

Building a Sustainable Local Food Economy in North Carolina: From Farm-to-Fork

We are pleased to announce that over the next year, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (www.cefs.ncsu.edu) has been funded to reach out across the state and together with our partners ask: What will it take to build a sustainable local food economy in North Carolina?

From the mountains to the coast, various organizations are promoting and implementing exciting initiatives to support our state and communities through sustainable local agriculture. Examples include new farmer's markets, local food policy councils, comprehensive county- or region-based food initiatives, farm incubator programs, farm and/or garden youth education programs, health and nutrition projects focused on local sustainable foods, procurement initiatives by large retail and institutional buyers and schools, and much more.

For every 25 cents/day each North Carolinian spent on local food (just 2.5 percent of the \$3600.00 that we spend on average on food consumption per year), that would mean \$792 million for the state economy. That money circulates here in the state so has a multiplier effect, rather than going to a corporate headquarters in another state.

Other benefits of a sustainable local food economy in North Carolina include economic development, job creation within farming and food sectors, preservation of open space, decreased use of fossil fuel and associated carbon emissions, preservation and protection of the natural environment, increased consumer access to fresh and nutritious foods, and greater food security for all North Carolinians.

Over the next year, CEFS and its partners will be gathering information from across food system sectors: conducting regional meetings, targeted issues forums, interviews, and a statewide summit on March 2 and 3, 2009. Our desired result is a **Statewide Action Plan for Building the Local Food Economy** with specific steps (short- and long-term) that policy makers, Universities, government agencies, environmentalists, businesses, funding agencies, social activists, NGOs and citizens can take to make this happen.

The first three regional meetings have been set and are to be held in:

Raleigh, North Carolina: October 14, 8:30-11:30 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at 3313 Wade Avenue.

Shannon, North Carolina: October 21, 12:30-3:30. American Indian Mothers Building, 1211 Wagon Wheel Road.

Ashville, North Carolina: November 12, 1:30-4:30 at the NC Arboretum, 100 Frederick Law Olmsted Way.

The purpose of the regional meetings is to bring together those engaged in all aspects of the food system, to collect information and ideas that will be the building blocks of discussion at the summit and eventually the core components of the **State Action Plan**.

We want to identify specific regional and local sustainable food systems models that are working and also regional challenges that can be addressed through policy, programs, and funding. We seek to engage the broad group of those involved with the food system including farmers, suppliers, processors, economic development organizations, distributors, farm and food industry workers, extension and other educators, marketers, financial institutions, Universities and community colleges, elected officials, government agencies, county and city planners, farm organizations, anti-poverty organizers, social justice workers, consumers and consumer groups, granting agencies, health and wellness organizations, environmental groups, food banks, and more. These regional meetings will be facilitated listening sessions and provide important input into this process, so we are encouraging broad participation.

The end product—the **State Action Plan**—will articulate a shared vision and set of common goals for building a local, sustainable food system and economy in North Carolina. It will

- 1) describe key elements of our current food system and define key terms;
- 2) identify the diversity of people, businesses, and organizations involved in and impacted by North Carolina’s food system;
- 3) highlight specific efforts and partnerships underway across our state and within different sectors of the food system to achieve greater “localness” in our food system; and
- 4) identify opportunities for action, and propose priorities, both in the short and long term, that will enable us to make progress toward shared goals.

Finally, another key goal of this process is the formation of an ongoing working committee or task force, with broad representation across food system sectors that will focus on facilitating and carrying out action items, provide ongoing networking opportunities, and revise the action plan as needs and priorities change.

A “Road to the State Action Plan” listserv has been established, please respond to: nancy_creamer@ncsu.edu to be added to the listserv and receive more information about the project, regional meeting dates, policy forums, summit, etc.

If you or your organization are engaged in a food systems project, please take a minute to fill out the attached contact information sheet describing the nature of the work you or your organization does and email to nancy_creamer@ncsu.edu. This information will be included in a data base for all participants, and may also result in further interviews by the project team.

Please feel free to share this information with others who may be interested in becoming involved with this project