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# The Role of Community Colleges in Developing the Illinois Local Food System

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A Report of the Illinois  
Green Economy Network  
(IGEN) Local Food Task  
Force

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As interest in and support for the local food economy grows, Illinois community colleges are uniquely poised to help propel the state's local food movement forward by offering relevant job training, community education courses, and campus and community outreach opportunities. Community college involvement in these areas will grow as demand for locally grown produce and other goods continues to increase across the state.

This report discusses opportunities for Illinois community colleges to support local food economies on campus and in their communities. It provides specific recommendations for ways in which community colleges across the state can train farmers, food entrepreneurs, and food processors to increase local food-related employment, as well as to educate community members about the benefits of local food production and consumption. This will increase the interest in, and demand for, locally produced food. The report was developed by the Illinois Green Economy Network (IGEN) Local Food Task Force, a team comprised of community college sustainability professionals and other individuals involved in supporting the work of community colleges related to local food.

Through a survey sent to multiple representatives of all 48 community colleges in the state, the Local Food Task Force gleaned information on three main topics: what is currently being done related to local food at campuses in terms of credit and non-credit programming, what local food policies the colleges have in place or are considering, and the challenges colleges face as they move forward with their work related to local food and sustainable agriculture. This survey data was used to inform the recommendations the Local Food Task Force made to community colleges its report, including:

- Develop certificate and degree programs focused on urban, suburban, or rural agriculture, depending on the area in which the community college is located. A farm/business incubator program located on or near community college campuses may serve as the perfect complement to such certificate or degree programs. Academic courses should also be offered to established farmers seeking additional training, and to those wanting to work in food preparation or food processing.
- Offer community education courses on topics such as organic gardening, composting, canning and preserving, food safety, beekeeping, and cooking with local foods. Such courses offer opportunities for colleges to connect with community members interested in learning more about local food production and consumption.
- Assess the needs of college's respective communities related to local food and seek ways to meet these needs. This might involve offering access to campus culinary kitchens to support the growth of cottage industries, lending assistance in the development of food processing and distribution opportunities, or building community gardens in low-income areas.
- Begin any work with local food on campus by crafting a definition of "local food" that will guide all future work related to the topic. This becomes particularly important as colleges begin to work with campus food providers or caterers to source local food as much as possible. This definition may also inform institutions that choose to serve as a CSA pickup site, farmer's market venue, or farm stand location as well as those that seek opportunities to increase student engagement on campus related to local food.

Each college and the community in which it is located faces its own unique set of challenges and barriers related to increasing education, awareness, and demand for local food within the state. The recommendations laid out in this report are designed to serve as a starting point for colleges looking to play a role in developing the local food economy in Illinois. It is the hope of the Local Food Task Force that the dialogue and exchange of ideas among community colleges in the state will continue and grow from here.

# INTRODUCTION

At each quarterly Illinois Green Economy Network (IGEN) Retreat, a number of network priorities are defined by attendees from community colleges from across the state. These priorities are then translated into collaborative task force team projects undertaken by IGEN-funded staff for the benefit of all 48 community colleges in Illinois. At the November 2010 IGEN Retreat, a discussion on the need to expand the local foods movement in Illinois led to the formation of the IGEN Local Food Task Force.

The goal of the Local Food Task Force was to identify the role IGEN and community colleges can play in supporting the growth of local food economies on campus and in the community. The Local Food Task Force began by identifying and reviewing current research on local food economies and opportunities in Illinois, discussing gaps in this research, and then deciding how the Task Force report might fill those gaps. The Task Force surveyed Illinois community colleges to determine what is already being done and what the needs are that relate to local food on community college campuses. Finally, the Task Force recommended ways community colleges can become more actively engaged within the Illinois local food movement on campus and in their communities. Results of this research are presented in this white paper with the hope that the recommendations will assist community colleges across the state in more actively engaging in the local food movement on their campuses and within their communities.

## **Local Food System Defined**

For the purposes of this report, “local food system” is defined as:

A collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies—one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution, and consumption are integrated to enhance the economic, environmental, and social health of a particular place.<sup>1</sup>

## **Overview: The State of Local Food in Illinois**

Over the last decade, interest in local and urban food systems has increased dramatically in Illinois, as illustrated by the number of publications on the topic (see Appendix A). These reports have been sponsored and authored by government agencies, foundations, and not-for-profit organizations.

Most of the Illinois-specific research done to date has focused on the need to address food security issues in the state—specifically, lack of access to fresh food for urban and rural citizens who live in areas called “food deserts.” The need for local food in these areas is particularly important because people who live in food deserts typically do not lack access to food in general so much as access to healthy, fresh foods.

Another key reason to ramp up the local food economy, according to many of the more recent reports, is that it offers a way to keep a large amount of money circulating in Illinois communities. According to economist Ken Meter’s 2010 study of the Sangamon region of central Illinois:

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<sup>1</sup> Feenstra (2002). “Creating space for sustainable food systems: lessons from the field.” *Agriculture and Human Values*, 99-106.

“Farmers gain \$3 million each year producing food commodities, spending \$636 million buying inputs from external suppliers, for a total outflow of \$633 million from the regional farm economy. Meanwhile, consumers spend more than \$1 billion buying food from outside. Thus, total loss to the region is \$1.6 billion of potential wealth *each year*. This loss amounts to more than the value of all commodities currently raised in the region.”<sup>2</sup>

The increased production, processing, and marketing of fruit and vegetable crops are also significant tools for job creation. Recent research from Iowa State University<sup>3</sup> reveals projected economic impacts of increased vegetable production in the Midwest. Specifically, the researchers estimated the volume of acres required and the number of jobs that would be created in several Midwestern states if they produced and sold the amount of fruits and vegetables consumed by residents of those states. The study made the assumptions that production would occur during the normal growing season and that 50 percent of the fruit and vegetable crop would be sold by farmer-run retail operations, such as on-farm stands.

The results of the Iowa State study are both impressive and informative. The amount of land needed to produce Illinois' seasonal fruit and vegetable requirements was calculated to be 69,387 acres. To put this number in perspective, Illinois had 26,775,100 farmland acres, according to the 2007 USDA Census of Agriculture. This is .03 percent of Illinois farmland acres, an amount of land so small it could easily be derived from “underutilized” tracts of land in both rural and urban communities across the state. Most importantly, the study projects that the production of local fruits and vegetables at this scale would generate 2,600 farm-level jobs and 2,800 retail-level jobs in Illinois<sup>4</sup>.

It is important to note that as employment in local food production increases, so too will job creation in related occupations and industries. For instance, as local food production grows, demand for jobs related to food processing, packaging, and distribution will likely increase.

Other reports point out environmental benefits, including reduced travel time and carbon footprint for foods grown, purchased, and consumed by people in the state of Illinois. Foods that are purchased locally tend to be fresher, be more nutritious, taste better, and have traveled fewer miles than foods purchased from out of state. Decreased travel time also allows fruits and vegetables to “vine ripen” to maturity, thus greatly enhancing the flavors, natural textures, and nutrient densities of foods purchased at Illinois markets.

For reasons ranging from personal health to economic vibrancy to environmental health, the reports urge policymakers and others to support efforts at the local level to encourage the availability of healthy, locally grown and processed foods. In a few cases, the reports specifically mention or discuss the role that community colleges in the state can play in developing local food production.

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<sup>2</sup> Meter, Ken (2010). “Sangamon Region Local Food and Farm Economy.”

[http://sfc.smallfarmcentral.com/dynamic\\_content/101/Sangamon.Region.Local.Food.Economy.pdf](http://sfc.smallfarmcentral.com/dynamic_content/101/Sangamon.Region.Local.Food.Economy.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Swenson, Dave (March 2010). “Selected measures of the economic values of increased fruit and vegetable production and consumption in the Upper Midwest.” Leopold Center. [www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing\\_files/midwest.html](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing_files/midwest.html).

<sup>4</sup> Swenson.

## **IGEN Local Food Task Force Survey Results**

During the spring of 2011, the Local Food Task Force conducted a survey of all the community colleges in Illinois. The initial survey (see Appendix B) was sent to representatives from all community colleges in Illinois. Twenty-four responses were returned, with representation from rural, urban, and suburban colleges.

Among the sample, 16 percent reported offering credit classes related to local food topics and 32 percent reported offering non-credit, continuing education classes. Among the colleges that responded to the survey, ten credit classes were offered during spring 2011. Five colleges reported offering at least 14 non-credit classes in spring 2011. Although this is not a complete sample of schools, it does illustrate that there is already established, ongoing educational programming regarding local foods throughout the state of Illinois. In addition, there were reports that local foods topics are being integrated into existing agriculture and horticulture curricula as a way to upgrade existing educational offerings, thus reflecting new interests, concerns, and information about local food.

Since a common understanding of local food systems is still being developed, the actual number of classes offered in both credit and non-credit delivery systems that touch on concepts related to local food may be higher than the number of courses reported in this survey.

Types of classes and programs described by the respondents were:

- Classic agricultural education including Intro to Animal Science and Intro to Soils
- Classic culinary curriculum with discussion of local food choices, sourcing, and their use and value
- Sustainable Landscape Practices
- One-day workshops for the “Educated Gardener”
- Healthy cooking techniques
- Foraging for local mushrooms
- Sustainable lawns and landscapes workshops
- Farm to fork dinners showcasing local food production
- Faculty development workshops in conjunction with service-learning projects

Workforce Development needs were addressed by 40 percent of the respondents. It is interesting to note that the number of respondents who identified workforce needs exceeded the numbers of respondents offering either credit or non-credit course offerings.

Survey-reported barriers to Workforce Development for employment in local food systems included several important factors. Among those identified were the:

- Seasonal nature of the work involved
- Fact that most local food growers operate family-owned businesses and workplaces requiring “no college-level training for the majority of their workforce”
- Lack of food processing and packaging facilities that comply with state regulations

Several respondents identified unfulfilled workforce needs. These include:

- Trained individuals to work in distribution channels for local foods
- Small-scale and medium-scale producers trained for semi-skilled farming
- Entrepreneurial training for production/sustainable agriculture

- Farm managers
- Replacements for retiring people in the feed, seed, chemical, and fertilizer industry
- Increased training and access to community kitchens and meat packing/processing careers
- Qualified and trained workers in the food service industry
- Assistance and expertise in learning best production techniques required to grow local foods
- Permaculture production relating to orchard and nut production and other perennial crops such as berries

When respondents were asked if the food service on their campus utilized local food sources, only three colleges identified formal policies favoring local foods. The explanation provided by those participating in the survey for not having formal policies favoring local foods include:

- Lack of local sourcing options
- Seasonal availability of commodities
- Challenges of navigating costs, contracts, and the policies of the hired food-service providers working on campus.

One respondent raised a concern about food safety issues related to sourcing local food on campus because safety reporting and testing of sources for local food is not standardized and their food provider has a robust tracking system required for any food sources that are used on campus. (It is important to note, however, that according to the Illinois Department of Public Health Food Safety Committee, fresh, whole, uncut foods are safe and do not require testing or approval. Although meat, eggs, dairy, and processed foods must meet certain regulations, those regulations are met even when selling at local farmer's markets, so this concern should not be an issue from community college food providers.)

At those schools with culinary programs, the use of local food appears to be greater. One school reported that the produce from their student-run garden is used in their student-run restaurant. Another school identified special events where local foods were featured and discussed. Insufficient supply of locally grown food at the required scale for purchase by community college cafeterias illustrates inadequacies within the current local food supply chain.

A few colleges reported partnerships with local food task forces and healthy food campaigns. However, the most prevalent response to the questions about partnerships with external entities or organizations described the relationship between one or more farmers using the local community college as the location for CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) weekly deliveries.

In summary, the surveys reflected increased interest in promoting local agriculture as a topic for credit and non-credit education and training. There is indication of demand for workforce training in this area. The growth areas, in particular, appear to be those in the entrepreneurial fields as applied to local foods. Further work needs to be done to capture the best practices and potential needs that Illinois community colleges can fulfill related to local food.

## THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Due to their commitment to providing high-quality, accessible, cost-effective educational opportunities for the individuals and communities they serve and their strong connections within the communities where they are located, community colleges are uniquely poised to play a role in expanding the state's local food economy.

Independently, many community colleges across the state have embarked on a mission to support local food economies and help meet workforce and community educational needs related to local food. For the past three years, six community colleges in particular have been at the forefront of developing and implementing local food initiatives in Illinois. Through a collaborative partnership between the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), resources have been made available to colleges to implement local foods initiatives based on their local and regional expertise and need.

Local foods work in Illinois is seen as an economic/workforce development issue, which has grown out of concern over the large amount of food imported into the state for human consumption. The Community College Local Foods Initiative grew out of two forces:

1. The work of the Illinois Workforce Investment Board Agriculture Task Force
2. The work of the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force.

As a result of recommendations from these two groups, DCEO and the ICCB entered into discussions that led to the ongoing and successful Community College Local Foods Initiative. Early in the project, key players in the Community College Local Foods Initiative identified the following list of strengths that community colleges could bring to the local foods movement in Illinois:

- Existing resources for partnering
- An established funding stream for program continuation
- A fabric of adaptable curricula and workshops
- Positioning to connect local food farmers and urban consumers and retailers
- Physical spaces for conferences, programs, and experimental farming
- University partnerships
- Additional campus business development and community resources

Six colleges were identified as possessing the capacity and ability to take on the Community College Local Foods Initiative. All had some level of agricultural or horticultural programming already in place. The six colleges are:

- Black Hawk College
- John Wood Community College
- Kankakee Community College
- Lincoln Land Community College
- Illinois Eastern Community College
- Joliet Junior College

Below are the highlights from each college to date:

Black Hawk College

- Received USDA Organic Certification.



- Developed curriculum to support organic production practices.
- Developed educational curriculum involving sustainable agricultural practices, including three courses tailored to address sustainable crop production: Hort 295 vegetable production, Hort 293 Fruit and Viticulture, and Ag Special Topics in Agriculture
- Marketed crops through u-pick sites, produce brokers, and grocery store chains.
- Provided more than 20 students educational experiences in local foods production: field preparation, planting, maintenance, harvesting, and marketing. The college hired two students to farm the four acres of certified organic vegetable production onsite.

#### Lincoln Land Community College

- Developed seven new local foods credit courses for its agriculture and culinary programs; four existing Agriculture courses were adapted to include Local Foods topics.
- Developed 23 community education courses.
- Reached out to local District 186 and Chatham elementary schools with demonstrations for students, parents, and teachers on purchasing and cooking with local foods.
- Taught cooking with local foods classes at the local Salvation Army.
- Is developing a series of DVDs related to local foods selection and cooking as well as canning and preserving.
- Planned, hosted, and/or supported a number of local food-related events including the Central Illinois Composting Symposium and Springfield Area Local Food Task Force events.

#### Kankakee Community College

- Leveraged Perkins funding to provide eight high schools with starter hydroponic units to stimulate local foods education at the secondary level.
- Outfitted a greenhouse to begin integrating local foods/alternative agriculture curriculum into horticulture curriculum.
- Reviewed existing horticulture curriculum to develop new modules on local foods production and marketing for the existing curriculum.
- Worked with low-income neighborhoods on local foods production.

#### Illinois Eastern Community College

- Established a campus vineyard.
- Established a campus fruit orchard.
- Planted vegetable crops for the local community for marketing through grocery stores, local restaurants, and the farmers market.
- Identified elementary students (5<sup>th</sup> grade) as a target audience and are conducting local food-related demonstrations and interactive sessions with them.

#### John Wood Community College

- Developed 11 non-credit short courses addressing local foods and gardening.
- Developed seven for-credit local foods courses addressing fruit and vegetable production, issues of agricultural sustainability, soil management, marketing, and business management.
- Created a Sustainable Local Foods Farming Certificate, which is currently being offered and has been approved for financial aid eligibility.

- Made presentations to groups of high school educators and students on opportunities for local food producers and entrepreneurs.
- Hosted workshops for producers in cooperation with University of Illinois Extension.
- Established an on-campus demonstration market garden on 11 acres of agricultural land to house lab activities and community events.
- Distributed campus-grown produce to Western Illinois food banks.

#### Joliet Junior College

- Developed a popular vegetable gardening course.
- Developed a hydroponics course.
- Planted fruit trees and an herb garden.
- Created and marketed 100 hanging herb garden baskets.
- Donated food to local food pantries.

The six community colleges will continue their work through June 30, 2012, with funding through ICCB. Over the next year these colleges will develop their sustainability plans, which will outline how they will continue to move forward. Although these six colleges are not the only community colleges engaged in the local foods movement, they have become community college leaders in Illinois. They are able to bring all the pieces together to accelerate the effort to make local foods and farming a major economic development force across Illinois.

### **The Challenges Community Colleges Face**

Illinois' community colleges are well-positioned to serve as a focal point for community-based local foods initiatives. Currently, many communities are faced with the lack of leadership and expertise needed to create a truly viable local food system. Within their horticulture, agriculture, culinary arts, and other programs in both credit and non-credit departments, community colleges house many of the necessary resources that communities need.

Professionals may already come to colleges for these types of resources. For instance, entities such as local forest preserve districts, townships, Farm Bureaus, and K-12 schools contact their community colleges for information on establishing community gardens, CSAs, and local food purchasing policies. A major challenge that emerges, however, is a lack of staff time, resources, and internal college support to address these requests. Current staff in these departments is already stretched thin developing new programs and teaching students. There is no dedicated staff time or resources for coordinating local foods programming or support within communities. This challenge is a result of the fact that, while community colleges house the necessary expertise, local foods issues are not yet included as part of their official role in their communities.

One solution to this challenge is for community colleges to partner with their local University of Illinois Extension offices, which also provide much of this same expertise and answer similar questions from community members. A collaboration with local Extension offices would allow community colleges to rely on already existing expertise rather than “re-inventing the wheel.”

Another key to addressing this challenge is to create an institutionalized structure for local foods initiatives and support in the community. College administrators must recognize and support these efforts with resources and dedicated staff time. According to the results of the IGEN Local Food Task Force survey, there is a lack of curriculum models for

sustainable agriculture or local food credit or non-credit programs. However, a wealth of resources have been developed across the country (see Appendix C for examples). It is likely that this barrier results not from the lack of resources available to assist in developing these programs but due to a shortage of staff and/or faculty to develop and run these programs. Illinois community colleges can adopt existing programs to fulfill many of the goals expressed in our survey results. They may be able to collaborate with one another to develop associate's degrees and certificate programs, offer non-credit courses, and reach out to the community to meet their local food educational needs.

Several of the challenges and barriers expressed by Illinois community colleges are linked to funding, staff time, and institutionalized acceptance and recognition of local foods programming. The following are direct responses from our survey results that illustrate barriers to implementing local foods programming on community college campuses:

*"On-campus community gardens aren't an option due to staffing needs."*

*"Barriers have included: 1. Program funding. 2. Personnel time limitations. 3. Developing a clear definition of sustainable agriculture programming that is accepted campus-wide."*

*"We have a plan for a campus farm to be run in conjunction with a Sustainable Ag. curriculum. However, we have not yet been able to fund the project. Our food service has provided a list of their produce needs and would be happy to purchase locally, if we can supply their needs."*

Facing these challenges and overcoming such barriers will allow community colleges to position themselves as a go-to resource for information on local food and sustainable agriculture-related topics on campus and within the larger community. The recommendations on the following pages may assist community colleges in overcoming these barriers and providing the local foods support many communities need.

# TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

## Academic Programs and Coursework

### Develop certificate and degree programs focused on urban, suburban, and rural agriculture.

Illinois' natural resources and infrastructure in many ways lend themselves to the production of commodity food crops, and consumer demand for local food is growing. However, there is a shortage of farmers who know how to produce specialty food crops (such as fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, and eggs) in Illinois. This shortage was identified by the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force in its March 2009 report to the Illinois General Assembly as the primary obstacle hindering the development of an Illinois local food economy. An important initial step to create a more local and community-based food system in Illinois is workforce development. Although 26 of the 48 Illinois community colleges representing every region of Illinois—from Grayslake to Ullin—support agriculture and horticulture programs, few of these programs specifically address the particular challenges of local food production and marketing. Instead, Illinois' community college agriculture programs effectively equip students with the skills needed to produce and market the state's major agricultural commodities. Horticulture programs serve the landscaping industry by training students in greenhouse production, turf grass management, and landscape maintenance, design, and construction. Local food issues are not well served solely by these approaches.

Existing course offerings within these agriculture and horticulture programs address some skills needed by local food producers, such as vegetable production, plant propagation, and small engine repair. Comprehensive curricula must be developed that will equip new, inexperienced, and transitioning commodity farmers and their children and entrepreneurs with the background in horticultural science, small farm machinery, business and marketing planning, knowledge of crop production practices, and knowledge of business management practices needed to successfully develop and operate local food-producing farms and farm-related businesses.

It is essential that new courses be developed within the agricultural education resources that already exist in the form of current courses, faculty expertise, and lab facilities. It is also important to recognize that farmers growing and supplying local food crops and farm products require a similar agricultural sciences background as commodity crop farmers and those employed in the landscape horticulture industry. For example, students pursuing a certificate or degree in local food production require knowledge of plant growth and crop science, soil science and management, and animal science, when appropriate. Rural community colleges with traditional agriculture programs may find it possible to create a certificate in local food production and marketing by adding to the existing agricultural sciences core of crop science, soil science, and animal science. Possible additions include courses addressing the culture of fruit and vegetable crops and livestock production, as well as coursework addressing small farm viability and sustainability. Marketing of horticultural crops and niche meat and animal products as well as business planning and management for the food-producing farm—including value-added processing—are also important. Likewise, suburban or urban community colleges with traditional landscape horticulture programs could add local food production and business courses to core horticulture courses such as horticultural science, pest management, and plant propagation in order to create a local foods certificate. In some cases, colleges are choosing to integrate local food production-related content into existing courses rather than developing entirely new programs.

The levels of local food production and consumption are not uniform from region to region within Illinois. There is great demand for locally produced food in most of the population centers of the state and within Illinois' college and university towns. The current trend is that more beginning farmers are entering the local food market in these urban settings. In some rural areas of the state, there is less demand for local food and little public awareness of the employment potential that local food production holds for small acreage producers, rural community college districts,

and local economic development. It follows that community colleges would approach the development of a local foods curriculum based on the context in which the college finds itself. In a populous peri-urban district where there is high consumer demand for local food and much student interest in local food production as a career and course of study, it makes sense to immediately start developing a local food curriculum for a for-credit certificate or degree program. In this scenario, the college would assemble an advisory committee of local food farmers and entrepreneurs to review current horticulture and agriculture courses to judge their appropriateness for inclusion in the proposed local food curriculum. In addition, the committee would identify modules for insertion into existing courses and entirely new courses on production or business practices not addressed by the college's current horticulture or agriculture program.

In a rural district with relatively low demand for local food and low awareness of the economic benefits and employment potential of local food production, it may not be realistic to expect the immediate success of a for-credit local food certificate or degree program. More public education is required to raise awareness of local food benefits. Implementing campus and community projects such as community gardens and community education short-courses and workshops could be employed to build awareness of and interest in local food. Once awareness and demand for local food are developed, the process of certificate or degree development could take place.

It is worth noting that in developing a local foods workforce, entrepreneurs are being trained and educated. Students are not simply enrolling in a sequence of courses to learn a finite set of technical skills. At this stage in the development of the Illinois local food industry, potential participants must learn not only hands-on crop production practices, but must also engage in operation- and situation-specific business and market planning. They must study the economic realities and philosophical underpinnings of small farm viability and marshal their production skills and knowledge of business practices into entrepreneurial and agricultural success.

#### **Offer courses for established farmers seeking additional training.**

In most areas of the state—particularly agricultural areas isolated from either urban centers or college towns—the local food industry finds itself squarely in the capacity-building stage of its development. A majority of local food producers in these rural areas manage simple and very small direct-market businesses (often CSAs, farm stands, and farmer's markets) limited by the availability of and access to labor, capital, and appropriate local markets, as well as training in emerging production systems, effective business management strategies, and legal and financial risk management.

Even in agricultural areas of Illinois with more developed local food systems and businesses—such as Chicagoland's collar counties and areas around the largest college towns, such as Champaign and Carbondale—important strides must be made if local food producers are to make significant contributions to Illinois' food system. In these areas, too, there is a need for training to help producers expand their businesses, develop more sophisticated and profitable business and marketing plans, and adopt more fiscally and environmentally sustainable production systems. "In the course of working with the Western Illinois local foods community, we have observed strong producer demand for continuing education opportunities," stated Martha Sheppard of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. In addition, as University of Illinois Extension Crop Systems Educator Mike Roegge said recently, "For locally grown efforts to increase to sustainable levels within our community, we need producers and we need existing producers to grow. Both current and potential producers need to understand the risks involved in producing food for consumers. Currently, many do not understand the complexities that exist when managing risks for themselves, what these risks are, or how to safeguard themselves from some of these risks. The need for this type of programming is critical if we are to grow locally grown efforts."

Serving the continuing education needs of local food producers will require community colleges to build strong relationships between faculty and producers. Community colleges are experienced developers and facilitators of industry advisory committees to inform the content, delivery, and direction of most career and technical programs. Developing a local foods advisory group is also an important first step in developing any local food programming or curricula. In many cases, local food producer groups (such as the Central Illinois Sustainable Farming Network and Stewards of the Land) already exist and can serve as de facto advisory groups for program and curriculum development. Members of these existing groups are often willing and engaged industry advisors. Access to producers may also be gained by partnering with farmers market organizations and by consulting University of Illinois Extension educators who work closely with agricultural producers within their county or region.

Identifying and delivering appropriate continuing education programs can be challenging. While the need for continuing education opportunities for local food producers and entrepreneurs is evident in the unsatisfied market demand for local food products and optimistic production and purchasing benchmarks prescribed by the Illinois General Assembly, these programs must address topics demanded by local producers. Programs must be delivered in a format accessible to producers. Producers commonly have employment outside the farm, and, in some cases, rural producers have limited Internet access. Deciding when and where to offer continuing education courses can be challenging. To meet this challenge, preliminary education of producers—working through producer groups, farmer’s market organization, etc.—may be necessary in order to make producers aware of certain topics. These include business and marketing planning, legal and financial risk management, the USDA National Organic Program, and other sustainable production systems. Support from the Small Business Administration (SBA) and on-campus small business development centers could also greatly benefit local food producers.

#### **Create a farm/business incubator program to provide hands-on experience for students.**

Some form of experiential learning is a vital part of new farmer training programs. Creating a college-based farm business designed to provide a site for hands-on learning is an ideal way to serve students from both farm or non-farm backgrounds. This method would expose students to the work involved in season-long production of food and train them in the marketing skills required to expand small operations into commercial-scale local food producing farms.

Many community colleges possess land suitable for developing a market farm, and many possess the machinery and hand tools necessary to establish and maintain such an operation. The type and scale of the operation will vary widely depending on the capability and culture of the college.

Existing local food producers should be consulted before establishing a college-based farm to ensure that the college operation is not perceived as competition. In some cases, local food producers may request the college not grow and market particular crops or not market to particular buyers. If the college is conscientious about consulting producers and seeking out markets that are not currently buying local food, the case can be made that college-based farms actually develop and expand the market for local food. Appropriate markets—usually markets not purchasing local food—for college-produced farm products include but are not limited to the college’s culinary arts program, the college’s food service provider, institutions such as schools and nursing homes, and the campus community. Excess food may be donated to area food pantries, thus providing the needy with more healthy food choices, and providing good public relations for the community college.

Some successful college-based operations have openly sold produce at local farmers markets or to local grocery stores. For instance, Kankakee Community College developed an on-campus farmer’s market, which sells to students, faculty,

and staff. Black Hawk College is planning to market certified organic produce to Whole Foods. In some cases, these efforts were met with concerns from producers but were eventually embraced and seen as opportunities to raise public awareness of local food and to develop and expand its marketplace. One of the greatest hindrances to the establishment of local food production statewide is inability to find enough farmers who can supply the market with food. Demand for local food in Illinois far outstrips supply, so competition can be overcome by a farmer or college simply moving sales to supply the unmet customer demand in a nearby community.

## **Community Education Programs and Coursework**

### **Offer courses open to the community on topics related to local food and sustainable agriculture.**

For people interested in expanding their professional skills, getting fit and healthy, or exploring a new hobby, a community college community education department is often the first stop. Courses covering a wide range of personal enrichment, health and wellness, professional development, and home and garden topics are already offered at community colleges across the state. Community education departments are perfectly positioned to raise awareness about food system issues by teaching community members about the economic, health, and environmental benefits derived from producing and purchasing food that is local. The public can learn how to find a local food network they can support and how to eat seasonally and freeze, dry, or can local food for year-round consumption. They can also learn how food production fits into larger issues like rural economic development, food security and global hunger, chronic health problems, and the local and global environment.

Community education courses might also be targeted to specific audiences. For instance, a “Food Systems 101” class might be offered to journalists, planners, community development professionals, or public health officials, all of whom could benefit from learning about food systems, particularly if the material was presented in their “language” with their needs in mind.

Short courses, evening enrichment classes, and weekend seminars are the forte of these departments. People see community colleges as the place to go for ongoing education and personal enrichment opportunities. Existing partnerships provide connections to a wide range of community members. Facilities are easy to access, readily available and conducive to learning. Most colleges already offer cooking, gardening, and craft courses for do-it-yourselfers. Almost 35 percent of our survey respondents are already offering one or more community education courses related to local food and/or food production. Some of the courses currently offered include organic gardening, composting, canning and preserving, beekeeping, farm tours, local food dinners, and cooking with local foods courses.

## **Community Connections**

### **Assess the needs of the community related to local food—and collaborate where possible.**

One of the most important first steps in identifying ways that Illinois community colleges can facilitate education about and an increased interest in the local food economy involves assessing the needs of the college’s surrounding community. Each Illinois community will have different needs, interests, and challenges related to local food and sustainable agriculture. Surveying the community; speaking to people from different organizations, producer groups, and parts of the community; and assembling an advisory group of community stakeholders are all ways to gauge interest in local food issues and assess what the community’s major needs and barriers are.

Community colleges should strive to learn about what efforts are already underway in their communities related to local food. The goal should be to learn about and seek ways to collaborate with individuals and organizations currently involved in the movement in the community, rather than trying to replicate what has already been done or compete with community members' efforts. Local food councils, University of Illinois Extension offices, Farm Bureaus, Slow Food Chapters, and nonprofit organizations are just some examples of local partners that community colleges across the state are partnering with in order to support local food initiatives within their communities.

One of the best opportunities for community colleges to support local food efforts is through the local K-12 school system. Farm to School projects and community youth programs surrounding local food education have taken center stage in many communities in recent years. Currently there is a lack of systems or structures for connecting these programs with community college agriculture, horticulture, culinary arts, or other related programs. Community colleges currently place a great deal of emphasis on "college readiness" programs in local high schools and communities. However, these programs often do not focus on fields of study such as agriculture, horticulture, or culinary arts. An opportunity exists for community colleges to work with local K-12 institutions to integrate school gardens and food education into their curricula and to create connections with community college programs. Such opportunities might take myriad forms. These include:

- Developing service-learning projects that get college students into elementary classrooms to assist the students in starting school gardens
- Having faculty or staff who focus on local food and sustainable agriculture at the community college train K-12 teachers in ways to integrate such topics into their classroom curricula
- Creating curricula that trains high school vocational agriculture teachers and/or instructs vocational ag classes in the art of growing and marketing local food
- Creating curricula that trains school cooks in the legalities and art of preparing local food for school lunches
- Creating cooking class curricula that teaches high school students how to prepare and cook "real" food
- Creating curricula on season extension so vocational agriculture, farm to school, cooking, and other "local food in school" projects can continue year-round
- Connecting with 4-H, FFA, and other school programs that might touch on local food-related topics.

Another opportunity for community education lies in the ability of community colleges to serve as a hub for resources and expertise. Community members often seek resources from community colleges, and it is a natural fit for colleges to expand this role into the enhancement of local food system development. Community colleges can act as a clearinghouse for information on local food education, production, distribution, and procurement. Community outreach efforts often involve providing a space for networking, coordination, and training.

**Lend support for the development and growth of cottage industries, food processing, and distribution opportunities within the larger community.**

According to the Family Farmed "Ready to Grow" report, one of the primary barriers to increasing the amount of locally produced food available in retail and institutional settings is a lack of producer access to appropriate processing facilities. Preparation of local food for sale into institutional markets sometimes requires washing, packaging, and temperature-controlled storage facilities. Very few of these facilities are currently available in Illinois, especially for small- to medium-sized growers. This is a barrier community colleges may be in a position to help address. According to Family Farmed:



The number one recommendation of the Project Team is the development of a system of regional packing houses to aggregate produce and ensure that buyers can get a high quality product in sufficient volumes with proper post-harvest handling, food safety, and packaging. To develop momentum towards this, the Project Team conducted a Feasibility Study for the development of an aggregation, packing and distribution facility (packing house) serving wholesale customers. The primary determinant of feasibility is the commitment of sufficient acreage to provide the necessary raw material for a packing house to operate profitably as an independent commercial business<sup>5</sup>.

In the Bloomington-Normal area, a group of citizens have formed The Edible Economy Project, with the long-term goal of building modern local food infrastructure so that farmers have expanded markets and consumers have greater access to healthy local foods. The missing infrastructure includes food processing, marketing, storage, and distribution capabilities. To accomplish this goal, the project is working to facilitate establishment of a “local food hub,” which the USDA defines as “a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products.” The Food Hub will have full-time management and employees, plus seasonal, part-time employees. The Hub will have many workforce development ripple effects—including on-farm labor, drivers, delivery personnel, and marketing and outreach personnel. The Edible Economy Project is currently working with Illinois State University Dining Services to provide a small amount of local produce from three local specialty crop farmers. This pilot will be expanded in 2012, but will require a great deal of community support and expertise, some of which local community colleges may supply.

Many colleges are equipped with food preparation facilities, through either campus food service or culinary arts programs. These facilities often get limited use during off times and breaks, and could serve as pilot spaces for some level of processing and packaging, as well as an area for holding workshops or courses on safe processing and food handling. Courses also might assist interested individuals in learning how to make, package, and market chocolate, salsa, herb mixes, and other products.

This is just one opportunity colleges have to support the development of food processing and distribution infrastructure in the community. Colleges are well positioned to lend assistance through community education programs, by providing space for events, and as conveners of stakeholders and as sources of volunteers and research support. Community colleges might also address the need for larger-scale production, processing, and distribution by helping facilitate local food hubs and processing centers. Such centers would create further training opportunities for community colleges, such as food safety and good agricultural practices (GAP) training.

#### **Build community gardens on campus and in the community.**

Community gardens are a successful tool used on campuses to engage and promote local food systems. The following is a best practice example from the College of Lake County (CLC).

In 2008, the CLC Horticulture Department tilled approximately 7,500 square feet of existing unused lawn space behind the department building to start a community garden. The goal was to create garden plots available for rent to roughly 12 to 15 community members, faculty, and staff, as well as space for use in the horticulture curriculum. The Horticulture Department received an overwhelming response of 34 interested gardeners. For the second season, the garden

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<sup>5</sup> Familyfarmed.org (2010). “Ready to grow: A plan for increasing Illinois fruit and vegetable production.” Available at: [www.familyfarmed.org/readytogrow/](http://www.familyfarmed.org/readytogrow/).

expanded to 50 plots and had more than 40 gardeners. In the third season, it reached more than 50 gardeners, with a number of people sharing plots. Table 1 depicts the garden operations from launch through the current growing season.

**Table 1**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Garden plots</b>	<b>Rent per plot</b>	<b>College expenses</b>	<b>Advertising</b>	<b>Gleaning program</b>
2008-2009	38	\$15	\$600 for compost; \$600 for fencing, staff time, and water use	Ad in local paper, all-employee announcement	Informal
2009-2010	50	\$30	\$900 for compost; \$200 for more fencing, staff time, and water use	None	Offer plot discount of \$10 if opt in to gleaning (most participants opt in and pay \$20)
2010-2011	50	\$30	\$900 for compost, staff time and water use	None	Gleaning is standard, but gardeners may opt out for a \$10 raise in plot rental to \$40

Important considerations include plot rental fee, college expenses, advertising, and the garden gleaning program. Due to high demand, CLC increased plot rental fees annually. Average community garden plot rental fees in CLC’s region range from \$35 to \$45 per plot. The college placed an emphasis on the affordability of its garden, keeping fees lower than average to make the project accessible to entire the community. College expenses for garden operation remained consistent annually. Internal grounds staff performs the tilling each spring, and compost is the main external cost. It is important to note that college staff time and water hook-up are in-kind costs of the college. Garden plot rental fees amount to approximately \$1,500 annually, allowing the college to roughly break even for the compost and water.

Very little advertising was needed to recruit gardeners to the program. This suggests a large interest in and need for community gardens within the CLC region. In 2010 and 2011, CLC worked in the community to assist in establishing other community gardens. Thus far, CLC has mentored new community gardens in Vernon Hills and Antioch and garden expansion in Waukegan and helped create a community garden at the Avon Township Food Pantry. This latter garden is only a few miles from CLC’s campus, allowing them to direct overflow gardeners to Avon. Although infrastructure needs are relatively small in starting a community garden, staff time to coordinate and manage gardens is the biggest barrier to most local entities.

Finally, CLC built in a gleaning program, which recruits volunteers to harvest unwanted produce from the garden for donation to local food pantries. In year one, CLC informally provided this service to gardeners who volunteered their excess produce. However, a lack of a formal volunteer structure limited the program. In year two, CLC offered a discount for gardeners to sign up for the gleaning program. Lack of staff time and volunteer coordination still made execution of the program difficult. In year three, the gleaning program became standard and gardeners were required to opt-out and pay an additional rental fee if they did not wish to participate. CLC hopes to engage a local entity, Lake County Green Congregations, a collaborative of faith-based social action teams, to provide volunteers to execute the gleaning program. The goal is to donate one ton of produce from CLC’s garden to the food pantry this season, and harvest an additional ton directly at the food pantry’s production garden.

CLC’s garden will require redesign of existing planting to expand near its current location behind the Horticulture building, which is part of the long-term plan for the horticulture grounds. Opportunities lie within the community to

create additional community garden locations, but the college is the primary source of expertise on local food systems and garden management. Non-credit training, community organizing, and outreach can help address this issue. However, the college must dedicate staff time and resources to do so.

## **On Campus**

### **Create a campus-wide definition of “local food.”**

There is not an official definition of “local food” that is widely accepted or used within Illinois or nationally. Therefore, one of the first steps community colleges may wish to take as they set about developing their local food programs and initiatives is to develop a definition of the phrase. This way, all stakeholders on campus and in the community will be “speaking the same language” in regard to what they mean when referencing “local food.” This becomes particularly important if the campus food service or caterer begins working to source local food for use in cafeterias or at special events.

As was stated previously, for the purposes of this report “local food system” is defined as: “A collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies—one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution, and consumption is integrated to enhance the economic, environmental, and social health of a particular place.”<sup>6</sup>

This is one definition colleges may choose to adopt, which focuses less on the distance food has traveled and more on the integration of economy, environment, and social health in building local food economies. On the other hand, when defining the parameters of what is considered local food, some colleges have chosen to focus on the distance between the college campus and where the food was produced. Some schools chose to rely on the definition used in the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act, which states that: “ ‘Local farm or food products’ are products grown, processed, packaged, and distributed by Illinois citizens or businesses located wholly within the borders of Illinois.” In other instances, “local” may include anything produced within a 275-mile radius, a definition used in the text of the Tester Amendment to the U.S. Senate’s food safety bill S.510. Or “local food” may include anything produced within a tri-state area around the college, which is how Heartland Community College defines the phrase. Another possibility: In 2008, Congress passed H.R.2419, an amendment to the “Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act,” in which “local” and “regional” products together are defined as those final products that have been transported less than 400 miles from the origin of the product or within the state in which the product is produced.<sup>7</sup>

### **Designate a location on the college campus to serve as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) pickup site or farmer’s market venue.**

With their location within the community, ample parking, and connection to the local food economy, community colleges are a logical place to serve as a pickup site for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs or as a venue for a farmer’s market. In doing so, institutions are offering additional services to their faculty, staff, students, and community, while creating valuable partnerships with in-district organizations and industries.

While all CSA farmers will have their own special requirements for pickup sites, typically a qualifying CSA site must have the following features:

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<sup>6</sup> Feenstra (2002). “Creating space for sustainable food systems: lessons from the field.” *Agriculture and Human Values*, 99-106.

<sup>7</sup> 110<sup>th</sup> Congress (2007-2008). H.R.2419, an amendment to the “Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act.”

- Parking or public transit access for CSA members
- Space for a produce truck
- Large, open space for share boxes
- A tent or sheltered area to protect the produce in case of inclement weather.<sup>8</sup>

To explore the above option, institutions must first identify local growers/CSA programs (www.localharvest.org is a convenient site for beginning your search) and then offer fair outreach to all qualifying in-district growers for drop-off site service through targeted outreach efforts.

Institutions may also wish to work with local growers, businesses, or market companies to function as a community farmer’s market site. This option is especially beneficial to urban institutions that do not yet have existing farmer’s market options. Institutions that build, sponsor, and develop new farmer’s market sites can use the market as an opportunity to provide local food education and offer access to fresh produce to areas that may, otherwise, be limited as a “food desert.” Colleges might consider working with local businesses or organizations that have captive audiences and/or an existing large marketing net, such as hospitals<sup>9</sup>. French Market companies exist to assist as a host organization to local markets and can offer financial assistance to start-up programs<sup>10</sup>, or there may be local organizations or groups in the community available to assist with starting a farmer’s market.

Should an institution be unable to host a farmer’s market or serve as a CSA pickup site, providing space for a produce stand of a single local grower (or a stand for selling produce grown on campus) might be incorporated into the plan at the institution. Institutions that have access to green space might offer community gardens<sup>11</sup> or develop a campus farm, and the excess produce generated from such programs could be sold to faculty, staff, students, and community members at a campus farm stand. The responsibility of functioning as a host to local produce stands can fall within associated academic departments (such as agriculture, horticulture, business, or marketing) as a special project or within relevant non-academic programs such as human resources or community education.

**Work with campus food providers to source local food in cafeterias, through catering, and in vending machines.**

In order to “walk the talk,” community colleges that seek to get involved in supporting the local food economy should find ways to source local food on campus as much as possible. For institutions currently locked into a food-service contract, this may involve organizing a local food committee comprised of professionals from departments such as purchasing, dining, student activities, and facilities who will work together to prepare language regarding specific requests for locally sourced foods in future dining/catering/vending contracts. This team may also craft suggestions for a broader, campus-wide sustainable purchasing initiative. Community colleges may collaborate with other institutions hosting already-successful programs for assistance in developing proper language for this process. Colleges with agriculture departments or campus farms may wish to request inclusion of these programs in any sourcing of local food that occurs on campus.

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<sup>8</sup> www.familyfarmed.org

<sup>9</sup> http://www.metrohealth.net/news-events/press-releases/2011/04/19/metro-health-will-again-host-farmers-market

<sup>10</sup> www.bensidounusa.com

<sup>11</sup> Starting a Community Garden: http://www.communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php

Institutions within Illinois should also begin examining available options for improving local/healthy food options in vending areas. States such as California<sup>12</sup> and Iowa<sup>13</sup> are working to “rate” the quality of vending machine food products based on health. Outreach to outside entities such as the state’s Department of Public Health, vending franchises, and local farmers can provide an institution with a baseline assessment for moving forward with improving vending machine food options for students and the campus community.

Community colleges should also, when possible, include consideration of local food in catering contracts or special requests made to the institution’s approved catering companies. This could involve exploring the options for local food with the existing catering contractor and working to adequately market those options that do (or could) exist for departments on campus seeking catering. Colleges and caterers may even go so far as to team up to develop a “Local Food Menu” the departments can choose from when hosting special events on campus.

### **Create opportunities for student engagement with the local food movement.**

By working collaboratively, student affairs practitioners and sustainability professionals or local food staff on campus can develop programming that elicits socially and environmentally responsible behaviors in students. While this conversation is not limited to the topic of local food, there are a number of ways in which campus-wide programs can incorporate this topic:

- Work with on-campus vendors and institutional communications departments to provide educational marketing regarding the origination point of food available in campus cafes, vending machines, and catered meals. Many food service providers have already recognized this need and, depending on your campus food service provider, they may have pre-fabricated marketing tools available for your institution’s use. For a sample of these measures, please view Sodexo’s “Don’t Be Trashy” marketing campaign<sup>14</sup>.
- Provide the campus community with regular communication regarding local farmers markets, farm stands, home-growing tips, and local food businesses to assist in the institution’s goal of providing access to local food.
- Offer involvement incentives and opportunities for students to engage in local food activities, including college-oriented national “local food groups,” such as Real Food Challenge, and regional/national conferences such as the Growing Power Urban Agriculture Conference in Milwaukee.
- Examine pop culture and common college events for opportunities to get creative with programming. This might include:
  - Hosting a “Local Food Fear Factor” event that highlights locally produced food items that may not typically be offered in the dining area.
  - Creating a “Top Local Chef” challenge that is judged by local celebrities or that features the work of culinary arts students.
  - Working with the college’s office of student life and/or diversity council to host a Hunger and Homelessness program that incorporates local food (and, thus, environmental justice) into the conversation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Kaiser Permanente Incorporates Health Local Food Alternatives in Vending Machines and Cafeterias:

[http://www.hobartcorp.com/sustainabledesign/doc/hcfs/HCFs\\_CaseStudy\\_Kaiser.pdf](http://www.hobartcorp.com/sustainabledesign/doc/hcfs/HCFs_CaseStudy_Kaiser.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> “Iowa Public Health Will Soon ‘Rate’ Vending Machine Food”: <http://www.kcrg.com/news/local/Iowa-Public-Health-Will-Soon-Rate-Vending-Machine-Food-117207738.html>

<sup>14</sup> “Food Waste-Don’t Be Trashy”: <http://www.multivu.com/players/English/45656-Sodexo-Food-Waste-Reduction/>

<sup>15</sup> [www.nationalhomeless.org/projects/awareness/index.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/projects/awareness/index.html)

- Partnering with ceramics and culinary arts departments to create an “Empty Bowls”<sup>16</sup> program that features local soup and bread while it offers education on the topics of locally sourced food and hunger.
- Supporting student programming by offering active educational activities in passive locations—for instance, setting up a spot in a high-traffic area such as a cafeteria or building lobby to provide students with home gardening starter kits or educational materials about participating in a community garden.
- Offering free admission to a movie showing that highlights local food as a topic. Relevant movies might include: King Corn; Fast Food Nation; Food, Inc.; and No Impact Man.<sup>17</sup>
- Inviting local food farmers to a panel discussion following a movie screening or other local food event.
- Posting information about the health benefits of eating locally produced foods in strategic locations around campus, such as bathroom stalls and campus health/wellness facilities.

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<sup>16</sup>Empty Bowls: <http://www.emptybowls.net/>

<sup>17</sup> Please note that movie showings need to be registered with SWANK Motion Pictures for copyright fees: [www.swank.com](http://www.swank.com).

## APPENDIX A

### **Publications Related to Local Food in Illinois**

2004 – Red Tomato Report: “Feeding Ourselves: Strategies for a New Illinois Food System,” sponsored by 4 foundations. The Chicago Community Trust and the Chicago Department of Planning and Development presented research and recommendations on how to accelerate the growth of sustainable agriculture in Illinois. [www.redtomato.org](http://www.redtomato.org) – *Resources, The Big Picture, Reinventing the Food System, Illinois Report*

2004 – Advocates for Urban Agriculture releases “A Plan for Sustainable Urban Agriculture,” describing how a strong, integrated urban agriculture system can generate broad community, economic, nutritional, and environmental benefits. [www.auachicago.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/aua-plan-updated-3-4-10.pdf](http://www.auachicago.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/aua-plan-updated-3-4-10.pdf)

2005 – Sustain releases “The Land of Organic opportunity,” covering the many benefits of local, organic agriculture: promoting economic development, preserving open space, producing high quality food, and protecting the environment. [www.howtogoorganic.com](http://www.howtogoorganic.com) – under *IL Resources*

2006 – Mari Gallagher releases the report, “Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Chicago,” followed by a series of reports in Chicago and other cities that discuss the needs for increased supplies of healthy food, education, and access regarding the role of food in health. [www.marigallagher.com](http://www.marigallagher.com) – under *Projects*, the main page has updates on the original report; scroll down to access the original

2007 – City of Chicago releases “Eat Local, Live Healthy,” a strategy to coordinate aspects of the local and regional food industry in ways that enhance public health and create food-related business opportunities. [www.cityofchicago.org](http://www.cityofchicago.org) – search for “Eat Local, Live Healthy”

2008 – Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council releases “Building Chicago’s Community Food Systems,” discussing how to utilize public/private partnerships to develop thriving community food systems that improve access for Chicago residents to culturally appropriate, nutritionally sound, and affordable food grown through environmentally sustainable practices. [www.foodsecurity.org/FPC/Report-ChicagoFPAC-2008.pdf](http://www.foodsecurity.org/FPC/Report-ChicagoFPAC-2008.pdf)

2009 – Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farms Task Force releases the “Local Food, Farms and Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy” report demonstrating how Illinois can facilitate development of a local food system that complements the existing global food system and revitalizes rural, suburban and urban communities, Governor’s IL Local, Food, Farms and Jobs Council formed by legislation August 2009. [www.foodfarmsjobs.org](http://www.foodfarmsjobs.org)

2009 – Vicktor Schrader and Joseph Lauchlan write “Local Food Systems in Central Illinois: An Economic Impact Analysis” for the Department of Economics and the Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development at Illinois State University.

2009 – Illinois Workforce Investment Board Agriculture Task Force releases “Agriculture Task Force Findings and Recommendations,” discussing the critical role expanded food and agriculture educational programs and workforce initiatives can and should play in the growth of the Illinois agriculture sector and the Illinois economy; commodity production, horticulture and local and regional food systems were the 3 initial target areas. [www.commerce.state.il.us](http://www.commerce.state.il.us) – *Workforce Development, Resources, IWIB Sector Reports*

2009 – University of Chicago Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship at Chicago Booth sponsored the “From Farm to Fork: Innovations in the Chicago Food Industry” conference to advance the region’s leadership and growth in all areas of the food value chain, followed by the creation of a white paper and resource guide in 2010. [www.chicagobooth.edu/food](http://www.chicagobooth.edu/food)

2010 – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning included local food system planning among its 12 priorities in its “Go To 2040 Plan” for a sustainable metropolitan Chicago, recommending the region should strengthen the sustainability of its local food system by facilitating sustainable local food production, increasing access to fresh, nutritious, and affordable foods and raising awareness of its value. [www.cmap.illinois.gov/2040/main](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/2040/main)

2010 – Dave Swenson writes “Selected Measures of the Economic Values of Increased Fruit and Vegetable Production and Consumption in the Upper Midwest” for the Department of Economics and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, which explores the potential for significant long-term economic impact through increased direct-market sales of Illinois specialty crops.  
[www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing\\_files/Midwest\\_032910.pdf](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing_files/Midwest_032910.pdf)

2010 – Ken Meter writes “Sangamon Region Local Food and Farm Economy,” an overview of the Sangamon Region farm and food economy covering the following counties in Central Illinois: Cass, Christian, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, and Sangamon.  
[http://sfc.smallfarmcentral.com/dynamic\\_content/uploadfiles/101/Sangamon.Region.Local.Food.Economy.pdf](http://sfc.smallfarmcentral.com/dynamic_content/uploadfiles/101/Sangamon.Region.Local.Food.Economy.pdf)

### **Additional Sources of Interest**

2007 – The American Planning System released its first food systems planning paper and in 2010 created a new department, Planning and Community Health Research Center, which focuses on local food, active living, and social justice.

2007 – Center for Excellence in Eliminating Disparities (CEED), funded by CDC, established at UIC to increase the equitable distribution of healthy food resulting in lower incidence of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The Center is now doing extensive research into the values of local food systems.

Currently, the APA and CEED are organizing a national food systems conference for planners.



2008 – USDA Midwest Regional Office facilitating Good Greens Collaboration of Bobby Rush, Real Men Cook, Blacks in Green. Chicago Dept of Environment, Il Dept of Human Services, Il Dept of Public begins to explore ways to ensure all residents have access to affordable locally grown food, be informed about good nutrition, and understand the inter-relationships established; facilitated by the USDA Midwest Regional Office, now Midwest Sustainable Food Alliance, encompassing a very broad representation of the entire food IL system and reaching out to all states in the Midwest territory.

2010 – The Illinois Public Health Association’s Food and Nutrition Section begins an initiative to connect the public health sector to local foods, food access and food security issues.

2010 – Cook County Department of Public Health receives \$16 million in ARRA funds to build healthy communities; their focus is on addressing access to healthy foods and food/nutrition/activity/health related issues. Communities Putting Prevention to Work created a Cook County Food Systems Steering Committee to develop a county food policy council.

## APPENDIX B

### IGEN Local Food Task Force Survey Questions

A link to an online survey developed by the IGEN Local Food Task Force was sent to multiple representatives of all community colleges in Illinois. The online survey included the following questions.

1. **Does your college offer for-credit courses that focus on local food and/or sustainable agriculture?**
2. **If your college offers for credit courses focused on local food and/or sustainable ag, how many have you offered/do you currently offer?**
3. **Please list the most successful credit courses or programs you currently offer (in terms of students enrolled, graduates from the program, or employment resulting from the program) that includes content related to local food and sustainable agriculture practices. What makes them successful?**
4. **Does your college offer non-credit courses that focus on local food and/or sustainable agriculture?**
5. **If your college offers non-credit courses focused on local food and/or sustainable ag, how many have you offered/do you currently offer?**
6. **Please list the most successful non-credit programming you currently offer (in terms of students enrolled or other indicators you use to gauge success of non-credit programming) that includes content related to local food and sustainable agriculture practices. What makes them successful?**
7. **Has your college identified any workforce needs in your district or region related to local food and/or sustainable agriculture?**
8. **Does your college have any formal policies surrounding local food purchasing? Please explain.**
9. **What is/are your food service provider(s) on campus and do they offer local food options? If so, do they work to educate the consumer about local food? How?**
10. **Has your college expressed interest in advancing your local food efforts? If so, what are your goals and what barriers have you experience? If not, why?**
11. **Does your school have community partnerships with local farmer's markets, CSAs, community organizations, and others involved with local food? Please list particularly important partnerships.**
12. **Please list any other best practices your college has used to promote local food on your campus or any additional comments you have related to community colleges and their connection to local food and sustainable agriculture.**

## APPENDIX C

### Curriculum Resources

Below please find a short list of curriculum resources cited by the College of Lake County Horticulture Department Chair.

1. GrowLab, National Gardening Association ([garden.org](http://garden.org))
2. Life Lab, Life Lab Science Program ([lifelab.org](http://lifelab.org))
3. Project Learning Tree, American Forest Foundation ([plt.org](http://plt.org))
4. Project Wild, The Council for Environmental Education ([projectwild.org](http://projectwild.org))
5. Agriculture in the Classroom, University of Illinois Extension
6. Growing in the Garden, Iowa State University ([extension.iastate.edu/growinginthegarden](http://extension.iastate.edu/growinginthegarden))
7. Great Explorations in Math and Science, Lawrence Hall of Science ([lhsgems.org](http://lhsgems.org))
8. Activities Integrating Math and Science, AIMS Education Foundation ([aimsedu.org/index.html](http://aimsedu.org/index.html))
9. Northwest Earth Institute curricula, including "Choices for Sustainable Living," "Menu for the Future," "Voluntary Simplicity," "Global Warming," "Healthy Children, Healthy Planet," "Reconnecting with the Earth," and "Discovering a Sense of Place" ([nwei.org](http://nwei.org))

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- Dara Reiff, College of Lake County
- Rebecca Rossi, Heartland Community College
- Rich Schultz, Kankakee Community College
- Dr. Scott Stewart, Kankakee Community College
- Sandra Streed, Wilbur Wright College

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- Jim Braun, co-president of the Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council
- Terra Brockman, founder and board president of The Land Connection and author of *The Seasons on Henry's Farm*
- Carrie Edgar, department head and educator of the Dane County UW Extension
- Debbie Hillman, chair of the Evanston Food Policy Council
- Rory Klick, assistant professor of horticulture/departement chair at College of Lake County
- Lindsay Record, executive director of the Illinois Stewardship Alliance