



**A Healthy Maine Partnership**  
Bureau of Health, Department of Human Services



**FARM TO SCHOOL**

Washington County  
Food System

Public Forums  
April - May, 2013



Washington County:  
**One**  
Community  
Committed to improving  
the quality of life for  
Washington County citizens



**GROW WASHINGTON AROOSTOOK**  
Embracing the Future

## Our Food System

- What's local?
- Benefits of Local Food
- Economic momentum
- Food System
- Assets/Progress
- Challenges/Opportunities
- Audience polling throughout
- Next steps?



## What is Local?

According to the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act adopted by US Congress the total distance that a product can be transported and still be considered a “locally or regionally produced agricultural food product” is...



*less than 400 miles from its origin or within the State in which it is produced.*

No general agreement on definition

## Local Food (Potential) Benefits

- Nutrition associated with freshness
- Less travel - lower carbon footprint
- Local economy multipliers
  - import substitution
  - localization of processing activities
  - indirect and induced sales and job creation
- Food security – access for low income households
- Food safety risks – decentralized food system
- Agricultural soils/land conservation
- Preservation of genetic cultivars

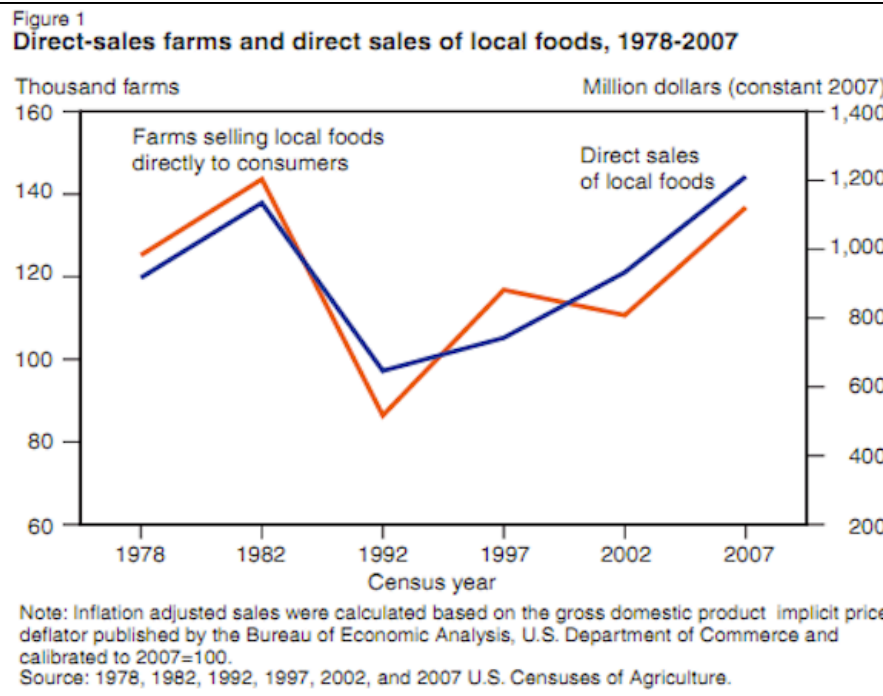


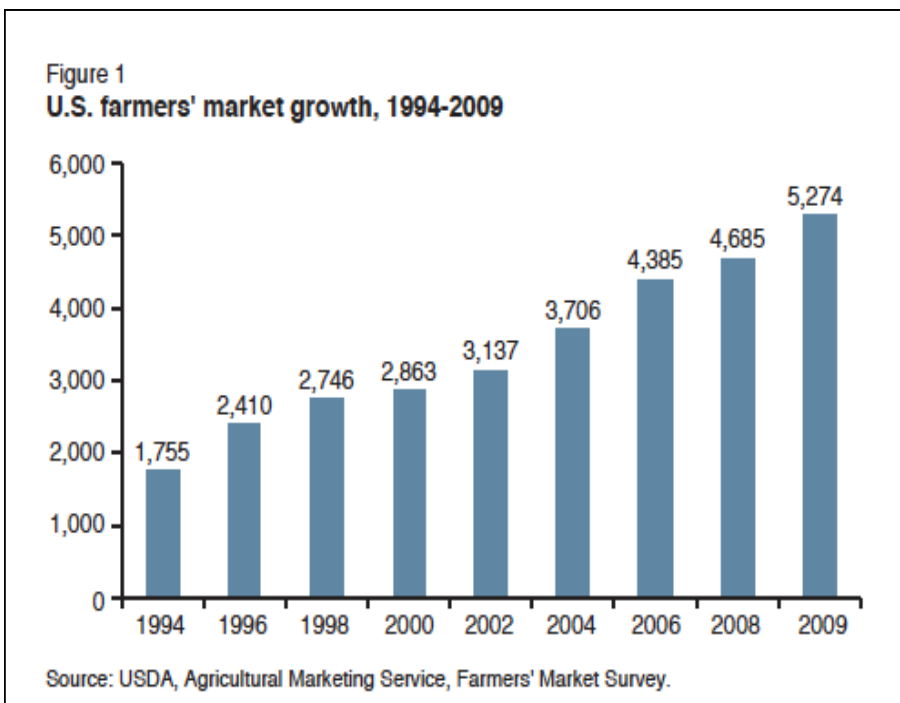
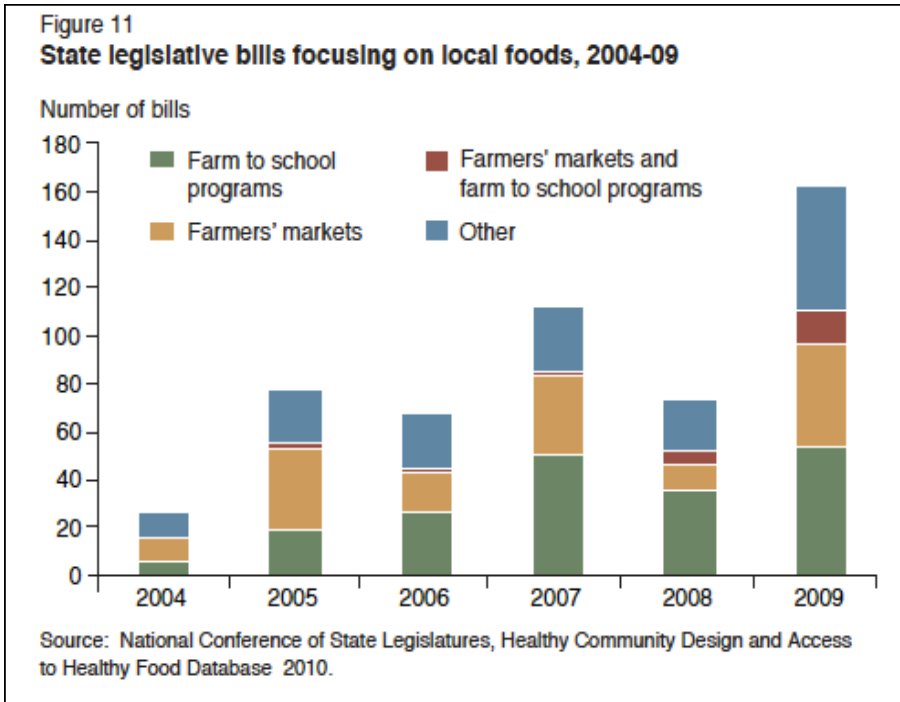
## Local Foods – Economic Significance

Part of statewide efforts [www.mainefoodstrategy.org](http://www.mainefoodstrategy.org) to create a **broader and more strongly connected network** of organizations, agencies, businesses and individuals contributing to the food system in Maine.

**Locavore** (2007 Oxford American Dictionary Word of the Year) : **consumers’ interest in eating locally-sourced foods**

Locavore Index: Maine 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation in 2013; up from 4<sup>th</sup> in 2012





## Organic Market Growth

### Nationally

organic industry (includes processing) grew **19% annually** from 1997 – 2008

Organic agriculture sector grew **8% in 2008**



### Maine

# of organic farms grew at a rate of **more than 300%** from 1997 -2008



What if 50% of school food purchases from nonlocal vendors were spent on local farms?

### Estimated local impacts\*

Additional...

local value added: **\$56,000**

labor income: **\$20,000**

jobs: **1.4**

State & local taxes: **\$4,800**

Kevin Athearn, Ph.D Associate Professor, UMM

\*Estimates based on production profile of typical fruit (blueberry) farm in WC

What if 10% of Washington Co resident grocery purchases were switched to local farms?

## Estimated local impacts \*

Additional...

local value added: **\$3.5 million**

labor income: **\$641,000**

jobs: **70**

State & local taxes: **\$117,000**

Kevin Athearn, Ph.D Associate Professor, UMM

\*Estimates based on production profile of typical fruit (blueberry) farm in WC

## What is a Food System?

**All processes & infrastructure  
involved in feeding a population:**

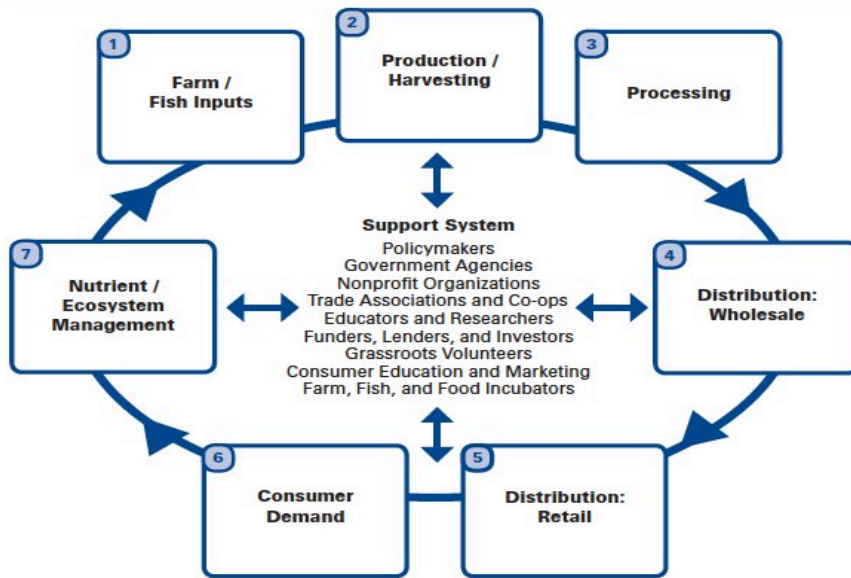
Growing or harvesting, processing, packaging, aggregation, distribution, transportation, marketing, consumption and disposal/recycling of food and food-related items.

Inputs needed & outputs generated at each of these steps.

Operates within / influenced by social, political, economic and environmental contexts.

Requires human resources - labor, research and education.

FIGURE 1: Elements of a Food System



Source: Adapted from Vermont Farm to Plate Strategic Plan

# 1. Farm/Fish Inputs

## Assets/Progress

- Clean water
- Available farmland
- Working waterfront
- Intern/apprentice labor
- Experienced mentors

## Challenges (Opportunity)

- Access to livestock/aquaculture feed
- Access to farmland
- Access to materials/supplies
- Equipment Repair
- Labor
- New/Adjacent landowner (& Realtor) awareness of current farming activities at purchase
- Cost of insurance(s)

## 2. Production/Harvesting

### Assets/Progress

Clean water  
 Available farmland  
 New producers in ME/Wash County  
 Well drained acidic soils (excellent for wild blueberries)  
 Food safety

### Challenges (Opportunity)

Critical mass of growers  
 Access to livestock feed  
 Underuse of productive farmland  
 Knowledge of market demand  
 Marine harvesting/licensing restrictions; resource conservation  
 High entry/infrastructure cost  
 Pesticide certification required for produce sales of \$1000+/yr

## 3. Processing

### Assets/Progress

HACCP slaughterhouse facility (livestock & poultry - pending May, 2013)  
 CBRC; CCLC; in-home commercial kitchens  
 Commercial freezer capacity (Jonesboro, Addison, Cherryfield)  
 Blueberry processing capacity  
 Food safety

### Challenges (Opportunity)

Commercial kitchen access; capacity in closed schools  
 Availability of Inspection Services (USDA and FDA)  
 Availability/co\$ of storage & freezer space  
 Food safety/licensing



## 4. Distribution/Wholesale

### Assets/Progress

GIS mapping  
 Institutional markets  
 On-line ordering; computer capacity in schools  
 Access to an international market

### Challenges (Opportunity)

Distance from markets  
 Limited refrigerated trucks  
 Lack of storage/distribution hubs  
 Insufficient volume for market/food pantries  
 No co-packing facility  
 Product packaging and presentation  
 Regular pricing/product lists

## 5. Distribution/Retail

### Assets/Progress

GIS mapping  
 Credit/debit processing machines  
 On-line ordering  
 Farmers Markets  
 Buying Clubs

### Challenges (Opportunity)

Trucking  
 Access to markets  
 Consumer awareness  
 Insufficient/unreliable supply  
 Regular pricing/product lists  
 Product packaging/presentation  
 Local food in Spring/Winter

## 6. Consumer Demand

### Assets/Progress

Growing demand

Multiple outlets see:  
[www.gro-wa.org](http://www.gro-wa.org)

New Farmers Market in  
Harrington?

Maine Farmers Market  
Federation

### Challenges (Opportunity)

Food preparation skills/interest

Nutrition education

Access to EBT/WIC

Price (high - food; low or  
unpredictable - lobster)

Senior Share Program unsustainable

## 7. Nutrient/Ecosystem Management

### Assets/Progress

Raw materials access

Composting industry

### Challenges (Opportunity)

Nutrient management

Institutional compostable resources

High cost of compost and of  
trucking compost

## 1-7 Support System

### Assets/Progress

Pricing workshop

Cooperative Extension education series (forthcoming)

Grants/loans: Value-added production; energy efficiency; systems innovation; infrastructure; fencing/high tunnels

Networks (WCF&F; SCFA; H&BTL;Facebook)

Farm to School Program

Work well together

### Challenges (Opportunity)

Nutrition education

Awareness of/access to capital

No Extension horticultural or livestock agent

Coordination among multiple players

Fisheries regs imperfect; new unregulated fisheries driven by market demand

Mentoring young farmers

## Next Steps/Priorities

- Limits/opportunities for growth - questions and discussion
  - Distribution
  - Access to capital
  - Support to growers (new/expansion)
  - Storage
- 2 small groups
  - Vision for Washington County to feed ourselves
  - Vision for Washington County to grow the food system for regional economic development
- Shared visions and how do we get there?

## Discussion

