

## **Investigating Gambier as a Model Homegrown Village**

The changing state of local food systems in recent years has loosened the ties between food consumers and food producers. The ties have become so scattered that even those consumers that are within agricultural communities have become dependent on outside food sources.

Gambier, Ohio is a prime example of this shift. Gambier is a college town within an agricultural environment. Currently, however, the communities remain more or less separate. The institutional buyers within the town obtain most of their foods from non-local distributors, often from states away. Not only does this type of food system take away the connections between the consumers and the farmers, but it also limits the food dollars that stay within the local economy. Many of the foods traveling into Gambier are products that are also produced locally. This project, coordinated by the Rural Life Center, is focused on investigating the possibilities for a local food system in Gambier. The research conducted this semester intends to seek out opportunities to bring local (Knox County) foods to the institutional buyers of the town.

A “Model Homegrown Village” would mean that the food establishments within the village would feature local products either in their menus or on their shelves. The institutions within Gambier represent a sample food system in that the establishments characterize the types of buyers that would need to be catered to in any food system. The goal of this project and its research is to determine whether or not a system featuring local foods is possible, and to see what it would take to make this happen from the institutional buyers perspective.

Some of the main advantages of a local food system in Gambier:

- ◆ Make healthy/fresh/tasty foods available
- ◆ Educate the community
- ◆ Create ties within the local community (the college, the businesses and the farmers)
- ◆ Draw attention to the community and the businesses that support it
- ◆ Help give distinctive character to the town of Gambier
- ◆ Support local agriculture and economy (help keep food dollars within the community)
- ◆ Support independent businesses
- ◆ Help maintain green space
- ◆ Support the viability of small-scale agriculture
- ◆ Provide a network of support to link farmers to the institutions
- ◆ Help educate consumers of the value of local foods

This project is part of a larger effort to build connections and awareness within the farm and non-farm communities of Knox County. The success of the Rural Life Center's earlier efforts makes this research the next logical step. *Homegrown*, published in 2000, began this growing effort to draw together the local consumers and producers of the foods grown in Knox County, Ohio. It briefly explores the reasons that purchasing local foods is beneficial: freshness, taste, nutrition, variety, improving the local economy, strengthening producer/consumer relations, and avoiding health hazards. By setting this in print, and allowing the public to read about the food and agricultural issues that are currently churning throughout the country, *Homegrown* serves as one of the first local projects to educate the Knox County public as to the current status of the local food system. Heightening awareness of the benefits of buying locally and publicizing local producers is an important predecessor to this project, as purchasing local foods becomes a

realistic option for Gambier. The booklet lays out the products grown locally, their growing season, availability, location, etc. *Homegrown* also provides a brief history of farming in Knox County that lays out the main obstacles of small-scale local farming in the area:

Today, family farming in the region faces three challenges. A globalized, competitive agricultural economy demands expansion, increased technological sophistication, and management strategies more typical of the boardroom than the family room. While economic conditions have stabilized somewhat since the crisis of the 1980s, current talk of reduced farm subsidies in the U.S. Congress may again bring significant changes to American agriculture. The rapid expansion of metropolitan Columbus, the state capital, presents challenges of significant alteration of local land use, increases in population density, and the influx of urban residents with little understanding of farm life. (**Appendix A**)

Current agricultural trends within the U.S. and the rapid action of urban sprawl both indicate that the community of Gambier is approaching, and is already seeing around them, immense change. Mount Vernon has already undergone the process that most rural communities of Middle America have seen in the past thirty years. Strips of national food services and chains have sprung up, and local institutions are not only being threatened, but phased out. Gambier, because of its size and close distance to Mount Vernon, has thus far been able to avoid such problems. However, the farmers within the area are suffering the consequences of the changes around them, and Gambier has the opportunity to help confront those problems. Family farms are slowly becoming threatened with non-existence, and with that, the character of the surrounding communities is also threatened. Family farming within Knox County, and the U.S. for that matter, is declining with its economic stability, and generations are ceasing to continue the farming traditions of their predecessors. If these threats are not confronted, Gambier and other rural communities will no longer have the same appeal and cultural importance that they have today. Rural communities tend to encourage individuals to

feel connected to their surrounding environment. Agricultural communities allow individuals the opportunity to form a connection with the food that they eat. As Gambier follows the trends of globalization, primarily purchasing foods from national distributors, it faces the risk of losing its individual appeal and identity. Supporting the local community and independent businesses (and farmers) is one way of confronting those threats.

Creating a *Model Homegrown Village* is one way of stabilizing the current appeal and identity of the town. We are in a point in time, NOW, where things can still be changed. However, the path is set and these problems and trends are already in effect. There needs to be a more educated public so that these topics and problems can be more often discussed and addressed. Things should not continue in this direction without the general population realizing the consequences and implications of their daily food rituals and purchasing habits.

The Rural Life Center's second publication, *Foodways*, helps to define the collective identity of the communities in Knox County through food. The articles make arguments that there should be an effort and an interest in minimizing the distance between food producers and consumers. The readers of *Foodways* are introduced to some of the people involved in the local food system, thus demonstrating the capability of the system to remain small and personable. The effort also intends to reinforce the existing interest in expanding the market for local food use.

In the 1998 *Knox County Comprehensive Plan*, the Knox County Chamber of Commerce set forth possible policies and initiatives that would preserve the character and economic stability of the County. Included were the Farmer's Market, a guide to local

food sources (*Homegrown*), and the idea to “develop plans for Kenyon College and other institutions to use local foods” (**Appendix B**). The success of the previous efforts to educate the public of the local food system encourages further exploration of a Model Homegrown Village. Their success also sets a foundation for what could become a regional and sustainable food system.

While the earlier projects focused on Knox County as a whole, this research zeros in on a more specific sample of the community: Gambier. Within Gambier itself, there are only independent food institutions. There are no fast food chains or corporate businesses within the village, making it easier to equate the local businesses with the local farmers.

**Categories of Institutional Buyers:**

<b>Cafeterias</b>	<b>Restaurants</b>	<b>Bed and Breakfasts</b>	<b>Food Markets</b>	<b>Catering</b>
Kenyon College	The Cove	Gambier House	Village Market	The Parish House (Joyce Klein)
Wiggins Street Elementary School	Kenyon Inn			
	The Village Inn			
	Deli			

These businesses represent the typical institutional buyers of rural northeast Ohio. Each institution has different requirements as far as the foods they need to stock their shelves and kitchens. Catering to somewhat different clients and needs, each buyer

purchases foods by evaluating the convenience and price range of available distributors. Each buyer has a potential use or need for locally grown products, suggesting that a regional food system is a viable option for the community.

Gambier residents are typically in an economic bracket above the rest of the county, allowing for more food dollars to be spent in the town. It is most likely that these residents are the ones that could afford to buy local products, and so it makes sense that this area be targeted for such sales. The Kenyon community also creates a unique situation within this area of northeastern Ohio, as there are more residents from cities and other areas of the country where food education is becoming increasingly more popular. People are educated to the notions of organic products, local foods, and the agriculture problems that have been evolving steadily since the 1970s. Gambier residents are more inclined to follow the modern trends towards organically produced and locally produced foods. The businesses in Gambier are catering to some of these customers, and therefore also have an interest in such foods. Public interest in the current state of agriculture and food distribution is growing, and so it makes sense to continue to educate and learn about what can be done to help the situation, as well as to help our own health and sense of community.

### **Gambier's Institutional Buyers**

The local institutional buyers have many similar needs and requirements because they typically serve the same customers. The Gambier House and the Kenyon Inn serve a slightly wealthier clientele than the other institutions, and thus have more leeway in where they can afford to buy their foods. However, more often than not, their

requirements and obstacles are similar to the other businesses as they face the decisions involved in purchasing food products.

The Village Market buys the most varied foods because it is meeting the most versatile demands within the village. This makes it so that their number of suppliers greatly exceeds that of the other institutions. However, the major national distributors used by the other businesses are included in the list of suppliers that the market deals with. A food distribution company decides for the market where they purchase their dairy, produce, deli items, wheats, and grocery taxable items (those items that are not edible). Depending on the volume of the product that the market is purchasing, they receive a proportional price. The volume of the purchase tends to increase the buying power that the Village Market receives. Currently, the market is satisfied with their suppliers, as they see many advantages to using a national supplier. There are always products that are out of stock, but that problem can never be helped. The larger distributing companies leave less room for error than the smaller distributors, or the small-scale farmers. The distributors have more chickens to have die, more produce that can fail to grow, etc. They provide outlets that are less likely to be inconsistent. These companies have more resources, and can gear their businesses in ways that appeal to the consumer. For example, the produce supplied by the larger farms are grown using technological advancements that allow for better looking food than naturally grown produce. Because the consumer today rarely looks beyond the shelves when purchasing foods, this sort of tactic makes them feel as though they are receiving the best product, even when all they go on is visual information. The farmers growing tomatoes locally might have different sized and shaped tomatoes, which may look unappealing to the

consumer who is used to seeing perfectly round and red tomatoes which have been manipulated as they were grown to look a certain way. Natural products, not chemically treated or genetically altered, are not guaranteed the same visual appeal. Because the Village Market now has to compete with the larger supermarkets in Mount Vernon, their products must compare in appearance to those on the shelves of the larger stores. This creates a demand for foods that are not grown naturally, or locally for that matter.

The major problem with using the larger distributors for the market, from a business point of view, is that the manufacturers have a minimum-purchasing requirement. This means that in order for the market to receive a certain price or food, they need to order a specific amount of that product. The market cannot always know how much they will sell, and, because they cater to such a small population, often end up with food that outlives its shelf life. This loses money for the business. There are only about six hundred residents of the town, not including the Kenyon students who are here only during the school year. In order to meet the needs of a small community without over ordering, the market has to place orders on a weekly basis, sometimes ordering food three times a week. If there is a demand for a certain amount of meat or dairy or produce, the national suppliers can take the orders on such a short notice and be able to deliver. There is a very strong advantage here to the market, as the supplier allows for a level of convenience that a smaller distributor may not be able to achieve.

It is hard to judge the decision making of an institutional buyer because the decisions are based on their economic interests, and not on improving the general situation of agriculture and community within rural areas. If the market is going to make more money, and loose less money, by purchasing foods from the larger distributors, it



seems to be the best decision for the business. However, this ignores something very integral to the idea of an independent and small-scale business, especially in a small community like Gambier. The cultural implications of the decision making that the market controls extend beyond the economic implications. By ignoring the local producers, the food dollars end up extending themselves beyond the county, beyond the state of Ohio, and often beyond the Midwest. This means that the economic status of the community that houses the market drops. In addition, the character of the community changes, as the farmers are no longer able to sell their foods locally. Less and less small farms are surviving, creating a substantial threat to the land that they occupy. The agricultural community is losing its ability to sustain itself because it cannot compete with the agricultural communities that have cooperative farms and can deliver from across the country.

It is not that the owners of the market are disinterested in keeping the food dollars local. They recognize the fact that, like them, the local farmers are small and independent businesspeople. They want to make it possible to support one another, but find it difficult because it creates the need for too many sacrifices. They have tried to carry local produce in the past, but the supply has proved to be too inconsistent. When the farmers cannot supply the number of items needed, it will, in turn, reflect poorly on the market. Since the market relies on the consistency of the consumers, they also need to provide that consistency of supply, which they have not been able to find within the local producers and distributors. Another problem they have found with buying locally is that there is often little demand for some of the products grown and raised. For example, a few years back they purchased lamb from the 4H club at the county fair. They had it

slaughtered locally, and only ended up being able to sell half of what they purchased. The population of the town again comes into play here. If there are only six hundred people here, there is a very small level of demand for many products, and so it creates problems and money loss. There needs to be equilibrium between the supply and the demand. For someone to stay in production on, say, lambs, only selling locally, everyone within the village would need to buy lamb. But that does not happen. The farmer needs to reach beyond the immediate community even if there are people buying the lamb within the community. There aren't enough people within the town to keep them in business.

The Village Market displays many of the problems that arise when a business considers buying locally. The problems do not lie in a lack of interest to support the local farmers. Instead, they mainly stem from the lack of consistency that the farmers provide within their supply. The problem also seems to relate directly to the amount of money being made and lost. Because this is a *business* of food, making money is the priority of the business owners. The amount of money that the distributors require is often more reasonable or affordable to independent businesses of such a small town. The amount of money that the store loses because of lack of supply from bigger distributors is less than the money lost because of the inconsistency of the local growers.

Is it possible for local farmers to create a system that has the same margin of error as the larger farms? Do more chickens mean more business? How can small-scale farmers compete when there is so much working against them? If the farmers were able to supply a consistent amount of products to a supplier, they would have a greater chance at survival and success. At the same time, if the farmers were able to provide products on

short notice, it would also help the businesses because those are the two most prominent reasons for going with the larger distribution companies. Is there a way for the farmers to compete? It seems that when the village market has tried to buy locally in the past, all attempts were failures. The Village Market has found that it is safer for the business to go with larger companies, even if they would rather support their fellow local and independent businesses.

Restaurants seem to go through the decision making process a little differently than the market. They are working off of a menu rather than a specific, week to week, customer demand for certain food products. However, it still is the general consensus that the local farmers cannot be depended upon. The restaurants find that the local producers cannot guarantee the same levels of consistency and convenience that the larger producers provide.

Currently, the Village Inn and the Cove are changing hands, as the V.I. moves to Mount Vernon, and the owners of the V.I. make plans to take over the Corrigan's Cove restaurant. Nevertheless, the food purchasing history and issues that are in place now will continue to hold once the restaurants change hands. The V.I. purchases the majority of their food products from Gordon Foods. Gordon Foods is a distributing company out of Michigan, and delivers to many institutions throughout this area of Ohio and to Indiana. They have their own farms and processing plants, and deliver to the directly to the doors of their customers. They are capable of retrieving any items that the V.I. might need, even their paper goods. This makes it easier to order things for the restaurant because there are less contracts and middlemen. They order food twice a week, and

receive the same number of shipments. Gordon Foods has sales representatives located in each area that they do business within. This makes interactions with the distributor more personable and helpful. The representative is local, even if he represents a company that is larger and on a national level. The business, Gordon Foods, is family owned, and provides a level of interaction that most national distributors lack. They also provide a computer system where the institutional buyers can check the availability and price of products with minimal effort. Gordon Foods additionally provides weekly price lists, interactions with chefs, gives recipe tips, holds food shows, and offers other such side services.

Before switching to Gordon Foods, the V.I. dealt with Trio Foods, a local distributing company that went out of business. It seems that attempts at success for local distributors have failed. In 1973 the Gambier Farmer's Co-operative, a local distribution co-operative, was the first attempt at a regional sustainable food system. However, the attempt was short-lived, and failed because of financial problems. Lannings, a distributor in Mount Vernon, is the only distributor that consistently has local products in stock. The history of past attempts to keep local independent businesses alive suggests that there needs to be an investigation of the problems that such attempts face.

The Village Inn's experience with a smaller distributing company has proved successful because the company lessens the amount of responsibility of the restaurant in many ways. The current trend to buy pre-prepared foods affects the restaurant because it decreases labor costs, and liability. Gordon provides their own processing plants, costing the V.I. nothing, and provides an easy way to keep costs down. When the V.I. began purchasing foods from Gordon eight years ago, the business covered only four states.

The company is now growing, and with that growth, gains recourses and connections within the distribution world. They are therefore able to cover more of the inconsistency of products, as they are able to run off other labels when they do not carry a specific item. There is still a fluctuating price and quality of the foods, but the fluctuation is less drastic than the local growers would be because there is, again, less inconsistency of supply. In addition, using a distribution company reduces the responsibility of the V.I., in terms of national regulations (sanitation, etc.), because both businesses have to meet similar requirements.

A small restaurant in a small community has less reason to be catering to personal interests (such as a local food system) than a restaurant within a city. Cities have more support for local foods, and funds for the more expensive local products. There is often less demand for those foods in a community of a lower economic bracket. Smaller locations also have fewer options as to what foods, costs, and distributors they can choose from. They can't cater to a small demand or interest because they are limited in their own options. They have to react to what the customers want as a whole. They go with the demand of their consumers, and not with their personal food interests.

The restaurant does buy their meat and dairy from Lannings, a local distributor. In the past, they have attempted to purchase potatoes locally as well, but that proved to be unsuccessful. In the restaurant business, food presentation is often as much a key element as the taste. For that reason, there needs to be a level of visual consistency among the food products that they purchase. This is similar to the produce in the Village Market where the consumer is used to seeing the manipulated, good looking, foods that the larger farms and distributors place on shelves and plates throughout the country.

The Village Inn owners pointed out that their personal interests do not necessarily coincide with their business interests. They are interested in making money with the food that they serve. If the consumers aren't interested in purchasing local foods, the restaurants have no interest in purchasing local foods. Without consumer education, there can be no need for a regional food system. There needs to be changing eating habits and interests within the community to create such a demand.

The Cove and the Deli have similar situations to that of the Village Inn, where their customers dictate what they need to purchase. When they took over the Cove, the owners took on the suppliers of the previous business (1978). The local farmers would be a viable option for a supplier, but it seems as if they cannot compete with the ease that the larger distributors create. Occasionally, they buy from local distributors, Lannings or Smithheislars, but most of the food comes from Sysco and Gordon. This way, everything comes from one place in large shipments. The restaurant only has to write one check, deal with one contract, etc. There is ease when dealing with fewer details and people. There are consistent supplies of whatever needs the restaurants have, and a computer system that keeps the buyers informed of relevant information. There is *variety* in what they can order. For example, they can choose from ten different types of chicken to order, and ten types of lettuce. The large companies provide food shows that allow the buyers to look at and test the foods they will purchase. Working off of a menu makes it important for the food supplier to be consistent. Sysco will take care of any problems that occur for the restaurants. The sales representative, for instance, will hand deliver and obtain products that require a minimum order that the cove or deli does not need.

To obtain products that the Deli can't obtain locally or from Sysco, specialty cheeses and what not, they order from Euro-Importing in Cleveland. They also get Dublin Yogurt Company products in Dublin, Ohio. When local products are needed and accessible, they like to purchase them. "Keeping the food dollars within the local economy is important to local businesses" (**Appendix C**). There is also something of quality that comes into play here. The Deli has purchased bread from the Amish in Danville Ohio for years now. The recipe has been passed down through the years, and a different baker has supplied the Deli each time that the recipe has changed hands. Jeanie Coorigan, the owner of the Deli, drives to them to pick it up. When the food is worth the effort, she puts it in. However, to obtain all the food from such small-scale suppliers would be too much work for one person, especially one who has other sides of the business to run. If more local products were to be used at the restaurants, they would need to come to the door.

The Gambier House only serves breakfast, and so has limited needs for locally produced goods. They need mostly fruits, which are not abundantly grown in the area, and are especially sparse out of season. They will purchase apples and peaches from the local orchards, but only in the summer and the fall. When there are farmers selling melons on middle path, they will also purchase those. They would like to buy locally, but it is difficult because there isn't a consistent or abundant supply of what they need. However, because they are such a small business, the regulations and restrictions as to what they can purchase is less than those on the other local businesses. This makes them

a good candidate for buying local products. When it is easy and accessible, they will purchase what they can from the local producers. There just needs to be the availability.

The Kenyon Inn, like the Gambier House, has limited needs that can be met by the local producers. However, the chef orders most of his foods through a local distributor, Lannings. Lannings will carry food specifically for the Kenyon Inn's needs. Specialty items, salmon, etc. can all be ordered and received with no problem. Lannings can find any food for him, and only needs notice and reason to carry any given item. The Kenyon Inn chef plans his menu three weeks in advance so that he can make sure that he can get the items he needs from Lannings. He could deal with the producers directly, but he does not order enough food himself to get shipments from them. Therefore, Lannings needs to order more than the Kenyon Inn needs, and will sell those products to other businesses in the area. There are other local businesses, in Mount Vernon that can use the types of products that he orders, so it works out well.

Currently, the restaurant does not use local products often. From time to time, the chef will purchase local strawberries. However, the chef is interested in the idea of supporting local producers. His clients can afford to pay more for quality products, especially if they can add some sort of appeal to the restaurant. The restaurant always needs tomatoes and lettuces that could be bought from local growers. He would even curtail his menu to items that local growers could provide him with if they could not provide him with the products that he needed.

There seems to be an opportunity here for local producers to step in and approach the interested businesses and figure out what they grow that is in need (and for what they *could* grow that is needed). There seems to be an interest in supporting each other within



the community. When there is such an easy going and interested attitude at even one of the institutions, it seems likely that there can be something accomplished in the direction of a local food system.

The Parish House, and Joyce Klein's catering service, is the most small-scale of the businesses. Their clients are usually Kenyon faculty and students, with occasional weddings. They use produce, meat and fish. They buy their chicken from the Village market, beef from Lannings, and their produce from Big Bear or Kroger. Their consumers do not require them to order large amounts of foods, and so there is not need for a consistent contracted supplier. Wherever they can get their foods the cheapest, they shop. Occasionally, they will buy local strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries. There is no specific need to buy locally, but if it were offered at comparably cheap prices, they could use those foods. The main problems seem to be that the growing season is so short for the foods they purchase, and that they do not do business during the summers. This provides limited opportunity to obtain local foods. Being the smallest business, it seems probable that it would be comparably easy to meet the needs of the caterers, but there would need to be a similar price range.

The cafeterias are a different story than the other Gambier businesses because they have more legal issues to deal with. The Wiggins Street Elementary School does not decide for themselves where their food comes from, and so there would need to be meetings with the public law officials in order for a dialogue to take place as to whether or not buying local products would be a viable option. For Kenyon, the option seems

more likely. However, that does not mean much. The main issue that Kenyon Dining Services brought up when discussing the idea of local foods is the issue of liability. Not only does Sysco provide all paper goods, foods, canned goods, chemicals, etc., but they also take responsibility for all of the food served. If a student were to get sick from the dining hall food, it would not be Kenyon's responsibility, financially or legally, to deal with the problem. For Kenyon, it is frustrating that there is no competitive pricing, but the contract with ARAMARK provides a consistent pricing of the foods and products bought from Sysco. Occasionally, when Sysco can't provide something, the school obtains food from Lannings. This makes it seem as though there could be some change in where they purchase their foods, but it does not seem likely that the contract will terminate. Kenyon is relieved of many responsibilities by relying on the national contract with Sysco, and without substantial student interest in motivating any changes, there is no need for change.

This is one of the largest problems that exist for all of the institutional buyers: there is not current *demand* for local products. If there were a way to create a demand, it seems as though a local food system could rise from the institutional buyers of Gambier, but there needs to be an educated consumer population in order for that to happen.

### **Problems and Concerns of Institutional Buyers (trends)**

#### A. CONSISTANCY:

1. Foods are needed out of season
2. Fruits are scarcely grown
3. Quality and physical appearance (size, appearance, etc.) of foods needs to be consistent for menus
4. Quantity can't always be consistent
5. There needs to be some consistency of price
6. Availability (in general) of products

## B. CONVIENIENCE

1. Door to door service
2. Currently they are covered when a product is needed (product availability)
3. They receive weekly price lists
4. Orders can be made with computer systems
5. Quantity from one source
6. All foods from one source: less deliveries, payments, contracts, etc.
7. Middle-men dealing with problems
8. Large distributors provide recipe tips and other side services
8. Processed foods (pre-cut lettuce, etc.)

## C. PRICE

1. They receive price lists weekly
2. Insurance coverage is lower because of pre-processed produce, foods
3. They receive discounts in bulk
4. They receive discounts when non-organic
5. Delivery is cheaper

## D. LEGAL ISSUES

1. Board of Health Regulations
2. Certified foods
3. Local product restrictions (mushrooms, eggs)
4. Liability can be placed on national distributors

### **Possibilities for the Future**

There is a limited availability of local foods in Gambier. As a result, there is sporadic and limited purchasing of local products, but no consistent interest and motivation. The local producers, as explored by the *Family Farm Project*, are willing to address the issue of a local market. The institutional buyers were also willing to address the issue, even if they are not willing to forfeit their concerns. In fact, both members of the local food system seem willing to explore the idea of a regional food system, but are not willing to toss away their hesitation. However, this will only make it easier to target the needs of each party, and easier to plan out options for a “Model Homegrown Village.”

The first problem to be dealt with, it seems, is the lack of a “demand” for local foods. An educated public would be more likely attentive to the issues that are relevant, and so there should first be an educational initiative within the area. The success of the Farmer’s Market and *Homegrown* show that Knox County is interested in local foods. Kenyon students are interested in what they eat. There is a hungry public in Gambier, and they deserve to learn about the current situation of the food system, and the options that are out there. There needs to be a heightened awareness in order for there to be a demand for change.

It is possible that the farmers could create some sort of co-operative, like the one that failed in 1973. They could then act as a distributing company, providing the local institutions with comparative food recourse. A co-op would allow the farmers to compete with the larger producers on a small-scale level, and would make it so that their foods could remain within the county. There are other options as well: CSA, marketing advancements, etc. There needs to be further investigation into what needs the farmers are capable of meeting, and then there can be a more serious discussion of creating a regional food system.