

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture Marketing & Food Systems Initiative

(in cooperation with the Value Chain Partnerships)

Project Abstracts



LEOPOLD CENTER

Leopold Center
Marketing and Food Systems Initiative
Workshop

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The Marketing and Food Systems Initiative will:

- Research and test new marketing strategies and business structures that allow Iowa's small and midsize producers to retain more of the value for food, fiber or energy produced with high standards of environmental and community stewardship.
- Conduct research and education to address challenges that impede farmers and farmer networks from being equal partners with other players in food, fiber or energy-based value chains.
- Research and document economic, environmental and community impacts of local and regional food, fiber and energy value chains and best determine how farmers and other groups can use this information in their market messages to increase local/state investment in these enterprises.

The Value Chain Partnerships will:

- foster value chains that reward farmers who use high standards of environmental and community stewardship

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Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG)

The Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG) formed in 2002 to help address challenges facing niche pork farmers and niche pork companies. Coordinated by Practical Farmers of Iowa, its mission is to foster successful niche pork value chains that are profitable to all participants that incorporate farmer ownership and control, and that contribute to environmental stewardship and rural vitality. It has met 22 times and participants represent 23 different organizations and 14 different niche pork companies. Total funding secured for PNMWG coordination and 29 R&D projects is \$1.26 million. Key past projects examined the market potential for niche pork products, transportation logistics, new product development, maximizing carcass utilization options, Berkshire production and marketing, herd health management, and using records and veterinary diagnostic services to help improve profits of niche pork farms. This last project obtained usable 2006 records from 49 niche pork farms, and it worked with 31 niche pork farmers to generate data on disease pressures. Information from both components was used to develop educational materials and deliver outreach programming. Near-term PNMWG priorities include continuing to help existing niche pork farmers address production issues, developing a niche pork beginning farmer program, and developing options for PNMWG's future. The PNMWG hosts a website (<http://valuechains.org/pnmwg/>) and publishes *Niche Pork News* four times a year. PNMWG is part of the Value Chain Partnerships project.

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Effects of Ambient Temperature and Transportation Distance on the Resulting Pork Quality

Niche pork marketers are emphasizing quality and consistency of product. Specific factors have been identified as potentially causing product variability. These include temperature and time on the truck. In order to begin to identify opportunities to manage product variability, this research project has been structured to control for two factors. Data collection periods were chosen to include both very hot and very cold periods with moderate weather included as a base. A spreadsheet was designed for data input. The data fields include more than distance and temperature. These additional fields serve to isolate exogenous effects that might skew portions of the core data within the analysis. Also, the additional fields are available for future study of additional specific management factors.

Preliminary results are available but will be more complete by April 2008. Findings suggest that there is a dynamic created with each hauling event. Since the hogs must be harvested regardless of weather, it is important for the producer to understand the totality of effects that can reduce carcass quality. These include handling facilities, space on the trailer, genetics, condition of the hogs when loaded, producer handling technique, time on the trailer, transfer station, and handling at the plant. Correcting for one factor such as temperature is not a silver bullet. There is need for further practical trials to determine operational optimums. Clearly, there will be a need to optimize within each producer's conditions. The opportunity exists for niche companies to reduce costs by reducing variability and defects that show up at the processing plant. Handling procedures designed to humane standards also can likely be modified for weather extremes, if producers can understand the scope of the potential loss and the possibility of improving. Temperature and humidity clearly can have a negative effect on product quality. Time on the trailer is generally less negative since most of the stress effect occurs in handling and early in the trip.

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Small Meat Processors Working Group (SMPWG)

The number of small-scale meat processors in Iowa has been in steady decline for several decades. The Small Meat Processors Working Group seeks not only to stop this decline, but to reverse it. Our mission is to help small Iowa meat processors expand, upgrade, or build new facilities in order to promote rural development. The working group has been meeting since the fall of 2006 and members include processors, regulators, Extension staff, producer groups, agricultural research centers, and business and economic development organizations. Having spent an initial period evaluating this sector, the working group is now supporting targeted assistance in several ways: product costing analysis workshops to help processors get a better handle on their costs and product pricing; the production of a “Resource Guidebook” to help processors identify what steps need to happen as they move to build their businesses, and where to find assistance at each step; and open house mini grants to help small processors improve public relations within their communities. We continue to work at analyzing labor training needs and human resources development. SMPWG is part of the Value Chain Partnerships project.

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Fruit and Vegetable Working Group (FVWG)

The demand in Iowa for locally-grown fruits and vegetables far exceeds current production. The industry’s ability to meet this demand is limited by a variety of production, processing, marketing, distribution and political barriers. A strengthened fruit and vegetable industry in Iowa could provide significant economic, nutritional and environmental benefits to the state.

A working group will be established, representing the breadth of Iowa’s fruit and vegetable growers and supportive/affiliated positions. Through meeting discussion and an on-line survey, this group will identify the most limiting constraints towards building the capacity of Iowa’s fruit and vegetable industry. Several key constraints will be directly addressed. FVWG is part of the Value Chain Partnerships project.

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Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) The Regional Food Systems Working Group supports education, conducts research, and facilitates partnerships to increase investment and support of community-based, economically sustainable, and environmentally and socially responsible regional food enterprises.

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Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) - Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition

The Northeast Iowa Food & Farm (NIFF) Coalition is a diverse group of farmers, food producers, community leaders and area residents in the five counties of Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek. They have created a plan to support the development and marketing of locally grown agricultural products to enhance the lives of local citizens. The NIFF Coalition received funding from the RFSWG to complete five assessments to learn more about the local food environment in northeast Iowa: a household consumer survey, institutional survey, baseline data survey, an economic impact

assessment and a map of assets. We learned that northeast Iowa has great potential to produce food for its residents. There is a long history of food production in the area, yet annual direct marketing sales are less than 1 percent of the total food expenditures each year. Consumers and institutions are ready to support a local food system. Forty-eight percent of the consumers surveyed would purchase locally grown food but are unable to find it. Barriers to the use and integration of local foods have been identified. This information will be used to complete the Community Action Plan as part of the northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. This initiative will address issues such as increasing the availability of healthy local foods in school, restaurants and grocery stores and improving opportunities for residents to incorporate physical activity into their everyday lives. RFSWG is part of the Value Chain Partnerships project.

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Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) - Growing the Local Food System in Southeast Iowa

How can we increase the amount of local food produced and consumed in a six-county region in southeast Iowa? The six counties targeted in this project include Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren and Wapello. An economic data analysis for the region shows that consumers spent \$231 million each year on food purchases (for dining in and out). Of these dollars, \$141 million are spent on food from outside the region. This project is developing the leadership structure to increase local food consumption by addressing production, processing, and distribution in this six-county area and ultimately recapturing a portion of the \$141 million leaving the region. Ken Meter, agricultural economist from Crossroads Resource Center, completed an economic impact study for the region. Agricultural producers in the region were assisted with entry into the Iowa Market Maker program to increase their visibility to consumers. Mini-grants were awarded to producers in the project region to identify producer needs. Strategic planning meetings were held to develop a vision statement, goals and leadership team to continue moving efforts forward. Producers, meat processors and grocers are being surveyed to identify needs and opportunities. A two-part workshop targeting farmer's market managers and local food producers will be held this spring.

This project has shown that there is widespread interest in local food system development in this region. Over 50 people attended strategic planning sessions and represented a wide array of interests including: food producers, business developers, county supervisors, state representative, Extension personnel, bankers and entrepreneurs. A leadership team has been assembled to lead and organize efforts for the next six months. In 2007, \$1,500 in mini-grants were awarded to five producers who leveraged an additional \$8,200 of their own funds. Mini-grants were awarded for production of apples, organic beef, honey, raspberries, eggs and grapes. Survey work is underway to better understand the needs and interests of local producers, grocery managers and meat processors. Momentum in our southeast Iowa region continues to grow. To date, efforts have been focused on capacity building, developing leadership and data collection related to food production and sales. We have an engaged leadership team and will spend the next six to twelve months working to identify specific resource needs to expand local food production, processing and distribution in this six-county area. RFSWG is part of the Value Chain Partnerships project.

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Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) - Southwest Iowa Food and Farm Initiative

The Southwest Iowa Food and Farm Initiative (SWIFFI) is a multi-county coalition of individuals and organizations with the common vision of a sustainable regional food system for Southwest Iowa linking production, processing, distribution, and consumption for better health, food security, and community and economic development. SWIFFI is working on a strategic plan to build that regional food system, including an overall plan for our region as well as assisting counties to develop their own county-level plan and activities. Counties represented include Adams, Adair, Cass, Guthrie, Montgomery, Pottawattamie, and Shelby. We have learned that there is strong demand for locally produced foods in our region, but that many elements of the food system need to be strengthened in order for supply of local food to meet demand. These elements include clarification of regulations pertaining to local foods, financial and technical support for new food producers, and aggregation of product in order to reach urban markets as well as the very small markets in most of our counties. We are addressing these issues by initiating a local chapter of Buy Fresh Buy Local, starting a mini-grants program for food production or marketing, bringing SWIFFI members to learn about a successful model for producer cooperative marketing at the Floyd Boulevard Local Foods Market, a new food producer incubator pilot project and developing workshops to clarify regulations. RFSWG is part of the Value Chain Partnerships project.

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Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) – Northwest Iowa Regional Local Foods System

In 2008, the Northwest Iowa Regional Food System will start creating a plan to increase local food production and consumption in a six-county area in northwestern Iowa. The counties include Woodbury, Monona, Ida, Cherokee, Plymouth and Sioux. The area needs more local leaders to organize, plan and encourage the participants to achieve clear goals. The plan should provide training for business plan development, business mentoring from experienced people, a clear vision of the organization mission and resources for funds. A process should be implemented to collect asset inventory data regarding current food sales, potential food sales, current local food production and potential local food production. The plan should educate consumers, increase awareness of health benefits and provide local foods to area institutions, schools and food service businesses. The plan also should address local food availability to citizens who are underserved due to isolation, financial restrictions or awareness.

In 2008, twelve community planning meetings will be scheduled to increase local food awareness and identify/develop leaders in area counties. The goal of these meetings is to assemble a leadership team to develop a strategic plan to implement the vision of increased local foods consumption in our communities. RFSWG is part of the Value Chain Partnerships project.

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Investigation of the Economic Feasibility of Pasture-based Dairy Operations in Northwest Iowa

Recent dairy growth in northwest Iowa has been in the form of large farm relocations, start-ups, or expansion of existing farms. Despite the increase in larger farms, the majority of dairy farms in northwest Iowa remain in the small or medium herd size range. There is impetus within this dairy community to identify strategies for maintaining competitive, profitable dairy operations by means other than large-scale expansion. With reports from northeast Iowa about the success of pasture-based systems for smaller farms, this project aimed to investigate the feasibility of the pasture-based system as an option for northwest Iowa dairies.

We analyzed two pasture-based/mixed feed dairy farms currently operating in northwest Iowa to understand how and why they were operationally and economically viable. After learning what key factors determined their feasibility, we applied these factors to hypothetical scenarios of establishing pasture-based system on typical existing northwest Iowa dairies to determine if transition of northwest confinement management system to a pasture-based/mixed feed system could be a workable model for beginning or transitioning farmers. We concluded that pasture-based/mixed feed dairy management systems are economically feasible in northwest Iowa for smaller sized herds if family resources/financial resources are available to offset high capital investment start-up costs, if debt per cow is kept low through combination of low interest loans and low cost leases of facilities and land, if building/equipment costs are kept low, if growth is phased in gradually, and if herd size is maintained at a level to match family labor resources.

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Expanding Grass-based Organic Dairy Enterprises among Southeastern Iowa Farmers

Five years ago, the Amish population in southeastern Iowa had no outlet for their quality organic milk because a market had not yet developed in the area and transportation costs were deemed too high by industry buyers. Today, there are not enough organic dairy producers to meet consumer demand. This project addresses the shortage of organic/grass-based dairy farmers by increasing market options and technical assistance available for them, and documenting the challenges in establishing and growing dairy grazing networks.

Over the past year, the Iowa Valley RC&D has worked with Farmers All Natural Creamery, Kalona, in promoting the development of grass-based dairies and the grass-based dairy market. A survey of 500 eastern Iowa dairy farmers found widespread interest in transitioning to organic dairy. Survey respondents also identified barriers and challenges to the transitioning process. Five field days, and two winter meetings, involving Iowa State University Extension and NRCS staff, were held to educate producers about grass-based dairying. Testing of milk samples, documenting levels of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) from area producers was conducted through Iowa State University. CLA has antioxidant properties and is appealing to health-minded consumers. This data will be used to promote the utilization of grass-based systems in the region and as a future marketing tool.

This project has educated farmers about transitioning to and marketing of organic dairy products, identified barriers and opportunities to this process, and provided the basis for an on-going farmer grazing network.

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Sustainable Economic Development through Organic and Grazing Dairy Farm Establishment and Transition

This grants aims to provide financial and production information about model grazing farms for other beginning and transitioning dairy producers who aspire to establish profitable dairy operations. Methods and Procedure: Financial analysis of model dairy operations will be done in 2008 for 2007 data. This data is or will be presented in a format for producers to use to help benchmark their beginning or transitioning dairy operations.

The results are still in process for the financial data. The biggest highlight of accomplishment for Year 1 of the project was the very successful development of the PowerPoint presentation on "Building Your Own Low Cost Parlor" which was viewed 546 times since July 25, 2007. The second biggest accomplishment was the creation of the Low-Cost Parlor publication. The third biggest accomplishment was beginning the "Designing a Dairy Grazing System" PowerPoint presentation. There were three major items published. The first was the PowerPoint presentation on "Building Your Own Low Cost Parlor" which is available on the web at the following site: <http://connect.extension.iastate.edu/parlor> The second piece published was the "Low Cost Milking Parlor" publication which can be viewed at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/B090C051-8602-4456-B3D6-1ED769C2D495/61848/pm2033transiowaparlor12Mg.pdf>

In addition to the video shots, a 45-minute video was produced that includes the above items, but depicts the building and milking process of the low-cost TRANS Iowa Parlor. This video is too large for the internet website so is available only by request. Though not specifically part of the grant, these fit nicely within the project scope. Conclusions: Producers are using the information items produced and when the financial models are published, it is anticipated they will be of high interest as well.

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Mapping Biomass Fuels in Iowa

Thermo-chemical processes can be used to produce a variety of transportation fuels from a variety of bio-based feedstocks. The tool that will be demonstrated in this session is intended to help researchers and decision-makers compare market needs to capabilities at the county level in Iowa. Generating value from the land with low-tillage perennials and minimal shipping needs is viewed as a way to reduce the energy losses currently needed to ship fossil fuel tonnage into the state, and commodity corn to distant markets out-of-state. In this regard, focusing on markets within a 15-mile radius from the source is viewed as a conservation strategy as much as a source of supplemental transportation energy.

The model links data from several sources to show how much material is needed to replace some or all of the demands currently being met with fossil fuels in Iowa. Results can be expressed in a variety of measures such as the number of truck or rail car loads associated with a particular market share, or the amount of product or feedstock storage needed for weekly or daily shipments. Shipping distances are estimated using a general protocol that can be set to existing refineries, a hypothetical network of county level refineries, or one refinery located at the center of a user-defined region of counties. Users can set parameters to reflect different yields, product mixes, or utilization rates. To promote additional evaluations, key values are hyperlinked to the source of data used.

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Researching and Evaluating an Effective Web-based Local Food Sales Template

Many small-scale producers find that setting up an eCommerce site is too complicated, too costly, or too impersonal, creating a barrier to expanded sales and business development. These barriers have especially inhibited local food sales to institutions that have become accustomed to conducting the majority of their food service menu management and purchases over the Internet. Through this project, several partners are working together to brainstorm, develop and test a software product that will reduce the complexity and cost of creating a personalized, independently run web-site. The project will then facilitate use of the software product across Iowa to help local food producers throughout the state develop an online presence as part of Iowa's newly emerging local food system.

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Assessing Needs and Fostering Agricultural Entrepreneurship among Immigrants in Several Iowa Communities

Latinos are becoming farm operators in the United States and Iowa at a faster rate than any other ethnic group. Across the country, immigrants of all backgrounds are participating in training and business incubation programs geared toward their particular needs as immigrant farmers. Iowa's Latino population grew 15 percent between 1990 and 2000 to make up nearly 4 percent of the state's population today. This project sought to identify the assets and interests in farming among not-currently-farming Latino immigrants in the Iowa communities of Denison and Marshalltown. The results of a survey of 111 respondents reveal strong interest and a wealth of agricultural experience and skills. Many grew up on small-scale, diversified family farms. Respondents see access to financial capital as a major challenge to starting farming in Iowa, although homeowners are less likely to see this as a barrier. Through this project, we created a survey that can be used in other Iowa communities. The information can assist communities statewide to determine the value of developing programming to support immigrant farmer entrepreneurs. Agricultural organizations could provide such programming by creating multilingual access to targeted services, such as training in small business development and production in a northern climate, creating access to financial services, and connecting beginning farmers to small acreages.

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Cash Flow and Product Profitability Analysis and Improvement for Small Meat Processors

Purpose of the project is to improve financial viability of small, private meat processing firms through improved product pricing, pricing of services and improved cash flow. With the leadership and cooperation of the Iowa Meat Lab, Dr. Joe Cordray and Matt Wenger, the approach is to develop an Excel-based direct costing software system taught to owners and employees of meat processing firms

through six workshops. As a result of the workshops, the staff involved learned that firms 1) do not know their costs, 2) may lack technology and skills to utilize the costing spreadsheets, and 3) do not manage their firms from a financial viewpoint, but 4) desire to learn techniques to better manage their firms. One firm that implemented the cost system and reviewed prices reported a potential 15 percent increase in sales revenue, a savings of 5 percent with a potential of adding 1-2 additional employees. The lesson learned is to continue the effort with another series of workshops and to provide one-to-one assistance to firms.

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Financing of Niche Agricultural Producers

The purpose of the project was to analyze issues related to the access to capital by owners of small niche agriculture producers in Iowa. This project conducted two surveys. The first survey was sent to 138 potential funding agencies of niche agricultural producers in Iowa. A total of 56 questionnaires were returned, providing a response rate of 40 percent. The purpose of this survey was to identify niches served by the specific providers of capital, funding criteria, and technical assistance provided. The second survey was sent to 693 niche market agricultural producers in Iowa. A total of 169 questionnaires were returned, providing a response rate of 24 percent. The questionnaire asked questions about sources of capital, funding agencies, and technical assistance.

Results of the first survey indicated: 1) the highest recommended methods to increase flow of capital were more technical assistance, government involvement, and capital. 2) Insufficient collateral was the most common reason for rejecting funding requests. 3) Most agencies do not offer technical assistance. 4) The mean number of investments during the past three years made by funding agencies was <2.0. Results of the second survey indicated: 1) Most producers were unfamiliar with potential sources of capital. 2) Community banks were the most common source of technical assistance. Other agencies were not often used. 3) Savings, friends/family, and community banks were the most common sources of financing. 4) Seasonal needs and equipment financing were the most common reasons for acquiring capital. Overall, the findings suggest a disjointed relationship between potential funders and niche producers. Better flow of information could improve the flow of capital. Improved and more widely available technical assistance could help overcome difficulties in access to capital.

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Establishing an Iowa Microloan Foundation

Iowa is at or near the bottom nationally in business startup rankings. A steering committee of sixteen was formed in 2006 to identify the gaps in Iowa's entrepreneurial development system. Gaps were identified for microentrepreneurs--those with five or less employees and requesting loans up to \$50,000. Addressing the gaps is consistent with the ISU Strategic Plan. An inventory of existing programs and initiatives was developed. Two surveys and several interviews were conducted with lenders and technical assistance providers across the state to confirm the hypothesis that microenterprise is being underserved in regard to access for loans, technical assistance, and equity capital. A business plan was drafted for a demonstration project. Grant funding for a demonstration project was approved and will be used as a 15 percent required match for an SBA Microloan application.

The research confirmed gaps in capital and technical assistance for Iowa's microentrepreneurs. Access to capital received the highest need rating from respondents in a Microenterprise Survey conducted in collaboration with IDED consultants. A survey of Iowa Bankers Association members indicated 68

percent of respondents were interested in regional projects for assisting entrepreneurs. The research and business plan development process created promising prospects for a demonstration project. Initial financing for a Microloan Application and four Microenterprise Pilot Projects has been secured. A nonprofit microlender called the "Iowa Foundation for Microbusiness and Community Vitality" is being incorporated. The entity is to provide market-based, risk-adjusted interest rates to encourage loan clients to graduate to commercial lending within six years. The entity also will provide incentives for technical assistance and networks to support microloan clients. Four microenterprise assistance projects will be selected to organize initial local and regional support for microloan clients. The Iowa Microloan Foundation seeks to ramp up to assisting 150 new microloan clients per year by the end of a three-year startup period. Each loan approval includes a technical assistance plan and \$500 for a TA incentive grant for each client. The Foundation seeks to achieve financial sustainability in nine years.

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Strengthening the Regional and Local Food Systems in the Iowa Valley Enhancing the Sustainability of the University of Iowa Food System: A Factor-10 Approach

The central question of this research is, "How can we make the University of Iowa food system more sustainable?" This research builds on previous efforts to examine the sustainability of the UI food system, by forming a diverse working group of individuals internal and external to UI, including faculty, students, dining services and other university staff, farmers, non-profit organizations and others. This group agreed to assess and improve the University of Iowa food system in the key areas of a) Human Health and Well Being, b) Ecological Health and c) Regional Prosperity. Over the full 11 months of this project, its members produced a vision document generated by members of the working group, two original research papers by graduate students, service-learning experience for six undergraduate students and a working group for sustainability initiatives on campus. Despite grassroots efforts, we found it difficult to overcome the lingering skepticism and inertia of key players in the UI food system. Lack of direction from upper administration and the absence of strong, organized student demand created an environment of low incentive for progressive action on the part of some staff. In light of these problems, project participants concluded the effort with a new institutional strategy involving (a) the development of a Sustainability Action Curriculum to create a brochure for students interested in courses addressing sustainability, (b) active cooperation with the members of the UI administration who are committed to putting sustainability on the agenda at UI, (c) cooperation with student organizations in creating meaningful opportunities for students to learn about sustainability and to take action, and (d) the development of a web-based network to enhance communication among sustainability groups on campus and a marketing strategy to create a coherent message for sustainability efforts at UI.

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Farm to ISU – The First Year

Iowa State University Dining Services is celebrating the anniversary of the start of its farm to college program – Farm to ISU. ISU Dining operates eight cafes, three residential dining halls, three catering operations, a food court, numerous vending machines, and five convenience stores. Altogether customers make over 50,000 transactions a day at these venues. Based on such high volumes of food purchased by ISU Dining (\$6 million each year), there exists a great opportunity for local producers to market their products. Although a large market for local producers exists, there have been two main

challenges in the coordination of the program in the first year: 1) developing lasting relationships with fruit and vegetable growers and 2) creating awareness and appreciation of local food among ISU Dining staff.

The Farm to ISU coordinator will be reflecting on the methods that were used to engage producers and to generate awareness among staff. Producers participated in informational meetings about the requirements to sell to ISU Dining and took tours of ISU Dining facilities. ISU Dining staff took part in presentations about the procurement of local meat and also was invited to visit local farms. Although a year has passed since the beginning of the program, the two challenges remain. It is imperative that ISU Dining continues to reach out to vegetable and fruit growers and that the staff continues to increase their awareness about the importance of farm to college programs. The difficulties of creating a program at a state institution are outlined in the case study that was written about this project, as well as stories of success. The hope is that the case study will give insight to other colleges about farm to college programs.

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Safe Food Handling on the Farm: Meeting the Needs of Foodservice Operations

Media attention and consumer concerns about potential risks of foodborne illness from fresh produce have resulted in the need for growers to apply best practices (environmental and human elements) to control against contamination of food products while on the farm (harvest, post-harvest, transportation and delivery) and better understand purchasing criteria of retail foodservices. Three workshops targeted to producers in Iowa have been held or scheduled. Pre- and post-workshop assessments were administered to participants in the first workshop (Jefferson County) to determine changes in knowledge about best practices in product handling during harvest, post-harvest, transportation and delivery; importance of operational policies related to employee hygiene and proper food handling; procurement regulations for retail foodservice establishments; and documentation of cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Interviews and observational site visits were conducted at three (50 percent) of the farms participating in the first workshop. PDF versions of workshop presentations, educational materials, and promotional aids from the current project have been posted at the Iowa State University Extension Local Foods site (HRIM Extension) at www.iastatelocalfoods.org.

Generally, results indicated increased awareness of need for Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), a better understanding of foodservice market sectors' perspectives, and improved knowledge about procurement regulations. Initial results indicate that workshops increased participating producers' awareness of food safety issues and concerns of foodservice operators. Continued programming efforts and information sources are needed for communication to all producers considering a new market in retail foodservices.

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Is the Meat Goat Enterprise Profitable & Sustainable?

Meat goats sell for more money per pound than any other typical Midwestern livestock enterprise. This income is not sufficient to cover the entire cost of production in most cases. Record-keeping is such that

total cost of production is not known or calculated. Without records it is difficult to determine if the meat goat enterprise is profitable or sustainable. The three greatest concerns hindering the meat goat enterprise from being a more vibrant and sustainable option are: First, producers find that long-term profitability and sustainability are difficult to maintain; the first three years seem to be the life span of many meat goat operations. Second, reliable breeding, feeding and health information is scarce or very hard to find. Third, profitable marketing opportunities are limited. Also, the doubling in feed cost has put an additional burden on meat goat producers seeking to earn a profit.

Producers have found that there are many “budgets” available for producers to ‘budget’ expenses and incomes to determine profitability. These “budgets” are not very useful, because producers have not gathered accurate information to fill in the blanks. “Accurate” information is different for every producer, so a uniform enterprise analysis program to track all income and expenses is needed. The Meat Goat Enterprise Analysis Program has been developed and utilized by five meat goat producers for the past year. This pilot record-keeping system will determine meat goat enterprise profitability and identify the common profitable benchmarks. Typical problem areas identified include high feed cost and miscellaneous expenses, low kidding percentage and market price.

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Functional Quality Management Systems for Livestock Producers

Farm management and market access requirements are increasingly complex and livestock farmers often lack skills to develop and implement a management system that addresses these diverse needs. Three management tools were developed and delivered as part of this project. 1) Discussions with niche market pork producers and their supply chain partners indicated challenges in predicting supply. A pigflow spreadsheet that projects and tracks pig numbers from conception to slaughter was developed to provide better management planning for farmers and supply planning for their marketing partners. 2) A comprehensive quality management system (QMS) was developed and delivered to a group of 41 producers that must meet particular label claims for the pork they produce. 3) A simplified QMS tool was prepared and presented at Extension Field Specialists training with the expectation that they will use and train farmers to use it.

We are relatively early in the delivery process and feedback from farmers is limited. The QMS in #2 was delivered to a beta group of six farmers that recommended to the board that all 41 members participate. In #3, Dairy Field Specialists have developed a formal farm consultation format built on the simplified QMS and existing assessment tools. Farmers often are so busy with day-to-day production issues that they fail to plan and document management practices to improve returns and assure market access. The tools developed in this project provide farmers a way to grow into a proven systematic management system.

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Potential to Operate Greenhouses and Aquaculture in Conjunction with Iowa's Ethanol Plants

With the rapid expansion of Iowa's biofuels processing industry, the state currently has 29 dry-grind ethanol and 14 biodiesel plants. As the fuel ethanol industry matures, operators of biofuels plants may seek opportunities to sell other co-products. One such opportunity may be in selling waste energy to nearby production facilities for fish, fruits, vegetables, herbs and ornamental plants that could, in turn, be sold locally. This project was designed to answer two questions: 1) is enough waste energy available from an ethanol plant to supply energy to a greenhouse or aquaculture operation? and 2) what crops and/or fish species would carry enough market value to consider producing them in Iowa for Midwest markets?

A discussion group of ISU researchers involved with greenhouse, aquaculture, and biofuels production was assembled to pinpoint the issues that currently face each of these operations. This ad-hoc research team collected market and operational information about greenhouse and aquaculture operations, and estimated waste heat energy available from ethanol plants. Key issues were identified that may lead to success or failure including: selection of high-value crops or fish species, sufficient low-cost energy to overcome the high cost of heat and light during the winter months, and assurance of coordinated management between the ethanol plant and greenhouse/aquaculture facility to avoid costly mistakes. Estimated waste energy from one 50 million-gallon-per-year ethanol plant comes from flue gas at a rate of 6-12 million Btu's per hour (Btuh) and from cooling water at 3-5 million Btuh. In total, this energy would be enough to heat a 1-5 acre greenhouse on Iowa's coldest days, or heat as many as 100 30,000-gallon tanks in a reusable aquaculture system assuming an ambient temperature of 65°F. A feasibility study and detailed engineering plans for a specific location would need to be done to better estimate set-up costs, facility design, and product profitability for an operation co-located with a processing plant.

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New Champions, Expanded Scope for Strengthening a Multi-county Food System

This session should interest local food organizations that are primarily run by one or two dedicated staff in a community, often on volunteer time. How can the cause grow to be championed by many other leaders in the community? A few leaders in Black Hawk and neighboring counties conducted a planning process to identify ways of involving more organizations and develop priority areas. We're in our second year and have our work cut out for us. The original volunteer organizers now have paid jobs! The Northern Iowa Food and Farm Partnership is taking shape, we have identified certain priority areas, and have lots of questions that you maybe able to help us with.

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Strengthening the Local and Regional Food System in the Iowa Valley: Iowa Valley Regional Food Initiative

Since 1996, local food initiatives in the Iowa Valley have had demonstrable impacts in their own areas, but have largely functioned in isolation from each other, limiting their ability to pool resources and seek support. Local food champions voiced an urgent need for a regional body to coordinate and strengthen efforts. The Iowa Valley Regional Food Initiative (I-Food) has filled this need for coordination between a diverse group of food programs and 140 partners and organizations, while facilitating the drafting of a comprehensive regional sustainable food systems plan.

Over the past year, the Iowa Valley RC&D contracted with Crossroads Resource Center to research the regional food and farm economy. This research was shared in three public presentations. Eight planning meetings, attended by local leaders, residents, organizational representatives and producers, were held in 2007. Meeting attendees shared materials and knowledge and networked with the common goal of creating a local food plan. Four I-Food sub-committees have researched the local food system, providing the informational basis for the local food systems plan now being developed.

A key I-Food success has been the partnership between Kalona Organics and Metro High School in Cedar Rapids in which locally grown food is provided to alternative high school students. I-Food also has been involved in efforts to integrate local foods into the Iowa City Community Schools and (with Northeast Iowa RC&D) in developing a website template to connect local food producers and consumers.

I-Food has provided the needed facilitation to coordinate exciting local food efforts and programs and develop a sustainable local foods plan for the region.

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Strategies to Stabilize Locally Grown Produce for Year Round Sales: A feasibility study

Through expert analysis, it was determined that the most acceptable and efficient method to stabilize locally grown products was by freezing. Pathogen reduction was determined for steps in the freezing process and found to be sufficient to provide a safe product. Work done in the second year of this project evaluated the minimum unit operations required to operate a portable on-farm processing unit. The feasibility of such a unit is remote. Several factors play into this determination: energy costs associated with cooling, blanching, and freezing unit operations; availability of enough acreage or product to sustain an operating unit in any one county; and overall cost to build customized equipment was very high. The cost to build the system including energy generation was approximately \$1.4 to \$1.8 million dollars. Further work should show that a static building with receiving coolers, frozen storage, and packaging equipment will be a more sustainable operation.

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Building a Direct-to-Consumer Food Distribution System in Iowa

The burgeoning interest in local foods is well-substantiated. New distribution systems are needed to augment farmers' markets and CSA farms to help satisfy this demand. The Iowa Food Cooperative (IFC) will provide another direct-to-consumer marketing option for Iowa farmers. It will utilize a *web-based inventorying* and ordering system with regular deliveries to distribution sites where consumers will pick up

orders. We have: (1) analyzed operations of two existing direct-to-consumer food cooperatives, (2) conducted consumer and producer surveys, (3) built a database of interested consumers and producers, (4) identified possible food delivery/pick-up sites, (5) identified an appropriate legal structure, (6) secured the needed software and (7) completed a draft business plan.

Sales were \$600,000/year for the four-year-old Oklahoma Food Cooperative and \$48,000/year for the one-year-old Nebraska Food Cooperative. About 50 percent of sales were meat, 30 percent were prepared foods, with the remaining 20 percent being fruits and vegetables and non-food items. Eight-seven percent of 187 Iowa consumers who returned surveys on the IFC were very or extremely likely to participate. Reasons cited were to (1) support sustainably-grown local foods, (2) support family farmers and the Iowa economy, (3) know where their food comes from, (4) be part of a community of like-minded people, and (5) obtain a specific type and quality of food. Over 70 Iowa farmers responded to surveys with data on how much of what products they would likely have available for sale through the IFC. The IFC is building on the experiences of two successful web-based direct-to-consumer cooperatives. Substantial interest exists among both consumers and farmers. Additional work is needed to finalize the business plan and launch the cooperative, which is planned for the spring of 2008.

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Tunnels to Tables

Interest in incorporating high-tunnel production into farming operations is growing rapidly. Participants in recent ISU high tunnel workshops clearly indicated that high tunnel technology offered them a realistic alternative for adding income to existing farm operations or could serve as an affordable enterprise for new/beginning farmers. In order to maximize these opportunities, it was important to provide producers with information that helps identify the crops that offer the most potential for profitable returns. Matching processing and packaging infrastructure needs associated with high tunnel production also was identified as a critical concern by these producers.

High tunnel research production projects and workshops were conducted at two locations in Iowa (ISU Horticulture Research Farm and the Armstrong Research Farm). Both locations grew and monitored the production of brambles (any of a genus *Rubus*, usually prickly shrubs of the rose family including the raspberries and blackberries), tomatoes and bell peppers to establish production budgets and methodology used to maximize production. Processing and handling business models are being developed using USDA feasibility guidelines.

Crops with high potential for profitability in a high-tunnel facility were identified with the focus in year one on tomatoes, green peppers and brambles. Production records were monitored and an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Scouting Guide was developed. Producer input at the workshops helped identify the business strategies for light processing and accumulation that will be evaluated according to USDA-RD feasibility guidelines. Production data and testing continue to need refinement. Using the production parameters from year one, significant work can now begin to determine infrastructure needs and appropriate business model scenarios for accumulation and light processing facilities.

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Investigating the Feasibility of Establishing Food Processing and Distribution Centers for Western Iowa

A major barrier to development of regional food systems is the inability to meet institutional purchasing requirements through product aggregation. Information on supply and demand in the region is needed to best determine specific approaches to aggregation. Existing data on demand and supply and new telephone and mail surveys to better determine supply and demand for selected products, as well as interviewing producers and buyers, are being used to estimate potential supply and demand.

In Northwest Iowa, area producers will provide larger quantities, but not at the current wholesale market prices. In Southwest Iowa, current and potential supplies of fruits and vegetables are too low to justify large facilities. In both areas, meat production is strong, but the issue is inconsistent product quality due to differences in breeds and processing. This is where a facility could be beneficial. In both regions, it appears that decentralized approaches are more likely to facilitate aggregation. In Northwest Iowa, success will depend on finding buyers who will meet producer price requirements for scarce or differentiated items. Small producers' lack the strong ability to collectively and profitably produce items meeting wholesale demands. In Southwest Iowa, rather than focusing on a central distribution point, we are looking at decentralized aggregation points, perhaps even at the individual producer level (such as coolers), that will assist current producers to better increase production.

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What state and local policies could help advance Iowa's local food systems?

Local Foods in Iowa: Opportunities and Challenges. Matt Russell will present a landscape in which farms and food businesses are benefiting from the local food movement as well as identifying the challenges. A food policy framework will be used to explore potential supports for growing the Iowa food economy.

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Organic Agriculture Program Viability Study

Demand for farm products has been growing continuously for the last several years. However, there are limited or no organic agriculture education options that complement the growing interest in this area. Western Iowa Tech Community College has been developing courses in organic agriculture to assist farmers and/or interested individuals in transitioning to organic farming systems. This study has been conducted to determine the viability of an organic agriculture program at the college level in the Siouxland area.

Organic agriculture survey questionnaires were mailed to 1,000 Siouxland residents to learn about the participants' perceptions regarding food issues, interest in organic agriculture and its products, interest in pursuing organic agriculture education, preferred settings and scheduling for classes, areas/subjects of interest and hindering factors. One hundred and eight completed and usable questionnaires were received.

Findings indicate that these respondents were concerned or very concerned about food safety, food freshness, chemical contamination and food cost. Overall, women seemed to be more concerned about genetically modified food supply than men do. Concern about chemical residue on food products increased as the age of respondents increased. Respondents were *somewhat* interested in organic farming, organic agriculture products and learning more about organic agriculture. They preferred face-to-face classes and evening schedule. However, when asked if they would consider taking organic agriculture credit courses, non-credit courses or pursuing a college diploma/degree in organic agriculture, these respondents indicated little or no interest in taking any of those options.

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New Marketing Grants funded in 2008.

Producer Machinery and Labor Sharing Arrangements Workshops

The project addresses how machinery and labor sharing arrangements are used to assist in the intergenerational transfer of farm assets. Two additional case studies will be prepared, to complement the existing 10 cases, which detail the methods and structure of sharing arrangements used specifically for intergenerational transfer. These case studies will be the center-piece for three producer workshops to be held in Iowa during the winter of 2009. The anticipated 100 workshop participants will gain an understanding of the strengths and weakness of alternative resource sharing arrangements, and understand how these arrangements influence legal, financial and human risks associated with transferring farm assets over time. The new case studies and workshop materials will be available to other interested parties via a dedicated web site. After completing the workshop, participants will be better able to work with farm transition specialists to design and implement their own resource sharing arrangement.

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Measuring the Economic Impacts of Local Food Initiatives at the Regional Level

This research effort is aimed at providing technical assistance and economic analysis in support of three other regional or local food production and distribution efforts in Iowa. In particular, this research will use econometric models to help producer groups understand the potential economic impacts that are associated with the introduction of new food production and new food distribution configurations at the regional level. This research helps quantify the potential region-wide economic outcomes when comparing different production and distribution possibilities as compared to some baseline situation, i.e., the status quo.

The foundation for this work began with the "Five-a-Day" research sponsored by the Leopold Center in 2006 that showed the potential statewide economic impacts of increased statewide production of fruits and vegetables to meet a prescribed nutritional goal for Iowans. Those methods will be applied to the regional projects and the particular food and marketing goals and programs that they establish. All of the

research ultimately will be presented as sets of case studies. In addition, the techniques of this analysis also will be reported in order to stimulate additional research of this kind in other areas.

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Pottawattamie County Farm to Fork

The Pottawattamie County Farm to Fork Committee is working towards a healthier local foods economy. Our plans involve a needs assessment, asset mapping, and gap analysis, with the information gathered into a strategic plan with an action register. An overarching goal is to make connections between growers and institutions, restaurants and other consumers to stimulate the markets for local foods, but first we must build the infrastructure to allow those connections to materialize and flourish. One of the main items already of concern is the lack of grower vendors in Pottawattamie County. The two main objectives of this project are a 1) Mentor Program and a 2) Strategic Plan (done in conjunction with the Southwest Iowa Farm to Food Initiative).

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Expanding Business Skills for Specialty Growers in Iowa

Expanding Business Skills for Specialty Growers in Iowa will take a very successful Iowa agricultural business planning program and expand its services in order to serve more farm businesses across Iowa. Objectives are to: (1) Build a dynamic statewide farmer business network with 150 members, whose major business is to produce specialty farm and food products. Elements to include: Developing a three-year strategic plan, identifying a leadership team and developing a web site. (2) Develop a plan for a regional agricultural-based business planning program in Iowa by January 31, 2009. We will consider delivering this program statewide by holding the program twice a year, always in Central Iowa and rotating each year once on the east side of Iowa and the following year on the west side, utilizing the web to teach the curriculum phase, developing a one-on-one service; and franchising the program as a train-the-trainer program so others will teach it around the state. and (3) Provide up to three LCSEA scholarships in 2009 and 2010 to encourage sustainable farm businesses to attend the Grow your Small Market Farm (GYSMF) Business Planning Program. The \$250 Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture scholarships will be given to three new sustainable specialty farm businesses a year.

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Grinnell Area Petroleum Replacement Initiative Phase 2

In 2006, the Imagine Grinnell group and the Iowa DNR partnered to establish the Grinnell Area Petroleum Replacement Initiative (GAPRI), a one-year program to promote alternatives to petroleum products, and assist in expanding opportunities for local entrepreneurs. Phase 2 of GAPRI will seek to explore farm and

community-based alternatives to large-scale biofuels production, in order to reduce on-farm energy costs, and decrease emissions and dependence of fossil fuels. To make on-farm biofuel and bio-products viable for farmers, a model needs to be developed that takes into account regional resources, roadblocks and regulations. Phase 2 of GAPRI will construct such a model.

Phase 2 of GAPRI will focus on several objectives: 1) Make information available to farmers on the feasibility of on-farm bio-fuel processing and "de-mystify" production techniques. This will include holding workshops, followed by the formation of a work group and publishing literature and web-based information. 2) Provide value-added options to farmers through on-farm energy production and track the progress of energy use, product viability and marketability. 3) Encourage partnerships between farmers and local businesses to explore new opportunities and document the successes and obstacles. 4) Create four models for cost-effective and environmentally friendly farm-based production of biofuels and other bio-products.

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New Farmer Jump Start Project

The "New Farmer Jump Start" project is a one-year pilot project to recruit and provide financial and technical assistance to one new food producer in Cass County. That producer will receive access to land, water and production equipment, and expertise that will enable him or her to grow one or two profitable vegetable crops, which will be marketed to local retailers. Modeled after the "That's My Farmer" program in Oregon, selected low-income residents will receive coupons for meals and discounts on local foods at the farmer's market or grocery store.

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Adding a New Generation to Iowa's Sustainable Farms

Adding a new generation to Iowa's sustainable farms is a timely and urgent challenge that needs to be addressed, as the decline in young farmers in recent years has been the most dramatic of the last century. This two-year project will help farmers who are transitioning the next generation onto the farm do so successfully and smoothly.

After interviewing a dozen families transitioning the next generation onto the farm we found that communication and financial planning were the biggest challenges they faced. This information produced these project objectives: 1) help at least 15 farm families or farmer/apprentice matches transition the next generation onto the farm effectively, with improved communication and a unified vision; 2) help at least 15 farm families or farmer/apprentice matches transition the next generation onto the farm profitably, with improved business/financial plans and possible new enterprises; and 3) help at least 200 farm families or farmer/apprentice matches transition the next generation onto the farm more effectively with the information they learn from others through case studies publicized by media outlets and available on our website, at field days, and the PFI Annual Conference sessions.

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Strategies to Effectively Promote and Market On-Farm Retail Enterprises

Agritourism promotes the concepts of locally grown foods, place-based foods, the heritage and culture of the farm and the food grown on it, and places an emphasis on sustainable and natural resource preservation and development. Agritourism enterprises usually are an addition to an existing farm operation and the effectiveness or the efficiency of promotional and advertising transaction costs often are not completely understood or evaluated or are neglected. Getting visitors to the farm is a hard sell, and different than selling products off the farm.

The activities involved in this project will target the Iowa agritourism industry and will enable state entities to provide marketing research and identify strategies to effectively promote and market on-farm retail enterprises. This project will provide for specific and relevant marketing education aimed to affect increased opportunities in the state for the development of the agritourism industry and to help build a state wide marketing campaign. These activities will be directed by the Iowa Agritourism Working Group, led and facilitated by the staff of the Iowa State University Extension Value Added Agriculture Program.

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Strengthening the Local and Regional Food System in the Iowa Valley – Iowa Valley Regional Food Initiative

The Iowa Valley Regional Food Initiative (I-Food) is working to finalize the development of a regional local food system strategic plan for the Iowa and Cedar Valley regions, including Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Linn, Poweshiek, and Tama counties. This group is framing the basis from which to become a formal vehicle that fosters partnerships and cooperation in addressing barriers and opportunities for a local food system meeting regional needs and utilizing local resources.

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Latino Farmers and Local Multicultural Food and Marketing Systems

The purpose of this project is to collaboratively develop an immigrant farmer training and business incubation program integrated into a multicultural local/regional food system. We will build upon the entrepreneurial spirit and diverse foods sought by new immigrants to create entry points for Latino farmers in local food systems. We will work in two Iowa counties (Marshall and Crawford) to build a team of local partners to (a) recruit, train, and improve immigrants' access to resources needed for farming; (b) plan and implement a local food system with a strong focus on the marketing links in the value chain; and c) prepare a guide that documents crucial aspects of the process for replicating the approach. Monitoring and evaluation, using the community capitals framework (CCF), will provide important inputs to the guide. Locally relevant indicators, including annual review of business success of new farms, will be identified

and monitored through a participatory process involving immigrant residents and the project leadership team. Partners in the Marshalltown component thus far include Marshalltown Community College, Raíces, Growing Food and Profit (INCA), Marshall County Extension, and NCRCRD.

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