

The Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Plan

Contained in the 2009 report of
the Illinois Local & Organic Food & Farm Task Force
Growing the Illinois Economy: Local Food, Farms, and Jobs

Commissioned by the Illinois General Assembly:
Illinois Food, Farms, & Jobs Act of 2007 (Public Act 95-145)

Adopted by the Illinois General Assembly:
Illinois Food, Farms & Jobs Act of 2009 (Public Act 96-0579)

Chief author & sponsor: State Rep. Julie Hamos (Evanston, IL)

Goals for 2020

1. Coordinate state institution food procurement policies to increase purchase of Illinois local farm and food products at state-funded cafeterias to 20% of total purchases.
2. Support and expand programs that recruit, train, and provide technical assistance to 20,000 Illinois residents (5,000 farmers, 12,500 farm laborers, and 2,500 infrastructure entrepreneurs) to produce, process, and distribute Illinois local farm and food products.
3. Increase the purchase of Illinois local food products by Illinois consumers to 10% of total food dollar expenditures.

Immediate Implementation Strategies

1. The Illinois General Assembly shall direct state agencies to engage existing staff, resources, and authorities to support and build community-based farm and food networks and commission all state agencies to coordinate with local and federal authorities to obtain resources required to accomplish the goal of constructing an Illinois local farm and food economy.
2. The Illinois General Assembly shall create The Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council. The Council shall have responsibility to implement the Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Plan.
3. The General Assembly shall direct state agencies to work with the Council in convening an inter-agency committee that facilitates the focusing of state agency goals and objectives to the development of local farm and food economies in communities across Illinois.
4. The General Assembly shall direct the Council and the University of Illinois Extension to build the capacity of Extension's Local Food Initiative.

5. The General Assembly shall direct the Council to facilitate public-private working groups as required to eliminate unnecessary and contradictory local, municipal, state, and federal regulatory barriers to production, processing, and marketing of local farm and food products in Illinois.
6. The General Assembly shall direct the Council to work with state agencies to build partnerships required to reform state institution food procurement policies to encourage and facilitate the purchase of local farm and food products to the maximum extent practical. To track progress towards this goal, we recommend that the Illinois General Assembly request that state agencies and state-funded institutions that purchase more than \$25,000 of food each year be required to track and report their local food purchases on an annual basis. The Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Council will work with each institution and cafeteria to facilitate this process. This will create the baseline against which increases in procurement can be measured.
7. The Council shall work to facilitate accessibility by farmers to public and private lands for growing local farm and food products.
8. The Council shall support as well as financial and business planning education and/ or facilitate the creation of programs to recruit, train, and provide technical assistance as well as financial and business planning education to farmers, farm labor, and entrepreneurs desiring to build an Illinois local farm and food economy.

All Implementation Strategies

Assessment of Obstacles and Strategies for Solutions for Building an Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Economy

The obstacles and solutions section below represents the complete findings of the Task Force committees in their work to carry out the Task Force mandate. The obstacles inform the reasons why Illinois agriculture produces only a small percentage of the food that Illinois consumers eat each year. The strategies for solution indicate the action steps required to expand the capacity of Illinois agriculture so as to capture in-state a significantly larger share of Illinois consumers' food dollars. The obstacles and solution strategies are divided into categories of production, infrastructure, customer access, public awareness, and systems building.

A. PRODUCTION

OBSTACLE 1: Not Enough Farmers

— Support programs that recruit, train, and provide technical assistance in order to create 5,000 new local food farmers by 2020

OBSTACLE 2: Not Enough Farm Labor

— Create farm labor training programs

OBSTACLE 3: Insufficient access to farmland by aspiring local farm and food producers

— Support and facilitate creative arrangements for using public lands for local farm and food production

— Create a farmer transition support committee

— Support local and regional land conservation movements

Work with land trusts.

Establish a standing Illinois Farmland Committee.

OBSTACLE 4: Lack of support for diversified farm production

— Create knowledge bases and support infrastructures for diversified local farm and food production:

Agri-tourism

Cosmetic industry

Dairy and dairy products

Eggs

Fiber

Fish

Fruits and Vegetables

Forestry products

Grains

Herbs

Honey

Meats

Ornamental plants

Recreation

Renewable energy

Seed, seedlings and saplings

Soil amendments and services

Wine, Beer, Distillates

— Create linkages between local farm and food producers

B. INFRASTRUCTURE

OBSTACLE 5: Systems for moving products from farm to market are inadequate

— Support development of regional aggregating, processing, storage, packaging, and distribution centers

C. CUSTOMER ACCESS

OBSTACLE 6: Farmers have limited knowledge, access, and/or trust in current market opportunities

- Establish a local food procurement process for state institutions
- Leveraging state purchasing power to enhance direct- market opportunities

OBSTACLE 7: Customers have limited access to local farm and food products

- Increase community access points for the purchase of fresh food

D. SYSTEMS BUILDING

OBSTACLE 8: Benefits of a local farm and food economy are not widely known by the general public

- Create public awareness campaigns that share with every Illinois community the benefits of an Illinois local food, farms, and jobs economy

OBSTACLE 9: Local farm and food entrepreneurs have limited knowledge about how to nance their enterprises

- Establish positive working relationships with financial institutions
- Maximize capital access through participation in state-sponsored farm financing programs
- Develop creative financing approaches in concert with private and public lending institutions
- Tap all available federal financing resources

OBSTACLE 10: Regulatory barriers impede growth

- Create an inter-agency coordinating committee to streamline regulations
- Recognize small farms' inherent value to a community

OBSTACLE 11: Producers and entrepreneurs have insufficient access to relevant and/or coordinated data

- Create a source for comprehensive local farm and food information

OBSTACLE 12: Local farm and food resource centers are limited

- Begin, support, and/or expand programs
- Build the capacity of University of Illinois Extension's local food programs

OBSTACLE 13: Local farm and food producers and entrepreneurs are isolated

- Create, facilitate, and support local farm and food action groups
- Create, facilitate, and support communities of practice to support local farm and food action groups.
- Create an Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council