

Funding Impact Brief #4: The Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG)



The RFSWG

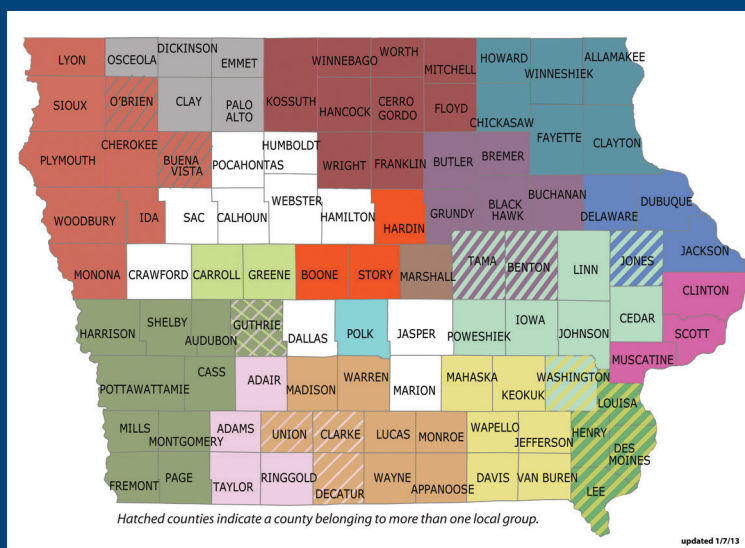
This group is comprised of geographically-based practitioners and community leaders with a goal to increase the investment in and support for local and regional food businesses in Iowa. There are 17 local groups that participate and jointly manage this group. The group was convened in 2003 by the Leopold Center Marketing and Food Systems Initiative as part of the Value Chain Partnerships program.

A regional food system supports long-term connections between farmers and consumers while helping to meet the health, social, economic and environmental needs of communities within that region.

By the Numbers

- **\$922,837** awarded by the Leopold Center (1998-2012)
- **\$4,291,471** externally leveraged funds
- **45+** key organizational, agency and institutional partners
- **RFSWG food groups work in 89 of Iowa's 99 counties**

Where does the RFSWG operate?



What's the economic impact?

- From 2006-2008, partnering farmers from 4 food groups reported an *increase* of \$878,780 in the sale of local foods.*
- From 2007-2009 partnering institutions, businesses and restaurants reported an *increase* of \$1,068,000 in the purchase of local foods.*
- The Food and Farming Initiative of the Heartland (FFIHL), formerly SWIFFI, helped leverage \$30,000 per year from Pottawattamie County for 5 years (2008-2012), to support a local foods coordinator in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area.

*The figures will be updated in June 2013 from current data collection efforts.

RFSWG members gather at a 2009 quarterly meeting

Credit: Leopold Center

Photo on back:

RFSWG members enjoy sweet corn at Wright County food festival

Credit: Jan Libbey





About this series

Purpose: To communicate the impacts of long-term Leopold Center investments made in sustainable agriculture research, education and outreach on Iowa's communities, economies and landscapes. This brief is the fourth in a series of six featuring:

1. Low-Input High-Diversity Systems (\$313,854; 2004-2012)
2. Long-Term Agroecological Research (\$900,000; 1998-2012)
3. Hoop Houses for Alternative Hog Production (\$526,451; 1997-2012)
4. Regional Food Systems Working Group (\$922,837; 2003-2012)
5. Bear Creek Riparian Buffer Project (\$900,000; 1990-2012)
6. Practical Farmers of Iowa (\$100,000; 2011-2012)

Each brief was prepared based on data gathered from project publications, and 2012-13 interviews with principal investigators and/or key partners.

The analysis showed that for every dollar invested in these six projects, an additional \$4.60 was leveraged complement or expand the work. Get all briefs: www.leopold.iastate.edu/change

Selected RFSWG Reports

The following reports were published on the state of Iowa's local food systems:

- Creating change in the food system: The role of regional food networks in Iowa
- Learning about local: A resource guide to Iowa organizations and programs supporting local and regional food systems
- Food facts: Results from marketing and food systems research
- Developing a vibrant and sustainable regional food system: Suggestions for community-based groups
- A resource guide to cultivate the Linn County local food system
- The current state of regional food system work in Iowa
- Consumers, vendors, and the economic importance of Iowa farmers' markets: An economic impact survey analysis
- Collecting data for collective impact: A guide for coordinators in the Regional Food Systems Working Group (a how-to manual for documenting the economic impact of regional food systems work in Iowa)

Leverage by the Leopold Center

The Leopold Center has leveraged external grants from Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education – Professional Development Program, USDA - Rural Business Enterprise Grants, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Wallace Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Winrock International, and Alces Foundation, totaling in \$476,937.

Related RFSWG Grants and Leverage

The Leopold Center has funded the following projects related to the RFSWG activities, investing a total of \$246,197; these projects have leveraged \$968,671 in additional funding:

- Regional Flavors of Northwest Iowa
- Involving new immigrants and minorities in local food systems
- Developing permaculture techniques for increased production and profit in sustainable year-round agriculture for beginning farmers and ranchers in southwest Iowa
- Experiential educational engagement with working groups
- A food distribution network for the Northern Iowa Food and Farm Partnership
- Pottawattamie County Farm to Fork, Phases I and II
- Northeast Iowa local food summary survey report

Leverage by Regional Food Groups

Northeast Iowa Food and Farm Coalition (NIFF) was the first Regional Food group to be funded by the Leopold Center in 2006 in the amount of \$10,000. The NIFF Coalition is now central to a larger effort called the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative, which has been able to directly leverage \$2,695,863 in external funding. The Leopold Center is in the process of collecting similar data pertaining to the past year for the remaining 16 food groups.

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