

Promote Sustainable Local Food

Implementation Action Area #1: Facilitate Sustainable Local Food Production

| Action | Lead Implementers | Specifics |
|---|--|--|
| 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. |

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](#) Local Technical Assistance project addresses local food production and access in Chicago neighborhoods.

| Action | Lead Implementers | Specifics |
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| 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. |

Implementation Examples:

- [Lake County Local Food](#) 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 |
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| 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. |

Implementation Examples:

- 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 |
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| 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. |

Implementation Examples:

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

| Action | Lead Implementers | Specifics |
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| 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. |

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 |
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| 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. |

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.

| Action | Lead Implementers | Specifics |
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| 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 Examples:

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

| Action | Lead Implementers | Specifics |
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| 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. |

Implementation Examples:

- [Lake County Local Food](#) 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 [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.

| Action | Lead Implementers | Specifics |
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| 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. |

Implementation Examples:

- CMAP's "Local Food Systems" [microsite](#) 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 Implementers | Specifics |
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| 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). |

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

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| 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. |

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](#) Local Technical Assistance Project discusses food and farming as major topics in the recently-adopted comprehensive plan.
- The [Blue Island Comprehensive Plan](#) 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 [Park Forest Sustainability Plan](#) Local Technical Assistance project addresses local food.