

Regional Food System Impact Statement

Southwest Indiana Region

Beautiful Edibles Grow, Roger & Mary Winstead



Photo taken by: Katherine Frances Jacobson, Purdue University

INTRODUCTION

As the regional urban center, Evansville is well-positioned to serve as the hub for multi-county local food commerce in Southwest Indiana.

Economy, public health, food access, and quality-of-place benefit from a **vibrant local food system**.

Food value chains are key elements to a vibrant local food system. **Food value chains** differ from typical food supply chains in that they are intentionally structured to produce both business success and social benefit.

Central to the collaborative efforts required to create and sustain a local foods system is a **Value Chain Professional (VCP)**. The VCP serves an instrumental role, creating strategic relationships between producer and buyer - such as a school or healthcare system, restaurant, or household.

Economic Development

Local food systems support **growers in our own community**. Dollars spent directly with a neighboring grower increase the money kept in the local economy. Institutions - particularly schools, hospital systems and restaurants - provide an opportunity to **create sizable demand**, contributing to the potential of growers achieving **economies of scale**.^{5,17}

If Southwest Indiana residents purchased \$5 of food each week directly from farmers in the region, this would **generate \$98M of gross farm income** for the region. In 2013, a study estimated that 90% of the food eaten in Southwest Indiana was sourced outside the region (that's an estimate of \$1.2 billion of food eaten is sourced outside the region.)¹⁷



Countryside Orchard, Kristi Schulz

Public Health and Equitable Food Access

The **nutrient density** in produce can be affected by the time of consumption after harvest and the way produce is handled/stored during transportation. Shortening the time between farm and table decreases the variables that can affect nutritional quality.⁵

Linkages exist between community health emphasis and **health outcomes**, particularly those that include a local food system.²¹ A local food focus may also lead supporting organizations to provide **nutrition education**.⁷

Equitable access can be achieved through several avenues of a local food system, including farmers markets that accept SNAP-EBT and Farm to School practices that provide fruit and vegetables to students equitably.^{5,21}

Resiliency and **stability** in being prepared for food chain disruptions is supported by relying on local growers.²³ Experts recommend an integrated nutrition security system that reaches people where they are, be that in schools, health care facilities, hospitals, etc. designed to serve communities from rural to urban.²²

Quality of Life | Quality of Place Talent Retention | Recruitment and Tourism

A vibrant local foods system strongly aligns with **quality urban and rural life experiences**, as citizens enjoy and benefit from food options cultivated by their own community.¹⁹

Recent trends point to local foods and **culinary tourism** being an attraction for visitors, which contributes to a larger community economic development strategy.⁷ Food trails attract tourists to experience the local food and drink culture of a state or region. Several states boast rich, distinctive food trails for their visitors. Examples: [Indiana](#), [Oregon](#), [Kentucky](#), [Wisconsin](#)



Darnell School Farm, Kathy Yearwood

A Note on COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Local food systems contribute to community engagement among citizens.²¹ Growers also benefit from an increase in socio-cultural connection. When relationships between grower and buyer flourish, growers can better understand preferences of the consumer and can base planting decisions on this, filling a desired demand of which they may have not otherwise been aware.

Local Growers of Southern Indiana

Mission: To serve as a network where local growers/producers can distribute throughout Southwest Indiana

Goals:

- Achieve volume consistency and availability
- Everything sold before we put it in the ground

5-Year Goals:

- Enhance and facilitate direct marketing opportunities for local growers
- Buyers ease of access to local products while educating consumers on the benefits of supporting and consuming locally grown food

10-Year Goals:

- Consumers see us as a local grocery store
- Buyers plan to buy local in their purchases
- Local seasonal nature of eating - what is great at different times of the year



Local produce for the annual Urban Seeds Farm to Table Dinner

Support from the EVANSVILLE REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Eating locally supports the Greater Evansville economy in a meaningful way. Supporting tristate farmers builds our regional economy; and, locally-grown foods get moved on a smaller scale, which means less hands involved in the process. A locally sustainable food system also encourages local production and distribution infrastructures, making nutritious food available, accessible and affordable to all. By contributing to a Greater Evansville business, we help to preserve existing local jobs and create new skilled jobs as local businesses are also the most ardent supporters of local parks, libraries, events, and the great area amenities that make communities unique.

Locally grown food creates important economic opportunities, provides health benefits and helps to reduce environmental impact. It also helps bring the community together and gives people the opportunity to make a difference. Additionally, many people feel local food tastes better and lasts longer. That is why the Evansville Regional Economic Partnership supports Urban Seeds and it's effort to build a strong, locally grown and sustainable food network.

Greg Wathen, APR
President & CEO of Evansville Regional Economic Partnership

Models to consider for Evansville, as the regional urban center for local food:

[Rose Hill Farm Stop - Bloomington, IN](#) | [Findlay Market - Cincinnati, OH](#) | [Market Cities Initiative](#)

References and Resources

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