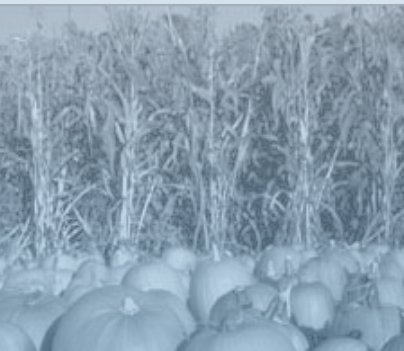


SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN COMMUNITY FOOD PROFILE



SOUTHEASTERN MICH COMMUNITY FOOD PR

Preface

This Community Food Profile is designed to highlight and explore various aspects of our local food system in southeastern Michigan.

The Profile was compiled by a team of University of Michigan graduate students working on behalf of the Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP). The Community Food Profile template was developed by the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at Michigan State University.

Since this Profile only begins to explore a fraction of our food system, we hope it will be the first in a series of informational brochures produced by FSEP and others investigating, challenging and celebrating the local food system.

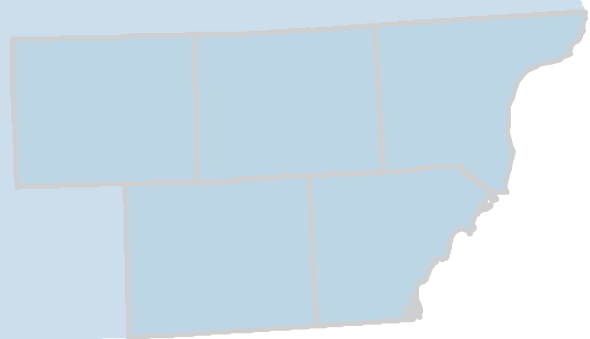


About FSEP

The Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP) is an urban-rural collaboration dedicated to the tenets of local food systems within Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw and Wayne counties.

Its mission is to catalyze change in the food system to enable strong farms, healthy cities, community wealth, and job creation in southeastern Michigan. FSEP was officially launched in the beginning of 2005, and provides research, education and outreach with urban and rural partnerships, resulting in agricultural development opportunities, sustainable communities, and healthy local economies.

A central strength of FSEP comes from the collaboration of its diverse leadership: the combined effort of five county administrations, farm organization leaders, food industry entrepreneurs, community groups, food system and economic development experts and resource providers. This Profile serves as an important communication tool to enable these goals for change in the local food system.



IGAN PROFILE



**Prepared with assistance from the
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Community Profile Goals:

The Community Food Profile provides a snapshot of the local food system from the varied perspectives of food system actors in a five-county region of southeastern Michigan. These representatives include farmers, producers, processors, distributors and consumers as well as policy-makers, educators, entrepreneurs and community leaders. Through interviews, photographs and supporting research, the Profile gives the seemingly impersonal food system a face and a story. More precisely, it begins to build a library of the many faces and stories that comprise the local food system.



Beyond painting a picture, the Profile strives to inform stakeholders including individuals and organizations, current and potential entrepreneurs, and policy-makers about the local food system in a creative and accessible way.

Through this information, the Profile aims to provoke increased awareness of and dialogue about the local food system. Awareness and dialogue are the first steps in taking an active role in creating a food system that better represents our values as a community.

Finally, to promote active change in the local food system, this Profile showcases future opportunities for development of small businesses, organizations and networks to promote local economic growth through a stronger food system.

The topics and examples included here only begin to represent the complex, interconnected food system in our region and the many opportunities for change toward a system that better meets the needs of all stakeholders. As FSEP deepens its work, the Community Food Profile will serve as a compass to help steer change in the local food system and a weathervane to gauge its progress.

We hope you enjoy browsing the colorful, informative pages of this Profile and we urge you to get more involved in supporting the local food system.



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INTRODUCTION

4

Food: the tie that binds...

It is rare that something can claim to connect each of us to every other person in the world. Food is one of these rare, all encompassing elements. We all need the nourishment and energy that food provides. And all of us possess a unique relationship with food. Yet, this relationship is often superficial. Most of us do not know where our food comes from. Do you know who produced the vegetables that you eat? Do you know how your food was processed or shipped to get to your market? Did you know that the average distance that your food travels from farm to plate is 1,500 miles?

Our current global food system has developed into such a complicated set of relationships that we in Michigan often get many of our tomatoes from California, asparagus from China, or beef from South America. Yet, all of these items are produced locally in our region. Local food systems seek to establish an intentional set of relationships between local farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers of our food and food products. This new set of relationships requires mutually beneficial connections among all of the people involved in the food system. Reworking and strengthening the interconnected set of relationships within our food system helps us to address community problems ranging from public health, to economic development and job loss, to urban sprawl and our dependency on fossil fuels.



Why a turn toward the local?

When we prioritize local markets, resources, and products, we invest in our community. Instead of allowing money to filter out of our region, these new more self-reliant practices circulate money within our community to create opportunities and investment. Locally produced products often focus on goods that are fresher and healthier. Resource use is cut drastically when we shy away from long-distance shipping. When we enforce local connections, it is typically easier for the needs of all community members to be met more readily. Community-based decision making is especially important in low income communities, where larger supermarkets have abandoned many areas.

The cornerstone of a viable local food system is the committed participation of well-informed consumers who can influence how and where their food is produced. When local agriculture and food production are integrated in community, food becomes part of a community's problem-solving capacity rather than just a commodity that's bought and sold. By turning toward the local we increase the capacity, as a community, to enhance our social, economic, political, and environmental well-being.

Our region: Southeastern Michigan

For the purpose of this Profile, southeastern Michigan is defined as Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties. Of the local food systems re-emerging throughout the United States, the most successful networks share a common factor: a major metropolitan area in close proximity to fertile farmland. Southeastern Michigan, which includes both the Detroit Metropolitan Area and rural agricultural land, is ripe for the development of a decidedly more localized food system.

CIRCLE OF CONNECTIONS

Using this Guide

Usually, we think of food as following a linear path from farm to table; food is grown on farms, processed in factories, distributed by trucks and purchased by consumers at grocery stores or restaurants.

If we instead think of the food system as a circle, we are reminded that we are all linked in a multiple ways (see diagram below).

Realizing the nature of these connections, acknowledging and revering their importance and, when possible, strengthening them within our communities, we begin to see a host of possible benefits.

The outer ring in the Circle of Connections diagram suggests some potential outcomes of a local food system. That diagram provides more detail as to their significance.

Everyone—regardless of economic status, ethnicity, profession, or political bent—has a stake in the food system. It is indeed reasonable to ask, **“what type of food system do I want for my community?”**

This Community Food Profile will help you answer that question.



Inner Ring - food system components



Outer Ring - food system outcomes



OUTCOMES

6 The Benefits of Local Food Systems

A strong local food system has many potential economic, social, health, and environmental benefits for a region's communities and residents. For example, an assessment of local needs can provide entrepreneurs with key information to satisfy unmet demands and create new or more efficient opportunities for the production and movement of foods. These opportunities help to strengthen the local economy by growing the agricultural sector, creating jobs, providing more choices for consumers, contributing to the local tax base, and reinvesting local money exchanged for food back into local farms and businesses.

When producers and consumers are linked via efficient infrastructures, local farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers alike can experience a competitive advantage over alternative systems. By sharing the risks and rewards of food production, processing, distribution, and retail with other local partners, farmers and businesses can explore opportunities to produce new varieties of foods or expand existing ventures to meet a local or regional need.



A strong local food system can also result in positive effects on community development and revitalization. For example, the development of networks within a community supports long-term connections between farmers and consumers. This, in turn, helps to support the viability of small and medium-sized family farms and foster a sense of place, culture, history, and ecology within a region. A strong local food system and informed local decision-making can also help to create healthier communities. The strategic preservation of farmland and the production of healthy and accessible foods can combat urban sprawl, obesity, and hunger.

Opportunities for niche markets

Agricultural viability

Job creation

Efficient movement of foods

Reinvestment of local money

Long-term connections between farmers and consumers

Supports small-scale farms

Preserves farmland

Revitalization of communities

Combats urban sprawl, obesity, and hunger

Reduced environmental impacts

Greater nutritional value of foods

Less energy used to grow and transport products

Similarly, local food systems can foster the long-term sustainability of communities through reduced environmental impacts and increased stewardship. Foods produced locally are typically grown on a smaller scale than most large “factory farm” ventures and do not require as much energy as mass-produced products. Local farmers that have a direct connection to the consumer through farmers markets and other networks are also more likely to take greater care to grow fresh and healthy foods. Consequently, many local farmers do not engage in the types of harmful practices seen in larger operations.

When foods are grown and consumed locally, harmful chemicals are not required to preserve the foods for longer periods of time, and less energy is needed to transport the products to their final destinations. Since local foods are harvested and then processed or sold to the consumer within a matter of hours or days instead of weeks or months, foods are fresher and often have a greater nutritional value when purchased because they can mature fully before being harvested and consumed.

ABOUT THE 5-COUNTY AREA

Regional Data & Statistics

Our five-county region of southeastern Michigan, comprised of Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties, has many elements that support the creation of a local food economy. Characterized by diversity in land use and population, the region is full of opportunities for networking, partnership and small business development to strengthen the local food system.

Southeastern Michigan contains both large urban areas and prime agricultural land - a combination that has been an asset to local food systems in other regions. The major metropolitan area of Detroit contains over two million people in the city and suburbs. Other cities of moderate size within the region include Adrian, Ann Arbor, Jackson, Monroe, and Ypsilanti.

Over 90 percent of the region's 2.8 million people live in urban areas. According to the U.S. Census, minorities account for nearly 40 percent of the aggregated population - an increase of 5.2 percent since 1990. While the average household and per capita incomes are near the U.S. averages, between 7 and 16 percent of individuals in each county live below the poverty line.



Simultaneously, southeastern Michigan boasts a substantial agricultural base. In the five-county region there are over 5,500 farms that cover almost one million acres of land. In 2002, these farms produced agricultural products worth over \$320 million, or 8.5 percent of the state's total market value of agricultural products. In 2001, the Michigan Farm Bureau estimated that agriculture contributed \$37 billion to the state's economy.

SOURCES:

US Bureau of the Census. Census 2000. American Factfinder Online. May 5, 2006 <http://factfinder.census.gov>
National Agricultural Statistic Service. US Census of Agriculture, 2002. US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC.
Davis et. al. "Toward a Sustainable Food System: Assessment and Action Plan for Localization in Washtenaw County, Michigan. University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment. August 2004.

As a state, Michigan is the second most agriculturally diverse in the United States, after California and a variety of agricultural products originate in our region. Southeastern Michigan is among the top producers of livestock including sheep, hogs, cattle and calves. Main food commodities include corn, dairy products, soybeans, and wheat. While these crops cover much of the working lands, a wide array of other fruits, vegetables and grains are grown in the area.

Despite farming's strong presence in the region, the occupation has become increasingly difficult to sustain a living. The number of farmers selling less than \$2,500 worth of agricultural products (by market value of sales) within the region has nearly doubled between 1987 and 2002. The yearly net income for a typical farmer in the region is less than \$10,000.

As farming has become less profitable, many farmers near the urban fringe have sold their farmland to developers. This, in part, has caused total farmland acreage in the region to shrink by almost 50,000 acres between 1987 and 2002. The rapid population expansion expected within Washtenaw, Monroe, and Lenawee counties during the next 20 to 30 years will continue to chip away at the amount of farmland within these counties, enabling further urban sprawl.

Looking forward, current trends of urban growth will continue to challenge the viability of farming in the southeastern Michigan. This future will undermine a substantial sector of the regional and state economy, further distance consumers from the origins of their food and increase reliance on outside markets and energy-intensive transportation.

Yet with a substantial and diverse base of consumers and a rich array of producers in the region, opportunities abound for the development of a more localized food system. Such a system can help to support local farms, bolster the regional economy, provide high quality food for local consumers, and help to maintain the region's rich agricultural heritage.

Demographics:

Population of 2,787,314 in 2002,
91.2 % live in urban areas.

39.5% minority population; an increase of 5.2% since 1990.

Average household income: \$42,962 (U.S. average: \$41,994).

29.2% of residents have an Associate's degree or completed some college (27.4% for the United States).

Farm Facts:

5,538 farms in 2002 which is over 10% of the farms in Michigan.

960,259 acres in farmland (in 2002).

Net average farm income per year: \$7,290; State average: \$13,585.

Estimated value of farmland and buildings per acre: \$3,520 State average: \$2,667 (in 2002).

Population in Monroe and Washtenaw counties is expected to grow 30% by 2030.

GRAIN PRODUCTION

8

Commodity grain farmer sees new opportunities in local food market

In many ways, Larry Gould, owner and operator of Gould Farm in Lenawee County, is your average farmer in the southeastern Michigan region. Like many farmers here, Larry's involvement in farming has deep roots in family tradition. Working on the Gould Farm that, as Larry says, was "homesteaded before the state of Michigan was established," Larry has been farming for 50 years. Three generations of Goulds, including Larry's father, brother, and son, currently work with him on his farm.



In addition to the family ties, Larry is like many other grain farmers of the region because he grows the commonly grown commodity crops of corn, wheat, and soybeans on a large farm. Larry also raises cattle for meat, which is marketed in Philadelphia and sold mostly on the East Coast. Much of the grain that Larry grows is fed to his livestock, but any excess is sent to local intermediary businesses called grain elevators to be stored and eventually sold when Larry decides to bring it to market.

Larry typically works with three area elevators in order to diversify his sales and, hopefully, minimize risks. Since elevators compete among each other for business, the cost of storing grain varies slightly from one to the next. However, many times the elevator with the lowest storage fees levies a higher fee when Larry decides to sell his grains on the commodity market. Therefore, Larry plays it safe by holding and selling grain through a few elevators.

Despite all this, Larry admits that some years he still loses money farming his grains. Like many farmers in the region, he doesn't know year to year whether he will make any money at all. Likely because of this, Larry acknowledges the economic opportunity in producing and selling foods on a local level.

Larry states that selling grains locally would benefit farmers because "the cost of transportation and advertising that is currently included in the price of the finished product... is the cost the producer seems to be absorbing from his profit margins." But Larry, being your average grain farmer in the region, usually doesn't have a whole lot of sway in deciding these types of matters. Or does he?



Besides being a farmer, Larry is also an active member of the Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP), where he serves on the board of directors and represents Lenawee County. He got involved with FSEP by way of his work as a Lenawee County Commissioner. Through these duties, Larry uses his 50 years of agricultural experience to provide insights and improvements for the region's farmers and the entire community as a whole.

When pressed, Larry admits that he will probably retire from farming some day. When this does happen, Larry says that he plans to pass his farm along to the next generation in his family. Thanks to his work with FSEP and as a Commissioner, Gould Farm and other farms just like it in the region may be able sustain themselves economically in the future, maintaining the rich agricultural heritage of generations.

GRAIN PROCESSING

FSEP works to increase grain processing in SE Michigan

Grains, throughout most of history, have been an integral part of a human being's diet. Today, cereals, breads, pastas, noodles, crackers, and many other things are made from grains. Even fuel today is made in part from grains. But have you ever wondered where the grains in your cereals, breads, pastas, and other products come from and how they get that way?

Your typical grain today goes through an extensive life-cycle before it is eventually consumed. First, of course, the grain must be grown. In southeastern Michigan, grain production is a primary farming activity. Grains are grown on about two-thirds of all the farmland in the region. After growing and harvesting the grains, most farmers of the region sell their product to local grain elevators, which are intermediary businesses where farmers can either sell or store their grains for a fee before they decide to sell them on the commodity market.



Since the vast majority of grains are processed in some capacity, almost all of the grains in the region are sent from the elevators and out of the state to be processed before they are ultimately sold. Toledo, Ohio, being home to a large Nabisco processing plant, is a major hub for grain shipments from the region. After pro-

cessing is complete, the new products made (in part) out of grains from southeastern Michigan are shipped throughout the nation and the world to be sold and consumed.



At this point, you may be wondering why grains from our southeastern Michigan region are not processed and then sold within southeastern Michigan. You may wonder even more about this when you learn that farmers in the region strongly desire to sell their grain products directly to local processors. A survey study conducted by FSEP in the spring of 2006 showed that over half the farmers within the region currently selling to a grain elevator would prefer not to. Instead, these farmers overwhelmingly preferred to sell their grains directly to a local processor.

However, farmers in the region cannot sell their grains to local processors. This is because the types of processing facilities needed to accommodate the local grains of the region do not exist. Ironically, the few processing facilities that do exist in the region almost completely import their grains from outside of southeastern Michigan, processing grains that are not commonly grown in the region. The disconnect between the grains grown and the grains processed here in southeastern Michigan is indeed substantial.

However, thanks in part to the work done by FSEP and other groups and organizations in the region, grain processing facilities that purchase locally grown products are on the rise. In January of 2007, a grain processing plant for ethanol fuel will open here in southeastern Michigan and become a major market where farmers of the region can sell their grains. Given the many benefits of locally produced products, this is great news!

SOURCES:

National Agricultural Statistic Service. US Census of Agriculture, 2002. US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC.

SMALL VEGETABLE FARMS & CSAs

10

Small family farms sustain local consumers and the land

In the global food system most of our food is grown on large farms and shipped hundreds of miles before it gets to our table. Yet, despite the increasing trend toward larger food business, scores of small, local farmers across the country – including here in southeastern Michigan – work tirelessly to bring high-quality produce to the region’s consumers via a pick-up truck and a few gallons of gas.

There are hundreds of small farms in southeastern Michigan. Many of these farmers sell most or all of their produce directly to the local consumers through one or more means that serve as alternatives to the national food distribution system. Some find local farmers’ markets to be the best outlet for their produce. Increasingly, small, local farmers are building relationships with small local grocers and cooperative markets to sell their produce on a more daily basis. One of the fastest growing alternative means of selling produce is Community Supported Agriculture programs, referred to simply as “CSAs.”

Local CSAs:

Boxelder Acres: Ypsilanti (734) 483-7752
Community Farm of Ann Arbor: (734) 433-0261
Frog Holler Organic Farm: Brooklyn (517) 592-8017
Garden Works: Ann Arbor (734) 995-5130
NeedleLane Farms: Tipton (517) 263-5912
Tantre Farm: Ann Arbor (734) 475-4323

CSAs present a unique opportunity to cultivate more intimate relationships between producers and consumers. Most CSAs are characterized by a group of local “shareholders” in a farm. These individuals or families buy a “share” of the farm’s produce usually at the beginning of a season and collect a weekly bounty of produce throughout the growing season. The contents of each week’s harvest change throughout the season as different varieties become ready for harvest.

A CSA system can be invaluable to a small farm by providing capital for seed and labor at the beginning of the season and a consistent consumer base throughout the year. Successful CSA programs that pair local markets with local agriculture can help small farms remain viable and keep lands in agricultural use – particularly farms on the “urban fringe” where development pressures are on the rise.

While farmers benefit from the reliable consumer base, CSA members benefit from the weekly supply of well-priced, responsibly-grown local produce and the op-

portunity to participate in the production of food. In doing so, CSA members are also helping to sustain and preserve farming in their region. A 1999 national survey of CSAs found that 94% of CSAs practice sustainable agricultural including organic and biodynamic methods.

Some farms invite their CSA members to help out on the farm, either as part of the member agreement or even for compensation. Asa and Peggy Wilson of Boxelder Acres in Ypsilanti, enjoy having a number of part-time workers to help out on the farm. Not only does this allow for greater flexibility and variety, but it gives more people the opportunity to “experience first hand how all this food gets delivered.”



The CSA movement in the United States began with a handful of farms in 1986 when Robyn Van En introduced the concept to North America. Today, there are an estimated 1,200 CSAs in the US and the numbers continue to grow. Local agriculture databases list at least 15 CSAs in southeastern Michigan.

Running a CSA, in addition to the many responsibilities and obligations of small-scale organic farming, is no simple feat. Local farmer Mary LaFrance, of the Lakeplain Prairie Organic Farm in Wayne County, is opting out of the CSA business after two years due to low membership and lack of member participation. She says, however, “I will continue to sell organic food to stores like Whole Foods, Peoples’ Food Co-op and chefs at the Henry Ford. They like the variety, and heirloom vegetables offer that kind of appeal.”

Heirloom varieties of fruits and vegetables are “any garden plant that has a history of being passed down within a family, just like pieces of heirloom jewelry or furniture” according to Seed Savers, a non-profit dedicated to saving and sharing heirloom seeds. Though growing some heirloom vegetables can be a challenge, LaFrance and her customers find that they usually have a richer, more interesting flavor.

Of the food that Chef Nick Seccia of the Henry Ford gets from local farmers, including LaFrance, he says, “the produce is much higher in flavor and I know how and where the produce is grown and by whom. There is much more of a connection with cooking when you personally know the people who raise your food.” Small, local farms and Community Supported Agriculture are key to building strong food communities around local food systems.

CSA information available on the Net:

Seed Savers: www.seedsavers.org
Sustainable Agriculture Network: www.sustainableag.org
The Eat Well Guide: www.eatwellguide.org
Local Harvest: www.localharvest.org/csa

ORCHARDS & CIDER MILLS

Agri-tourism as an opportunity to promote local foods

The sweet smell of apples and freshly-baked pies is a familiar scent that ushers in the beginning of fall each year in Dexter, Michigan. A popular seasonal destination, both local residents and visitors from great distances have come to cherish the Dexter Cider Mill, a family owned and operated business located in Washtenaw County. Although the owners have never used advertising strategies to market their business, it's not unusual to see large crowds of people at the Mill enjoying a beautiful fall day while sipping cider or savoring a caramel apple or other baked goods made from local ingredients.

There are 178 orchards, covering 1,699 acres, located within southeastern Michigan.

Of these, 151 are apple orchards. Other MI-grown fruits include apricots, cherries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums.

As the oldest continuously operating cider mill in Michigan, the Dexter Cider Mill has been in production since 1886. Owned by the Koziski family for more than 20 years, many local families and children grew up with the Mill, making regular trips to buy apples or other locally produced foods.

The Koziski family prides itself on using very basic methods to produce their cider. "It's important to us to preserve the heritage of traditional cider making for future generations of young people." Apples are sourced from local orchards within a 30-mile radius from the Mill and are hand-picked directly from the trees. After a thorough washing, a seasonal mixture of apple varieties are then ground and pressed using a traditional wooden press to generate the all-natural, unpasteurized cider that cannot be found in stores. The Koziskis look forward to harvesting their own apples from their newly planted orchard once it begins to mature.

SOURCES:

2002 USDA Agricultural Census Data
Michigan Cider Makers' Guild (<http://ciderguild.org>)
Dexter Cider Mill (<http://dextercidermill.com>)

In addition to apple cider and freshly baked desserts, a wide array of other local products are sold in the Mill's retail store. These include honey from local orchards, cheeses, pickles, jams, apple cider vinegar, pastry and bread mixes, and products from the occasional guest vendor. The Koziski family cookbook, which provides recipes for preparing foods with local ingredients, is another popular item for sale at the Mill.

As the Mill continues to expand its operations, the Koziski family is considering the addition of a second cider mill featuring new attractions for the whole family such as hayrides and pumpkin harvesting.

Orchards, cider mills, roadside produce stands, and U-Pick operations are just a few examples of consumer-focused farm-related attractions that contribute to a growing industry known as Agri-tourism. Agri-tourism presents a number of opportunities to local farmers in southeastern Michigan and can be utilized to grow a regional agricultural identity and stabilize farm revenues to keep small farms viable. For more information, visit the Michigan Farm Marketing & Agri-Tourism Association website at www.mi-fmat.org.



Craving locally produced apples or cider?



Alber Orchard & Cider Mill Manchester

alberorchard@aol.com

Dexter Cider Mill Dexter

www.dextercidermill.com

Obstbaum Orchards Salem

www.obstbaum.com

Parmenter's Northville Cider Mill Northville

parmenters.homeip.net/parmenters

Plymouth Orchards & Cider Mill Plymouth

www.plymouthorchards.com

Wiard's Orchards & Country Fair Ypsilanti

www.wiards.com

Who knew a little bean could do so much?

Soybeans: The second most abundant crop in the United States, exceeded only by corn. If you are unfamiliar with agricultural practices, this statistic is probably unexpected. That's because there are few foods that are made from soybeans. Perhaps, for you soybeans conjure images of tofu, soy milk, and soy sauce.

Historically, soybeans have not been used for food but instead are the key ingredient in animal feed, industrial products, and many oils/lubricants. They are also used to create biodiesel fuels. In order to make these products, however, the versatile soybean crop must be heavily processed.

Commodity Markets reign supreme as the most popular means of selling this legume. This typically sees a marginal return for the farmer, demanding grand-scale farms in order to make a profit. However, some farmers in southeastern Michigan are finding new and innovative ways to process soybeans into food products.

Tom and Roseanne Bloomer, residents of Washtenaw County, are an example of entrepreneurs who have developed their business within the emerging markets of soybean products. Located 5 miles outside of the city of Ann Arbor, the Bloomer's farm, Burr Oaks, is home to the on-farm processing business Rabble Roasters soy nut products and Burr Oaks gourmet popcorn. Rabble Roasters are dry roasted soybeans (GMO free) that come in four flavors. Many specialty shops and independent grocery stores sell Burr Oaks products throughout the State of Michigan and in select locations in eight other US states.

All of the soybeans for Rabble Roasters are grown on the 150 acre Burr Oaks farm. Tom explains the business structure of his company: "Burr Oaks has an unusual business structure in that I am in a partnership



with a neighbor. He (the neighbor) farms the land on Burr Oaks. Meanwhile, I run the on-farm processing, marketing, and the business itself...the practice of farming land other than your own is not uncommon, however."

On-farm processing is a strategy a business owner employs to create 'value-added' steps to their production capacity, selling the end product which has more value than the raw commodity. The Bloomers have a cleaning and conditioning plant, an on-site roasting/processing plant, and infrastructure for packaging the products. Plenty of on-farm storage allows the bloomers to navigate around the seasonality of crops.

Rabble Roasters and Burr Oaks popcorn are distributed throughout Michigan via four small specialty foods distributors. Tom personally distributes the soybean and popcorn products to retailers in the Ann Arbor area.

This on-farm processing business plan allows the Bloomers to maintain a viable local business and live on the farm that they have been on for over twenty years. Keeping the farm in agricultural land and not succumbing to developmental pressures is not an easy thing to do in today's market. The Bloomers received some additional help in ensuring the future of their farm from the Ann Arbor Greenbelt initiative.



Did you know?

Nearly 75 million acres of land were planted in soybeans in the US in 2006

Soybeans are the #2 cash crop in America, next to corn

Soybeans are the #1 export crop in the US

44% of all soybeans in the US go towards animal feed, not human food

RESERVATION

Burr Oaks Farm was the first to participate in the Ann Arbor Greenbelt initiative, a law passed by voters that secures taxpayer funds to purchase land and development rights both within and outside of the city limits in an attempt to curb urban sprawl. If an easement obtains a farm's development rights, then that land is legally required to stay as farmland forever. Through the Greenbelt initiative, the City of Ann Arbor redirected .5 mills to farmland preservation from the parks acquisition program to buy these farm development rights.

"Agriculture is our business and the greenbelt easements are an enhancement to our business," reasoned Tom Bloomer. "The easement is perpetual, which means that the land will remain in agricultural production forever. This fit well with the vision for the company, so we decided to apply soon after the law passed."



Tom went on to explain, "Healthy communities must have a diversified economy. Because most communities are near agricultural land, farming is a very important part of a diversified economy and healthy community...I'm not sure if voters realize how visionary they were or not when they passed the law. Through being willing to spend money outside the city's borders, Ann Arbor strengthened their investments in the city and will have a pleasant community for many years to come."

The Bloomers represent an example of how innovative business models along with small-farm friendly policies may enable agriculture livelihoods as a viable profession for members of the Southeastern Michigan community.

If you are interested in knowing more about farmland preservation, The Michigan Land Use Institute (www.mlui.org) is the predominant organization working on maintaining the integrity of agricultural land in the state. Their approach to farmland protection includes engaging in state and local policy, strengthening agricultural zoning, supporting land easements, and using farmland taxation as a means to incentivize attainment of development rights by farmers.

Things you can do

Individual:

Buy local soy products such as roasted soybeans, edamame (fresh soybeans), tempeh (fermented soybeans), or soy flour



Community:

Organize tours of farmland that are in danger of being developed. Create digital images of what the area would look like with sprawl development and use this as a tool to persuade community members and representatives to support farmland preservation.

Municipally:

Introduce legislation or ballot initiatives similar to the Ann Arbor Greenbelt initiative in Ann Arbor to protect open space and family farms from urban sprawl.

Family farmers feed growing demand for local meat

Stand around at the Hannewald Lamb Company booth at the Ann Arbor Farmers Market on a Saturday afternoon and you are sure to walk away with some new recipes and bits of knowledge about the best cuts for the grill or rotisserie. But be sure to get to market early if you want to walk away with some locally-raised lamb to prepare.



Now in their fourth year at the Ann Arbor Farmers Market, Hannewald Lamb Company regularly sells out of favorite cuts before the market closes. Rex Hannewald's family has raised lambs for generations, and several years ago Rex and his wife, Judy, created a business plan to devote their farm in Stockbridge to raising lambs with the ultimate goal of building a retail store on the homestead.

After two years of planning, they began selling at market to build a customer base and develop name recognition. If all goes as planned, the Hannewalds will open a store right on their farm within a year.

SOURCES:

DK Cattle: dkcattle.tripod.com

USDA National Organic Program: www.ams.usda.gov/nop

US Meat Consumption trends: www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Baseline/livstk.htm

Over the last few years, a few other local producers have joined the Hannewalds at the Ann Arbor market. For instance, in 2004 D K Cattle expanded the fresh, local meat offerings to include beef and pork. Ernst Farms now offers beef, pork and some poultry as well.

“When you buy local meat from a trusted butcher, you’ve got tons of assurances that the meat is going to be healthier and tastier,” said an Ann Arbor Farmers Market customer.

While more farmers markets in southeastern Michigan include meat producers, many area food retailers and restaurants now carry and prepare local meat products, as well. For the first time in its 35-year history marking a shift in the consumption trends of the health conscious, the Peoples’ Food Co-op in Ann Arbor added a refrigerator dedicated to sustainably-raised meat featuring products from local farmers including D K Cattle.

A handful of local restaurants in search of high quality meat products to serve to diners, purchase products from local producers like the Hannewalds and DK Cattle in Washtenaw County. Pacific Rim in Ann Arbor uses Hannewald racks of lamb and Rodger Bowser, Chef at Zingerman’s Deli, uses local meat products whenever he can. He praises the quality and flexibility of developing his own networks directly with farmers.

“When you have the availability of buying top quality meat from someone in your community without all the middle man garbage, strict order schedules and prices based on transportation, marketing and packaging,” Bowser says, “it’s a beautiful thing.” Bowser and Zingerman’s are committed to paying sustainable prices directly to producers to ensure quality and support local agriculture.

What do all these buzz words mean, anyway?

Pasture-raised means that the animals spent most of their time in the fields where they graze.

Grass-fed means that the animals ate a diet consisting primarily or entirely of grasses which are what livestock are biologically best prepared to digest. To develop full flavor, grass-fed animals must grow to full size at their natural pace, which is more gradual than animals fed on primarily grain-based diets.

Some animals are **finished** on grain, which means they are fattened on a corn and soy-heavy diet before they are slaughtered.

Organic meat products, as defined by the USDA must be fed a diet of 100% organic feed, cannot be given growth hormones or antibiotics for any reason, and must have access to the outdoors including pasture for ruminants. Organic meat production in the US increased fivefold from 1997-2003. (USDA, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/April06/Findings/Organic.htm>)

MEAT PROCESSING

Few options for meat processing pinch the pockets of local producers

Pleased at the increasing demand for their product, small-scale local meat producers face some formidable challenges when it comes to processing their animals to prepare them for safe human consumption. Recently, Mark DeKarske of DK Cattle in Washtenaw County said he was at risk of going out of business in part due to high processing costs imposed on small farmers with very limited options.



All meat processing must be done at USDA certified facilities. Only a few such facilities in the entire state are available to small farmers, the nearest to our corner of the state is Union City. Due to the limited options, local meat producers find the costs of processing to be significantly higher per head than the prices paid by conventional, large-scale operations – Judy Hannewald of the Hannewald Lamb Company estimated about \$25. For producers to stay in business, they must pass that cost on to the consumer.



While slightly higher than the farmers would like, the price premium on meat raised by small, local farmers represents higher quality in a number of ways. In addition to being fed a healthier diet and raised in safe, healthy, humane conditions, Rick Kissau of DK Cattle noted based on his experiences that the level of inspection at small processing facilities is much higher. The USDA official scrutinizes every animal as it walks off the truck and witnesses every step of the process.

There are also many rules regarding labeling meat products that can put small, local producers at a disadvantage when they are striving to build a strong customer base through name recognition. Labels have to be approved by the USDA through the processor. No matter how much work the farmer is willing to put into getting his own label, processors may not have the time or desire to manage all of the paperwork and time required to get approval.



Local farmers have expressed a great interest in new processing facilities in the southeastern Michigan region. A local processing facility would allow farmers to save on energy costs of transportation. It might also present healthy competition into the limited supply to allow for more flexibility and lower costs to local farmers.

GROCERY STORES: SUPERMARKETS

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Challenges for Local Foods

Within the southeastern Michigan region, large chain food retailers have very different opinions about the profitability and practicality of providing local foods in their stores. While most store purchasers see the merits of offering local food options for their customers, key themes that typically arise with respect to local foods include the purchasing constraints and “shelf-life” of fresh local products. Retailers seem to have divergent views on both of these points, with perspectives and experiences varying greatly according to the store’s standard operating procedures.

While some stores have the ability to order items directly from one or more distributors, other chain stores choose to establish contracts directly with farmers and other suppliers up to nine months in advance – well before the crops have even been planted or harvested – to ensure a full selection of available products year-round.

When purchasing from distributors, stores appear to be more likely to supply local products and may source up to 15% of their total produce items from local producers during peak harvest months. The flexibility of being able to call in an order and select from what is currently available reduces the retailer’s control in setting prices with the producer since they are one step removed from that process. But this flexibility also allows retailers to assess the market demand and supply at any given time and determine which products to offer in their stores and at what quantity.



On the other hand, stores that set contracts to purchase directly from farmers or other producers can guarantee specific quantities and prices for particular food items in their contract negotiations and can budget for these sales and associated marketing well in advance. How-



ever, this type of arrangement also introduces potential limitations to purchasing from certain regions or farm sizes in order to ensure that food items will be delivered as promised and at the guaranteed price.

Generally, many of these types of retailers are less willing to purchase local products, illustrating a perceived barrier within the food system. These stores assume that local producers cannot provide the consistent supply of items that is required to supply a major retail chain. The assumption is that local producers are not producing foods year-round and are subject to local climate variations that may impact the growing season, crop yields, and product quality for any given season. And while some stores recognize that local food sales generate increased revenues, others claim that the demand for local items is not strong enough for their store to warrant changes in their standard purchasing practices.

Other challenges to the purchasing of local foods by large retail chains include the seasonality of locally grown items. While foods such as local asparagus, cauliflower, apples, and blueberries are very popular during peak harvest months, California or foreign producers in warmer climates can often provide a greater variety and consistent supply of many of these items less expensively year-round.

Similarly, some retailers also question the practicality of preserving the quality and freshness of local foods in their stores. Although these items are often of excellent quality, because they have not been preserved for the purpose of transportation from region to region, stores must take greater care to refrigerate or otherwise store these products to prevent spoilage. This can ultimately increase operational costs, which may then be absorbed by the retailer or passed on to consumers through higher prices.

Opportunities for Local Food Producers

In a market where price margins for retailers are already at a minimum and competition for business and customer loyalty is intense, food retailers are looking for creative ways to minimize costs. Local foods may play a key role in this effort.



According to a recent report from the Worldwatch Institute, on average, U.S. food travels an estimated 1,500-2,500 miles from the farm where it was grown to the consumer's table. As fuel prices continue to rise and distributors as well as retailers are faced with increased costs of supplying goods and services, grocery stores may find promising opportunities in locally grown or produced items. Since products are produced nearby, transportation costs are minimized and products are fresher and more flavorful because less time passes between the time the food is harvested and consumed. Since travel time is reduced, the need for special packaging or other means of preserving foods can also be minimized, which contributes to decreased costs and reduced environmental impacts.

U.S. food travels an estimated 1,500-2,500 miles from the farm where it was grown to the consumer's table.

In addition, large chain grocery stores often search for ways to adapt their stores to the communities and populations they serve. One potential way to connect with local residents and the local food system in this regard is to supply foods from local farmers, producer cooperatives, distributors, and processors. By supporting local farms, these large chain stores can contribute to the local economy by reinvesting funds back into local agricultural businesses and enhancing the viability of small and medium farms.

By supporting local farms, large chain stores can contribute to the local economy...



SOURCES:

Case Study Analysis of Marketing Potential for Local Producer to Independent Grocer in Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw and Wayne Counties. Prepared by Michaelle Rehmann for the Food System Economic Partnership. August 2006.

Halweil, Brian. 2002. Home Grown: The Case for Local Food in a Global Market, Worldwatch Paper 163, Worldwatch Institute.

FARMERS' MARKETS

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Farmers' markets: a great place to buy local foods

Farmers' markets are a great place in your community to go and buy local foods. Although known for fruits and vegetables, farmers' markets in southeastern Michigan often have other foods for sale such as meat, eggs, honey, maple syrup, jams, bread and other baked goods. Much of the time other non-food items such as bedding plants, flowers, clothes, and craft or artisan items are available there as well.

When purchasing food at a farmers' market, you not only get the freshest food available, but you also get to meet the local farmer that grew or produced it. Farmers get to connect directly with the people eating their food, giving them an added sense of purpose and community. Farmers' markets are a socially and gastronomically vibrant place where the community comes together.

Farmers' markets also benefit the community economically. Farmers selling their food directly to you increase their profits because middlemen are eliminated. Consumers frequenting the market often also shop at neighboring local businesses and restaurants. These actions allow for more money to be retained and circulated in the local economy, benefiting everyone.

Get involved by shopping at your local farmers' market regularly! Tell your friends about it too!



A few southeastern Michigan farmers' markets

Adrian Farmers' Market

Toledo Street parking lot
Adrian, MI 49221
Open May-November
Wednesday Noon-6 p.m.
Saturday, 8 a.m.- Noon

Jackson-Kuhl's Bell Tower Market

117 Louis Glick Highway
Jackson, MI 49201
Open May-October
Tuesday, Friday & Saturday
7 a.m.-1 p.m.

Ann Arbor Farmers' Market

315 Detroit Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Open year-round
Wednesday & Saturday,
7 a.m.-3 p.m.

Livonia Farmers' Market

Middlebelt & West Chicago
Livonia, MI 48150
Open May-October
Saturday, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

Blissfield Farmers' Market

325 West Adrian Street
Blissfield, MI 49276
Open June-October
Tuesday, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

Monroe Farmers' Market

20 East Willow Street
Monroe, MI 48162
Open year-round
Tuesday & Saturday,
6 a.m.-Noon

Chelsea Farmers' Market

Park Street
Chelsea, MI 48118
Open May-October
Saturday, 8 a.m.-Noon

Ypsilanti City Farmers' Market

1 South Huron Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48917
Open May-October
Tuesday, 3 p.m.- 7 p.m.

Detroit Eastern Market

2934 Russell Street
Detroit, MI 48207
Open year-round
Sunday-Friday,
4 a.m.-Noon.
Saturday, 6 a.m.-5 p.m.

Ypsilanti Farmers' Market/ Freighthouse

100 Rice Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Open May-October
Wednesday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Saturday, 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

A community gathering: the Adrian farmers' market

Functioning for over 35 years, the Adrian Farmers' Market brings together Lenawee farmers and community members every Saturday morning from 8am until noon during the months of May through October. Like many farmers' markets throughout our region and the United States, each market day is a time for community gathering, an exchange of locally grown produce to be used in the next week's family menu plans, and a chance to meet your neighbors while buying scrumptious baked goods, succulent fresh fruits and vegetables, or handmade crafts.

Over 12-15 vendors exhibit their homegrown and homemade goods every week in Adrian, attracting hundreds of consumers who prefer to buy their goods in this community setting. Market patrons cited a variety of reasons they choose to shop at the market including: getting better tasting, fresher food; the desire to support their local economy; the friendly atmosphere; the desire to have more environmentally conscious buying habits that include eating local so as to reduce the fuel usage from long distance shipping; healthier food that uses minimal to no pesticides and synthetic fertilizers; and knowing where their food comes from and who produced it.

Marv Sharrock manages the market, in addition to selling his own produce every week. He and his brother farm a couple of acres each, approximately 15 miles outside of Adrian. Over the course of the season they produce about two dozen different crops, which are harvested the day before or the day of market.



Marv said that he likes selling his produce at the market “because the people are always friendly.” He also enjoys the large number of people that come through the farmers’ market. Indeed with hundreds of people circulating in a matter of hours, farmers can sell a significant amount of goods over a short period of time at a fair price to the farmers. This makes farmers’ markets an essential part of our viable local food system: they enable agricultural livelihoods.

To participate, vendors must have personally grown or produced the goods sold at the market. This rule ensures that wholesale vendors cannot underscore the price of local producers by selling produce that was not grown locally or that was mass produced by large farms.

Marv would like to see a permanent overhang structure constructed for the farmers’ market in Adrian. A structure such as this provides a dry place to hold the market during rainy mornings.

The Kastel Family Farm is another Adrian Farmers’ Market anchor. The Kastels have been selling their goods at the market for

over 35 years. Their farm in Blissfield, MI, is 16 acres and a full time, seasonal venture for the entire family. Monica Kastel explained that farming provides an important activity for kids and gives them direction. “This way,” she reasoned, “kids will be less likely to get into trouble when they are younger and are more likely to be responsible adults.”

The Kastels are also in charge of Project FRESH at the Adrian Farmers’ Market. This program provides low-income and nutritionally at-risk women and children with nutrition education and encourages participants to improve their dietary choices by providing them with coupons to buy fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers’ markets. Meanwhile, the program increases the demand for Michigan-grown produce and boosts the income of farmers who sell fruits and vegetables at participating markets.



In 2005, Project FRESH served more than 38,000 people in 75 counties throughout Michigan, with nearly \$600,000 in federal, state, local, and private funding. Programs such as Project FRESH are working alongside local food system initiatives to expand access and consumption of healthy, fresh, local foods in our communities.

Additional information on farmers’ market in your community can be found on the web at www.localharvest.org or www.michigan-farmers-market.org or www.moffa.org



Things you can do

Individual:

Shop regularly at farmers’ markets. Bring others along with you.

Community:

Make your farmers’ market a festive occasion with live music, cooking demonstrations, kids’ activities.

Municipally:

Sponsor a farmers’ market in your town center. (See: ww2.attra.ncat.org/where.php/PDF/farmmarket.pdf)

Allocate funding to construct a permanent overhang for your farmers’ market space to keep participants sheltered from poor weather.

Local food distributors close the “seasonality gap”

For innumerable Michiganders, summer is watermelon season. And summer is popularly defined by two holidays known for barbeques and cook-outs featuring sticky slices of huge, juicy, sometimes seedy watermelons: Memorial Day and Labor Day.

However, for Michigan farmers, watermelon season is roughly mid-July through early October, distinctly askew from the common period of high demand for the quintessential summer fruit. So how is that when we walk into our nearby supermarket in late May, we are welcomed by an enormous crate of ripe, 10-pound melons?



Grocers know that most people, when planning their barbeque menus, don't consider the local seasonality of their ingredients. And they know that if they don't have the goods their customers demand, they'll lose the business to another store that does. In today's global food market, consumers have come to expect the availability of nearly any kind of food nearly any time of year.

In order to bring us watermelons, and any other produce, when we want it, grocers work with distributors who build networks with farmers, growers, brokers, wholesalers and retailers around the country and world to move food from where it is ready to harvest to markets where consumers are ready to eat. In a word, distributors could be considered the lynchpin of the food system. They connect two other critical forces of the food system, producers and retailers, in order to link supply with demand, often on a grand scale.

In watermelon terms, this means that in May and June, Ann Arbor-based distributor Ed McClellan coordinates the transport of dozens of semi-truckloads of melons from farms in Georgia up to southeastern Michigan,

northern Indiana and the Chicago-area. The trucks are delivered to wholesalers who inspect the products and bring them to area grocery stores. Later in the season, many of the trucks are moving the other way, delivering Michigan-grown melons to markets in other states.

McClellan strives to support local watermelon growers by connecting them with markets when their fruit is ripe. In many cases, he is able to connect local fruit with local markets, but he notes that retailers will only work with distributors who can provide the product throughout the season of demand. In order to sell local watermelons, he must also be able to provide watermelons of other origins to fill in any gaps in supply. In an odd way, the success of local watermelon producers is linked to producers across the country.

Watermelons are, of course, just one example of the seasonality gap that distributors bridge – where the local climate's idea of 'seasonality' doesn't quite square with local consumers' desires for a product, distributors bring in products from elsewhere. But some of these gaps can be narrowed to increase the viability of local agriculture.

Based on years of experience working with farmers around the country, McClellan has some suggestions about how Michigan growers can increase their market share and better meet the local demand for certain products.

One strategy is season extension. There are many techniques farmers can use to lengthen the harvest period of a crop. In most cases, these methods involve protecting the plant from the cold either at the beginning of the growing season, at the end, or both.

Another way to increase profitability of products available during a short period of time is to create value-added products that have a longer shelf life. This approach would necessarily involve at least one other sector of the food system, processors, to convert a perishable fruit or vegetable into an item that can be stored for a period of time and provide a more consistent supply to retailers. Canning and drying or dehydration and roasting are the most common value-adding processes. But more involved ventures that include multiple local products like juices, salsas, cereal bars and soups are just a few among innumerable possibilities.

McClellan puts the charge to local growers, processors and entrepreneurs to seek out new knowledge about extending the growing season and to find creative ways to add value and shelf life to the region's rich harvest. Despite the primary challenge of the distribution system, to provide reliable and consistent products throughout the year, growing interest in locally grown and produced food will likely present new opportunities for locally-based distributors like McClellan to help retailers meet their consumers' demand.

SCHOOL GARDENS

When “local” means “just outside the principals office”

A year ago, few people paid much attention to the large, rarely-used courtyard at Sherrard Elementary Middle School in Detroit. Today, through a unique collaboration between the school, a community organization and the University of Michigan, students and teachers clamor to get a peek at the latest happenings.

In the summer of 2006, the once-forgotten 1/4-acre space began its transformation into a school, community garden, and outdoor classroom. With the help of a grant through the U of M School of Social Work, the M.O.O.R.E. Community Council (a neighborhood group in the Milwaukee Junction neighborhood of central Detroit) spearheaded the garden project in partnership with the school.

M.O.O.R.E., which stands for Mobilizing Our Own Resources and Energy, purchased supplies and plants and hired a few community members to clear the land and prepare it for gardening. Meanwhile, Ms. LaWanda Smith, a 1st grade teacher and leader of the school side of the garden project, worked with other summer school teachers to engage students in the planting and tending of the garden.

Most of the students involved in the project had never worked in a garden before. Many younger kids were happy for the unique opportunity to get dirty and explore in the soil. And all of the students were mesmerized to observe as the seeds they planted in June become vibrant, green leaves in just a few weeks. Summer school teachers and students planted over a dozen beds with tomatoes, peppers, collards, and squash.

In addition to providing member gardens with plants, seeds, compost and woodchips, the program offers dozens of classes for gardeners. Perhaps most important, the program aims to build a network of community and school gardeners across the city to share, teach and learn from each other through garden tours and strategic planning meetings.



Increasingly, schools are doing their part to get kids and families thinking about where their food comes from and how it grows. School gardens present endless opportunities for teaching across the curriculum and community gardens transform once-empty lots into green spaces ripe for community building and learning.

The energy and momentum around gardening in Detroit and throughout southeastern Michigan is sure to continue into the coming years. Other community gardening organizations include Growing Hope in Ypsilanti, Project Grow in Washtenaw County, and the Agrarian Adventure at Tappan Middle School in Ann Arbor. Most community and school gardens are always on the lookout for resources, including volunteers and donated items, providing ample ways to get involved!

No wonder school gardens are on the rise!

According to an annual survey by the National Gardening Association, 97% of US households (about 107 million households) believe schools should provide gardens and hands-on gardening activities for kids.

<http://assoc.garden.org/press/>

Though the first season's harvest was modest and interrupted by the August break and teachers' strike, the successful pilot project energized teachers and the community to devote more energy and resources to develop the garden further in the coming year. Community members also hope to start more gardens like this one in other school and neighborhood locations.

The Sherrard School Garden is a new player on a field of over a dozen established school-based gardens and scores of community gardens in Detroit. The Garden Resource Program, a collaboration between the Detroit Agricultural Network, the Greening of Detroit, Earthworks Garden and Michigan State University Extension, serves an invaluable resource to school and community gardens in the city.

Learn more about school gardening!

Local:

DAN (Detroit Agricultural Network)
www.detroitagriculture.org

Growing Hope
www.growinghope.net

MSU Michigan 4-H Children's Garden
4hgarden.msu.edu/main.html

National:

American Community Gardening Association
www.communitygarden.org

Kids Gardening (from ACGA)
www.communitygarden.org

Edible Schoolyard
www.edibleschoolyard.org

Junior Master Gardeners
www.jmgkids.us

FARM-TO-SCHOOL

this purchasing power helps to build the infrastructure of the local food economy necessary to get it up & running.



Farming, food, and our schools

The Farm to School Concept

Farm-to-school (FtS) is a generalized term that refers to efforts by regional communities to establish direct markets between local farmers and schools or school districts as institutional purchasers of farm products. Local vegetables, fruits, eggs, meat, and dairy products are consumed as a part of cafeteria meals, classroom snacks, and school vending options.

A central goal of FtS programs is to address the growing problem of childhood obesity. This goal is fulfilled by increasing youths' consumption of nutritious food through augmenting the amount of fresh produce, meat, and dairy products in school lunches sourced by local farmers and producers.

Students also learn about nutritious eating habits, gain knowledge about environmental health and community capacity, and develop an appreciation of where their food comes from. In turn, FtS programs bolster local economies and support agricultural livelihoods, forge strong relationships among community members, and reduce overall fuel costs from transporting food long-distances.

Often, FtS will include classroom educational components on farming, land use practices, and healthy eating, student field trips to farms, as well as student-created school gardens. Participating schools see benefits through gaining an enriched school curriculum, as well as a greater engagement with the community at large.

FtS programs, collaborative by design, include stakeholders that range from school district administrators, teachers, parents, farmers, food service personnel, local food producers, processors, distributors, vendors, and nutritionists. Together, these stakeholders work to create viable and sustained change in the food served in our schools.

Jeremy Moghtader, a local community leader for FtS, explains the importance of FtS to our local food system in Southeastern Michigan: "Local school districts are feeding our children every day. This is an important role and large task that needs to be done well. By bringing local food into school, FtS represents an opportunity to make significant change in our children's wellbeing, in addition to providing an important educational component for the youth who will be our future community leaders."

Jeremy also stresses how FtS represents one of the most powerful forms of 'farm-to-institution.' As an institutional buyer, schools or school districts correspond to a large and consolidated amount of purchasing power. In turn, the large volume of food that institutions purchase will speed up and facilitate the development of the local food system by invoking economies of scale. Engaging

Farm to School in Southeastern Michigan and FSEP

FSEP is working to create three pilot FtS projects. The Michigan FtS pilot is unique in that it is engaging school districts in addition to individual schools. Ann Arbor Public Schools, Chelsea Public Schools, and the Henry Ford Academy are all working to develop strategies to bring locally produced food into the school cafeterias. Chelsea elementary school had its first "Farm Day" event on November 20, 2006. Most of the food in the school lunch cafeteria came from local farms, including carrots, kale, and apples.

Each school district in the pilot program possesses different social/ethnic/income demographics and food service systems. For instance, while Chelsea Public Schools make all of their own food buying decisions, Ann Arbor Public Schools contracts out their food service to a company called Chartwells. This makes it easier for Chelsea to act quickly toward bringing in farm fresh food. Having pilots with a spectrum of school characteristics yields more knowledge about what FtS strategies work and what does not for different types of school districts.

A larger volume of farm products is slated to arrive in school cafeterias during the 2007 growing season. Meanwhile, people and organizations throughout the region are working hard to make this vision a reality. There are many hurdles to overcome, including State and Federal regulations that explicitly prohibit the preferential buying of local food products for use in school lunch programs. These laws are a major hindrance and an unnecessary obstacle in the FtS efforts, which actually contradict other federal laws that give preference to local food.

Though barriers exist, we are marching on the path toward change in our schools and our community. Jeremy Moghtader emphasized the importance of FtS as "a real opportunity for our community to work collectively on issues that are very important to us, including childhood health, economics, and the health of our community." He invites us all to work together to achieve these goals.

NEW AGRICULTURE-BASED BUSINESSES

Emerging food-related businesses

Detroit's Eastern Market

Following the release of a 2004 Urban Land Institute study calling for the centralized management of Detroit's Eastern Market District, the Eastern Market Corporation (EMC), a nonprofit development company, was created to manage and oversee the long-term goals of the existing retail and farmers' market area. With support of Detroit's mayor and city council, the EMC officially took over management responsibilities in August 2006 with a renewed focus on educational programming and community purpose.



Since its establishment, the EMC has secured \$20 million to renovate the historical shed structures to their original condition, add modern amenities such as improved heating and lighting allowing for year-round shopping, and construct a new local farmers-only shed and regional education center. The EMC is also working to provide wireless internet access for Market vendors by May 2007 to facilitate Bridge Card, WIC, and Project Fresh point-of-sale non-cash transactions for low-income consumer purchases of fresh and nutritious foods.

With these strategic renovations, the EMC strives to be the premier fresh food center for Detroit residents and is working to serve low-to-medium income populations by increasing access to fresh local foods. Through a partnership with Forgotten Harvest, food left behind by vendors is collected to help fight hunger in Detroit communities.

Secondary to this goal is the EMC's effort to draw shoppers from nearby communities by reinventing the Market as a Detroit attraction. Initial improvements to the Market have already attracted four new busi-

SOURCES:

Eastern Market Corporation (www.detroiteasternmarket.com)

Organic Valley to Market Michigan Organic Milk. Michigan Food & Farming Systems. July 25, 2006

nesses, increased traffic for nearby business owners and market vendors, and created over 50 new jobs for local residents – with hundreds more to be created as the redevelopment continues.

For more information on the renovation of Detroit's Eastern Market or the Eastern Market Corporation, visit www.detroiteasternmarket.com.

Organic Valley Family of Farms' Michigan Expansion

To meet a growing demand for organic milk in the region, Wisconsin-based Cooperative Regions of Organic Producer Pools (CROPP) is pursuing an expansion to include a new organic milk collection route in Michigan, pending organic certification of Michigan dairy farmers. Products such as dairy, juice, soy, eggs, and other produce are marketed by this group under the Organic Valley Family of Farms label. "More than 100 Michigan dairy farmers have expressed an interest in transitioning to organic dairy production and are considering marketing their organic milk as OV members," according to Lowell Rheinheimer, CROPP's Mideast Dairy Pool Coordinator.

Founded in 1988, CROPP is a farmer-owned cooperative with nearly 600 dairy members in 24 states. Under the Organic Valley label, members work together to set their own policies and establish milk prices. Farmers also benefit from additional support services and educational opportunities that come with CROPP membership.

This expansion, along with the Michigan Organic Food and Farming Alliance, Michigan State University Student Organic Farm's Organic Transition Program and others, provides an exciting opportunity for Michigan dairy farmers and will help to build the local supply of quality organic dairy products.

To learn more about OV's Michigan expansion, visit www.farmers.coop or call (888) 444-6455. More information on the Michigan Organic Food and Farming Alliance is available at www.moffa.org, and the MSU Student Organic Farm at www.msuorganicfarm.com.

For more information contact:

Michigan Department of Agriculture

P.O. Box 30017
Lansing, MI 48909
(800) 292-3939
mda-info@michigan.gov

Michigan Food & Farming Systems

416 Agriculture Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 432-0712
www.miffs.org

ACTION STEPS - HOW TO GET INVOLVED

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Conclusion

We hope the articles in this community food profile have heightened your awareness of our Southeastern Michigan food system. More importantly, we hope that the stories and ideas have urged you to ask more questions about where your food comes from, about the power of your choices in the food system and about how you can influence the choices made by others that impact the vitality of our local and regional food system.

The individuals and places included here provide one snapshot of the richly complex regional food system. There are countless other individuals and organizations in the region working hard to help our food system thrive today and flourish in the future. You too can play a part! Whether you are a farmer, processor, retailer, policy-maker or consumer, there are innumerable actions you can take to help strengthen the regional food system by increasing access to healthy, local foods for all, supporting small and medium farmers, and protecting agricultural lands. Here are just a few ideas:



Action Steps

Individual

Shop at a farmers' market – and talk to the farmers!

Cook local food at home and invite friends to share

Buy local produce, meat and value-added products

Ask your grocer to stock more local food

Take your family to a U-Pick farm

Ask where your food comes from

Join a CSA

Community

Support a school garden

Visit a local farm, orchard or cider mill

Start or participate in a community garden

Make your farmers' market a festive occasion (live music, cooking demonstrations)

Develop a school fundraiser using locally produced foods

Let your school administrators know that you support healthy food in school lunches

Volunteer with community groups making efforts to create change in the local food system

Get involved as citizen planners to add food systems issues to the local planning agenda

Work with your community of faith to organize a CSA group or host a farmers' market

Policy

Write to your local and state government officials in support of farm-to-school programs

Collaborate with local government and community groups to establish a farmers' market in your town center

Advocate for funding to build a permanent structure for your farmers' market

Introduce and/or support greenbelt and farmland preservation legislation

Share this document and your ideas with local decision-makers (local and county planners, elected officials, chambers of commerce and public health departments)

Some Local Food System Resources

Five-county region

Detroit Agricultural Network: www.detroitagriculture.org

Growing Hope (Ypsilanti): www.growinghope.net

Food System Economic Partnership: www.fsepmichigan.org

MSU Extension Offices Portal: www.msue.msu.edu/portal

Slow Food Huron Valley: www.slowfoodhuronvalley.org

Washtenaw County Public Health: www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/public_health

Michigan

C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems: www.mottgroup.msu.edu

Michigan Department of Agriculture: www.michigan.gov/mda

Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems: www.mifffs.org

Michigan Health Tools: www.mihealthtools.org

Michigan Land Use Institute: www.mlui.org

Michigan Organic Food and Farming Alliance (MOFFA): www.moffa.org

MSU Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources: www.aec.msu.edu/product/index.htm

National

American Farmland Trust: www.farmland.org

The Sustainable Table: www.sustainabletable.org

Community Food Security Coalition: www.foodsecurity.org

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture: www.leopold.iastate.edu

The Food Project: www.thefoodproject.org

Local Harvest: www.localharvest.org

Land Stewardship Project: www.landstewardshipproject.org

Rodale Institute: www.rodaleinstitute.org



