

**Food & Farm Network Summit
& Small Farm Conference
By Sharron May**

Food & Farming Network - A forum for the region's food and farming interests to link up and advance their work. **Goal:** The region's food and farming systems will provide 20% of our region's food by 2020.

Projects

1. **Get Farming/Keep Farming** Workshops, training, networking.
2. **Farm Succession program:** 40% of Michigan farmers are over the age of 65 and less than half intend to pass on the farm as a unit to an heir. Meanwhile new and beginning farmers are challenged by the high cost of agricultural land. Discussions for the development of a FarmLink website to connect these two groups.
3. **Safe Food Risk Assessment** – small farm, scale-appropriate, voluntary food safety education and certification program.
4. **Seeds and Rootstocks** – preserving regional bio-diversity
5. **Scaling Up** – Infrastructure needs and product branding
6. **Farmer Residency** – helping new and young farmers gain experience and access to land and funding.
7. **Farm To School, Double Up Food Bucks, 10 cents a Meal** – programs for increasing access to local food
8. **Regional Food Hub**

Background Info on Regional Food Hub

A 2007 plan prepared by the Michigan SBTDC under a MDARD grant to the Traverse Bay EDC. The project has expanded into a regional food hub that would develop, promote and expand direct market and employment opportunities for farmers and agri-food businesses through value-added processing, packaging, refrigerator and freezer storage and specialty food kitchen incubator equipment.

Objectives:

1. Help farmers meet increasing consumer demand for direct market produce through farmer's markets, restaurants, institutions and other avenues.
2. Increase availability of local food year round.
3. Increase number of value-added Ag ventures through small scale processing and marketing channels
4. Increase access of fresh food to low income and underserved residents.

Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network:

<http://foodsystems.msu.edu/activities/food-hub-network>

PDF: Zoning Lessons Learned Regarding Food Hubs

<http://foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/file/resources/fh-zoning.pdf>

Food & Farm Network Summit Updates:

Marketing Support

- Taste the Local Difference Smart Phone App; new logo, shelf talkers, in-store marketing and maps of regional farms and products. See Benzie/Manistee county map here: <http://www.mlui.org/userfiles/filemanager/2563/>. Now is the time to get farms listed on the map!

Food Hub

- A Food Hub feasibility study was done for TC region: http://foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/file/Grand_Traverse_Regional_Market_Feasibility_Study.pdf. Based on the results of that study, The Glacier Dome on Barlow was purchased and is under construction. Currently occupied by Cherry Capital Foods, it will have office space for partners.

New agri-businesses:

- Roaming Harvest Food Truck, <http://roamingharvest.com/> They are now opening a restaurant in downtown TC.
- Grand Traverse Culinary Oils <http://gtculinaryoils.com/>
- Carter's Compost, <http://carterscompost.com/> a 9-year old gets it!

Educational Opportunities:

- Get Farming/Keep Farming Farm Business Viability Programs (NMCOG)
<http://www.nwm.org/userfiles/filemanager/2262/>
<http://www.foodandfarmingnetwork.org/getfarming>
- Joint NMC Applied Science Assoc. Degree/MSU Plant Science Certification in Viticulture, Landscape Horticulture, Commercial Horticulture, Turfgrass
http://www.ncmich.edu/2011_12_catalog/Other_Applied_Science.pdf
- Baker College, Cadillac: new Agriculture Technology Program
<https://www.baker.edu/programs/detail/agriculture-technology-associate-of-applied-science-degree/>
- Continued MSU Student Organic Farm Certification Program/Internships
<http://www.msuorganicfarm.com/>

New Projects/Programs

- Regional Grass-fed Beef Project/MSU SARE grant – 3 out of 20 participants in L2L region (including yours truly)
http://anrcom.msu.edu/anrcom/news/item/msu_extension_asking_20_farms_in_northern_michigan_for_grass_fed_beef
- Farm to Freezer Program, collaboration between Calvin Lutz Farms in Manistee and Goodwill Industries providing temporary employment providing local food year round in the school system. <http://www.goodwillmi.org/programs-services/goodwill-food-services/farm-to-freezer/>
- Farmer Residency program: Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy's Maple Bay Farm
- FarmRaisers – School fundraisers using local food
<http://www.traverseticker.com/story/farmraiser-launches-pilot-program-in-northern-michigan>

Business Development and Non-Traditional Funding Resources

- Michigan SBDTC
- SCORE
- MSU Product Center
- Northern Initiatives <http://www.northerninitiatives.com/>
- TC Chamber Sub Micro Loans, Food and Farm 20/20 Fund – 75 loans were given to food and farm businesses. 2 were in Benzie County (including yours truly ☺)
<http://www.nwm.org/planning/planning-policy/food-systems-and-food-innovation-districts/food-and-farm-20-20-fund.html>
- See article www.tcbusinessnews.com/news/new-biz-this-is-where-the-money-is_1

Small Farm Conference: Small Farms Are Real Farms

Keynote speaker: John Ikerd, author "Small Farms are Real Farms"; Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics at Univ. of Missouri. www.johnikerd.com

- Local food is the most dynamic sector of the American Food system.
- By 2011, Local Food sales were 11 billion (1/3 of organic sector).
- Farmers markets quadrupled between 1994 (1800) to 2013 (8000) in 2013
- The # of CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farms increased from 100 in 1990 to 2700 in 2009
- The USDA reports 12,500 farmers selling thru CSAs or multi-farm CSAs
- The new movement is multi-farm collaboratives or Food Hubs, which offer a wider variety of options. There are more than 235 food hubs in the U.S.

L2L Region Applications

- There is very little awareness of opportunities available. There are no Benzie/Manistee organizations involved in the Food & Farm Network.
- Taste the Local Difference Food and Farm Map for Benzie/Manistee features 20 farms, 2 wineries, 11 retailers 5 restaurants and 7 Farmer's Markets. Local products produced in this market include: eggs, cut flowers, fruit, dairy, herbs, meats, maple syrup, honey, nursery plants, Christmas trees, wine, mead, beer, gourmet mushrooms and other specialty products. Updates are happening now – get your farm listed! <http://www.mlui.org/userfiles/filemanager/2563/>
- The new Cottage Food Law allows for the production and sale of jams, honey, syrup, baked goods from home kitchens for direct sale only.
- 2 Incubator Kitchens provide facilities and support for developing value-added agricultural products from idea to market, allowing successful Cottage Food businesses to expand their market and products.
- Food For Thought outside of Honor provides custom packaging and labeling for other aspiring agri-entrepreneurs.

Summary:

Much effort has been put into developing local food and farm businesses, including new agricultural programs in surrounding colleges, free to low cost consulting, access to funding.

- How do we tap into/complement existing efforts/resources?
- What do we do really well?
- How much of the local market is currently being served by our local farms?
- How well are we meeting the demand at farmer's markets, restaurants and institutions? Seasonally? Year-round?
- Are low income/under-served residents accessing fresh, local food?
- What are the barriers? Success stories? Gaps? Opportunities?
- What and where are our needs? Market? Existing under-utilized assets and infrastructures? Partner organizations?