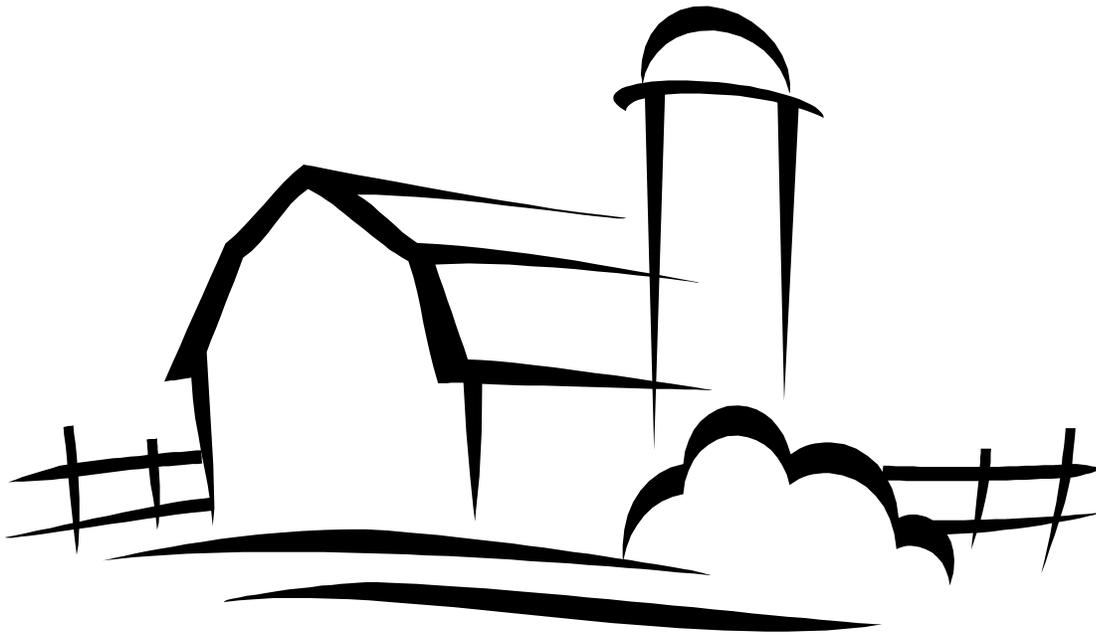


Buy Local Food and Farm Toolkit



A Guide for Student Organizers



Oxfam
America

July, 2002

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Why should I care where my food comes from?

Food isn't just about nutrition. And it isn't just about taste. Food is what brings us to the table and allows us to share time together while nourishing our bodies. It is an integral part of our daily lives, whether we have plenty or none at all. Today, the food we eat is produced by a system that has become increasingly complex and that is having greater impacts on our health, our economy and our society. As a result, food is taking on greater significance in our lives. More and more people are seeing food as a viable vehicle for social change. Our values can actually be reflected on our plates! It is important, therefore, to make sure the best values are represented.

In order to consider our food holistically, we can begin by focusing on the farm: the source of our food. For family farmers, food represents life in the deepest sense. Farms establish lifelines among themselves, communities, and ecosystems that constitute a food system. This toolkit will show you how you can help to shape our food system in ways that promote the production of safe, healthy food; protect the environment; and bolster your local economy.

“The fight to save family farms isn't just about farmers. It's about making sure that there is a safe and healthy food supply for all of us. It's about jobs, from Main Street to Wall Street. It's about a better America.”

—Willie Nelson
President, FarmAid

What is the problem with our food system now?

It begins with a journey, namely the journey of our food. Currently our food originates and travels within a food system that is global, not local. Food in the United States travels an average of 1,300 miles from farm to plate. That's approximately the distance between New York and Dallas—for every bite! For every dollar spent on food, only a fraction – 20 cents on average -- goes back to the farmer. The rest goes for transportation, packaging, marketing, wholesalers and retailers.

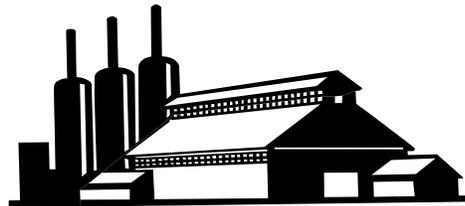


Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Agribusiness Domination

And where does the farmer's share go? Since the 1950s, the agriculture sector has been undergoing a fundamental transformation, resulting in a few large corporations controlling the majority of food production in this country. These corporations are called agribusinesses, because of their synthesis of farming and corporate practices. Agribusinesses run industrial-sized farms and also contract with many smaller farms to grow crops and raise livestock according to their own prescribed methods,

U.S. AGRIBUSINESS FACTS



- ✘ Large corporations produce **98%** of the poultry .
- ✘ **2%** of farms produce **50%** of all agricultural products
- ✘ **4** firms handle over **80%** of beef slaughter

many of which are damaging our soil, air and water.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has declared that concentrated animal feeding operations, the preferred method of the largest livestock and poultry producers, are one of the chief causes of water pollution in this country. An estimated 35,000 miles of rivers and groundwater sources in 17 states have been polluted by waste from hogs, chickens and cattle.

Industrial farms also use massive amounts of chemical pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, and fertilizers. Each year, 939 million pounds of pesticides are used, and a shocking 90 percent of these chemicals never reach their target. They are released into the air and water, and as the many toxic chemicals are dispersed, they begin accumulating in ground and surface water.

Agribusinesses use their considerable wealth and political influence to promote domestic farm policies and international trade laws that give the largest businesses an unfair advantage over small farms and allow them

to pollute our environment, often without being held responsible.

Around the world, rural landscapes are being transformed, and farming families are being forced to give up their land, homes and livelihoods. In the United States, the number of farms dropped from 6.8 million in 1935 to less than 2 million in 1998. When small farms fail, entire communities suffer from the ripple effects: families move away, local businesses shut down, schools close and main streets become ghost towns. The very fabric of American communities changes irrevocably.

You Can Help

There are many ways that you, as a consumer, can help. Small farms are finding ways to survive by carving out their own niche markets; they are selling directly to consumers (like you!) in their local areas. When you buy directly from the farmer, the food travels fewer miles. It is fresher, and less of your dollar goes to transportation, packaging and marketing, which means the farmer makes more: their fair share. In addition, with every

dollar spent, three dollars go back into the local economy, so your money is working triple time. The more you invest in the local food system, the stronger both the farms and the local economy will be.

"I believe the small farm model is the only way to achieve broad-based economic development, where poor people themselves are the source of production within an economy. I also believe that small farmers are better stewards of natural resources, and that a small farm system offers much more sustainability in the long run."

--Dr. Peter Rosset
Institute for Food and
Development Policy

Small Farms:

The Optimal Model

In the United States, conventional wisdom about agricultural production is that "bigger is better." Many people see large farms as representative of economic progress and growth, and see small farms as inefficient representations of an earlier era. However, when you consider the range of products of small farms,

they are in fact more efficient and cost-effective while also protecting and preserving the soil. Small farms generate less waste and use fewer chemicals. They increasingly employ crop rotation and integrated pest management in order to keep the soil healthy for their own livelihood and for future generations.

Think Globally, Act Locally.

The small farm crisis truly brings home the issues that have dominated global discourse over the past five years: globalization, industrialization and development. International economic consolidation is having a direct impact on small farmers in the United States in the same way that it is plaguing small producers all over the world.

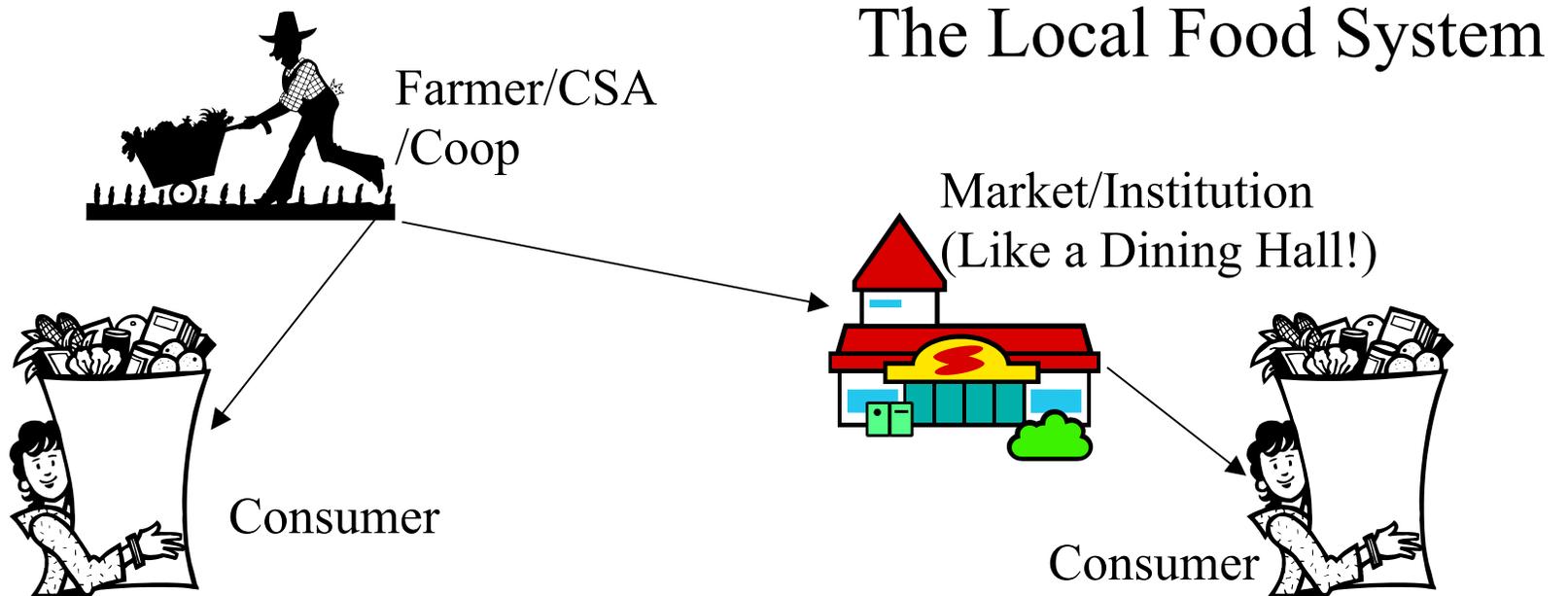
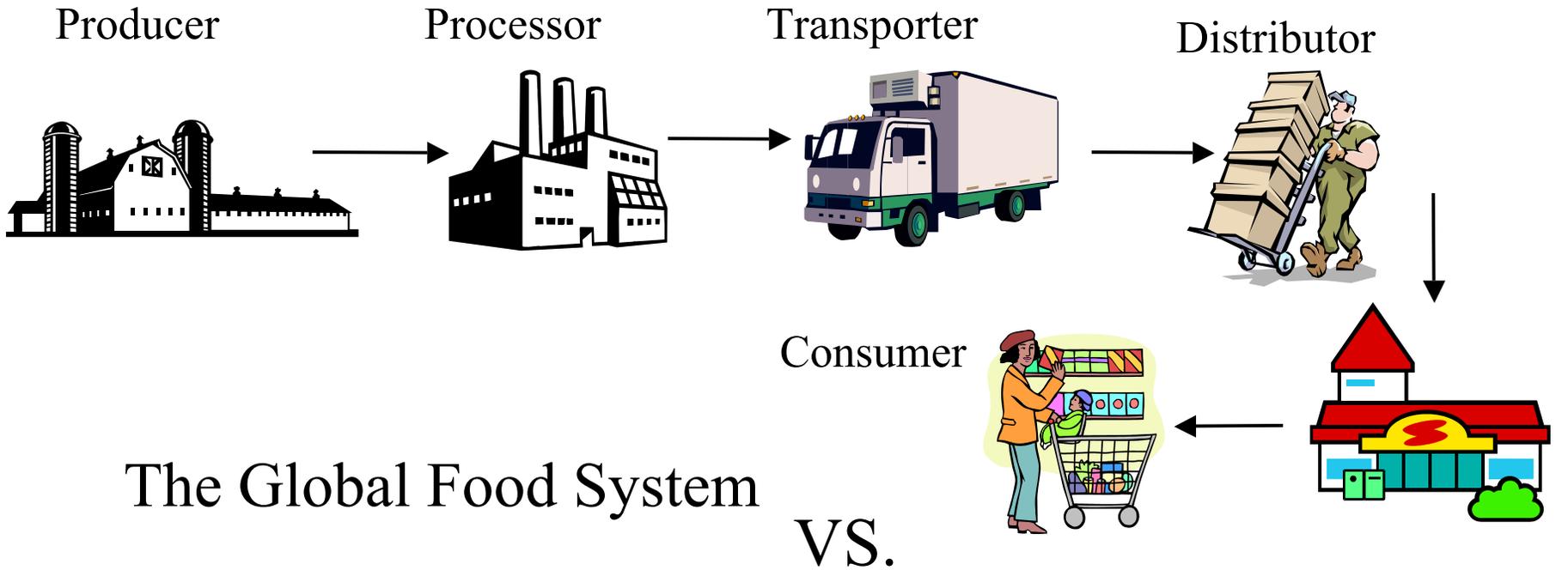
A locally based, sustainable solution to the problems of small farmers is feasible and at our fingertips. It starts small, often with one roadside farm stand. When you purchase an apple, you know that it has traveled almost directly from the field to your hand. You can taste the freshness. Even better, you are doing something constructive to counter the crisis facing small farmers in America.

Oxfam America Supports Small Farmers

Oxfam America's U.S. Program supports improved livelihoods for small and minority farmers in the United States, including farmers' cooperatives demonstrating sustainable practices and innovative ways to sell directly to consumers. The U.S. Program also supports statewide and national farmers' associations pressuring lawmakers to enact fair agricultural policies.

With the support of concerned consumers, some of those roadside stands are growing into markets and cooperatives, and farmers are looking to branch out and expand their connections with communities to include colleges and universities. A growing number of statewide and national organizations are committed to spreading the "Buy Local" message in new and

expanded ways. By encouraging your campus food service provider to buy from local farmers, you will provide the missing link in this vital effort to save the livelihood of U.S. family farmers. Their lives, and the communities they represent, are intimately tied to our own, no matter where we live or what we do, because they are part of the economy and the environment that we all share.



Food Facts

- Americans spent \$789 billion dollars on food in 1999, 13.6% of their income.
--U.S. Department of Labor, 1999
- For every dollar spent on food, about 20 cents goes to the farmer; the other 80 cents goes into packaging, transportation, and marketing.
--U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999
- The number of farms in America decreased from 6.8 million in 1935 to less than 2 million in 1998. Of the remaining farms, large and very large farms make up just 8 percent of all farms, but produce 53 percent of all output.
--Oxfam America, *How Globalization Endangers Agriculture and Independent Farmers*, 2002
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has declared that concentrated animal feeding operations are one of the chief causes of water pollution in the United States. An estimated 35,000 miles of rivers and groundwater sources in 17 states have been polluted by waste from hogs, chickens and cattle.
--Oxfam America, *Factory Farms: Corporate Agriculture and Environmental Degradation*, 2002
- A 1998 report by the National Commission on Small Farms made it clear that small farms were the invaluable foundation of any vibrant rural community, and that the future of agriculture in the United States was dependent on the their re-growth across the country.
--Oxfam America, *Small Farms: The Optimal Sustainable Agriculture Model*, 2002
- There are more than 500 CSAs (community supported agriculture farms) in North America, and the number continues to grow at a rate of 12 percent per year.
--Oxfam America, *Buying Local Food: The Smart Alternative*, 2002

Making a Personal Commitment

Ok, so you want to help . . . now what?

What you can do today

- *Make a decision to “eat with a conscience.”* Find out where your food comes from and choose local food. You’ll taste the difference!
- *Go to your local market and ask the manager whether any of the produce comes from local farmers.* Look for labels. If the manager says no or looks confused, let them know that you would prefer to buy locally grown food and explain why.
- *Spread the word!* Talk to your family and friends about the benefits of choosing local. Prepare a meal with local foods and invite *them* to taste the difference. The higher the demand for local foods, the more pressure on grocery stores and markets to offer them.
- *Check out all the grocery stores and markets in your neighborhood.* Which places have local food? Which places don’t? Pass on this information to your friends and family!

What you can do this week

- ***Check out that nearby farm stand or go to the weekly farmers’ market in your area. See what they have to offer. The diversity and quality of produce available may surprise you. It’s not just fruits and veggies anymore! Farmers’ markets have flowers, bread, cheese, honey, and other homemade products such as candles, quilts and toys.***
- ***Not sure where to find a farmers’ market near you? Check out this list of possible sources:***

Community message boards

Natural food stores

Local newspapers

Chambers of commerce

Local/county cooperative extension service offices

U.S. Department of Agriculture listing of farmers’ markets:

www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm



Local Harvest web site: www.localharvest.org

What you can do this month

- If your living situation allows, *join a CSA.*
- *Convince fraternities, sororities, student co-ops and religious groups like Hillel kitchens to join a CSA.*

Community Supported Agriculture – What's That?



CSAs are working relationships between farmers and consumers, allowing for a mutually beneficial relationship. Members (typically families or small groups) pay a farmer or a farmers' cooperative an annual membership fee to cover the production costs of the farm. In return, they receive produce from the farm on a regular basis, usually weekly, throughout the growing season. For more information on CSAs, see the Resource List at the end of this toolkit.

- *Organize a fundraiser* to buy CSA shares for a local food pantry or shelter. Everyone wins!
- *Organize an Oxfam Hunger Banquet* (see <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/publications/art1104.html> on Oxfam's web site for a how-to) and serve local food. Invite a farmer to be a speaker.
- *Join or volunteer at a local farm, urban agriculture project or community garden.*

Want to take this to the next level?

Although your individual efforts will contribute significantly to sustaining family farms and the local economy, getting your campus food service to buy local can have a much broader and lasting impact. As a student, you are in an excellent position to mobilize your campus to make this a reality.

AMO Organics

Salinas, California

AMO Organics, one of the many farmer cooperatives supported by Oxfam America, was formed by former farmworkers who are now independent farmers. As farmworkers on large farms, they were often forced to work in areas where pesticides had been newly sprayed and experienced firsthand the terrible health effects. Now that they are on their own, they grow only organic produce and sell it through farmers' markets and CSAs organized through local schools and churches.

Get Your Campus to Buy Local!

So you're a student trying to get your food service to buy local? This toolkit was created for you! You've chosen a worthy cause that will benefit everyone involved. Hopefully you'll soon be able to provide your fellow students with fresher, more nutritious, and tastier food while benefiting local farmers and the local economy.

Getting your food service to change the way it does business can seem like a daunting challenge at first. The first clue: **think big but start small.** Bates College, in Maine, is one of the leaders in buying local, organic food. They started with composting at a local farm 10 years ago. In 1994, they started buying local potatoes and haven't looked back! Many schools started by purchasing local apples, which require no special care and are available in many regions. After you've achieved one success, you can move on to add other foods and other facilities on campus.

Keep in mind that a "Buy Local" campaign is all about relationships, primarily people's relationships with their food and

their community. It also involves forming relationships among farmers, food service staff, and your fellow students. The campaign culminates with a lasting relationship between your food service and local farmers -- a relationship that reflects a community effort and self-awareness concerning its food system.

Getting your campus to buy local requires cultivating relationships and spreading awareness and demand for local food. This toolkit outlines helpful

Get Your Campus to Buy Local

Step 1

Research Your School's Food System

Step 2

Form Your Team

Step 3

Investigate Local Food Sources

Step 4

Get Organized and Set Goals

Step 5

Raise Awareness on Your Campus

Step 6

Talk to Food Services

Step 7

Evaluate and Publicize Your Success!

steps to run a successful campaign. No two campaigns are alike. You know your campus better than we do, so keep that in mind as you follow this guide and adapt your plan to suit your needs.

Step 1: Research Your School's Food System

Before you start planning and bringing people on board, it is important to have a full understanding of the current situation on your campus, in terms of food sources and the way your food service operates. It will shape your campaign and help you set reasonable goals, as well as make you a more educated campaign leader when you deal with higher authorities in the food service. The answers to these questions can be found on your school web site or from almost any member of the food service department.

How does your U measure up?

Some questions to guide your research:

? **How is the food service operation managed?** There are essentially two options here: self operation, where a member of the department deals with

vendors directly to get food, or contract operated, where a provider like Aramark, Chartwell's or Sodexo handles most orders.

? **Where does the food come from now?** This will help you set goals and also facilitate educated comparisons between food systems.

? **Are there primary vendors with contracts?** Food Service providers often work directly with distributors like Alliance or Sysco to purchase most of their food. Even self-run schools operate this way. It's an important characteristic to know.

Missouri Rural Crisis Center Columbia, MO

The mission of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, an Oxfam partner organization, is to preserve family farms, promote stewardship of the land and environmental integrity, and strive for economic and social justice. In 1992, MRCC created Patchwork Family Farms, an economic development project that buys hogs from its 12 member farmers and markets the meat locally under its own label.

www.inmotionmagazine.com/rural.html

? **What are your kitchens' resources?** Both the skills of the staff and the limits of the supplies can be tested when fresher produce is introduced. Adjustments can be made, but it's good to know the current status of your school's "kitchen infrastructure." Ask about produce that they currently buy – is it already washed, sliced and ready to eat? Or do their kitchens have the equipment and staff to perform these tasks?

Step 2: Form Your Team



Now that you've decided to fully commit yourself to a local food campaign, the first thing to realize is that you can't do it alone. (You have probably already realized this.) It's time to draft a team. You are going to find helpful allies at all levels of your university.

You can think of the group as a network, or a circle, with all parts of the food system represented. Applying this

principle to the formation of your team and eventually to the incorporation of the broader community in your campaign can help guide your mission.

"Nowadays most of us in the industrialized countries don't farm, so we may no longer really understand that way of life...It's also hard for those of us who get our food from supermarket shelves or drive-thru windows to know how dependent we are on the viability of rural communities."

–Brian Halwie

"Where Have All the Farmers Gone?"

Worldwatch Institute

Once you start bringing people on board, remember that this isn't your final team. You will broaden your team later on, in Steps 4 and 5. Right now, you need your strongest supporters on your side. You aren't really taking action quite yet; this group, an advisory committee of sorts, will help you conduct research, gather information and build the rest of your team. This group could be as small as six students, depending on the size of your school. In Step 4, you will invite people who are a bit broader afield; check out the

list below for a springboard. Some might not seem like natural alliances, but remember that food is an issue that reaches into every corner of a community. Finally, in Step 5, you will reach out to your whole campus community when you launch your campaign.

Here are some suggestions for gaining **potential allies**:

Your Fellow Students:

Already established student groups working on issues such as labor, social justice, and environmental concerns could all find reasons to sign on to your campaign. Check your school website and attend open meetings of student groups to find them. Student government will have great experience in working with your school administration and the ins and outs of school policy (and changing it!).

Extra! Extra! Use your campus newspaper(s) to publicize your efforts, with an open letter to the editor or opinion piece. Later in your campaign, this will be a terrific vehicle for getting your

message out to a large audience.

Put the Lectern Aside: Many of your professors may be interested in your findings from Step 1 and offer their assistance. Impetus for local food projects like that at Northland College started with students in an Environmental Studies class whose research paper turned into a campaign for local food on campus. Beyond the more obvious allies in Agricultural Studies and Environmental Studies, try Sociology (especially rural specialists), as well as Economics and Political Science. Remember, the dramatic reduction of small farms has lasting economic and political repercussions for small communities, as the patchwork quilt of family farms comes unraveled. You can help them make the connection.

Reinvent Alumni Giving:

See if any alumni are involved in agriculture, either as farmers or as participants in the sustainable agriculture

movement. What better way to give back to your alma mater than to help to change your school's food system?

A Resident "Act-Tank":

Sometimes research institutes are looking for people to take action on their issues. In the case of Iowa State University, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, an on-campus research institute, was ready and willing to support a local food project.

Foundations: Foundations that are already funding projects at your school might be willing to help.

Many of these folks may not yet be aware of how much this issue relates to them and why they should be involved. You will need to break down the intellectual obstacles of this issue. Approach people armed with information that is relevant or meaningful to them.

Sometimes in the beginning all it takes is three or four students to get things rolling. At Grinnell College in Iowa, two students with the Student Environmental Council worked

with two state farmers' organizations to champion local food on their campus. In this case, students tapped into off-campus resources first, which helped to broaden their viewpoint and bolster their research. Explore your root system beyond your

**Federation of Southern
Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund**
East Point, Georgia

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, an Oxfam partner organization, works in nine southern states, helping African-American farmers form cooperatives to market their produce collectively, to access markets and to hold on to their land.

www.federationsoutherncoop.com

campus!

There is an undisputed power in student coalitions. In the formation of a coalition made up of some of the people mentioned above, you will enjoy a diversity of opinion and a core strength that will facilitate and strengthen your efforts.

In the end, the most successful efforts include students, faculty, the administration, the food service, and farmers.

Step 3: Investigate Local Food Sources

If you're planning on buying local, you'll need to investigate possible sources of local food. Having some background about the local farmers – whether they are organized and how they market their produce – will help you advise your food service on where to start.

Some farmers have formed cooperatives to market their produce collectively. It is much easier for schools to work with farmers who are organized because groups can better manage supply (quantity, consistency and quality of products) and liability insurance.

Bates College in Maine and Northland College in Wisconsin, two leading colleges that buy local, buy directly from farmers and cooperatives. Other

schools such as College of St. Benedict and St. John's University, both in Minnesota, buy from a local-to-the-community (not national) food distributor that carries many local and regional products.

Distribution, of course, is a key component in this process. Farmers may deliver their own goods or they may hand this task over to a distributor or broker. An individual, a for-profit or non-profit organization, or even another farmer can fill this role. These brokers should *help* the farmers by making their goods more accessible rather than *hurt* them by taking all of their profits.

So . . . now that you have some information, how do you find out what farms and cooperatives are near your school? Here are a few tips:

Farmers' markets. Chat it up



Red Tomato

Canton, Massachusetts

Red Tomato, an Oxfam partner organization based in Massachusetts, is a nonprofit committed to serving as a broker for some 40 family farms, educating consumers about farm-fresh foods, and making it easy for supermarket produce buyers to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables.

with some of the local farmers.
So easy!

Local food cooperatives and health food stores. They should be able to give you some good contacts.

Statewide farmers' associations. Ask at the farmers' market or your cooperative extension agent whether there's one in your state. Most of these groups can give you the lay of the land – what types of farmers are in your area, whether any are organized into cooperatives, and recommendations for people to talk to.

Farmer coalitions and research institutes. Check out the web sites in the Resource List at the end of this toolkit or conduct a web search.

Cooperative extension agents at state universities. These people are typically a

fountain of knowledge concerning farmers and food systems in your area.

Local Harvest web site:
www.localharvest.org for listings of farmers' markets, CSAs and sustainable farmers.

U.S. Department of Agriculture web site:
www.ams.usda.gov/directmarketing for a farmers' market directory.

Hmong American Community, Inc.
Fresno, CA

Hmong American Community, Inc., an Oxfam partner organization, is a nonprofit dedicated to promoting the economic well-being of Hmong Americans who came to the United States from Southeast Asia. To help Hmong farmers in Fresno increase their income, HAC established the Hmong American Cooperative, a collaboration of small farmers who are increasing their income through joint marketing efforts.
www.hmongamer.com

The next step is to start interviewing local farmers and farmer cooperatives. Many of them are already looking for institutional customers, and will probably be quite receptive to your contacting them.

Farmers involved with the University of Northern Iowa who were polled said that upwards of 10 percent of their income was from institutional buying. Nine out of 10 farmers rated their satisfaction with the program at over 90 percent. The Practical Farmers of Iowa, who have worked with Iowa State University and Grinnell College, have polled a network of interested growers and are willing to act as a voice that legitimizes negotiations between farms and colleges. Clearly there is the impetus on their end to get the ball rolling.

Just remember, at this stage of the game you are not trying to cut any deals. You're just trying to scope what's out there and gather information.

Here are some important questions to ask:

? What do you produce and how much do you produce?

This will help you assess whether the farmer and your school might be a good match.

? What goods are in season at what times?

You want to make sure that growing seasons and academic calendars agree. Don't forget that your school may have summer sessions, though, so don't eliminate that possibility! You should be looking to start small – with one or a few types of foods and then expanding later.

? What are your prices?

Perhaps you won't get an exact answer, especially since food services and farmers will want to reach agreements about prices on their own. However, it can't hurt to have ballpark figures when you sit down with your food service manager.

? Can you offer value-added products?

Value-added products refer to foods that have been processed, such as peeled potatoes or chopped lettuce. Food services have a limited amount of staff, and will be reluctant to add to their workloads by buying produce that they have to wash or chop. Having farmers provide foods in more easily usable forms may help win them over.

? How do you distribute your goods?

Distribution can become an issue for schools who are willing to transition but don't want to have to deal with several farmers when they currently buy from just one broker. Farmers who market their produce through cooperatives are easier for your food service to work with. They are also more likely to have the capacity to meet your food service's requirements, including for value-added products.

? Are your goods organic?

The National Organic Program defines organic foods as those "produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; petroleum-based fertilizers or sewage sludge-based fertilizers; bio-engineering; or ionizing radiation." More and more small

farmers are using organic methods in response to greater consumer demand, environmental benefits to farmland and the potential for increased local sales.

? **Have you ever sold to institutions?**

Previous experience with institutional buying is a plus. If the farmer has had previous experience, he/she is probably organized and well networked.

? Do you have liability insurance?

Liability is a factor that can easily hold you back. A negative response doesn't mean terminating the project; it just means a little more work. Keep that in mind.

? How do you think this campaign could positively affect *you*?

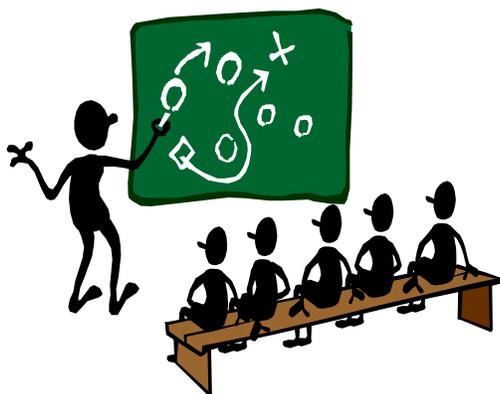
The answer to this question -- a personal story -- will give you yet another motivational factor for the people you're trying to convince!

Finally, **find a champion.**

Much like your advisory committee on campus, one or a few key contact people in the farming community who are completely on your side will strengthen your efforts tremendously. A farmer strongly in favor of your campaign will be a valuable asset to your team!

Step 4: Get Organized and Set Goals

Now that you've got your team assembled, it's time to start brainstorming and planning your campaign. Setting some time aside for goal setting and evaluation of potential on your campus is important so you stay focused and start seeing some



tangible results. Don't be afraid to dream big, however. This is the fun part!

- ✓ **Organize a meeting** of your team. Have your team put their heads together, and capitalize on the diversity of opinion within the group.
- ✓ **Set goals** using the information you have gathered. As we mentioned before: **think big but start small.** Be realistic, taking into consideration your school's limitations and also its potential. You may want to start with one food that is widely available in your area. Once you can claim success, you can move on to add other foods and other facilities on campus. Think also about the growing season and climate of your region when setting your goals -- what have the farmers taught you?
- ✓ **Develop a plan and a timeline.** Incorporate your goals and your context. Breaking your plan down into small steps is key to making it manageable. Compile a list of resources and allies you will need to target to make this campaign work. Form committees if you are planning a lot of activities: outreach to

students, publicity, researching more local farmers, negotiating with food services.

Step 5: Raise Awareness on Your Campus

Spread the good news! Share all you've learned with the rest of your campus and in the process gain more support and momentum for effecting *change*. Think of this step as marketing. You are selling the idea (that will soon transform into more than an idea!) of buying local. Here are some hints for successful marketing of this or any concept:

 **Define your customers:** Who are they? Students, faculty, administration? All of the above?

 **Know your customers and their interests:** Let's pretend you're trying to sell watercolors. You probably wouldn't describe the watercolors to an artist the same way you would describe them to a kindergartner! Knowing your customer allows you to play up aspects of your idea that will appeal to that particular customer. Talk about the nutritional benefits to a nutrition professor, list the environmental pluses to environmental

groups, and highlight the contrasts between the social conditions in agribusinesses versus those on family farms to sociologists or political activists.

 **Use the media:** Work with your campus newspaper. A letter to the editor or an op-ed piece that is direct, timely and well-supported can reach a large audience. Use "Food Facts" from page 7 to make your point.

 **Get active:** Check out the Menu of Activities on the next page to help you get started. A delicate balance of anecdotes, images and facts is important. Be creative!

 **Be positive:** Above all, maintain a positive attitude. This campaign will require a lot of cooperation from many parties. Using aggression as a weapon can backfire on you.

Show the “Global Banquet” or “A Time to Act for Family Farms” videos listed in the resource section.

At Middlebury College, students held special dinners to promote local food and invited key community members.

“...Oberlin students buy right from the farm. The path of the local-foods lifestyle is a little bumpy, a lot dirty, somewhat uncertain, but generally enjoyable.”

-Adam Kowit '01
Oberlin Alumni Magazine 8/99
www.oberlin.edu/alummag/oamcurrent

Bastyr University’s organic garden produces food for its small student population. Oberlin, Middlebury and many other schools also have their own gardens

Every fall, students in the Cornell Food Project organize Harvest Week, with educational tents, tables and art exhibits focused on local food.

On the Menu: Activity Ideas

Hold a teach-in

Invite a well-respected speaker or show a video to raise interest in your cause. Be sure to serve lots of local food!

Tabling with samples of local food
Who passes up free food? Let people TASTE the difference!

Hold local food dinners

Invite students to a local food dinner. Also invite faculty, administration, and, of course, local farmers.

Publications

Work up the publications network! Write an article, an op-ed, or a letter to the editor. Even venture out to your local paper. It’s all about building and maintaining a community.

Petition drives

Make petitions available at events, or send out students to get signatures. Petitions PROVE support!

Plant a garden right on your campus
Or volunteer at a nearby garden. A great way to bring the reality of small farming to your community.

Organize a field trip

Take a group to a teaching farm or farmers’ market for a fun, hands-on experience. Or visit a grocery store to evaluate the availability of local foods.

Put together a Food Awareness Day
Use any combination of the activities above to reach out to different groups and types of people on your campus.

Step 6: Talk to Food Services

You are ready to meet with your food service manager. You've done your research; you've gathered support. Now all you have to do is convince your food service manager to become a link in the chain to buy local.

Preparation is your most powerful tool. Put your honed marketing skills to work: place yourself in the shoes of your food manager. What are your food manager's priorities? What are the limitations? Keep these questions in mind when planning your meeting.

Here are some tips for presenting what you have to say:

- Point out the benefits of buying local:

You'll serve healthier food.

Local foods from small farmers tend to be grown with less harmful chemicals and are fresher since they have less distance to travel.

You'll protect the

environment. Small farmers care about their land. They must use sustainable farming practices in order to conserve it.

You'll bolster the local

economy. This point may spark interest because universities and colleges don't always have good relationships with their surrounding communities.

Buying from local farmers is a great way to foster a more positive relationship.

Community Food Security Coalition

Farm to College Program

The Community Food Security Coalition, with more than 250 member organizations nationwide, has a Farm to College Program that can help you, especially in working with food services. CFSC offers workshops and conferences for food service directors, students, farmers and faculty, and organizes resources on how to develop successful local food purchasing initiatives. Contact Kristen Markley for more information: email kristen@foodsecurity.org or call 570-658-2265.

- Discuss your research findings. You'll want to show your food service manager that you have looked at this topic from different angles.

Talk about the farmers you have met in your vicinity. Whip out some facts you acquired from the farmers such as types of produce, prices, methods of distribution, etc. Incorporate anecdotes demonstrating the positive impact that buying local can have on a farmer.

Point out what other schools have done. Provide examples from schools similar to yours in management, size, and location that have successfully incorporated local foods. See our resource list starting on page 31.

Show your numbers! Demonstrate that you have a significant number of students, faculty and others supporting your proposal to buy local. Bring signed petitions to help make your case. Food services want to serve what people will eat. That's their job!

Now comes the real challenge! Your food manager will surely point out obstacles and barriers. Be prepared to receive criticism. Don't get defensive. And

Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural Washington, DC

Oxfam partner the Rural Coalition is a unique alliance of nearly 100 culturally diverse, community-based groups in the United States and Mexico united in the pursuit of equality and sustainable development in rural communities. The Rural Coalition is coordinating the SuperMarket project which brings small and minority farmers together to market their products over the Internet.

www.ruralco.org

don't be discouraged. It's important to show you have an understanding of the food service's position. Do your homework and rehearse your responses in a kind, calm manner. You don't want to add stress to their jobs, but to offer an opportunity that means a lot to students and that will benefit both the school and the community. There's a great research report from the University of Wisconsin, "Something to Cheer About . . ." It outlines potential problem areas (see page 33 for information on how to get hold of it).

Here are some ways to address these concerns and obstacles:

➤ **Problem: Prices**

“It sounds like buying local foods might be more expensive. We have to keep our costs down.”

Response: Buying local does not always mean higher prices. Different colleges have had different experiences with this. Where higher prices are expected, remind your food manager that they reflect the higher quality and greater nutritional value of fresh food. If it’s really out of the budget, think about how you could fix this problem. At Northland College, a group of students researching organic, locally-grown food figured out that buying local would require adding six cents per day to every student’s meal plan. They got the OK from their fellow students, and all their potatoes and onions began to come from local farmers!

➤ **Problem: Distribution**

“Umm . . . This seems a little complicated. Right now I have one contractor who can supply me with everything I need. I know I can count on the contractor and that I’ll never have to worry about not having broccoli.”

Response: In this case, you should emphasize how much this means to you and many others on campus, and

that there are many people who are willing to help make this happen. Inform your food manager that distributors, natural foods brokers or farmers organized into co-ops can facilitate the food distribution operation as well as offer a high level of food security so that they will not fear a broccoli shortage. Offer to help find them. You can also suggest starting with local food to *augment*, rather than replace, food they currently serve.

➤ **Problem: Legal issues**

“How can small farmers monitor production, packaging, processing, grading and transport AND cover all the bases of food safety? Liability is a serious matter.”

Response: Liability is probably the greatest challenge, and legal issues can be messy. Since most farmer co-ops have liability insurance, they would be a good match for your school. For more information about liability, check out the “Something to Cheer About” report, listed on page 33.

➤ **Problem : Labor/staff issues**

“We don’t have the staff to deal with the added labor of buying local. We

just don't have time to chop, clean, etc."

Response: Explore the option of value-added products with the farmers. They may already be looking into performing some of these tasks that bring food services staff near to tears. Consider applying for foundation grants to purchase equipment to make the kitchen staff's job easier.

➤ **Problem: Lack of storage/freezer space**

"Our freezer isn't large enough to store food for later when it is out of season."

Response: Growing seasons are growing seasons and you can't control them. What you can control, though, is making a commitment to buy certain foods when they're in season. And you can always commit to buying meat and dairy products that aren't confined by seasons. Create a menu with your food service manager of foods ordered each week. See what foods are staples and must be provided year-round. Look for foods that can be replaced by other foods that are in season. The menu is your demand; the list of produce offered by your local farmers is your supply. You must figure out how to make the best possible fit.

Step 7: Evaluate and Publicize Your Success

Congratulations! You have created a valuable link between local farmers and your school's food service. Perhaps you're still working on details or fighting some barriers, but you're nearly there. So what's missing? Two things: evaluating and publicizing your success.

Evaluating your success

Evaluation is a key component to any campaign. You need an idea of how far you've come in attaining your goals. Your team may decide to evaluate its success every few months or once a year. Compare how far you've come from your starting point, and you'll feel uplifted and ready to work toward higher goals. You may want to keep a journal to record all of the challenges that have come up and how

Journal

Date:
Current task:

Problems and Solutions:

- a) Problem 1
Solution 1
- b) Problem 2
Solution 2
- c) Problem 3
Solution 3

you've overcome them. Of course, how you organize this journal is up to you, but if you're looking for a suggestion, take a peek at ours.

Note the status of these factors to see how things are going:

How much and what percentage of the food at your university is being bought from local farmers? What does this mean in dollars? How and to what extent has the campaign benefited the farmers? How has the campaign benefited your community? Have town and gown relations improved?

This information will come in handy if you ever try to repeat this campaign elsewhere, if you're helping another student start a campaign on their campus, or to publicize your success.

Publicizing Your Success

Here are a few tips for publicizing your success:

★ **Write thank you letters** to the farmers, food service managers, and faculty and student leaders who have put in time and effort into this campaign. Let them know all the positive outcomes of their efforts!

★ **Throw a party to celebrate your success!** Announce the good news! Send out personal invitations to every-one that has been involved in your campaign and publicize the party to the rest of the campus. Have a farmer and/or food service representative speak. Make sure to invite the media.

★ **Share your story with Oxfam!** Oxfam would love to hear your story! We can help spread your good news and highlight it as a case study in future publications. E-mail your story to us! We can't wait to hear it!



Publicize Your Success



Don't forget to share your success at each step of the way with your community. Keep everyone on campus involved and informed about the status and progress of your campaign, either through open meetings, posters or through campus publications. One of the great aspects of a Buy Local campaign is how connected it is to our everyday lives. Make this feeling a reality for your community!

★ **Publications** What better way to publicize? Write an article about the campaign for your school newspaper. Be sure to tell your school's community relations department; they would love to help publicize your accomplishments. Call your local newspaper and invite them to write a story about how your school is supporting family farmers and the local economy. It's a great story!

Piecing the Puzzle Together

As you have seen, relationships are truly the backbone of this campaign and the key to success! And as with all relationships, open dialogue is key. Because these campaigns are student-driven, it is your responsibility to create the links among the other players.

At the University of Northern Iowa, students act as brokers between their institutions and farmers' associations and co-ops. It's a lot easier if the only institution involved is your own school,

and you have gained the support of the food services department. Keep the concerns and desires of all parties in mind when you try to connect them or set up a meeting. Flexibility on both sides will be key. (And of course, patience, with which you should now have extensive experience!)

We want to remind you that you will need to continually redefine your role in the campaign as it develops.

According to your situation, you may want to

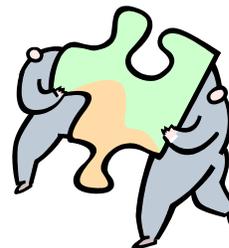
step back after introducing your representative from the farming

community to

your food service director. Conversely, you may need to take a larger, more broker-type role. Keep in mind that you represent the voice of the consumer. The depth of your role, therefore, is up to you and your situation.

When you come upon challenges or obstacles, put your persuasive energy and resourceful mind to work.

Remember your end goal and



that small steps will get you there. You may have to reroute or create parts of the path that are missing, but you will get there.

Remember, everyone you've recruited will want this to work. Students are moved by the cause and will benefit from the fresh, healthy food. Your school will have a great selling point that will please parents, faculty,

alumni, staff and prospective students. Local farmers and the community as a whole will benefit economically. And town and gown relations will receive a definite boost!

Congratulations on all the hard work you've done so far. Soon you can expect to enjoy the well-deserved fruits of your labor!

Resource List

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but many of these sites maintain their own resource lists that will provide more information. Stay focused on the specific concerns of your campaign as you conduct your research. Of course, Oxfam is always the best place to start for information and resources.



Resources on Small Farm Issues

Grace Factory Farm Project

www.factoryfarm.org

The Grace Project seeks to eliminate factory farming in favor of a sustainable and environmentally sound solution.

The National Family Farm Coalition

www.nffc.net

The NFFC was founded as a network of organizations and people working against the vertical integration of agriculture and supporting family farms.

Oxfam America

<http://www.oxfamamerica.org/art2567.html>

This section of Oxfam's site includes a series of 10 articles on small farm issues.

The Rural Coalition

www.ruralco.org

The Rural Coalition, an Oxfam partner organization, is a network of diverse groups in the United States and Mexico committed to reforming the food system and promoting sustainable methods that support rural life.

Where to Find Farmers, Farmers' Markets and Community Supported Agriculture Information

Local Harvest

www.localharvest.org

Local Harvest is an online "living" directory of small farms, co-ops and farmers' markets that seeks to make local food available to everyone.

Robyn Van En Center for Community Supported Agriculture Resources

www.csacenter.org

A subdivision of the Fulton Center for Sustainable Living, the Robyn Van En Center also works as a general resource for the concept of community supported agriculture.

SmallFarms.comwww.smallfarms.com/

"The site where farmers and ranchers connect with you who appreciate variety, quality, and safety in food. We're talking about authentic farmer food here, grown to the personal standards of independent small farmers and ranchers for you, your family, our communities, and the natural environment." You can search by state for CSAs, local farms and farm tours.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Farmers' Markets Directorywww.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service - "Find a Farmers' Market in Your State!"

U.S. Department of Agriculture CSA Directorywww.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/csastate.htm

Compiled by the Alternative Farming Systems Information Center and found on the USDA web site, Community Supported Agriculture Farms by State is a collaborative effort by many organizations working with CSAs.

University of Massachusetts Extension Servicewww.umass.edu/umext/csa

UMASS Extension has a great section on community supported agriculture, as well as a long list of printed and online resources for CSAs and local food systems. Generally great, but especially for work in the Northeast Region.

General Support for Local Food Campaigns on College Campuses**Oxfam America**www.oxfamamerica.org

Xavier Benavides, National Outreach Coordinator (617) 728-2488
Oxfam America's CHANGE initiative works to heighten the discussion on college campuses of social justice and global citizenship. Oxfam recruits young people as CHANGE Leaders, offering leadership training and support so they become effective social change agents. The CHANGE program is working hand in hand with Oxfam's U.S. Program which supports improved livelihoods for small and minority farmers in the United States. Oxfam America sees student-driven campaigns as a key component in the fight for small farm survival. Please contact us for resources, contacts or information.

Community Food Security Coalition's Farm to College Programwww.foodsecurity.org

Kristen Markley kristen@foodsecurity.org or (570) 658-2265

The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) is dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to food for all people at all times. CFSC, with its 250 member organizations, seeks to develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, making available, and selling food that is regionally based and grounded in the principles of justice, democracy, and sustainability.

CFSC's National Farm to College program works with projects across the country to organize workshops, conferences and resources that provide the know-how in making purchasing relationships between colleges and local farmers work.

This fall, CFSC's web site will include a section that details the barriers, opportunities and strategies for success for 18 farm-to-college projects around the country.

The Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS) at the University of Wisconsin

www.wisc.edu/cias

CIAS has been the leading research institution on this issue, and has key research briefs, case studies, as well as a PDF edition of "*Something to Cheer About: National Trends and Prospects for Sustainable Agriculture Products in Food Service Operations of Colleges and Universities*" which is a tremendous publication. CIAS' web site includes subsections for each of its research areas. Check out "College Food Project."

The Food Routes Network

www.foodroutes.org

The Food Routes Network's mission is to reconnect the components of the food system: from the seed to the table. Conducting national research, creating communication and educational aids, FRN works within a network of partners. Their web site is bountiful, and a resource unto itself. You can search for conferences and workshops, potential ally organizations, and their web resource list can't be beat! Bookmark this one!

The Humane Society of the United States

www.hsus.org/ace/11527

Farm Animals and Sustainable Agriculture
The Humane Society of the United States
2100 L St. NW Washington, D.C. 20037
(202) 452 1100

The HSUS works on sustainable agriculture issues and offers help for local food projects. Ask for their publication "Local Food Projects: A How To Manual" by Gary Valen, much of which can be adapted for college/university use.

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

www.leopold.iastate.edu

Richard Pirog, Marketing and Food Systems Research Program Leader
209 Curtiss Hall Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011-3120
(515) 294-1854

Through competitive grants, educational programs and research through Iowa State University Extension, the Leopold Center has worked on college food projects, including one at Grinnell College. They are also connected to the University of Northern Iowa Project (see below).

Practical Farmers of Iowa

www.pfi.iastate.edu

2035 190th St.

Boone, IA 50036-7423

(515) 432-1560

PFI works to promote farm research and methods that support farming families. It has been instrumental in brokering a few key institutional projects and is an example of a statewide organization working to unite farmers toward new marketing practices. It is the force behind the All-State Meal Program that is becoming popular. Especially notable is their Winter 2001 Program Update.

Fulton Center for Sustainable Living

www.wilson.edu/csl/FCSL.htm

Inno Onwueme, Director

Wilson College

1015 Philadelphia Ave.

Chambersburg, PA 17201

ionwueme@wilson.edu (717) 264-4141 x 3247

Housed at Wilson College, the Center works with the Environmental Studies Department, the Robyn Van En Center for Community Supported Agriculture, runs its own farm and oversees the Wilson College Food Project.

Videos

"A Time to Act for Family Farms" is a thoughtful analysis of the crisis in America's small farms, examining the negative affects of industrial agriculture contrasted with the new and encouraging examples of sustainable and cooperative farming. It was produced for the National Family Farm Coalition and is available for \$10 from the Center for Rural Affairs, P.O. Box 406, Walthill, NB 608067, phone (402) 846-5428, email info@cfra.org. 28 minutes.

"The Global Banquet: Politics of Food" helps viewers understand the deeply destructive aspects of the corporate globalization of food. It shows how free trade policies, advanced mainly by the World Trade Organization, allow a handful of very powerful corporations to control the world's food system. It is available for \$19.95 from Maryknoll World Productions, P.O. Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545, (800) 227-8523, www.maryknoll.org. Two parts, 25 minutes each.

Programs Already at Work: Case Studies and Web Sites**University of Northern Iowa Local Food Project (IA)**

www.uni.edu/ceee/foodproject

Kamyar Enshayan, Director

This group facilitates linkages between the university, hospitals and restaurants, and local farmers. It has an incredibly helpful website that outlines details of their project: results, successes, failures, suggestions for similar models, etc.

The Cornell Food Project (NY)

www.nysaes.cornell.edu/cifs/ift_international/FoodProject2.html

This site outlines the project, including their Harvest Week focus, as well as providing resources and eating local in general.

Tufts Food Awareness Project (MA)

www.tufts.edu/~eco/tfap/tfap.html

A partnership between students and dining services, local food is just one part of this large and growing project.

Bates College (ME)

www.bates.edu/x23601.xml

Long the model in local food buying as well as environmental conservation, the Bates College Dining Service was awarded the ReNew America National Award for Sustainability in 2000.

Northland College (WI)

www.wisc.edu/cias/research/colgfood/northlan.html

This case study, prepared by the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS), links to the web site of this small college in Wisconsin.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

www.wisc.edu/cias/research/colgfood/uw-mad.htm

Another CIAS Study, this time of a larger state school, and the host campus for CIAS. Other Wisconsin campuses have also started similar projects throughout the state.

Middlebury College (VT)

<http://community.middlebury.edu/~misd>

Middlebury's "Get Local!" Project had its origin in the Middlebury Initiative for Sustainable Development (MISD). They work with dining services and publicize their efforts really well. MISD also runs an organic garden on campus.

***Remember:** Student contacts change each year due to graduation, so be sure that your information is up to date.

Comments Welcome

This is a working copy of *Oxfam America's Buy Local Food and Farm Toolkit*. We invite you to field test it and send us your comments: What parts were the most helpful? How could other sections be improved? We would also appreciate descriptions of successful case studies for possible inclusion in the final version of the toolkit.

If you use *Oxfam America's Buy Local Food and Farm Toolkit* materials in your own workshop or trainings, or republish materials in your own publications, please let us know so we can track how it is being used and disseminated.

Please send all communications to Xavier Benavides at xbenavides@oxfamamerica.org or (617) 728-2488,

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Committed to creating lasting solutions
to poverty, hunger and social injustice.

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