



Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy

A Report to the Illinois General Assembly
By The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force

March 2009

“Every Illinois community would benefit from our farmers producing products for in-state purchase. I encourage and support all efforts that accomplish this goal.”

– Governor Pat Quinn



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Executive Summary

Illinois consumers spend \$48 billion annually on food. Nearly all of this money leaves the state. To retain a larger share of Illinois food dollars, public, private, and civic sectors must work together to build a farm and food system that meets consumer demand for “local” food. The popularity of farmers markets is a measure of consumer demand that now reaches into large-volume wholesale markets. Currently, Illinois colleges and universities, corporate kitchens, schools, hospitals, museums, restaurants and grocery stores are unable to procure adequate supplies of products grown and marketed by Illinois farmers. The same is true of Illinois’ “food deserts”—pockets of scarcity that extend from inner-city neighborhoods to rural communities. Meeting this demand will require construction of a supply chain that shortens the geographic distance between the farm gate and food plate, thus ensuring that Illinois food and farm products are made readily available for all consumers statewide.

This report shows how the state of Illinois can facilitate development of a local food system that complements the existing global farm and food system. It reflects the work of the 32-member Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force which was created by the Illinois General Assembly through the Illinois Food, Farms and Jobs Act of 2007. This law authorized formation of the Task Force to develop a plan containing policy and funding recommendations for expanding and supporting a statewide local farm and food system.

The Task Force encourages Illinois’ rural, urban, and suburban communities to cooperate statewide to develop local farm production, infrastructure, customer access, and public education. Both beginning and transitioning farmers need agronomic training, business planning, land, labor, equipment, and financing. Entrepreneurs need to build Illinois-based supply chains capable of delivering large volumes of Illinois farm products to in-state markets. Farmers and other entrepreneurs need assurances that market outlets are ready, willing, and able to buy their products. Public awareness campaigns need to persuade consumers, businesses, and policymakers how they will benefit from helping to increase the volume and value of Illinois branded food and farm products. Children need to be taught the connection between healthy food, exercise, wellness, and learning. Implementation of this plan makes it feasible for 20 percent of Illinois food expenditures to be grown, processed and distributed in-state by 2020.

The Illinois General Assembly can foster this farm-based local economic development by approving new legislation that (1) directs state agencies to align their missions to support this strategy for job creation, public health, and food security; (2) supports the Local Foods Initiative of University of Illinois Extension; (3) Encourages state institutions to procure at least 20% of their food locally by 2020; (4) assembles a team to eliminate regulatory barriers restricting local food production and marketing, (5) creates the Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council which will be commissioned to facilitate local farm and food system development statewide. Passage of this legislation will accelerate countless initiatives at the local, regional, and state level to promote community revitalization throughout Illinois.

This report shows how the state of Illinois can facilitate development of a local food system that complements the existing global farm and food system.

Support for Illinois Food, Farms and Jobs Economy

“Using locally grown food means fresher, higher quality food.”

– *Southern Illinois University food-service chef William Connors*

“If a state like Montana, with its much more limited growing season can support local foods within their state university system, there is no reason why Illinois should not be able to do the same.”

– *Illinois State University Assistant Professor of Sociology Dr. Joan M. Brehm*

“A savings of a penny per tray per inmate per year reduces our annual costs by approximately \$500,000.”

– *Illinois Department of Corrections food service administrator Suzann Griswold*

“The development of a comprehensive, intrastate food production and distribution system holds much promise. It has the potential to expand markets for organic and locally grown products, providing an abundant supply of food such as fresh fruits and vegetables for consumers, a diversified source of income for farmers and greater economic prosperity for rural communities.”

– *Illinois Agriculture Director Tom Jennings*

“Illinois Farm Bureau believes opportunities are growing for farms of all sizes to provide quality locally grown food to Illinois consumers and that Illinois farmers are adept at responding to market signals to meet this growing demand.”

– *Illinois Farm Bureau Director Bill Olthoff*

“Illinois-sourced produce can cut shipping costs by 10-20 percent, giving farmers a strong competitive advantage over distant farms.”

– *Goodness Greeness CEO Bob Scaman*

“We would be very supportive of efforts by the state to make Illinois-produced food and drink more readily available to our members.”

– *Illinois Restaurant Association president Sheila O’Grady*

“As the largest independent grocer in central Illinois, Niemann Foods Inc. is committed to meeting the growing demand for locally grown food.”

– *NFI consumer affairs director Gerry Kettler*

“A statewide local food, farm, and jobs system will lead to community revitalization, grow job opportunities, and will play a vital role in our state’s economic recovery.”

– *Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin*

“Having enough to eat as well as access to a variety of nutritious foods are both important for all Illinois families. And having access to locally grown food is part of the solution to being prepared for emergency events which may hamper the state’s ability to bring in food supplies.”

– *Illinois Department of Human Services Secretary Carol L. Adams, Ph. D.*

“I hope my mom can buy me the same things I tasted with the class.”

– *Chicago 4th grader Alejandro on participating in “Fresh from the Farm” curriculum*



Food, Farms & Jobs: Lincoln to Obama

“...no other human occupation opens so wide a field for the profitable and agreeable combination of labor with cultivated thought as agriculture.”

– *From Abraham Lincoln’s September 1859 speech to the Wisconsin State Agriculture Society in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

In 1862, President Lincoln signed three laws that transformed American farming. The Homestead Act gave free public land to persons willing to farm it. The Morrill Land Grant College Act gave free public lands to states for the establishment of colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts. The “Act to Establish a Department of Agriculture” outlined a broad set of responsibilities defining the basic authority of the USDA.

“The Agricultural Department...is rapidly commending itself to the great and vital interest it was created to advance. It is precisely the people’s Department in which they feel more directly concerned than in any other. I commend it to the continued attention and fostering care of Congress.”

– *From President Lincoln’s last annual message to Congress in December 1864*

“We celebrate the family farm not only because it gives us the food we eat, but it also maintains a way of life. And it teaches us the values of decency and hard work and looking after one another. That’s what the farms of Illinois represent. And we will not take them for granted and we will make sure they get the advocacy and support they need day in and day out.”

– *From U.S. Senator Barack Obama’s September 2005 speech at the 20th Anniversary Farm Aid concert in Tinley Park, Illinois.*

“America, we cannot turn back. Not with so much work to be done.... Not with an economy to fix and cities to rebuild and farms to save.”

– *From Senator Obama’s August 2008 acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado.*

Most of our fruit and vegetables travel an average of 1,500 miles. The cost of shipping produce from California or China accounts for 10-20 percent of the price consumers pay.



Seizing Our Opportunity

Seeing farms and food in a new light

Food and farming are an economic engine, and one of Illinois' largest employment sectors. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, Illinois 12.8 million consumers spend \$48 billion a year on fresh, prepared, and processed food from supermarkets, restaurants, and other sources.¹ Yet, very few of our food dollars are spent on products grown, processed, and distributed in-state.² The vast majority of the food we eat comes from outside of Illinois. To pay for our daily sustenance, we export tens of billions of dollars of Illinois wealth each year to places like California, Mexico, and China.

To retain a larger share of food dollars, Illinois needs a plan to increase the supply of farm products grown, processed and distributed in Illinois for Illinois. Many

Illinois farmers will support creation of an additional alternate market for their products. Consumers will also like more options. Most of our fruit and vegetables travel an average of 1,500 miles.³ The cost of shipping produce from California or China accounts for 10-20 percent of the price consumers pay. An Illinois farm-product brand would provide a competitive advantage for Illinois businesses—but only if we have an efficient food delivery system that shortens the geographic distance between farm gate and dinner plate.

The Illinois agricultural industry is a national leader in the delivery of vast quantities of low-cost commodities into the global food system. Farm exports are good for the Illinois economy, but an over-reliance on imported food represents a lost opportunity. Illinois' annual food expenditure of \$48 billion is a sum that nearly equals the state government's

annual budget. The state treasury will benefit only when Illinois begins to implement a plan to capture all the benefits from growing our own farm-and-food economy.

About 80 percent of Illinois is farmland, including some of the most fertile soil on earth. Our 28 million acres of rich and productive farmland once supported vibrant rural communities. Over the last 50 years, the decline of rural towns and villages parallels the decline of the farmers' share of the food consumer dollar from over 40 percent to less than 20 percent.⁴ Rural Illinois can get back on track by using its competitive advantage to feed its metropolitan neighbors.

More and more Illinois consumers want to know how their food is produced, where, and by whom. Farmers are responding to this trend. In 1999, there were 97 outdoor farmers markets statewide; last year there were 270.⁵ There would be many more such markets, if there were enough farmers to meet the demand for fresh-picked vegetables and fruit, eggs, meat, honey, cheese, and breads, as well as Illinois products like goat-milk soaps, oils, and lotions. Some farmers use a direct marketing approach called community-supported agriculture. The CSA business model requires subscribers to make a pre-planting payment for products that will be delivered on a weekly basis during the growing season. The farmer is guaranteed a market; the customer a personal connection to a farm—the essence of traceability. In 2000, there were 14 CSAs statewide; in 2008 there were 68.⁶

Demand for “local” food is extending into larger-volume wholesale markets. Illinois' colleges and universities, as well as corporate kitchens, schools, hospitals, prisons, restaurants, and grocery stores want to procure farm products from nearby sources. Marketers see a competitive advantage in being able to tell the story behind the food they serve, but Illinois' limited local food production and

delivery channels pinch supply. Illinois' predominant farm and food system is designed to serve distant markets, not to link Illinois farm production with in-state markets. Farmers in Kankakee, Kendall and DeKalb Counties should have the option to be able to sell products to metropolitan Chicago consumers. The same is true for farmers near Carbondale, East St. Louis, Springfield, Bloomington/Normal, Rockford, and every other community statewide.

Illinois is hardly alone. The nationwide clamor for local food is exposing an infrastructure bottleneck that discourages farmers from trying to meet nearby demand. The private sector's evident failure to satisfy the marketplace is also raising questions about a global farm-and-food system constructed under the assumption that people have no reason to care where their food comes from. Today, numerous states are devising strategies to build food-and-farm economies.⁷ This isn't a move against interstate commerce, but one in support of a home-grown industry.

It is unclear how much Illinois food is grown, processed, and distributed for in-state consumption. A little more than a decade ago, the percentage of Illinois food dollars spent on direct-marketed farm products amounted to 0.144 percent. Federal data documents rising demand, with one indicator-- Illinois' annual direct market farm sales—having grown from \$12 million in 1997 to \$25.9 million in 2007.⁸ Analysis of additional federal data suggests that Illinois businesses supply in the neighborhood of four percent of our food which would mean we're exporting \$46 billion out-of-state each year.⁹ Perhaps that four percent estimate is low. Or perhaps it's high. One way or the other, Illinois can only gain by taking steps to grow this stay-at-home industry. Without baseline measures, it will be hard to gauge our progress in coming years. Hence, this report supports the viewpoint of established

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Illinois state agencies are discovering the relationship between local food and their mission.

state level food policy councils that seek to develop inventories of “available food, nutrition and/or agricultural services. In addition to serving as an outreach tool to engage stakeholders, these virtual data sources will serve as the foundation upon which to build targeted food policy recommendations.”¹⁰

The conventional food system regards local food and farm products as a market niche—“identity preserved” specialty items along the lines of organically-produced farm and food products. Organic is a niche that Illinois farmers could take advantage of locally. For two decades, organic food was the fastest growing segment in the food industry, approaching 20 percent per year. Yet, an increasing amount of organic corn, soy, meat, and vegetables is imported from out of the country because U.S. producers are not meeting the demand. This is despite the fact that organic commodities like corn and soy have historically paid producers two to three times more per bushel than conventional products.

Mass production has driven the longstanding agricultural-commodity

system, but in recent decades it is mass customization that has spurred development of differentiated and source-identified foods tailored to particular needs of particular processors or consumers. “Organic,” “biodynamic,” “naturally grown”, “grassfed,” “pasture raised,” “chemical free cosmetics,” as well as many ethnic products may develop into subsets of foods whose value is tied to the place of origin.

Customers sometimes pay a premium for specialty items. Yet, food is such a basic need that the idea of localizing production and distribution systems is catching on, not only as a potential solution to tough economic times, but as a civil right. Such is the case in communities where the lack of full-service grocery stores limits availability of healthy food choices. Such is life in Illinois’ “food deserts”—pockets of scarcity that extend from inner-city neighborhoods to rural communities surrounded by bountiful farm fields.

Illinois state agencies are discovering the relationship between local food and their mission. For example, public health officials view the nutritional value of recently-picked produce as a component



of federally-mandated school wellness strategies intended to curb obesity and childhood diabetes. Human services officials advocate the integration of these products into assistance programs for the 467,000 Illinois households categorized as “food insecure.”¹¹ All Illinois households, emergency preparedness officials say, could benefit from proximity to their food source if disaster strikes. Agricultural officials see development of new market outlets for farmers. Economic development and workforce recruitment officials see a means to reinvigorate commerce and industry.

The business of creating and maintaining all the links in the local supply chain—aggregating, processing, packaging, storing, and transporting products—translates into jobs that cannot be outsourced. Right now, such a system doesn’t exist. There is not enough local food to meet the demand, nor enough farmers growing local food, nor companies in the business of processing local food. But there are too many food marketers disappointing their customers. This void is what’s called opportunity.

Reaching out to Springfield

In 2006, a statewide group of farmers, farm and food entrepreneurs, and non-profit organizations sought Springfield’s help in figuring out how to build local food systems. Small- and medium-scale farmers would be among the immediate beneficiaries. The coalition also sought to create an alternative in which large-scale farmers also want to participate. The question is: how to create a system that combines the efficiencies of the prevailing food system with a commitment to fair prices for farmers and farm labor. And how to do so in a way that supplies customers with a vast range of affordable products grown, processed, and distributed from nearby farms. Many people—from farmers on the ground to eaters at the table—shared this vision: Creating an Illinois brand for farm products will lead to

The development of a farm and food system that keeps tens of billions of dollars in state will also generate the revenue to address the following economic goals:

- * Provide incentives for farmers to invest in their enterprises
- * Ensure jobs and incentives for farm labor
- * Provide farmers with access to land for production
- * Make farm equipment and supplies affordable and available in state
- * Encourage diversified farm production
- * Build the infrastructure to move products from the farm to market
- * Expand in-state markets for farm products
- * Offer customer access to farm and food markets
- * Educate the people of Illinois about the benefits of buying local food and farm products
- * Provide affordable financing and insurance for new and transitioning farmers
- * Correct regulatory barriers that hinder farm and food production
- * Open up access to food and farm data
- * Establish local resource centers to build, maintain and expand local food systems
- * Encourage local food and farm networks to plan local systems

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Illinois state agencies are discovering the relationship between local food and their mission.



economic development, job creation, and community revitalization.

State Representative Julie Hamos agreed to draft and sponsor the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act of 2007. State Senator Jacqueline Collins became HB1300's lead Senate sponsor. Steve Frenkel, the governor's deputy chief of staff, supplied advocacy within the executive branch. The Illinois Local Food and Farms Coalition built a broad base of support for the legislation which won unanimous support in the General Assembly.

In August 2007, the bill was signed into law. Public Act 95-145 commissioned the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force to:

“ . . . 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.”

In January 2008, the 32-member Task Force began holding monthly meetings at the Illinois Department of Agriculture headquarters in Springfield. The Task Force included representatives of three state departments (Agriculture, Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and Human Services) as well as the cities of Chicago and Carbondale. Other perspectives came from farmers; farm, community and advocacy organizations; educational institutions; and various enterprises in the food supply chain. Four committees—production, infrastructure, consumer access, and public education—focused on identifying specific sets of obstacles and solutions. Eighteen listening sessions were held around the state. Additional input came from myriad sources nationwide.

This report presents a plan for building the public/private collaboration needed for Illinois to capture a larger share of its food dollars and, in the process, strengthen urban, suburban, and rural communities statewide.

Expanding Illinois agriculture

Soil scientists estimate that nearly 90 percent of the state's farm ground merits the highest level classification—prime farmland. Few places on earth possess such an extraordinary combination of soil types and fertility, climate and rainfall. A unique ability to maximize output with the minimum of inputs makes Illinois farmland the foundation for an agricultural economy now generating commodities valued at more than \$9 billion a year. Illinois is a leading producer of corn, soybeans, and hogs. Billions of additional dollars flow into the state's economy from ag-related industries, such as farm machinery

manufacturing, agricultural real estate, and the production and sale of value-added products. Food processing is the state's largest manufacturing activity, with more than 950 companies adding almost \$13.4 billion annually to the value of Illinois' raw agricultural commodities. Illinois ranks second nationally in the export of farm commodities with nearly \$4 billion worth of goods shipped to other countries each year.

Illinois will benefit by complementing our global-oriented food and farm economy with one oriented toward local and regional markets. Studies show that money spent at local businesses creates a multiplier effect, internally circulating the same dollars up to eight times within the local economy. Using

Few places on earth possess such an extraordinary combination of soil types and fertility, climate and rainfall.

Local farming: rural

Bureau Valley Community Unit School District #340 spans more than 340 square miles of west central Illinois farmland—a larger geographic area than all but four Illinois school districts. The district operates a \$280,000 meal program for 1,100 pre-K, elementary, and high school students, but procures no locally grown food.

The school board has formed a local farm-to-food committee and is seeking state funding to implement the Department of Public Health's Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) program. Now utilized in 131 schools statewide, the CATCH program's goals include procurement of local produce.

Buy-local school initiatives should start small. Schools often lack facilities to store and use products. Produce tends to be seasonal. Quality can vary. And local farmers may not be prepared to deliver sufficient quantities of product, nor at the time when schools need it.

One rural institution's commitment could spur demand from others. Bureau County has 1,189 farms on 478,389 acres generating \$303.3 million in crops and livestock sales.¹³ Growers who see a new market will start small too, perhaps using a land tract that's been idle. An acre of ground can yield a lot of vegetables.



A 20 percent increase in local production, processing, and purchasing will generate \$20 to \$30 billion of new economic activity annually within the state's borders.

the conservative economic multiplier of two to three cycles, a 20 percent increase in local production, processing, and purchasing will generate \$20 to \$30 billion of new economic activity annually within the state's borders. Thousands of new jobs will be created for farmers and farm-related businesses. Pre-agricultural production includes seeds, soil amendments, tools, equipment, and maintenance. Post-agricultural production includes aggregation, storage, processing, packaging, and distribution.

An Illinois food, farms, and jobs economy can succeed in today's—or any—economic climate because food is a genuine need. We have the farmland and farming heritage to grow that food. We have the capacity to provide consumers with the broad diversity of foods that they are demanding. The year-round supply of food and other farm products we now purchase can be produced in Illinois. Our farmers can extend the growing season by relying on the same greenhouses, hoop houses,



and cultivation practices that farmers in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ontario currently use to supply a surprisingly high percentage of Illinois produce each winter.

Building an Illinois food, farms and jobs economy will require production, infrastructure, customer access, and public awareness to be developed at the same time. Both beginning and transitioning farmers will need training, business planning, land, labor, equipment, and financing. Entrepreneurs will need to build supply chains capable of delivering large volumes of farm product to regional markets that require strict specifications. Farmers and entrepreneurs will need assurance that market outlets are ready, willing, and able to buy their products. Public awareness campaigns will have to persuade consumers, businesses, and policymakers how they will benefit from helping to increase the value of farm and food products bearing the Illinois brand. Children will need to be taught the connection between healthy food, exercise, wellness, and learning.

Most Illinois citizens are only a few generations removed from the farm. During that time a global food system emerged, and people stopped asking where food comes from. But it is precisely this question that has spurred nutrition-minded moms, public health professionals, rural advocates, educators, restaurant chefs, and many others to jumpstart the local food movement. Nevertheless, transforming this movement into a sustainable economy will require significantly greater scale than can be provided by a relative handful of farmers showing up at the outdoor market with pickup trucks.

Because this work will take time, the Task Force has set a long-term goal. By 2020, the aim is to increase the percentage of Illinois food dollars spent on products grown and processed instate to at least 10

percent. By 2030, the goal is to capture at least a 20 percent market share of Illinois food dollars.

Where to start

Innovation begins with an understanding of what a local food system is and participation in dialogue with others who have a mutual interest. Chances for success will be enhanced by cooperation with a broad range of stakeholders, ranging from neighbors, community

leaders, and entrepreneurs to state and federal governing bodies.

The state of Illinois will need to create a crosscutting strategic goal that guides various departments, agencies, and other entities affiliated with governing bodies. Effective governmental collaboration requires agencies to define and articulate the common purpose or outcome they seek to achieve through such means as establishing mutually reinforcing or joint strategies; identifying and addressing needs by leveraging resources;

Prairie Crossing Farm is creating an incubator where farmers lease small parcels of land and test a business before making the long term investment in their own farms.



Local farming: suburban

Farmers take advantage of proximity to population centers by growing high-value, direct-marketed products. Local food production is a subset of a broader urban-edge farm economy that includes traditional commodity production as well as horticulture; horse farms and stables; forestry; “agritainment,” and related farm-supply enterprises.

Farming can mean revenue for public entities. The Cook County Forest Preserve District leases 1,000 acres of farmland. A Kendall County park district raises produce for food banks. A Kane County township leases land to an organic farmer.

Lake County’s Prairie Crossing development combines suburbia and farming. Clustered housing is surrounded by permanent open space, including a 100-acre organic farm. One producer has a long-term lease on 40 acres. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity funds a farm-development center that leases small tracts to beginning farmers who aren’t ready to invest in their own farms.

Agricultural investment in and around easement-protected land could help farmers generate sufficient earnings to remain farming amidst suburbia. Kane is Illinois’ only county operating a farmland preservation program. Between riverboat funds and federal matching dollars, Kane has spent \$26.8 million to buy development rights on 4,655 acres of land. There’s a waiting list of farmers who want to participate.

establishing compatible policies and procedures; and developing mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on results.¹⁴

The following state entities operate programs that will drive implementation of this new state policy to foster development of a robust local farm and food marketplace:

- * Lieutenant Governor's Office of Rural Affairs
- * Department of Agriculture
- * Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- * Department of Human Services
- * Department of Public Health
- * University of Illinois Extension

Illinois' Congressional delegation can also help in Washington. The public purpose for supporting the development of a local farm and food marketplace is evident in the 2008 federal farm bill. New provisions include loan guarantees targeting enterprises involved in local/regional food distribution, processing, aggregation, and marketing. Federal grants will be available for "community food projects" that "promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues." Also, federal feeding programs will encourage the purchase of "unprocessed agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised, to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate."

New Farm Bill provisions reflect a growing understanding of the unique nature of local food systems. Price transparency and discovery tools analogous to those enjoyed by commodities markets are likely to remain imperfect in the near future for local farm and food system markets. Instead, effective state and federal policy must build on the acknowledged relationship between production, marketing, distribution, and consumer demand by supporting business strategies,

best practices for production, process-level innovation in distribution and marketing, as well as general promotion.

This year's reauthorization of the federal Child Nutrition Act provides another vehicle for Congress to advance the Illinois food, farms and jobs economy. Illinois residents receive more than \$2.2 billion a year in federal food programs, including more than \$458.4 million for food procurement by institutions like schools, community development centers, and child care centers.¹⁵ Institutions present a consistent, large-scale market. This purchasing power could be leveraged through buy-local incentives that will spur investment among in-state production and distribution networks.

Local Food, Farms and Jobs Act of 2009

Through support of this plan, the Illinois General Assembly will spur economic development, job creation, and community revitalization. The Illinois food, farms, and jobs economy will be built simultaneously from the ground up and from the top down as the missions of state entities—starting with Rural Affairs, DOA, DCEO, DHS, DPH, and Extension—are meshed with the missions of farm and food entrepreneurs in every Illinois community. The purpose of the proposed Illinois Local Food, Farms and Jobs Council will be to facilitate the public/private action teams whose enterprise will foster a culture of innovation founded on Illinois' abundant resources – rich, productive farmland with a growing diversity of consumer demand.

Where food comes from was no mystery in 1859 when Abraham Lincoln told the Wisconsin State Agriculture Society "...no other human occupation opens so wide a field for the profitable and agreeable combination of labor with cultivated thought as agriculture."¹⁶ The enduring value of farmers and farmland was an explicit human truth three years later

Federal grants will be available for "community food projects" that "promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues."

when President Lincoln signed the federal law that established the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Seven generations later, the time is right to re-affirm Lincoln's vision of USDA as

"the people's Department." And by doing their part to help build an Illinois food, farm and jobs economy, the time is right for the people of Illinois to help re-affirm our legacy as the "Land of Lincoln."

Gardens are cropping up on vacant lots, under railroad tracks and power lines, and on rooftops.

"If we buy the steel from Britain, we have the steel but the money is gone. If we buy the steel in the United States, we have the steel and the money, too. Such an advantage far outweighs a lower price for imported steel."

— President Abraham Lincoln on the purchase of railroad tracks.



Local farming: urban

Gardening has become a cornerstone of community development strategies in inner-city "food deserts" that suffer from decades of disinvestment. With full-service grocery stores few and far between, residents of such communities have notoriously poor access to affordable, healthy food. Driving this back-to-the-land movement is the motivation for self-sufficiency and the idea that individuals need to know their food as well as to have some sense of control over its safety and security.

Gardens are cropping up on vacant lots, under railroad tracks and power lines, and on rooftops. Successful growers benefit from various techniques designed to raise yields, reduce pest pressure, and build soil fertility on small land tracts.

One is called SPIN Farming—for S-small P-plot IN-tensive. Several years ago, the Philadelphia, PA water department agreed to let SPIN farmers turn a half-acre lawn into a demonstration farm. By its fourth year, the Somerton Tank Farm generated over \$68,000 in gross sales.¹⁷

Numerous initiatives provide various combinations of food access, job training, environmental education, and community cohesion. Such enterprises have room to grow. After all, there are thousands and thousands of vacant lots throughout Chicago, inner-ring suburbs, Rockford, and other urban areas statewide.



The Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Plan

The mission of the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force is to create a plan and funding strategy to facilitate the growth of an Illinois-based farm and food system that creates jobs, promotes overall economic and community development, and enhances the availability of healthy, local farm and food products throughout Illinois.

The core values of this system are the following:

Economic Vibrancy. An Illinois local farm and food economic system creates urban, suburban, and rural development and jobs by encouraging Illinois farmers to raise more farm and food products for Illinois customers and encouraging Illinois customers to purchase more food and other products grown by Illinois farmers.

Fairness and Justice. The community-based system fosters long-term economic and social equity among Illinois families, farmers, businesses, communities, and governments.

Accessibility. The community-based system makes Illinois farm and food products available in every rural, suburban, and urban community at reasonable prices.

Health. The community-based system supports production and distribution of healthy, flavorful food and products that enhance community health.

Responsibility. The community-based system promotes respect for Illinois individuals, cultures, and natural resources for present and future generations.

An Illinois local farm and food economy can also provide increased food security for every Illinois community in times of disaster.

For purposes of this Plan, “Illinois local farm and food products” are products grown, processed, packaged and distributed by Illinois citizens and businesses located wholly within the borders of Illinois.

The Task Force’s complete findings are located in the “Assessment of Obstacles and Strategies for Solutions for Building an Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Economy” (see page 19). Every one of the obstacles and strategies need to be addressed simultaneously and as quickly as possible. There are, however, key strategies that will have the most immediate impact and that will focus attention and resources on all the other solution strategies. The immediate goals and strategies are as follows:



Goals for 2020

- 1.** Coordinate state institution food procurement policies to increase purchase of Illinois local farm and food products at state-funded cafeterias to 20% of total purchases.
- 2.** Support and expand programs that recruit, train, and provide technical assistance to 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.
- 3.** Increase the purchase of Illinois local food products by Illinois consumers to 10% of total food dollar expenditures.

Immediate Implementation Strategies

- 1.** The Illinois General Assembly shall direct state agencies to engage existing staff, resources, and authorities to support and build community-based farm and food networks and commission all state agencies to coordinate with local and federal authorities to obtain resources required to accomplish the goal of constructing an Illinois local farm and food economy. (see Solution Strategy 13:1)
- 2.** The Illinois General Assembly shall create The Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council. The Council shall have responsibility to implement the Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Plan. (See Solution Strategy 13:2)
- 3.** The General Assembly shall direct state agencies to work with the Council in convening an inter-agency committee that facilitates the focusing of state agency goals and objectives to the development of local farm and food economies in communities across Illinois. (See Solution Strategy 13:1)
- 4.** The General Assembly shall direct the Council and the University of Illinois Extension to build the capacity of Extension's Local Food Initiative. (See Solution Strategy 12:2)
- 5.** The General Assembly shall direct the Council to facilitate public-private working groups as required to eliminate unnecessary and contradictory local, municipal, state, and federal regulatory barriers to production, processing, and marketing of local farm and food products in Illinois. (See Solution Strategy 10)
- 6.** The General Assembly shall direct the Council to work with state agencies to build partnerships required to reform state institution food procurement policies to encourage and facilitate the purchase of local farm and food products to the maximum extent practical. To track progress towards this goal, we recommend that the Illinois General Assembly request that state agencies and state-funded institutions that purchase more than \$25,000 of food each year be required to track and report their local food purchases on an annual basis. The Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Council will work with each institution and cafeteria to facilitate this process. This will create the baseline against which increases in procurement can be measured. (See Solution Strategy 6:1)
- 7.** The Council shall work to facilitate accessibility by farmers to public and private lands for growing local farm and food products. (See Solution Strategy 3:1)
- 8.** The Council shall support as well as financial and business planning education and/or facilitate the creation of programs to recruit, train, and provide technical assistance as well as financial and business planning education to farmers, farm labor, and entrepreneurs desiring to build an Illinois local farm and food economy. (See Solution Strategies 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 12)



Assessment of Obstacles and Strategies for Solutions for Building an Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Economy

The obstacles and solutions section below represents the complete findings of the Task Force committees in their work to carry out the Task Force mandate. The obstacles inform the reasons why Illinois agriculture produces only a small percentage of the food that Illinois consumers eat each year. The strategies for solution indicate the action steps required to expand the capacity of Illinois agriculture so as to capture in-state a significantly larger share of Illinois consumers' food dollars. The obstacles and solution strategies are divided into categories of production, infrastructure, customer access, public awareness, and systems building.

A. Production

■ OBSTACLE 1:

Not Enough Farmers

We can't increase food production in Illinois without more farmers. Though Illinois can count 28 million acres of farmland, only several thousand of these acres and several hundred of our 76,000 farmers are producing products for local markets.¹⁸ The state's few relevant training programs do not reach a significant number of potential farmers, because the programs are not geographically accessible to most communities. There is no statewide

strategy to create and train Illinois' next generation of farmers, nor to help food farmers find land to lease or own.

The ready availability of up-to-date information on production issues, new technologies, market conditions and other data will help current farmers transition to these emerging in-state markets and help interest young people to enter the field.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 1:

Support programs that recruit, train, and provide technical assistance in order to create 5,000 new local food farmers by 2020

Association with peer farmers is crucial to the success of beginning and transitioning farmers. Illinois has a few successful farmer-to-farmer training and mentoring initiatives that link new farmers with mentors who share production, marketing, and organizational knowledge and skills. The programs are characterized by (1) strong farmer leadership, (2) farm associations that provide a social network, and (3) multi-stakeholder support (partnerships with nonprofits, county extension offices, the private sector, and state agencies). Such programs should be made accessible in all 102 counties through such established entities as University of Illinois Extension and the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Several Illinois community colleges offer classes for local food and farm production. Curricula that build an Illinois farm and food economy should be offered at all 48 of Illinois' community colleges, and farming should once again be touted as a viable career opportunity.

University of Illinois Extension is uniquely qualified to provide a "local farm and food library" service to farmers who need up-to-date information to help manage risks like weather, weeds, insects, bacteria, and fungi.

Rural, urban, and suburban schools, colleges, technical institutes, and universities should be aware of the career and job opportunities summarized in this plan. Access points include curricula in farming, horticulture, and green jobs and programs such as 4H, FFA, Master Gardeners, Master Preservers, and Ag in the Classroom.

Various programs link Illinois farmers with wholesale buyers. These programs need to provide farmers the skills on food safety, post-harvest handling, storage, and transportation necessary to sell into wholesale markets.

Many Illinois municipalities allow farm projects in community gardens, backyards, schoolyards, greenhouses, and on vacant lots, rooftops, and small-acreage farms. In addition to growing food, most projects have other goals such as job training (youth, homeless, formerly incarcerated), teaching life skills (cooking and preserving food, health, and nutrition), and serving as community centers. These programs can be expanded and/or replicated to grow more food for sale (supermarkets, restaurants, direct markets) and to provide training for people desiring farm careers.

■ OBSTACLE 2:

Not Enough Farm Labor

Local farm and food production is labor intensive. Too few people presently reside in Illinois rural communities to provide the labor required to create an Illinois-based farm and food economy. If the farm has livestock or greenhouses, year-round labor is required.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 2:

Create farm labor training programs

Farm work is an entry point for farming, and can accommodate a broad range of skilled and unskilled laborers, including



rural and urban youth, retirees and the socially disadvantaged. It offers a new outlet for the Department of Human Services' summer youth program as well as the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Elsewhere in the U.S., prisons are using food projects to reduce food budgets, supply local food pantries and provide inmates with a new skill. Illinois can replicate successful programs from other states and also model federal initiatives such as those offered via the USDA Risk Management Agency Community Outreach and the New Immigrant Farming Initiative.

■ **OBSTACLE 3:**

Insufficient access to farmland by aspiring local farm and food producers

Many individuals cannot find land to farm that is affordable or located near mentors and a support community. The physical infrastructure required to efficiently move local products to market is missing.

Illinois is taking farmland out of production at roughly 100,000 acres per

year. According to the American Farmland Trust, 28 of Illinois' 102 counties are at high risk to lose farmland due to development, particularly in the Chicago collar counties.¹⁹

As farm children exit agriculture, land that once passed from one generation of farmers to the next is passed to the hands of absentee landowners.

Most Illinois farmland is currently enrolled in the federal farm program to grow corn and soybeans. Out-of-state fruit and vegetable producers successfully lobbied to have federal penalties imposed upon farmers who raise non-program crops on land enrolled in commodity programs.

Finally, farming is a risky occupation due to both weather and market price fluctuation. The time between planting a crop and harvesting is often many months plagued with fear of crop loss. Commodity farmers rely upon federal farm programs to partially offset possible financial losses caused by both weather and fluctuating market prices. Before Illinois farmers will risk withdrawing land from federal subsidy programs to grow products for Illinois customers, they must be assured that Illinois markets for local farm and food products are both stable and profitable.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 3:1:

Support and facilitate creative arrangements for using public lands for local farm and food production

A multiplicity of governing jurisdictions own significant amounts of farmland, much of which may be suitable to generate revenue through leases to local food farmers. The Cook County Forest Preserve District leases several thousands acres of land mainly for hay production and is considering the possibility of leasing additional land for local food. Kendall County's Oswegoland Park District supplies local food banks. Kane County's Dundee Township has approved long-term leasing of 16 acres of protected open space land to an organic farmer.²⁰ The land borders on prairie/woodland on one side, and it is an example of natural land and working land functioning together in a suburban area and providing people with healthy local foods. The state should encourage rental of its holdings for the production of local food and provide incentives for other units of government to do the same.



■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 3:2:

Create a farmer transition support committee

Beginning and existing farmers need reliable sources of information concerning their rights and obligations under ever changing federal statutes governing farm production. An "information clearinghouse" needs to be created to provide Illinois farmers with answers and guidance regarding present federal statutes that regulate farm operations.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 3:3:

Support local and regional land conservation movements

Local land trusts are proliferating in Illinois. Suburban Chicago counties consistently win bond referenda to conserve open space. Advocates of land preservation should develop stronger ties with farmers who produce farm products in a manner beneficial to adjacent natural areas—especially as climate change issues become a stronger component of conservation policy.

Work with land trusts.

The high cost of acquiring and managing lands constrains public initiatives to protect and conserve land. Local food production can make the economics more favorable for improving farmland conservation and land trust efforts. Organic farmers, especially are appropriate neighbors to natural habitats when they are homes to rare or endangered species. Land trusts need to receive information and support enabling them to monitor and manage this land, as it requires a different set of criteria than typical conservation land.

Establish a standing Illinois Farmland Committee.

An Illinois Farmland Committee would bring together governmental and private organizations to serve as a clearinghouse

for aspiring local farm and food producers seeking farmland to connect with landowners seeking local farm and food producers. The Committee will perform the following functions:

- * Assist farmers and communities in launching local farmland initiatives.
- * Work with land trusts to develop a coordinated strategy to identify, prioritize, and protect farmland. A replicable model could be the Department of Natural Resources' Illinois Natural Areas Inventory program.
- * Identify matching funds from federal and county resources to purchase development rights and place easements on farmland.
- * Establish an Illinois Farm Link program to match landowners with local food farmers seeking land for production.

■ OBSTACLE 4:

Lack of support for diversified farm production

Few support mechanisms exist to encourage our farmers to explore the diversity and potential inherent within local farm and food production. Not only are there fewer Illinois farmers with the knowledge and skills required to produce diversified crops than there once were, integrated systems of technical support, mentoring, and teaching do not exist in sufficient quantity to help farmers seriously consider these options.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 4:1:

Create knowledge bases and support infrastructures for diversified local farm and food production

Illinois must develop the mechanisms required to support diversification of the

state's farming base. With proper knowledge and infrastructure, Illinois soils will produce an abundance of diversified farm and food products. Start-up farm operations can be at a smaller size and scale than the current typical Illinois farm. As such, relatively small diversification efforts by existing farms into local farm and food products may provide a way for farm operations to support more family members, easing the path to farm transition from generation to generation. Opportunities include:

Agri-tourism. Farm visits, bed and breakfast, holiday events, seasonal celebrations

Cosmetic industry. Soaps, oils, creams, lotions, make-up, ointments

Dairy and dairy products. Milk, cheese, yoghurt, ice cream

Eggs.

Fiber. Animal (wool, alpaca, llama, angora, vicuna, pygora, buffalo, mohair, yak, camel, cashmere, silk) and plant (flax, cotton, hemp, milkweed)

Fish. Tilapia, shrimp

Fruits and Vegetables.

Forestry products. Lumber, wood chips, logs, Christmas trees, maple syrup, nuts, mushrooms

Grains. Rye, wheat, barley, flax, edible corn, popcorn, oats, amaranth, kamut, millet, flaxseed, spelt, quinoa, teff, triticale

Herbs.

Honey.

Meats. beef, pork, poultry (chicken, turkey, duck, goose, pigeon, pheasant, partridge), sheep, goats, and other specialty products like buffalo, rabbit and ostrich

Ornamental plants. Trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, cut flowers, turfgrass, seeds

Recreation. Hunting, fishing, bird watching, water sports, camping, hiking

Renewable energy. Wind, geothermal, solar energy, methane and biomass

Seed, seedlings and saplings.

Soil amendments and services. Compost, fertilizers, soil conditioners, lab tests

Wine, Beer, Distillates.

■ **SOLUTION STRATEGY 4:2:**

Create linkages between local farm and food producers

Three plantings of crops can be harvested in southern Illinois using greenhouses in the winter with relatively little heating. In northern Illinois, greenhouse heat could be supplied from manure packs generated by an expanding local livestock and poultry sector or by on-farm wind-generating projects envisioned as part of new federal energy policies. In urban areas, heat could be captured from numerous existing sources.

Illinois meat and poultry farmers can provide manure to fertilize field and greenhouse crops, while simultaneously increasing in-state usage of corn and soybeans. Grazing animals can utilize existing grasslands and highly erodible land that will eventually exit the Conservation Reserve Program.

B. Infrastructure

■ **OBSTACLE 5:**

Systems for moving products from farm to market are inadequate

Many farmers are limited to direct marketing outlets like local farmers markets, u-picks and CSAs, because they are unable to access larger wholesale markets. Institutional buyers require large lots and, in many cases, must purchase through a distributor for reasons of

efficiency, food safety and liability. The same economies of scale will make local food more attractive for restaurants and grocery chains. Moving large volumes of produce to nearby customers will require infrastructure—including combinations of aggregation, processing, storing, packaging, and distribution. Similar disincentives affect livestock and poultry producers, who must drive great distances and experience long waits at the state's few small meat processing plants. In most cases, large processors will not handle small lots by local producers.

■ **SOLUTION STRATEGY 5:**

Support development of regional aggregating, processing, storage, packaging, and distribution centers

State and federal policies and programs should support co-ops, limited liability corporations, and other forms of business ventures that encourage the aggregation, processing and/or packaging of farm products for nearby markets. Wholesale buyers, supermarkets, restaurants, and institutions would work through these centers with growers and producer groups to encourage production and market development. These centers could be located in rural communities near farm production as well as in metropolitan areas.

Communities should also develop local centers in which smaller volumes of farm production can be aggregated with those of other local food farmers. The centers must also provide the liability coverage needed to protect institutional and other large purchasers in the event of a food-borne illness. Storing and processing operations can be a part of these centers or other businesses can be developed in their locality. Such centers would create larger lots for local consumption or for sale in other parts of the state. Larger lots can be marketed to institutions, retail and wholesale outlets.



State and federal funds could be sought to encourage entrepreneurs to develop single- and multi-species meat and poultry processing facilities, including organic. Mobile slaughtering units could also be developed.

C. Customer Access

■ **OBSTACLE 6:**

Farmers have limited knowledge, access, and/or trust in current market opportunities

Most farmers either do not yet recognize the demand for Illinois-grown products, have difficulty reaching a market, or consider it unreliable. Illinois farmers need assurance that if they commit the resources and labor required to grow food they will be able to sell it. They also need to understand that food service companies can only sell what their customers are willing to buy. The food service business model is very dependent on centralized purchasing with one-stop-shop suppliers

and value-added products. Without ease of purchasing, it is difficult for many businesses to justify purchasing local food and farm products.

The biggest impediment preventing supermarkets and restaurants from purchasing more local food is supply. Willing purchasers find that there are not enough farmers growing produce, meat, poultry or dairy products to meet the required guidelines of large-scale buyers. Another problem is that farmers new to selling wholesale do not have experience in post-harvest handling, food safety, shipping, and understanding of USDA grade standards. Liability issues restrict most institutions from purchasing food from the back of a farm pick-up truck.

Smaller markets run into supply problems as well. The Illinois Department of Agriculture estimated that there were more than 270 farmers markets for the 2008 season, up from 97 markets in 1999. But outdoor market managers from Chicago's minority neighborhoods to rural communities have difficulty attracting sufficient number of farmers. Markets across Illinois have opened and closed or were considered but never begun because not enough farmers could be found to supply the product.

■ **SOLUTION STRATEGY 6:1**

Establish a local food procurement process for state institutions

State-run cafeterias in hospitals, schools, educational institutions, government buildings, prisons, and other facilities are among Illinois' largest and most reliable food purchasers. A commitment by the state to purchase even a small percentage of Illinois grown and/or processed food would not only provide farmers the assurance of government support; it would also create the guarantee for a market of last resort. Counties and states have already initiated such programs using schools and correctional facilities to jumpstart buy local programs. Wholesale market development will facilitate purchasing by other interested outlets, including private educational institutions, grocery stores, and restaurants.

State-run institutions and social service agencies should establish purchasing linkages between their food serving facilities and local producers. In addition

to direct purchase at the institution level, Central Management Services could further leverage this purchasing power by aggregating the needs of state agencies and determining which food products would be most likely to receive responses to RFPs based on local content or processing. Illinois community colleges and state universities could be included in this directive.

A Task Force objective for 2011 would be for state agencies to increase to 2 percent or more the amount of food they purchase that is grown and processed in-state. Local food purchases could increase 2 percent a year with a goal of 10 percent of total being local food within five years and 20 percent within 10 years.

As part of this program, a "Buy Illinois" marketing campaign could be implemented to educate state food personnel and train them in new procedures for doing business. This might include technical assistance on purchasing procedures, menu planning, and food preparation based on availability. It could also include visits to local farms.



Tax incentives could be offered to businesses using Illinois grown products. For example, reduce the sales tax to 2 percent, or provide a tax credit. This could be accomplished at both the federal and state level.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 6:2

Leveraging state purchasing power to enhance direct-market opportunities

The growth of farmers markets result from the awareness that consumers benefit from the availability of nutritious, locally-grown food, host communities benefit from increased tourism, and the state treasury benefits from the jobs that are supported as demand grows for Illinois grown processed products.

Illinois can build on this success through creation of a statewide “farmers market association” to mentor new market managers, share marketing expertise, enhance farmer education, and solve recruitment needs of individual farmers markets.

“Point of Sale” machines should be made more readily available so that credit/debit card and Link card users can participate.

Programs can also be developed to train young people to work booths at farmers markets. They will learn to grow, harvest, merchandize, manage inventory, and sell food, while farmers can use the labor to expand into new market outlets.

Such activities will also benefit Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) The CSA business model involves pre-selling a portion of their crop to members in advance of the season. Customers purchase a share of the farm and in exchange receive a box of freshly-picked produce each week during the growing season. In 2008, Illinois had 68 CSAs, up from 14 in 2000. CSAs serve most of the major metropolitan areas and are entering smaller metropolitan areas and

even rural communities. Direct-market enhancements should also extend to participants in CSAs.

■ OBSTACLE 7:

Customers have limited access to local farm and food products

The shortage of well-stocked grocery stores has led many urban and rural communities to be recognized as “food deserts.” Food desert communities are dependent upon food products from gas stations, convenient stores, liquor stores, and fast food outlets where foods tend to contain high concentrations of salt, fat, and sugar. Studies show that food deserts residents suffer greater rates of diet-related health maladies, including diabetes, cancer, obesity, heart disease, and premature death than residents with regular access to unprocessed foods. These studies also show that food deserts are most likely to exist in low-income communities, where there are also other social determinants of poverty, such as race and ethnicity.

Rural communities across the state also suffer from lack of fresh food. Many smaller towns no longer have grocery stores, and rural residents often must drive long distances to purchase fresh foods. Gas stations and convenience stores in rural areas, like those in urban food deserts, emphasize foods high in salt, fat, and sugar.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 7:

Increase community access points for the purchase of fresh food

Support training centers with outreach capacity to educate customers concerning nutrition and encourage aspiring farmers to learn to grow fresh food.

Link local farmers with service industries and neighborhood stores stocked and

maintained by farmers, co-ops, or local distribution partners, much in the same way that potato chip and other snack food commodities are re-shelved three times per week.

Allow gardens to serve as training sites for beginning farmers, who can grow and market food crops specifically for farmers markets, farm stands, and community residents in small-scale venues.

Allow farm stands to be set up by reducing paperwork, health regulations, taxes and other barriers.

Allow for the purchase of coolers and related equipment needed to establish a “local and fresh produce” aisle at neighborhood retail outlets, including those that accept WIC food instruments and the Link card.

Expand the approved alternative redemption process so that Illinois Link card users can patronize farmers’ markets, local food cooperatives, and other local food outlets. The USDA and the Illinois Department of Human Services can simplify the redemption process for the grower and/or market.

Encourage Illinois Food for Families and Illinois Food Bank Association to facilitate the creation of partnerships between local growers and food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens.



D. Systems Building

■ OBSTACLE 8:

Benefits of a local farm and food economy are not widely known by the general public

Most Illinois consumers are unaware that over 90 percent of their food comes from out of state, and that it travels long distances to their plate. Few understand how food is produced, how the food delivery system works, or the fact that a concerted effort to build an Illinois food, farms and jobs economy can provide additional food choices while supporting economic development and more self-sufficient communities.

In addition, Illinois’ population is a diversity of communities with differing perspectives. Like the United States as a whole, Illinois contains a multiplicity of ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural groups, with most people identifying with more than one group. Communicating simultaneously to all communities and cultures the potential benefits of an Illinois local farm and food economy will be challenging.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 8:

Create public awareness campaigns that share with every Illinois community the benefits of an Illinois local food, farms, and jobs economy

Build on the popularity of the local food story by encouraging bodies and agencies statewide to market the message of a food farms and job economy. Such campaigns should acknowledge the different goals and perspectives of all Illinois communities



while promoting the common benefits of a statewide effort to support local farm and food production. Multiple public awareness campaigns should be crafted to reach consumers, entrepreneurs, rural and metropolitan communities, ethnic and faith-based groups, etc. Use traditional outreach strategies, such as media/public service announcements, and non-traditional outreach strategies, such as job placement offices, places of worship, schools, grocery and drug stores, and farmers' markets. Expand collaborative efforts with existing advocacy networks.

Urban agriculture is one method for educating urban people about where their food comes from and how it grows. Once urban people grow food they often realize how difficult it is to be a farmer and feel more connected to Illinois' rural communities. An urban media strategy should be developed to promote the benefits that urban families and their communities would derive from an Illinois farm and food economy.

A separate, rural media strategy should be developed to promote the benefits that

farmers and their rural communities would derive from an Illinois farm and food economy. Farm organizations, service organizations, farm businesses, community leaders, county commissioners, and churches are the best avenues for informing rural communities of the benefits derived from a local farm and food economy. These rural entities should be the first point of contact for any rural public awareness strategy.

■ **OBSTACLE 9:**

Local farm and food entrepreneurs have limited knowledge about how to finance their enterprises

With demand exceeding supply, many people see an opportunity to enter farming and serve its markets. Non-profit agencies provide various services to facilitate marketplace development, while private donors, philanthropic organizations, and corporations offer limited start-up capital. Despite such efforts, many entrepreneurs struggle to build sustainable businesses.

Entrepreneurs remain unfamiliar with the steps involved in accessing private capital. Government-financing and business-development-program administrators are also unfamiliar with the unique nature of the local food system marketplace. This unfamiliarity impedes efforts to leverage limited public funds and grant monies to make the most of private investment.

■ **SOLUTION STRATEGY 9:1:**

Establish positive working relationships with financial institutions

Illinois has an abundance of private institutions that are in the business of lending capital to creditworthy

agricultural producers and farm-related businesses. These include hundreds of small community banks operating in particular geographic locales as well as two Farm Credit System (FCS) institutions. Community banks are full-service institutions that choose to include agriculture in their business-lending portfolios. Most are members of the Illinois Bankers Association and/or Community Bankers Association of Illinois. The two FCS institutions, which do not take deposits, belong to a customer-owned, cooperative-lending network created by Congress in 1916 to ensure an ample supply of financing in rural America. Northern Illinois is served by 1st Farm Credit Services and southern Illinois by Farm Credit Services of Illinois.

Community bankers and Farm Credit lenders use similar criteria to compete for the opportunity to lend money to agricultural enterprises which are deemed creditworthy if they have a thorough business plan and sufficient equity capital. Loan applicants are encouraged to educate themselves on building and writing a viable business plan. They also must realize that business success depends a great deal on how much of their own money (equity capital) they bring to the table. Lenders know that start-up businesses have higher failure rates, often due to inadequate working capital. A solution to managing this risk should be to help these business owners identify how much capital they need, and help them develop plans to build an appropriate level of equity capital prior to looking for business lending. The loan evaluation process has become quite automated, with the applicant's credit score often the determining factor as to whether one qualifies for a loan. Lenders who agree to deviate from the standard streamlined credit score process are likely to charge higher interest rates to cover the increased costs.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 9:2: Maximize capital access through participation in state-sponsored farm financing programs

The Treasurer's Office operates Cultivate Illinois, a linked-deposit program that makes state income tax money available to financial institutions for low-interest-rate loans to farmers who are purchasing equipment or acquiring lines of credit to pay for farm operating costs. The Treasurer's Office could invest these tax dollars in the private market at a higher rate of return but instead takes discounted deposits and makes these monies available for financial institutions to lend. (The Treasurer's office "buys down" the interest rate by depositing funds at a community bank or selling a bond to the Farm Credit institution.) Borrowers cannot be approved for participation in the state program until the lender determines that they qualify for a loan. The Treasurer's office calls Cultivate Illinois the largest state-backed deposit program in the nation, with more than \$800 million in loans mainly to commodity producers. Program officials are receptive to establishing methods to better serve young farmers and specialty-crop growers.

The Illinois Finance Authority (IFA) is a self-supporting quasi-governmental agency that provides financing products to commerce, industry and public institutions. In fiscal year 2008, IFA supplied \$5 billion in project financing, including about \$150 million for agriculture and rural development. The IFA offers 10 agricultural loan products. As is true with Cultivate Illinois, IFA programs are designed to lower borrowing costs for farmers who have been deemed creditworthy by private lenders. The beginning farmer bond program enables community banks to provide borrowers the same kind of federally tax-exempt real estate loans as Farm Credit institutions.

Various guarantee programs secure up to 85% of the principal and interest on a loan. One program serves young farmers borrowing needs to buy assets like farmland, machinery, and breeding livestock. Others facilitate purchase of specialized livestock, stock in value-added businesses, agribusiness diversification, and debt-consolidation. IFA is considering a new agriculture/rural development initiative that might include a micro-lending program

■ **SOLUTION STRATEGY 9:3:**

Develop creative financing approaches in concert with private and public lending institutions

Encourage the two loan programs to enhance local food production through pilot projects that help finance small start-up farm operations. If the model involves replication of small start-ups that demonstrate operational sustainability by having clear farm business plans to assure that they are economically viable, then the state entities

can support local food production without significant resource allocation.

Explore potential methods for increasing entrepreneurs' access to equity capital—including CSA subscription payments.

Recognize that local farmers working on leased land would benefit from the creation of operating loan guarantee programs, which may be seen as more creditworthy when CSA subscription payments are factored in.

Develop a micro-lending program for beginning local farm and food entrepreneurs with the recognition that loans less than \$50,000 will generate administrative costs that will likely discourage the participation of most private lenders.

■ **SOLUTION STRATEGY 9:4:**

Tap all available federal financing resources

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers programs that allow banks, Farm Credit institutions and other lenders



(e.g. credit unions) to make capital available to farmers who do not meet standard underwriting criteria. As is true with the state's farm-financing programs, FSA's direct and guaranteed loans are made available to borrowers deemed creditworthy by private lenders for the purchase of land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and supplies. FSA loans are often provided to beginning farmers who cannot qualify for conventional loans due to insufficient financial resources. FSA guaranteed loans provide lenders with a guarantee of up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan.

The 2008 federal farm bill reflects the growing realization of the public purpose for supporting local-food-system-marketplace development, with such new provisions as loan guarantees targeting enterprises involved in local/regional food distribution, processing, aggregation, and marketing. The creation of such programs reflects a growing understanding of the unique nature of local food systems. Price transparency and discovery tools analogous to those enjoyed by commodities markets are likely to remain imperfect for local-food-system markets. Instead, effective state and federal policy will need to build on the acknowledged relationship between production, marketing, distribution, and consumer demand by supporting business strategies, best practices for production, process-level innovation in distribution and marketing, as well as general promotion. The growth of this marketplace will depend on entrepreneurs' ability to access reasonably-priced private capital to fund their enterprises.

Establish guidelines and state funding for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) matching funds so that local farm and food entrepreneurs can secure federal cost share dollars for conservation programs.

■ OBSTACLE 10:

Regulatory barriers impede growth

A multiplicity of local, state, and federal regulations hinder farmers' ability to build and expand their various projects. The tangle of jurisdictions, fees, property taxes, and interpretations discourage aspiring entrepreneurs from entering business.

Different government entities are responsible for different food items; e.g. a cheese pizza is inspected by Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH); a sausage pizza by the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA). An egg producer has to meet IDOA regulations as well as county health rules in order to sell his product. If the same producer wants to sell egg noodles, a whole new set of regulations comes in to play, most from the IDPH. The laws themselves are written in a way that allows for a multiplicity of interpretations and significant regulatory discretion. IDPH guidelines clarifying regulations





concerning farmers-market products were written with the understanding that individual county personnel can interpret these guidelines at their own discretion. Counties are also free to impose whatever fees they wish. Hence regulations are enacted or enforced differently in different parts of the state. A farmers market vendor in one county cannot assume that the same goods can be sold in the same manner in the next municipality, township, or county. Selling products across state lines further inhibits free enterprise.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 10:1:
Create an inter-agency coordinating committee to streamline regulations

The committee should be composed of representatives from local health departments, Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois Department of Agriculture, the Illinois Attorney General’s Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and any other agencies whose rules affect local farm and

food projects (e.g., Illinois Department of Transportation). The committee should support the building and expansion of local farm and food projects while protecting public health and safety. Subcommittees may be needed to address regulations affecting the differing food system components – production, infrastructure, and retail access.

Output from this initiative should reflect input from the following:

- * lawyers with expertise in local farm and food projects
- * relevant agency personnel and government officials
- * farmers and other entrepreneurs providing case-study information

The following tactics address direct-farm businesses, but may be applicable for other businesses:

- * Commission legal research and analysis of statutes, regulations, and agency guidance documents relevant to all types of direct-farm business formation and operation. An initial list of potential legal issues is available on the Direct Farm Business website, created by University of Illinois.
- * Update, expand, and improve the visibility, accessibility, and user-friendliness of the legal information available on the Direct Farm Business website. Link website to relevant statutes, agency contacts, and fee information. Publish an annual print version of website.
- * Hold trainings so that Illinois farm and food support networks and Extension personnel are familiar with the site and can use it to assist farmers and processors in their area.
- * Develop recommendations/checklists to assist producers in navigating potential legal barriers to entry and successful operation of the food/farm businesses.

Identify points of emphasis as well as alternative options to fulfill regulatory requirements.

- * Create a bulletin (downloadable and paper) showing the decision tree, letting farmers know where to go and who to consult if they are thinking about selling a specific item, e.g., eggs, meats, jams, breads.
- * Create bulletin(s) for planning any sort of small home/farm business involving food. Areas to cover include zoning, licensing, regulations, canning (low acid and acidified foods), labels, sales tax, etc.
- * Help farmers and farm-related businesses that serve nearby markets across state lines to work with out-of-state partners to accomplish needed goals.
- * Develop a two-tiered system of rules and regulations to ensure that revised state regulations do not default to existing federal regulations written primarily for industrial-scale farming operations.



■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 10:2:
Recognize small farms' inherent value to a community

Municipal, township, and county authorities often tax land in an agricultural use at a higher non-agricultural base due to its proximity to residential, commercial or industrial property. This practice can have the punitive effect of making the agricultural land use unprofitable.

■ OBSTACLE 11:
Producers and entrepreneurs have insufficient access to relevant and/or coordinated data

A number of web-based data collection efforts have developed across Illinois to connect farmers with customers. One university effort has geo-coded data to provide layered mapping capability, while another is very project-specific, using satellite and remote imaging data. Some databases act as a consumer directory to local food and farms (farmers markets, CSAs, u-pick, etc.). The Illinois Department of Agriculture website also contains a variety of local farm and food information. There are also some national local farm and food databases that cover Illinois, including one Illinois-based project. However, the USDA Census on Agriculture does not track such information.

Since the data collection and presentation of these projects were intended for different purposes and funded by different sources, the management and architecture for warehousing the data are not uniform and the data sets are not consistent from site to site. This lack of uniformity and consistency limits small businesses and individuals who are forced to search and collate information gathered from multiple sources.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 11:

Create a source for comprehensive local farm and food information

For Illinois to maximize economic potential, businesses must have access to comprehensive data management and presentation systems. These will support investment, site selection, and capacity decisions for infrastructure. Create a committee with public and private participation to develop a strategy on how to integrate existing data into a seamless, user-friendly system, including working with the USDA to develop a Census on Local Farm and Food Products.

■ OBSTACLE 12:

Local farm and food resource centers are limited

Producers have little access to community-based resource centers capable of providing information and technical assistance required to successfully build, maintain, or expand local farm and food projects.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 12:1:

Begin, support, and/or expand programs

As primary information centers, schools, colleges, and universities must become knowledge bases for dispensing information on the benefits of a local farm and food economy, as well as providing the training required by our 21st Century farm and food entrepreneurs.

Grammar schools and high schools statewide are beginning to grow their own food. Some operate edible gardens, both to provide hands-on education and improve nutrition through in-school consumption. Food-production oriented vocational and leadership training programs are being

developed. Student organizations grow food for fundraising projects. The Illinois State Board of Education could help ensure that such schools are made aware of the Illinois Committee for Agricultural Education, which is mandated to develop curriculum and strategies to establish a continuing source of trained and qualified individuals in agriculture.

Colleges, universities, and technical schools provide an established framework that could and should be training Illinois' next generation to succeed in an Illinois food, farms and jobs economy. Cafeteria administrators in many Illinois institutions would like to serve Illinois farm products and could drive efforts to allocate college land for on site food production. The use of local food and farm products would provide on-the-ground educational farm and food training, retain cafeteria dollars within the school system, and provide students with nutritious and flavorful food. Kankakee, John Wood, Black Hawk community colleges are among those developing farm-and-food-enterprise curricula.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 12:2:

Build the capacity of University of Illinois Extension's local food programs

Seventy-seven Illinois Extension offices representing all 102 Illinois counties carry out a historic mandate to serve the people of the state with practical knowledge about farming and food. The Morrill Act of 1862 established the land-grant system of universities in the United States to "teach sub-branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanical arts." The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 was designed "to aid in diffusing among the people of the U.S. useful and practical information on subjects related to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same."



County Extension directors organized some Task Force listening sessions and participated in most others. Directors in Adams-Brown and Stephenson-Winnebago Counties in particular are spurring development community-based farm and food networks. Survey findings show that 57 Extension units representing 78 counties have identified Extension's involvement in training programs across selected aspects of the farm and food system.

The University of Illinois Extension can use its statewide reach to provide an interactive, web-based "farm, food and jobs library" as a clearinghouse for dissemination of research and information on local farm and food systems in Illinois. Expanding University of Illinois Extension's on-the-ground network would quickly put local farm and food information into the hands of local farm and food pioneers and

entrepreneurs in every Illinois county.

In concert with this Plan of action, the University of Illinois Extension would perform the following functions:

- * Provide up-to-date technical support
- * Recruit new producers, producer groups, and local food entrepreneurs
- * Facilitate the building of local farm and food networks in communities statewide
- * Identify public and private funding opportunities and cultivate grant-writing skills necessary for entrepreneurs to access funding
- * Other initiatives within the University of Illinois Extension would supplement their role in building an Illinois farm and food economy. First, the programming power of Market Maker

would connect various segments of production. Second, a new website suited to local farm and food systems needs to be developed and maintained. This could be modeled after the farmdoc website and other websites related to agronomic and production practices.

■ OBSTACLE 13:

Local farm and food producers and entrepreneurs are isolated

Countless individuals, neighbors, community groups, organizations, institutions, businesses, and governmental agencies are looking for ways to access local food. They may be in the same vicinity but have no means to develop a relationship and work together to address common concerns.

A complete local farm and food network features four essential components, each of equal importance:

- * Farmers growing local farm and food products
- * An infrastructure to aggregate, process, store, package, and transport local farm and food products
- * Markets that sell local farm and food products
- * A population aware of the benefits of supporting a local farm and food system

For each community to develop its fullest potential, production, infrastructure, and customer access, and public awareness must develop in tandem. This is not happening today. For example, farmers are often hindered from growing local farm products because they don't have access to infrastructure, but an infrastructure will not develop without farmers growing products that require it. Farmers cannot commit to growing local products without knowing that markets exist to purchase those products; local food retailers can

exist only with a consistent and reliable supply of local products.

Building a fully-functioning economy will require a coordinated effort from a broad range of stakeholders involved in building projects and networks across the state. Two types of organizational structures are envisioned: Communities of place and communities of practice.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 13:1:

Create, facilitate, and support local farm and food action groups

Obstacles are best confronted when we are not alone, but united within a larger support community. Within a support community, we find the courage and encouragement to overcome the problems we face. Often solutions are derived not from what we know, but from who we know.

Local farm and food action groups are the communities of place. They consist of local people, businesses, government, and organizations coming together to improve and support their community through addressing needs around food. Participants can include (but are not limited to):

- * local farmers
- * local processors and distributors
- * local restaurants
- * local grocers
- * local bankers
- * local seed salespersons
- * local equipment sales and rental entities
- * local service entities (food banks, health care, schools)
- * local consumers
- * local officials

Activities that action groups have engaged in include:

- * farmers markets

- * co-ops (farmer, retail)
- * food banks, soup kitchens
- * community gardens
- * farm and food policy
- * conferences, workshops, and fairs

Local farm and food action groups already exist in many communities. They have different names, different compositions, different jurisdictions, and operate under a variety of authorities. Most bring together some level of private-public partnership and broad-based citizen engagement. Examples are the Tri-State Food Policy Council (Quincy), Heartland Local Food Network (Bloomington-Normal), Northwest Illinois Local Foods Task Force (Freeport), and the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council (Chicago). The boards of Resource Conservation and Development organizations (example e.g., Prairie Rivers RC&D - Henry) and Extension's IDEA chapters (e.g., Peoria) are already providing functions and services typical of local farm and food action groups.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 13:2:
Create, facilitate, and support communities of practice to support local farm and food action groups.

Members of communities of practice are not typically farm producers or businesses. Rather, they support local product farmers, businesses, entrepreneurs, and customers to build local networks, providing such resources as a regional, statewide, and national perspective, as well as planning tools, marketing, research and training. Members may include:

- * University of Illinois Extension
- * Universities
- * Community colleges
- * Local authorities

- * State agencies
- * Federal agencies
- * State institutions
- * Metropolitan planning organizations
- * Foundations
- * Non-profit organizations
- * Financial/Insurance entities
- * State food policy councils nationwide
- * Vision for Illinois Agriculture
- * the Illinois General Assembly

Activities of communities of practice include:

- * Support, promote, and enhance new and existing farm and food businesses.
- * Provide flexibility for every community to plan and build according to its desire, diversity, geography, and market potentials.
- * Provide entrepreneurs with tools for efficient building of farm and food networks.
- * Facilitate communication and cooperation among entrepreneurs and action groups.
- * Unleash the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of citizens in every Illinois community.
- * Participate in the systems building process.

■ SOLUTION STRATEGY 13:3:
Create an Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council

Communities of practice generally have very defined positions, missions, and charters, and are thereby restricted to specific realms of expertise in their community outreach. A myriad of communities of place and communities of purpose are at work separately and collectively in multiple realms of local farm

and food expertise across Illinois, but their projects today remain isolated. Because they are disconnected, they have difficulty reaching their fullest potential. A new team member is required that is chartered specifically to guide and monitor the building of the statewide system.

An Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council will serve local action groups and communities of practice by facilitating and synthesizing relationships between projects and networks. The Council will maintain the vision of the Plan for the benefit of all. It will move the system along. The Council will perform work not yet undertaken, that is outside the understandings, purviews, missions, and charters of fellow. The Council will exercise no authority over communities of place or purpose, but will work to support and expand the efficiency of their existing missions. Because they are disconnected, they would benefit from the assistance of a new team member chartered specifically to guide and monitor the building of the statewide system.

* **Subsidiarity.** This organizing principle states that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest, or least centralized competent authority. The Council shall empower local networks. Local networks shall implement and benefit from all practices.

* **Non-competition.** The Council shall not compete in any manner against Illinois team members or community-based farm and food pioneers or projects.

* **Facilitation.** The Council shall facilitate program startups, and shall then relinquish all rights, benefits, and control to independent local farm and food pioneers and their networks capable of continuing the mission after a short duration of time. The Council

shall not function as an agent of program continuation.

The communication and cooperation between Illinois citizens led to the enactment of the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act (Public Act 95-145) and the creation of the Task Force. The Illinois General Assembly should establish a new statewide community of practice through the creation of a permanent Council. As a citizen group authorized by the Illinois General Assembly, united with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, key state agencies, community colleges, the University of Illinois Extension, non-profits, and entrepreneurs on the ground, the Council will carry a statewide and national vision and facilitate the building of farm, food and jobs economies in communities across Illinois. Key council functions are:

* Facilitate communication and cooperation among all stakeholders in communities of place and communities of practice.

* Convene an inter-agency committee that facilitates the focusing of state agency goals and objectives to the development of local farm and food economies in communities across Illinois.

* Initiate planning for the creation of public awareness campaigns.

* Produce an annual report to the General Assembly on the progress in developing an Illinois local farm, food and jobs economy.

* Develop resources to assist all types of local farm and food entrepreneurs

* Guide the over-all movement to create this new Illinois economic sector by implementing the Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Plan

Appendices

Footnotes

¹According to <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/CPIFoodAndExpenditures/Data/table15.htm>, national per capita food expenditures (at home + away from home) - \$3,778 times Illinois population (12.8 million people) = \$48 billion

² USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released 2007 Census of Agriculture data in its 2007 Annual Bulletin. On page 93, NASS reports that "Cash Receipts from Farm Marketings" in Illinois totaled about \$2 billion. Assuming that all these products are consumed in Illinois, the \$2 billion in cash receipts means that Illinois produces about 4% of our food needs.

³ Locally grown produce traveled an average of 56 miles from farm to point of sale (compared to average of 1,494 miles), according to a July 2003 Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture report. <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing.htm>

⁴ <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmToConsumer/Data/marketingbilltable1.htm>

⁵ # of farmers markets: 1999 – 97, 2008 – 270 Robin Schirmer (Maywood, IL) database; IDOA

⁶ <http://www.ota.com/organic/mt/business.html>

⁷ According to USDA's 1997 Agriculture Census, \$12 million of 1997 Illinois farm sales were from "agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption." In USDA's 2002 Agriculture Census, "this category was deleted;" Page 6, FEEDING OURSELVES: Strategies for a New Illinois Food System, a 2004 report to the Illinois Food and Community Funders Group.

⁸ 97 and 07 USDA ag census.

⁹ USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released 2007 Census of Agriculture data in its 2007 Annual Bulletin, p. 93. cash receipts for all Illinois farm production in 2006 amounted to \$8,635,699. If we subtract corn (\$3,594,141,000) and soybeans

(\$2,509,651,000), and greenhouse and nursery (\$304,986,000) we have a balance of \$2.2 billion cash receipts. Of this, \$1,794,860,000 is from all livestock products and \$432,061,000 from all other crops.

Cash Receipts are gross income. Farm Income for 2006 is not available in the Bulletin, but net farm income for 2005 in Illinois was \$1,064,580,000. If we spend \$48 billion on food and consume every bit of food grown in Illinois (\$2.2 billion) this means that we are only producing 4% of our food need.

¹⁰ This is the "overarching recommendation" of the New York State Council on Food Policy (page two of the December 2008 report to Governor David A. Paterson: "Recommended State Food Policies in Respect to the Health and Prosperity of New York State."

¹¹ Food Research and Action Center's State of the States: 2008; Pg 43

¹² IDOA Ag Facts; www.agr.state.il.us

¹³ USDA Census of Agriculture 2007

¹⁴ Beginning Farmers: Additional Steps Needed to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of USDA Assistance; GAO-07-1130, September 18, 2007

¹⁵ Food Research and Action Center's State of the States: 2008; Pg 43

¹⁶ Special Collections of the National Agricultural Library "Abraham Lincoln and Agriculture"

¹⁷ Growing Opportunity: Outlook for Local Food System Marketplace; Farm Credit Council

¹⁸ IDOA Ag Facts; www.agr.state.il.us

¹⁹ <http://www.farmland.org/programs/localfood/default.asp>

²⁰ Terra Brockman, "From the Good Earth," Edible Chicago No. 3 (Winter 2009), p. 19.

Public Act 95-145

Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act of 2007

State of Illinois 95th General Assembly Passed by the General Assembly June 7, 2007

Introduced by Rep. Julie Hamos

Signed into law August 14, 2007

Senate Sponsor Jacqueline Collins

Task Force Appointed December 14, 2007

SYNOPSIS

Creates the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act and the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force. Sets out the composition of the Task Force. Provides that the Task Force shall develop a plan 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. Sets out the contents of the plan. Effective immediately.

HB1300 Enrolled LRB095 08986 CMK 29177 b

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") is created. The Task Force shall initially 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.

Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force

Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act of 2007

Appointed by Governor Blagojevich December 14, 2007

Members

Erika Allen, Growing Power, Chicago (Cook County)

Harry Alten, Illinois Specialty Growers, Harvard (McHenry County) appointed 2009

Keith Bolin, American Corn Growers Association, Sheffield (Bureau County)

Jim Braun, Illinois Farmer-Consumer Coalition, Springfield (Sangamon County)

Mary Ellen Caron, Dept. of Family and Support Services, City of Chicago, (Cook County)

Greg Christian, Greg Christian Organics/Organic School Project, Chicago (Cook County)

Johari Cole, Iyabo Farms, Hopkins Park (Kankakee County)

Dean Craine, Agri-Energy Resources, Princeton (Bureau County)

Leslie Duram, School Nutrition Action Committee, Carbondale (Jackson County)

Chris Eckert, Eckerts Orchards, Belleville (St. Clair County)

Carrie Edgar, U. of Illinois Extension (Adams/Brown Unit), Quincy (Adams County)

Jack Erisman, Goldmine Farms, Pana (Christian County)

Tom Grant, Neighborhood Services Division, City of Carbondale, (Jackson County)

Debbie Hillman, Evanston Food Policy Council, Evanston (Cook County)

Bridget Holcomb, Illinois Stewardship Alliance, Springfield (Sangamon County)
(resigned 9/08)

Wes Jarrell, Prairie Fruits Farm, Champaign (Champaign County)

Gerry Kettler, Niemann Foods, Quincy (Adams County)

Warren King, WellSpring Management, Oak Park (Cook County)

Donna Lehrer, Lamb of God Farm, Big Rock (Kane County)

Therese McMahon, Dept. of Comm. & Econ. Opportunity, Springfield (Sangamon County)

Bill Olthoff, Illinois Farm Bureau, Bourbonnais (Kankakee County)

Chuck Paprocki, Dayempur Farm, Carbondale (Jackson County)

Dinah Ramirez, Healthy South Chicago, Chicago (Cook County) appointed 2009

Vicky Ranney, Liberty Prairie Foundation, Grayslake (Lake County)

Delayne Reeves, Dept. of Agriculture, Springfield (Sangamon County)

Penny Roth, Dept. of Human Services, Springfield (Sangamon County)

Stan Schutte, Organic Crop Improvement Association, Stewardson (Shelby County)

Allan Sexton, Prairie Trace Farm, Sheffield (Bureau County)

Bryan Sharp, Illinois Farmers Union, Springfield (Sangamon County)

Jim Slama, FamilyFarmed.org, Oak Park (Cook County)

Tom Spaulding, Angelic Organics Learning Center, Caledonia (Boone County)

June Tanoue, America's Second Harvest, Chicago (Cook County) (resigned 4/08)

John Vanek, Harvest Food Group, Inc., Warrenville (DuPage County)

Kim Wasserman-Nieto, Little Village Environmental Justice Org., Chicago (Cook County)

Illinois Local & Organic Food & Farm Task Force

Listening Sessions

March - October, 2008

CARBONDALE

March 22 (Saturday, 1:00 PM)
Dunn-Richmond Center
Southern Illinois University
Organizers: Chuck Paprocki, Dayna
Conner, Jerry Bradley

QUINCY

April 9 (Wednesday, 7:00 PM)
University of Illinois Extension -
Adams County
Organizers: Carrie Edgar, Brenda Derrick,
Mike Roegge

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL

April 11 (Friday, 12:30 PM)
Shirk Center, Illinois Wesleyan University
Organizer: Elaine Sebald

ST. CHARLES

April 12 (Saturday, 9:00 - noon)
Kane County Farm Bureau Office
Organizers: Donna Lehrer, Steve Arnold

MARSEILLES

April 13 (Sunday, 2:30 PM)
Growing Home Farm
Sponsored by Green Farmers Network
Organizer: Jody Osmund

CHICAGO

May 20 (Tuesday, 3:00 - 5:00 PM)
DePaul University (downtown campus).
Organizers: Lynn Peemoeller, Hugh
Bartling

CHICAGO

May 20 (Tuesday, 12:00 - 1:30)
"Soup Soapbox" Listening Session
Hull House Museum
Organizer: Sam Kass

URBANA

May 28 (Wednesday, 7:00 - 9:00 PM)
Urbana Civic Center
Organizer: Lisa Bralts

CHICAGO

June 11 (Wednesday, 6:00 - 9:00 PM)
Chicago State University
Organizer: Johari Cole

GRAYSLAKE

June 12 (Thursday, 6:30 - 9:00 PM)
Prairie Crossing.
Organizer: Mike Sands, Stan Rosenberg

EFFINGHAM

June 16 (Monday, 7:00 PM)
University of Illinois Extension -
Effingham County
Organizer: Brenda Roedl

BELLEVILLE

June 17 (Tuesday, 6:00 - 9:00 PM)
Southwestern Illinois Community College
Organizer: Margie Sawicki

ROCKFORD

June 18 (Wednesday, 6:00 - 8:00 PM)
Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden
Organizer: Margaret Larson

FREEPORT

June 19 (Thursday, 6:00 - 8:00 PM)
Freeport Library
Organizer: Margaret Larson

KANKAKEE

June 26 (Thursday, 6:00 - 9:00 PM)
Kankakee Community College
Organizer: Johari Cole

CHICAGO (in Spanish)

Sept. 17 (Wednesday, 10:00 - 11:30 AM)
Cafe Catedral
Organizer: Eduardo Anaya, Martha Boyd

HOPKINS PARK

October 23 (Thursday, 6:00 - 8:00 PM)
Lorenzo Smith Elementary School
Organizer: Terence Mitchell

Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force

GUEST PRESENTATIONS

(January 2008 – February 2009)

FOOD IN SCHOOLS (May 7, 2008):

Joan Brehm, Asst. Professor of Sociology, Illinois State University (Bloomington-Normal)
Josephine Lauer, Organic School Project (Chicago)

FOOD SAFETY (May 7, 2008):

Sandra Streed, Director - Illinois Center for Food Safety & Technology (Summit)

WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA Local Foods Model (June 4, 2008):

Rob Marqusee, Director of Rural Economic Development – Woodbury County

RESOURCES FOR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM PROJECTS (July 2, 2008):

Elise Benveniste, Masters Student in Regional Planning from University of Illinois
(Champaign-Urbana)

GIS ASSET MAPS (July 2, 2008):

Dagmar Budikova, Director of GEOMAP: Institute for Geospatial Analysis and Mapping,
Illinois State University (Bloomington-Normal)
Gretchen Knapp, Research Associate, Institute for Geospatial Analysis and Mapping,
Illinois State University (Bloomington-Normal)

EXTENSION AND LOCAL FOODS (August 6, 2008):

Dick Warner, Assistant Dean – Univ. of Illinois Extension (Urbana)

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS (August 6, 2008):

Jerry Weber, President - Kankakee Community College (Kankakee)
Jeff Galle, Director – Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences Dept. - John Wood
Community College (Quincy)
Andrew Larson, Dept. Co-chair – Applied Sciences, Black Hawk Community College
(Galva)
Chandra Dowell, Vice President (East Campus) – Black Hawk Community College (Galva)
Rose Campbell, Vice President – Instruction and Student Services (East Campus) – Black
Hawk Community College (Galva)

PUBLIC HEALTH (Feb. 4, 2009):

Jamie Gates, Nutrition Coordinator – Ill. Department of Public Health (Springfield)
Jim Bloyd, Asst. Health Officer – Cook County Dept. of Public Health (Oak Park)

Acknowledgements

The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force, 32 Illinois citizens who came together in January 2008 to write a strategic plan for a local farm and food economy, are grateful to many who have given us this opportunity and who have helped us along the way.

We would like to thank the Illinois General Assembly for unanimously believing in this project. We are grateful to State Representative Julie Hamos who, in response to a broad-based coalition, wrote the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act of 2007 creating the Task Force. We are indebted to her for her wise counsel along the way. We thank State Senator Jacqueline Collins, our chief Senate sponsor, a passionate spokesperson for the basic human values embodied in this report. We thank the many legislative sponsors, both in the Illinois Senate and the Illinois House of Representatives, whose support made us feel the responsibility of this project.

Director Tom Jennings of the Illinois Department of Agriculture has not only been a gracious host to the Task Force for our monthly meetings, but has taken an active role in the details of our final report.

In addition to the in-kind support from the Department of Agriculture, resources were provided to the Task Force by: Liberty Prairie Foundation, Chicago Community Trust, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Farm Credit Council, AgriEnergy Resources, Organic Valley, Lumpkin Family Foundation, McKnight Foundation, the Ellis Goodman Family Foundation, Farm Aid, and, through the Fresh Taste Initiative, the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation. We could not have provided the necessary amount of attention to this report without that support.

During the Task Force process, we received much help from other Illinois citizens. Presentations on eight different topics were made to the Force by fifteen experts, each of whom are named in the Appendix. We thank them not only for their attendance at Task Force meetings but in offering follow-up assistance. Many other interested citizens attended meetings and gave us the benefit of their experience and knowledge. Members of the Illinois Local Food and Farms Coalition, the grassroots group that formed around the writing and passage of the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act, also provided much on-going support through statewide conference calls as well as list-serv e-mails. Thanks to Illinois Stewardship Alliance for funding some of those calls.

Over the course of seven months, the Task Force attended 18 listening sessions all over the state. We thank the many organizers and hosts for setting these meetings up (see Appendix), as well as the many farmers, entrepreneurs, officials, and community members who attended. The information we gathered, the stories we heard, and the connections we made were invaluable in helping us understand the complexity and nuances of our task, while also showing how communities all over the state are really very much alike.

Once we had a rough draft of our report, we turned to more than 50 Illinois citizens as well as some non-Illinois citizens for feedback. The “Red Team” came through with the detailed and general comments we were seeking from expert but “outside” eyes.

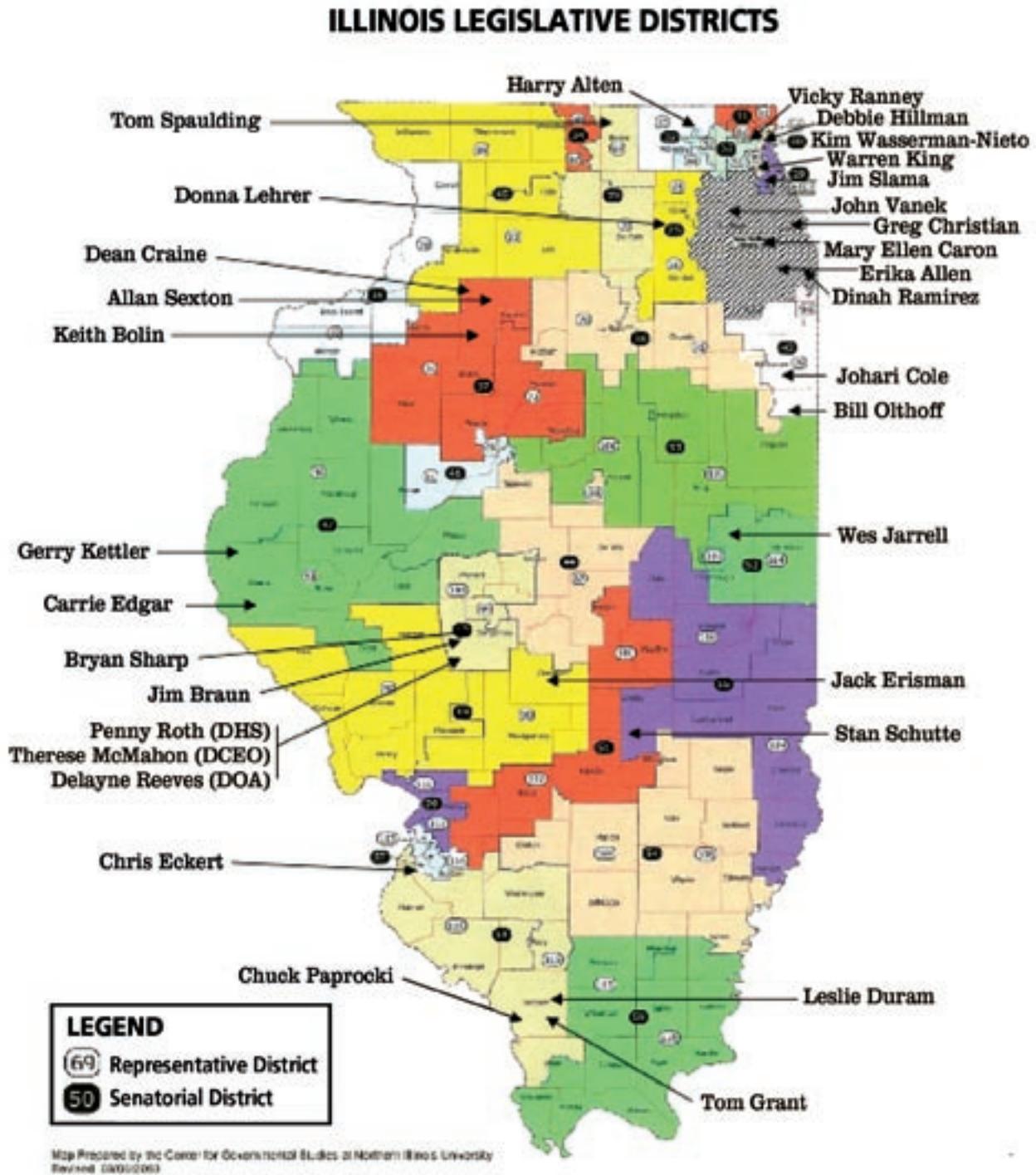
A big thank-you goes to those who helped with the final report. Writer Bob Heuer stepped in at the last minute to give a fresh perspective and journalistic flair to the many words, facts, concepts, and recommendations in our draft report. Writer/editor Sheri Reda gave extensive time and talent to the report. Designer John Beske donated a great deal of time and talent to the graphics. The Valerie Denney Communications team supplied welcome collegiality and professionalism.

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Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act of 2007

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