



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

## **Indiana Uplands: Local Food, Local Good** *A 2020 Report*

CENTER FOR RURAL ENGAGEMENT &  
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS SCIENCE



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- Shoals Public Library, Shoals, Indiana
- Salem Public Library, Salem, Indiana
- Community Center, Odon, Indiana

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## CENTER FOR RURAL ENGAGEMENT

Engaging communities through research, teaching, service, and partnerships, we re-imagine the relationship between universities and rural communities, employing our resources to address the challenges faced by Indiana communities and to enhance opportunities for collaboration.



## SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM SCIENCE

We are a corps of interdisciplinary scholars and professionals exploring the leverage points for building more resilient and sustainable food systems that support food justice, public health and wellbeing, sustain more livelihoods, and improve civic and community life.



### Resilience in the Indiana Uplands

The Indiana Uplands are an 11-county region in South-Central Indiana, characterized by rolling hills and boasting a rich agricultural heritage of primarily corn, hogs, and traditional mixed farming.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Although the Indiana Uplands are still known as an agricultural region, today, of the approximate 1.5 million acres of land in farms throughout the area, less than 0.2 percent is used to grow food for human consumption, the majority of crops destined for export as animal feed or biofuel material.<sup>4</sup> As with many rural areas across the country, the rapid industrialization of agriculture over the past several decades has deeply altered the region's economic and environmental make-up, leading to a cascade of social and environmental changes that affect the well-being of Hoosiers throughout the state.

A collaboration between Indiana University's (IU) Center for Rural Engagement (CRE) and Sustainable Food Systems Science (SFSS) group was formed in order to learn more about the effects of these changes on communities in the Indiana Uplands, and to develop an understanding of the current state of the region's food system. Over the course of several months, the CRE and SFSS held community input meetings in each of the region's eleven counties and found that, although each community was unique in their individual assets and needs, there were many similarities and crossovers between them. Despite an impressive asset base of thriving school garden projects, innovative entrepreneurs, steadfast farmers, passionate emergency food access volunteers, a blooming network of farmer's markets and

more, across the board, we found that issues of food availability, food accessibility, and food literacy all rose to the top as challenges highlighted in the meetings.

These common challenges faced by the region's communities are tied to the effects of the industrialization of agriculture on the economic balance of rural communities throughout the country.<sup>5</sup> With fewer people needed to bring the same amount of agricultural product to market, related agricultural services and industries were consolidated, resulting in a loss of a number of employment channels that have long enabled people to thrive in rural areas. As portions of a community leave to seek employment opportunities elsewhere, these changes are often exacerbated as population decline leads to the loss of other services such as business enterprises, tax revenue to support schools and other infrastructure, and other vital community assets, perpetuating a cycle that can make it difficult for rural communities to grow.

Resilience is a term used to describe a community's ability to use available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations and change.<sup>6</sup> With changes in the food system at the root of many of the challenges faced by rural communities today, it comes as no surprise that studies have shown a focus on regional and local food system development as a successful strategy for building resilience in both rural and urban areas—communities focusing on local food system development often seeing an increase in local jobs, improved human and environmental health, and a



general increase in quality of place.<sup>7</sup> Understanding this pivotal role of food systems in resilience-building becomes vital as communities everywhere explore the question of what their citizenry needs in order to thrive.

While acknowledging the many challenges faced by the Indiana Uplands' rural communities, IU also recognizes the wealth of resources of this region, both in terms of its natural environment and of its people. Over the past several months, the CRE and SFSS have met with dozens of inspired and inspiring individuals who are dedicated to employing their energies and expertise to enhance the well-being of their communities. Resilient communities are constantly evolving entities of multidimensional strengths and needs. This report showcases the vital role rural communities play in the resilience of the Indiana Uplands region, as producers and consumers, as stewards of our natural resources, and as home to our country's leaders of tomorrow. Resilience is both an outcome and a process, and that process begins here.

## Process

Throughout the fall of 2019, the CRE and SFSS hosted a series of listening sessions across the eleven counties of the Indiana Uplands. Entitled "Local Food, Local Good," this listening series was designed to explore the needs and assets of communities throughout the region through the lens of regional and local food systems, with the ultimate goal of creating this report informed by direct community input. In total, eleven listening sessions were held, targeting the eleven counties of the Indiana Uplands—Brown, Crawford, Daviess, Dubois, Greene, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, Orange, Owen, and Washington. These listening sessions were open to the public and were promoted through social media and newspapers, as well as through direct outreach by the CRE, SFSS, and county-specific session hosts. We reached out to community members working in government, economic development, philanthropy, small business, school food service, restaurants, grocery, farming, farmers markets, public health, emergency food provision, and youth development.

During the listening sessions, community members were invited to share their thoughts, ideas, and projects relating to their local food system with the understanding that,

as eaters, all people are stakeholders in the food system, no matter their professional affiliations. The sessions began by attendees introducing themselves and sharing one of their food values—a qualification they use to make decisions about the foods they purchase and eat (Figure 1). Introductions were followed by a brief presentation covering some baseline data on the county's local food system, covering a range of topics from agriculture to school cafeterias.

The rest of the meeting consisted of group discussion guided by a survey modified from the "Community Self-Assessment" of the Environmental Protection Agency's *Local Foods, Local Places Toolkit: A Guide to Help Communities Revitalize Using Local Food Systems*.<sup>8</sup> This survey covered a variety of food system related topics across the sectors of business, nonprofit, and government, and enabled attendees to rate each topic in terms of priority and feasibility in their communities. The survey was also offered online, collecting input from community members who were unable to attend the listening sessions in person (see Appendix A).

The descriptive data in this report use both primary and secondary data—primary data from survey responses and from notes of conversations that took place during our meetings, and secondary data drawn from a number of federal and private resources including the 2017 Census of Agriculture, the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Feeding America, and Simply Analytics. The data are presented in aggregate for the Indiana Uplands, as well as by individual county, and are used to offer the recommendations that conclude this report.

This report is intended to guide food system stakeholders to engage in the conversations, network building, innovation, and strategy development that will result in positive food system changes throughout the region. It is a snapshot of the perspectives presented during the community meetings, and serves as a starting point for further conversation. CRE and SFSS are committed to continuing this conversation and encourage you to engage with the Indiana Uplands Regional Food Network, launching in Spring 2020.

## A Vision for a Thriving Food System

The food system lies at the center of a complex web of environmental, economic, social, and political factors that manifest in the sectors of business, nonprofit, and government (Figure 2). Although there are no clear delineations between these sectors, with multiple cross-overs between and throughout, breaking the system down into these groupings can help when trying to understand the food system as it relates to different areas in our lives.

In partnership with community leaders across the Indiana Uplands, IU is exploring how more locally-controlled, closed loop food systems can keep resources within the region and foster resilience in communities. In the current system, food business follows an industrialized, linear structure in which wealth and goods often leave communities and must be imported back in from outside sources. This system distorts the relationships between production and consumption, and it creates communities more vulnerable to influences outside of their control like climate events, biological hazards, or trade dynamics.



Figure 1. The most frequently cited food values shared during the listening tour. Food values drive food purchasing and eating decisions.

Food is a big business, involving \$18.9 billion in Indiana each year.<sup>9</sup> Re-localizing the food system can have major community benefits. A study of the sixteen-county Northeast Ohio region found that shifting 25 percent of agriculture to local food production could create 27,664 jobs, providing work for one in eight unemployed residents, generating \$4.2 billion in economic activity and \$126 million in taxes, while improving food security and public health, and lowering the region's carbon footprint.<sup>10</sup>

What would a thriving, values-driven food system look like for the Indiana Uplands? What alternative avenues for production, aggregation, processing, and distribution could create more resilience in our region? What environmental, economic, social, and political factors are necessary to create such a food system?



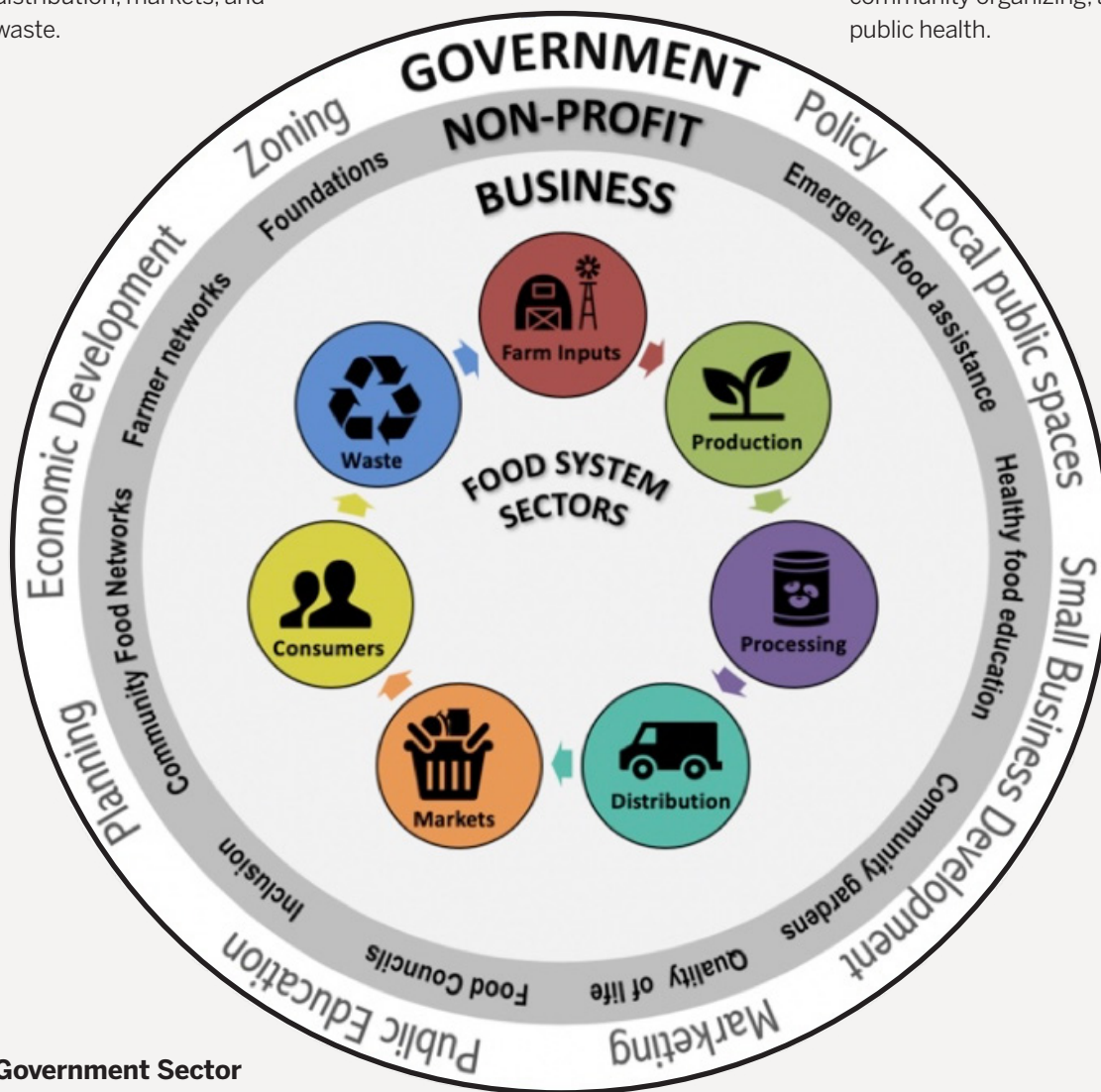


### Business Sector

The functional aspects of the food system, including food production, processing, distribution, markets, and waste.

### Nonprofit Sector

The social aspects of the food system, including food values, food assistance networks, community organizing, and public health.



### Government Sector

The structural elements of the food system that influence the big picture of how our system functions, including policy, education, and regulation.

Figure 2. The food system represented as business, nonprofit, and government sectors with their various roles.

## Population and Eating

The Indiana Uplands region is home to 6 percent of Indiana's population, with the greatest number of residents located in the City of Bloomington.<sup>9</sup> Despite being a rural region, consumers spend more than \$1.2 billion buying food each year (Figure 3).<sup>9</sup> This is food purchased at the grocery and cooked at home (food at home), as well as food that is ready to eat, such as in a restaurant or school (food away from home). Household average spending on food is \$8,000 per year, or about \$670 per month (Table 1).<sup>9</sup> Despite regional food insecurity rates between 10-17 percent, only 4-11 percent of residents receive food assistance from the federal government through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).<sup>11,12</sup> More than \$47 million in SNAP monies are distributed to qualified Indiana Uplands residents each year and 329 retailers accept SNAP or the Hoosier Works card for payment.<sup>12,13</sup> But not all SNAP retailers are grocery stores with fresh food. Most of these retailers are convenience stores, pharmacies, gas stations, and dollar stores.

	Indiana Uplands	Indiana
Population	405,534	6,710,532
Households	161,752	2,602,935
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$7,987	\$7,275
Total annual food expenditures	\$1,242,435,000	\$18,936,060,900

Table 1. Population statistics for the Indiana Uplands region compared to the state.<sup>9</sup>

## Consumer Spending on Food 2019 Regional Total = \$1.24 Billion

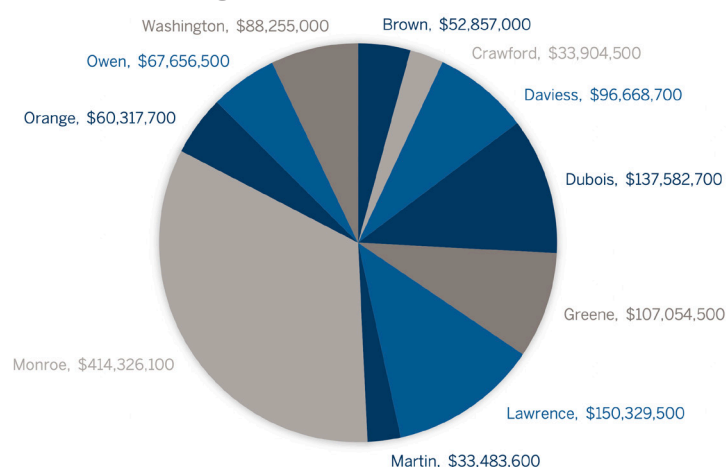


Figure 3. Consumer spending on food at home and away from home in the 2019 calendar year.<sup>9</sup>

## Farm to Consumer Sales 2017 Regional Total = \$3.5 Million

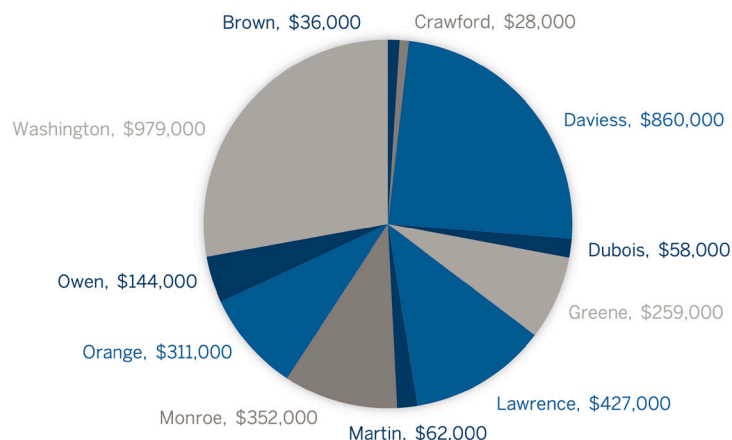


Figure 4. Sales figures by county for farmers selling directly to consumers at farmers markets, roadside stands, farm markets, online markets, and CSA sales in calendar year 2017.<sup>14</sup>

*School food service directors feed anywhere from **10-17%** of the regions' population lunch, and sometimes breakfast and supper during school days.<sup>9, 15</sup>*



## Land and Farming

The Indiana Uplands region represents 9 percent of all the farmed acreage in the state, and 12 percent of the total land mass of Indiana.<sup>14</sup> Public, private, and nonprofit conservation and recreation lands represent 14 percent of the Indiana Uplands regional land use, as we are home to much of the Hoosier National Forest and Brown County and McCormick's Creek State Parks, among others.<sup>15</sup> Forty-six percent of the land in the Indiana Uplands is in farms, characterized by rough terrain, shallow soils and low water flows.<sup>14</sup> These challenges can create opportunities for farmers, such as a focus on raising proteins. Counties in the Indiana Uplands rank in the top 10 for a number of these types of activities (Table 2).

	Daviess	Dubois	Greene	Lawrence	Martin	Orange	Washington
All cattle		6					8
Beef cows		4	5	1			2
Sheep	3						2
Chickens	10						7
Turkeys	1	2	7		5	6	4

Table 2. Indiana Uplands county rankings for raising proteins.<sup>14</sup>

In Indiana, 6 percent of farms participate in local and regional food system activities, grossing more than \$132 million in 2017.<sup>14</sup> In the Indiana Uplands, farmers earned \$3.5 million selling directly to consumers, and an additional \$1.2 million selling to wholesale buyers or value adding to their farm products for sale (Figures 4-5).<sup>14</sup>

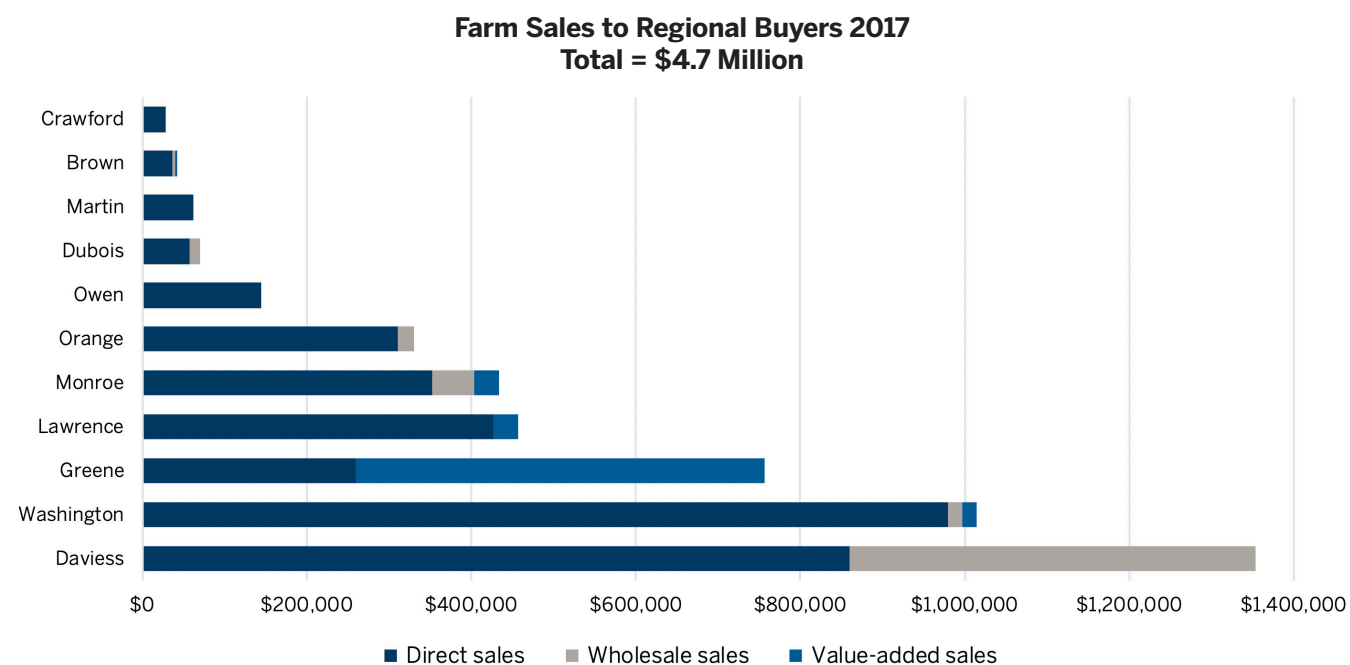


Figure 5. Sales figures by county for direct, wholesale, and value-added sales in calendar year 2017.<sup>14</sup>

Using these snapshots of information from secondary data, community food system stakeholders were convened to discuss their views and experiences living in the Indiana Uplands food system. The following pages are the profiles of the information gathered, and feedback as to how communities and counties could move forward on initiatives that address identified needs.

## Brown County

Brown County has the highest concentration of forested land of any of Indiana's 92 counties, with nearly 90 percent coverage. It is home to Brown County State Park, the largest and most visited of 24 state parks in Indiana, with 12 hiking trails, 2 lakes, and several stone bridges, stairways, retaining walls, and lookout towers. Brown County is known for its scenic views of the hills of Southern Indiana, with bold autumn colors that attract tourists, artists, photographers, and locals alike. Sightseeing, bird watching, mountain biking, fishing, hiking, and horseback riding are popular activities. The Town of Nashville is the center of the Brown County Art Colony and a popular tourist destination.

Population Data 2019	
Population	15,311
Households	6,298
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$8,393
Total food expenditures	\$52,857,000

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	6
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$1,159,000
Average number households using SNAP each month	419
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	53%
Population eating at school	14%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	182
County land in farms	7%
Farms selling directly to consumers	13
Direct to consumer sales	\$36,000
Wholesale farms	3
Wholesale sales	\$4,000
Farms adding value	3
Value added sales	\$1,000

Table 3. Brown County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Discussion Highlights

Meeting attendees indicated that the school system is both a strength and a powerful force in Brown County, with school lunches, gardens, and district leadership were all cited as going well. Brainstorming ways to work on food system improvements within the network of the school system, attendees proposed launching an Future Farmers of America and agriculture program in the schools, using home economics classrooms for community and school classes for cooking, and coordinating among garden programs at the YMCA and Deer Run Park to engage Master Gardeners in educational opportunities. Attendees also noted that Compass Group, the new food serve provider, has improved the quality of food, and they anticipate things continuing to move in a good direction.

Although two farmers' markets in the county improve access to fresh foods while markets are open, grocery options are limited, and residents noted a lack of fresh produce, high costs for food in general, and that driving out of the county for grocery shopping was common.

There are a number of restaurants in the county buying wholesale local food and many festivals celebrating food and art throughout the year. Attendees expressed that there is a lot of room to feature more local food local restaurants, particularly in Nashville where there is the strongest tourism presence and a lack of restaurant diversity. Overall, there seems to be a strong interest in exploring agritourism to add to Brown County's tourism strengths.



Community-identified assets included:

- Strong tourism marketing
- Farmers markets
- Restaurants that buy local
- Master Gardener program
- Well-promoted festivals and events
- Strong support from school administration
- Compass Group managing school food

## Survey Input

Using the community input survey, Brown County residents prioritized the following top strategies for improving their local food system:

1. Create food growing spaces for youth and community.
2. Increase support for farmers selling directly to consumers at the farmers market, farm stands, through online ordering or CSA programs.
3. Food education classes in the community.
4. Engagement of many community groups in healthy, local food production and eating.

## Food System Development Strategies

It seems that the school system is a key organization to engage for food system work in Brown County. Leveraging current leadership in school gardens to support further exploration of healthy eating both in and beyond the school is key, and there may be interest in expanding existing programs to other schools. An increase in home gardening activities may increase self-sufficiency and healthy eating habits for Brown County families, and there are a number of educators and technical service providers in the area through Purdue Extension and the Master Gardener program who could share their experience and expertise. Addressing the need to increase the amount of local food available, creating opportunities for beginning farmers and agritourism ventures, and working on a year-round farmers' market or other desirable sales avenues such as an online marketplace may help increase access.

## Next Steps

Strong, trusted lead organizations will need to convene

the many stakeholder groups working in the food system for Brown County. Creating a welcoming space for various groups to work together on achieving set, agreed-upon goals will be key to moving forward as a stronger, more resilient county food system. Working together on a grant application on a common project is one way to move a group forward. Convening casual, family-friendly, and inclusive meetings around food on a regular basis will grow the network of community members invested in improving the local food system. Cross-linking farmers with students, buyers, eaters, and organizations is key to everyone having a better understanding and respect for their roles in the food system.

### Van Buren Elementary School Gardens

Van Buren Elementary School in Nashville, Indiana has three school gardens finished in 2016 thanks to Brandon Harris and a motivated team of volunteers. The gardens all serve different functions: a traditional harvest garden with corn, squash, and other direct-sow plants; a raised-bed garden dedicated to vertical gardening techniques; and an experiential play area, featuring a pergola and bench for teachers to rest while children play. During the winter, Harris teaches classes indoors, finding interesting ways to get kids to think about where their food comes from and prepping for the growing season. In the growing season, there is a sunflower garden where the younger kids can get their hands dirty pushing seeds into the ground, and for older kids, there are spaces for them to more carefully tend to direct sow crops.



## Crawford County

Crawford County is home to Marengo Cave, one of only four show caves in Indiana. Marengo Cave is open all year long and offers two walking tours that cover different sections of the cave. Public tours of the cave have been given since 1883, when two schoolchildren discovered the cave while playing in the woods. Patoka Lake is the second largest reservoir in Indiana and spreads across Dubois, Crawford, and Orange counties. After the lake was created, several parks and nature preserves were established around it totaling 16,920 acres.

Population Data 2019	
Population	10,589
Households	4,316
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$7,856
Total food expenditures	\$33,904,500

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	12
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$1,236,200
Average number households using SNAP each month	454
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	61%
Population eating at school	15%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	391
County land in farms	27%
Farms selling directly to consumers	20
Direct to consumer sales	\$28,000
Wholesale farms	1
Wholesale sales	N/A
Farms adding value	1
Value added sales	N/A

Table 4. Crawford County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Discussion Highlights

Community members attending the meeting in Crawford County discussed a number of issues in the local agricultural scene, including the predominance of cattle production in the area and the fact that there seem to be several unused family properties where food crops could be grown. There seems to be a lot of residential gardening, including food gardens, and there are plans for a private-run farmers' market to open in Summer of 2020 in the town of English. This market will help to establish a network of growers and gardeners in the area who could collectively improve access to local food for county residents. Attendees indicated some interest in participating in a food council, and the Economic Development office and Chamber of Commerce were identified as potential leaders in this process. Like many counties in the region, there is currently no zoning, and residents are unsure of how they would feel about it being introduced.

Community-identified assets included:

- Lincoln Hills Development Corporation
- Crawford County Economic Development Corporation
- Purdue Extension Crawford County
- Area 15 Agency on Aging
- Crawford County United Ministries Food Pantry



## Survey Input

Using the community input survey, Crawford County residents prioritized the following top strategies for improving their local food system:

1. Engagement of many community groups in healthy, local food production and eating.
2. Food education classes in the community.
3. Business training and incubation for small farm or food businesses in the region.

## Food System Development Strategies

Organizations have an excellent opportunity to begin building broad-scale support for local farms and food production by supporting the farmers' market that is launching in Summer 2020. Although the market will be privately run, many community groups can engage and participate as partners in order to increase consumer participation and attendance. Strong attendance at the market will ensure that farmers (who may farm in neighboring counties) stay and sell in Crawford County. The Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Office could leverage their social media platforms to promote market attendance, and health and wellness organizations like Purdue Extension could offer cooking demonstrations to increase consumer knowledge of locally grown foods. The various food pantries in the area could also engage with the farmers' market, picking up unsold and donation produce from farmers and gardeners on a weekly basis after market to residents who use the pantries or to the Summer food program for school-age families. Leaders in the community seeking funding and other support for food system work could weave together these assets to apply for grants and other financial resources that could double SNAP, WIC, and Senior Farmers' Market Vouchers as well as supplement the purchasing of healthy foods for home cooking for any consumer seeking to improve their health outcomes.

## Next Steps

Purdue Extension convenes a food insecurity meeting on a quarterly basis in Crawford County. Similar to this, a regular meeting to pull together leadership on local food system needs that would engage farmers and home

consumers would help with sustaining the new farmers' market and other food related initiatives. Intentional efforts to provide farmers with small business training and other support will help them create sustainable businesses incubated by the farmers' market and engaged consumer base. Working together on a centralized feature such as the new market will help the various interested individuals and communities throughout the county to develop the relationships and connections necessary for success in future food system developments.

## Crawford County Food Pantries

For the emergency food network in Crawford County, there are some exciting changes ahead. The food pantry at United Methodist Church, which has been operating out of the parsonage basement since 2012, is currently in for a major facelift. With over \$40,000 fundraised from both within and outside of Crawford County, the 501(c)3 organization will build a warehouse where they will be able to more safely house their 10 freezers and 4 refrigerators that allow them to provide fresh and frozen food to residents every other Saturday morning. The new space will be wheelchair accessible, have bathrooms for volunteers and pantry-goers to use, and be able to accommodate the growth they expect to see. This food pantry, two other brick-and-mortar food pantries spread across the county, and a mobile pantry that comes once monthly from Dare to Care in Louisville, Kentucky, work together to provide a resource for food insecure people. Residents can use all four food assistance programs.



Stephanie Fennell, Clarion News

# DAVIESS COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM PROFILE

## Daviess County

Daviess County has an impressive collection of history housed at the Daviess County Historical Society Museum, featuring a funeral practices exhibit, a military history room, an art gallery, a Civil War display, a school room, and an archives room for genealogists. Washington retains a number of architecturally historical buildings as well, from Greek Revival to Prairie School style. Prairie Creek is an archaeological site north of Washington in Daviess County, surrounded by a heavily wooded area around a glacial lake. Archaeologists have discovered a range of extinct animal bones and human artifacts at Prairie Creek, and it is currently recognized as a leading archaeological site in the National Register of Historic Places.

Population Data 2019	
Population	33,266
Households	11,900
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$8,123
Total food expenditures	\$96,668,700

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	30
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$3,487,600
Average number households using SNAP each month	1,088
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	53%
Population eating at school	14%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	1230
County land in farms	82%
Farms selling directly to consumers	59
Direct to consumer sales	\$860,000
Wholesale farms	12
Wholesale sales	\$493,000
Farms adding value	8
Value added sales	N/A



## Discussion Highlights

Community members highlighted the idea for creating a farmers' market, and discussion ensued about the hurdles such as unknowns regarding what paperwork might be involved. It seems that both a high school class and a local library made efforts to launch a market, but both were one-off attempts. Perhaps this is an idea that can be revisited. A business to business guide to help farmers and growers in the region identify all the great food-farming assets in the area would be helpful, not just to Daviess County residents, but to all in the Indiana Uplands region.

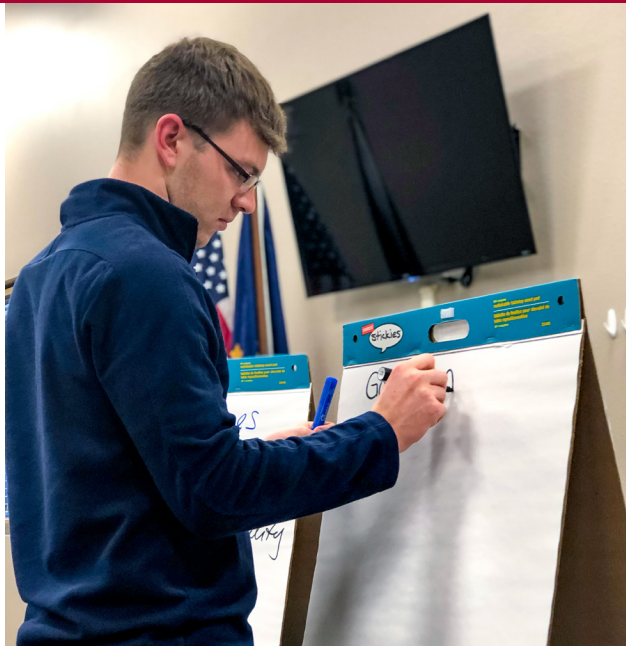
Community-identified assets included:

- County Health Department
- Lots of community events
- Small mom and pop stores
- Amish presence
- Dinky's Auction Center

## Survey Input

Due to low survey input, Daviess County does not have sufficient data to quantify. See strategies and next steps sections to learn more about the discussion at the meeting.

Table 5. Daviess County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Food System Development Strategies

Based on the assets and opportunities identified in the meeting, farmers, leaders, and organizations in the county could revisit the idea for a local farmers' market. Education on the minimal effort to create a market is available, and will be essential for breaking down the barriers that have stopped past attempts. Connecting with the county health department regarding the local regulatory framework could help dispel myths regarding excessive paperwork. Surveying local consumers to assess how they want to support their farmers would help planning processes by determining if a permanent public space would be important for a community to establish a market, or if something more informal would satisfy the community's needs.

Leveraging current assets such as the produce auction and numerous small businesses for local food farmers in the region, leaders in Daviess County could organize a business guide for various audiences, and an attendance guide for the produce auction. Wholesale buyers from the Indiana Uplands region could be invited for a tour and talk with farmers and auction leadership to understand auction growth efforts. Education for farmers to engage with wholesale activities beyond the auction could also be of value, increasing the flow of locally grown produce and other food stuffs to larger wholesale buyers throughout the region.

## Next Steps

Inclusive, county-wide efforts to engage farmers will help open opportunities for regional distribution of food grown in Daviess County. Leadership and coordination that can bridge between farm and food businesses and buyers will enable farmers to stabilize their markets and production of food. Finding common goals and prioritized strategies will help move everyone forward together.

## Dinky's Auction Center<sup>18</sup>

Dinky's Auction Center, founded in 1996 in Montgomery, Indiana, attracts thousands of visitors from across the country each year. Dinky's boasts up to ten auction rings at peak periods, selling a wide variety of items, from produce to furniture and horses to engines. Despite the rise of online shopping closing traditional retail venues, Dinky's remains competitive because of the experience it offers to attendees, who cite the spectacle and social atmosphere as reasons to visit the auction on Friday nights. It serves not only as a venue for wholesale buying and selling, but also as an example of the positive impact agritourism can have on a local economy—traffic from the auction bringing in a large amount of additional support for local businesses. Learn more about Dinky's on their website (<https://www.dinkysauction.com>) and Facebook (@dinkysauctioncenter).



Sarah Ann Jump, Dubois County Herald



## Dubois County

Dubois County is home to the historic Astra Theatre located in Jasper. The theater is used for a number of arts events, including community theater and public speakers, with the broader goal of fostering cultural and artistic events and knowledge in Dubois County. Jasper is also known for its German Catholic roots. The Jasper Strassenfest is a four-day event held annually during the first weekend in August. The fest is a celebration between Jasper and its German sister-city Pfaffenweiler, a small village in southwest Germany. Many Pfaffenweiler citizens travel to Jasper around this time of year. The street festival encompasses the entire city square, with food stands, rides, and a very large Biergarten.

Population Data 2019	
Population	42,660
Households	16,621
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$8,278
Total food expenditures	\$137,582,700

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	34
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$1,613,300
Average number households using SNAP each month	612
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	33%
Population eating at school	17%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	757
County land in farms	65%
Farms selling directly to consumers	23
Direct to consumer sales	\$58,000
Wholesale farms	5
Wholesale sales	\$12,000
Farms adding value	1
Value added sales	N/A

Table 6. Dubois County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Discussion Highlights

A lot of discussion revolved around year-round access to local food in an innovative retail setting making the transaction easier for farmer and consumer. Ideas included increasing shelf space for local food at existing retailers, creating a wholesale transaction space for buyers such as chefs, pre-season planning and pricing between growers and buyers, and staggering existing farmers' markets to different days of the week (rather than all three in the county occurring Saturday morning).

Creative school food practices that encourage healthy eating include "Tasting Tuesdays" and "Flavor Stations" at Holy Trinity Elementary School and the new "Fear Factor Veggie Tasting Challenge" in the works at Community CHEW. Community CHEW (Child Hunger Ending Workshop) is a nonprofit organization in the community that hosts a weekly summer camp where K-8 kids are served a hot meal, participating in activities and given a bag of groceries to take home for the week. Their philosophy, "Don't make plans for me, without me," is something they are endeavoring to do well, especially given the struggles with the community garden project.

Farming strengths seem to be in raising proteins—meat farmers, some of whom work with Farbest, are adept at raising poultry, beef, and pork, with access to a county-based processor, Sanders Processing. One resident, however, expressed that, "we are surrounded by farms, but no local food in sight," when it comes to buying food in local grocery stores.

Community-identified assets included:

- Three farmers' markets all on Saturdays
- Huntingburg Main Street
- Kimball International hosting local food distribution
- Sultan's Run chef purchasing locally grown food
- Community CHEW
- Purdue Extension Agriculture and Research Station
- Local restaurants interested in buying local if more consistent supply

## Survey Input

Using the community input survey, Dubois County residents prioritized the following top strategies for improving their local food system:

1. Selling local food at stores where people buy food.
2. Build greater access to locally grown food for the home consumer.
3. Food education classes in the community.

## Food System Development Strategies

Dubois County farmers may want to increase their ability to access wholesale buyers in the region through education and market connections. Increasing local food supply as well as improving consistency of supply for regional wholesale buyers will help strengthen purchasing. Connecting farmers with buyers on a regular basis to communicate plans and what food stuffs they want to purchase are very important conversations and connections. Sustainably produced food metrics for meat production may also be very important for the county's farmers and food businesses. Purchasing policy programs such as the Good Food Purchasing Program and the Real Food Challenge, may help identify the types of meat/proteins large-scale buyers are seeking to purchase from regional farmers and processors.

Consumers and families in Dubois County seem to have good access to locally grown food from the seasonal farmers' markets, but more efforts could be made to coordinate market days and to engage other nonprofit groups such as Community CHEW into the market bounty. To address healthy food access and consumer knowledge, how could the county weave together public health

resources and farmers' markets to codify the donation and purchasing of local food for youth programs such as Community CHEW? In addition to their bag of staple foods, families could receive locally grown, fresh produce with recipes to increase their consumption of healthy foods. Master Gardeners and other home gardeners could be engaged in food production as well in programs like "Plant a Row for the Hungry."

## Next Steps

Hosting a regional farmer-buyer meeting with structured communication may help farmers and buyers better understand opportunities and specific ideas for what and how to grow to make relationships and sales more stable. Continuing the community-based food meeting concept started with Local Food, Local Good, would help strengthen relationships, partnerships, and synergies among nonprofits, public and private sector organizations working for a healthier Dubois County. Many community members expressed appreciation for hosting such a meeting and it seems that many would continue to connect in such a setting.

## Holy Trinity Elementary School

As part of their new program called Tasting Tuesdays at Holy Trinity Elementary School in Jasper, Indiana, the school food service directors choose two vegetables to feature in the spring each year. The program focuses on 4th graders, as research identifies that age group as a pivotal time in taste development. Staff prepare the featured dishes, and parent volunteers come in to pass out samples and interact with the students. The program encourages kids to try foods they might not otherwise be interested in by making it a fun and interactive experience. Teachers are encouraged to get involved by incorporating the featured vegetables into their lesson plans. The food service director has also set-up flavor stations in the cafeteria to introduce healthy ways to enhance the flavor of their meals. They send out a newsletter to let parents know which spices are being featured each week in case they want to play around with using them at home, and in the cafeteria, each spice or spice mix has a sign with the spice names, flavor profiles, and ideas for food pairings.

## Greene County

Greene County has been designated as a Labor Surplus Area and a HUB (historically underutilized business) Zone, which provides businesses in the county with unique advantages in government contract bidding and eligibility for federal and state assistance. It is home to the Richland-Plummer Creek Covered Bridge, located in Taylor Township. Built in 1883, the bridge measures 102 feet long, with Italian Renaissance design elements. The largest city in Greene County is Linton. Linton is home to the largest Independence Day parade in Indiana, bringing more than 40,000 people to the city for the week-long Linton Freedom Festival.



Population Data 2019	
Population	32,058
Households	13,124
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$8,157
Total food expenditures	\$107,054,500

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	28
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$3,780,700
Average number households using SNAP each month	1,330
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	46%
Population eating at school	16%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	828
County land in farms	49%
Farms selling directly to consumers	30
Direct to consumer sales	\$259,000
Wholesale farms	2
Wholesale sales	N/A
Farms adding value	13
Value added sales	\$497,000

Table 7. Greene County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>

## Discussion Highlights

Farmers and community members in Greene County have had long-term grassroots success in creating and establishing a network of local food farmers and buyers, however, many growers based in the county are selling in neighboring counties in order to remain financially sustainable. Policy, planning, and agency leadership seem to be lacking support for and understanding of the needs of this grassroots food network, exemplified in the county's current comprehensive plan that includes no language for local food and agriculture, and a lack of zoning in the county to support local, small-scale growers. Community needs identified in the discussion included: (1) greater collaboration between people working in the food system, (2) value-added and processing opportunities for farmers, (3) establishment of a seller's co-op or multi-farmer CSA, (4) permanent space for the farmers' market such as an open air pavilion, and (5) an annual, high-visibility event focused on local food. As one attendee noted, "I think groups are established, the trick is turning the groups into a working coalition."

This type of activity requires leadership from a well-respected public or nonprofit organization who can pull together farmers, local groups, and community members to have an inclusive discussion of next steps. Attendees expressed that local food businesses would like the greater Greene county public to be able to access their food, but understand the need to have that food more available where people are already used to shopping. "Can we find a way to make local food more convenient?" one participant asked.



Community-identified assets included:

- Farmers' market and SNAP doubling
- Wabash County correctional facility garden
- Hospital has garden and is second largest employer
- Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition
- Apple Festival
- Feed Store Brewery
- Local Dollar General, Save-A-Lot as potential buyers
- #1 Asian Buffet Mongolian Grill—buys local eggs and honey

## Survey Input

Using the community input survey, Greene County residents prioritized the following top strategies for improving their local food system:

1. Activities, festivals and events to promote locally grown food.
2. Increase support for farmers selling directly to consumers at the farmers market, farm stands, through online ordering or CSA programs.
3. Coordinated marketing, branding and communication effort around local food.

## Food System Development Strategies

Greene County grassroots organizers may want to continue to convene and discuss project ideas that were presented at the meeting, including a coordinated CSA or marketing program for local food and establishing an annual event to celebrate local food. Funding opportunities for quality of life investments may be available for pursuing these types of ideas. As stated in the meeting, "We need to commit as a community to get through the hard part." Indeed, these efforts take a lot of time. Resources that invest in a local food coordinator will go a long way in supporting the grassroots efforts that have laid the foundation for these opportunities. Investing in the people power necessary for improvements in the local food system will also ensure that leadership among communities in Greene County demonstrate commitment to these important efforts. Additional conversations for wholesale sales channels and activities with Aramark, Dollar General, the local correctional facility, schools, and hospital may diversify market channels for growers in the

county. These conversations need to include value-added processing needs on behalf of growers and buyers to better understand how infrastructure investment would help scale production and availability of food. They also need to include the organizations and consumers who use non-traditional grocery stores as places to buy food in order to best serve those audiences.

## Next Steps

Grower training for beginning and established farmers is in demand in Greene County. Education that supports how local growers can increase sales directly to consumers through the farmers' market and through a coordinated, multi-farm CSA would help farm businesses grow and stabilize. Increasing access to wholesale buyers through strategic purchasing programs and/or through wellness policy efforts will create new opportunities for farmers who need more buyers. A leadership partnership working together could apply for funding for a common goal and start to support growers and the local food system for the long term.

## Linton Farmers' Market

From May to September, the Linton Farmers' Market in Linton, Indiana hosts vendors from Greene County who sell produce, meat, baked goods, teas, soaps, and more. Since 2013, the Linton Farmers' Market has been a venue where vendors have sold more than \$375,000 worth of goods. To increase the accessibility of local food to community members with low incomes, the Linton Farmers' Market offers a Market Bucks program through which the value of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Women, Infants, and Children Program, and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program dollars are doubled when used at the market, an incredible program made possible by donations from a network of sponsors. In addition to being a space to buy and sell local food, the market often hosts local performers which adds to the festive community feel. Read more about the Linton Farmers' Market on their website (<https://www.lintonfarmersmarket.com>) and on Facebook (@lintonfarmersmarket) and Instagram (@lintonfarmersmkt).

## Lawrence County

Lawrence County is known as “Limestone Country” because of the stone terrain found there. Caves, caverns, forests, and rivers make up much of the county, aside from its communities of Bedford and Mitchell. Bedford is known as the “Limestone Capital of the World” because of its large limestone quarries that are around the area. Some of the limestone was used to make the Empire State Building and the Pentagon. Spring Mill State Park, located near Mitchell, has a restored pioneer village with 20 historic buildings, a historic watermill, and several limestone caves to explore. The Department of Natural Resources runs a boat tour that travels about 500 feet into one of the caves.

Population Data 2019	
Population	45,813
Households	18,824
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$7,986
Total food expenditures	\$150,329,500

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	38
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$4,529,000
Average number households using SNAP each month	1,640
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	50%
Population eating at school	14%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	840
County land in farms	51%
Farms selling directly to consumers	58
Direct to consumer sales	\$427,000
Wholesale farms	1
Wholesale sales	N/A
Farms adding value	17
Value added sales	\$30,000

Table 8. Lawrence County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Discussion Highlights

The Lawrence County community discussion touched on many aspects of the local food system and identified a number food-related assets. There is a strong farming community that meets at the feed mill and Farm Bureau is supporting the notion of hemp production for farmers. Participation in classes at the career center is greatest for courses that focus on agriculture and they have an Future Farmers of America chapter for students. Residents expressed an interest in having more local food available in retail stores, citing that they do not have a store like Lost River Market and Deli, who purchases from local farmers.

The farmers' market, operated by Bedford Revitalization Inc. (BRI), happens every Saturday, and accepts WIC and SNAP and doubles SNAP dollars as part of a partnership with IU Health. There is a mobile market that goes to Cambridge Square apartments that also doubles SNAP and provides vouchers for resident seniors who participate in cooking classes. Some of the schools in Lawrence County are interested in farm to school and purchasing more local food from farmers, and excess food from school lunches is already being donated to the local women's shelter on a daily basis.

Community-identified assets included:

- Feed mill
- Farm Bureau
- Career Center
- Harp Commons of BRI

- Trail system that leads to market
- School food services

## Survey Input

Using the community input survey, Lawrence County residents prioritized the following top strategies for improving their local food system:

1. Selling local food at stores where people buy food.
2. Business to business guide or networking focused on food.
3. Coordinated marketing, branding and communication effort around local food.

## Food System Development Strategies

It seems that strategic work in Lawrence County is best done through engaging farmer organizations, the Career Center, and the strong network of the faith-based community. A new comprehensive plan has been drafted and, though language supporting local farmers and the food system were of interest to leadership, it is unclear whether that language will make it into the final documents. There is interest in adding culinary training to the Career Center courses and connecting students with entrepreneurial resources in Bloomington to support small business development. A better connection to Lost River Market and Deli for Lawrence County residents and farmers would help the county reorient consumers to locally grown food and connect those already interested with an excellent regional resource. The BRI seems to have a number of active and potential resources for farmers and food businesses including the farmers' market and a licensed, commercial kitchen. The county's newly established community garden could also be leveraged as a business incubator and culinary skills education center.

## Next Steps

Organizations interested in actions related to a stronger local food system will need to gather and discuss current assets and drivers for change. A clear need for one or two movements was not identified, despite many interesting things going on in the food and farming communities. Leaders interested in supporting farming as a career will need to gather and organize the educational resources

available and target certain production opportunities related to local food and other crops like hemp. Increasing consumer interest in and awareness of local food, both at the farmers' market and other regional grocers such as Lost River, will drive demand and increase the market for foods that could be produced in the county. Leveraging the new community garden to host educational programming around gardening, urban agriculture, beginning farmers, food safety, and cooking with seasonal foods would be an opportunity to weave together the many organizations working for a healthier Lawrence County and those seeking to support small business development in the food and farming sectors.

## Bedford Garden Park<sup>19</sup>

In 2017, the Bedford Parks and Recreation Department opened the Bedford Garden Park, a community space featuring garden plots and raised beds for rent, an orchard, and a hoop house. The infrastructure not only brings life to a public space in Bedford, it also produces food for families who grow in the park or who donate to emergency food providers in the community. A number of organizations came together to make this project possible, raising a total of \$140,000 with support from the CreatINg Places initiatives out of the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority. The facility will serve as a gathering place for years to come as people garden and enjoy the fresh, local food they grow. Read more about the Bedford Garden Park at (<https://eri.iu.edu/erit/case-studies/bedford-community-garden.html>).





## Martin County

Martin County is home to the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center which provides many jobs for the community. In the Martin State Forest, Hindostan Falls State Recreation District, and West Boggs Park, visitors enjoy fishing, hiking, and boating. Martin County also is home to Jug Rock Nature Preserve, where the largest free-standing table rock formation east of the Mississippi River is located. The eastern part of Martin County is known for its beautiful rolling hills and valleys. The western part is flat, similar to prairie lands. There are three federal and two state highways that are heavily used for transportation. Railroads are also an integral part of the county's economy both in terms of income and movement of goods.

Population Data 2019	
Population	10,230
Households	4,138
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$8,092
Total food expenditures	\$33,483,600

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	9
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$909,200
Average number households using SNAP each month	328
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	51%
Population eating at school	14%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	260
County land in farms	29%
Farms selling directly to consumers	15
Direct to consumer sales	\$62,000
Wholesale farms	N/A
Wholesale sales	N/A
Farms adding value	N/A
Value added sales	N/A

Table 9. Martin County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Discussion Highlights

In Martin County, we hosted a robust discussion on things happening in the food system and heard many good ideas for innovation. A number of issues in food access came to the forefront of discussion, including the lack of access to fresh food in the county, even in the stores selling produce. Produce is delivered infrequently and, when it does arrive at the store, it seems to sell out quickly, encouraging people to buy up what they can all at once which increases the risk of food going to waste at home. One community member noted, "If there were better access here to fresh food, not as much would go to waste." At schools, it seems the food options are limited, and kids are not learning about a healthy diet and lifestyle. However, the high school agriculture program has at least 60 students participating, and they are selling eggs and produce to the school cafeteria. The community correctional facility has a food garden that supplies their cafeteria, and corrections leaders seem interested in how farming and food can be a path for re-entry to community life.

Community-identified assets included:

- Shoals community garden
- County jail garden
- Loogootee farm stand
- Velma's Diner
- Wi-fi hotspot at library
- Leadership program
- High School Agriculture Program
- Martin County Alliance
- Shoals craft show
- St. Vincent Depaul freezer

## Survey Input

Using the community input survey, Martin County residents prioritized the following top strategies for improving their local food system:

1. Build greater access to locally grown food for the home consumer.
2. Increase awareness of and sales from local food businesses in your community.
3. Selling local food at stores where people buy food.
4. Activities, festivals and events to promote locally grown food.

## Food System Development Strategies

Moving locally grown food into existing retail locations as well as launching an aggregated farm stand were ideas discussed to address the need of connecting local consumers with more local food. “Local stores could sell local produce, but they don’t. How could we help with that moving forward?” One way to address access to fresh, locally grown foods is through quality of place initiatives and resources, which could be spearheaded by the local leadership group interested in these issues.

Another idea to increase revenues is to institute an innkeeper’s tax that would generate revenue for increased residency and visits. One attendee’s idea of a “man-cation” destination marketing scheme to compliment the “girls weekend” marketing in Orange County would build the capacity of Martin County to leverage its natural resource assets such as fishing, hunting, four-wheeling, mountain biking and hiking to increase participation in the local food system at restaurants and farm stands, mobile food trucks and “man-themed” dining options.

## Next Steps

Organizations and individuals interested in leading initiatives for food system change need to coordinate with each other to generate ideas and support for those ideas. Prioritizing who would do what is a great next step for a county who has a lot to offer the region. Just in the short meeting, there emerged creative, asset-based thinking with tremendous positive, “can-do” attitudes among attendees. Increasing visitorship to the county would

bolster efforts by the Martin County Alliance to increase residency for the defense, mining, agriculture and small businesses they seek to support.

Examining the farmer training pipeline with the high school agriculture programs and area farmers would help gain an understanding of the opportunities available for growers and would inform a strategy moving forward. Supply chain assets that could be leveraged in the community, such as freezer or storage spaces, would help local food farmers scale-up, without cost-prohibitive capital investments.

## Meals on Wheels

Though Meals on Wheels is an organization many are familiar with, not everyone would associate it with home-cooked meals, made fresh daily and delivered hot. But in Martin County, thanks to the hard work and vision of the county’s Council on Aging, that is how they do it. Since 2015, the Council on Aging has been responsible for the county’s Meals on Wheels operations, cooking meals fresh, Monday through Friday, and delivering them hot to community members rain or shine. This is not how every Meals on Wheels operation runs, however, and it was not always this way in Martin County. Several years ago, when funding cuts took meal delivery from the state government down to three days each week, a handful of employees at the Senior Center in Shoals began cooking on the in-between days. This endeavor was so successful that they decided to take over the whole operation. A paid staff plans the menus and cooks the meals, and a small group of volunteers take shifts with delivery throughout the week, currently serving 70-80 meals each day across Shoals and Loogootee. Menus are seasonally-inspired, with lots of hot soups in the winter time and fresh fruits and vegetables in the summer, and often feature delicious treats like homemade cobblers, cupcakes, and more. Though the organization receives some funding and reimbursements from the state and federal governments, a large part of the funding for the program comes from generous donations in the community. Learn more about the program through its umbrella organization, Generations, an Area 13 Agency on Aging and Disability in Vincennes on their website (<https://www.vinu.edu/web/generationsor>).

## Monroe County

Monroe County has three main water sources: Lake Monroe, Lake Lemon, and Griffy Lake. Lake Monroe is used both for recreation and to supply the city with drinking water. The lake is the largest in Indiana, with a water surface area that spreads over both Monroe and Brown counties. Indiana's only federally protected US Wilderness Area, the Charles C. Deam Wilderness Area, is located on the south shore. Lake Lemon and Griffy lake are used mainly for recreation, and is home to two dozen varieties of fish, wildlife, and birds, including Bald Eagles. Bloomington is the county seat of Monroe County and home to Indiana University's flagship campus.

Population Data 2019	
Population	147,167
Households	59,592
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$6,953
Total food expenditures	\$414,326,100

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	74
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$10,419,100
Average number households using SNAP each month	3,624
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	35%
Population eating at school	10%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	490
County land in farms	19%
Farms selling directly to consumers	67
Direct to consumer sales	\$352,000
Wholesale farms	12
Wholesale sales	\$51,000
Farms adding value	16
Value added sales	\$31,000

Table 10. Monroe County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Discussion Highlights

Attendees at the Monroe County meeting and online are aware of the challenges that local food businesses have in matching consumer demand for faster, more convenient healthy food access. The introduction of a food processing center for value-adding activity would help food businesses increase the convenience of local food for the home consumer of multiple income levels.

If growers are to engage in wholesale sales, they will need training, and buyers will need financial incentives in order to build a more sustainable wholesale value chain for Monroe County and the region. Increasing consumer awareness of what "local" means, including farmer identification, location of farm, and sustainable farm practices were important for attendees. Food storage facilities for dry, refrigerated, and frozen farm goods would help farmers scale for wholesale buyers and minimize capital investments on their farm, which can be cost prohibitive. Challenges with coordinating growers for multi-grower CSA's or other cooperatives include a lack of interest in food safety regulation training and a mismatch among growers in what certifications they have for their farm and food practices. Attendees were also interested in incentivizing farming and working to "make farming sexy" in response to ideas about connecting consumers with local food and growers or potential growers with land and knowledge.

There was much discussion around the disparity between the price farmers need and the prices buyers are willing to



pay as a source of continued frustration among growers and buyers alike.

Community-identified assets included:

- Mutton Creek has a lot of machine builders
- Neighborhood Planting Project
- Bloomingfoods
- Farmers' Market
- Mother Hubbard's Cupboard

## Survey Input

Using the community input survey, Monroe County residents prioritized the following top strategies for improving their local food system:

1. Build greater access to locally grown food for the home consumer.
2. A local food network or council.
3. Integrate local food and agriculture into comprehensive planning documents.

## Food System Development Strategies

Monroe County and Bloomington have fostered the development of a local food system for years. A farmers' market has fostered a direct to consumer sales outlet for growers for many decades, and growers continue to innovate and provide value-added and locally grown foods for market goers. The region seems to be in that difficult phase of growth where there is support on paper for a strong food economy, but little financial support or directed efforts toward a common goal. Finding a common goal also seems to be a challenge, noting that two of the top needs identified in the survey are actually things already happening in the county. Historical efforts toward unification of growers under the Local Growers Guild were successful but under-resourced, causing a breakdown of volunteer efforts over time. The current Bloomington Food Policy Council seems to struggle with awareness and participation from the broader community, and perhaps a council that could be supported by a public organization such as the City could help put the council back on track for being an engaged nonprofit for consumers, growers, and organizations working toward similar food system goals, such as food equity and healthy food access.

## Next Steps

Monroe County has many groups of people working to change different aspects of the food system. Regular system-wide meetings would help increase cross-disciplinary efforts and connect more resources and organizations with each other. Working across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors may be a very important strategy for addressing the interwoven economic, social benefit, and environment-friendly foci that are part of the local food system discussions.

United projects with many partners will help re-build trust and relationships among organizations as well as between organizations and farmers in the region. Projects and investments that have triple bottom line benefits will be essential, as the county seems to have all the ingredients, leadership, and resources to ensure that project outcomes and impacts address the community's social, economic, and environmental needs.

Monroe County is the most populated county in the region, and recognition of that role can help bridge the rural and urban resources that are so critical for strengthening the regional food system in the Indiana Uplands as a whole.

## Mother Hubbard's Cupboard

At Mother Hubbard's Cupboard—a food pantry, community garden, and shared kitchen space in Bloomington, Indiana—you can now shop once a month at their Hub Farm Stand, where patrons sell homegrown produce, eggs, plantstarts, crafts, and more. The staff at Mother Hubbard's Cupboard (the Hub) recognize that food insecurity can be chronic, periodic, or event specific, and that while a pantry patron may need assistance in one area, they may have a lot to share in another. The Hub Farm Stand has turned into a monthly event featuring several vendors, live music, and usually some yummy refreshments to sample, cooked up in the Hub Kitchen highlighting local and seasonal fare. The stand provides not only an avenue for pantry-goers to earn extra income, but also creates a friendly and supportive community space where people can come together and celebrate the bounty of the season.

# ORANGE COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM PROFILE

## Orange County

Orange County is home to French Lick Resort and Casino, a 3,000-acre complex in the towns of French Lick and West Baden, with two historic spa hotels, a casino, and three golf courses. The complex is part of a \$500 million restoration and development project. Patoka Lake is the second largest reservoir in Indiana and spreads across Dubois, Crawford, and Orange counties. After the lake was created, several parks and nature preserves were established around it totaling 16,920 acres. Paoli, the county seat, has at the center of its town square the oldest operating courthouse in Indiana. With a fascinating history and recent wave of investment, Orange County is well-positioned for growth.

Population Data 2019	
Population	19,508
Households	7,789
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$7,744
Total food expenditures	\$60,317,700

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	18
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$2,228,800
Average number households using SNAP each month	856
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	49%
Population eating at school	16%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	448
County land in farms	40%
Farms selling directly to consumers	28
Direct to consumer sales	\$311,000
Wholesale farms	6
Wholesale sales	\$19,000
Farms adding value	2
Value added sales	N/A

Table 11. Orange County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Discussion Highlights

Orange County has a number of leadership organizations working in their food system to build community partnerships to address matters of health and food system impact with farmers and consumers. Much of the discussion focused on the desire for a renaissance in consumer knowledge of and interest in healthy, locally grown food, and the benefits that would come from more consumer demand. The importance of intergenerational sharing of food knowledge and culture was discussed, along with the need for educational programming for the home cook. Amish growers in the county are selling produce in-season to the Lost River Market and Deli who is, in turn, finding creative ways to re-distribute food to home consumers and wholesale buyers. The strong relationships from this partnership enable Lost River to plan with growers during the winter months, though they recognize a continued need to drive demand. Attendees also noted a lack of support at the state and county level for local food systems and a need for rural transit to address food access issues.

Considering the role of youth in the food system, Paoli's Jr./Sr. High School Agriculture Program was identified as a key leader, noting that they are producing pork, hydroponic lettuce, and other food stuffs for the school cafeteria as well as accepting school food waste for their composting program, helping ignite an interest in local food and agriculture among the wider student body.

Community-identified assets included:

- Amish growers
- Lost River Market and Deli
- Jr./Sr. High Agriculture Program
- Orange County HomeGrown
- Orange County Health Coalition
- Orange County Foundation
- Southern Indiana Community Health Clinic
- Community Garden
- Purdue Extension

## Survey Input

The Orange County meeting was a pilot and therefore does not have input survey data. See the strategies section below for the focus areas and ideas for improvement as brought up in the discussion.

## Food System Development Strategies

Many ideas were generated in this discussion for how to work toward better health and well-being for the communities in Orange County. The strategies fell largely into the subject categories of families and farmers.

**Families:** Attendees identified a need for better access to fresh foods for the home consumer. With an abundance of fresh, local food in the area, much of that could be accomplished via creative food distribution, improvements in rural transit, increasing availability of fresh and local food at popular retailers such as the Dollar General, and increasing awareness of what is already available. Increasing demand for healthy food was also suggested as a driver for a sustainable local market. Recognizing linkages between community health (even medical care) and food retail is important, and connecting the institutions holding strong influence on community health, such as schools and hospitals with local food providers, Lost River Market and Deli, and the farmers' market could help improve health outcomes.

**Farmers:** Increasing purchasing of local food from farmers, either direct to consumer or wholesale, can be promoted across several local avenues. Developing resources such as a "produce trail" map could encourage people to drive out to farms and engage with Amish growers directly.

With the Amish population such an integral part of the local food system, developing programs or resources to educate people about Amish history and customs will be important for fostering those connections. Targeted tours of the farmers' market for leadership audiences including elected officials, doctors, investors, economic development officers, and small business advisors would help integrate more leadership into the local food system, creating more support for farmers.

## Next Steps

Orange county partners can continue to meet and generate ideas and workable solutions to address the prioritized needs of better health and quality of life for residents. School wellness policies that support purchasing local food and removing unhealthy snacks from classrooms could help make sure students are receiving healthy food where they spend a majority of their time. Additional support for teachers in the form of health education and classroom tools and resources could help teachers model healthy eating behavior for students.

A value chain coordinator for Lost River will help build a focus on the local food supply chain and strengthen relationships with growers in the region. Working with a few consistent wholesale buyers will help increase the flow and, subsequently, the production of local food.

Creative solutions for all consumers, but also special audiences such as SNAP customers and consumers with diet-related disease, at the farmers' market and local stores can increase access to and comfort with healthy foods. Cooking and nutrition education and a shift in purchasing patterns will help with long-term demand for local food in the county.

## Lost River Market and Deli<sup>20</sup>

Lost River Market and Deli is a consumer cooperative opened in 2007 in Paoli, Indiana, "dedicated to serving the needs of local growers, producers, and consumers by providing goods, services, and healthy food choices at fair value." Lost River estimates it purchases \$100,000 worth of local products each year, a significant investment in the local economy. Visit soon for a delicious lunch at the deli.

## Owen County

Owen County is home to the oldest state park in Indiana, McCormick's Creek State Park. Much of the park's original infrastructure—including its retaining walls and elegant, arched limestone bridges—remain in use today. There are eight hiking trails in the park, a 90-foot-tall fire tower, ravine, cave, sinkhole formations, and equestrian paths. McCormick's Creek Falls is the main attraction, and the heart of the park is McCormick's Creek Canyon which drops to the West Fork of the White River. The historic Cataract Covered Bridge spans Mill Creek in the Lieber State Recreation Area and is open only to pedestrians. It was, at one time, one of the most famous and photographed covered bridges in the United States.

Population Data 2019	
Population	20,902
Households	8,329
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$8,123
Total food expenditures	\$67,656,500

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	18
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$2,524,600
Average number households using SNAP each month	848
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	50%
Population eating at school	12%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	649
County land in farms	45%
Farms selling directly to consumers	41
Direct to consumer sales	\$144,000
Wholesale farms	11
Wholesale sales	N/A
Farms adding value	1
Value added sales	N/A

Table 12. Owen County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Discussion Highlights

Discussion focused on the diversity of support for local food and farming, centered around the Owen County farmers' market and the county's link to the Bloomington farmers' market. Growers seem to be well-connected among themselves, but would be interested in increasing connectivity to the home consumer in Owen County. The new farmers' market pavilion and the establishment of the farmers' market as a permanent community fixture are working in the direction of making Owen County a farmer and grower friendly landscape. Ideas for land banking to increase opportunities for beginning farmers were put on the table, and could be needed if demand for local food increases and markets stabilize.

Community-identified assets included:

- Boston Scientific as employer
- New pavilion for farmers' market
- Annual farm to table event
- Sweet Owen Tourism
- Good network of farmers
- Chamber of Commerce
- Babb's Grocery Store
- Winter Farmers Market at VFW
- Owen County Library
- Owen County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Economic Development Office





## Survey Input

Using the community input survey, Owen County residents prioritized the following top strategies for improving their local food system:

1. Selling local food at stores where people buy food.
2. Business to business guide or networking focused on food.
3. Build greater access to locally grown food for the home consumer.

## Food System Development Strategies

Owen County growers and leaders have a number of ideas to explore to continue establishing themselves as a grower-friendly county. Direct to consumer and wholesale sales to larger buyers are avenues for a group to explore together. Establishing a local growers guild or similar network will help address food system needs and issues as a collective. Farmer education, access to more markets, and a land banking system are all ways such a network could move forward with a common vision.

## Next Steps

The Owen County farmers' market has an excellent opportunity to establish a growers guild or other network to explore increasing market share to the home consumer in a coordinated approach. Joining Indiana Grown and exploring joining or creating a virtual farmers' market are two ideas that would be easy to organize and support

in Owen County. Discussions with Boston Scientific and other major employers in the county would help growers access larger local distribution channels. Creative marketing, such as a workplace wellness CSA or farmers' market volunteer days, would help engage more of the local workforce with local growers. Leveraging the annual farm to table dinner to set up future engagements with consumers and farmers is also key. The dinner can be a platform from which to announce an annual engagement plan for locally grown food, to educate consumers on how they can purchase more local food, and to continue to convene growers after the dinner is over. A farmers guild or other food system coordinator could also engage with school food service directors to learn about current practices for healthy food education and to explore how locally grown food could be incorporated in the future.

## Farm to Table Dinner

The Owen County Farmers' Market hosted its annual Farm to Table Dinner in September 2019 to celebrate their local farmers and provide a space for community members to get to know each other. The event was held on a visible downtown street in Spencer, Indiana, with tables set for dozens of people. The meal featured bruschetta, butternut squash soup, vegetable lasagna, roasted root vegetables, and many other delicious dishes made with locally grown food. An array of talented local musicians also played throughout the evening. Community events activate public spaces, serving as tools for developing close-knit communities and for investing in the local farmers and downtown businesses.



## Washington County

Washington County is known for its fertile cropland, scenic rolling hills, and progressive business community. The county seat of Salem has many unique buildings and destinations, including a historic district that includes Italianate, Gothic Revival, and Late Victorian architectural styles. Salem also celebrates Old Settler's Day each September, set in a village of authentic log structures with historical re-enactments and local arts and crafts. Beck's Mill, a historic gristmill seven miles southwest of Salem, is one of 20 such mills in Indiana. Of the 65 mills that operated in Washington County, it is the only one still standing.

Population Data 2019	
Population	28,030
Households	10,821
Average annual food expenditures per household	\$8,156
Total food expenditures	\$88,255,000

Food Assistance Data 2019	
SNAP retail stores	20
Annual distribution of SNAP	\$2,903,900
Average number households using SNAP each month	1,118
School children qualifying for free and reduced lunch (2017)	49%
Population eating at school	15%

Agricultural Census Data 2017	
Farms	865
County land in farms	64%
Farms selling directly to consumers	58
Direct to consumer sales	\$979,000
Wholesale farms	15
Wholesale sales	\$18,000
Farms adding value	12
Value added sales	\$17,000

Table 13. Washington County summary statistics.<sup>9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17</sup>



## Discussion Highlights

A wide range of local food advocates and community members engaged in discussion in Washington County, bringing together a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. The county is known for beef production, and despite there being a nearby meat processor, growers seem to have unmet needs for meat processing in the county. Data shows strong direct to consumer sales for farmers, however, the local farmers' market struggles to attract consumers and retain growers. Discussion focused on ideas for revitalizing the local food market such as opening the farmers' market to non-Washington county growers, re-evaluating open hours, and exploring a market CSA program, as well as increasing access to locally grown food in a cooperative retail store setting and working on the regional distribution of foods.

It seems that there is great leadership in and knowledge of gardening in the community, and that there are (or were) a number of organized garden projects in the county, including at the schools, a local church, and the county correctional facility.

Community-identified assets included:

- Awareness Washington County
- Share cart at schools to reduce food waste
- High school agriculture program
- Garden project at church
- Popcorn garden at eastern schools
- All the schools have greenhouses

- Settler's Day and Friday Night on the Square events
- Wineries, Grateful Goat, Hunters' Ridge

## Survey Input

Using the community input survey, Washington County residents prioritized the following top strategies for improving their local food system:

1. Increase awareness of and sales from local food businesses in your community.
2. Activities, festivals and events to promote locally grown food.
3. Increase support for farmers selling directly to consumers at the farmers market, farm stands, through online ordering or CSA program.

## Food System Development Strategies

Washington County has the opportunity to leverage existing networks of farmers such as the Farmers' Club, Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's Association, and growers selling at the market to explore how to drive market changes, increase sales through new channels, and establish local food as an integral part of the Washington County way of life. The many local food system assets and strong knowledge of homegrown food can be coordinated to bring change to school food service, the farmers' market, and the several events and festivals already happening throughout the year.

Many creative ideas were discussed to increase support for farmers and access to local food for consumers. County residents want to build a website to increase awareness and knowledge of where people can purchase locally grown food from county farmers. One idea was to have a weekly farm to table dinner that could serve to increase awareness, act as a fundraiser, and build community around local food.

Attendees were also sure that their role in a regional food system is important and wanted to explore how a regional food system could also address the issues raised at the local level. Events such as the Popcorn Festival, Friday Night on the Square, and Settler's Days could be leveraged to showcase locally grown food, either through vendors or other marketing channels. There was strong interest in

featuring agritourism as an opportunity for farmers. The county tax base, along with several organizations including the chamber of commerce and tourism board, could lead these efforts alongside farmers.

## Next Steps

Assembling growers in the county on a regular basis to discuss the direct to consumer market ideas is important. Leaders and growers will need to prioritize projects that will strengthen the existing farmers' market and codify agritourism for the county. Creative ideas and out-of-the-box thinking seem to be readily available in Washington County, and coordinating efforts will be key to have the desired outcomes and impacts. Exploration of wholesale market channels such as the school system will also be important, as grower and supply strengths could be met with steady demand from school breakfast and lunch menus. The county engaging on a regional level will be important to ensure efforts are communicated and highlighted for the Indiana Uplands Food Network.

## West Washington School Corporation

West Washington School Corporation in Campbellsburg, Indiana recently introduced a share cart in their school cafeteria. The share cart provides a space for students to place packaged foods from their school lunches that they will not eat that day for other children to pick up. This effort not only decreases food waste in the school system, but it also provides students with more agency about their food choices, encourages sharing and thinking about others, and creates more opportunities for students to access nutritious foods they like and may not get otherwise. In the future, the nutrition director hopes to purchase a packaging system so that more foods can be eligible for placement on the share cart. Read more about West Washington School Corporation on their website (<https://www.westwashingtonschools.org/o/senators/dining>).





### Final Thoughts

Home to a culture of work ethic and innovation and a history of agricultural production, the Indiana Uplands is poised to cultivate a regional food system that will offer lasting economic, social, and environmental benefits to its residents. Communities with robust local food systems are more resilient—better prepared to adapt to change—because they can maintain influence over their resources and reduce their dependence on factors outside of their control. In other words, these communities have an ability to design a food system that reflects their values and meets their needs.

This report, with input from more than 200 residents of the Indiana Uplands, shares insights into how residents want to shape the regional food system. With a strong foundation of growers and markets for local food, communities do not have to develop their local food systems from scratch. Assets like farmers markets, consumer cooperatives, processing and aggregation facilities, and many others, can be leveraged to shift control of the food system back to the local context, generating new wealth and replenishing old.

Given the multiplicative effects of complex systems, leveraging seemingly minor assets can have significant impact. As an example, in 2019, nearly \$1.5 billion were spent buying food by residents in the Indiana Uplands, around \$4.7 million of which were spent on food grown within the region. A \$5 per week substitution purchasing local food by the region's households would generate \$42 million for the local food economy. This tenfold increase

would create a ripple effect of changes in economics, infrastructure, and human and environmental health. With farmers in the local food system currently earning only about 0.38 percent of what consumers are spending, the vast potential in a collective effort to shift purchasing toward locally grown and raised foods becomes clear.

### Recommendations

Taking action toward this goal and achieving results will require collaboration across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors of our economy. Table 14 shows the prioritized strategies for the Indiana Uplands counties, categorized by sector. Where counties' priorities align, there are potentially opportunities for collaboration. It will also be critical to engage outside the local context, working with organizations at the regional, state, and federal levels. Rural communities can be well-positioned to collaborate and partner on initiatives that are low-cost and high impact. Community networks already exist, helping synergies develop quickly. Many technical assistance and resource agencies at the state and regional level are eager to support initiatives and ideas being generated at the local level by the people who know their communities best. As one might imagine, however, working with multiple stakeholders comes with its challenges, and achieving the desired outcomes requires an investment in the time and human resources necessary to “make things happen.”

If your community or **public sector** organization is looking to create partnerships and collaboration among groups in



Sector	Strategies	Brown	Crawford	Dubois	Greene	Lawrence	Martin	Monroe	Owen	Washington
Business	Selling local food at stores where people buy food.*			X		X	X		X	
Business	Build greater access to locally grown food for the home consumer.*			X			X	X	X	
Business	Increase support for farmers selling directly to consumers at the farmers market, farm stands, through online ordering or CSA programs.^	X			X					X
Nonprofit	Food education classes in the community.^	X	X	X						
Government	Increase awareness of and sales from local food businesses in your community.^						X			X
Business	Business to business guide or networking focused on food.					X			X	
Nonprofit	Create food growing spaces for youth and community.	X								
Nonprofit	Engagement of many community groups in healthy, local food production and eating.	X	X							
Nonprofit	A local food network or council.							X		
Government	Integrate local food and agriculture into comprehensive planning documents.							X		
Government	Business training and incubation for small farm or food businesses in the region.		X							
Government	Activities, festivals, and events to promote locally grown food.				X		X			X
Government	Coordinated marketing, branding, and communication effort around local food.				X	X				

Top ten strategies identified by Indiana Uplands county residents. Due to low to no input, Orange and Daviess Counties are not represented in this chart. Please refer to all county pages for more detail.

\* Highest ranked strategies across all counties

^ Second highest ranked strategies across all counties

the local food system, it is critical to invest in an individual, such as a food system coordinator, who is paid to focus on outcomes and impacts. All local food projects require trust among stakeholders and take time to develop. A local food coordinator can host meetings, connect like-minded businesses or people, create markets for growers, and help implement innovative projects. A coordinator needs knowledge of local food production and markets and an ability to be inclusive and to connect people in the food system who may not otherwise connect.

In the **private sector**, a coordinator may have a different role, and may focus on the needs of the business, including educating buyers on the value of local food, delivering trust-based customer service, and ensuring that buyer values align with grower supply. This values-based supply chain or “value chain” is crucial for understanding how local food systems work. When consumers are “closer to their food,” meaning they have greater knowledge of

how and where it was raised or grown, they tend to make purchasing decisions based on their values. As shown in Figure 1 on page 6, consumer values are variable, but a number of things stand out in this region such as “local,” “fresh,” “health,” “affordability,” and “convenience.”

If your **nonprofit sector** organization is lucky enough to have paid staff who are solely focused on local food and farming, trust building and creative partnerships are a critical component of their work. Care must be taken in nonprofit organizations that volunteers are not overextended, and that there is oversight and accountability of volunteers and the outcomes and impacts of their efforts. Success is based on trust and relationships, and every volunteer must carefully represent your organization’s values and uphold its bylaws.

In addition to the largely unseen critical infrastructure of people and values in a regional food system, physical

## One World KitchenShare

One World KitchenShare program in Bloomington, Indiana is a 24/7 rental kitchen designed to offer new and experienced food businesses a commercial kitchen without the cost and effort of creating their own. With preparation tables, dish and preparation sinks, gas ranges, ovens, food processors, mixers, a meat slicer, deep fryer, refrigeration, freezer, and dry-good storage space, and more, this kitchen houses the top-quality cooking and processing equipment to provide everyone the tools they need to create a food business. The site is even equipped with a grey water dump station and a clean water fill area, as well as multiple powered parking spaces for clients with food trucks to plug in their truck or trailer. One World KitchenShare exists to help entrepreneurs explore their ideas and passions, providing the early support that may eventually lead to clients opening their own storefronts. Learn more on their website (<http://www.kitchenshare.net>) or reach out to the kitchen manager, Jay Burton ([jburtun@bloomington.com](mailto:jburtun@bloomington.com)).



One World KitchenShare

infrastructure investments that address the needs of farmers, food businesses, and consumers need to be carefully weighed and researched. As seen in shared-use kitchens, just because you build it, does not mean people will use it. Each county has unique market dynamics that need exploration and prioritization. Endeavors such as building an online farmers' market, constructing a year-round pavilion for the farmers' market, investing in processing or storage businesses, launching a shared-use kitchen, coordinating with distributors, or addressing the "last-mile delivery issue" must all be examined and evaluated by the individuals who would be the critical users or providers of this infrastructure. Programs that address consumer needs such as starting a farmers' market, forging a multi-farm or retail-based CSA, engaging workplace wellness programs, hosting cooking programs with local food, doubling federal food assistance dollars, or targeting particular audiences such as resource-limited families, youth, workers, or dollar store shoppers could all be great ideas for increasing local food access in a county, but each strategy needs to be considered in the context of its local environment before determining if it is a good fit for a community.

## Best Practices

Generally speaking, the following four issues need to be addressed before launching a project:

1. The idea or strategy must fit the community. Ask yourselves, "Is the audience we are trying to reach sitting here with us during the planning phase? What are we asking people to do differently? What needs has this audience expressed? What incentives or policies are in place that can help with change?" "What assets exist in this community that are either directly or indirectly related to this work?"
2. The idea or strategy should have a model that has worked in other communities. Finding and connecting with research and evidence-based strategies will help keep your organization from making the same mistakes as others, and ensure that your funder's resources are used efficiently and for impact. Ask your idea leader if they can demonstrate how this worked elsewhere,

and brainstorm together how it might look in your community.

3. The idea or strategy should have data to support need. Looking at secondary data or collecting primary data will help guide the development and evaluation of your initiative. Implementing educational food programming can be helpful in a community, but how is it being woven into the fabric of existing food culture? Will it have lasting impact? Will it change the data you collected at the onset?
4. The idea or strategy should have leadership and partners who understand their role, are committed to long-term investment in the project, and who have the financial, human, or capital resources to sustain the initiative. In community meetings, many ideas can get tossed onto the table with passion and fervor. Find out—are those same people ready to roll up their sleeves and get to work? Are they already overcommitted? Food system ideas can be complicated and involve many moving parts. Complicated ideas need attention and care—who is going to see it through? Do you have someone in a coordination role for the long-term?

Considering these best practices, organizations in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors will be better prepared to come to the table, lower barriers, discuss priorities, and move forward as partners, together, in strengthening our local and regional food systems. Understanding that we can no longer rely on the goodwill and hard work of volunteers and farmers to sustain us, we must examine how we plan to invest for our region's future—for quality of life, resiliency, and our local food economy. Supporting the work of farmers, locally-owned food businesses, buyers, and all of the critical infrastructure necessary to move food from farm to table will go a long way to attract and retain the educated, technical workforce that our region relies upon and help our communities thrive.

## Local Food, Local Good

People are the greatest asset in the food system, and nurturing our young people to understand their food needs and values will help build a more connected,



value-driven, and resilient regional food system. Some of today's local food farmers do not come from a farming background but are driven, rather, by a strong desire to grow and raise food that nurtures people, communities, and our land. For these farmers and other food businesses to be sustainable, they will need a strong regional distribution infrastructure in order to turn a profit, and having supply chain systems in place will help them do that. Beyond the business side of the food system, organizations that work to address public health will need to reach back to food for the prevention of diet-related disease in order to lower the burden on our health care systems, and public sector leaders will need to care for and invest in food systems, much as they do for water, energy and waste.

In the 21st century, though the way people buy food is changing, our basic health needs that come from food are not. Food is essential for survival, but *good* food is essential for health and community wellbeing. In this region with a strong agricultural focus, it is critical that we take the steps, together, to create a system that cares for farmers and eaters alike. United in this pursuit, we can innovate for a strong, healthy, and productive food system that sustains livelihoods in our region, nurtures communities, and supports the health of our people and environment.

## Fischer Farms

Fischer Farms, a grass-fed beef operation in Dubois County, on land in the Fischer family for over 150 years, has been selling direct to restaurants and consumers since 2004. They also sell pastured pork, turkey, and eggs from local farmers. Their meats are processed each week at a Sanders Processing in Celestine, Indiana, and shipped fresh, providing product to over 130 restaurants across Indiana and Chicago. Fischer Farms sells their product to many local institutions, including Indiana University Dining and other schools in the region. In addition to their commitment to quality product and humane treatment of animals, they also employ innovative regenerative farming techniques to sequester carbon in the soil and greatly improve the soil for future generations. Learn more about Fischer Farms on their website (<http://ffnatural.com>).





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## Appendix A—Survey

This survey was modified from the “Community Self-Assessment” of the Environmental Protection Agency’s *Local Foods, Local Places Toolkit*.<sup>8</sup> The survey helped to guide discussion during the community meetings hosted by the CRE and SFSS in fall 2019, and was also available online, collecting input from community members who were unable to attend the meetings in person. Each item consists of a strategy for food system development and the related potential outcomes that might result if that strategy were implemented. Based on their personal knowledge and experience, respondents ranked each item according to the following criteria and definitions:

1. Poor fit—I do not feel this is a good fit for my community.
2. Low priority—I would not place this among my community’s top needs.
3. Neutral opinion—or this is already established in my community.
4. Future priority—this would be great for my community, but I am not sure we have the pieces in place to make it happen right now.
5. Immediate priority—there are people or organizations in place who could help make this happen.

Business Sector		
	Strategy	Potential Outcomes
1	Farmer access to land for food production.	More farmers could launch a small farm business in the region with more assurance regarding a land lease or purchase.
2	Farmer education and resources for food production.	Beginning and transitioning farmers would have the information and resources they need to produce food. More farmers would increase production for more of the calendar year for local buyers including home consumers, food service (schools, hospitals), and grocery and online retailers.
3	Increase food processing for local farm and food businesses in the region.	More farmers and food business owners would have local access to essential processing and storage facilities for building and scaling local food businesses.
4	Regional distribution of locally grown or produced food.	With increased access to local distributor(s), local food and farm businesses could distribute more food to regional buyers, thus increasing sales, using local distribution partner.
5	Increase support for farmers selling directly to consumers at the farmers market, farm stands, through online ordering or CSA programs.	By increasing support for farmers to market and engage with home consumers, they can stabilize their income and create a stronger business plan.
6	Selling local food at stores where people buy food.	People in the community would be able to buy healthy, local food for eating. Stores in the area would work with a local distributor or farmers to stock fresh, healthy food from gardeners and growers.
7	Build greater access to locally grown food for the home consumer.	Farmers can create trusted relationships with consumers, increasing knowledge and interest in local food farming and healthy eating for consumers of all income levels. Farmers would have more sales days with consumers and greater access to a diverse consumer base.
8	Business to business guide or networking focused on food.	Businesses in the food system would rely on other local businesses for goods and services. This would create opportunities for new businesses as gaps are identified.




Nonprofit Sector		
	Strategy	Potential Outcomes
9	Create food growing spaces for youth and community.	By increasing food production in these settings, more people can access knowledge of healthy food, develop a taste for eating healthy, and participate in a healthy lifestyle.

10	Food education classes in the community.	More youth and consumers would increase purchases of healthy, seasonal fruits and vegetables, to build healthier lifestyles, personal health, and diets.
11	Engagement of many community groups in healthy, local food production and eating.	By building a network of organizations to discuss food system issues, we will be able to increase coordination and partnerships among groups to address needs in the community.
12	Create food and farm programming for re-entry populations in the community.	By engaging re-entry individuals, those who are recovering from drug addiction, incarceration and other challenges in the community could have positive outcomes for reducing relapse, maintaining family ties and increasing the capacity of the local workforce.
13	A local food network or council.	A grass-roots effort to build a food council can create the leadership and synergies in the community to make food a priority for economic development, job creation, healthy lifestyles, market development and other activities.
14	Farmer networking events or organization	Gathering farmers together on a regular basis can lower isolation issues, increase knowledge sharing and increase access to markets and partnerships.

Government Sector		
	Strategy	Potential Outcomes
15	Address policy issues at local government level including zoning, wellness and food and agricultural economic development.	Policy documents such as school and workplace wellness policies, health insurance policies can be leveraged to support local food system purchasing, awareness and engagement. Shifting policy from just 'healthy' food to 'healthy, local' food can have an impact on sales for local farmers.
16	Integrate local food and agriculture into comprehensive planning documents.	Comprehensive planning documents affect the implementation of projects, fiscal strategies and grantmaking in the community. Including food and agriculture can increase resources allocated to food system efforts.
17	Business training and incubation for small farm or food businesses in the region.	Business training and plan development can help make farm and food businesses more profitable by being more strategic in what they sell, where they sell it, and how they brand it. Farm and food businesses would have the small business development tools and expertise they need to create longer term strategies to target the buyers in the region.
18	Examine creative uses for public spaces for local food system development.	Revitalization using food is a great way to raise awareness, increase participation across demographics and create a hub of activity for your local food system.
19	Increase awareness of and sales from local food businesses in your community.	Increased revenue for local small businesses may foster small business development, increased tourism, more social media engagement and ability to brand your locale into something more locals can 'get behind.' Working with food businesses to highlight food that is from local farmers can help increase farm sales and consumer awareness.
20	Activities, festivals and events to promote locally grown food.	Events that bring people from the region to celebrate local food and network can help engage more people in the food system community, including long-standing members and those who are new. Regularity in these events will put it on the calendar and in people's minds as the place and space to build business and address needs together.
21	Coordinated marketing, branding and communication effort around local food.	Increased information on where local food is grown and sold will help farmers and food businesses with their marketing. Efforts to coordinate with regional and statewide initiatives help more consumers find local food to buy.

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