# Promote Sustainable Local Food

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

Implementation Action Area #1: Facilitate Sustainable Local Food Production

- The City of Chicago's Urban Agriculture <u>zoning amendment</u> allows food production, chickens, and bees to be raised in residential areas.
- The <u>Green Healthy Neighborhoods</u> Local Technical Assistance project addresses local food production and access in Chicago neighborhoods.

Action	Lead	Specifics
	Implementers	
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.

- <u>Lake County Local Food</u> Local Technical Assistance project examines Lake County's policies in order to remove barriers to a more robust local food system in Lake County.
- The Openlands Farmland Protection program offers a wealth of resources and education tools through its Farmland Protection initiative.

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics
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.

• The 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 will be available to support training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers in FY 2011.

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

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

Action	Lead	Specifics
	Implementers	
Increase community	Federal (USDA),	Support and expand various demonstration
access to fresh food	state (DCEO),	programs for providing better food access in
through	counties,	food deserts, such as farmers' markets, farm carts
demonstration	municipalities,	and stands, fresh food delivery trucks, food
programs	philanthropic,	cooperatives, on-site school programs, and other
	private	alternative retail options and direct sales from
	investors,	community vegetable gardens. On-site school
	banking	farms could also be used to increase access and
	institutions	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.

# **Implementation Examples:**

• The Bronzeville Food Access Study Local Technical Assistance Project examines food access in a disadvantaged Chicago neighborhood and recommends strategies for improving access to healthy food.

Action	Lead Implementers	Specifics
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.

• DCEO's <u>Illinois Fresh Food Fund</u> 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.

Action	Lead	Specifics
	Implementers	
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.

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

Action	Lead	Specifics
	Implementers	
Build regional	Nonprofits,	Identify and support a regional food entity
nonprofit capacity for	philanthropic	(nonprofit). The entity should be represented by a
local foods systems		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.

- <u>Lake County Local Food</u> Local Technical Assistance 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 <u>brochure</u> 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 <u>references</u> for the statistics cited in the brochure. The local food <u>video</u> highlights individuals working in the local food system, from grower to distributor to restaurant and household.

Action	Lead	Specifics
	Implementers	
Improve data	State, CMAP,	The region needs improved data on the production
collection and	counties,	and distribution of local food and specialty crops.
research on local food	nonprofits,	Also, infrastructure needs for the transportation,
production,	universities,	storage, and distribution of food (such as regional
distribution and	philanthropic	distribution hubs or refrigerated storage facilities, for
other needs		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.

- CMAP's "Local Food Systems" <u>microsite</u> presents a wealth of information and research related to local food systems.
- The Regional Food Systems Local Technical Assistance 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 Local Technical Assistance Project is intended to establish a set of guidelines for selecting land that may be appropriate for local food production.

Action	Lead	Specifics
	Implementers	
Provide training and	Universities,	Local food training and technical assistance
information sharing	community	programs for farmers and laborers should be
	colleges, other	provided to assist in the transition to local food
	education and	production. These should be linked with workforce
	training	development programs. Sustainable and
	providers,	conservation oriented farming techniques should be
	philanthropic,	particular focuses. Also, information sharing
	local	between practitioners on a variety of local food
	businesses and	topics, including food waste reduction, processing,
	restaurants	and reuse, should be encouraged. Develop
		comprehensive information resources to develop and
		connect the value chain between farmers,
		distributors, retailers, producers and consumers,
		such are the University of Illinois MarketMaker
		website. <sup>1</sup> 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).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> University of Illinois MarketMaker website, 2010. See <u>http://www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/</u>.

Action	Lead	Specifics
	Implementers	
Provide technical	CMAP,	Assist government officials and planners to
assistance to	counties,	incorporate local foods and agricultural protection
incorporate local food	municipalities,	into comprehensive plans and ordinances. Local
systems in	nonprofits	food could also be integrated into economic
comprehensive plans	_	development plans. Technical assistance should
and ordinances		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.

- CMAP's recently-published "<u>Municipal Strategies to Support Local Food Systems</u>" includes resources to help municipalities include Local Food in Comprehensive Plans, as well as an urban agriculture ordinance toolkit.
- The <u>Campton Hills Comprehensive Plan</u> Local Technical Assistance Project discusses food and farming as major topics in the recently-adopted comprehensive plan.
- The <u>Blue Island Comprehensive Plan</u> Local Technical Assistance Project incorporates a local food chapter into the comprehensive plan.
- The Lake County Framework Plan Local Technical Assistance project, addresses local food in its chapter on sustainability.
- The <u>Park Forest Sustainability Plan</u> Local Technical Assistance project addresses local food.