



LOCAL FOOD ACTION PLAN

CITY OF COLUMBUS & FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO

Potential Actions List

The Project Team compiled potential policy and program actions related to the food system by reviewing local food, health, and planning publications and plans throughout the nation, state, region and city. Potential policy and program actions also came from community meetings held in seven neighborhoods throughout the City of Columbus and Franklin County.

Process

The Project Team gathered an initial list of over 800 potential actions. By eliminating non-specific actions and duplicates, 146 potential actions were identified for further consideration and are included in this document for Working Committee review.

Potential actions are listed under the closest associated focus area, with some focus areas separated into subcategories for easier review. A summary of the current condition and vision report (DRAFT) related to each focus area is also included. Potential actions informed by or relating to actions gathered through the seven neighborhood community meetings are noted with an asterisk (*).

Focus Area	Subcategory	# of Potential Actions
1 - Improving access to nutritious food, and education about healthy food	Access	36
	Education	21
2 - Increasing the role of food in economic development	Resources & Tools	19
	Regulations & Incentives	23
	Infrastructure	24
3 - Preventing food related waste	Food-Related Waste	10
4 - Enhancing communication and coordination among existing food resources and agencies.	Coordination & Communication	13

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Working Committee Instructions:

Please review the potential actions in each focus area and come to the Working Committee meeting on December 11, 2015 prepared to discuss. At the meeting we will ask you which actions best reflect the actions that should be researched for possible inclusion in the Local Food Action Plan.

Please focus on the ideas presented in each action and not on the exact wording. We will refine the action wording and provide more specifics for selected actions in the next project phase.

Focus Area 1

Improving access to nutritious, affordable food, and education about healthy food

Current conditions summary related to Focus Area 1 (DRAFT):

There is demand for locally produced food, especially fruits and vegetables, and although most local food is purchased at farmers markets, supermarkets are the preferred point of purchase. Currently, the accessibility of food, in terms of physical proximity to food sources, as well as the affordability of food, varies greatly across the socioeconomic spectrum.

Strategies to improve food access and measures of success will vary widely but must effectively consider all levels of food security including very low, low and marginally food secure individuals and families. Due to the need and desire for local healthy food, ongoing community conversations, in the form of food action committees, can define benchmarks for success in individual communities and neighborhoods.

ID	Potential Actions Focus Area 1 - ACCESS
775	Increase SNAP payment acceptance at farmers markets, stands and corner stores*
762	Incorporate growing and cooking space in multi-family and low income housing developments*
738	Create a virtual/online supermarket of healthy and local food accessible at libraries and senior centers
699	Provide mobile markets to distribute healthy and local food along with food education to underserved communities
698	Provide a fruit/vegetable prescription program for obese children including nutrition counseling and farmers' market vouchers
669	Provide a training program for small store owners on sourcing and handling perishable food
638	Establish farmers markets and community gardens at healthcare facilities to educate and provide produce to employees, patients and the community*
633	Increase salad bars at public schools*
610	Adopt zoning standards that limit fast food near neighborhoods and encourage healthy food providers*
572	Create a standard evaluation method for local food pilot programs

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406	Provide rotating farmers markets and cooking demonstrations at neighborhoods and institutional locations*
392	Create a student loan forgiveness program for individuals pursuing local food related jobs
381	Create a map that shows transit routes with healthy food access locations
369	Provide translation services at farmers markets
349	Create a year-round, indoor farmers market*
324	Create and advertise summer meal sites that provide healthy, local food
271	Create a program that regularly distributes local produce to seniors*
218	Set-up joint use agreements between neighborhoods and community gardens located on school grounds*
201	Create "healthy food zones" near schools and institutions that market and provide healthy food while limiting unhealthy food
177	Improve transit routes between low access communities and healthy food sources*
167	Start community gardens at senior centers*
141	Create low-income CSA models or subsidized produce boxes from farms to low-income families
128	Create a discount bus pass or on-demand transit program for low-income residents to supermarkets, gardens and farmers markets*
086	Revise zoning and health codes to allow produce display along store exteriors
054	Create fully functional school kitchens to prepare entire meals
037	Create a gleaning program and distribute a list of emergency meal sites and food donation requirements to producers, food businesses and institutions
820	Organize grocery store tours and provide transportation for residents in low access areas*
822	Establish a food truck/cart park at community gathering spots*
838	Create community gardens available for refugees, immigrants and low-income residents*
840	Establish a food network of farmers and gardeners that can provide training and excess food to low-income families*
842	Link grocery store surplus with farmers markets for resale*
866	Organize events around food sharing and food swapping*
795	Facilitate dialogue between school boards and students' families to offer nutritious, locally-grown food in school breakfast and lunch programs
776	Locate farmers markets in underserved areas*
143	Encourage retail policies that better market healthy food such as in-store display and signage
134	Support purchases of local, nutritious food by schools, senior care facilities, and local government agencies
<i>*Action informed by neighborhood community meeting</i>	

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ID	Potential Action Focus Area 1 - EDUCATION
735	Use research on the relationship between local food consumption and dietary practices to inform local policy development
682	Equip grocery stores in underserved communities with nutrition counseling, shopping strategies, and incentives to buy local and healthy food*
652	Integrate nutrition and food system education into public school curricula*
391	Create community centers with educational kitchens and gardens and health fairs and services to the community, particularly women and children*
321	Create a neighborhood food guide providing healthy food locations and availability
205	Provide culturally sensitive nutrition assistance, food education and cooking programs to immigrant communities
186	Improve signage and advertising of assistance programs (WIC, SNAP, etc.) at farmers markets
173	Create farm-to-school classes for parents and children that include at-home cooking activities*
172	Sponsor a gardening campaign that highlights creative food production tailored for families
120	Appoint an education specialist to integrate food system and nutrition education within school curriculum
066	Create school garden coordinators and school garden resource centers at schools*
063	Advertise and coordinate activities around the annual "Food Day"
040	Host events and workshops in local gathering places on food access and education featuring multicultural food and cooking styles*
848	Organize community food tours that showcase community gardens, restaurants, and markets*
832	Provide free gardening resources and training to residents*
835	Advertise community events about healthy eating on neighborhood marquees*
841	Educate communities on produce availability in local community gardens*
850	Create a formal community garden network that provides support resources including recurring activity reports*
861	Provide healthy food education through existing health centers*
864	Provide healthy food education using gardens*
789	Offer kitchen programs to the community that teach cooking with healthy and local food
<i>*Action informed by neighborhood community meeting</i>	

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Focus Area 2

Increase the role of food in economic development

Current conditions summary related to Focus Area 2 (DRAFT):

Agriculture Census and economic data, in addition to surveys and stakeholder interviews, indicate an aging farmer population, decreasing farm numbers, unstable wages, lack of succession plans and lack of diversity in farming.

- Between 2007 and 2012, the number of farms decreased while the value of total sales increased.
- Majority of farm operations and acreage in Central Ohio is located outside of Franklin County.
- The majority of farm operators are male and white with an average age of 57 years.
- Market value of fruits, vegetables, tree nuts and berries was \$687,000 as compared to market value of \$26.4 million for grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas.

Regulations, required certifications, competitive pricing, supermarket internal systems and uncertainty of purchasing serve to disconnect producers from commercial buyers and distributors and diminish opportunity for diverse crop production and farm operations. Survey results indicate that the majority of producers sell directly to consumers and prefer this as their primary method.

To increase production capacity and crop diversity, producers and distributors report a need for low-interest capital, subsidies and other type of support such as land trusts, incentives and training.

Stakeholder and Working Committee feedback, in addition to producer surveys, demonstrate producer interest in developing a locally-based marketing brand.

The value and availability of land in Franklin County and the City of Columbus is reported as a barrier to expanded agricultural production.

The rural-urban connection within Franklin County and between Franklin county and the surrounding counties should be more fully explored to understand the capacity for food production and crop diversity in our local food system.

Regulations, availability of a trained workforce, access to capital for infrastructure and a disconnect from local producers all inhibit local processors from scaling up to meet the demands of local distributors and commercial buyers.

Similarly, distributors are unable to consistently meet the availability, price, quality, processing (e.g. peeled, diced, etc.) and certifications required by commercial buyers through local producers.

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**Current conditions summary related to Focus Area 2 (DRAFT):
(Cont.)**

Processors report a need for business models and technical assistance to scale up and ultimately to facilitate development of sustainable, revenue generating operations and businesses.

Infrastructure is essential to facilitate the development and expansion of local processors.

- Cold storage facilities are needed to keep meat processors operating at full capacity.
- Specialized commercial kitchen space such as canning lines and high pressure pasteurization are needed to facilitate expansion for produce processing.

Disparate regulations and unclear responsibilities for enforcement related to food processing and distribution deter new business and expansion of existing processors and distributors into new markets.

Finally, the current conditions of processors needs to be further evaluated based upon the type of business they operate. For example, needs and opportunities of a meat processor and fruit and vegetable processor will vary significantly.

Existing market mechanisms (aggregation, processing, distribution) are insufficient to ensure the consistent availability, price, quality, and processing (e.g. peeled, diced, etc.) of local produce that commercial buyers require.

The needs and capacity of commercial buyers to purchase local food needs to be further evaluated based upon the type of business they operate (e.g. the purchasing needs of small local restaurant will vary greatly from those of a school foodservice system serving 50,000+ students).

Commercial buyer perception of consumer preferences (e.g. the notion that consumers want uniformity in size and shape, and we are not demanding values in food productions) limits access to markets for local producers.

Central Ohio is rich in logistical expertise but it remains underutilized in connecting sectors of the local food system. Local processors do not often operate at a large enough scale to work with existing distributors, who in turn work with non-local producers to meet their business needs.

ID	Potential Actions Focus Area 2 - RESOURCES & TOOLS
238	Plan, create and connect natural landscaping, forestry, green belts and orchards within urban areas*
430	Connect local food businesses to the county Purchasing Department's Small and Emerging Business Outreach Program

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463	Support food businesses with technical assistance and resources to reduce fixed costs and increase marginal revenue
464	Provide more short-term financial assistance for new and expanding farm operations
512	Support small-scale niche markets with technical assistance to increase local food diversity*
519	Create a farmland preservation fund to protect and increase farmland availability
004	Develop a regional/local brand
104	Create and distribute a food business development and resource guide identifying processes and resources for startup food businesses.
114	Develop and advertise CSA programs at workplaces.
288	Implement a transfer of development rights program and educate communities and community leaders about land preservation tools.
306	Collect data on urban farms to better reflect agricultural conditions in urban areas.
346	Provide technical assistance and resources (crop maps, investment calculator, economic models, etc.) to producers
352	Fund a neutral "public interest broker" who can link regional producers with Franklin County commercial buyers
429	Develop a toolkit for starting new farmer's markets and fund staff to provide technical assistance
435	Develop and promote a strategic farmland preservation and conservation program
456	Develop a guide to link institutions with local producers, processors, and distributors to form purchase agreements*
529	Develop a strategic marketing plan for local food using multiple mediums (newspaper, social media, television)*
651	Work with Cooperative Extension to provide community resources and training on starting gardens and increasing food education*
786	Complete a supply-chain analysis of Franklin County and identify opportunities to integrate the food distribution network
<i>*Action informed by neighborhood community meeting</i>	

ID	Potential Actions Focus Area 2 - REGULATIONS & INCENTIVES
022	Develop 3rd party safety and environmental certifications for producers
193	Coordinate with State and Local agencies to streamline food processing certification
229	Create a streamlined and accessible Commercial Urban Farm Permit
245	Revise city and county development standards to support home-based agriculture expansion and agricultural exemption
302	Increase regulation flexibility and streamline permitting services for farmer's markets
450	Revise local food processing regulations to be consistent and differentiate types of processing
548	Revise zoning codes to protect agricultural land, allow agricultural uses in more areas, and require pedestrian-friendly infrastructure in urban areas*

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550	Adopt a countywide growth plan to limit development on agricultural land and redirect it to already developed areas
757	Create special zoning standards for mixed use residential and commercial developments with grocery stores, community gardens, and farmers' markets*
774	Create a user-friendly farmers market permit guide
791	Update zoning and building regulations to encourage safe and adequate on-farm employee housing
793	Revise zoning regulations to allow retiring farmers to retain their homesite and build additional homesites for family members continuing the farming operation
005	Use awards/recognition to promote retailers that provide healthy, local food
235	Subsidize local fruits and vegetables to incentivize the use of portions of land or large farms for compact specialty crops
355	Provide gas credits or other tax incentives to distributors purchasing and distributing local foods
511	Incentivize the production of non-seasonal local foods such as eggs and dairy
593	Attract grocery stores to underserved neighborhoods (e.g., tax credits, grant and loan programs, small business/economic development programs, and other economic incentives).
734	Provide tax incentives to farmers who donate fruits and vegetables to food banks
800	Create a new tax structure to incentivize the use of urban land for urban agriculture*
250	Create an inventory of existing and potential agricultural land
496	Create a database of relevant regulations to help local producers and processors operate effectively and assist public agencies with identifying redundancies
508	Identify local produce not currently being processed locally
869	Develop key guidelines and metrics for healthy food systems and incorporate into city and county departments to direct policy (similar to transportation and housing).
<i>*Action informed by neighborhood community meeting</i>	

ID	Potential Actions Focus Area 2 - INFRASTRUCTURE
170	Create an online program that links producers to landowners with unused land
266	Leverage and expand local food distribution around "natural hubs" where families and communities currently gather*
336	Build agricultural parks or mixed-use working farms within municipal parks
350	Build cold storage facilities at central locations along major trucking routes
360	Promote an "Eat Local" campaign*
398	Host local food tastings
407	Implement a local food social media campaign
414	Redevelop existing buildings and infrastructure to use for indoor farming

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437	Establish cooperatives around shared labor, equipment, distribution, storage and/or revenue generating processing operations.
442	Provide agriculture and food business classes with internships at joint vocational schools
515	Develop facilities to process game and fish to increase the supply of locally processed food.
523	Create an agricultural section in the County Department of Job and Family Services to link job seekers with various sectors of the food system
526	Create a work/ride program for agricultural workers in coordination with transit agencies and Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services
740	Create a city-county land lease program to connect local food producers with available land
743	Start a business center or online resource that provides technical assistance to food businesses and producers seeking financial support for start-up or expansion
796	Establish an anonymous reporting system for agricultural workers to report violations of labor law and employer misconduct
798	Establish a farm-health connection program for migrant, seasonal, and year round agricultural workers
807	Attach a community food hub to a permanent Farmers' Market to process and warehouse local food and serve the neighborhood*
813	Create a neighborhood food center that offers job and entrepreneurial opportunities, collaborative food education, and true community engagement*
817	Transform vacant commercial spaces into neighborhood food hubs, food-based businesses, education sites or green space*
825	Increase African-American/minority community member ownership of corner stores and other food-related businesses*
830	Establish local hydroponic farms to produce fresh vegetables and fruits with reduced costs during the winter*
845	Establish an international food marketplace*
855	Establish a food manufacturing facility to provide local jobs*
<i>*Action informed by neighborhood community meeting</i>	

Focus Area 3

Preventing food-related waste

Current conditions summary related to Focus Area 3 (DRAFT):

Survey results and stakeholder interviews demonstrate a general willingness within each sector to participate in some type of food waste reduction practice.

Food waste consists of both edible and inedible food that ends up in the landfill. Specific strategies designed to reduce both types of food waste must be addressed.

Food donation is the primary method for preventing waste of edible food reported by stakeholders and survey respondents, but perceived liability and regulatory limits may be inhibiting more food donations. Community Plates offers a viable local option for food donation at no cost and liability.

Composting and animal feed are the primary methods reported for diverting inedible food waste from landfills.

Franklin County and the surrounding counties lack the infrastructure and services for large scale and centralized food waste diversion.

ID	Potential Actions Focus Area 3
108	Revise zoning and health codes to allow commercial farming, farmer's markets, edible landscapes and composting areas in commercial districts.
135	Offer low-cost in-home and outdoor compost bins to residential areas
157	Create financial incentives and educational campaigns to encourage food waste reduction
292	Establish a citywide program to reduce and recycle food packaging
419	Establish large scale neighborhood composting sites to encourage composting practices
420	Engage local leaders in food waste reduction and diversion practices to provide training and guidance for other large scale food waste generators.
421	Develop a composting or anaerobic digester facility for organic waste conversion.
583	Develop a system to track waste diversion
589	Require waste reduction plans from new businesses as part of the business license application and provide incentives for existing businesses to adopt waste reduction practices
176	Organize volunteers to collect leftover crops from local farms and deliver to food pantries
<i>*Action informed by neighborhood community meeting</i>	

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Focus Area 4

Enhancing coordination and communication among existing food resources and agencies

Current conditions summary related to Focus Area 4 (DRAFT):

The USDA definition of a farm and related statistics may not adequately reflect the current production capacity and diversity that non-traditional producers such as urban agriculture productions, social enterprise efforts and community gardens bring to the local food system.

Working Committee feedback, stakeholder interviews and survey responses report that offering customers “local” options is important. The majority of commercial buyers responding to survey questions define local as food produced in Ohio. Stakeholder interviews and working committee feedback indicates that producers typically describe local on a smaller, regional scale rather than statewide.

Efforts in local food system planning are partially compromised by unclear or varying definitions of terms including ‘local’, ‘consumer’, ‘processor’, ‘distributor’, ‘producer’ and ‘farm’. The plan must strive to communicate operational definitions for these terms and other terms.

Of particular concern is the term ‘consumer’ which implies an economic transaction. Individuals access food in a variety of ways including free food distributions, supplemental food resources and purchasing products. The term ‘consumer’ may not adequately communicate the diversity of people who provided input and who will be impacted by the plan.

Equity and the impact of a living wage on food prices for all sectors of the food system should be considered as the current reality is potentially one of non-intersecting goals in ‘local’, ‘health’ and ‘hunger’.

ID	Potential Actions Focus Area 4
003	Organize an annual Food Summit and Harvest Festival to foster community networking, education, and celebration*
010	Establish an Agricultural Land Trust that develops incentives, resources, and community education around the use of agricultural land
059	Establish a "Local Food Office" to coordinate food system initiatives in the City of Columbus and Franklin County
129	Create an online platform that allows food organizations to share data, facilitate transactions, access relevant resources, and connect with consumers
243	Develop an outreach and educational program focused on innovative farming/ranching practices, urban-rural linkages and "Farmer to Farmer" collaboratives.
315	Organize a regional food conference to focus on cross-sectoral collaboration, food policy council development, and urban-rural linkages
357	Fund a regional meat and poultry processing facility through a multi-county collaborative

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363	Create a searchable database or map of local food markets, community gardens, CSAs, and restaurants who source local foods
488	Establish a regional food policy council in Central Ohio with broad representation from the food system to work on regional projects in areas such as economic development and food access
500	Partner with trade organizations to coordinate, build relationships and consolidate high cost activities to create a greater supply of processed local food.
671	Work with relevant programs and organizations to increase the number of new farmers willing to grow specialty crops
754	Educate urban areas and communities on farm life to help reduce the rural to urban divide.
836	Start a food communication network that advertises educational events, food access and production locations, and other relevant food resources and topics*
<i>*Action informed by neighborhood community meeting</i>	