

Local Foods in the Dan River Region

WHAT IS LOCAL FOOD?

The definition of local food varies according to who you ask. If you ask Frito-Lay, it means made in America.¹ If you ask author and locavore Barbara Kingsolver, it means “a handshake deal in a community gathering place. It involves farmers with names, who show up week after week.”²

The USDA Farm Bill of 2008 defines a “locally-produced agricultural food product” as one that is produced and consumed within a 400 mile radius. However, a definition commonly accepted by the general population is food grown within 100 miles.³ Kingsolver’s *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* follows the author and her family for a year as they attempt to consume as much as possible from their own backyard.

As Jeff Mansour of the Harvest Foundation says, “Food doesn’t stop at the county line.” Therefore a fixed definition of local, while convenient, is not necessarily realistic. For the purposes of this report, we define local as produced in the Dan River region.⁴

WHY LOCAL FOODS?

Agriculture or more specifically, food production is the fundamental basis of society. While development of agriculture may not be as economically appealing when compared to the return of other industries, the development of agriculture in the region has the potential to create a better economic environment.

According to the 2007 census of Agriculture, counties in Virginia and North Carolina demonstrate a correlation between population and the market value of agricultural products sold. Generally the higher the population of an area the higher the market value for agricultural products. This alludes to the potential of Pittsylvania and Caswell counties to develop agricultural products at a higher market value and create a market that could reach the 1,138,587 individuals that live in bordering counties. Caswell and Pittsylvania counties have a great resource in the land available and its suitability to produce food and fiber.

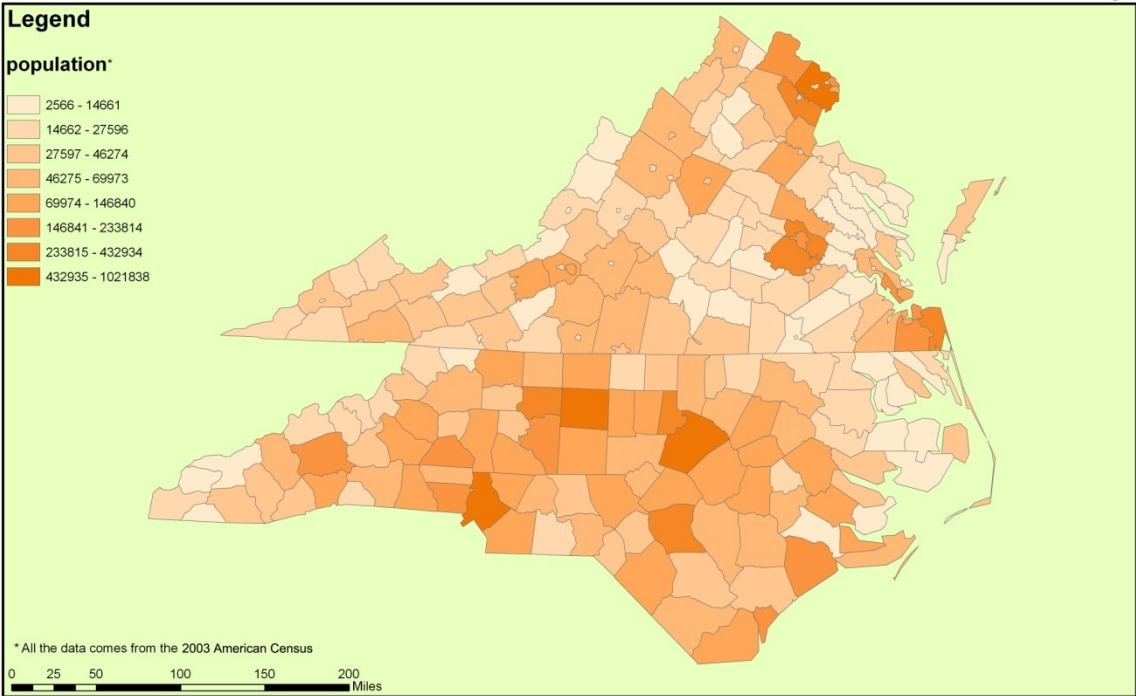
¹ Fritolay.com. The company recently started an advertising campaign incorporating a “Chip Tracker.” Consumers can enter a product number and find in which state the potatoes were grown and processed.

² Quoted in Beatley “Quantifying access”

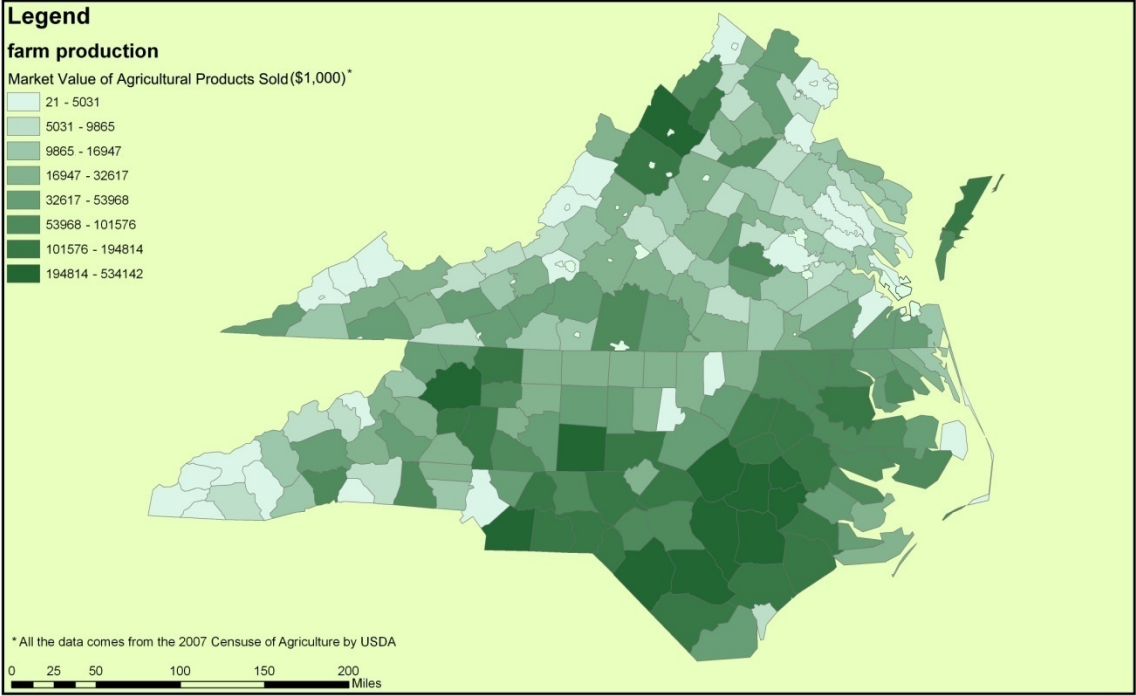
³ Sager. According to a study by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

⁴ Caswell County and Pittsylvania County but also nearby counties that may be where partners in this initiative are located. The definition should be reconsidered after a local food shed assessment.

Total Population by County



Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold



In a deeper cultural meaning, agriculture is the close relationship between humans and the land. However, in modern society, many individuals have lost a strong feeling toward our homeland step by

step. Local foods could promote and recreate the home-feeling and pride in the area by promoting the local agriculture and local food. This is a very important component of creating the “new culture.”

A local foods system offers advantages over mainstream, commoditized foods, while appealing to various preferences. Outlined below are the benefits as well as the disadvantages of implementing a local foods system. While the focus of the project is the economic advantage and health effects that a local foods system could have in the region, we also illustrate the many other benefits a local foods system could have.

| Disadvantages | Benefits |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| More expensive (short-run) | Food security/self-reliance |
| Less variety | Carbon footprint (sometimes): fewer food miles |
| Less convenient | Lower transportation costs |
| | Personal relationship with farmer |
| | Less expensive in the long-run: health benefits, economic, environmental |
| | Support for local economy (high multiplier) |
| | Fresher |
| | Cultural identity |

Buying local is good for the economy

Economically speaking, a strong local foods sector, as any other sector, will take revenue and magnify its influence through a multiplier effect. Potentially, new businesses may also crop up around local food centers. A reputation for selling locally grown products provides a distinction in the market, giving a business a competitive advantage. Furthermore, buying local helps ensure **food security** as a defense against a disrupted commodity food system (e.g., contamination outbreaks, blocked transportation, etc.).

Also on the economic side, the local multiplier—a number that multiplies any initial amount spent by a consumer on local foods—far exceeds the multiplier from purchasing goods at a nationwide chain. Annie Wolock, owner of Keystone Media and a local foods advocate, says that every dollar spent on big box stores generates \$1.40 into the local economy, whereas local consumption generates \$4.50.⁵

Buying local is good for the environment

Some benefits of local foods are **environmental**: Local foods travel less to their destinations, which often translates into less pollution as well as a better tasting product. (However, the utility of lower food miles is limited. In some cases, when taking the entire environmental impact of growing, food that

⁵ http://www.mlive.com/business/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2009/07/deb_merion_buy_local_food_move.html

has been transported over a greater distance still generates less carbon dioxide than locally grown food.⁶⁾

Buying local is good for health and nutrition

Health reasons provide another motive to buy local food. A major area of focus of the Danville Regional Foundation is health and wellness. Since the region's obesity rates are on the rise, it is important to use a multi-faceted approach to combat these numbers. Local food has a place in reducing obesity in this region by providing access to healthy food options. Areas with fewer supermarkets have a limiting effect on the access local citizens have to fresh and nutritious options. An area without adequate access to food options is referred to as a "food desert." Specifically Caswell County and Pittsylvania county have limited food options and Caswell County offers one grocery store and a few community groceries. Residents who live in food desert areas are more likely to buy packaged processed foods which lead to a higher proportion of obesity and health related problems. Local foods offer local residents access to healthier, more nutritious options and has the potential to affect overall health.

Local food is most often a healthier option compared with foods that have travelled long distances to the consumer's plate. When food travels such long distances, it is more likely to lose much of its original nutritional value. Fresh food is more nutritious and local foods are generally fresher. Often local food is harvested within twenty four hours of purchase.

Local farmers and smaller farming operations can better monitor their usage of pesticides, antibiotics, and other hormones because they have smaller operations to manage. This is not to say that buying local means buying organic, because there is a distinct difference, but buying local often provides that option over buying from the large agribusinesses who sell to mass distributors.

Buying from local farmers reduces the risk of food contamination and increases food security. This includes not only decreasing the likelihood of eating contaminated foods, but also increasing a region's food supply in the chance of a natural disaster that would hamper the food supply chain. Local foods are easily tracked, and personal contact with the farmer ensures knowledge about growing practices.

If the region can successfully promote buying local foods, it will also be combating its obesity challenge because it will be actively advocating health.

Animal welfare activists might enjoy eating "free range" meat locally. However, local does not necessarily mean free range and local does not necessarily mean organic (produced without synthetic inputs). We must be careful not to assume that *local* always means *best practice*. Some may experience a variety of positive **psychological** effects from eating locally. Knowing from where one's food originates or supporting small-scale family farms may secure a peace of mind and even make the food "taste" better. Interacting with farmers at the community market establishes new relationships and a strengthened community spirit among those who shop locally. These relationships mean that consumers

⁶ *The Sunday Times*. Accessed at <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article3294448.ece#>>.

can hold the farmers accountable for their growing practices and take **ownership** of how their food is produced.

Goal

→ On average residents of the service region will spend 10% of their food expenditures on local foods.

HOW BIG IS THE MARKET FOR LOCAL FOOD?

STATUS QUO

Danville Community Market

The Danville Community Market, located at the Crossing at the Dan in the tobacco warehouse district, is a prime outlet for local foods in the region. Because of its status, it has valuable information to share regarding how to attract people to the local foods scene. Dennis Forslund, the market manager, was our source for the following information:

The largest obstacle in creating a sustainable community market was a shortage of vendors, and this continues to be a problem. Simply put, there is more demand than supply for local foods in the community. This suggests that although increasing local foods consumption remains a goal, a higher priority, perhaps, should be placed on convincing farmers to participate. Overall, the market has about 40-65 vendors present, including farmers, bakers, craftspeople, and everyone else.

The community market offers a seniors program to make buying local products more affordable for pensioners. Seniors are eligible to receive a \$40 check that can be spent at the community market each month; however, only Virginia farmers can participate, excluding farmers from North Carolina. As for recognizing food stamps, Mr. Forslund has applied for a grant from the USDA for an EBT machine that would accept the stamps; the department is expected to definitively reply by mid-September 2009.

Addressing the increasing deficit of cooking skills that presents an obstacle to buying local (instead of buying pre-made, processed foods), the community market has started offering various cooking demonstrations. Mr. Forslund mentioned one chef, the food manager at Danville Regional Medical Center, who has conducted demonstrations of various meals in the past. Additionally, the months of June are designated as "Meat Month," and involve comparisons between a locally grown chicken and a supermarket chicken, as well as preparations of other meat dishes, such as pork tenderloin.

The community market recently opened its doors for Wednesdays in addition to Saturdays. To set up a booth on a Saturday costs a vendor \$15; on Wednesdays, the price drops to \$10.

Caswell Farmers' Market

Caswell County, North Carolina, currently has no farmer’s market. Past attempts to begin one have been unsuccessful, but interest still exists. The county extension agent would like to begin a market, but low support within the community has hampered plans. Many reasons have been mentioned as possible barriers: residents’ personal gardens, the prevalence of fast food, and nearby larger farmers markets. The food shed assessment should provide a clearer picture and factual information from which to make a decision.

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Danville’s current local foods system is primarily composed of its Community (farmers’) Market. According to official USDA Food Plans and the American Community Survey (ACS) 2007, the average amount spent on food in the service region is about \$315 million⁷, while the total market value of agricultural products sold in the service region is \$83 million. This illustrates the region’s current food production deficit and the current flow of money to areas outside of the region.

| | Caswell County, North Carolina | | Pittsylvania County, Virginia | | | Danville city, Virginia | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------|--------------------------------|-------|-----|----------|---------------|
| | Estimate | monthly food plan | Estimate | monthly food plan | Estimate | monthly food plan | | | | |
| Total: | 23,332 | | 60,940 | | 45,307 | | | | | |
| Male: | 11,818 | | 29,702 | | 20,502 | | | | sum | |
| Under 5 years | 535 | 130 | 834600 | 1,734 | 130 | 2705040 | 1,370 | 130 | 2137200 | \$5,676,840 |
| 5 to 9 years | 945 | 160 | 1814400 | 2,067 | 160 | 3968640 | 1,403 | 160 | 2693760 | \$8,476,800 |
| 10 to 14 years | 637 | 210 | 1605240 | 1,586 | 210 | 3996720 | 1,351 | 210 | 3404520 | \$9,006,480 |
| 15 to 17 years | 451 | 220 | 1190640 | 1,252 | 220 | 3305280 | 922 | 220 | 2434080 | \$6,930,000 |
| 18 and 19 years | 206 | 250 | 618000 | 742 | 250 | 2226000 | 586 | 250 | 1758000 | \$4,602,000 |
| 20 to 49 years | 5178 | 225 | 13980600 | 12103 | 225 | 32678100 | 7484 | 225 | 20206800 | \$66,865,500 |
| 50 years and over | 3866 | 210 | 9742320 | 10218 | 210 | 25749360 | 7386 | 210 | 18612720 | \$54,104,400 |
| Female: | 11,514 | | 31,238 | | 24,805 | | | | | |
| Under 5 years | 600 | 130 | 936000 | 1,661 | 130 | 2591160 | 1,413 | 130 | 2204280 | \$5,731,440 |
| 5 to 9 years | 457 | 160 | 877440 | 1,939 | 160 | 3722880 | 1,159 | 160 | 2225280 | \$6,825,600 |
| 10 to 14 years | 875 | 170 | 1785000 | 1,604 | 170 | 3272160 | 1,425 | 170 | 2907000 | \$7,964,160 |
| 15 to 17 years | 490 | 190 | 1117200 | 1,211 | 190 | 2761080 | 915 | 190 | 2086200 | \$5,964,480 |
| 18 and 19 years | 173 | 200 | 415200 | 695 | 200 | 1668000 | 406 | 200 | 974400 | \$3,057,600 |
| 20 to 49 years | 4381 | 200 | 10514400 | 12279 | 200 | 29469600 | 8833 | 200 | 21199200 | \$61,183,200 |
| 50 years and over | 4538 | 210 | 11435760 | 11849 | 210 | 29859480 | 10645 | 210 | 26825400 | \$68,120,640 |
| | | | | | | | | | sum up | \$314,509,140 |
| Caswell County, North Carolina | | | Virginia | | | Danville city, Virginia | | | | |
| \$20,703,000 | | | \$62,644,000 | | | \$83,347,000 | | | | |

Not only can food in the region be sold locally but agriculture in the region also has the potential to expand. Counties in Virginia and North Carolina with similar physical conditions, (e.g. top soil quality, climate) are producing over \$2000(market value of agriculture productions) per acre of farmland, while Pittsylvania county is currently only producing \$230 dollars per acre. Similarly Caswell County is producing \$200 of agricultural products per acre.

⁷ See Appendix 1: Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels, USA Average, August 2007.

The revenue created through the sale of local products also has the potential to increase if local farmers convert from national to local markets. According to research conducted by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, there is sharp distinction between the price received by farmers from direct market and from big-box chain groceries. In 2007 only 1% of agricultural products in Virginia were sold directly and the corresponding percentages in Pittsylvania County and Caswell County were 0.24% and 1.86% respectively.

VISION

A thriving local foods market

- On the farmers' side, we envision institutional and farmer-to farmer support to get farm products to consumers.
- On the consumer side, we envision improved health and economic well-being.

STRATEGY

To fulfill our economic goal, our fundamental strategy is to build up a fostering mechanism, helping local farmers to sell their products to local consumers.

Conduct a Local Food Shed Assessment

Although our analysis shows a promising future for local food in the region, we are not very clear on the local food consumption pattern or the most important influencing factors of local food (e.g. price, freshness, organic, accessibility, etc.). This assessment should also identify the interest in the community regarding a co-op store with local foods.

A Local Cooperative Market

Currently the Dan River Region has no local food co-op. Food co-ops are owned and managed by farmers or specialists. Their main function is to create a bridge between farmers and local consumers, releasing farmers from commercializing their productions and helping local consumers purchase local foods. In our tour of local farms, we found that many of the farmers believe that the biggest hurdle for a local food system is the farmers' inability of lack of time to market their products.

Local residences can become members of a food co-op by paying a membership fee that gives them all the benefits and advantages of being a member of the co-op. This membership is very beneficial because it allows local residences to save money when they shop at the food co-op and it allows them to have a say in how the co-op is managed.

Influence local policy and encourage tax incentives for local food buyers

This will give an incentive to those who wish to provide or buy local foods within the community.

Marketing Educational Program for Farmers

The majority of farmers in the region have historically produced food and agriculture products that had established buyers and markets. Tobacco, a past dominant crop of the region, was a high demand crop with ample buyers that did not require marketing. As farmers have transitioned into new production they often find themselves incapable of the marketing skills necessary to move their crop. A marketing workshop series along with one on one consulting should be available for farmers who are interested in marketing their crops locally. This program could potentially be administered through the Cooperative Extension service.

Access for Low Income

To stay in line with the mission and vision of the Danville Regional Foundation it is important that the local food system be accessible across all demographics. This is a concern especially for low income individuals who may not be able to afford the initially higher price of local food. Programs should be established that would allow lower income individuals and families to have access to local food. Access programs should include:

- Transportation
- WIC and Food Stamp participation

Website and Resource Guide/Dan River Exchange

A compilation of local food resources should be made available so that local farmers and local residents can connect. This resource should feature local farms, CSA's, restaurants serving local foods, and educational components. The printed resource guide could be provided to residents interested in the local foods movement with a focus on those who may not have access to the internet. This could also be included on the Dan River Exchange website when created.

Educational Campaign for Local Residents

For the local foods movement to be a success, local residents must see the merit of such a system. An educational campaign should be promoted in the region. The local foods campaign should consist of information sessions, fliers, and various other community promotions through print and broadcast. The Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign could be utilized as part of this strategy.

NEXT STEPS

- DRF initiated meeting with Local Foods stakeholders.
- Contact organization to begin research for the Food Shed Assessment
- Approach Harvest Foundation for potential partnership

- Contact local Farmers and begin compiling information for website resource

CONSUMERS

TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY

Economy vs. Health

When discussing how to approach this initiative, we initially felt the need to narrow our focus to an analysis of local foods from either an economic or health perspective. However, we concluded that both aspects warrant analysis. There are strong arguments in favor of local foods from the economic *and* health perspectives, and both sides require further investigation than what current studies cover. If we chose to focus on one topic or the other, a large segment of consumers might lose interest.

Local food boosts the economy. According to Eric Bendfeldt and Matt Benson, community viability specialists, if each household in Virginia spends \$10 per week on local food, then \$137 million per week would be invested into the local Virginia economy.⁸ In Danville and Pittsylvania County, that translates to \$27,360,320 annually.⁹ In Caswell County, it would amount to \$4,508,400 every year.¹⁰

Local food supports local enterprise. North Carolina lost 1,000 farms in 2005.¹¹ Small farms in particular are struggling to compete with large industrial farms, and farming in general is losing its appeal. The average North Carolina farmer is 57 years old, and increasingly, young generations are not continuing the family farming tradition.¹² Supporting local food means supporting local farmers. By providing an assured market, especially for these small family farmers, they have a reason to keep producing.

Local food is healthy food. The options available at roadside stands and farmers' markets are likely to be much more nutritious than the options at local grocery stores. See health impacts for more detail.

Elite vs. Everyone

Are local foods elitist? Organic and local food movements are often accused of being elitist. Admittedly, the usually higher cost of organic foods excludes low-income populations. However, there is currently not sufficient research to support price trends for local foods. Depending on the season, locally grown roadside and farmers' market produce may be less expensive than the imported grocery store varieties.

As the local food movement spreads, advocates should be mindful of reaching beyond their own constituency and should take action to make local foods accessible to more people. If the movement is

⁸ Sutphin "Buying, selling"

⁹ Benson and Bendfeldt

¹⁰ According to the 2000 census, there are 8,670 households in Caswell. $8,670 \times \$10 \times 52 = \$4,508,400$

¹¹ *North Carolina leads nation in loss of farms*

¹² 2007 Census of Agriculture

not intentionally inclusive, the local foods movement could be confined to patrons of stores like “Whole Pay Check” (Whole Foods).

Movements started by elites often eventually become mainstream (e.g., civil rights and the environmental movement), and the same should (and must) occur with the local foods movement to bring about maximum benefit to the community.¹³ Food grown in our backyards should be accessible to all of the neighbors.

Access for everyone. Several programs exist to help individuals with low income obtain local foods. In the state of Virginia, Social Services conducts the Food Stamp program, also known as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, “SNAP.” There are several divisions under SNAP that allow subsidized food, including Women, Infants and Children (WIC)¹⁴ and Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP)¹⁵. More programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program¹⁶, School Lunch and Breakfast Programs¹⁷, Summer Food Service Program¹⁸, and Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program¹⁹.

Programs have begun to shift to promote local foods, and in particular, emphasize fruits and vegetables. A program to benefit WIC participants is the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program FMNP. This initiative seeks to improve the nutrition of WIC participants, increase farmers’ share of the food dollar, and to revitalize rural areas by increasing awareness and use of the farmers’ markets. WIC coupons to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers’ markets are available to eligible pregnant and postpartum women, breastfeeding women, and children 3 to 4 years old.²⁰ According to Michael Burns of the

¹³ Nestle

¹⁴ **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)** - *The WIC program provides nutritious foods to supplement the diets of low-income pregnant, postpartum and breast-feeding women, infants and children up to five years of age. It also provides nutrition education and referrals to health services and other assistance programs. WIC is administered by the Department of Agriculture through state health departments. Eligibility is based on income and on nutritional risk as determined by a health professional.*

¹⁵ **Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP)** - *NSIP (formerly Nutrition Program for the Elderly or NPE) is a food program designed to help older people. It is run by the Department of Health and Human Services through the state agencies on aging. NPE is part of the Grants for State and Community Programs on Aging, which also authorizes in-home services for frail elderly people, support services and senior center operations. The nutrition services program provides elderly Americans with nutritious meals. If you are age 60 or older, you are eligible for the program and so is your spouse, even if he or she is not 60 years old.*

¹⁶ **Child and Adult Care Food Program**- *Offers meals and snacks to children in eligible day care centers, family day care homes and other care centers, as well as to functionally impaired adults and elderly people in day care situations.*

¹⁷ **School Lunch and Breakfast Programs** -*Offers meals at schools to children. Low-income children get these meals free or at a reduced price, while other children have access to reasonably priced meals.*

¹⁸ **Summer Food Service Program** -*Offers free meals and snacks to needy children during the months when school is not in session.*

¹⁹ **Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program** -*Provides low-income seniors (individuals who are at least 60 years old) with coupons during the harvest season that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers’ markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture programs.*

²⁰ <http://www.nutritionnc.com/wic/fmarket.htm>

Virginia Department of Health, the FMNP is limited to 7 of the 35 health districts, not including Danville or surrounding districts. State matching funds required by USDA for the FMNP are not included in the state budgets for 2009 and 2010. Therefore, there will not be a WIC FMNP in these budget years.

However, while the FMNP only operated in 7 of the 35 health districts, and only from July through October, the Virginia WIC Program will be implementing food package changes to allow WIC participants to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables on a statewide, year-around basis (although these are not necessarily local produce). *Contact: Donna T. Seward, Director of WIC & Community Nutrition Services, VDH (804) 865-7800, or Michael Burns, Division of WIC and Community, Nutrition Services, VDH, (804)864-7834.*

An effort to link Farmers' Markets and Food Stamp participants is underway through the acceptance of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards in Farmer's Markets. An early example is Fondy Farmers' Market in Milwaukee, which began taking EBT/Quest cards in 2003. According to the Milwaukee Hunger Task Force, hundreds of food stamp recipients use their cards quickly and easily via wireless point-of-sale devices during the growing season. The Iowa Department of Health Services and Iowa Farm Bureau have promoted the slogan, "Fresh Made Easy!" Radio promotions and billboards have sparked greater public awareness about farmers' markets and the Food Stamp Program as supports for good nutrition.

Another example is in New York City, where a successful pilot program encourages more people to use their food stamps at farmers' markets. An \$81,000 allocation equips farmers and organizers at Greenmarkets in Harlem, the South Bronx, and central Brooklyn with handheld scanners to read EBT cards. Few farmers have the scanners without support from a funded initiative - the scanners cost about \$1,000 each. The program also supports marketing and outreach to food stamp recipients.

According to Dennis Forslund, the Danville Farmers' market has applied for a grant from USDA for an EBT machine, and should hear by mid September 2009 if they will receiving funding support. The Danville market also accepts checks from the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. See "Danville Farmers' Market" for more information.

A final option for distributing local foods is via soup kitchens and food pantries. Some regions have a system where churches and other nonprofits buy leftover produce from farmers to be donated at feeding centers. For example, *Appalachian Sustainable Development* has created a market for 30 family farmers in southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee by delivering their food to low income families. Churches, civic groups, Appalachian Harvest, and the Southwestern Virginia Second Harvest Food Bank partner to buy the leftover produce and distribute it at over 120 food pantries in 9 counties.²¹

Organic vs. Local

Definitions. Organic agriculture practices emphasize renewable resources, biodiversity, and practices that will not deplete the land. Organic production incorporates standards set by the National Organic

²¹ <http://www.asdevelop.org/Healthyfamilies.html>

Standards Board (NOSB), and in layman's terms, use no inorganic pesticides, antibiotics, or other chemicals .²²

Labels can be misleading. Local foods do not necessarily mean organic foods. Often, local implies more sustainable and environmentally friendly. That organic lettuce may be traveling to your plate from across the globe, leaving a large carbon footprint in its wake. Furthermore, the certified organic farm may be a huge industrial complex that, although it uses no pesticides, sacrifices low impact farming practices. Local farmers are often small farmers who are struggling to compete with large industrial farms. Supporting them means keeping fellow community members employed.

Another issue with local versus organic is the actual organic certification process. It is expensive to hire a contractor to certify a farm and have the USDA Organic label on the product. So many smaller farmers may actually use organic practices or even more conscientious practices but cannot call themselves *certified* organic. Also, small farmers may use processes that are much healthier for the environment and the consumer than traditional practices (i.e. spraying much less pesticide than the suggested amount), but they don't qualify for the special label of organic that gets them more attention from consumers.

Trendy vs. Return to Roots

Hot ticket item. *Local* is replacing *organic* as the new buzz word. Local foods are quickly becoming the next "Bobo" (Bohemian Bourgeoisie) must have. According to a nationwide survey of chefs, "locally grown" is the most fashionable trend for restaurants in 2009.²³ As discussed above, attracting an elite fan club is both beneficial, because the movement can be funded and then spread, and dangerous, because it risks being exclusive or a passing fad.

From near to far and back again. Ironically, local food is how it all started. Until relatively recently in human history, no one had the option of obtaining their food from far away. But beginning in the age of the explorers, exotic was desirable. At that time, it was mostly accessible to classes who could afford what came on ships. With modern transportation and production, exotic, or at least distantly produced, food became even more accessible and popular than backyard grown. With the local food movement, we are experiencing a "return to roots." Locally grown, which used to be the only option, is now the cool option.

Here to stay. Local food advocates should take advantage of this sentiment as well as the international attention that the movement is receiving. Furthermore, local foods fit nicely with the "Go Green" mentality that is suddenly in so many conversations. However, advocates also need to establish a solid base of supporters and a system that will not crumble when the buzz dies down.

²² *National Organic Standards Board*

²³ Horovitz

BARRIERS

Local Foods Connection, a non-profit organization that donates local food to low-income families, has compiled the “Top Ten Barriers to Local Food Access for Low-Income Individuals.” The following are some key points from the list:

1. Financial restrictions

- Vegetable and fruit costs rose 120% from 1985-2000. Soda and sweets prices rose on average only 50%.
- Fresh food offers fewer calories than processed food, decays faster than processed food, and local food requires more meal preparation than processed food. All of these factors work against low-income people on a budget.
- People reliant on government food assistance are further restricted in the places they can obtain food. Food stamps are often not accepted at farmers’ markets.

2. Preparation and storage of food

- Local food likely involves more cooking than pre-packaged, processed food.

3. Distribution of food

- One-stop grocery shopping is easier because it saves time and gas money.
- Public transportation is not always easy to use, carrying food via public transportation is cumbersome, and rural areas (e.g., the Dan River region) have inadequate public transportation.

4. Lack of knowledge and education

- Lack of understanding of health benefits of eating local/organic food.
- Lack of confidence and skills in preparing fresh food.

5. Cultural values and lifestyles

- The consumer may prefer food that is unable to be grown in the local region.

FARMERS

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS

Farmers need to be aware of institutions such as CSAs, farmers' markets, community gardens, and others before they can take advantage of these ideas.

CSA's take out the middle man. Over the last 20 years, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has become a popular way for consumers to reliably and directly support local farmers.²⁴ Essentially, CSAs entail the farmer offering "subscriptions" to a certain amount of product over a specified period of time (e.g., two months). In return for pledging to pick up a certain amount of produce, consumers will regularly (e.g., each week) receive the produce from the farmer. Often times, the farmer will drive all produce to a drop-off point in the community at which consumers are expected to be to receive their product. CSAs offer the following advantages for farmers:

- Spend time marketing early in the year
- Receive early payment

For consumers:

- Eat very fresh food
- Support local agriculture
- Know the farmer and his or her techniques

Cooperatives provide an assured market. Another form of a cooperative is that of an association of farmers, distributors, and or processors that support each others' operation. If a farmer knows that a processor will buy a certain amount of the crop, and the processor knows that the distributor will buy a certain amount of the product, then each party has an assured market. According to the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC), "The majority of America's 2 million farmers and ranchers belong to one or more farmer cooperatives."²⁵

Despite this statistic, according to the Caswell County and Pittsylvania County Extension Agents, no such cooperatives exist in either county. However, Mac Baldwin of Baldwin Family Farms participates in an informal co-op arrangement. He receives Del Monte's rotten produce, for the cost of transportation, to feed his pregnant cows. Del Monte gets rid of their unwanted produce and Mr. Baldwin is able to feed his livestock at a low cost.

POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Farmers need to understand how farming subsidies, including those for local foods, address some of the economic challenges they face.

²⁴ <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>

²⁵ NCFC.org

The Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program (CFPCGP)

This competitive grant program funds community foods projects that focus on creating local foods initiatives. The grants are one time funding awards in the amount of \$10,000-\$300,000 and must be matched dollar for dollar.

NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

This trust fund was established to fund programs that create conservation easements, agricultural agreements, and programs that develop sustainable or viable agriculture. North Carolina counties and nonprofits may apply for grants through the trust. This funding could be used to create local foods programming and for creation of infrastructure that promotes the local foods initiative. Each entity may apply for up to \$50,000 per grant with a maximum of three grants per entity being accepted.

Sustainable Community Innovation Grants

This grant opportunity is funded through the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program and provides awards up to \$10,000 to individuals or groups that propose to inform, build capacity, and link sustainable agriculture activities to rural areas. Possible projects include marketing, establishment of farmers markets, etc.

USDA Rural Development Value-Added Producer Grant

Individuals and groups can apply for money to market value-added products and to promote farm based renewable energy. Amount of awards varies.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project

A competitive grant program funded by the North Carolina Tobacco Trust fund Commission will assist farmers with the marketing and promotion of their local foods. Individual farmers can apply to receive up to \$1500 of assistance while farmers tailgate markets are eligible for up to \$2000 a group of farmers can receive up to \$5000. Farmers must be Appalachian Grown Certified.

BARRIERS

Farmers face several problems growing, distributing, and advertising their food. Not surprisingly, the inability to overcome these barriers deters food service organizations, precludes the food from reaching local consumers, and adds to the general list of inconveniences of local foods.²⁶ Some of these difficulties, such as consistency, payment, and organization, arise especially when farmers lack business acumen and marketing skills. Even if the produce is superior, it needs to be sold in a more efficient manner if it is to be appealing to large-scale food distributors and retailers.

Barriers Include:

1. Lack of year-round crop availability
 - Consumers are accustomed to getting what they want any season

²⁶ Source: Iowa State University. Accessed at <<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/publications/PM1853C.pdf>>.

2. Multiple vendors
3. Difficulty in raising an adequate supply to meet the demand
4. Inconsistent packaging and quality
5. Marketing
 - Farmers lack the time and the training to market their products
6. Lack of order, delivery, and payment methods
7. Expense of running a farm
 - Farming is costly in regards to time and money
8. Averse to change
 - Farmers do not have time or are unwilling to try new techniques or test a new market

MARKETING

When considering how to get the word out about local food, the effort should be multifaceted. The two sides of the coin are the farm and the consumer; however, many more groups are involved in getting food from plant to plate. Below is a good illustration of the different parties that should be considered in marketing local foods.



Education is necessary to connect all parts of the equation. Below are some existing marketing strategies that can be replicated or tailored to our region. Internal marketing is aimed at the consumer side and external marketing is targeted at the farm side of local food.

INTERNAL MARKETING

Enlighten consumers

Buy Fresh Buy Local

<http://www.buylocalvirginia.org/>

This is a nationwide community advertising campaign for communities to market local foods in the area. Begun by the **FoodRoutes Network**, a Pennsylvania based nonprofit working to revitalize community food systems. In Virginia, the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) began the first Buy Fresh Buy Local chapters in 2006. Currently, there are six chapters (made up of 27 counties) in the state, of which three are coordinated by PEC, two by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, and one by the Richmond Area Food System Council. All of the chapters are coalitions of counties and cities in the *northern* and *central* parts of the state. The closest chapter to our region is the Richmond area chapter, which includes six counties and the city of Richmond.

In North Carolina, there is no centrally publicized BFBL campaign. There is a group in Franklin County using the “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” slogan although it does not appear to be an official chapter.

Think Local First

“Think Local First” campaigns have been initiated nationwide as a concept developed by the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE). They aim to promote *thinking* locally about one’s purchases, from foods to shoes to office supplies. Towns that implement Local First campaigns recognize the positive investment that well-supported local businesses return to their communities. By uniting those businesses and marketing them to local consumers, towns are promoting a locally sustainable economy. While the Local First is not specifically geared toward local foods, locally-owned businesses that sell local foods stand to gain from this promotion if it is introduced in their area.

The sole BALLE network in North Carolina is Asheville BALLE, and the only group in Virginia is For the Greater Good in the Northern Shenandoah Valley. An explicit goal of For the Greater Good is to support healthy agriculture by supporting local farmers and food producers.²⁷ Their website includes a list of CSAs and farmers markets so consumers can locate and connect with local producers.

EXTERNAL MARKETING

From farms to tables. A need to market local foods exists in the Danville Regional Foundation’s service area. For the local food movement to take root in the area, people must see the benefits of and potential for it. Also, they must see what is available from their local farmers. Every farmer that our group spoke with stressed the need for marketing when asked how to establish a local foods market in the area. Because farming is the main concern of farmers, marketing their products must be simple yet effective. Therefore, this section will offer some guidance to those farmers who wish to develop the marketing aspect of their business. It should be a crucial component of their business plan if they are to be competitive.

Get funding. Farmers should take advantage of the many grants available to them for marketing and other purposes. This will eliminate using a portion of their own budget for marketing, while still growing their business. A list of grants is listed in the above section.

Get training. The Extension agents and other organizations should expand their farmer training to include marketing techniques. Individual consultation would also benefit farmers, both for those whose production falls into a generic or niche market.

²⁷ *Food Available*

Start talking. Again, organizations could sponsor forums or roundtables where farmers have the opportunity about what strategies are working or failing for them. Collaboration could also lead to the ability to break into new (hopefully local) markets.

IMPACTS

When discussing the benefits of local foods, it is important to distinguish between factors that entice the *individual* to buy local foods and the *community-wide* results that a successful local foods system creates. The Danville Regional Foundation’s goal is to revitalize the community; and therefore the focus of this report and its recommendations are focused on the economic advantages created by a local foods system. While a local foods system has the potential to be more environmentally friendly and is viewed as more healthy, these factors are individual influences and will not be the focus.

Economic Impacts

If the goal set for this project is reached, then \$33.5 million will remain in the region every year.

Furthermore, the implementation of a local foods system would create a “multiplier” effect. According to one study for every \$1 spent at a local business, 45 cents is reinvested locally; while only 15 cents is invested locally if the \$1 is spent at a corporate chain²⁸.

Simply speaking, when we buy food from a corporate chain, we are exporting money outside of the region and the money has minimal influence in our own community. If food is purchased locally, the money received by our local farmers has the increased likelihood of circulating through the local economy through the purchase of supplies, equipment, and labor. Restaurants that purchase local food also contribute to the multiplier effect as they buy directly from the farmer and then individuals in the community purchase a meal made from the local food. Therefore, there will a ripple effect caused by the increase in money that is circulating in the area which contributes greatly to the local economy.

Comparing the maps of total market value of agricultural products and the map of market value of agricultural products sold directly, we can find some similarity, which prove the relationship between “local food” and total agricultural production.

Environmental Impacts

The exact environmental impact of local foods is a debatable topic, but one that cannot be ignored when considering reasons to eat locally grown food. Local food is often grown organically and close to

²⁸ <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/go-local/the-local-multiplier-effect>

the place of consumption. Increasingly high “food miles”, or the distance that one’s food travels from farm to plate to disposal, is often cited as a reason to eat locally. Eating locally decreases food miles, frequently resulting in more environmentally friendly food than organic food, which could have travelled any number of miles from the farm to a store or home. Therefore, local food proponents argue that it is better to eat local than to eat organic. However, studies have shown that calculating food miles are only a small part of measuring the environmental impact of food.

A study led by Richard Pirog of Iowa State University’s Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture compared the conventional system of importing food to local systems of CSAs and farmers markets within the state of Iowa. He found that “the conventional system used 4 to 17 times more fuel than the Iowa-based regional and local systems” and that “the same conventional system released from 5 to 17 times more CO₂.”²⁹ Therefore, there is no doubt that eating local foods has a positive impact on the environment by decreasing usage of fossil fuels and carbon dioxide emissions in the transportation process.

However, the study observed that many other factors must be considered when determining the overall environmental impact of the systems. Their study did not delve into other factors, but noted that production and distribution costs add much to the environmental costs, more than “food miles” do.

To address those additional costs, life cycle assessments (LCAs) are being conducted to calculate all costs associated with food systems, from farm to plate. Growing practices, transportation, processing, and distribution are all included in these assessments. Tara Garnett, of the Food Climate Research Network, used LCA to measure a range of impacts. She found “that agriculture accounts for around half of food’s total GHGs [green house gases] with the impacts largely attributable to methane and nitrous oxide.”³⁰ It was stated that the remaining percentages were evenly distributed throughout the additional stages. When these agricultural costs are included in the calculations, local foods may very well have a greater environmental impact than do conventional food systems, conflicting with the food miles argument.

Based on these studies, it can be inferred that the food miles argument in favor of local foods is quickly fading as further research is conducted. Buying organically and local is the ideal way to shop environmentally, but that is entirely dependent on local offerings. At the least, local foods decrease the number of food miles travelled. In the future, environmentally sustainable agricultural practices must be utilized if a sustainable food chain is to be established.

Health Impacts

"We have been so conditioned to believe that we can have anything at any time. The consequence is genetically-modified food that looks really pretty and has a great shelf life. But that food has a huge carbon footprint and is not as nutritious," said Ingrid Ault, executive director of *Think Local First* in Ann Arbor. There are many health benefits to consuming locally farmed foods. Buying local foods often

²⁹ *Food, Fuel, and Freeways: An Iowa perspective on how far food travels, fuel usage, and greenhouse gas emissions.* Pirog et al. June 2001. <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/staff/ppp/index.htm>

³⁰ *Cooking up a Storm: Food, greenhouse gas emissions, and our changing climate.* Garnett. September 2008. http://www.fcrn.org.uk/frcnPubs/publications/PDFs/CuaS_web.pdf

means consuming more nutritious foods. A diet incorporating products grown and raised within 100 miles is likely to include plenty of fruits and vegetables. According to a study of 8 Philadelphia farmers markets, 57% of residents who shop at the market increased their fruit and vegetable intake.³¹

Nutritional value of these fruits and vegetables declines the further they have to travel; produce that is purchased at a local farmers' market has often been picked within 24 hours. Maximum time on the vine also adds to nutrition. Local farms can allow their produce to get soft and juicy on the vine, instead of picking rock-hard tomatoes and peaches that are shippable cross country. Also, by eating with the seasons, we are eating foods when they are at their peak taste, are the most abundant, and the least expensive.³²

Local foods do not come from large commercial food companies; therefore, people who eat local do not consume as much processed food. Processed food typically contains lots of refined carbohydrates, sugar, fat and preservatives. Eating local often means you can meet the people who produce your food, and you can also ask questions about pesticide use and farming methods. Food with less distance to travel from farm to plate has less susceptibility to harmful contamination.⁶

Some local small farms also offer meat grown in a pasture, rather than locked in Confined/Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). One example is Baldwin Farms in Yanceyville, NC. The pasture raised cattle have less fat and none of the antibiotic chemicals found in most meat. "Over the past decade, many studies have shown that the meat and milk from pasture-raised animals are higher in the fats that may have health benefits for humans," said Annie Wolock, owner of *Keystone Media* in Ann Arbor, Michigan.³³

A study is underway that will seek to understand the health benefits of local foods. Performed by the University of North Carolina, the study will last two years, and researchers say it will improve understanding of the health, environmental and economic issues associated with the local food trend. The study will look at the environmental benefits of transitioning to sustainable farming practices, determine whether there are nutritional and health benefits for consumers, and conduct an economic analysis of opportunities and barriers to local food systems.³⁴

Social Impacts

If the community is more connected to their food and its producers, and if producers are connected to the consumers of their food, then people are likely to feel more invested in and connected to their community. Modern consumption and production habits have lead to "a struggle to keep the 'culture' in 'agriculture'." ³⁵ Eating local is reconnecting with the land and our neighbors.

³¹ *Farmers Market Program Evaluation*

³² http://fogcity.blogs.com/jen/2005/08/10_reasons_to_e.html

³³ http://www.mlive.com/business/annarbor/index.ssf/2009/07/deb_merion_buy_local_food_move.html

³⁴ <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/06/06/boosting-health-with-local-food/>

³⁵ Tasch 27

OPPONENTS

- **Area Food Distributors:** These distributors are in direct competition for local food outlets
- **Individuals who see local foods as an elitist framework:** Some may be opposed to the idea if they do not believe the local foods movement can reach all demographics
- **Large Agribusinesses:** The local foods model generally promotes small farm operations and agricultural businesses. Large agribusiness may see this as a threat especially as the local foods movement progresses

CONCLUSION

The local food movement is a relatively new concept; however, it is one that the Dan River region can be on the forefront of embracing, with help from key partners and institutions. Its acceptance in the Dan River region would benefit the community in many ways. Improved health, a sustainable environment, and a diversified economy would propel the overall transformation of the region. The Danville Regional Foundation, because of its interest in all of those areas, should help establish the concept of local foods in the area by aiding farmers and informing consumers. With the help of the foundation and its community and regional partners, the region could become a sustainable, prosperous place in the near future.

DEFINITIONS

Agribusiness

Industrialized farms that are geared toward producing large amounts of food. They deal in terms of global markets, “mechanization, and what some have even called ‘chemicalization’.”³⁶

Community Food Security (CFS)

“Community food security is a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice. “

³⁶ Tasch 27-28

Food security focuses on low income access to healthy food and on strengthening regional food ties. It also promotes initiatives such as food policy councils, farm to cafeteria projects, CSA's, farmers' markets, community gardens, and community development

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)³⁷

Consumers purchase a share of local farmers' crops for a defined period, providing the farmers with an assured market and the consumers with healthy food and a stake in the farm. Also promotes reconnection with the land and familiarity of where our food comes from and how it is produced.

The idea was imported from Switzerland in 1984 by Jan VanderTuin, and today there are two types of CSAs:

1. Subscription CSA : Farmer acts as manager to provide food to the CSA's consumers. Sometimes farmers will partner to provide more variety.
2. Shareholder CSA: Consumers (or an organizer) hire the farmer(s) to provide food to the group. Some nonprofit-operated CSAs offer reduced prices for low income subscribers

Farmers' Cooperatives

Producers, processors, and/or distributors work together so there is an assured market. They also provide financial services and share the profit of the agricultural products.

Food Miles

How far food has traveled to get to your plate (farm, distributor, grocery store, etc.). Relates to the carbon footprint of the overall transportation as well as level of connectedness the consumer has to the food.

Organic

According to the USDA, organic products contain no antibiotics, hormones, genetic engineering, radiation, synthetic pesticides, or fertilizers. There are 3 levels of organic. Independent certifiers are contracted by the USDA to approve producers.

- 1) 100% organic: contains only organic ingredients
- 2) Organic: contains 95% organic ingredients
- 3) Made with Organic Ingredients: contains 70% organic ingredients

³⁷ Adam

Slow Foods

The slow food movement was founded in 1989 in Italy in reaction to fast food. The goal is to raise awareness of where food comes from, how it was produced, the consequences of its production and delivery to our plates, its cultural value, and its taste. Slow food is “good, clean, and fair.”³⁸ The movement encourages us to think of ourselves as “co-producers” instead of consumers because we need to take ownership of who we support with our purchases.

PARTNERS

The following are select organizations in North Carolina and Virginia that are currently involved with the local foods movement. Because of their proximity or relevant ideas, Danville Regional Foundation could partner with them to bring the movement to the Dan River Region.

Appalachian Sustainable Development, Abingdon, VA

www.asdeveop.org

Market development, farmer training, and public education to help farmers earn a “comfortable living” from their land. The group organizes workshops as well as on-farm training. Serves southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee.

- *Healthy Families-Family Farms*: Creates a market for 30 family farmers in southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee by delivering their food to low income families. Churches, civic groups, Appalachian Harvest, and the Southwestern Virginia Second Harvest Food Bank partner to buy the leftover produce and distribute it at over 120 food pantries in 9 counties.
- *Appalachian Harvest*: Network of certified organic family farmers. The brand is found in grocery stores, including mainstream chains such as Ingles and Food City, as far north as Philadelphia and D.C. A “transitional organic” category is available for farmers that are working towards organic certification.

Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), Raleigh, NC

A Raleigh based nonprofit with the goal of building a sustainable local food economy in North Carolina. They are in the process of creating a state-wide action plan and a team to facilitate the plan. The strategy will be the result of discussions and interviews across North Carolina.

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA),

³⁸ *Slow Food*

A nonprofit composed of over 1,000 farmers, consumers, and businesses in North and South Carolina. Projects include implementing and educating about local food systems. The group is planning several farm incubators to lease land and equipment to new farmers as well as provide them with business planning and other training.

Food Policy Councils

Food Policy Councils are groups that influence legislation regarding the production and distribution of food. They were established in select states in 2001, including North Carolina, and funded by a USDA grant. The Council in NC was disbanded, but new councils are on the verge of reappearing. For example, nascent groups have formed in Charlotte and Cabarrus County. The Center for Environmental Farming Systems summit recommends the creation of a Sustainable Local Food Policy Council to establish benchmarks and be a clearinghouse for local foods research and assistance for farmers and entrepreneurs.³⁹

A food policy council has just begun to form in Virginia. In 2007, the Virginia Food Security Summit overwhelmingly recommended a policy council to represent “all sectors and interests.”⁴⁰ As a result, the Virginia Food System Council held its inaugural meeting in March of 2009 and is set to go public the fall of 2009.

Golden LEAF Foundation, Rocky Mount, NC

www.goldenleaf.org

Works to support NC farmers by funding new crops, technology, farmer training, marketing, and other agricultural enterprises. As of winter 2009, the foundation had pledged \$3 million in grants to local foods and direct marketing in NC. Organized the Farm to Fork Summit in March in Raleigh.

Harvest Foundation, Martinsville, VA

www.theharvestfoundation.org

Jeff Mansour, Program Officer

The Harvest Foundation in Martinsville is beginning a comprehensive local foods initiative and would be willing to partner with DRF efforts. Below is an outline of their proposed ideas:

- *Local Assessment:* Conducting a “piece meal” assessment of farmers, potential partners, and current initiatives to identify current agricultural impact.
- *Martinsville Farmers’ Market:* Promoting the market through cooking demonstrations, health seminars, and other special events. The Harvest Foundation already supports marketing and a part time director of the market.

³⁹ *Formalizing the initiative*

⁴⁰ Beatley, et. al

- *Economic Development:* Negotiating the barriers to successful local farming, notably the disconnect between the city and the county, the decreasing desire to pursue farming as a career, and the popularity of fast food chains.
 - Regional Brand - Assisting area farmers in achieving the Appalachian Sustainable Development's brand, *Appalachian Harvest*.
 - Create Jobs - Continuing the tradition of many people cultivating even just a few acres, but encouraging food production instead of tobacco. Also, encouraging young farmers to transition to more profitable, niche crops.
 - Policy – Working with the city to make taxes more favorable to local farmers who sell locally, and developing better land use policy.
 - Import Substitution – Substituting food imports with local food and exporting surplus goods to increase profit. Encouraging spin off distribution and processing jobs.

- *Community Development:*
 - Partnership – Encouraging churches to buy excess produce to donate to a network of food pantries.
 - Community Garden – Engaging master gardeners and other gardening leaders to take ownership of the garden and involve others.
 - Community Kitchen – Supporting micro enterprises by providing an industrial, certified kitchen for them to make their products (located at the Spencer Penn Community Center).
 - Patrick Henry Community College – Developing technical education to serve agricultural needs.

Piedmont Environmental Council, Warrenton, VA

<http://www.pecva.org/anx/index.cfm/1,1,0,0,html>

The group brought the Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign to Virginia. It is also involved with many projects, including those related to preserving working farms and supporting sustainable community development. Its service area is nine counties in the northern piedmont.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service

The NC Extension is incorporating the promotion of local foods into their programming. They are educating farmers and the community. For example, there is an upcoming meeting for farmers' market managers to exchange ideas about marketing, receive food safety training, and learn about market regulations.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, Asheville, NC

asapconnections.org

ASAP's mission is to "create and expand regional community based and integrated food systems that are locally owned and controlled, environmentally sound, economically viable, and health promoting." The group encourages discussion by sponsoring speakers, chefs, movies, and other community food related programs. They certify food from Western NC and the southern Appalachians as the *Appalachian Grown* brand. They also promote a *Farms to Hospitals* program and a senior gardening program.

Furthermore, the organization has completed a Baseline Food Assessment of Western NC to identify where food is coming from in the region, who is consuming it, and the potential for future growth of local foods.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Perhaps even more so than the NC Extension, local foods are part of the VA Extension's programming. Local extension agents are educating farmers and communities about the benefits of local food, and are helping to implement community food systems. The Extension predicts large economic benefits to the region as a result of transitioning to local foods. In some counties, extension agents advise farmers markets. Others are working with farmers and grocery stores to get local foods into stores. Finally, agents are initiating local food marketing campaigns and facilitating food expos to get the community's attention.

4-H

There are six 4-H clubs in Danville that have before or after school programs for high school and middle schoolers. The focus for the upcoming year includes nutritional, environmental, and agricultural education. The Extension Service is already working with 4-H to supplement programming.

MODEL COMMUNITY

WOODBURY, ILLINOIS⁴¹

This rural county, made up of towns with an average of about 500 residents except for the county seat (population 83,000), is implementing policies to put their community back in control of food production and consumption. Sioux City is an industrial meat packing center, but the county has managed to be named a National Sustainable Community by the National Association of Counties. The program emphasizes the farmers' current dependence on subsidies that force farmers to grow food for more

⁴¹ www.woodburyorganics.com

than they earn selling it. Large agriculture companies buy the food at a low price and sell it to consumers for a higher price. Therefore, the ag companies win.

The following are steps Woodbury County is taking to reverse this cycle:

- 100% real property tax rebate for land converted to organic. Land owners can apply for up to \$50,000 per year over 5 years to help with conversion costs. They must be certified organic by year 3. Funding comes from sales tax and general funds.
- Encourage small farms and higher paid labor by providing incentives to new farmers. 5 to 40 acres would be available to those eligible new farmers. No principal or interest payment for 3 years and loans available at 4% interest.
- Health initiative focused on farmers' market and local food in schools. The Floyd Blvd. Local Foods Market is run by farmers and features a twice weekly farmers market, a health foods store, a restaurant, and a distributor that sells food to local restaurants. Earns \$30,000 per week in peak season. Started in with a grant from the Human Society and a local foundation. Managed by a market manager.

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