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The Role of Local and Regional Food Systems in U.S. Farm Policy

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Summary

Sales of locally produced foods comprise a small but growing part of U.S. agricultural sales. Estimates vary but indicate that local food sales total between $4 billion and $12 billion annually. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that local food sales totaled $6.1 billion in 2012, reflecting sales from nearly 164,000 farmers selling locally marketed foods. This represents 8% of U.S. farms and an estimated 1.5% of the value of total U.S. agricultural production. Most (85%) of all local-food farms are smaller in size, with gross revenues under $75,000.

A wide range of farm businesses may be considered to be engaged in local foods. These include direct-to-consumer marketing, farmers' markets, farm-to-school programs, community-supported agriculture, community gardens, school gardens, food hubs and market aggregators, kitchen incubators, and mobile slaughter units. Other types of operations include on-farm sales/stores, Internet marketing, food cooperatives and buying clubs, pick-your-own or "U-Pick" operations, roadside farm stands, community kitchens, small-scale food processing and decentralized root cellars, and some agritourism or other types of on-farm recreational activities.

There is no established definition of what constitutes a "local food." Local and regional food systems generally refer to agricultural production and marketing that occurs within a certain geographic proximity (between farmer and consumer) or that involves certain social or supply chain characteristics in producing food (such as small family farms, urban gardens, or farms using sustainable agriculture practices). Some perceive locally sourced foods as fresher and higher in quality compared to some other readily available foods and also believe that purchasing local foods helps support local farm economies and/or farmers that use certain production practices that are perceived to be more environmentally sustainable. However, no such standards or practices are required under federal programs that support local foods. Many federal programs that support local foods generally define "local" based on the geographic distance between food production and/or sales such that "the total distance that the product is transported is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product"; or "any agricultural food product that is raised, produced, and distributed in ... the State in which the product is produced" (P.L. 110-246, §6015).

Authorization for many of the federal programs that support local food farms is contained within periodic farm bills or within the most recent reauthorization of the child nutrition programs. The 2014 farm bill (Agricultural Act of 2014, P.L. 113-79) is the most recent omnibus farm bill. Other programs and program funding were authorized in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296), which includes programs that sometimes promote local food systems. Congress periodically reviews and reauthorizes expiring authorities under these laws. Many existing federal programs benefiting U.S. agricultural producers may also provide support and assistance for local food systems. With few exceptions, these programs are not limited or targeted to local or regional food systems but are generally available to provide support to all U.S. farmers and ranchers. These include farm support and grant programs administered by USDA, among other federal agencies. In addition, USDA has implemented departmental initiatives intended to support local food systems, such as the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" Initiative, among other activities. These initiatives are not stand-alone programs but are intended to eliminate organizational barriers between existing USDA programs and promote enhanced collaboration among staff, leveraging existing federal activities and programs.

In recent years funding to support local food systems has increased. For 2015, USDA awarded nearly $40 million in grants to support local food systems across several programs. In addition, nearly $50 million in loans is available exclusively to support local and regional food enterprises. Other USDA programs often also support local food systems; however, the share of total spending attributable to local foods is not known.

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Sales of locally produced foods comprise a small but growing part of U.S. agricultural sales. Estimates vary, but they indicate that local food sales total between $4 billion and $12 billion annually.[1] The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that local food sales totaled $6.1 billion in 2012, reflecting sales from nearly 164,000 farmers selling locally marketed foods.[2] This represents 8% of U.S. farms and an estimated 1.5% of the value of total U.S. agricultural production. Most (85%) of all local food farms are smaller in size, with gross annual revenues under $75,000.

Local and regional food systems[3] generally refer to agricultural production and marketing that occurs within a certain geographic proximity (between farmer and consumer) or that involves certain social or supply chain characteristics in producing food (such as small family farms, urban gardens, or farms using sustainable agriculture practices). Some perceive locally sourced foods as fresher and higher in quality compared to some other readily available foods and also believe that purchasing local foods helps support local farm economies and/or farmers that use certain production practices that are perceived to be more environmentally sustainable. However, no such standards or practices are required under federal programs that support local foods.

Many of the federal programs that support local foods generally define "local" based on the geographic distance between food production and/or sales based on the number of miles the food may be transported and require that food be sold within the state where it is produced to be considered local. The most widely used definition is from the 2008 farm bill (P.L. 110-246, Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008), which defined a "locally or regionally produced agricultural food product" as it pertains to eligibility under the Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program, a USDA loan program.[4] Under the definition, "locally or regionally produced agricultural food product" means "any agricultural food product that is raised, produced, and distributed in ... the locality or region in which the final product is marketed, so that the total distance that the product is transported *is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product*"; or "any agricultural food product that is raised, produced, and distributed in ... *the State in which the product is produced*."[5]

This report provides background information on many of the types of operations engaged in the U.S. local and regional food system. A wide range of farm businesses may be considered to be engaged in local foods. These include direct-to-consumer marketing, farmers' markets, farm-to-school programs, community-supported agriculture,[6] community gardens, school gardens, food

[1] Estimates cited in S. A. Low, et al., *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: Report to Congress*, AP-068, January 2015. Other estimates include $9 billion annually (A. T. Kearney, *Ripe for Grocers: The Local Food Movement*, 2014) and $12 billion (Packaged Facts market research, reported by *PRNewswire*, January 30, 2015). See http://www.atkearney.com/.

[2] S. A. Low, et al., *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: Report to Congress*, AP-068, January 2015.

[3] For the purposes of this report, "local and regional food systems" refers to systems in which foods are marketed directly to the consumer, or in which the identity of the farm where the food is produced is preserved in some way (often referred to as "farm identity-preserved marketing"). USDA definitions of "direct-to-consumer" sales and "direct" sales to consumers are not strictly equivalent: direct-to-consumer sales are defined as the value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption (e.g., from roadside stands, farmers' markets, and U-pick sites), but exclude agricultural products sold through their own processing and marketing operations (e.g., catalog or Internet sales) and nonedible products, which may be included as part of "direct" sales.

[4] 7 U.S.C §1932(g). §310B of the ConAct, as amended by P.L. 104-127 (§747) and P.L. 107-171 (§6017).

[5] Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, P.L. 110-246, §6015. Italics added for emphasis.

[6] As is discussed later in this report, "community-supported agriculture" or CSA provides a way for consumers to buy local, seasonal food directly from a farm by pledging to support that farm's costs and risks at the beginning of each year in return for a share of that farm's annual production.

hubs and market aggregators, kitchen incubators, and mobile slaughter units. Other types of operations include on-farm sales/stores, Internet marketing, food cooperatives and buying clubs, pick-your-own or "U-Pick" operations, roadside farm stands, urban farms (and rooftop farms and gardens), community kitchens, small-scale food processing and decentralized root cellars, and some agritourism or other types of on-farm recreational activities.

This report also highlights some of the available resources within existing federal programs administered by USDA and other agencies. A number of existing federal programs benefiting all U.S. agricultural producers also provide support and assistance for local food systems. These and other USDA programs were authorized in the 2014 farm bill (P.L. 113-79, Agricultural Act of 2014). Other programs were authorized in 2010 as part of the most recent child nutrition reauthorization (Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, P.L. 111-296). In addition, some Administration initiatives have been created to leverage existing USDA programs to support local food systems. A more comprehensive description of existing programs supporting local and regional food systems in the United States is available in CRS Report R43950, *Local Food Systems: Selected Farm Bill and Other Federal Programs*.

Finally, this report discusses some of the legislative options that have been previously proposed by Congress and intended to broaden support for local and regional food systems. Some aspects of these proposals were included as part of the omnibus farm bill in 2014 and may be included in future farm bill reauthorizations. Despite gains in federal support for local food systems in recent years, some Members of Congress, as well as many community and farm advocacy groups, continue to argue that such food systems should play a larger role in U.S. farm policy and that the laws supporting agriculture should be revised to reflect broader, more equitable policies across a range of production systems, including local food systems. Those supporting the expansion of such policies often advocate for the creation of programs specifically targeting support for local food systems, as well as increasing funding for federal farm programs that support local foods. However, others in Congress oppose extending farm support programs to local food systems, which traditionally have not been a major constituency among other long-standing U.S. agricultural interests.

Those supporting an increased role for local food systems within U.S. farm policy cite the increasing popularity of local foods and a general belief that purchasing local foods helps support local farm economies and/or farmers that use certain production practices that may be considered more environmentally sustainable. Those opposed to extending farm bill benefits to local food systems cite concerns about overall limited financial resources to support U.S. farmers as well as concerns that the local food systems might not provide for the most efficient and productive use of natural resources for producing food, among other criticisms.

Definitions of Local Foods

The focus on locally sourced foods and efforts to convince consumers to "buy local" are not new concepts. "State grown" or "locally grown" branding programs were introduced in the 1930s (e.g., "*Pride of New York*," "*Pick Tennessee Products*," or "*Ohio Proud*"), and such programs now exist in most U.S. states.[7] (For more information, see text box below.) In the late 1990s, the USDA-appointed National Commission on Small Farms, among other recommendations,

[7] P. M. Patterson, "State-Grown Promotion Programs: Fresher, Better?" *Choices* magazine, Quarter 1, 2006; and K. A. Onken and J. C. Bernard, "Catching the "Local" Bug: A Look at State Agricultural Marketing Programs?" *Choices* magazine, Quarter 1, 2010. Table 1 provides a summary of state branding programs.

emphasized the need to strengthen the "local farm economy" through policy changes within the department's federal programs as a way to better meet the needs of small farmers and ranchers.[8] Although consumer interest in local foods has some of its roots in the late 1960s and concerns about the environment, growth in mainstream consumer demand has increased sharply in the past decade, along with consumer willingness to pay more for such products.

Despite the growing popularity of the local foods market, there is no established definition of what constitutes a "local food."[9] There is also no consensus about what primary factors would need to be considered if one were to construct a definition of what constitutes a "local food."

In most cases, local foods refer to foods produced near where they are consumed, based on a certain geographic proximity (between farmer and consumer) or the number of miles the food travels from where it is grown to where it is ultimately purchased or consumed by the end user. Local foods may also refer to the types of marketing channels used between farmers and consumers. In other cases, however, local foods may invoke certain attributes desired by the consumers who purchase them, involving certain social or supply-chain characteristics in producing food, such as supporting small family farms, urban gardens, or farms using sustainable agriculture practices. The latter case also raises questions about how the local food movement may be used to address a perceived need, such as increasing access to fresh, nutritious foods for underserved communities or contributing to rural economic development. The lack of a universally agreed-upon definition, however, does raise questions about what a local food is and may also provide opportunities for fraud in the marketplace with the sale of foods that are marketed as "local" when they cannot be determined to be local.[10] Studies show that consumers continue to confuse "local" and "organic" foods,[11] even though only a small percentage of certified organic products are direct marketed, according to studies.[12]

"Local" Based on Distance Traveled

One measure of local agricultural products is based on distance between where a product is produced and where it is ultimately purchased or consumed. However, although "local" has a geographic connotation, there is no consensus on the distance or number of miles between production and consumption. USDA reports that, depending on the definition, distances can vary widely, from 25 miles up to 350 miles from where the "local" food is produced.[13] The single statutory definition for "locally or regionally produced agricultural food product" in the United States applies to products transported less than 400 miles or within the state in which they are produced.[14] In Canada, fresh fruits and vegetables cannot be labeled as "local" unless produced within about 31 miles (50 kilometers) of where they are sold.[15] Most state definitions view

[8] USDA, "A Time to Act," National Commission on Small Farms report and recommendations, July 2009.

[9] See S. Martinez et al., *Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts, and Issues*, ERR-97, USDA, ERS, May 2010, and R. King, "Theme Overview: Local Food—Perceptions, Prospects, and Policies," *Choices* magazine, Quarter 1, 2010.

[10] See, for example, "States on Lookout for Local Produce That Isn't," *The Packer*, June 29, 2010.

[11] University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, "Some Consumers Confuse 'Local' with 'Organic' Food," *ScienceDaily*, May 28, 2014; online survey of 2,511 people.

[12] L. Lev and L. Gwin, "Filling in the Gaps: Eight Things to Recognize About Farm-Direct Marketing," *Choices* magazine, Quarter 1, 2010.

[13] M. Hand, "Local Food Systems: Emerging Research and Policy Issues," USDA conference, June 26, 2009.

[14] Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, P.L. 110-246, §6015. This definition applies to eligibility under a USDA's Business and Industry loan program, but has also been applied by USDA to other programs in cases where a specific statutory definition has not been defined.

[15] Canadian Food Inspection Agency, "Local' Claim on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables," http://www.inspection.gc.ca.

"local" to mean grown within state borders; however, in some cases "local" may be defined as food grown within a certain geographic region that might cross state lines. Definitions based on geographic distance vary depending on the state or region and on whether the food is fresh or processed, among other factors.[16]

State-Grown Promotion Programs Versus Geographical Indications

Nearly all U.S. states have a "state grown" or "locally grown" branding program that provides for state-sponsored or state-authorized advertising for agricultural products grown in a particular state. Products such as Florida citrus, Maine potatoes, Washington apples, or California peaches are supported through the respective state programs—programs such as "*Fresh from Florida*," "*Get Real, Get Maine*," "*From the Heart of Washington*," or "*California Grown,*" respectively. Many of these programs were established as a local response to federal marketing orders for some products covered under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937 (7 U.S.C. §601 *et seq.*). In general, these campaigns and brands promote all state products grown in a state and do not focus on a single commodity only. Funding for these state branding programs is mostly through state legislatures with private sector contributions.

"Geographical indications" (GIs) are similarly driven by where a particular product is produced, as well as how the product is produced and also its perceived quality and reputation, among other desired attributes. GIs are place names (or, in some countries, words associated with a place) used to identify the origin and quality, reputation, or other characteristics of products. Specific examples of GIs from the United States include Florida oranges; Idaho potatoes; Napa Valley wines; Missouri pecans; and Washington State apples. However, GIs are generally both commodity-specific and site-specific. Also GIs are often more strictly defined by where or how they are produced and also may be registered under administrative trademark structures governed by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO). Like trademarks, GIs are source identifiers; guarantees of quality; and valuable business interests.

Both state-grown promotion programs and GIs provide producers with the means to promote the distinctiveness of their products in the marketplace. Both programs also provide consumers with choices among products and with information on which to base their choices, and help protect against deceptive or misleading labels. In addition, GIs often refer to a specific branding program that has been widely adopted—especially in the European Union (EU)—to protect the names of certain EU agricultural products within the global economy, similar to other forms of intellectual property. As intellectual property, GIs are eligible for relief from acts of infringement and/or unfair competition. As such the use of GIs for some European wines and cheese products has become a contentious international trade issue since some countries consider GIs to be protected intellectual property, and others consider them to be generic or semi-generic terms (e.g., parmesan, feta, gorgonzola, and mozzarella).

In some local and regional markets in the United States, some producers are developing an interest in cultivating labels of origin unique to a particular geographic area, and are organizing their efforts under the American Origin Product Association. Members include Napa Valley Vintners, California Dried Plum Board, Cuatro Puertas/New Mexico native chile peppers, Ginseng Board of Wisconsin, Idaho Potato Commission, International Maple Syrup Institute, Kona Coffee Farmers Association, Maine Lobstermen's Association, Missouri Northern Pecan Growers, and Vermont Maple Sugar Makers. For more information, see http://aopcentral.us/.

For more background information, see the USPTO's website (http://www.uspto.gov/ip/global/geographical/) and also CRS In Focus IF10188, *Geographical Indications (GIs) in U.S.-EU Trade Negotiations*.

Most consumers, when they purchase local foods, have been shown to generally believe that their local purchases are sourced within a much smaller distance from where it is produced—generally under 100 miles—even though this may not actually be the case.[17] Generally, consumers believe that locally marketed foods are produced on nearby small farms.

Two existing U.S. federal laws provide different definitions of local food production based on the geographic distance between food production and sales. These definitions differ in terms of the number of miles the food may be transported, but both require that food be sold within the state

[16] C. Durham, et al., "Consumer Definitions of 'Locally Grown' for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables," *Journal of Food Distribution Research*, vol. 40, no. 1, March 2009.

[17] A. W. Hodges and T. J. Stevens, "Local Food Systems in Florida: Consumer Characteristics and Economic Impacts," *Proceedings of the Florida State Horticultural Society*, vol. 126 (2013); and Wuyang Hu, et al., "What Is Local and for What Foods Does It Matter," paper presented at Southern Agricultural Economics Association meeting, February 2010.

where it is produced to be considered local. The 2008 farm bill (as noted above) defined the term "locally or regionally produced agricultural food product," as it pertains to eligibility under a USDA loan program, to mean "any agricultural food product that is raised, produced, and distributed in ... the locality or region in which the final product is marketed, so that the total distance that the product is transported *is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product*"; or "any agricultural food product that is raised, produced, and distributed in *... the State in which the product is produced*."[18] Alternatively, food safety legislation enacted in 2010 defined a "qualified enduser"—for the purposes of exempting smaller, local producers from regulation—as "the consumer of the food; or ... a restaurant or retail food establishment ... that is *located ... in the same State as the farm that produced the food; or ... not more than 275 miles from such farm.*"[19]

A 2013 European Commission report defines "local farming" as "the production of agricultural products and foodstuffs with the aim of selling them in an area reasonably close to the farm of production" and defines "local food systems" to mean "production, processing, trading and consumption of food occur in a relatively small geographical area," but acknowledges that there is no uniform definition of the term "local area."[20] The report confirms that the term "local area" is intended to refer to a "relatively small geographical area, there is no agreement on the distance, varying between 20 and 100 km [12 and 62 miles] from the point of production" and that "it is essentially the consumer who decides whether a product comes from a 'local area' or not."[21]

A 2013 survey of buyers of local foods indicates that most consumers (64%) consider food "local" if produced within a 100-mile radius of the store, while other consumers (37%) consider products from the same state to be local.[22] Other information indicates that most consumers (more than 75%) consider "local" as produced within 50 miles, while more than 20% consider "local" as produced within 100 miles (with the remainder willing to consider distances of more than 100 miles as "local").[23]

Elsewhere within USDA and other federal agencies, many examples exist of very specific statutory definitions for "farms" and "food facilities" that govern a range of programs and policies. These definitions generally do not differentiate between the types of farms and food facilities based on an operation's various production practices, size, locality, or distance between production area and markets, among other types of producer- or consumer-driven attributes. Specific federal guidelines are lacking for labeling food as "locally grown," and different states have opted to address local food labeling within the state.[24]

"Local" Based on Marketing Outlet

Another measure of local agricultural products is based on the types of marketing channels used by farmers to distribute food from the farm to the consumer.[25] USDA data are based on surveyed

[18] Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246, §6015). Italics added for emphasis.

[19] FDA Food Safety Modernization Act, P.L. 111-353, §105. Italics added for emphasis.

[20] European Commission, "Report From the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Case for a Local Farming and Direct Sales Labelling Scheme," COM(2013) 866 final, December 2013.

[21] Ibid.

[22] A. T. Kearney, "Buying into the Local Food Movement," 2013. Online survey of 1,300 U.S. respondents.

[23] D. Thilmany McFadden, et al., "Are Local Food Consumers Civic Minded or Seeking Assurances?" C-FARE Lunch and Learn with Ag Committee Staff, Washington, DC, June 2009.

[24] M. Erdman, "Guidelines and Legalities to Consider for "Local" Labeling," *Blueprints*, Jan/Feb/Mar 2013.

[25] M. Hand and S. Martinez, "Just What Does Local Mean?" *Choices* magazine, Quarter 1, 2010; and S. Low and S. Vogel, *Direct and Intermediated Marketing of Local Foods in the United States*, ERR-128, November 2011.

farm information of sales by selected marketing channels, including direct-to-consumer outlets and intermediated outlets. Direct-to-consumer marketing outlets include roadside stands, on-farm stores, farmers' markets, and community-supported agriculture (CSAs). Intermediated outlets include grocers, restaurants, and regional distributors.[26]

USDA reports that 144,530 farms sold $1.3 billion in agricultural products directly to consumers in 2012.[27] Farms with direct sales to consumers were 6.9% of all U.S. farms; direct-to-consumer sales accounted for less than one-half of one percent of total U.S. agriculture sales. Compared to 2007, the number of farms selling directly to consumers increased 6%, and total direct sales to consumers increased 8%. The average value of direct consumer sales per farm was $9,063. Four states—California, New York, Pennsylvania, and Michigan—accounted for one-third of all direct consumer sales. However, farms in all U.S. states reported direct-to-consumer foods sales in 2012.[28] **Figure 1** provides a county-level map showing average value of sales for U.S. farms with direct sales to consumers in 2012. The leading states with direct-to-consumer marketing sales are California, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Oregon, Ohio, Washington, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Texas. States where direct-to-consumer marketing comprised a relatively large share of the state's total agricultural sales were Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Vermont, New Jersey, Maine, Alaska, New York, and Hawaii.

By value, leading products that are directly marketed to consumers include nursery and greenhouse products, fruits and vegetables, and livestock and dairy products.[29] Sales of value-added products such as beef jerky, fruit jams and jelly, floral arrangements, cider, and wine have also increased. In 2012, a reported nearly 95,000 farms produced and sold value-added products, mostly from farms located in Texas, California, Kentucky, Missouri, and Oklahoma.[30]

Direct-to-consumer sales accounted for less than one-fifth of the value of all local agricultural products marketed in 2012 across all farms and all marketing channels. The remaining products are marketed through intermediated marketing outlets only or through both direct-to-consumer and intermediate marketing outlets (**Table 1**).

The majority of farms selling food products directly to consumers are considered small farms. USDA reports that three-fourth of farms selling directly to consumers had annual sales of less than $5,000 in 2012, accounting for 11% of total sales.[31] Farms with annual sales of more than $50,000 accounted for only 3% of farms but the majority of total sales (58%). Previous analysis by USDA using 2007 Census data provides additional information. At small-sized farms (defined as farms with sales of less than $50,000), 78% of all local sales were through direct-to-consumer channels, with 22% of sales made through intermediated market channels, including grocers, restaurants, and regional distributors (**Figure 2**). This compared with larger farms (sales of more than $250,000), where 40% of all sales were through intermediated channels.

[26] Despite common perception, farmers' markets do not dominate direct farms sales (L. Lev and L. Gwin, "Filling in the Gaps: Eight Things to Recognize About Farm-Direct Marketing," *Choices* magazine, Quarter 1, 2010).

[27] USDA, "Farmers Marketing," *2012 Census of Agriculture* highlights, ACH12-7, August 2014. See also Table 2 (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_US/).

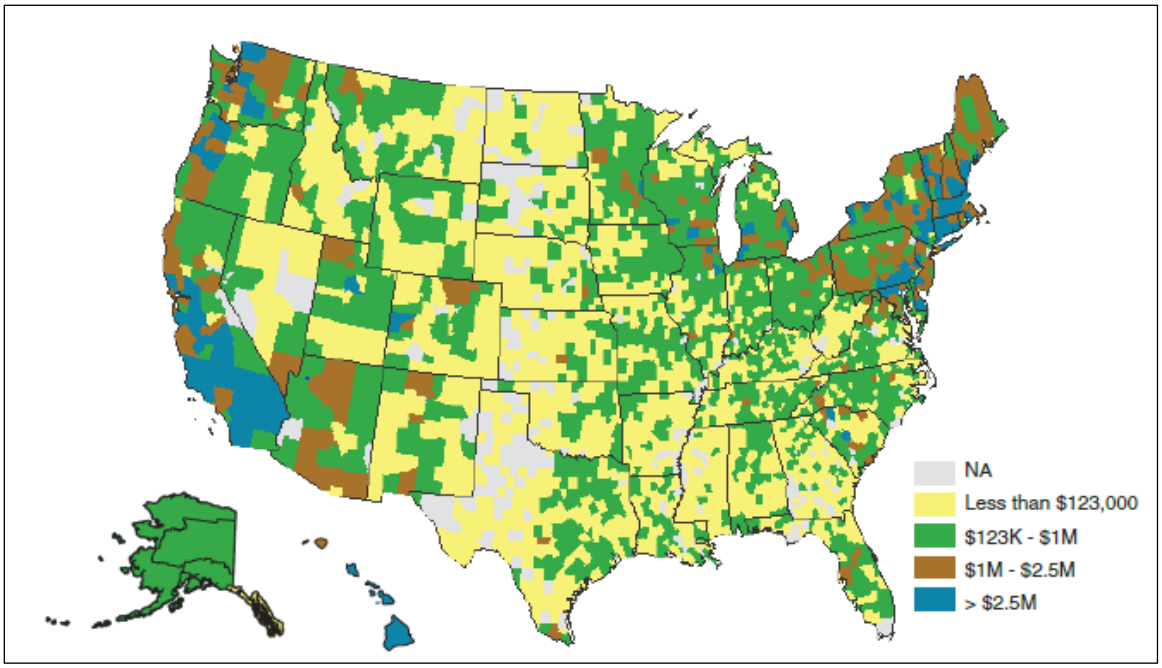
[28] USDA, *2012 Census of Agriculture*, state-level data are available in Table 2 (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_US_State_Level/).

[29] USDA, "Direct Marketing Survey 2009," October 2010.

[30] USDA, "Farmers Marketing," *2012 Census of Agriculture* highlights, ACH12-7, August 2014.

[31] USDA, "Farmers Marketing," *2012 Census of Agriculture* highlights, ACH12-7, August 2014.

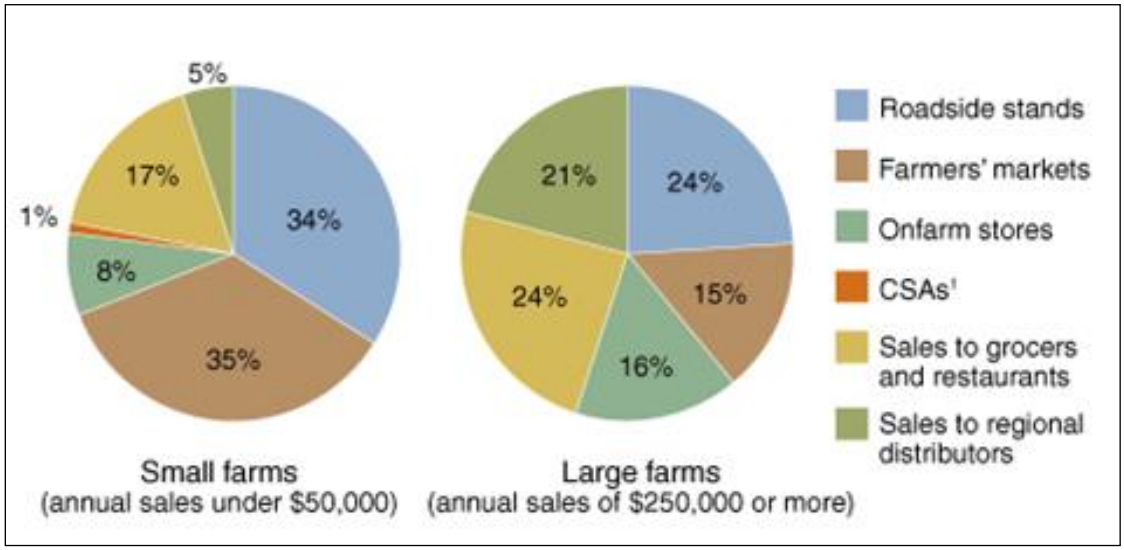
Figure 1. Total Direct-to-Consumer Sales, by County, 2012



Source: S. A. Low, et al., *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: Report to Congress*, AP-068, January 2015. See also USDA, *Census of Agriculture*, "Average Value per Farm of Agricultural Products Sold Directly to Individuals for Human Consumption: 2012" (Map #12-M038), http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/.

Figure 2. Reliance on Direct-to-Consumer Marketing

(Small Versus Larger Farms, Share of Annual Sales)

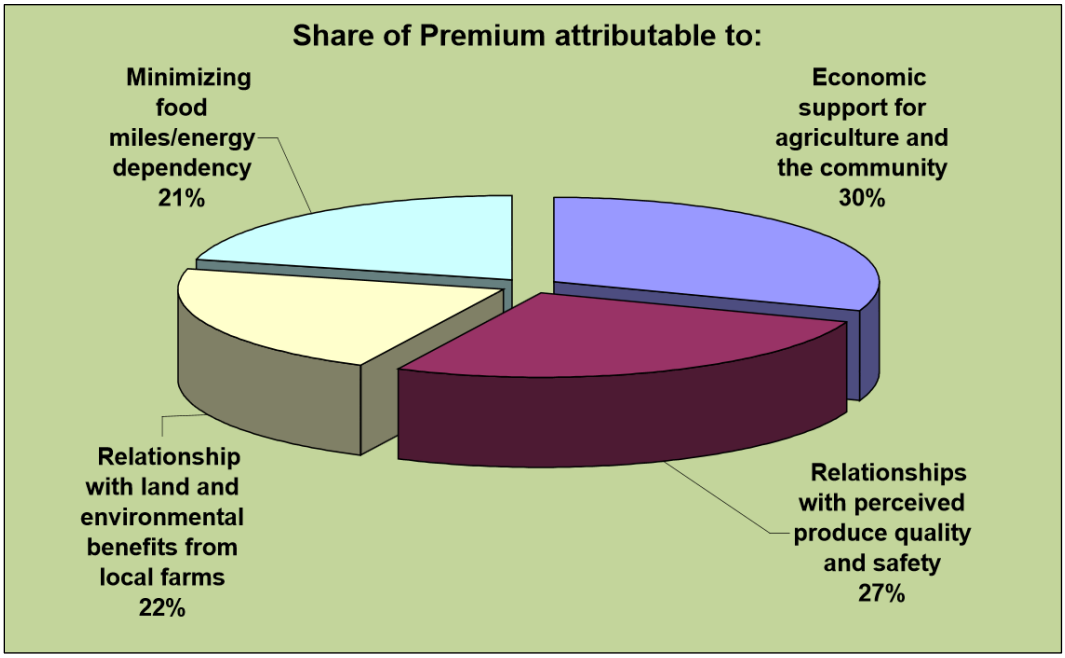


Source: S. Low and S. Vogel, "Local Foods Marketing Channels Encompass a Wide Range of Producers," *Amber Waves*, December 2011. Based on data from USDA's *2007 Census of Agriculture*.

Most indications are that support for agriculture and the local economy appear to be perhaps the most important motivator to consumers for buying local food products, although other factors also rank highly (**Figure 3**). Among the types of attributes consumers are willing to pay a premium for when purchasing fresh produce directly from a producer are providing economic

support for agriculture and the community (30%); perceived produce quality and safety (27%); relationship with land and environmental benefits from local farms (22%); and minimizing food miles and energy dependency (21%).[32] Other information indicates that the types of attributes regarding fresh produce practices that consumers are willing to pay more for include support for local farms (36%), perceived nutritional benefits (26%), perceived food safety benefits (22%), and support for organic production practices (16%).

Figure 3. Consumer Motives for Buying Fresh Produce Direct from Producer



Source: D. Thilmany McFadden, et al., "Are Local Food Consumers Civic Minded or Seeking Assurances," C-FARE Lunch and Learn with Ag Committee Staff, Washington, DC, June 2009.

A study released in 2013 indicates that surveyed consumers believe purchasing locally sourced foods helps local economies (66%); delivers a broader and better assortment of products (60%); provides healthier alternatives (45%); improves the carbon footprint (19%); and increases natural or organic production (19%).[33] Among other study findings: about 30% of those surveyed said they would switch stores if their preferred store did not carry local foods and indicated that their main source for local food is local farmers' markets and farm stores.

Consumer support could potentially help small businesses address some of the perceived challenges for marketing locally sourced foods. USDA and others report that business barriers to market entry and expansion in local food markets include capacity constraints for small farms; lack of distribution systems for moving local food into mainstream markets; lack of resources for capital and infrastructure investments; and limited research, education, and training for marketing local food.[34] Other challenges facing producers include access to processing and packaging

[32] D. Thilmany McFadden, et al., "Are Local Food Consumers Civic Minded or Seeking Assurances?," C-FARE Lunch and Learn with Ag Committee Staff, Washington, DC, June 2009.

[33] A. T. Kearney, "Buying into the Local Food Movement," 2013. Online survey of 1,300 U.S. respondents.

[34] S. Martinez, et al., *Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts, and Issues*; American Farmland Trust, *Think Globally, Eat Locally: San Francisco Foodshed Assessment*, 2008; L. Day-Farnsworth, et al., "Scaling Up: Meeting the Demand for Local Food," December 2009; and R. King, "Can Local Go Mainstream?" C-FARE webinar, April 12, 2011.

services; delivery procedures; consistency (volume and quality); uncertainties related to regulations that may affect local food production, such as food safety requirements; and the need for traceback of foods to their origin. A 2011 study focused on beginning farmers cites challenges, including lack of capital and access to credit and land, and cites as "valuable" programs such as apprenticeships, local partnerships, and CSAs.[35]

"Local" Based on Perceived Attributes

Yet another measure of local agricultural products may be based on the desire by consumers to support local farmers and/or encourage the use of certain social or supply-chain characteristics in producing such local products. Such attributes may include production by a small family farm, an urban farm or garden, or a farm using sustainable agriculture practices. Other attributes may include perceived higher product quality and freshness of local food; a desire to provide social and political support for local farmers and the local economy; farmland preservation; concerns about environmental impacts, energy use, and the perception that local foods are more environmentally friendly (limited use of chemicals, energy-based fertilizers, and pesticides); perceived better food safety given shorter supply chains; sense of social justice (perceived fairer labor prices and fair price for farmers); knowing the source of the product; a commitment to establishing closer connections between consumers and agricultural producers; and, generally, a response to concerns about industrialized commercial agriculture.[36]

A 2015 national survey by the American Farmland Trust and the Farmers Market Coalition reports that, among producers who sell at farmers' markets, 48% use integrated pest management (IPM) practices, 78% use practices that are consistent with organic standards (although less than 20% have completed organic certification), and 81% use practices intended to improve soil health.[37] Often it is important to consumers that they know that production and distribution occur within a specific region, or that consumers are informed about the local nature of products, in some cases through personal communication with the farmers. Regardless of the distance the food travels from the production area to the consumer, many of these factors inherently influence consumer demand for products marketed and perceived to be "local." The desire to support nearby small and medium-sized farms is also a motivation for consumers. USDA reports that small farms rely more on direct-to-consumer marketing channels (farmers' markets, on-farm sales, roadside stands, CSAs, etc.) as compared to larger farms.

Support for farms using sustainable agriculture practices is often claimed as a motivation driving demand for local foods. However, just as there is no single definition of "local" foods, much debate exists about what constitutes "sustainable agriculture." USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has identified three pillars of sustainability. These include profit over the long term; stewardship of the nation's land, air, and water; and quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and their communities. Another widely used definition also integrates three main goals—environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic

[35] National Young Farmer's Coalition, *Building a Future with Farmers: Challenges Faced by Young, American Farmers and a National Strategy to Help Them Succeed*, November 2011.

[36] For example, S. Martinez, "Varied Interests Drive Growing Popularity of Local Foods," *Amber Waves*, USDA ERS, December 2010; S. Martinez et al., *Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts, and Issues*; J. Jensen, "Local and Regional Food Systems for Rural Futures," Rural Policy Research Institute, November 2010; and M. Coit, "Jumping on the Next Bandwagon: An Overview of the Policy and Legal Aspects of the Local Food Movement," National Agricultural Law Center, University of Arkansas School of Law, February 2009.

[37] G. Schumacher, "Farmers Markets - Health, Access and Community," *Agri-Pulse*, June 25, 2015.

equity.[38] Alternatively, other definitions may apply according to laws governing some USDA activities.[39] Reportedly, U.S. food companies are increasingly incorporating sustainability initiatives into their global supply chains.[40]

"Local" Based on Potential to Address Food Deserts

Some groups advocate for an increased role for local food systems as a way to help address concerns about lack of consumer access to healthy foods within certain low-income or underserved communities ("food deserts"). Although there is no standard definition of a food desert, the term generally refers to areas where consumers lack access to grocery stores that provide a variety of affordably priced nutritious foods. The 2008 farm bill defined a "food desert" as an "area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominantly lower-income neighborhoods and communities" (P.L. 110-246, §7527). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) further classifies these areas as lacking access to affordable fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk, and other foods that make up the full range of a healthy diet, and focuses on the potentially negative health outcomes, including obesity and chronic disease. CDC notes, however, that "more research is needed to determine how access influences the types of foods consumers purchase and eat."[41] Other information on food deserts is provided in the text box below.

Various policy options have been identified to address food deserts. These include offering incentives (such as tax credits) to attract grocery stores to urban and rural communities; developing other retail outlets, such as farmers' markets, public markets, cooperatives, farm stands, CSAs, and mobile vendors; improving transportation and distribution networks; increasing stocks of fresh foods at neighborhood stores; reducing food waste and encouraging food donations; and promoting growing food locally in backyards and community gardens, as well as urban farms. Some studies, however, have raised questions about whether increasing access to food by siting markets within food deserts actually alters dietary habits or obesity levels.

[38] University of California SARE Program (UC-SAREP), "What Is Sustainable Agriculture?"

[39] For example, 7 U.S.C. §3103(19)) defines "sustainable agriculture" to mean "an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long-term-

> (A) satisfy human food and fiber needs;
>
> (B) enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agriculture economy depends;
>
> (C) make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls;
>
> (D) sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and
>
> (E) enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole."

[40] See, for example, R. B. Ross, V. Pandey, and K. L. Ross, " Sustainability and Strategy in U.S. Agri-Food Firms: An Assessment of Current Practices," *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2015), pp. 17-49.

[41] CDC, "A Look Inside Food Deserts," http://www.cdc.gov/features/fooddeserts/.

Background Information on "Food Deserts"

The 2008 farm bill defined a "food desert" as an "area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominantly lower-income neighborhoods and communities" (P.L. 110-246, §7527). For mapping purposes, USDA's food access indicators for census tracts assume "½-mile and 1-mile demarcations to the nearest supermarket for urban areas, 10-mile and 20-mile demarcations to the nearest supermarket for rural areas, and vehicle availability for all tracts are estimated and mapped." Originally USDA used a measure of food deserts based on "low-income areas where a significant number or share of residents is far from a supermarket, where 'far' is more than 1 mile in urban areas and more than 10 miles in rural areas."

A 2009 USDA report to Congress identified 6,500 food desert tracts in the United States. USDA also reported that of all U.S. households, 2.3 million households (2%) live more than 1 mile from a supermarket and do not have access to a vehicle; and an additional 3.4 million households (3%) live between one-half and 1 mile away and do not have access to a vehicle. Other USDA data show where food deserts are located in the United States based on indicators of access and proximity to grocery stores, such as the share of residents that are low-income households without a car that live a certain distance from a supermarket or large grocery store.

A 2012 USDA report further clarified that areas with higher poverty rates are more likely to be food deserts but vary depending on certain factors including vehicle availability and access to public transportation, percentage of minority population, regional location, and population growth rates. Other research has also highlighted how several other demand and supply factors play a role in creating food deserts, including household income; market size; population density; income growth; poverty rates; rates of use of income support programs; consumer preferences; cost of capital investments, sourcing, and distribution; among other factors. Regarding health implications, some research has focused on the role that low household income plays in contributing to U.S. obesity rates, rather than food deserts.

Additional information: USDA, "Food Access Research Atlas" (replacing the previous Food Desert Locator Tool), http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/about-the-atlas.aspx; USDA, ERS, *Characteristics and Influential Factors of Food Deserts*, August 2012; and USDA, ERS, *Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences*, Report to Congress, April 2009.

Local Food Markets

Estimated Market Size and Demand Trends

In recent years, growing demand for "local" foods has raised the importance of direct farm sales and the marketing of locally grown foods within the U.S. agricultural sector. Although local food sales still comprise a small share of overall sales, demand continues to grow.

Estimates reported by USDA show the extent to which local food sales have increased in recent years. As noted earlier, USDA's most recent estimates put U.S. local food sales at $6.1 billion in 2012, reflecting sales from nearly 164,000 farmers selling locally marketed foods.[42] This represents 8% of U.S. farms, and an estimated 1.5% of the value of total U.S. agricultural production. Previously, USDA estimated that the farm-level value of U.S. local food sales totaled about $4.8 billion in 2008, from both direct-to-consumer sales and intermediated sales[43] (**Figure 4**). An estimated 107,200 farms were engaged in local food systems in 2008, about 5% of all U.S. farms.

Of total local sales in 2012, direct-to-consumer sales accounted for 19% (about $1.2 billion), and were marketed through direct-to-consumer marketing outlets only, such as roadside stands, on-farm stores, farmers' markets, and CSAs. Another 55% (about $3.4 billion) was marketed through

[42] S. A. Low, et al., *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: Report to Congress*, AP-068, January 2015.

[43] S. Low and S. Vogel, *Direct and Intermediated Marketing of Local Foods in the United States*, ERR-128, November 2011. Also S. Low and S. Vogel, "Local Foods Marketing Channels Encompass a Wide Range of Producers," *Amber Waves*, December 2011.

intermediated marketing outlets only (local grocers, restaurants, and regional distributors). Another 26% (about $1.6 billion) was marketed through both types (**Table 1**). Comparing results from USDA's 2008 and 2012 reports indicates that local food markets continue to grow. USDA further reports that small farms rely more on direct-to-consumer marketing channels (such as farmers' markets, roadside stands, on-farm stores, and CSAs) as compared to larger farms. Most local food farms (85%) make less than $75,000 in gross income per year (**Figure 5**).

USDA's published estimates of market size utilize available data from the agency's *Census of Agriculture.* However, there are currently no national estimates of local food production. Limited information is available on local and regional food markets from USDA's *Market News* for some states only.[44] To supplement USDA's *Census* data, the agency is planning to survey 28,000 U.S. farmers and ranchers regarding local foods. Depending on available funding, the agency's "Local Foods Survey" would be a *Census* follow-on survey and sampled from respondents to USDA's 2012 *Census* who reported product sales directly to consumers or to retail outlets that in turn sell directly to consumers. Response to USDA's follow-on survey would be voluntary. USDA claims this effort is in response to community and farm advocacy groups who are requesting changes in U.S. farm policy to provide more direct support for local foods producers, consumers, and markets as part of the next omnibus farm bill.[45] Previously USDA expanded its data collection of direct-to-market sales, on-farm sales, and CSAs as part of its *National Farmers' Market Manager Survey*.[46]

USDA's 2012 report, *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* ("Compass"), further highlights the agency's support for local and regional food projects. Other recent and related USDA publications include a report on the distribution practices of eight producer networks and their partners distributing locally or regionally grown food to retail and food-service customers.[47]

USDA claims that "interest is growing in support of local agricultural economies through the purchase of foods from sources that are geographically close to the consuming areas, via channels that are direct from farm to consumer or at most one step removed."[48] The popularity of and demand for local foods continues to grow. One reported survey suggests that nearly 80% of all consumers would like to buy more local food, and almost 60% of consumers say it is important when buying food that it be locally sourced, grown, and made; more than one-half of consumers surveyed said they would be willing to pay a premium for local food.[49] Another survey suggests that 70% of consumers are willing to pay a premium for local food.[50]

[44] USDA, "Local & Regional Food Market News" website (http://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news/local-regional-food).

[45] 80 *Federal Register* 206: 65195, October 26, 2015. Data will be collected under the authority of 7 U.S.C. §2204(a) and subject to strict confidentiality rules under 7 U.S.C. §2276.

[46] 77 *Federal Register* 214: 66432-66433, November 5, 2012.

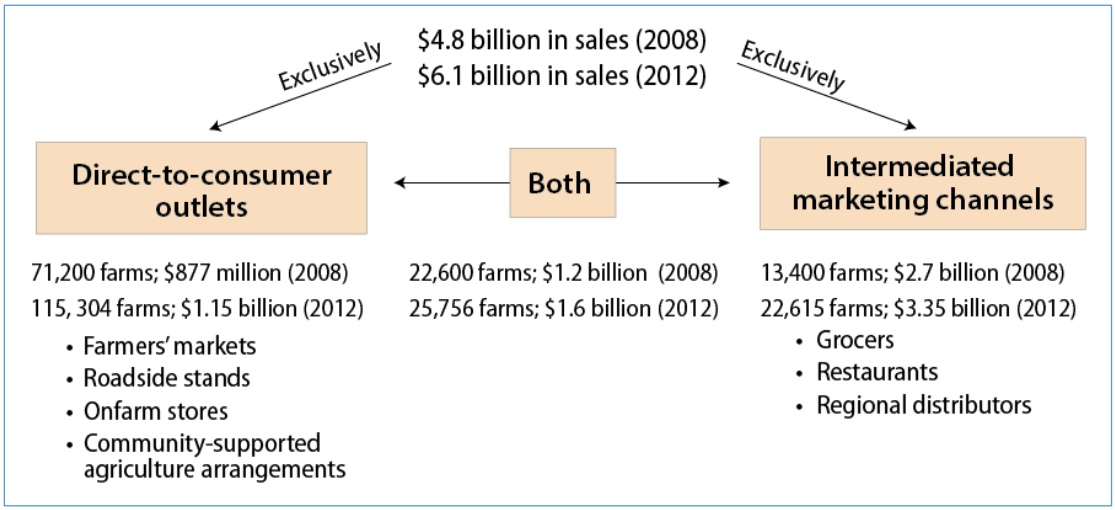
[47] USDA, "Moving Food Along the Value Chain: Innovations in Regional Food Distribution," March 2012; and USDA, "New Study Explores Innovation and Opportunities for Diverse Local Food Distributors," Releases No. 0096.12, March 16, 2012.

[48] 80 *Federal Register* 206: 65195, October 26, 2015.

[49] Sullivan, Higdon, and Sink, "A Fresh Look at Organic and Local," 2013.

[50] A. T. Kearney, "Ripe for Grocers: The Local Food Movement," 2014.

Figure 4. USDA Estimates of Local Food Sales, Farm Value (2008 and 2012)



Sources: 2008 estimates (S. Low and S. Vogel, *Direct and Intermediated Marketing of Local Foods in the United States*, ERR-128, November 2011); 2012 estimates (S. A. Low, et al., *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: Report to Congress*, AP-068, January 2015).

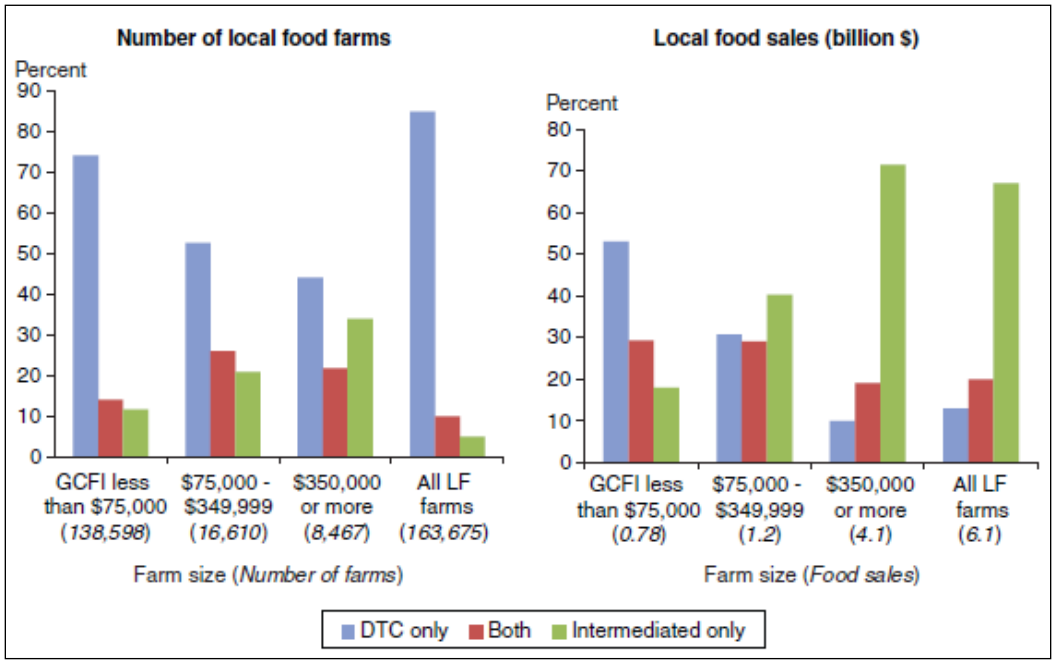
Table 1. Marketing Channels Used by Local Food Sales Farms, 2007 and 2012

Sales Channels	2007		2012	
	(number)	($billion)	(number)	($billion)
Direct-to-Consumer Outlets Only	71,200	0.88	115,304	1.15
Intermediated Marketing Channels Only	3,400	2.70	22,615	3.35
Both Marketing Channels	22,600	1.20	25,756	1.60
Marketed Through All Channels	107,200	4.78	163,675	6.10
	(percentage)			
Direct-to-Consumer Outlets Only	66%	18%	70%	19%
Intermediated Marketing Channels Only	13%	57%	14%	55%
Both Marketing Channels	21%	25%	16%	26%
Marketed Through All Channels	100%	100%	100%	100%
	% Change (2007-2012)			
Direct-to-Consumer Outlets Only	—	—	62%	31%
Intermediated Marketing Channels Only	—	—	69%	24%
Both Marketing Channels	—	—	14%	33%
Marketed Through All Channels	—	—	53%	28%

Source: 2008 estimates (S. Low and S. Vogel, *Direct and Intermediated Marketing of Local Foods in the United States*, ERR-128, November 2011); 2012 estimates (S. A. Low, et al., *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: Report to Congress*, AP-068, January 2015).

Notes: USDA definitions of "direct-to-consumer" marketing and "direct sales" to consumers are not strictly equivalent: direct-to-consumer sales are defined as the value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption (for example, from roadside stands, farmers' markets, and U-pick sites), but exclude agricultural products sold through their own processing and marketing operations (such as catalog or Internet sales) and nonedible products (which may be included as part of "direct" sales).

Figure 5. Local Food Farms and Sales, by Market Channel Use and Farm Type, 2012



Source: S. A. Low, et al., *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: Report to Congress*, AP-068, January 2015.

Notes: The share of farms by farm size and marketing channel use are based on 2012 Census of Agriculture benchmark counts; the shares of total value of local food sales by farm size and marketing channel use are synthetic estimates. DTC = direct-to-consumer; GCFI = Gross cash farm income, and LF = Local food farms. Calculated by USDA using Census and Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) data (2008-2011).

Other survey results reported by the National Restaurant Association indicate that locally sourced meats and seafood and locally grown produce, as well as "hyper-local sourcing," are among the top menu trends for 2016, followed by environmental sustainability, healthful kids' meals, a range of "artisan" food products, and also natural ingredients and minimally processed foods.[51] The National Grocers Association further reports that demand for local foods may now exceed that for organic foods.[52]

Most researchers recognize that innovation and expansion of local foods in mainstream channels will mostly be driven by growing demand in the marketplace.[53] Some large-scale food retailers, such as Walmart, claim locally sourced fruits and vegetables account for more than 10% of all produce sold in their stores nationwide.[54] Other retailers, such as Whole Foods, claim that as much as 25% of their offerings are locally sourced.[55] The retailer further supports local food production by providing about $10 million in low-interest loans to its independent food

[51] National Restaurant Association, "What's Hot 2016 Culinary Forecast," http://www.restaurant.org/News-Research/Research/What-s-Hot. Based on a survey of 1,600 professional chefs who are members of the American Culinary Federation.

[52] National Grocers Association-SupermarketGuru Consumer Survey Report, 2014.

[53] See, for example, R. P. King, "Can Local Go Mainstream?," C-FARE webinar, April 11, 2011.

[54] "Yielding Results for Local Farmers," July 17, 2012 blog post; and "Walmart Ramping up Fresh Food Marketing Push Next Year," *Agri-Pulse*, December 2011.

[55] A. T. Kearney, "Ripe for Grocers: The Local Food Movement," 2014.

growers.[56] Whole Foods also has established a rating system for fresh fruits and vegetables and flowers based on the growing practices used in production.

Perceived Benefits of Local Food Systems

Among the types of benefits cited by advocates of local food systems are increased and more stable farm incomes; increased jobs and wealth retention in local economies; improved access to fresh produce; enhanced accountability and choice; reduced vulnerability to contamination and food safety concerns, given the smaller distribution range of foods; diversified and sustainable production; and reduced energy use from reduced transportation (fewer "food miles") and reduced contributions to climate change.[57] Other reported benefits claim that buying directly from farmers allows producers to retain a greater portion of the value-added costs often captured by other businesses in the supply chain or middlemen, and also increases the likelihood that money spent remains in the local community; also, eating locally grown foods is correlated with improved nutrition and the increased likelihood of making healthier food choices.[58] Some of these claimed benefits have been disputed. In addition to raising questions about the general assumption that "local" is inherently good, other criticisms cite reduced productivity and inefficient use of resources in food production; questions about ecological sustainability and community effects; and concerns about food quality and food safety.[59]

USDA claims that nearly all U.S. states and congressional districts benefit from local and regional food systems in some way. However, few academic studies have quantified how local food markets may affect the economic development, health, or environmental quality of communities. USDA also claims there are economic gains to the U.S. farm economy from programs that support increasing the number of farmers' markets nationwide and programs promoting the use of electronic benefit transfer (EBT)[60] at farmers' markets, as well as programs to increase purchases of local foods by school districts and institutions.[61] Results from the limited number of available economic studies suggest that expanding local food systems in a community can increase employment and income in that community; however, evidence is insufficient to determine whether local food availability improves diet quality or food security and whether localized production results in a reduction of overall energy use or in greenhouse gas emissions.[62]

Most available economic studies rely on input-output analysis to generate "economic multipliers" that estimate changes in the economy (e.g., number of jobs) from a change in economic activity.[63]

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[56] Ibid. As part of Whole Foods' "Local Loan Producer Program."

[57] See, for example, M. Anderson, "The Case for Local and Regional Food Marketing," Farm & Food Policy Project Issue Brief, 2007.

[58] See, for example, a summary by R. Brain, "The Local Food Movement: Definitions, Benefits & Resources," Utah State University, September 2012, http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/Sustainability_2012-09pr.pdf. See also Union of Concerned Scientists, "Market Forces: Creating Jobs Through Public Investment in Local and Regional Food Systems," July 2011.

[59] See, for example, B. Born and M. Purcell, "Avoiding the Local Trap," *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, vol. 26 (2006), pp. 195-207.

[60] EBT refers to an electronic system that allows a recipient to authorize transfer of their government benefits, including benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) from a federal account to a retailer account to pay for products received.

[61] See, for example, USDA's "Healthy Food Access" (http://www.usda.gov/documents/7-Healthyfoodaccess.pdf) as part of the agency's *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* Compass.

[62] S. Martinez et al., *Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts, and Issues*, ERR-97, USDA, ERS, May 2010.

[63] Multipliers measure the total impact on the local economy of farmers for every dollar of new local food sales revenue (continued...)

For example, USDA reports that operators of fruit and vegetable farms with local food sales generate an estimated 13 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs per $1 million in sales (which is estimated as greater than the number of jobs created by fruit and vegetable farms not engaged in local food sales).[64] Other studies have shown estimated gains in both farm sector output and gross state product from farmers' markets[65] and also gains in output and employment from food hub development.[66] A limited number of regional studies have been conducted. One such study of the broader economic impacts of Iowa's regional food systems found that local food sales resulted in additional jobs both on-farm and elsewhere in the economy.[67]

Types of Businesses and Operations

Data and information are available on the types of businesses engaged in local food systems, including farms that sell direct-to-consumer through farmers' markets, roadside stands, on-farm stores, CSAs, or other types of on-farm sales such as Internet or mail order sales, pick-your-own or "U-Pick" operations, cottage food makers, mobile markets, and also agritourism or other types of on-farm recreational activities.[68] Other forms of local food markets may include foods produced in community gardens or school gardens, urban farms (and rooftop farms and gardens), community kitchens, or small-scale food processing and decentralized root cellars. The following is a review of some of these types of direct-to-consumer marketing and other forms of local operations. Products sold through these outlets may include fresh foods; processed foods (such as honey; syrups; beef jerky; and homemade jellies, jams, and pickled products); and certain non-edible products such as nursery crops, cut flowers, and wool and other fiber products.

Locally produced foods may also pass through an intermediary, such as a restaurant, government institution, grocery store, or other retail channel. Food sales to farm-to-school programs may be direct from the farm or through an intermediary. Food hubs and market aggregators, along with kitchen incubators and mobile slaughter units, may be employed in distribution and/or processing within these marketing channels. Some of these types of food outlets are also reviewed.

(...continued)

earned by the farmer (e.g., an estimated multiplier of $1.50 captures the initial $1 expenditure and an additional 50¢ calculated economic multiplier effect). For more information, see B. Jablonski, D. Thilmany, and R. Pirog, "Evaluating the Economic Impacts of Local and Regional Food Systems: Best Practices," December 14, 2015.

[64] S. Low and S. Vogel, *Direct and Intermediated Marketing of Local Foods in the United States*, ERR-128, November 2011, p. 12. See also USDA, *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* Compass, 2012, p. 5, http://www.usda.gov/documents/KYFCompass.pdf. Based on 2008 data. An earlier study showed that fruit and vegetable production has the potential to generate a greater number of jobs and farm income than commodity crops (D. Swenson, "Selected Measures of the Economic Values of Increased Fruit and Vegetable Production and Consumption in the Upper Midwest," Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, 2010).

[65] D. W. Hughes, et al., "Evaluating the Economic Impact of Farmers' Markets Using an Opportunity Cost Framework," *Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics*, vol. 40, no. 1 (April 2008), pp. 253-265.

[66] B. Jablonski, T. M. Schmit, and D. Kay, "Assessing the Economic Impacts of Food Hubs to Regional Economies: A Framework Including Opportunity Cost," WP 2015-03, Cornell University, February 2015.

[67] C. Bregendahl and A. Enderton, "Economic Impacts of Local Food in Iowa," Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, October 2013.

[68] Ibid. Also Cornell University, "Discovering the Food System, a Primer on Community Food Systems: Linking Food, Nutrition and Agriculture." For information on agritourism, see D. Brown and R. Reeder, "Agritourism Offers Opportunities for Farm Operators," *Amber Waves*, February 2008; and USDA's fact sheet, "Agricultural Diversification," http://www.agcensus.usda.gov.

Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets are among several forms of direct farmer marketing, which also include farm and roadside stands, CSAs, pick-your-own farms, and direct sales to schools. More than 8,100 farmers' markets operated in 2014, up from about 6,100 in 2010, 2,700 in 1998, and 1,800 markets in 1994 (**Figure 6**).[69] **Figure 7** shows the number of farmers' markets, by county, in 2010.[70] States with the most farmers' markets were California, New York, Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Massachusetts, Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina.[71] Farmers' markets also operate during winter, mostly in New York, California, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Ohio, Maryland, and Florida.[72] Previous estimates by USDA indicate that total farmers' market sales exceed $1 billion per year.[73] Products sold at farmers' markets include conventionally produced farm products and so-called natural and locally labeled products, as well as certified organic products[74] and other specially labeled products such as hormone- or antibiotic-free and free-range animal products. A 2015 national survey by the American Farmland Trust and the Farmers Market Coalition reports that food and food products sold at farmers' markets include vegetables (69% of all markets) and fruit and nuts (47%), but also include meat, poultry, and eggs (53%) and value-added products (31%).[75]

Figure 8 shows increases over the past decade in the number of farmers' markets that are authorized to accept benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps). Many farmers markets now accept payment in the form of SNAP's electronic benefit transfer (EBT) debit card system. According to USDA, in 2008, SNAP participants redeemed under $2.6 million in food stamps at about 753 farmers' markets; by 2014, SNAP participants redeemed nearly $18.8 million in food stamps at 5,175 farmers' markets.[76]

To increase participation of low-income consumers at farmers' markets as well as to incentivize fruit and vegetable consumption, a number of projects have been initiated regarding SNAP that provide matching purchases by SNAP users at participating farmers' markets. Examples include "Double Up Food Bucks" in Michigan; "Boston Bounty Bucks funds"; "Health Bucks" in New York City; "Fresh Exchange" in Portland, Oregon; and a dollar-for-dollar match at Evanston, Illinois, farmers' markets.[77] A study of SNAP-authorized farmers' market participants in Michigan reported that more than one-third of "Double Up" farmers' markets are in rural areas (communities with fewer than 50,000 people); also, rural residents were found to be more likely to use "Double Up" benefits than urban residents.[78]

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[69] USDA, AMS, "Farmers' Market Growth: 1994-2011." Reflects updated USDA data.

[70] Original data are at USDA, http://ers.usda.gov/foodatlas/downloadData.htm.

[71] USDA National Farmers' Market Directory is at http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets.

[72] "Winter Farmers' Markets Expand to More Than 1,200 Locations," *Agri-Pulse*, December 16, 2011.

[73] AMS, "Farmers Market Program Fact Sheet;" and AMS, *National Farmers' Market Manager Survey*, May 2009.

[74] Only a small percentage of certified organic products are direct marketed, according to studies cited by L. Lev and L. Gwin, "Filling in the Gaps: Eight Things to Recognize About Farm-Direct Marketing." A 2015 national survey by the American Farmland Trust and the Farmers Market Coalition reports that 18% of producers who sell at farmers'markets have completed organic certification.

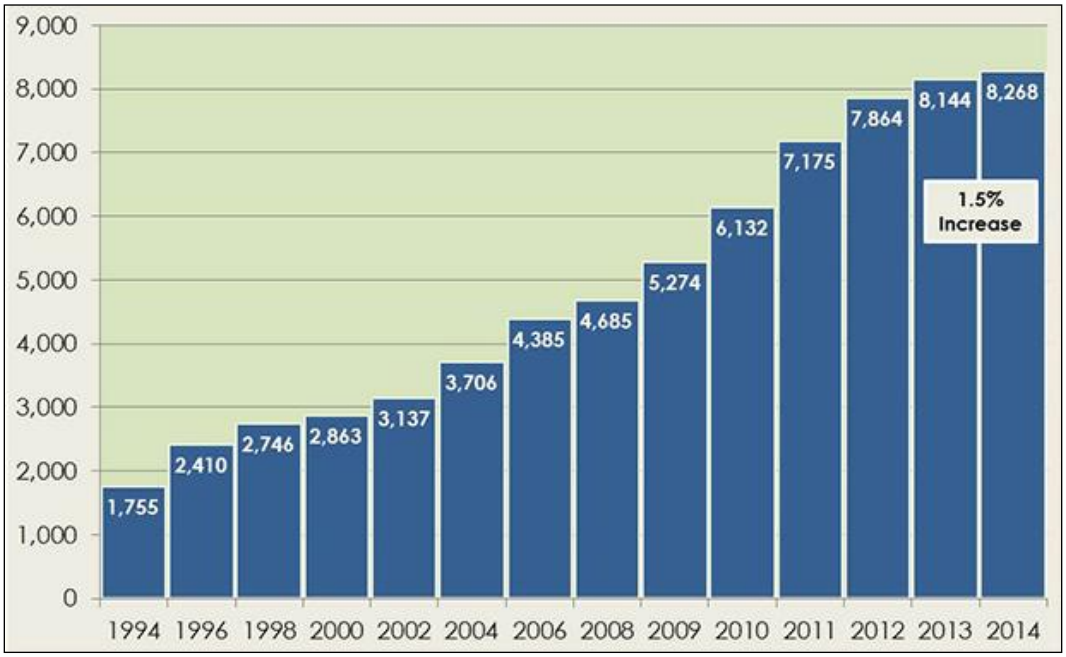
[75] G. Schumacher, "Farmers Markets - Health, Access and Community," *Agri-Pulse*, June 25, 2015.

[76] USDA, "Comparison of SNAP Authorized Farmers and Markets FY2008 and FY2014," June 30, 2015.

[77] See Snap to Health's website (http://www.snaptohealth.org/snap-innovations/snap-at-farmers-markets/). For a study of these types of incentives, see C. Dimitri, et al., "Enhancing Food Security of Low-Income Consumer: An Investigation of Financial Incentives for Use at Farmers Markets," *Food Policy*, December 2013.

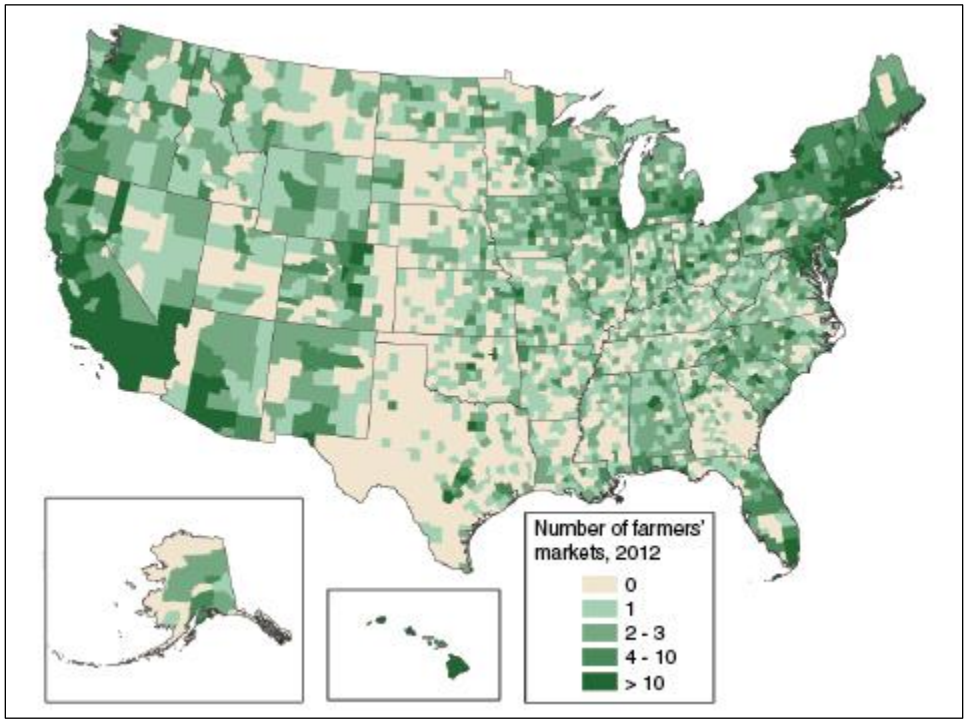
[78] Fair Food Network, "Double Up Experience in Rural Michigan," June 2015.

Figure 6. National Count of U.S. Farmers' Markets Directory Listings



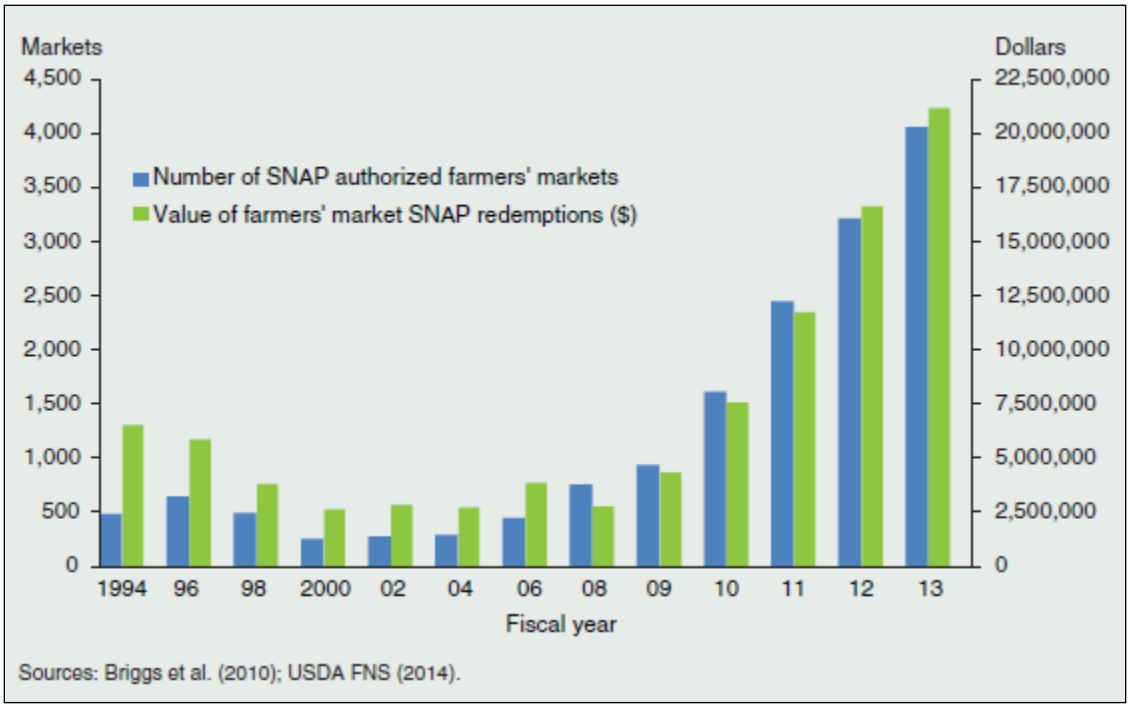
Source: USDA/AMS, "Farmers' Markets and Local Food Marketing," http://www.ams.usda.gov.

Figure 7. Number of Farmers' Markets, by County, 2012



Source: CRS using USDA data for 2010.

Figure 8. SNAP/EBT Authorized Farmers' Markets and Total Annual Value of Redemptions, 1994-2013



Source: Reported in S. A. Low, et al., Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: Report to Congress, AP-068, January 2015; original source cited as Briggs et al. (2010); USDA FNS (2014).

Farm-to-School Programs

Farm-to-school programs broadly refer to "efforts to serve regionally and locally produced food in school cafeterias," with a focus on enhancing child nutrition and providing healthier meals as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and other child nutrition programs.[79] The goals of these efforts include increasing fruit and vegetable consumption among students, supporting local farmers and rural communities, and providing nutrition and agriculture education to school districts and farmers.[80] School garden programs also build on this concept. Among the other goals of farm-to-school programs are those highlighted by the National Farm to School Network, connecting schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing education opportunities (regarding agriculture, health, and nutrition), and supporting local and regional farmers.[81] USDA's broader agency activities may also include other farm-to-institution activities involving hospitals or correctional facilities.

[79] USDA, National Agriculture Library's (NAL) Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC), "Farm to School," http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/. Child nutrition programs include the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, Special Milk Program, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

[80] USDA, FNS, "Farm to School," http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/fact-sheets.

[81] National Farm to School Network, http://www.farmtoschool.org. See also B. Bellows, et al., "Bringing Local Food to Local Institutions," NCAT publication, October 2003; and UC-SAREP, "Direct Marketing to Schools," July 2002.

USDA began its efforts "to connect farms to the school meal programs" in the late 1990s, as part of pilot projects in California and Florida, followed by other agency-wide initiatives in the early 2000s.[82] These efforts were reinforced by Congress as part of subsequent reauthorizations of child nutrition legislation, including the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296).[83] USDA's Farm-to-School Census reports that during the 2011-2012 school year more than 40,000 schools (about 44% of all U.S. schools) participated in farm-to-school activities, reaching an estimated 23.5 million school children.[84] This compares to an initial two programs in the 1996-1997 school year, and an estimated 400 in 2004 and 1,000 in 2007. An estimated $385.8 million was spent on local food purchases through these programs.[85] Nearly 20% of school districts have guidelines for purchasing locally grown produce.[86] USDA's website provides information on national and regional farm-to-school programs and other resource guides.[87] According to the National Farm to School Network, 40 states have supportive policies in place. States with the greatest number of schools participating in farm-to-school programs are North Carolina, Kentucky, Texas, Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, Florida, and Vermont.[88]

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA)

CSAs provide a way for consumers to buy local, seasonal food directly from a farmer. CSAs "directly link local residents and nearby farmers, eliminating 'the middleman' and increasing the benefits to both the farmer and the consumer."[89] In a CSA, a farmer or community garden grows food for a group of local residents—members, shareholders, or subscribers—who pledge support to a farm at the beginning of each year by agreeing to cover the farm's expected costs and risks. In return, the members receive shares of the farm's production during the growing season. The farmers receive an initial cash investment to finance their operation as well as a higher sales percentage because the crop is marketed and delivered directly to the consumer. The CSA model was first developed in Japan in the 1960s (known as "teikei," or "food with the farmer's face on it"), and was widely adopted in Europe in the 1970s.[90]

More than 1,400 CSAs were in operation in the United States in 2010.[91] The first U.S. CSA started in 1985 at Indian Line Farm in Massachusetts. By 2001 an estimated 400 CSAs were in operation, rising to 1,144 CSAs in 2005. USDA estimates that 12,617 farms marketed products through a CSA in 2012.[92] Overall, compared to a total of about 2 million farms, farms that sell

[82] AFSIC, "Farm to School," and National Farm to School Network, "Farm to School Chronology."

[83] For more information on this law, see CRS Report R41354, *Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization: P.L. 111-296*.

[84] USDA, "Farm to School Census," http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/. See also National Farm to School Network, http://www.farmtoschool.org.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Information from the National Farm to School Network data and USDA-sponsored School Nutrition and Dietary Assessment Survey, as cited in S. Martinez, et al., *Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts, and Issues*.

[87] AFSIC, "Farm to School," and Farm to School Network, http://www.farmtoschool.org.

[88] Center for Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) and National Farm to School Network (NFSN), *State Farm to School Legislative Survey*, http://www.farmtoschool.org/policy.

[89] USDA, Rural Development, "Community Supported Agriculture," http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/CDP-TN20.PDF.

[90] AFSIC (http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/) and USDA, Rural Development, "Community Supported Agriculture."

[91] Information from the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), cited in S. Martinez, et al., *Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts, and Issues*.

[92] USDA, *2012 Census of Agriculture*, state-level data are available in Table 43 "Selected Practices" (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_US_State_Level/). Data on marketed volumes is not available.

through CSAs comprise less than 1% of all U.S. farming operations. Leading states with farms that sold through a CSA were California, Texas, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and New York. USDA's website lists national, state, and regional organizations related to CSAs.[93]

Community Gardens and School Gardens

The American Community Garden Association (ACGA) defines a community garden as "any piece of land gardened by a group of people," whether it is in an urban, suburban, or rural area and whether it grows food, such as vegetables, or flowers and other horticultural products. It may be composed of a single community plot or can be a collection of many individual plots. These gardens may be located at a school, hospital, or in a neighborhood, or may be dedicated to "urban agriculture" in a city-like setting where the produce is grown, often for sale at market.[94] There are an estimated 18,000 community gardens throughout the United States.[95] Of these, about 2,100 gardens are recognized as People's Gardens under USDA's initiative and related programs, which have donated an estimated 3.9 million pounds of produce to local food banks or other types of charitable organizations.[96]

A precise count of the number of school gardens in the United States is not available; however, the National Gardening Association's "School Garden Registry" has information on several thousand school gardens across the nation (searchable by city, state, or name).[97] Other reports indicate that California alone had more than 2,000 school gardens in 2007.[98]

The National Gardening Association (NGA) estimates that about 42 million households (35% of all U.S. households) participated in food gardening in 2013, up from an estimated 36 million households in 2008.[99] Much of this increase is attributable to an increase in the number of urban households growing food, as well as the number of food gardeners, aged 18-34 years old, and households with children. An estimated 3 million households were growing food at a community garden, up from 1 million in 2008. In total, U.S. households spent $29.5 billion on their gardens and lawns last year, averaging about $350 per household annually.

Community gardens have been establishing linkages with urban farming efforts and with efforts to increase access to fresh foods within some low-income and underserved communities (or "food deserts"). The history of community gardens goes back more than 100 years, starting with subsistence vegetable farming on vacant lots in Detroit in the early 1900s and encompassing

[93] See USDA (http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csaorgs.shtml).

[94] ACGA, "What Is a Community Garden?" http://www.communitygarden.org/learn/. Web-based locators are available at the NGA, http://www.garden.org/public_gardens. Also see AFSIC, "Community Gardening," http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/; NCAT Sustainable Agriculture Project, "Urban and Community Agriculture," http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/local_food/urban_ag.html; and K. Adam, "Community Garden," NCAT publication, IP376, January 2011.

[95] ACGA, "FAQs," http://communitygarden.org/learn/faq.php. A map of locations is at ACGA, http://acga.localharvest.org/. Data not available for Alaska and Hawaii.

[96] USDA, "Find a Garden in Your Area," http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=PEOPLES_GARDEN.

[97] NGA, "School Garden Search," http://www.kidsgardening.org/groups/school-garden-search.

[98] E. Ozer, "The Effects of School Gardens on Students and School: Conceptualization and Considerations for Maximizing Healthy Development," *Health Education & Behavior*, vol. 34, no. 6 (December 2007), pp. 846-863.

[99] NGA, *Garden to Table: A 5-Year Look at Food Gardening in America*, March 2014 (as reported in "Food Gardening in the U.S. at the Highest Levels in More Than a Decade According to New Report by the National Gardening Association," *PR Newswire*, April 2, 2014); and NGA, "The Impact of Home and Community Gardening in America," 2009. Food gardening includes growing vegetables, fruit, berries, and herbs.

"Liberty Gardens" and "Victory Gardens" during the first and second world wars, among other urban gardening movements over the period.[100] Despite initial concerns by USDA that Victory Gardens were an inefficient use of available resources, during World War II the agency encouraged nearly 20 million home gardeners to plant food. By the end of the war, USDA claims home gardeners were producing a reported 40% of the nation's produce. Today, in addition to gardens that grow produce for personal consumption, some "market gardens" also grow produce for sale or for donation, and are part of a growing interest in urban agriculture—both farms and gardens. Resources available to households that want to grow their own food include benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), which lists among eligible food items "seeds and plants which produce food for the household to eat."[101]

Many school gardens are said to be based on a model developed in the mid-1990s as part of the Edible Schoolyard Project, largely attributed to the efforts of Berkeley, CA, restaurant owner Alice Waters.[102] School gardens are now being integrated into some educational curricula to provide nutrition and science education while teaching children about plants, nature, and the importance of eating healthy, nutritious foods. A number of nonprofit organizations support school gardens and provide resources for classrooms.[103] FoodCorps, an independent nonprofit organization, places young leaders into limited-resource communities for one year of public service to work with local partners teaching kids about food and nutrition, engaging them in school gardens, and supporting local healthy food for public school cafeterias.[104] USDA also has funded a pilot program to support school gardens in high-poverty schools.[105]

In addition, various groups support a range of education and youth empowerment/work programs, as well as small-scale urban agriculture initiatives in many cities, including Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and New York.[106] Also, many large cities—including Washington, DC; Baltimore; New York; and San Francisco—are developing their own food policy task forces to address local food initiatives within their cities.[107]

Food Hubs and Market Aggregators

USDA defines a regional food hub as "a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand."[108] Food hubs provide producer services, such as actively linking producers to markets and providing for on-farm pick up, production and post-harvest handling training, business

[100] "History of Urban Agriculture," http://sidewalksprouts.wordpress.com/history/; USDA, "Victory Garden Leader's Handbook," 1943; and Pennsylvania State Council of Defense, "Handbook of the Victory Garden Committee War Services," April 1944.

[101] USDA, "SNAP: Eligible Food Items," http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/eligible.htm. Congress added this provision in the 1970s. See SNAPgardens.org, "History," http://www.snapgardens.org/history/.

[102] See Edible Schoolyard Project, http://edibleschoolyard.org/.

[103] A list of resources and organizations is available from Civil Eats (see "School Gardens Across the Nation, and a Resource List for Starting Your Own," at http://civileats.com/2010/01/19/school-gardens-across-the-nation/).

[104] FoodCorps, "FoodCorps Launches National Service Program," August 2011, http://www.foodcorps.org.

[105] For more information, see CRS Report R43950, *Local Food Systems: Selected Farm Bill and Other Federal Programs*.

[106] See, for example, Policy Link, "Equitable Strategies for Growing Urban Agriculture" webinar.

[107] N. Shute, "Big-City Mayors Dig in to Food Policy," *The Salt*, National Public Radio, January 19, 2012.

[108] J. Barham. "Regional Food Hubs: Improving Market Access for Local Producers Through Innovative Distribution," USDA, May 3, 2013 (PowerPoint presentation). Includes hospitals, schools, restaurant chains, and grocery stores.

management services and guidance, and also value-added product development. Food hubs also provide for food safety and "good agricultural practices" (GAP) training, as well as liability insurance.[109] Among the types of operational services that hubs provide are aggregation, distribution, brokering, branding and market development, packaging and repackaging, light processing, and product storage. The types of community services offered by food hubs include "Buy Local" campaigns, distribution to "food deserts," food bank donations, health screening, cooking demonstrations, SNAP redemptions, educational programs, and youth and community employment opportunities.

USDA estimates that more than 300 food hubs operate in the United States in more than 40 states, with large clusters located in the Midwest and Northeast.[110] Oftentimes food hubs refer to a warehouse or similar facility that aggregates food and facilitates sales to wholesale customers or directly to consumers.[111] A produce packing house may also act as an aggregation facility that prepares and receives raw fruits and vegetables from farmers. Such aggregation points allow for "scaling up" of agricultural production from the farm to the marketplace, linking farmers to consumers.[112] Ideally, they are located near the farms they serve to better help farmers scale up and connect with consumers, wholesalers, retailers and grocery stores, restaurants, and food-service buyers such as schools or hospitals. (In addition, some states also have their own state-branded systems that may be accessible through their own online directory.) Most aggregators provide an online directory or virtual marketplace to link buyers and sellers. Many also provide assistance to participate in farm-to-school programs and other types of services, including agritourism. In some cases, a range of educational services, technical assistance, and outreach are provided, intended to advance agricultural entrepreneurship. Examples include on-the-ground farmer training, aggregation and distribution, capacity-building, curriculum development, and help with food safety certification, usually through linkages with state extension and university staff.[113]

Kitchen Incubators

A kitchen incubator (also culinary incubator, including shared-use commercial kitchens for rent) is a business that provides food preparation facilities to help a small start-up or home-based business produce a food product.[114] A kitchen incubator is often a fixed-location small food processing facility, serving as a resource for a new business (such as an early-stage catering, retail, or wholesale food business) that may not have the capital to invest in its own full-time licensed commercial kitchen (providing an alternative for cottage food makers and home

[109] D. Tropp. "Why Local Food Matters: The Rising Importance of Locally-Grown Food in the U.S. Food System," USDA, October 26, 2013 (PowerPoint presentation).

[110] S. A. Low, et al., *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: Report to Congress*, AP-068, January 2015.

[111] National Good Food Network webinar, "The Business of Food Hubs: Planning Successful Regional Produce Aggregation Facilities," September 30, 2010.

[112] See, for example, hearing before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, "Healthy Food Initiatives, Local Production, and Nutrition," March 7, 2012. Comments by Jody Hardin, Hardin Farms.

[113] CRS communication with University of Illinois staff, September 15, 2011. An example includes the University of Kentucky's "MarketReady" training program, which helps small farmers and ranchers address the market development risks and relationship management as they develop relationships with buyers (http://www.uky.edu/fsic/marketready/).

[114] Culinary Incubator, "8 Things to Consider when Considering a Culinary Incubator," http://www.culinaryincubator.com/tenant_information_kitchen_rental.php. Also USDA, "Agriculture Deputy Secretary Celebrates Opening of a Non-Profit Pennsylvania Kitchen for Use by Food Entrepreneurs," June 17, 2011; National Business Incubation Association (http://www.nbia.org/). Includes early-stage catering, retail, and wholesale food businesses. Differs from a community kitchen, where people share a common kitchen to prepare one food to share.

kitchens).[115] Instead, the new business is able to rent shared space in a fully licensed commercial kitchen, which also helps it comply with federal and state food safety laws and requirements. Reportedly more than 600 kitchen incubators are in service nationwide.[116] The types of businesses that use kitchen incubators include start-up or home-based food producers; caterers; bakers; street vendors; and makers of specialty food items, such as condiments and candies, and also in some cases established food businesses.

Mobile Slaughter Units

A mobile (also modular) slaughter unit (MSU) is a self-contained USDA-inspected slaughter and meat processing facility that can travel from site to site and can be used by small-scale meat producers who may not have resources to transport animals to a distant slaughterhouse (often referred to using the French term, *abattoir*) or who may want to sell locally raised meat directly to local consumers or restaurants. These mobile operations provide a trained and licensed workforce and are required to comply with necessary food safety, sanitation, hygiene, and waste management requirements. MSUs were also a response to increased consolidation in the meat and poultry industries, resulting in fewer slaughter facilities and a lack of USDA- or state-inspected establishments "available to small producers of livestock and poultry in some remote or sparsely populated areas."[117] MSUs are able to serve multiple small producers in areas where slaughter services might be unaffordable or unavailable. One of the first mobile USDA-inspected slaughter units started operation in the early 2000s in Washington State.[118]

Agricultural Production near Urban Areas

Historically, food grown in urban areas may be "planted on private or public property including vacant lots, city parks, churchyards, schoolyards, and rooftops and on land owned individually, by a community group, institution, municipality, land trust, or other entity,"[119] as well as in backyards, city lots, or community gardens, or grown using hydroponic (or soil-less) systems. Urban agriculture may include food crops (including medicinal and ornamental plants) and fruit trees, and also grazing of some types of livestock (e.g., honey bees, chickens, goats).

In the United States, urban agriculture has evolved over time, starting with vacant lot cultivation, encompassing school gardens and the city beautification movement prior to World War I and Victory gardens during the world wars (or relief gardens during the Great Depression); and now it covers ongoing trends in school and community gardening, city farming, and abandoned property reclamation.[120] Many of these operations are managed by an organization or private enterprise to grow food for sale at retail stores, but smaller-sized operations also grow exclusively for sale at

[115] USDA, "Urban Agriculture: An Abbreviated List of References and Resource Guide 2000," September 2000; and PolicyLink, "Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens," http://www.policylink.org/. Several states do have cottage food laws in place that allow for home processing (see "Cottage Food Law by States," http://cottagefoods.org/laws/).

[116] See databases at http://www.culinaryincubator.com/maps.php.

[117] USDA, "Mobile Slaughter Unit Compliance Guide," and USDA, "Slaughter Availability to Small Livestock and Poultry Producers—Maps," May 4, 2010.

[118] MSU, "State of the Art Mobile Processing Unit for Small Scale Producers," http://www.mobileslaughter.com/.

[119] PolicyLink, "Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens, Why Use It?"

[120] See, for example, summary in Appendix B in the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Urban Agriculture" report, September 2012, as well as other widely cited literature and web-based information.

farmers' markets and food fairs, or for field-to-direct-sales to consumers, food processors, and cottage food makers (home kitchens).[121]

Increasingly, urban agriculture has grown to include more large-scale innovative systems and capital-intensive operations, including vertical or roof-top farms, hydroponic greenhouses,[122] and aquaponic[123] facilities. Examples of some existing or planned larger-scale operations include Brooklyn's Grange Farm and Gotham Greens; Hantz Farms in Detroit; Growing Power in Milwaukee and Chicago; FarmedHere in Chicago; AeroFarms in New Jersey; and Bright Farms facilities located in Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Definitions of "Urban Agriculture"

There is no single formal definition of what constitutes urban agriculture. A definition posted on both USDA and EPA websites states, "city and suburban agriculture takes the form of backyard, roof-top and balcony gardening, community gardening in vacant lots and parks, roadside urban fringe agriculture and livestock grazing in open space." What constitutes urban farming likely varies depending on the country and the level of development within the population.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has defined urban agriculture as "an activity that produces, processes, and markets food and other products, on land and water in urban and peri-urban areas, applying intensive production methods, and (re)using natural resources and urban wastes, to yield a diversity of crops and livestock."

A related definition by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations refers to urban and peri-urban agriculture as "agriculture practices within and around cities which compete for resources (land, water, energy, labour) that could also serve other purposes to satisfy the requirements of the urban population." Another FAO definition states, "urban agriculture is an industry located within (intra-urban) or on the fringe (peri-urban) of a town, an urban centre, a city or metropolis, which grows or raises, processes and distributes a diversity of food and non-food products, reusing mainly human and material resources, products and services found in and around that urban area, and in turn supplying human and material resources, products and services largely to that urban area."

Additional information: USDA National Agricultural Library (http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/farms-and-community/urban-agriculture); and EPA (http://www3.epa.gov/region1/eco/uep/urbanagriculture.html); United Nations Development Program (UNDP), "Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities" and also UNDP's Publication Series for Habitat II, Volume One. See also P. Jacobi, A. W. Drescher and J. Amend, "Urban Agriculture: Justification and Planning Guidelines," May 2000; and L. Mougeot, "Urban Agriculture: Definition, Presence, Potentials and Risks, and Policy Challenges," 1999.

Urban agriculture is often characterized as being produced in close proximity to where it is sold and consumed. Urban farming operations are not only diverse in terms of the types of systems and practices used, but also differ in terms of their underlying motivations and objectives. As noted by other researchers:[124]

> A broad understanding of urban agriculture must take into account the various activities of households to achieve food security, and to create income. Urban food production is more than food related. Community-based and individual food production in cities meets further needs of the urban population like sustainable urban development and environmental protection.

[121] See Maryland Department of Planning, *Planning for the Food System*, September 2012; USDA, "Urban Agriculture: List of References and Resource Guide 2000;" and PolicyLink, "Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens."

[122] Hydroponic systems refer to growing plants in water with mineral solutions or inert medium, such as perlite or gravel but without the use of soil.

[123] Aquaponic systems combine hydroponics with aquaculture (raising fish or other aquatic species), growing both fish and plants within a single integrated system.

[124] As reported in P. Jacobi, A. W. Drescher, and J. Amend, "Urban Agriculture: Justification and Planning Guidelines," May 2000, referencing FAO, International Food Policy Research Institute, and Urban Agriculture Network.

Some noted objectives of urban agriculture include community and economic development; improved access to fresh, locally produced food; transformation of vacant urban property; collection and reuse of organic waste and rainwater; and education, organization, and employment of local residents. Several major cities have educational and apprentice programs geared to urban agriculture.[125]

A 2014 study by Portland State University reports that groups engaged in urban agriculture are mostly motivated by an interest in community building, education, food quality, and sustainability.[126] Myriad challenges exist in urban farming, such as city codes, zoning laws, land access and use restrictions, licensing, and permitting, as well as other regulations covering, for example, soil contamination, air and water pollution, site renovation, soil fertility, waste management, access to water, site security, marketing and financing, liability and risk insurance, local nuisance ordinances, pesticide use, pest management, and issues involving raising urban livestock, among other factors.[127]

Globally, an estimated 15% to 30% of the world's food supply is grown in urban areas,[128] and an estimated 60% of all irrigated croplands globally are located within 12 miles of an urban area.[129] In the United States, one study estimates that locally-produced foods (within 100 miles from where consumed) have the potential to meet as much as 90% of the national food demand.[130] Others are more skeptical of the contributions from urban agriculture: Some highlight the fact that urban land accounts for only about 2% of available land and question whether urban farming is an efficient use of available resources and whether urban producers have "the skills and the inclination to seriously grow food."[131] Others question whether urban farming can be profitable given the costs of land ownership and other farming inputs and whether urban farms can substantially contribute to U.S. consumption, while recognizing that urban farms provide services other than commodities, such as "instilling a sense of agrarianism" and supporting businesses devoted to food access.[132]

In October 2015, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack indicated that USDA was developing resources to provide assistance to urban farmers.[133]

[125] M. Goldstein, et al., *Urban Agriculture: A Sixteen City Survey of Urban Agriculture Practices Across the Country*, Emory Law, Turner Environmental Law Clinic, 2011; and Appendix C in the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Urban Agriculture" report, September 2012.

[126] N. McClintock and M. Simpson, "A Survey of Urban Agriculture Organizations and Businesses in the US and Canada: Preliminary Results," Portland State University, July 2014

[127] See, for example, Cornell Small Farms Program, *Guide to Urban Farming in New York State*, Cornell University, January 2013.

[128] J. Smit, A. Ratta, and J. Nasr (Eds.), *Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities*, Habitat II Series, United Nations Development Programme, 2001 edition; and USDA, "Urban Agriculture," http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/.

[129] A. L. Thebo1, P. Drechsel, and E. F. Lambin, "Global Assessment of Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture: Irrigated and Rainfed Croplands," *Environmental Research Letter* vol. 9, issue 114002 (November 2014).

[130] A. Zumkehr and J. E. Campbell, "The Potential for Local Croplands to Meet US Food Demand," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, vol. 13, issue 5 (June 1, 2015).

[131] R. Keller, "Commentary: Urban Agriculture Is a Myth," *AG Professional*, July 27, 2015.

[132] C. Dimitri, "Can Urban Farmers Make a Living?" *Edible Manhattan* magazine, November 25, 2013.

[133] "Vilsack Plans Land Ownership Commission and Aid to 'Urban Centric' Farming," *Hagstrom Report*, October 20, 2015.

Estimated Number of U.S. Urban and Metropolitan Farms

No comprehensive nationwide study exists of the number of urban agriculture sites in the United States. Limited USDA data and information are available on farms located in U.S. metropolitan (metro) areas, which cover a larger geographical area than urbanized areas, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as having 50,000 or more people.[134] Metropolitan areas are defined as a county or group of counties with an urban population of at least 50,000 people, plus any outlying counties that are economically connected to the central counties by communities.[135]

USDA reports that, in 2007, there were about 859,300 metropolitan farms in the United States, accounting for about 40% of all U.S. farms and about 40% ($115.7 billion) of the total value of U.S. agricultural production.[136] Metropolitan farms are reported to have a different product mix than farms in non-metro areas and consist of mostly high-value crops, such as fruits and vegetables, and also livestock and dairy products. Tracking changes in agricultural production in metro areas over time is complicated by the fact that the number of counties classified as metropolitan has been increasing due to growing urbanization.

In 2013, efforts were announced by researchers at New York University, Pennsylvania State University, and the National Center for Appropriate Technology, as well as Portland State University, to conduct a series of surveys geared at urban and peri-urban farms nationwide.[137] Preliminary results of these efforts are still being interpreted.[138]

Limited information is available for specific states and localities. For example, a 2012 study of the possible number of urban agriculture sites (including community gardens, vacant lot gardens, urban farms, school gardens, and home food gardens) in Chicago, IL, estimated that there were 4,648 urban agriculture sites with a production area of about 65 acres. Residential gardens and single-plot gardens on vacant lots accounted for about three-fourths of the total.[139] Of the 1,236 community gardens in Chicago, the study estimated that only 13% were producing food. This suggests that some gardening efforts may not be successful at growing food or perhaps may be more focused on providing for other types of services, such as education, community building, or outdoor recreation.

Studies of urban agriculture in New York indicate that more than 700 farms and gardens throughout the city's five boroughs grow food (including urban farms, schoolyards, grounds of

[134] U.S. Census Bureau maps comparing metropolitan and urbanized areas: "Combined Statistical Areas of the United States and Puerto Rico, December 2009" and "Urbanized Areas and also Urban Clusters: 2010" (http://www.census.gov). Urban clusters are defined as having at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people. "Rural" encompasses all population, housing, and territory not within an urban area.

[135] U.S. Census Bureau, "2010 Census Urban and Rural Classification and Urban Area Criteria."

[136] R. Hoppe and D. E. Banker, *Structure and Finances of U.S. Farms: Family Farm Report*, 2010 Edition, July 2010. The U.S. Census Bureau defines a "rural area" as open countryside with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants. For USDA data collection purposes, a "farm" is any place from which $1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the year.

[137] International Network for Urban Agriculture, "New Survey of Urban Agriculture in Canada and USA," March 2013.

[138] N. McClintock and M. Simpson, "A Survey of Urban Agriculture Organizations and Businesses in the US and Canada: Preliminary Results," Portland State University, July 2014; and C. Dimitri, "Farming in the City," New York University, presentation at the U.S. Botanic Garden, September 13-14, 2014.

[139] "Finding Chicago's Food Gardens with Google Earth," *ScienceDaily*, January 3, 2013. The original study: J. R. Taylor and S. Taylor Lovell, "Mapping Public and Private Spaces of Urban Agriculture in Chicago Through the Analysis of High-Resolution Aerial Images in Google Earth," *Landscape and Urban Planning*, vol. 108, no. 1 (October 2012), p. 57.

public housing developments, community gardens, and public parks).[140] A study of the Greater Philadelphia food system reports that there are more than 45,000 farms in the region's foodshed, which encompasses a 100-mile radius that extends from the center city of Philadelphia to 70 counties in five states, including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and New York.[141] Other inventories indicate about 500 urban agriculture sites in Oakland, CA, and about 300 sites in Portland, OR.[142] One county encompassing Cleveland, OH, is estimated to have about 225 community gardens, with a combined space of about 56 acres, which is said to provide for about 1.5% of the county's available produce.[143] Other data compiled by USDA provide information on beginning farmers and ranchers and cover all U.S. farms, not only farms in urban or metro areas or farms that participate in local or regional food systems.[144]

Other studies provide case studies across operations in selected states. For example, one study highlights selected urban farms and projects in California, Illinois, Kansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, New York, Massachusetts, Michigan, Washington, and Wisconsin, among other states, and Puerto Rico.[145] Yet another study provides case studies of urban agriculture communities in Chicago; Cleveland; Detroit; Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri; Milwaukee; Minneapolis; New Orleans; Philadelphia; and Seattle and King County, Washington; as well as cities in Canada.[146]

Federal Programs and Initiatives

Many existing federal programs benefiting U.S. agricultural producers may provide support and assistance for local food systems. With few exceptions, these programs are not limited or targeted to local or regional food systems, but are generally available to provide support to all U.S. farms and ranchers. These include farm support and grant programs administered by USDA as well as programs within other federal agencies, such as the Departments of Commerce; Health and Human Services; and the Treasury. In addition, the Obama Administration has implemented departmental initiatives intended to support local food systems, such as the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" Initiative, among other activities.

Selected USDA Programs

Many existing USDA assistance programs are available to all U.S. farmers, regardless of farm size or distance from markets. Federal programs that provide support to all U.S. producers—including local producers—cover a wide range of USDA programs contained within various titles of the 2014 farm bill (P.L. 113-79, Agricultural Act of 2014) and the most recent reauthorization of the child nutrition programs (P.L. 111-296).[147] Examples include USDA's farmers' market

[140] For example, K. Ackerman, et al., *The Potential for Urban Agriculture in New York City*, Earth Institute/Columbia University, [no date]. Jerome Chou, et al., *Five Borough Farm: Seeding the Future of Urban Agriculture in New York City*, Design Trust for Public Space/Added Value [no date].

[141] Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, "Fact Sheet: Philadelphia's Food System," June 13, 2010.

[142] K. Hodgson, et al., *Urban Agriculture, Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places*, APA Planning Advisory Service, 2011.

[143] "Urban Agriculture Movement Blossoms in Cleveland," *NextGeneration*, Fall 2011.

[144] M. Ahearn, "Beginning Farmers and Ranchers at a Glance," Economic Brief No. (EB-22), January 2013, USDA.

[145] PolicyLink, "Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens, Why Use It?"

[146] K. Hodgson, et al., *Urban Agriculture, Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places*, APA Planning Advisory Service, 2011.

[147] Many expect the 114th Congress to consider child nutrition reauthorization. For more information, see CRS Report R41354, *Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization: P.L. 111-296.*

programs, rural cooperative grants, and child nutrition programs, as well as USDA's research and cooperative extension service. (See listing of selected programs in text box below.) This listing does not include broad-based conservation or research and cooperative extension programs that also provide benefits to a range of agricultural producers, including producers engaged in local food production systems, either directly or indirectly.

Selected Federal Programs Supporting Local Foods

Marketing and Promotion

- Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
- Farmers' Market Promotion Program
- Local Food Promotion Program
- Federal State Marketing Improvement Program

Business Assistance and Research

- Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
- USDA Microloan Program
- Small Business Innovation Research
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
- Agricultural Management Assistance
- Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program
- Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers/Ranchers

Rural and Community Development Programs

- Rural Cooperative Development Grant
- Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program
- Community Facilities loans and grants
- Rural Business Development Grants
- Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program

Nutrition Assistance Programs

- Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at Farmers' Markets
- Farm to School Program
- Programs supporting School and Community Gardens
- Commodity Procurement programs (e.g., "DoD Fresh")
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative
- Community Food Projects
- Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grants

For information on these programs, see CRS Report R43950, *Local Food Systems: Selected Farm Bill and Other Federal Programs*. See also USDA's websites (http://www.usda.gov/kyfcompass; http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer).

Table 2 at the end of this report provides a summary of many of the individual federal programs that potentially support local and regional food systems. For more detailed information on these and other programs, along with information on available federal funding, see CRS Report R43950, *Local Food Systems: Selected Farm Bill and Other Federal Programs.*

Funding for local and regional foods has increased in recent years. Annual funding for selected grants and loans known to benefit local producers totals $90 million; other additional funding is also available, but information is not available to precisely estimate the total amount of federal

funding that support local food systems.[148] Reported total estimates may differ depending on whether estimates include funding for other programs, such as USDA programs that support specialty crops and organic agriculture.

Administration Initiatives

Aside from established federal programs, the Obama Administration has implemented departmental initiatives intended to support local food systems. These include the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" (KYF2) Initiative, which was launched by USDA in 2009, along with other USDA activities.[149] In general, these USDA initiatives are intended to leverage existing agency activities and programs by eliminating organizational barriers among existing USDA programs and promoting enhanced collaboration among staff. KYF2, for example, acts to coordinate USDA's support for local and regional food systems. These initiatives are not stand-alone programs, are not connected to a specific office or agency, and do not have separate operating budgets.[150] In general, these initiatives are intended to eliminate organizational barriers among existing USDA programs and promote enhanced collaboration among staff, leveraging existing USDA activities and programs. Nevertheless, some in Congress have challenged USDA's initiative (see discussion in text box).

Despite these concerns, Congress provided for expanded support and funding for USDA programs supporting local food systems as part of the 2008 farm bill (P.L. 110-246, Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008) and the 2014 farm bill (P.L. 113-79, Agricultural Act of 2014). Although recent farm bills have authorized some specific programs that directly support local and regional food systems, the local impact of new and existing programs ultimately depends on the level of appropriated funding and the nature of implementation. In April 2013, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced USDA's intentions to institutionalize some of the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" Initiative, by making it a permanent part of activities throughout the agency.[151]

Congressional Actions

Authorizations for many of the highlighted programs supporting local and regional food systems are contained within periodic farm bills or within child nutrition programs. Other introduced legislation in previous Congresses would further expand upon these types of existing programs to create additional opportunities for local food systems. These include proposals providing targeted support for nontraditional and beginning farmers, focused at the farm production level, as well as proposals focused on nutrition and enhanced access to food.

[148] For more on this estimate and other related information, see CRS Report R43950, *Local Food Systems: Selected Farm Bill and Other Federal Programs*.

[149] For more information on USDA's initiatives, see CRS Report R43950, *Local Food Systems: Selected Farm Bill and Other Federal Programs*.

[150] For more information see CRS Report R42155, *The Role of Local Food Systems in U.S. Farm Policy*.

[151] "Vilsack: USDA to 'Institutionalize' Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food," *Hagstrom Report*, April 19, 2013; also B. Barth, "15 Minutes with USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack," *Modern Farmer*, December 11, 2015.

Criticism of USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" Initiative

In September 2009, the Obama Administration launched the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" (KYF2) initiative, which was intended to eliminate organizational barriers between existing USDA programs and promote enhanced collaboration among staff, leveraging existing federal activities and programs.

In April 2010, Senators McCain, Roberts, and Chambliss wrote a letter to USDA Secretary Vilsack expressing concerns about the initiative. The letter stated, "This spending doesn't appear geared toward conventional farmers who produce the vast majority of our nation's food supply, but is instead aimed at small, hobbyist and organic producers whose customers generally consist of affluent patrons at urban farmers' markets," among other concerns regarding USDA's promotion and prioritization of local food systems. The letter also requested evidence of USDA's congressional authority to spend money for KYF2 and a full itemized accounting of all spending under the initiative. In response, USDA clarified that the initiative

> does not have any budgetary or programmatic authority.... Rather, it is a communications mechanism to further enable our existing programs to better meet their goals and serve constituents as defined in the respective authorizing legislation and regulations. While there are no programs under the initiative, since September 2009 a number of our program funding announcements have included a reference to 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food.'

USDA also asserts that "none of these programs are providing preference to local and regional food system projects, except as provided for in their existing regulatory rules or legislative authority." According to USDA, at that time, only two such statutory cases exist—a 5% set-aside established in the 2008 farm bill for rural development Business and Industry (B&I) loans and an allowance for schools to make local purchases under the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD Fresh). In addition, USDA had issued an administrative notice requiring that the agency's Rural Housing and Community Facilities Program provide "that each state must fund at least one project" supporting the initiative in FY2010 only.

The initiative remained controversial in the following years. Following extensive House floor debate on the FY2012 Agriculture appropriations bill, the House-passed bill included a number of provisions restricting funding for selected USDA programs that fund this initiative and also other local and regional food production projects. The Senate bill did not put restrictions on the use of USDA funds to support USDA's initiative. The enacted FY2012 Agriculture Appropriations Act (P.L. 112-55) did not specifically address this initiative, but the joint explanatory statement required USDA to report any travel related to the initiative, including the agenda and the cost of such travel, and to include justification for this initiative in its FY2013 budget request. USDA has also been required to submit a series of reports to Congress on the impacts of the initiative, as part of successive agriculture appropriations debates.

Following USDA's submission of one of these reports in 2012, Senator Pat Roberts, ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee (and now chairman), expressed concerns about the department's initiative, since most food consumed in the United States is not locally grown, and questioned whether it might result in redundancy, given the number of USDA agencies involved in this initiative. He also raised concerns in a February 2012 press release about "where do we get the most bang for the taxpayer buck?" Later, at a March 2012 hearing before the committee, he further questioned whether locally produced foods should be considered better than conventionally produced foods, and whether this pits farmers against each other. He also questioned whether local markets should receive public assistance, given growing consumer demand for locally produced products in the marketplace.

Despite these concerns, Congress has provided for expanded support and funding for USDA programs supporting local food systems as part of the most recent omnibus farm bill (P.L. 113-79, Agricultural Act of 2014).

Sources: Letter to USDA Secretary Vilsack from Senators McCain, Roberts, and Chambliss, April 27, 2010, and response to Senators McCain, Roberts, and Chambliss from USDA Secretary Vilsack, April 30, 2010. Senator Roberts press release, "Senator Roberts: USDA Report Shows Misuse of Taxpayer Dollars," February 29, 2012, and comments from Senator Pat Roberts, hearing before the Senate Committee Agriculture on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, "Healthy Food Initiatives, Local Production, and Nutrition," March 7, 2012. Also H.R. 2112, House-reported version, §750; H.Rept. 112-284 (p. 190); and Congressional Record, November 14, 2011, pp. H7433-7576. See also CRS Report R41964, *Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2012 Appropriations*.

Farm Bill Reauthorization

Omnibus farm bills govern U.S. agricultural and food programs, covering a wide range of programs and provisions, and are reviewed and renewed roughly every five years. Although many of these policies can be and sometimes are modified through freestanding authorizing legislation

or as part of other laws, the omnibus, multi-year farm bill provides a predictable opportunity for policymakers to address agricultural and food issues more comprehensively. The Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79) is the most recent omnibus farm bill, which was enacted in February 2014. It succeeded the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246).[152]

In recent years, a diverse mix of community and rural development groups and small-farm advocacy organizations have actively promoted initiatives intended to support the development of local and regional food systems by reforming the existing farm support framework and building on the concept of direct farm-to-consumer marketing to create new economic opportunities for small and medium-sized farms. Some domestic food-related and public health organizations were promoting initiatives to improve access to healthy, nutritious foods for schools and underserved communities. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) actively advocated to reduce total farm bill spending through payment limits and other reforms, while increasing investments in certain perceived underfunded areas, such as support for new farmers, rural development, conservation, renewable energy, agricultural research, and new market development.[153] Other groups advocating for an increased role for local food systems in the farm bill are the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP),[154] Food & Water Watch,[155] and the Union of Concerned Scientists,[156] as well as several anti-hunger and community advocacy groups such as Feeding America,[157] the Community Food Security Coalition,[158] the Food Trust,[159] and Green for All,[160] among others.

During the most recent farm bill debates in 2013 and 2014, some states, including California, submitted farm bill recommendations, seeking to promote specialty crop production to enhance fruit and vegetable production; to improve public health and nutrition; and also to revitalize local communities, support organic agriculture, and enhance the natural environment, among other goals.[161] Some state and local groups, such as the Pennsylvania-based nonprofit organization the Food Trust, were promoting expanded farmers' market programs and farm-to-school programs, as well as initiatives to reduce the number of food deserts nationwide.[162] These types of recommendations have been proposed by a variety of other groups and think tanks.[163]

[152] See CRS Report RS22131, *What Is the Farm Bill?* For more detailed information, see CRS Report R43076, *The 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79): Summary and Side-by-Side*.

[153] NSAC, *Farming for the Future: National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Releases its 2012 Farm Bill Platform*, March 19, 2012, and "NSAC Releases Letter to the Super Committee and Farm Bill Budget Views," September 20. Also see NSAC's 2012 "Farm Bill Platform: Budget Chapter Background."

[154] IATP, "Everyone at the Table: Local Foods and the Farm Bill," March 28, 2012.

[155] Food & Water Watch, *Farm Bill 101*, January 2012, and "Rebuilding Local Food Systems," February, 2011.

[156] Union of Concerned Scientists, "Toward Healthy Food and Farms," February 2012.

[157] Feeding America, "Food Policy Forum: Opportunities to Combat Hunger and Improve Nutrition in the 2012 Farm Bill," February 14, 2012 (series of farm bill program presentations for congressional staff).

[158] Community Food Security Coalition, "Federal Policy Program," http://www.foodsecurity.org/policy.html.

[159] Food Trust, "The Food Trust Mission," http://www.thefoodtrust.org/php/about/OurMission.php.

[160] Green For All, *Green Jobs in a Sustainable Food System*, April 2011.

[161] California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), "California and the Farm Bill: A Vision for Farming in the 21st Century," October 2011.

[162] Food Trust, "Farmers' Market Alliance" and "Bipartisan 'Healthy Food Financing' Bills Would Create Jobs and Cut Dietary Diseases," http://www.thefoodtrust.org.

[163] See, e.g., Harry A. Wallace Center, "Making Changes: Turning Local Visions into National Solutions," 2003.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization

Child nutrition programs and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provide cash, commodity, and other assistance under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (originally enacted as the National School Lunch Act in 1946) and the Child Nutrition Act (originally enacted in 1966). Local foods are sometimes promoted under these programs. Section 32 of the act of August 24, 1935 (7 U.S.C. §612c) also provides for additional funding in some cases. In the 2008 farm bill, Congress expanded the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (Snack) Program, amending the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.[164]

Congress periodically reviews and reauthorizes expiring authorities under these laws. The most recent reauthorization of the child nutrition programs was the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296). Some of the authorities created or extended in the last reauthorization expired in September 2015, and consideration of child nutrition reauthorization may occur in the 114th Congress.[165]

Other Proposed Legislation

Some in Congress have expressed the need to change farm policies in ways that might also enhance support for local food systems and rural communities.[166] Several bills were introduced in previous Congresses broadly addressing local and regional food systems. Some of the introduced bills represented comprehensive "marker bills"[167] addressing provisions across multiple farm bill titles and recommending changes that would have provided additional directed support for local and regional food systems. These marker bills proposed comprehensive changes to several USDA programs in the farm bill covering commodity support and crop insurance, farm credit, conservation, nutrition, rural development, research, and horticulture and livestock programs. Some of these provisions or aspects of these provisions were incorporated into the most recent omnibus farm bill (Agricultural Act of 2014, P.L. 113-79). Specifically, the 2014 farm bill included provisions or aspects of provisions contained in bills introduced in the 113th and/or previous Congresses, including provisions providing targeted support for non-traditional and beginning farmers,[168] including military veterans,[169] as well as to increase access to loans for small and beginning farmers and other groups.[170] The 2014 farm bill also included provisions to support enhanced nutrition[171] and improved access to food.[172]

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[164] P.L. 110-246, §4304.

[165] P.L. 111-296. For information, see CRS Report R41354, *Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization: P.L. 111-296*.

[166] See, for example, Representative Earl Blumenauer's report, "Growing Opportunities: Family Farm Values for Reforming the Farm Bill."

[167] A "marker bill" is used to introduce specific measures or issues into a larger legislative debate. Such legislation is generally proposed as a "placeholder" for specific aspects of a larger bill, such as the farm bill, and allows legislators to include key provisions in the larger bill debate while it is still at the committee or subcommittee level.

[168] For example, aspects of provisions introduced as part of the Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Acts of 2013 (H.R. 1414/S. 679) and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act of 2013 (H.R. 1727/S. 837).

[169] For example, in the 113th Congress, the Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Act (S. 784).

[170] For example, Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Acts of 2013 (H.R. 1414/S. 679) and Growing Opportunities for Agriculture and Responding to Markets Act of 2013 (S. 678). For more information, see CRS Report RS21977, *Agricultural Credit: Institutions and Issues*.

[171] Similar provisions have been contained in several previously introduced bills, as described later in this section.

[172] For example, in the 113th Congress: Healthy Food Financing Initiative (H.R. 2343/S. 821).

Other legislation introduced in past Congresses has addressed a range of other specific and related issues. Bills have been introduced to provide enhanced support for non-traditional agricultural producers, including creating a new USDA Office of Community Agriculture to ensure support for rural and non-rural food programs, along with grants and outreach for local food initiatives;[173] to establish a community-supported agriculture promotion program, similar to USDA's farmers' market program, to expand and develop CSAs;[174] and to support the creation of community garden projects[175] in both urban and rural areas, including the use of gardens as a means to employ veterans[176] and the promotion of urban agriculture more broadly.[177]

Other bills have proposed to improve the nutritional quality of and access to foods in underserved communities and to expand certain child nutrition programs and other domestic feeding programs.[178] Some introduced bills have proposed ways for schools to purchase fruits and vegetables and other locally produced foods, either through grants or loan guarantees, among other options,[179] while others have sought to provide grants to organizations operating in low-income communities and other incentives to low-income families receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly food stamps) to purchase fruits and vegetables.[180] Other bills proposed to support farmers' markets, roadside stands, and other farm-to-consumer venues to participate as licensed retailers in SNAP.[181] Other bills actively addressed concerns about food deserts.[182]

In February 2016, two subcommittees of the House Agriculture Committee held a series of related hearings regarding production and access to locally produced foods, including one hearing to examine the opportunities and challenges of direct to market farming (House Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture and Research)[183] and another hearing to review incentive programs aimed at increasing low-income families' purchasing power for fruits and vegetables (Subcommittee on Nutrition).[184] Previously, in March 2012, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry held a hearing addressing these and other related issues

[173] For example: Community Agriculture Development and Jobs Act (H.R. 3225, 112th Congress) and Preserving Healthy Food for the Hungry Act (H.R. 2147, 113th Congress).

[174] For example, in the 112th Congress: Community-Supported Agriculture Promotion Act (H.R. 4012/S. 1414).

[175] For example, in the 113th Congress: Community Gardening and Nutrition Act of 2014 (H.R. 4084), Let's Grow Act of 2013 (H.R. 1933), and provisions in a broader nutrition and health promotion bill (S. 39). See also H.Res. 691.

[176] For example, in the 112th Congress: Veterans Gardens Employment and Opportunity Act (H.R. 3905).

[177] In the 113th Congress: H.R. 5616 (to promote and enhance agricultural production and research in urban areas).

[178] For example, in the 113th Congress: Let's Grow Act of 2013 (H.R. 1933) and Fit for Life Act of 2014 (H.R. 4765).

[179] For example, in the 113th Congress, the Preserving Healthy Food for the Hungry Act (H.R. 2147); Local School Foods Act of 2013 (H.R. 1720); and the School Food Modernization Act (H.R. 1783/S. 2210). Also in the 112th Congress: Fresh Regional Eating for Schools and Health Act of 2011 (S. 2016); the Local School Foods Act (H.R. 3092) and the Eat Local Foods Act (H.R. 1722).

[180] For example, Local Food for Healthy Families Act of 2013 (H.R. 3072); and, in the 112th Congress, the Healthy Food for Healthy Living Act (H.R. 3291).

[181] For example, in the 112th Congress, an amendment to the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (S. 1593) and the Eat Local Foods Act (H.R. 1722).

[182] For example, in the 114th Congress, the Supermarket Tax Credit for Underserved Areas Act (H.R. 1433). Also the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (H.R. 2343/S. 821; 113th Congress) and the Community Agriculture Development and Jobs Act (H.R. 3225; 112th Congress).

[183] Hearing before the House Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture and Research of the Committee on Agriculture, "Opportunities and Challenges in Direct Marketing—A View from the Field," February 2, 2016.

[184] Hearing before the House Subcommittee Nutrition of the Committee on Agriculture, "To Review Incentive Programs Aimed at Increasing Low-Income Families' Purchasing Power for Fruits and Vegetables," February 3, 2016.

regarding local food systems.[185] Other House and Senate farm bill briefings have been conducted over the years on a variety of topics related to local and regional food systems.[186]

State Laws

A number of states and cities have enacted a variety of laws and policies affecting local food systems, including requirements regarding licensing, permitting, zoning, and public health, as well as initiatives regarding urban farming, housing of animals, and also nuisance ordinances. A number of cities and localities have convened urban agriculture workgroups that have issued a series of recommendations specific to different regions and production areas, which are available through online searches. A compilation of these state laws, rules, and requirements is beyond the scope of this report that focuses on federal programs, which are designed to support the development of local and regional food systems.

In addition, most states have enacted laws regarding "cottage foods" generally regarded as non-potentially hazardous foods (such as baked goods, jams, and jellies).[187] Many states allow producers to make these goods in their homes, rather than in a commercial kitchen, and intend to reduce the barriers to entry for small-scale food producers. Cottage food laws vary among states, with some being more restrictive than others.[188]

Considerations for Congress

Omnibus farm bills enacted in both 2008 and 2014 included a few provisions that directly support local and regional food systems, as well as reauthorized several programs that benefit all U.S. agricultural producers, including local and regional food producers. Despite these gains, many community and farm advocacy groups continue to argue that such food systems should play a larger policy role within the farm bill, and that the laws should be revised to reflect broader, more equitable policies across a range of production systems, including local food systems.

Many in Congress have historically defended the existing farm support programs as a means to ensure that the United States has continued access to the "most abundant, safest, and most affordable food supplies in the world." However, there are long-standing criticisms of the traditional farm subsidy programs administered by USDA. Some criticize the fact that the core farm bill programs are focused on selected commodities—corn, wheat, cotton, rice, soybeans, dairy, and sugar—and there have been calls from both inside and outside Congress to revamp U.S. farm programs. Among other program criticisms are concerns about the overall effectiveness of farm programs and the cost to taxpayers and consumers, as well as questions about whether continued farm support is even necessary, given that many support programs were established many decades ago and are considered by some to be no longer compatible with current national economic objectives, global trading rules, and federal budgetary or regulatory policies.

[185] Hearing before the Senate Committee Agriculture on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, "Healthy Food Initiatives, Local Production, and Nutrition," March 7, 2012, http://www.ag.senate.gov/hearings/.

[186] For example, Senate briefing "Path to the 2012 Farm Bill: Senate Briefing on Local Food and Nutrition," March 2, 2012; House briefing "Investing in the Next Generation of Farmers," March 5, 2012; and House briefing "How Smart Food Systems Promote Economic Security for our Farmers and Food Security for All Americans," March 28, 2012.

[187] A. Condra, "Cottage Food Laws in the United States," Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, August 2013.

[188] States that have not enacted cottage food laws include Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, New Jersey, and North Dakota. Other information is available at http://forrager.com (a cottage food community).

In addition to calls for increased equity among all U.S. food producers—regardless of farm size, type of food, or how it is produced—various programmatic changes have been proposed, some of which dovetail with efforts by supporters of local food systems.[189] Some researchers recommend that the most appropriate role for public policy is to reduce market barriers to local food production through policies that provide support for supply chain development and marketing, and also assistance with regulatory compliance.[190]

Some in Congress continue to express the need to change farm policies in ways that might further enhance support for local food systems and rural communities, arguing that U.S. farm policy should be modified to reflect broader, more equitable treatment across a range of production systems, including local food systems. Supporters often cite the increasing popularity of local foods and a general belief that purchasing local foods helps support local farm economies and/or farmers that use certain production practices that some consider more environmentally sustainable. Rising popularity is attributed to both increasing consumer demand and a desire among agricultural producers to take advantage of market opportunities within local and regional markets. Others contend that subsidizing the more traditional agriculture producers creates a competitive disadvantage to other producers who do not receive such support.

Others in Congress oppose extending farm bill support to explicitly support local food producers, who are already eligible for many farm bill programs. Some may be opposed to extending farm bill support to local and regional food systems, which traditionally have not been a major constituency among other long-standing U.S. agricultural interests. Those opposed to extending farm bill benefits to local food systems cite concerns about overall limited financial resources to support U.S. agricultural producers as well as concerns that the most efficient and productive use of natural resources be employed for producing food. As shown by challenges from some in Congress to USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative, concerns have been expressed about the perceived priorities of USDA and fear that a shift in priorities may result in fewer resources for "conventional farmers who produce the vast majority of our nation's food supply." (For more information, see accompanying discussion in the section titled "Administration Initiatives.") Other criticisms highlight the lack of an established definition of what constitutes a "local food" and also perception that USDA's support of local foods is mostly targeted to affluent consumers in urban areas, rather than farmers in rural communities.

[189] For example, it may be argued that other proposals introduced in the 112th Congress to address existing restrictions on planting fruits, vegetables, and wild rice on program crop base acreage (H.R. 2675/S. 1427; Ribble/Lugar) also had a "local" component, in that if these restrictions were removed the ability to grow fruits and vegetables on base acres could potentially provide benefits to producers in some regions. Comments from Doug Sombke, South Dakota Farmers Union, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (OIM-NAS), "Farm and Food Policy: Relationship to Obesity Prevention," May 19, 2011.

[190] See, for example, R. P. King, "Can Local Go Mainstream?," C-FARE webinar, April 11, 2011.

Table 2. Selected USDA Programs That Potentially Support Local and Regional Food Systems

USDA Agency	Program Name / CFDA#	Program Type	Eligible Applicants	Assistance Amount	Total Funding Type/Amount
AMS	Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), 10.170.	Formula grants	State departments of agriculture, in partnership with organizations.	Varies by state. Base grant (about $180,000 per state), plus additional funds based on the state's share of the total value and acreage of U.S. specialty crop production. In FY2013, grants ranged from $180,000 to $18 million. Also provides multistate project grants.	Mandatory, $72.5 million annually (FY2014-FY2017) and $85 million (FY2018 and each year thereafter). Funding for multistate project grants: $1 million (FY2014) reaching to $5 million (FY2018). Local share: Unknown.
AMS	Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program, 10.168.	Project grants	Farmer coops, associations, nonprofit/public benefit corporations, local authorities, regional farmers' markets.	Limited to $100,000, with a minimum award of $5,000. Individual grants have averaged about $50,000.	Mandatory, $30 million annually (FY2014-FY2018), plus authorized appropriations of $10 million each year. Local share: Unknown.
AMS	Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP), 10.156.	Project grants	State agriculture departments and experiment stations, other state agencies.	Grants have ranged from $21,000 to $135,000, averaging $51,385. Matching funds required.	Discretionary, about $1.3 million annually. Local share: Unknown.
RD	Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants, 10.352.	Project grants	Individual farmers, agriculture producer groups, farmer and rancher cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based businesses, and veterans.	Maximum grant amounts: $100,000 (planning grant) and $300,000 (working capital grant). Grant funds may be used to pay up to 50% of a project's costs. Applicant must contribute at least 50% in cash or in-kind contributions.	Mandatory, $63 million, available until expended, plus authorized appropriations of $40 million annually (FY2012-FY2018). Local share: Unknown.
NIFA	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), 10.311.	Project grants	State, tribal, local, or regionally based networks/partnerships of public and private entities. At least 5% funds for veterans.	Up to $250,000 per year for up to three years. Matching funds are required.	Mandatory, $20 million annually (FY2014-FY2018), plus authorized annual appropriations of $40 million through FY2018. Local share: Unknown.
FSA	Microloan Program	Loans	Beginning, niche, and smaller family farm operations.	Up to $35,000. Repayment term may vary and may not exceed seven years.	Administered through FSA's Operating Loan Program (CFDA# 10.406). Local share: Unknown.
NIFA	Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR), 10.212.	Project grants	Small businesses (fewer than 500 employees).	Grant limited to $100,000 and $500,000, and limited to eight months and two years, depending on the type and phase of the project.	Discretionary. Funding ranges from about $15 million to $20 million annually. Local share: Unknown.

USDA Agency	Program Name / CFDA#	Program Type	Eligible Applicants	Assistance Amount	Total Funding Type/Amount
RMA, NRCS, AMS	Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA), 10.917.	Direct payments for specified use	Agricultural producers who voluntarily address certain farmland conservation issues.	Provides technical and financial assistance of up to 75% of the cost of installing certain practices. Total AMA payments shall not exceed $50,000 per participant per year.	Mandatory, $15 million annually (FY2014-FY2018), allocated to NRCS (50%), RMA (40%), and AMS (10%). Local share: Unknown.
RMA	Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program (COAPP), 10.455.	Disseminate technical information; training	Educational institutions, state ag departments, community organizations, farmer/rancher associations, nonprofits.	Assistance is through a cooperative agreement, ranging from $20,000 to $100,000 per agreement. No matching funds are required.	Approximately $10 million is awarded annually through two RMA programs. Local share: Unknown.
USDA, Office of Outreach and Advocacy	Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR), 10.443.	Project grants	Land grant institutions, state-controlled institutions, Indian tribes, veterans, Latino-serving institutions, nonprofits, community organizations.	Grants range from $100,000 to $400,000 per year for up to three years, with no matching requirements.	Mandatory/discretionary. Mandatory funds of $10 million per year (FY2014-FY2018), authorized appropriations of $20 million annually through FY2018. Local share: Unknown.
RD	Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG), 10.771.	Project grants	Nonprofit corporations including universities.	One-year grants up to $225,000, with matching requirements. Maximum award amount per Small Socially-Disadvantaged Producer Grant is $200,000.	Discretionary. Appropriations authorized $40 million annually (FY2014-FY2018). Local share: Unknown.
RD	Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loans, 10.768.	Direct and guaranteed loans	Individual, nonprofits, business.	Guaranteed loans up to $10 million, with special exceptions for loans up to $25 million. The Secretary may approve guaranteed loans up to $40 million, for rural cooperative organizations that process value-added agricultural commodities.	Obligations of about $1.2 billion annually. Local share: At least 5% by law (estimated at about $50 million annually).
RD	Community Facilities (CF), 10.766.	Direct and guaranteed loans; project grants	Public and nonprofit organizations, and Indian tribes.	Direct loans range from $5,000 to $9 million (average: $828,407); guaranteed loans range from $26,000 to $20 million (average: $2.8 million); and project grants range from $300 to $0.4 million. No matching requirements.	Direct and Guaranteed Loans: About $500 million annually. Project Grants: About $30 million annually. Local share: Unknown.

USDA Agency	Program Name / CFDA#	Program Type	Eligible Applicants	Assistance Amount	Total Funding Type/Amount
RD	Rural Business Development Grants program (consolidating Rural Business Enterprise Grants and Rural Business Opportunity Grants)	Project grants	Rural public entities (towns, communities, state agencies, and authorities), rural nonprofit corporations, rural Indian tribes, and cooperatives.	Details of new consolidated program subject to USDA rulemaking. Previously grants generally ranged from $10,000 up to $150,000, with no matching requirements.	Authorized appropriations of $65 million annually (FY2014-FY2018) to remain available until expended. Local share: Unknown.
RD	Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP), 10-870.	Loans and technical assistance grants	Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDOs), or other nonprofit, Indian tribe or public institution of higher education serving rural areas.	Loans range from a minimum of $50,000 to a maximum of $500,000 for a single loan in any given fiscal year. Grants are awarded up to $130,000, with matching requirements.	Mandatory. $3 million annually (FY2014-FY2018), plus authorized appropriations of $40 million annually (FY2014-FY2018). Local share: Unknown.
NIFA	Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), 10.215.	Project grants	Individual farmers/ranchers, extension agents and university educators, researchers, nonprofits, and communities.	Varies depending on the type of grant and the region, ranging from $1,000 for a producer grant or $350 for a research grant.	Discretionary. Funding of about $20 million annually. Local share: Unknown.
FNS	WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WIC-FMNP), 10.572.	Formula grants	State health, agriculture and other agencies and Indian tribes.	Varies by state. In FY2013, grants ranged from $6,300 to $3.1 million.	Discretionary. Funding of about $16 million. Local share: Unknown.
FNS	Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), 10.576.	Project grants	State health, agriculture, and other agencies and Indian tribes.	Varies by state. In FY2013, grants ranged from $9,900 to $1.8 million.	Mandatory, $20.6 million annually through FY2018. Local share: Unknown.
NIFA	Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program	Project grants	State health, agriculture and other agencies and Indian tribes.	Three project categories: (1) Pilot Projects (awards <$100,000 over 1 year); (2) Multi-year, Community-Based Projects (awards <$500,000 over <4 years); and (3) Multi-year, Large-Scale Projects (awards >500,000 over <4 years).	Mandatory, $100 million (FY2014-FY2018), plus discretionary authority of $5 million per year. Local share: Unknown.
FNS	Farm to School, 10.579.	Project grants	Eligible schools, state and local agencies, Indian tribes, agricultural producers/groups, nonprofit organizations.	Maximum grant amount shall not exceed $100,000, and the federal share may not exceed 75% of the total project cost.	Mandatory funding set at $5 million starting on October 1, 2012, and each year thereafter, plus appropriations "such sums as necessary" (FY2011-FY2015). Local share: Unknown.

USDA Agency	Program Name / CFDA#	Program Type	Eligible Applicants	Assistance Amount	Total Funding Type/Amount
FNS	School Gardens, 10.579.	Project grants.	The pilot shall target not more than five states (either a school-based or a community-based summer program).	USDA's People's Garden School Pilot Program was awarded to Washington State University and will serve students attending 70 elementary schools (WA, NY, IA, AR).	The 2008 farm bill did not authorize appropriations to carry out the provision, but USDA allocated $1 million to the Peoples' Garden School Pilot Program.
FNS	Provision within commodity procurement through "DoD Fresh" program	Allows geographic preference regarding purchases.	Eligible schools, state and local agencies	Provision is structured as a preference and does not require states and school food authorities to include geographic preference in their procurement.	The 2008 farm bill did not authorize appropriations to carrying out this provision. The 2014 farm bill requires USDA to pilot up to eight states using local sourcing instead of DoD Fresh.
(TBD)	Healthy Food Financing Initiative (as authorized in the 2014 farm bill)	Loans, grants, tech. assistance.	Partnerships involving regional, state, or local public-private partnership	To be determined.	The 2014 farm bill authorizes appropriations up to $125 million, to remain available until expended.
NIFA	Community Food Projects (CFP), 10.225.	Project grants.	Private non-profit entities	Amount and duration vary depending on type of grant all require a match in resources. (Separate grant for a healthy urban food enterprise development center.)	Mandatory, $9 million in FY2015 and each year thereafter.

Source: Compiled by CRS. Funding levels shown are those available for all U.S. farming operations and food distribution systems, regardless of size and distance from market. Data are not available to determine share of available funding for the highlighted program used to support local and regional food systems. Program groupings are not intended to indicate any rank or importance. A primary source of information on these selected programs is from the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA), which has detailed program descriptions for more than 2,000 federal assistance programs (https://www.cfda.gov).

Notes: "Mandatory" means funding is available without an annual appropriation and usually funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). "Discretionary" requires an annual appropriation by Congress. Where the funding source could not be readily determined, available data on obligations/awards are provided. USDA agencies include Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Rural Development (RD), Risk Management Agency (RMA), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

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