Linking Farms with Colleges

A Guide to Understanding Farm-to-College Programs for Farmers, Food Service, and Organizers

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INTRODUCTION

Family farming is an endangered way of life. Of all occupations in America, farming is facing the greatest decline. Small and mid-sized farms have been experiencing tremendous economic pressure for several decades. With increasing costs for land and water, development pressure, and shrinking markets due to globalization, growers find themselves selling the farm in order to feed their own families. Most farms remain in business only because of other family members who have off-farm income. In 1993, the Federal Census Bureau decided to no longer maintain numbers of farming and farm families, saying the quantity of farmers had become "statistically insignificant."

While farmers' wallets are getting slimmer, students nationwide are experiencing an epidemic of obesity. Over 25% of Americans under 19 are overweight or obese . . . a number that has doubled in the last 30 years. Obesity puts young people at risk for hypertension, adult obesity, cancer, heart disease, and strokes. Unhealthy eating habits -- along with lack of exercise -- play a major role in this epidemic. It is a serious concern that many students do not understand the link between unhealthy food choices and future health problems.

In an increasing number of colleges and universities, the food service department, with limited funds and facilities, is contracting meals out to fast food chains such as McDonalds, Domino's or Taco Bell. There is an absence of fresh and healthy food choices, a lack of awareness of where and how food is grown, and a lack of understanding of how unhealthy food choices lead to health problems.

How can Farm-to-College programs counteract these negative trends?

By making direct connections between farmers and students, a win-win situation is created. Nationwide, interest amongst colleges and universities to purchase products from local, sustainable farmers is gathering momentum; dozens of communities and hundreds of colleges and universities are exploring opportunities to offer fresh, local, sustainably produced foods. In the Northeast, for instance, the number of colleges and universities buying products from local farmers for campus dining halls has nearly doubled over the past two years. Such efforts are opening up new markets for local, sustainable farmers and strengthening regional food systems. Research conducted by the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) indicates significant potential to increase profitability for family farms involved in these local food systems initiatives. “Serving local and organic foods is a national trend in colleges and universities. Many major industry journals, such as Nation’s Restaurant News, Foodservice Director, and Campus Dining Today, point to these trends and most Food Service Directors are aware of them” (Sanger, p. 26)

Existing farm-to-college programs across the nation already yield the benefits of promoting healthy food choices for students and increasing their awareness of the food and agriculture system. Quality matters when convincing students to eat their "five-a-day" recommended fresh produce items. Locally grown food is often tastier than its non-local equivalents, particularly when fresh. When the efforts of dining halls to incorporate local foods is combined with nutrition education, food and agriculture curriculum, and farm visits, students gain a greater appreciation for how and where their food is produced. Through this interdisciplinary approach, students are more inclined to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, adopt healthier eating habits in general, and, as adults, become supportive consumers of local, family farms.

Yet, despite these advantages, farm-to-college projects can be challenging to establish and maintain. They often require extra labor, new equipment, and changes in the way food is delivered, packaged, and procured. Food service staff may need more training. Local food can be more costly. There can be a mismatch between the school calendar and the growing season in colder climates. These are real and tangible barriers to the growth of farm-to-college projects.

This publication includes a discussion of the benefits generally experienced by participants involved in farm-to-college projects, as well as the challenges commonly faced during project start-up and implementation. It also provides some of the time-tested, overarching strategies for establishing strong foundations for projects to evolve and grow over time and suggestions for how these strategies may expand opportunities for success.

BENEFITS OF FARM-TO-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

While farm-to-college programs vary from region to region, they all provide similar benefits to students, farmers, and communities. Programs that engage students and faculty members can reap the most benefits. But the most successful programs start small – with one component, such as a special event that features local foods – and they build additional components as support grows. Here are some of the benefits that can be realized from farm-to-college projects:

Marketing Opportunities for Farmers

The most successful means for breaking into a college market is by engaging student groups and faculty members. Of all institutions, colleges are most receptive to the idea of purchasing and showcasing local foods if there is strong student demand. Like K-12 schools, colleges can provide small and medium size farmers a steady and reliable market. However, colleges and universities can offer a larger sales volume and a more profitable return than most K-12 schools. College food service directors expect to work with dependable vendors with whom they can establish a long-term purchasing relationship. Selling to colleges can fit well into a marketing plan that includes wholesale and retail marketing, and may increase the total amount of products sold. Sales to colleges may also increase participation in local marketing outlets, such as grocery stores, farmers' markets, or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares, through greater community exposure.

Students' Health and Nutrition

Many student groups are working to improve the variety and health of the options in their school dining hall. By engaging student groups and faculty members in the efforts of dining halls to incorporate local foods, students are more likely to support the project and be more motivated to improve their overall eating habits. By eating healthier food, they can decrease the risk of nutrition-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

Educational Opportunities

By engaging student groups and faculty members in developing educational programs in the dining halls and in the curriculum, the educational component of the program will be more effective. Student groups on campus interested in environmental, sweat-shop, and other related issues can get involved in the program by developing educational displays in the dining halls. Faculty members in biology, environmental studies, sociology, and other related departments can incorporate projects into their curriculum, such as researching where the food in the dining halls comes from and all the energy and resources that are expended in the steps from farm to dining hall. Other activities could include field trips to farms, classroom visits by farmers, dining hall composting and recycling, and school farms. Through farm-to-college projects, students learn about all the steps that go into the food on their plate, from planting to compost to planting again, from harvest to processing to packaging. Students gain an appreciation for the health and beauty of farmland and rural communities, the benefits of supporting local farms, and their role in preserving a healthy food system. As future community leaders and voters, this is vital.

Town-Gown Relations

There is commonly a 'tension' in relationships between a college and the local community. Farm-to-college programs improve these relationships through concrete actions that demonstrate the institutions' support for local farmers and the local community. Colleges and the food service departments appreciate the positive publicity generated by these programs. The more positive media coverage a project receives, the more support generated from the administration, food service staff, and the local community. By collaborating with administrators and community organizations, different aspects of a farm-to-college project can be supported and developed by the appropriate department or organization. In order to find solutions to the barriers that face farm-to-college projects, a variety of participants must be brought to the table.

The Local Economy and Environment

The existing system of food transportation and distribution requires enormous amounts of energy and other resources. Before reaching your table, the average food item in the United States will travel 1,300 miles. This is a highly inefficient system, creating serious environmental problems. Here are some food facts:

- Only about 10% of the fossil fuel energy used in the world's food system is used in production; the other 90% goes into packaging, transportation, and marketing.

- According to the USDA Economic Research Service, the 1999 energy bill for marketing food in the United States totaled $21.6 billion, accounting for 3.5% of retail food expenditures.

- The current food production and distribution system expends 10 - 15 calories of energy for every one calorie of energy produced.

When farm sales are made within the community they generally use much less energy. By purchasing products from farmers within the region, colleges and universities can make a substantial, positive effect on the environment by reducing energy needs for transportation, packaging and marketing. When vehicles travel shorter distances, less refrigeration is required, less fuel is needed and fewer ozone-depleting gases are emitted. The environment benefits when agricultural products are sold within the region where they were produced.

Purchasing products locally helps to create positive economic and social impacts:

- When farm sales stay within a community, the local economy can benefit from the recycling of those expenditures. Farms that are economically viable play a larger role in the economic, social, and political life of the community.

- Farms provide jobs, pay taxes, and keep working agricultural land open. Farmland has its own set of local benefits that can include lower cost of community services, open space, diversified wildlife habitat, greater food security, and flood control.

- Farms contribute more in taxes than they require in services, whereas suburban development costs more than it generates in taxes. On average, for every dollar in revenue raised by residential development, governments must spend $1.17 on services, thus requiring higher taxes. For each dollar of revenue raised by farm, forest, or open space, governments spend 34 cents on services.

When purchasing directly from local farmers, food services can support agricultural practices that are good for the environment as well as the community. By supporting sustainable producers through consumer demand, individuals can use their purchasing power to vote for a more environmentally sound production and delivery of food and help to preserve the health and beauty of farmland.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

These strategies attempt to address, in broad terms, a variety of key components inherent in most farm-to-college initiatives. While the organizational structure of these projects do vary greatly by region, by community, and by school -- employing a combination of strategies may aid the evolution of a strong and sustainable foundation for farm-to-college in your area.

1. **Assess need for additional resources**, adequate funding, and support from faculty members, student groups, and administrators.

2. **Commit to a cooperative approach with key partners**, including farmers, food service managers, administrators, faculty members, and students in early planning discussions.

3. **Engage students, student groups, and faculty members** in taking on significant responsibilities within the project. The more students feel ownership, the more effective and successful the overall project will be.

4. **Start small**, and don't move faster than any project partner is willing or able to go.

5. **Organize product supply**; develop contact with farmer organizations, grower networks, cooperatives and/or distributors.

6. **Work to develop strong educational and promotional components** aimed at increasing student's understanding of food and agriculture issues, promoting support for food service's efforts to buy local, and publicizing the project to the larger community

7. **Build policy support** at the state, local or district level for ongoing farm to institutional sales and other policies that advocate for family farms and sustainable agriculture.

8. **Be patient and solve problems creatively**; be willing to experiment.

9. **Communicate thoroughly**, honestly, and as frequently as needed. Be sure to include all relevant partners and collaborators in important decisions.

10. **Learn from the experiences of established programs**. Share these examples with your key partners.

IMPORTANT ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Contracts and food service structures

- Multiple Vendors

College food services are not accustomed to dealing with many vendors to obtain the products they use. Managing multiple vendors involves tracking availability, prices, orders, delivery schedules, invoicing, and quality control for each account. Colleges and universities' food service operations typically purchase large volumes of product at one time and usually purchase from only a handful of distributors. Many colleges and universities receive most or all of their produce, meats, staples, and kitchen supplies from a single vendor with whom they have a contractual agreement. These contracts limit a Food Service Manager's ability to buy from another vendor or from a farmer during the effective time of the contract. However, food services can buy products "off contract" if an item the Manager wants is not available through the prime vendor. This is a great way for food service to sample new products and begin purchasing from local farmers. In addition, many contracts are renewed annually giving vendors or farmers opportunities to develop new or change existing contracts for the upcoming year. Farmers can consider supplying products that do not travel well or are cost prohibitive through traditional channels.

A food service's inability to manage multiple vendors can be addressed through organizing product supply. The food service and the farmers both benefit when farmers are organized to market and sell their products collectively and offer reliable and quality service. A grower's cooperative is one effective model for farmers to organize with other producers in their area. Other effective models have included procuring products through local distributors or having a student intern coordinate orders and deliveries between farms and colleges (see resource list and case studies).

- Purchasing Issues

Food services can be self-operated by the college or university or privately managed by an outside food service company. Both self-operated and privately managed food services are able to purchase locally produced foods.

Factors that determine how easy it will be to market locally produced foods to food services include: personal interest and flexibility of the food service manager, support received from students and the administration, and the ability of local farmers to provide large, consistent volumes of high quality products.

In studies conducted in the Mid-West (by North Central Initiative, www.foodmap.unl.edu and the Land Stewardship Project) and in CFSC's National Farm to College Research Report, the most commonly listed benefit by institutional food service directors for purchasing local products was to support the local economy and local farmers. The impetus to contribute in a positive way to the local community is a strong motivation and something to keep in mind as a farmer "selling" this idea to a food service director.

- Efficiency Trends

The current trend in college food service is one of efficiency and cost cutting. More and more food services are working with prepackaged, ready-to-eat foods. Many food services are not able to utilize whole, raw produce as farmers generally sell it. Working with fresh produce requires the correct food service equipment, as well as appropriate storage facilities and a properly trained staff. A product that requires minimal preparation may be easier to market to food services, especially when they are just beginning to develop relationships with local farms.

Some farm-to-college projects have chosen to develop the food processing and storage capabilities on the farmer side of the transaction (before sale), rather than expecting food service to handle this matter. Food processing can be an important piece of the marketing puzzle. Organized grower groups are discovering that as they develop their own capacity to provide safe, reliable and ready-to-use products, many types of food services (not just colleges) become their willing customers. This expands their market potential considerably. Farmer-controlled processing can also hold the potential for preservation of their products, such as freezing, canning, etc. Particularly in the northern climates where a shorter growing season limits year-round sales, this possibility enables growers to serve their food service customers throughout the winter months. Contracting with commercial food processing facilities or establishing their own facility and expertise are among the choices for grower groups interested in pursuing this approach.

Supply Issues

Many college food services do not have direct contact with local farms, and don't know where to find them, even if they are interested in receiving local, fresh foods.

Seeking local farmers through the following outlets may provide the necessary initial contacts: farmers' markets, internet, 4-H groups, feed supply stores, roadside stands or u-pick farms, community supported agriculture farms, commodity boards and commissions, State Departments of Agriculture, Farm Bureau, county and state cooperative extension agents, sustainable agriculture organizations, and county fairs.

Successfully marketing products to college food service (so they know where and how to access the products) can be an overwhelming task for a single small producer. Through the economic stability of a grower group, this responsibility may be shared by several people, or may become a paid position within an organization.

- Volume and Consistency

College food services will require a reliable and consistent supply once they identify the quantity and frequency with which they will use a local product. The products available to food service staff will depend on what can be produced in a given area. In areas such as the Midwest or Northeast, fresh produce may be available seasonally, with processed items available year round whereas areas in the South and West may have year-round availability.

This is an area where it is very important to start small and work out the kinks as you go. As appropriate products are identified, begin with small trials and gradually increase quantities. Added demand over time will naturally increase the supply. Growing slowly means more sustainable changes and greater likelihood of successes upon which to build. Some projects start with one product, such as apples or lettuce or a special event that features local foods.

- Packing Specifications

College food services may require farm products to be packed in specific counts, weights and/or sizes. This should be a simple issue of communication, but may require the producer to adjust some of their packing methods to meet the food service requirements.

Delivery Issues

Most college food services will require regular deliveries once or twice per week. Food service operators are running on a meal schedule and require product to be available at a specific time in order to prepare and distribute a food for a specific meal. Growers who are used to grocery store deliveries with less specific unloading times need to understand the strict schedule of food service operations. Many small farms do not have the ability to make such frequent deliveries. The cost and the time required may make the frequent deliveries troublesome.

As the volume of sales go up and more producers are involved, it becomes cost effective to contract with a trucking service or to finance an appropriate vehicle for the group, and perhaps even pay a driver. Some college food services will help to work out transportation for their local products with their existing trucking systems. For example, sometimes products can be routed through a local distributor to obtain the needed transportation and meet the required delivery schedule. Another possibility is for growers to add destinations on an established delivery route. For example, a farmer may be able to deliver to a college on the same day she goes to the farmers' market, or delivers to restaurants.

Cost Issues

The cost of local, sustainably-raised (especially organic) products can be considerably higher priced than items conventionally sourced through large-scale distributors. College food service must cover their own expenses, if not generate a profit, and farmers must receive a price that allows them to remain in business.

Several of the "strategies for success" may come into play with this issue. First, start small, and identify one or more products that will work financially for both the food service and the growers involved. Then, build up support and acceptance for the product through the educational component of the farm-to-school project. Increased student demand for certain products or menus will likely be very meaningful to the food service staff. Over time, the educational component can have a positive economic effect for food service.

It can be difficult to determine a price that is fair to the food service director and fair to the producer. Producers can research what wholesale distributors are charging or ask the food service director what they are paying for particular products. The producer can use similar prices or a greater price, if the food service director is willing to pay more for a higher quality product from a local farm.

Initially, food service directors will express concern about the price issue but established programs have found that price is generally not an issue. Given how large the food budgets are for most colleges and universities, local food purchases generally do not represent a significant part of the overall budget. The local foods purchased usually represent less than 10% of the overall budget. Some smaller colleges have found creative ways to off-set the added expenses. For example, through purchasing locally produced whole foods, less waste is generated. And the waste that is generated is usually organic materials that can be incorporated into a dining hall composting project. Therefore, food service saves money on waste disposal costs. Another way to address the price issue that is sometimes used is to pass this cost on to the customer. Students can be given the choice as to whether or not to pay for the higher priced, locally purchased items.

State institutions are regulated by state contracts and may be locked into purchasing from the lowest bidder. In this case, working with state agencies and lawmakers to allow for an exception to a regulation if the product is locally grown may need to happen before products can be sold. However, in some state universities, exceptions to the rule can be made at the local level.

Seasonality Issues

Currently, most college food services do not plan menus with the seasonality of local products in mind. A shift in thinking and planning may allow dining hall menus to reflect seasonality on a frequent or occasional basis, as appropriate.

- Challenge of Northern Climates

Farm-to-college projects located in the northern Midwest and Eastern climates experience a shorter growing season and have the majority of product available during the summer months when regular school is not in session. While an abundance of fresh produce is available in the fall, providing products throughout the academic year is difficult without added processing and storage capacity or through season extension techniques.

Individual producers or grower groups that have appropriate facilities to hold storage crops throughout the winter may be able to supply their food service customers through the majority of the winter months. The growers that establish the ability to minimally process their products, including the potential to do some basic food preservation, such as bagging and freezing, will not only have product to sell year-round, but also will have created a product that appeals to the efficiency needs of food service.

Don't assume that seasonality is a barrier to a successful, year-round farm-to-college effort. Fresh fruits and vegetables are only some of the agricultural products available in most states. Other local products may include dairy, eggs, grains, beans, meats, or processed items such as honey, maple syrup, jams, etc. Start small, think creatively and identify over time what works in your particular agricultural region. Cornell University has developed a food pyramid based on what's in season year-round in New York.

Farmers are knowledgeable about product seasonality and can be directly involved with helping to develop seasonal menu ideas or aid the process by providing product availability charts by season. For example, a simple but effective approach might be to highlight a different fruit or vegetable each month throughout the winter, both in terms of menu planning and for educational or promotional purposes.

Assess opportunities with the college's summer food program. Colleges and universities operate dining halls in the summer to accommodate summer school students, and staff and faculty that work year round. In addition, many college food services have catering operations that serve foods year-round" Because of the smaller volume of product needing management during the summer months, they may have added space for food preparation and the flexibility to try fresh, locally grown items.

Food Safety Issues

Food safety is an especially high priority for both food service personnel and growers who provide their food products directly to consumers. In farm-to-college projects, the food service and the growers involved must work together to ensure the safety of their products. Some adjustments may need to take place on both sides to satisfy that "best practices" for food handling are in place.

Some food services have a HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) plan or some other thorough approach to food safety in place to ensure that the practices and procedures used by employees are continually protecting and monitoring food safety. If the food service is not accustomed to dealing with raw product, for example, some minor revisions or additions to these procedures may be appropriate. For example, upon delivery of fresh farm produce, a designated space to wash the produce prior to contact with other foods or facilities may be a new requirement. Additional staff training may be necessary to accompany any new food handling steps or food safety procedures.

Although HACCP plans are not routine on smaller farms, often the concepts and practices are already at work. It is always in the best interest of the producer to feel confident about their food safety practices. Ample communication between the food service personnel responsible for quality control and the farmer is the best approach for building trust in the area of food safety. A visit to the farm often assures the food service staff person

that best practices are in place. Any food safety areas needing improvement on the producer end can often be identified at this time, as well.

- Beliefs about Food Safety

At times, the assumption is made that produce from local and smaller farms is less safe than the same items produced on an industrial scale and transported long distances. This is in part due to the belief that the smaller operations do not have the infrastructure or resources to provide safe handling practices.

This assumption is based on misconceptions. Basic food safety considerations and practices are generally in place on small as well as larger scale farms. Basic knowledge and commitment to good practices are what it takes. Remember, good food safety practices mean staying in business for farmers, just like food service. Farmers take food safety very seriously. Generally farms interested in selling to colleges are experienced growers. Many are accustomed to selling to top-notch restaurants or farmers' markets, and they are very conscious of having a clean, safe and healthy product.

Keep in mind that products originating from large-scale operations generally move through large processing, distribution and storage facilities and usually require long distance transportation, often for thousands of miles. These products run an increased risk of contamination due to a breakdown somewhere in the chain of food safety management. Most conventional products today change hands (and responsibility) several times. Although food safety practices in our food system have markedly improved in the last several decades, the trend toward larger and larger operations in itself is associated with an inherent increase in food safety risk. Many family farmers are hands-on and see the produce through the entire process.

Liability Insurance

College food service may require that their vendors carry liability insurance. For many small growers obtaining and maintaining this insurance can be cost prohibitive. Grower groups, such as cooperatives of growers that market and sell together, often have liability insurance in place for other markets, such as restaurants, that require it. With liability insurance, particularly if shared among a group of farmers, new markets open and become more financially feasible. Farmers that already carry liability insurance may be able to add the required insurance for colleges to an existing policy. Groups such as the Farm Bureau specialize in providing insurance policies for farm operations.

CONCLUSION

The challenges that farm-to-college projects present can be overwhelming, particularly in the beginning. However, with a team of key players including farmers or agricultural organizations, food service managers, administrators, faculty members, and students, many of these barriers can be overcome. The following case studies highlight some farm-to-college success stories that vary in their approach and emphasis. Farm-to-college projects can be developed by farmers as a marketing opportunity, or by students or faculty members as an educational component or by food service staff as a way to improve meals. Whatever approach is taken, it will be uniquely based on the seasonality of the region and the goals of the farmers, college, and organizers. Farm-to-college projects offer significant opportunities for increasing farmer income, supporting the local economy and the environment, and improving students' eating habits. Through greater exposure to a wide variety of fresh, local foods and a deeper understanding of their important roles as consumers of food, students can develop healthier eating habits and become strong advocates for family farms.

CASE STUDIES OF THREE SUCCESSFUL FARM-TO-COLLEGE PROJECTS

The following case studies are adapted from Community Food Security Coalition surveys conducted in 2002 for the National Farm to College Research Report (http://www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_college.html#f2cresearch) and Appendix A, pp.63-70, from:
Farm-to-Cafeteria Connections: *Marketing Opportunities for Small Farms in Washington State*, Kelli Sanger, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560, phone: (360) 902-2057, e-mail: ksanger@agr.wa.gov http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/default.htm

Washington

In 2001, the Evergreen State College, an interdisciplinary liberal arts college with about 4000 students, invited Bon Appetite Management Company (BAMCO) to manage the campus dining services because of their reputation for fresh, high quality meal options and their commitment to source local, organic foods. During the 2002-2003 school year, BAMCO began hosting 'Local Grower Dinners." These dinners, held three times a quarter, showcased foods produced on area farms. The idea behind these dinners was to educate students about local farms and to promote the company's efforts to make connections with local farms. These dinners gave BAMCO a concrete introduction into the challenges and opportunities of working with local farms. 'Special' dinners held in campus dining halls are frequently a solid first step for farm to college projects. BAMCO's dinners enabled all of the critical 'players,' i.e. food service employees, farmers, students, faculty members, administrators, etc. to get to know each other through working collaboratively on a concrete project. By going through the planning and implementation process for these dinners, players gained an understanding of each others' needs and constraints which improves their chances of developing effective strategies for working with each other on a larger-scale. Three farms were showcased in Evergreen's 2002-03 Local Grower Dinners, which served locally grown vegetables and locally produced meats in fresh, innovative menus. Products were purchased from a student-run farm on campus, from local distributors who carry local products, and directly from area farms.

Purchasing local and organic foods has not increased BAMCO's overall expenses. BAMCO prices each meal individually, so students, faculty and staff who are interested in the local, organic meals pay the extra cost for these ingredients. BAMCO saves money by being very careful about the amount of waste they generate in their kitchens. BAMCO developed a composting project with the campus farm. The farm takes all of the pre-and post consumer vegetable waste and the biodegradable tableware that is used in the dining halls to make compost for the farm operation. BAMCO sees this as a sustainable system, a full circle where what the dining hall wastes in food goes to the farm where it is used as fertilization for the food BAMCO then purchases.

Student groups on campus have been active in promoting the dining hall's efforts to purchase locally. A 'Food Service Liaison' coordinator, a recent graduate of Evergreen, was hired during the initial phase of the project to assist with the logistical details of the project, especially in the development of relationships with local farmers. This position was funded by the college to help BAMCO meet the commitment made in their contract to purchase 20% of their foods locally with a 2% increase per year. Students, faculty, and staff have been very satisfied with BAMCO, who has continued to organize and promote their special dinners during the 2003-04 school year.

Wisconsin

The farm to college project at University of Wisconsin-Madison, a land-grant university with undergraduate and graduate students totaling around 41,000, was started in the mid-1990s. 'In contrast to other colleges, where students led the push for local, organic foods, UW-Madison's faculty and staff initiated local buying. The Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS) took the lead by requesting local, sustainable catering in 1996 and has continued this work with help from a USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant.' The SARE grant funded a graduate student, who as a research assistant for CIAS, laid the groundwork for the farm to college project in the early years. She visited farms and met with farmer cooperatives and other farm groups, organized a list of products available locally (including details about volume and consistency of product availability) for food service, assisted with the coordination of purchases and deliveries between food service and local farmers, and promoted the project on campus, in the dining halls, and to the local community.

Special event meals, featuring local and organic foods, were the first step in introducing the concept to food service, students, and the university. These events led to the incorporation of particular local products into the dining halls' meals on a regular basis. These items, that are available in the volume and consistency needed by a food service that provides around 15,000 meals/ day, include apples, potatoes, blue corn tortillas, and hamburger.

Two different food service operations are involved in buying farmer-direct and organic foods: The first is the UW-Madison Housing Food Service which has brought local and organic foods to their dining centers, carryout operations, and convenience stores on campus The second is the UW-Madison Memorial Union which has made local and organic food part of several catered events and is now planning to create a special menu option for customers who want to order locally grown and organic meals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison's farm to college project is a successful example of a large-scale model that has sustained itself through the test of time. The Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems continues to provide important support to the project and, in addition, has conducted extensive research on farm to college projects in Wisconsin and other parts of the country and developed very useful resources for food service directors and others interested in organizing similar projects on other campuses.

Iowa

The University of Northern Iowa's Local Food Project involves 10 different institutions in northeast Iowa, including the University of Northern Iowa (13,000 students), hospitals, other health care facilities, restaurants, and a retail grocery store.

The project started in 1997 through a grant from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and later received funding from Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). The project is housed in the University of Northern Iowa Center for Energy and Environmental Education. A faculty member spearheaded the project and continues to assist with project coordination and oversees an intern who handles the pricing, ordering, and delivery logistics between farmers and food services of the participating institutions. About 25 farmers have participated in the project. The intern works with each one directly. 'To date, the project has not attempted to facilitate cooperation and coordination among farmers involved, although this is an idea that continues to surface among the project organizers.' Products purchased include beef, pork, chicken, a variety of dairy products, and a large variety and volume of produce. Price has not been an issue for buyers, because the purchase of locally produced foods has not created a significant increase in food-related expenses.

At the University of Northern Iowa, local foods are incorporated throughout dining services, in the daily menus of the dining halls and incorporated into special events. UNI has one central kitchen that does all the processing of the fresh foods, which are then sent out to the kitchens around campus. As with many farm to college projects, UNI's food service appreciates the positive publicity that has been generated from the project. Students and their parents indicate their support of the project and are impressed that food service takes the time and effort to work with local farmers.

The University of Northern Iowa's Local Food Project is a successful example of a community-wide food system approach. The project encompasses several different types of institutions purchasing a significant volume from a large number of local farmers. Instead of working in isolation within their community, the farm to college project at UNI engaged a wide array of public and private institutions in local food purchasing. Given the resources, community connections, and expertise found within colleges and universities, farm to college projects can consider involving other institutions and partner organizations across a region in developing a community-wide strategy that results in a significant dent in improving local farms' profitability.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

NATIONAL FARM-TO-COLLEGE PROGRAM

Community Food Security Coalition
P.O. Box 209 Venice, CA 90294 • **Tel:** 310-822-5410 **Fax:** 310-822-1440 E**mail:** kristen@foodsecurity.org; www.foodsecurity.org; www.farmtocollege.org

1. Community Food Security Resource Kit: How to Find Money, Technical Assistance, and Other Help to Fight Hunger and Strengthen Local Food Systems, Free, $4 shipping
2. Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids: Evaluating the Barriers and Opportunities for Farm-to-school Programs, $12 plus $4 shipping. *Provides case studies of programs at the K-12 level and includes policy recommendations.* click here to order
3. "Linking Farms with Schools: A Guide to Understanding Farm-to-School Programs for Schools, Farmers and Organizers," 2004, Marion Kalb, Kristen Markley and Sara Tedeschi. Community Food Security Coalition, $7 plus $4 shipping *Details the benefits, challenges, and strategies for success for building successful farm to school projects and includes case studies of innovative projects and an extensive resource list. .* click here to order
4. "Farmer Resource Guide: Managing Risk Through Sales to Educational Institutions, " 2004, Community Food Security Coalition and the Center for Food & Justice, Occidental College. $22 plus $8 shipping *(*includes *Linking Farm with Schools*) *An extensive compilation of resources that address the many different issues within farm to institutional purchasing projects, including how to approach food service directors, how to organize supply and distribution of the products, characteristics of different institutions, pricing issues, and several case studies of different types of farm to institution projects.* click here to order
5. Community Food Security Coalition http: http://www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_college.html *Farm to college resources, links, and funding ideas.*
6. *National Farm to College Research Report*, http://www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_college.html#f2cresearch

COOPERATIVES

Keystone Development Center

Kate Smith
Executive Director
smith@kdc.coop
215-292-1461 (T) / 814-238-5059 (F)
1238 South Garner St, State College, PA 16801

www.kdc.coop

Resources available on-line:

The *Guide to Cooperative Development Resources in Pennsylvania* is a comprehensive guide to setting up a cooperative and finding help with various aspects of the process.

A *Needs Analysis of Pennsylvania Cooperatives* was prepared for the Keystone Development Center by AUS Consultants. Cooperative needs relative to management, financing, production, leadership, and membership were assessed for 305 cooperatives doing business in Pennsylvania.

USDA Rural Business and Cooperative Programs **http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/**

-information on publications and grants for rural businesses and cooperatives

"Innovative Marketing Opportunities for Small Farmers: Local Schools as Customers", Dan Schofer, (Available at their website, http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/mta/publications.htm) *Uses the example of a farmer managed cooperative in northern Florida to detail the development of a cooperative structure, includes more resources on cooperatives*

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Bringing Local Food to Local People: A Resource Guide for Farm-to-School and Farm-to-Institution Programs, ATTRA, **http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/farmtoschool.pdf** *Available free on the web. This resource includes profiles of programs, potential funding sources, and an annotated bibliography.*

Buy Local Food and Farm Toolkit: A Guide for Student Organizers, Oxfam America's Change Initiative program, **http://www.oxfamamerica.org/pdfs/food_farm_toolkit.pdf** *Report on incorporating local food into college dining operations. Downloadable for free.*

"Expanding Local Food Systems by Marketing to Iowa Institutions," Practical Farmers of Iowa. Practical Farmers of Iowa. http://www.pfi.iastate.edu/Local_Food_Syst/Expanding_Local_Food_Systems_by_Marketing_to_Iowa_Institutions.pdf *With a focus on Iowa, four different programs linking Iowa farms and institutions are described in this free publication.*

Farm-to-Cafeteria Connections: Marketing Opportunities for Small Farms in Washington State, Kelli Sanger, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560, phone: (360) 902-2057, e-mail: **ksanger@agr.wa.gov**, **http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/default.htm** *Thorough analysis of farm to cafeteria programs from a farm perspective, food service perspective, and community organizer perspective, includes several case studies and detailed resource list*

Farm to College resources, FoodRoutes Network, **http://www.foodroutes.org/farmtocollege.jsp** *Resources for students interested in starting Farm to College projects*

Farm to School: An Introduction for Food Service Professionals, Food Educators, Parents, and Community Leaders, Alison Harmon, PhD RD, Senior Extension Associate & Instructor, Food Science Department, 203A Borland Lab, phone: (814) 863-7782, fax: (814) 863-6132, e-mail: **ALH139@psu.edu** *A 73 page manual for a wide-variety of audiences. Profiles initiatives around the country and places farm to school programs in the food system context. Available for a donation of $12.*

"How Local Farmers and School Food Service Buyers are Building Alliances: Lessons Learned from the USDA Small Farm/School Meals Workshop," Debra Tropp and Dr. Suarajudeen Olowolayemo. Transportation and Marketing Programs, USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service. www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/mta/publications.htm *Considerations in working with food service, including barriers and recommended strategies for approaching the food service market, case studies, and information on government programs*

"Local Food Connections: From Farms to Schools," Iowa State University Extension. *http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/other/other.htm Geared towards farmers and producers interested in selling to schools. Downloadable for free.*

"Local Food Connections: Food Service Considerations," Iowa State University Extension. *http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1853C.pdf Geared toward food service professionals. Downloadable for free.*

Local Food Dinner toolkit, Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, **http://www.pasafarming.org/programs/tool_kit.htm** *PASA has made available online ready-to-use advertising and information tents to promote local food events. Materials can be downloaded at no cost.*

Local Food Project: A How-to Manual, by Gary L. Valen, The Humane Society of the United States. Call 301-258-3075 to order. *Strategies for planning and implementing local food projects.*

"Meeting the Diverse Needs of Limited-Resource Producers," Sustainable Agriculture Network, SARE, **http://www.sare.org/publications/limited-resource.htm** *A 16-page bulletin intended to be a resource for agricultural educators, heads of community development and agricultural organizations, government agency staff*

and others who want to better connect with and improve the lives of farmers and ranchers who remain hard to reach.

"Reap New Profits: Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Ranchers," Sustainable Agriculture Network and NCAT, 2003, Bulletin and Power Point, www.sare.org/htdocs/pubs *This 20-page bulletin offers snapshots of the many alternatives to marketing commodities through conventional channels. Describes how to break into farmers markets; establish pick-your-own operations and farm stands; begin entertainment farming; open a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm; join or start a cooperative; sell to restaurants or through mail order and the Internet; how to process and direct-market meat; and ways to add value to farm products.*

Selling to Institutions: An Iowa Farmer's Guide, Robert Luedeman & Neil D. Hamilton **http://www.iowafoodpolicy.org/ifpcpublications.htm** *Downloadable for free. Issues to consider when selling to institutions, including products, equipment, insurance and other requirements, government assistance.*

"Supplying Local Food to Educational Institutions: A How-To Manual for use by Educational Institutions, Farmers, and Advocacy Groups ", Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), 1 Sugarloaf Street, S. Deerfield, MA 01373, Tel: 413-665-7100, Fax: 413-665-7101, Toll Free: 866-965-7100, Email: cisa@buylocalfood.com; www.buylocalfood.com *Examines the barriers to institutional school sales and outlines 7 strategies to overcome the barriers. Based on actual experience with a private college, Hampshire College in Amherst, MA, and the Deerfield Elementary School, South Deerfield, MA. References included along with outline for a Local Food event (including a budget),* $8 +$2 shipping.

"Too Many Cooks?" by Julia Lane, Philip Moss, Harold Salzman, and Chris Tilly, http://www.bos.frb.org/economic/nerr/regrev.htm
Consolidation and outsourcing in the food industry have created higher-paying food prep jobs, but also have erected barriers for lower-skilled workers trying to move up the ladder, download for free

University of Wisconsin's CIAS Research Brief #55: *Dishing up local food on Wisconsin campuses* http://www.wisc.edu/cias/pubs/briefs/055.html *Summary of interviews with food service directors at 34 colleges and universities in Wisconsin*

University of Wisconsin's CIAS Research Brief #39: *New markets for producers: selling to colleges* http://www.wisc.edu/cias/pubs/briefs/039.html *Summary of research that identified opportunities and barriers faced by producers that sell products to six different U.S. colleges that have significant local, sustainable food buying components.*

CURRICULAR RESOURCES ON GARDENING, COOKING, NUTRITION, AND THE FOOD SYSTEM

Agriculture in the Classroom http://www.agclassroom.org/ *With links to state-specific programs and resources.*

Teaching Organic Farming & Gardening: Resources for Instructors, Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, Santa Cruz, http://zzyx.ucsc.edu/casfs/ *This 600-page manual covers practical aspects of organic farming and gardening, applied soil science, and social and environmental issues in agriculture. It is available for $45 from the Center, or can be downloaded.*

For information on how to start a **college farm**, contact Dan Guenther at farmerdan@hvi.net. Dan managed a farm at Vassar College and has provided free consultations for several other colleges interested in organizing a farm on campus.

RELATED WEBSITES

Campus Outreach and Organizing League (COOL): http://www.cool2serve.org

The Center for Food & Justice, http://www.farmtoschool.org

Community Food Security Coalition, www.foodsecurity.org

Community Food Systems Project of Practical Farmers of Iowa.
http://www.pfi.iastate.edu/Local_Food_Syst/Field_to_family.htm

Cornell University Farm-to-school Initiative
http://www.cals.cornell.edu/agfoodcommunity/afs_temp2.cfm?topicID=81 and
http://www.cce.cornell.edu/farmtoschool/

National Association for College and University Food Service, www.nacufs.org

National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture at: http://www.sustainableagriculture.net

Public Citizen, Monique Mikhail, 202-546-4996 or mmikhail@citizen.org or check out
http://www.citizen.org/cmep/foodsafety.

Project Food Land and People
http://www.foodlandpeople.org/

*http://*www.reapfoodgroup.org/farmtoschool/

University of Northern Iowa's Center for Energy and Environmental Education's Local Food Project:
http://www.uni.edu/ceee/foodproject

University of Wisconsin's website: http://www.wisc.edu/cias - click on "College Food Project."

USDA Small Farms/School Meals Initiative
http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/SmallFarms/small.pdf

Washington State Department of Agriculture Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program
http://www.agr.wa.gov/marketing/SmallFarm/default.htm

FARM-TO-SCHOOL/COLLEGE LISTSERVE

To log onto the National Farm-to-school/ Farm to College listserve:
Go to: http://groups.yahoo.com
Under: 'Join a Group'
Type: cfsc-schoolfood
Hit: 'search'
Click on: cfsc-schoolfood
Click on: Join this Group
Follow the directions from there!
Once you are signed on to this listserve, to contribute messages send to:
cfsc-schoolfood@yahoogroups.com

FARM-TO-COLLEGE CONTACTS

Community Food Security Coalition
Kristen Markley, National Farm-to-College Program Manager
PO Box 109
Beaver Springs, PA 17812
Phone: 570-658-2265
Kristen@foodsecurity.org
www.farmtocollege.org

Center for Food & Justice
Anupama Joshi, California Farm-to-school Program Manager
1600 Campus Road
Los Angeles, CA 90041
Phone: (323) 341-5095
ajoshi@oxy.edu
www.farmtoschool.org

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems
and REAP Food Group
Doug Wubben, Project Coordinator
Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch
350 Agriculture Hall
1450 Linden Drive
Madison, WI 53706
Phone: (608) 263-6064
dwubben@wisc.edu
http://www.reapfoodgroup.org/farmtoschool/

Washington State Department of Agriculture
Kelli Sanger, Program Coordinator
Small Farm and Direct Marketing
1111 Washington St. SE, 2nd Floor
PO Box 42560
Olympia, WA 98504-2560
Phone: (360) 902-2057
ksanger@agr.wa.gov
http://www.agr.wa.gov/marketing/SmallFarm/default.htm

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES FOR FARM-TO-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Environmental Grant Makers Directory, order from:
Environmental Grant Makers Association
437 Madison Avenue
37th Floor, NY, NY 10022
Phone 212-812-4260
Fax 212-812-4299

Funding Websites

www.reeusda.gov
Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program, Fund for Rural America, Community Food Projects, Community Supported Agriculture and a variety of other funding programs are listed here. A must see.

www.ocd.usda.gov
Notices of Funding Availability – search by Department, grant deadline, and key words.

www.fns.usda.gov
Lists grants for state agencies including Team Nutrition and Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP).

www.communityfoundationlocator.com
Lists foundations by state with an easy-to-use U.S. map graphic. Also uses maps to show locations of each community foundation.

www.granted.org
Corporate and community foundations listed by state or grant category with links on "How to Write a Grant Proposal". Grant categories include environmental, nonprofit organizations and agricultural farming resources.

www.rurdev.usda.gov
Rural Business Enterprise Grants, Rural Business Opportunity Grants, focuses on funding for agricultural marketing and production innovations.

www.sare.org
Organized by region, funds new markets for farmers. Also funds multi-institutional, collaborative approaches including non-profit organizations, university staff and farmers.

www.fdncenter.org
For a $20 monthly fee one can access and search the foundation center database for possible funding opportunities. Many grant directories are also made available.

Local Foundations

Important resources, not to be overlooked, are local foundations. Because they are local, they are interested in funding what's happening in their own backyard, and tend towards funding start-ups and special projects. A conversation with your local reference librarian should help turn up these sources.

Local Governments

Some city agencies - such as those dealing with community development, anti-hunger programs and school and youth programs - may have funds available for special projects. Elected officials often have small pots of money they can distribute at their own discretion for projects in their districts.

State Agencies

In some states, the state health department may have funding available through the Nutrition Network. The following states have Nutrition Network programs:

Alabama	**Iowa**	**New Jersey**	**Virginia**
Arizona	**Kansas**	**North Carolina**	**Washington**
California	**Maine**	**Oklahoma**	**Wisconsin**
Colorado	**Michigan**	**Pennsylvania**	
Georgia	**Missouri**	**South Dakota**	
Indiana	**Nevada**	**Vermont**	

For state contact information, contact Marion Kalb, National Farm-to-school Program Director, at 310-822-5410, ext. 3 or marion@foodsecurity.org.

National Churches

The major Protestant denominations, including Presbyterians, United Methodist, and United Church of Christ, have expressed interest in funding community food security projects. They tend to be very sophisticated and are looking for alternative approaches to traditional feeding programs. Local churches may also be interested in funding projects in the areas they serve.

Major Corporations and Corporate Foundations

While national foundations tend to have large amounts of funding available, it is generally difficult to secure this funding. Good sources of information for these foundations are:

- **The National Network of Grant makers - 1996 Directory - call 619-231-1348**
- **The periodical, "Chronicle of Philanthropy"**
- **Various foundation directories generally available in major libraries.**