving Vermont’s agricultural heritage and creating opportunities for small agricultural businesses.

Program Overview:

Hardwick’s system began in 2004 through the leadership of Andrew Meyer. Meyer began by gathering sustainable agricultural leaders in the area together and presenting them with a vision of a local food system economy. The food system effort in Hardwick is not just about growing and selling local food, but also creating value-added (processed) products from locally produced food. For example, Meyer, himself, is the owner of two value-added businesses - Vermont Soy and Vermont Natural Coatings. Meyer also helped start a non-profit called the Center for an Agricultural Economy, which provides education and networking opportunities for those involved in the agricultural economy. The Center works with the University of Vermont to conduct research on Hardwick’s burgeoning local economy and is conducting a feasibility study for an Agricultural Industrial Eco Park.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

Hardwick’s program is focused on improving the economy of Vermont through sustainable, local, agricultural entrepreneurship. They have leveraged the processing or value-added part of the local food system to create jobs and wealth in their community.

Advice:

One of the interviewees said, “It takes a couple of sparkplugs in the community.” Indeed, the efforts of Andrew Meyer and a few others seem to have jump-started this entire effort. Others point to a positive, inclusive process that uses networks to identify needs and opportunities for agricultural entrepreneurs.

State of Illinois – “A Statewide Effort to Create Jobs in the Farming Sector”

Population: 12,831,970

Median household income: \$47,711

Persons below poverty: 11.9%

Number of Farms: 73,027

Percentage of small farms (<49 acres): 26.9%

No. 1 crop or livestock in terms of sales: crops, including nursery and greenhouse

Farmer’s Markets: 250

Value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption: \$18,412,000

Date local food system effort began: August 2007

Community Overview:

The State of Illinois has over 1500 types of soils throughout its diverse regions from the Great Lakes to the Plains.¹⁰ It also has a range of municipal populations from urban Chicago to small rural towns. Within Chicago there is high demand for local foods; however, the majority of the food grown in Illinois is exported. Most of the food grown in the State is commodity crops, such as corn and soybeans. Therefore, the State imports most of its food, and “Ninety-five percent of organic food sold in this State [is] grown and processed outside of the State, resulting in food dollars being exported.”¹¹

Program Overview:

In August 2008, the State created a local food system task force that would make recommendations to the legislature about policies and funding opportunities the State could pursue to develop a local food system. This report is under review by the legislature, but interviews with participants provided a glance into what the task force will recommend. In addition to recommending that task force be made permanent, the group will recommend the following: increased support from the Univ. of Illinois’ agricultural extension, more funding and an increase in prioritization of local foods at the State Dept. of Ag, funding and technical assistance to help small farm business to expand their business, a Statewide marketing campaign for small farms, and a change in procurement policies to increase institutional purchasing of local foods and working on a means of making public land for farming (possibly creating agricultural TIF districts).

Distinguishing Characteristics:

The Illinois effort includes organic foods as well as local foods. There is also a heavy emphasis on job creation and transitioning farmers from commercial to organic agriculture. Currently, the State Department of Agricultural hosts “food shows” to connect local buyers and sellers and employs one person to coordinate local food system efforts. The final report has three major recommendations 1) requiring State institutions purchase 20% local foods by 2020 and 2) provide funding and training for “20,000 Illinois residents (5,000 farmers, 12,500 farm laborers, and 2,500 infrastructure entrepreneurs) to produce, process, and distribute Illinois local farm and food products” and 3) increase the purchase of local food products to 10% of total food dollar expenditures.¹²

Advice:

One of the interviewees said, “In some rural areas, people still remember when they could feed themselves...connecting to that history can be a powerful force.” Others stated that gathering a diverse and passionate group to man the task force has been part of its success.

¹⁰ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/17000.html>

¹¹ <http://www.farmland.org/resources/fote/states/top20.asp>

¹² The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force. (2009). *Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy*. Chicago.

Cabarrus County, NC – “Taming the Growth Machine”

Population: 156,395

Median household income: \$48,446

Persons below poverty: 10.8%

Number of Farms: 658

Percentage of small farms (<49 acres): 45%

No. 1 crop or livestock in terms of sales: broilers and other meat-type chickens

Farmer’s Markets: 4

Value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption: \$100,000

Date local food system effort began: October 2007

Community Overview:

Cabarrus County shares its western border with Mecklenburg County, home to NC’s largest city – Charlotte (population 670,000). As Charlotte has grown, so have Cabarrus’ urban areas along the I85 corridor. The municipalities of Concord (population 64,653) and Kannapolis (population 41,487) are home to Charlotte commuters, but also have their own economic engines. Of particular importance is the recent development of a biotech research campus in Kannapolis. In 2005, the Pillowtex textile mill closed and the site was converted into a research campus, drawing biotech researchers from private and public universities across the state. Interestingly, their research will focus on “nutrition, health and biotechnology research” and will include greenhouses and growing fields. The majority of agricultural land lies in the Eastern part of the county, with a small agricultural area in the Northwestern corner surrounding Lake Howell.

Program Overview:

At an agricultural town hall meeting in October of 2007, Cabarrus County began their efforts to develop a county-wide local food system. Over 179 stakeholders attended the meeting and as a result, the County initiated three projects –an incubator farm, a meat processing floor and a local food policy council. Currently, the incubator farm has six applicants and is prepared to host its first new farmers during the 2009 growing season. The county has received a grant from the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund to build the kill floor and conduct a food assessment. The assessment is estimated to cost between \$20,000 and \$40,000.

Before the agricultural town hall meeting, the County had made efforts to preserve its rural land. In 2005, the County passed an ordinance that prohibited utility expansion into areas zoned “agricultural” or “countryside” and created a voluntary agricultural district. In 2007, the County began to work with the Town of Concord to designate an urban growth boundary, as both the town and the county struggled to pay for public safety and education. Thus far, the Town of Kannapolis has not been willing to engage in growth management planning with the County.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

Urban sprawl helped mobilize Cabarrus’ effort to develop a local food system. Farmers and the county government have collaborated to curtail development of farmland through planning and collaboration with the Town of Concord. Through the county government, the effort has been successful in obtaining State funding to move forward with local food system projects. The movement’s next steps will be to focus on marketing to the consumer base within the county, instead of focusing on Charlotte.

Advice:

The support of the county, specifically the County Manager, has been crucial to the progress of developing a local food system. Working with the County has connected ideas with resources and helped create a program that has staying power. In addition, one of the interviewees said that the effort has “connected with anyone and everyone who is interested.” Finally, working with urban areas and including agriculture in the planning process has promoted better growth patterns.

Western, NC – “ASAP’s regional approach”

Population: 1,060,061

Median household income: \$31, 556

Persons below poverty: 13.2%

Number of Farms: 11, 479

Percentage of small farms (<49 acres): 58%

No. 1 crop or livestock in terms of sales: n/a

Farmer’s Markets: 21

Value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption: \$5,047,000

Date local food system effort began: late 90’s

Community Overview:

Western North Carolina is home to many small towns and a mid-size city, Asheville, and is also known as a tourist destination. Western North Carolina’s agricultural community was based on tobacco until the tobacco buyout in 2004. The non-profit, ASAP (Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project), recognized the void that the tobacco buyout would create and sought to fill that void with a local food system.

Program Overview:

Since 1999 the ASAP has taken on many local food projects – a local food guide and map; a farm to chef directory; conferences for farmers on marketing, training; a conference for connecting farmers and chefs; a Farm-to-School conference; a regional labeling system called “Appalachian Grown;” research; institutional purchasing programs; coordination and promotion for Farmer's Markets and a farm and garden tour. The group helped pioneer the very successful tailgate market program. Tailgate markets are small, informal markets, where food is sold from the “tailgate.” These markets are usually held at small town community centers.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

ASAP has been a leader in the local food system movement in Western North Carolina. Their focus is using market-based initiatives to provide health and access to local foods. They have successfully used a grassroots strategy over the past decade to develop WNC’s local food system. Their approach relies heavily on community involvement and relationships with local farmers.

Advice:

One of the interviewees said, “You really need to have people on the ground. Who's growing it? Who's buying what from where? You need to understand the entire system and remember there is no one size fits all.”

Appendix B - Illinois State legislation enacting the local food system task force

Public Act 095-0145

AN ACT concerning agriculture.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act.

Section 5. Legislative findings.

Illinois should be the Midwest leader in local and organic food and fiber production.

One thousand five hundred miles is the average travel distance for food items now consumed in this State, and agricultural products sold directly for human consumption comprise less than 0.2% of Illinois farm sales.

Ninety-five percent of organic food sold in this State is grown and processed outside of the State, resulting in food dollars being exported.

Illinois ranks fifth in the nation in loss of farmland.

The market for locally grown foods and for organic food is expanding rapidly.

Consumers would benefit from additional local food outlets that make fresh and affordable Illinois grown foods more accessible in both rural and urban communities.

Communities are experiencing significant problems of obesity and nutrition, including lack of daily access to fresh

fruits and vegetables.

Low-income communities that are currently "food deserts" lacking sufficient markets selling fresh fruits and vegetables would benefit from local food distribution systems.

The State's urban communities are showing renewed interest in growing food in urban areas.

Rural communities would be revitalized by increasing the number of families in the State that live on small properties and by providing fresh high-value local food.

Farmers who wish to transition from conventional

agriculture to local and organic food would benefit from training and support to diversify their farming operations.

Food consumers, farmers, and entrepreneurs would benefit from an expanded infrastructure for processing, storing, and distributing locally grown foods.

The capture of existing food dollars within the State would help to revitalize the State's treasury by creating a broad range of new in-state jobs and business opportunities within both rural and urban communities.

For the purposes of this Act and for the retention of the greatest benefit from every food dollar spent in this State, support for local food means capturing in Illinois the greatest portion of food production, processing, storing, and distribution possible.

Section 10. Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task

Force. The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force ("the Task Force") shall be appointed by the Governor within 60 days after the effective date of this Act. The Task Force shall be convened by the Department of Agriculture and shall include the following Illinois-based members:

(a) one representative each from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and Human Services;

(b) four organic farmers, representing different dairy, meat, vegetable, and grains sectors;

(c) four specialty crop producers, representing different flower, fruit, viticulture, aquaculture, fiber, vegetable, and ornamental sectors;

(d) two organic processors;

(e) one organic distributor and one non-organic distributor;

(f) three representatives of not-for-profit educational organizations;

(g) one organic certifier;

(h) one consumer representative;

(i) two representatives of farm organizations;

(j) one university agricultural specialist;

(k) one philanthropic organization representative;

(l) one food retailer representative;

(m) two municipal representatives from different communities in the State;

(n) four representatives from community-based organizations focusing on food access, to include at least 3 minority members; and

(o) one chef specializing in the preparation of locally grown organic foods.

All members of the Task Force shall be appointed for a 2-year term.

Section 15. Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Plan. The Task Force shall develop a plan containing policy and funding recommendations for expanding and supporting a State local and organic food system and for assessing and overcoming obstacles to an increase in locally grown food and local organic food production. The Task Force shall prepare and submit its plan in a report to the General Assembly by September 30, 2008, for consideration of its recommendations in the 96th General Assembly. The Plan, among other matters, shall:

(a) identify land preservation and acquisition opportunities for local and organic agriculture in rural, suburban, and urban areas;

(b) identify farmer training and development, as necessary, by expanding training programs such as Farm Beginnings, incubator projects such as Prairie Crossing Farm, urban agriculture training programs, farmer-to-farmer learning opportunities, or other programs;

(c) identify financial incentives, technical support, and training necessary to help Illinois farmers to transition to local, organic, and specialty crop production by minimizing their financial losses during the 3-year transition period required under USDA standards and to help with recordkeeping requirements;

(d) identify strategies and funding needs to make fresh and affordable Illinois-grown foods more accessible, both in rural and urban communities, with an emphasis on creating new food outlets in communities that need them;

(e) identify the financial and technical support necessary to build connections between landowners, farmers, buyers, and consumers;

(f) identify the financial and technical support necessary

to build a local food infrastructure of processing, storage, and distribution;

(g) identify the financial and technical support necessary to develop new food and agriculture-related businesses for local food and organic food production and distribution, such as on-farm processing, micro-markets, incubator kitchens, and marketing and communications businesses;

(h) identify the financial and technical support necessary to expand the development of farmers markets, roadside markets, and local grocery stores in unserved and underserved areas, as well as the creation of year-round public markets in Chicago and other large communities;

(i) research, identify, and coordinate best practices and opportunities for the development of local food and organic food production;

(j) identify opportunities to educate the public and producers about the benefits of local foods systems and about the development opportunities provided through this Act; and

(k) identify legal impediments to local food and organic food production, and develop recommendations for a remedy.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.

Effective Date: 8/14/2007

Appendix C – Local food system barriers

Resources - Land

City and county planning can impact land resources. In North Carolina, the number of acres in farmland has decreased by 365, 866 between 2002 and 1997. (USDA, 2002) The decreasing supply has driven land prices up, especially in urban and urban fringe counties where population growth and urban sprawl have occurred. A recent survey of fifteen urban-fringe counties found, “Across the 15 counties, from 30% (in Berks and Burlington) to 62% (DeKalb) of the respondents who assessed affordability chose the response option ‘Not at all affordable.’ And from 55% (Burlington) to 85% (DeKalb) selected either that most negative response or ‘Not very affordable.’ Only from 3% (Carroll) to 14% (Burlington) considered the agricultural land prices to be ‘On the whole very affordable’ or ‘Affordable.’”¹³ (Esseks, 2008) The high price of land deters many would-be-farmers from entering the industry and makes land too expensive to farm, meaning farmers can get much more by selling their land to developers, than they can from farming.

Producers

The average age of farmers in NC is 56 years old. This begs the question, “Why are young people not going into farming?” Farming is a risky business with a 9-10% failure rate (just one percentage point less than traditional small businesses).¹⁴ To reduce this risk, more and more farmers are earning off-the-farm income. For first-time farmers land prices may be too high, while those who inherit land find that the quality of life in rural areas does not meet their standards. The shortage of farmers is a symptom of the inability to “earn a living” from farming and the lack of amenities in rural areas.

Processing

Consumer demand for processed foods has increased, while opportunities for processing local foods are few. Consider the demand for processed vegetables for a farm-to-school program, when the school no longer has the labor or the equipment to turn raw vegetables into an edible form (Severson, 2007). The local meat industry provides an additional illustration. There are few local meat processors and, as a result, much of the beef produced in NC is processed elsewhere.

Consumption

While consumer demand generally outstrips supply of local foods, continuing to educate all-income levels

¹³ This exception was attributed to the “county’s large conservation easement program that protected very substantial amounts of farmland from development (54,191 acres as of August 2008).”

¹⁴ <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR21/>

about the benefits of local foods is necessary. At the moment, local foods are more expensive than commercial ones, creating access concerns for low-income people.

Food System Barriers	Policies and Programs
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Waste

There are no city/county curbside composting programs in the State of North Carolina.

Distribution

As with processors, there are very few regional/local distribution operations specializing in local foods. For individual farmers, distribution can be cost and time prohibitive and many institutional buyers do not have the time to buy from multiple, small vendors.

Markets

Some interviewees in NC spoke of a lack of farmer's markets, while others described markets that leave the farmer with unsold goods. Convenience and exploring different types of markets can help reach those who want local foods, but do not attend Farmer's Markets.

Appendix D - Policy and program solutions for food system barriers

Shortage of Resources (land, water, soil, seeds/breeds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voluntary agricultural district • urban growth boundaries • non-utility zones • food system impact assessments • agricultural TIF district • planning for food systems • farmer succession planning • economic development resources and grants • technical assistance • incubator farms • education from agricultural extension/transition programs • research and development of region-specific crops
Lack of Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • farmer succession planning • economic development resources and grants • technical assistance • incubator farms • education from agricultural extension/transition programs • internet service (communication/quality of life) • rural-urban roundtables/conferences
Insufficient Processors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating/removing regulations • community kitchens • economic development resources and grants • technical assistance • rural-urban roundtables/conferences
Lack of demand from consumers (individuals, retailers, institutions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public awareness campaign • school gardens/Farm-to-School programs • culinary schools • community and backyard gardens • labeling systems • farmers able to take food stamps • published list of local producers
Lack of waste recycling programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • jurisdiction-wide composting programs/ distribution and sale of compost
Lack of distributors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic development resources and grants • technical assistance • rural-urban roundtables/conferences
Lack of markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requiring percentage of institutional purchases are local (starting with City/County Government) • collaborative marketing campaigns • providing space and support for Farmer's Markets • economic development resources and grants • technical assistance • tailgate markets • coop restaurants

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