

Promote Sustainable Local Food

Implementation Action Area #1: Facilitate Sustainable Local Food Production

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Support urban agriculture as a source of local food	Federal (USDA, U.S. EPA), state (Dept. of Agriculture, IDPH, IEPA), counties, municipalities, nonprofits	Urban agriculture can be a productive use of vacant or underutilized urban land. Local governments should simplify and incentivize the conversion of vacant and underutilized lots, spaces, and rooftops into agricultural uses. Research groups should support this by developing an inventory of underutilized publicly owned land that could be appropriate for urban agriculture. Brownfield remediation funding can and should be used to support community gardens and farmers' markets.	Revise

Implementation Examples:

- The City of Chicago's Urban Agriculture [zoning amendment](#) allows food production, chickens, and bees to be raised in residential areas.
- The [Green Healthy Neighborhoods](#) Plan, an LTA project, has identified 3 productive landscape zones that will support urban agriculture. The Englewood Line Zone, Raber Park Zone, and Rock Island Urban Agriculture Zone are currently home to Wood Street and Honore Street Farms (operated by Growing Home) as well as the Perry Street Farm. The implementation of GHN will support growing food, producing horticultural products, job training and educational opportunities at each of these sites. The City of Chicago has also identified additional city-owned lots eligible for low-cost ownership transfers to individuals interested in urban farming.
- Lake County is currently very close to adopting revisions to its unified development ordinance that would make it easier for residents to grow food and keep chickens and bees.
- The Village of Schaumburg established a [Community Bee Yard](#), where residents can keep hives for free. Additionally, the Village offers a special use permit for residents to keep bees on their property.
- The Kane County Health Department released a [health impact assessment](#) for the new "Growing for Kane" ordinance in 2013.
- The [Model Communities program](#), led by the Cook County Department of Public Health, focuses on changing policy and the environment to help make healthy living

easier for individuals and families in suburban Cook County. This program supports urban agriculture initiatives, and in 2011-2012, with funding from a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10 grant recipients of the Model Communities program installed gardens in eight communities and 10 schools. One community also expanded its farmer's market.

- [Broadview Park District](#)
- [Chicago Ridge School District 127 ½](#)
- [Fourth Episcopal District AME Church](#)
- [Oak Lawn Community High School District 229](#)
- [Prevention Partnership/Chicago Heights](#)
- [Thornton Fractional School District 215](#)
- [Total Learning Center/East Maine School District 63](#)
- [Village of Forest Park](#)
- [Village of Riverdale](#)
- [Village of Schaumburg](#)

Rationale for Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete Assessment:

- This action could be revised to expand the focus beyond vacant land to other land uses (e.g., residential, churches, hospitals, schools). While “underutilized urban land” could refer to these land uses, the action should be clarified.

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Continue and expand farmland protection programs	Counties, forest preserve districts and conservation districts, municipalities, park districts, land trusts	The region's local governments should maintain and improve their current farmland protection programs and develop new programs where needed. Kane County's Farmland Protection Program can serve as a model for the region. Focused on the goal of preserving land, their program provides equal opportunity to applicants regardless of crop selection. Counties and municipalities should work together to remove barriers to local food production on their respective lands and encourage inter-jurisdictional business opportunities. Where appropriate, agriculture should be supported as part of preserved open space such as forest preserves, park districts, or land trusts. The state should also permit counties to hold referenda to raise revenue for agricultural preservation.	Retain

Implementation Examples:

- [Lake County Local Food](#) LTA project examines Lake County's policies in order to remove barriers to a more robust local food system in Lake County. The project also explores strategies to use publicly owned land for food production.
- Kane County is considering revisions to its Farmland Protection Program to specifically target land that can be used for food production. A new food and farm ordinance entitled "[Growing for Kane](#)" passed the County board unanimously in August 2013, and recommends the creation of a sister program to the Farmland Protection Program which would protect land being used to grow fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy for human consumption.

Rationale for Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete Assessment:

- Farmland protection continues to be a robust goal for the region, and local food production is one strategy for increasing the value and visibility of agricultural land, rather than being viewed as "waiting for development." Furthermore, land trusts are increasingly looking at local food production, and the farmland that supports it, as within the scope of conservation goals and strategies.

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Encourage revisions of federal policy to promote local food	Federal (USDA)	Farm and food policies and food regulations at the federal level should be reassessed to accommodate local and small farm operations. Most federal incentives have been geared to encourage large industrial farming practices, and current regulations can inhibit local and small farm production and infrastructure development. Recent federal policy changes to recognize the importance of local food should continue and be strengthened.	Retain

Implementation Examples:

- USDA’s [Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program](#) provides grants to organizations that train, educate, and provide outreach and technical assistance to new and beginning farmers on production, marketing, business management, legal strategies, and other topics critical to running a successful operation. Approximately \$18 million was available to support training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers in FY 2011.

Rationale for Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete Assessment:

- This action remains a priority for CMAP and the region.

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Support local food production through other institutional support and procurement processes	State agencies and institutions, wholesale farmers, University of Illinois Extension	In line with the 2009 Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act, a procurement process for state institutions that favors local foods (such as schools, hospitals, and other government facilities) could bolster the local foods economy by creating a stable demand for local food. Sharing of best practice information between participating institutions is also recommended.	Revise

Implementation Examples:

- The College of Lake County (Grayslake campus) has developed a farm learning center, where horticulture students grow produce for use at campus restaurants (like the student-managed restaurant, [Prairie](#)). The farm has a goal of supplying 20 percent of the restaurant’s produce.
- Familyfarmed.org, a local non-profit, is working on a “[food hub](#)” to help small producers in Illinois organize and develop distribution systems. In March 2013, Familyfarmed.org received [commitments](#) from the food service providers for institutions such as Chicago Public Schools, O’Hare International Airport, and Midway International Airport to support local food procurement.
- The Illinois General Assembly passed a cottage food bill ([SB 840](#)) in 2011. The [Illinois Stewardship Alliance](#) put together a Cottage Food Guide to assist local operators.

Rationale for Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete Assessment:

- Revise the lead implementers to include non-state agencies and institutions (e.g., school districts and hospitals).

Implementation Action Area #2: Increase Access to Safe, Fresh, Affordable, and Healthy Foods

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Increase community access to fresh food through demonstration programs	Federal (USDA), state (DCEO), counties, municipalities, philanthropic, private investors, banking institutions	Support and expand various demonstration programs for providing better food access in food deserts, such as farmers’ markets, farm carts and stands, fresh food delivery trucks, food cooperatives, on-site school programs, and other alternative retail options and direct sales from community vegetable gardens. On-site school farms could also be used to increase access and develop a local food curriculum. Funding should be identified to implement these programs. These programs also can be supported by examining health and licensing regulations to ensure that they do not create barriers to local access to fresh food.	Retain

Implementation Examples:

- The Bronzeville Food Access Study LTA project examines food access in a disadvantaged Chicago neighborhood and recommends strategies for improving access to healthy food. Centers for New Horizons and CMAP conducted a series of focus groups on food access, food quality, and food costs for residents of the Greater Bronzeville Area. Input will be used in creation of the Centers for New Horizons Local Food Study, a local plan that will supplement City of Chicago food planning efforts including the Recipes for Healthy Places plan.
- Twenty-one corner stores located in eight communities across suburban Cook County increased the availability of healthier options, including fresh fruits and vegetables, as part of [Healthy Hotspot: Corner Stores](#) pilot program. This initiative, funded by a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was led by the Cook County Department of Public Health and the Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago with technical assistance from The Food Trust.
- In 2012, the City of Chicago [passed](#) an ordinance encouraging fresh food carts throughout the city, with a particular focus on targeting “food desert” locations.
- Chicago State University’s Aquaponics Facility [opened](#) a four-acre community garden in April 2011.

Rationale for Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete Assessment:

- This action remains a priority for CMAP and the region.

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Implement fresh food financing initiatives	Federal, state, counties, municipalities, Illinois Food Marketing Task Force, philanthropic, private investors, traditional lending institutions	Illinois should replicate the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, which used state funding to spur private investment in supermarket and fresh food outlet projects in underserved areas. The recently created Illinois Fresh Food Fund could provide a similar opportunity for Illinois; however, sufficient funding is required. The federal government should also continue and strengthen its efforts to fund similar programs.	Revise

Implementation Examples:

- DCEO's [Illinois Fresh Food Fund](#) is a loan and grant program intended to provide affordable, flexible financing to help grocers succeed in underserved markets where infrastructure costs and credit needs cannot be met solely by conventional financial institutions. The goal of the program is to help grocers build successful community businesses.

Rationale for Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete Assessment:

- Revise to note the need for providing sufficient funding for the Illinois Fresh Food Fund program.

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Link hunger assistance programs to local foods	Federal (USDA), state (Dept. of Agriculture), public health organizations, food pantries, individual farmers' markets	A partnership between hunger assistance and local food production can benefit both parties. Food pantries can work with local food producers to increase their quantities of fresh food. Additionally farmers' markets and other alternative local food outlets should accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and conduct outreach to SNAP recipients to utilize these locations to purchase food. To support this effort, Illinois passed the Farmers' Market Technology Improvement Program Act in 2010, which establishes a fund to provide financial assistance for equipment (such as electronic benefit transfer [EBT] card readers) and transaction fees to facilitate the use of SNAP benefits at farmers' markets and other alternative retail locations. Resources such as grants and loans should be provided to support the fund and the other efforts listed above.	Retain

Implementation Examples:

- The [Village of Schaumburg](#), as part of the Model Communities program in 2011-12, installed an intergenerational community garden, focused on serving the needs of their Senior Center, Teen Center and Park District preschool program. Vegetables from the garden have found their way into meals at the Senior Center, snacks at the Teen Center, and have donated to the Schaumburg Township Food Pantry.
- The [Village of Forest Park](#), as part of the Model Communities program in 2011-12, doubled the number of available plots for residents to rent and grow produce. The produce grown in the giving garden has been regularly donated to the local food pantry.
- The Illinois Department of Natural Resources runs the [Target Hunger Now!](#) program, which encourages hunters and fishermen to donate deer and Asian carp to local hunger assistance programs. IDNR approved Asian carp for human consumption in 2011.

Rationale for Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete Assessment:

- This action remains a priority for CMAP and the region.

Implementation Action Area #3: Increase Data, Research, Training, and Information Sharing

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Build regional nonprofit capacity for local foods systems	Nonprofits, philanthropic	Identify and support a regional food entity (nonprofit). The entity should be represented by a variety of members (economic, environmental, transportation, agricultural, public health, etc.) to analyze and support food policy issues from a comprehensive perspective and coordinate federal grant and loan programs. This entity should coordinate with the activities of the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Council. It should also host summits and informative meetings for local officials and policymakers, including health departments, community organizations, and environmental groups.	Retain

Implementation Examples:

- [Lake County Local Food](#) LTA project builds the capacity of Lake County and local nonprofit organizations working to strengthen the local food system in Lake County.
- CMAP created a short educational local food [brochure](#) that summarizes many points about local food systems as an educational outreach tool for those interested in supporting local food systems. An additional document provides [references](#) for the statistics cited in the brochure. The local food [video](#) highlights individuals working in the local food system, including growers, distributors, restaurateurs, and households.
- The Illinois Public Health Institute, in collaboration with the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity; the Illinois Stewardship Alliance; the Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council; and others, hosted the “[Healthy Farms, Healthy People](#)” symposium on October 23, 2012.

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Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Improve data collection and research on local food production, distribution and other needs	State, CMAP, counties, nonprofits, universities, philanthropic	The region needs improved data on the production and distribution of local food and specialty crops. Also, infrastructure needs for the transportation, storage, and distribution of food (such as regional distribution hubs or refrigerated storage facilities, for example) should be identified and analyzed. CMAP should work with neighboring metropolitan planning organizations like the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission and the Southwest Michigan Regional Planning Council to accelerate effective planning, and regional food systems development.	Retain

Implementation Examples:

- CMAP's "Local Food Systems" [microsite](#) presents a wealth of information and research related to local food systems.
- The Regional Food Systems LTA project is intended to conduct a regional assessment of local food supply-side economics and develop a plan to create a more robust local food system for metropolitan Chicago.
- The Kane County LTA project is intended to establish a set of guidelines for selecting land that may be appropriate for local food production.
- As part of the suburban Cook County Communities Putting Prevention to Work initiative, funded by a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) commissioned a report on access to stores and other places people buy food in suburban Cook County. This report, "[Food Access in Suburban Cook County](#)," found that there are areas across the suburban region in which residents have less access to supermarkets that sell a variety of healthy foods. Additionally, in 2011, CCDPH convened the Suburban Cook County Food System Steering Committee to assess the current food system in suburban Cook County, from farming to food waste as it impacts nutrition-related health. This led to the development of a report in 2012 from the committee, "[The Suburban Cook County Food System: An Assessment and Recommendations](#)."
- On August 27, 2012, the Mayor of Chicago [announced](#) the release of data related to food deserts in the city.

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Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Provide training and information sharing	Universities, community colleges, other education and training providers, philanthropic, local businesses and restaurants	Local food training and technical assistance programs for farmers and laborers should be provided to assist in the transition to local food production. These should be linked with workforce development programs. Sustainable and conservation oriented farming techniques should be particular focuses. Also, information sharing between practitioners on a variety of local food topics, including food waste reduction, processing, and reuse, should be encouraged. Develop comprehensive information resources to develop and connect the value chain between farmers, distributors, retailers, producers and consumers, such as the University of Illinois MarketMaker website. ¹ Universities and community colleges should offer food related courses to cover a variety of topics from nutrition to distribution. Businesses and restaurants can also support local food by purchasing from local food farms/vendors and providing information to customers about food origin (such as menu and product labeling).	Retain

Implementation Examples:

- CMAP's "Local Food Systems" [microsite](#) presents a wealth of information and research related to local food systems.
- CMAP created a short educational local food [brochure](#) that summarizes many points about local food systems as an educational outreach tool for those interested in supporting local food systems. An additional document provides [references](#) for the statistics cited in the brochure. The local food [video](#) highlights individuals working in the local food system, from grower to distributor to restaurant and household.
- The College of Lake County has a new [Sustainable Agriculture](#) focus in its horticulture program. The new program provides hands-on courses leading to an Associate in Applied Science degree.

Rationale for Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete Assessment:

- This action remains a priority for CMAP and the region.

¹ University of Illinois MarketMaker website, 2010. See <http://www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/>.

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics	Retain/Revise/Complete/Delete
Provide technical assistance to incorporate local food systems in comprehensive plans and ordinances	CMAP, counties, municipalities, nonprofits	Assist government officials and planners to incorporate local foods and agricultural protection into comprehensive plans and ordinances. Local food could also be integrated into economic development plans. Technical assistance should accommodate the full spectrum of local food production from community gardens to commercial farm operations, and could include activities such as removing barriers to local food distribution or designating certain zones for permitted small-scale food production. Additionally CMAP and other technical assistance providers should produce local food model ordinances for consideration by local governments.	Retain

Implementation Examples:

- CMAP’s recently-published “[Municipal Strategies to Support Local Food Systems](#)” includes resources to help municipalities include local food in comprehensive plans, as well as an urban agriculture ordinance toolkit.
- The [Campton Hills Comprehensive Plan](#), which was produced through a CMAP LTA project, includes “Food and Farming” as a stand-alone chapter and is a priority for the community. The plan recommends that Campton Hills continue to add to its already significant area (nearly 500 acres) of preserved agricultural land through various preservation techniques, including using conservation design strategies to preserve farmland while allowing a limited amount of clustered residential development. It also suggests the use of the Farmland Preservation zoning district, which is a hybrid of zoning coupled with easements. Sustainable agricultural activities and local food production are also recommended for the community.
- The [Blue Island Comprehensive Plan](#) LTA project incorporates a local food chapter into the comprehensive plan. The incorporation of the food chapter was completed as part of the Model Communities program.
- The [Park Forest Sustainability Plan](#) includes a chapter specifically devoted to increasing the community’s access to local food. The “Local Food Systems” chapter proposes a variety of recommendations, such as establishing a community garden program and supporting related institutions, including the South Suburban Food Cooperative (located in Park Forest) and the Village’s long-running farmers’ market. Since adoption of the Sustainability Plan in 2011, the Village has already created four community gardens, which are managed by community members, and facilitated the use of

Electronic Benefit Transfers at the weekly farmers' market. These programs have significantly increased residents' access to fresh, local, and organic produce.

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