Story County

Local Food and Farms: Growing Story County

Story County Local Food Planning Strategic Action Plan

Story County Board of Supervisors - September 21, 2010

RESOLUTION #11-23

Grow Story County Committee and Story County Planning and Zoning

Introduction

What is Food Systems Planning?

Food and agriculture issues significantly affect public health, land use, hunger, community culture, economy, environment and quality of life. Although most counties have agencies responsible for these individual issues, many do not have a single government body illuminating ways that food production and consumption impact these different areas, nor do they have a body making recommendations for promoting the sustainable development of the local food system.

-Excerpt from *Counties and Local Food Systems – Ensuring Healthy Foods, Nurturing Healthy Children"* – a publication of the NACo Center for Sustainable Communities (written by Casey Dillon)

Food systems planning involves examining, from a policy standpoint, every aspect of a community's region in terms of all the players that bring food from the field to the plate. This includes farmers-be they from Iowa or Southeast Asia-processors, distributors, retailers, and finally consumers. ***Local*** food systems planning then looks at all the food grown and raised and brought to market in the local region. From a policy-making standpoint, local food systems planning involves examining the local food system, identifying deficiencies, inefficiencies, or negative externalities in the system, and implementing policies or programs to fix these problems, to achieve a result that provides a benefit to ***all*** the players in the food system.

Historically, a local food system is supported by a small group of food growers growing/raising produce on relatively small pieces of land. These same producers market their products, usually directly (from grower to consumer lacking a middleman) to a small number of devoted consumers whom derive many benefits from this process. The majority of the produce is grown either via an organic process (using no chemicals involving an intensive certification process through the USDA) or a natural/sustainable process (minimal use of fertilizers or pesticides). The use of human capital rather than machines is a common theme among local food producers.

More and more people are discovering the benefits of consuming food directly from farmers in their area. The United States had 340 farmers' markets in 1970, 1,700 in 1994, and almost twice that in 2002. By 2004, the number was 3,700. Community Supported Agriculture farms, or CSAs have been growing at a similar speed. At the turn of the century, consumer demand for organically grown products was growing at a pace of 20 percent annually. People are demanding more of these locally-grown products so much so that everywhere we turn we see a sign or a newspaper headlines encouraging us to "eat local".

History of the Grow Story County Initiative

Since 1977, the Story County Board of Supervisors has long established policies and regulations adopting the ongoing preservation of agricultural resources as a high priority. The *County Development Plan* (Story County's adopted land use plan) recognizes that agricultural land is a non-renewable resource and sets forth policies in order to:

- Identify and preserve productive agricultural land for continued agricultural use.
- Implement planning policies to protect farms and farmers from urban influences that inhibit agricultural practices.
- Encourage value-added agricultural practices that support sustainable economies.

The Story County Planning and Zoning Department Calendar Year 2008 Work Program approved by the Story County Board of Supervisors on January 22, 2008, identified a study entitled "Foodshed analysis to identify where and what is being grown in Story County and beyond and survey all local growers in Story County to establish baseline operations knowledge and relationships." Beginning in 2008, the Story County Planning and Zoning Department started work on a multi-phased project to develop a local foods systems planning initiative at the Story County government level.

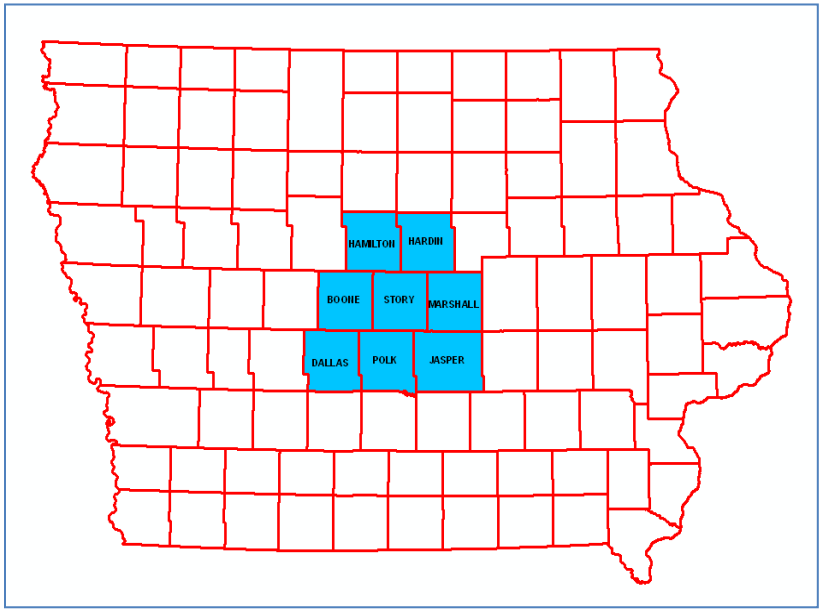

Figure 1- Story County Foodshed - Includes counties of Hamilton, Hardin, Boone, Marshall, Dallas, Polk, Jasper and Story.

Departmental tasks included creating a foodshed of the "Story County Region" with mapping of area food producers, retailers, wholesalers, and supporters of the greater Story County food system as well as identifying gaps in the foodshed requiring further investigation. The term "foodshed" describes a geographic area that supplies a population center with food. This foodshed analysis formed the basis to explore interest and feasibility of establishing county-wide programs and/or policies to assist the food system, such as a food to schools program and initiatives such as "Buy Fresh Buy Local".

In September and October 2008, the report entitled "Story County Local Food System: Issues and Opportunities" was presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Story County Board of Supervisors. The Report identified the "Story County Region" comprising the counties of Story, Polk, Boone, Dallas, Marshall, Jasper, Hardin and Hamilton.

In October 2008, the Story County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 09-16 forming the Grow Story County Committee and formally adopting the initiative as a component of the Planning and Zoning Department work programs. With such action by the Story County Board of Supervisors, Story County established a local food system steering committee called the "Grow Story County Committee" comprised of local stakeholders, food systems experts and citizens to discuss issues and opportunities in the Story Country Region, including the following areas:

- public education of local food issues;
- institutional purchasing of local foods;
- regional collaboration on food system issues and policies;
- recruiting and retaining more local food growers;
- niche farming opportunities;
- feasibility for a regional food processing facility;
- allowing for small acreage farming; and
- fostering more equitable access to healthy foods.

The Grow Story County Committee functioned as an advisory committee to the Story County Board of Supervisors. As put forth in the resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2008, the Grow Story County Committee was charged with the following goals:

- address food system issues in the County, including, but not limited to, development of educational programs, data-gathering, research projects, and policies; and
- outline specific policy changes and implementation measures [to be considered by the Story County Board of Supervisors].

Purpose of the *Local Food and Farms* Strategic Plan

The Grow Story County Committee identified strategies Story County could adopt and implement to facilitate and strengthen the local food system. These discussions formed the basis for the action steps identified in this strategic plan - ***Local Food and Farms: Growing Story County's Citizens and Economy.***

Local Food and Farms is a strategic planning initiative to lay the foundation for a successful local food system in Story County through 2015. It is a flexible, living document, designed to be reviewed, edited, and updated annually by the Story County Board of Supervisors. It is intended to provide step-by-step, concrete guidance to the Board, applicable committees, and Story County Departments and staff regarding local food systems and Story County's role(s). The plan identifies obstacles and establishes strategic steps to overcome defined obstacles. In addition, responsible parties and times to achieve positive impact toward fulfilling the mission identified in this strategic plan are identified.

Local Food and Farms - Foundational Elements

Our Vision

Story County supports local food production just as any other business and economic development program. We will make continuous progress towards strengthening our local food economy.

Our local food economy will allow residents and visitors ease of access to food grown in our local foodshed. The food will be raised, delivered, preserved, and prepared in a way that maintains and enhances the life-giving nourishment of the food and the productivity of the landscape.

The system of distribution will facilitate a trusting relationship between the food producer and consumer. The food will be priced in a way that permits farmers to sustain excellence in providing a clean, highly nutritious supply, to pass that noble task onto succeeding generations, and to provide for a strong economic base.

The Mission

To promote a locally-based food and farming system that advances Story County's economic, environmental and social well-being, through public policy recommendations and implementation strategies incorporated into daily practices.

Local Food and Farms focuses on the following main areas inhibiting growth of our local food system: **Production**; **Infrastructure**; **Markets**; and **Coordination**.

PRODUCTION

INFRASTRUCTURE

MARKETS

COORDINATION

This strategic plan establishes recommendations to create an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable local food system for the Story County region. In the Assessment section that follows, for each of the four impediments listed above, *Local Food and Farms* identifies:

Obstacle(s)
Solution Strategy(ies)
Best Practices.

It is the solution strategies that, when put into action by Story County, will address obstacles, resulting in a strengthened local food system. This plan includes an Implementation section that outlines the solutions strategies and suggests specific projects to be undertaken to help overcome the obstacle, along with timeframes. Successful implementation results in the realization of the vision and fulfillment of the mission statement.

PRODUCTION

OBSTACLE 1: New and Diversifying Farmers

Local food production in Story County cannot increase without an increase in new farmers as well as current farmers willing to produce additional crops beyond corn and soybeans. Although there are 1,077 farms farming 328,000 acres, only 57 of those farms are producing for the local market. These local producers represent a total of 0.2 percent of the total agricultural sales for Story County (*The Census of Agriculture* - 2007). A significant increase in local food sales is a necessity before comprehensive infrastructure and market coordination can be successfully implemented.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 1.0:** Support new and diversifying farmer initiatives creating 100 new or diversifying farmers by 2020.

  Story County is home to organizations supporting new and diversifying farmers. These organizations provide a perfect outlet to help grow the number of producers in Story County. The organizations include, but are not limited to: Grow Your Small Market Farm, ISU Extension's Small Farm Sustainability program, ISU Value-Added Agricultural Program, Practical Farmers of Iowa, and ISU Extension Beginning Farmer Program. These organizations are characterized by direct farmer interaction, farmer-led leadership, production practice support, and a diversity of stakeholders.

  Story County should find creative arrangements to support these established organizations, including, but not limited to, establishing programs supporting professional development services to beginning or diversifying farmers residing in Story County through appropriate organizations.

  Story County should also explore ways to partner with the various entities listed above to help identify opportunities for increasing the number of new and diversifying farmers. This can be done by meeting with various groups to see what strategies Story County can develop and what initiatives can be supported to optimize results.

OBSTACLE 2: Farm Labor

Local food and farming production methods typically require more labor. Accessing good farm hands in the rural areas can be difficult at times. Farm labor associated with local foods includes both skilled and non-skilled laborers. Identifying such labor and removing barriers to engaging such individuals - such as language and/or cultural barriers - is key to increasing local food production.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 2.0:** Support and facilitate creative arrangements, mentorships, and volunteer opportunities for organizations including, but not limited to, AmeriCorps positions in Story County.
  AmeriCorps positions represent a great opportunity to cost-share labor costs associated with organizing a region's local food economy. Story County should partner with the University of Northern Iowa Center for Energy and Environmental Education.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 2.1:** Coordinate with the Iowa Workforce Development's "New Iowans" program to arrange for increased availability of skilled and semi-skilled farm laborers.
  New Iowan Centers established by Iowa Workforce Development offer workforce development services to persons who have recently moved to Iowa and are seeking employment. The centers are designed to support workers, businesses, and communities with information, community service referrals, job placement, translations, language training, and resettlement assistance, as well as technical and legal assistance concerning forms and documentation. Story County should partner with Iowa Workforce Development to identify opportunities for job placement and other services through the New Iowan Centers.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 2.2:** Support programs that introduce and engage youth and citizens in on-farm experiences.
  Story County Conservation sponsors a number of educational events throughout the year. Building on the program templates established by Story County Conservation, Story County should develop a local food and farming educational component following this framework established by Story County Conservation.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 2.3**: Establish a community garden program.

County-owned properties throughout Story County - both inside city limits as well in unincorporated areas - contain open spaces which could support community gardens. As a pilot program, Story County should evaluate the grounds at the Story County Justice Center in Nevada which contain a vast amount of open space to determine if some space could be used as an inmate community garden program. The garden would teach inmates new skills, while reducing the costs associated with purchase of produce for meals at the jail.

BEST PRACTICES – 2

AmeriCorps Volunteers

Wisconsin recently secured funding for 22 AmeriCorps positions working on farm to school programs across the state.

Full Circle Farm is located in the heart of the Silicon Valley. Next year they will be using AmeriCorps partnerships for farm hands and organizing a low income local food box.

Inmate Community Garden Programs

Rock County, Wisconsin correctional service division partnered with UW-Extension to facilitate an organized gardening program near the jail facility. Program outcomes included increased knowledge of gardening, life skills and healthy living. The inmates produced over 17,000 pounds of food in two years.

Inmates at the Scott County correctional facility, located in eastern Iowa, are learning "patience, respect of property and gardening skills". The garden is viewed as being very successful, producing 800 pounds of vegetables with plans underway to expand four times the current size. Scott County Sheriff's Sgt. William Boyd, who is in charge of the inmates, believes the men participating in the gardening program are learning skills they can use upon their release.

OBSTACLE 3: Accessing Farmland by Aspiring Local Farm and Food Producers

Accessing an appropriate size and affordable tract of farmland is one of the most difficult tasks for aspiring farmers. Local farm and food production in Story County is characterized by smaller acre production per farm. Based on current information, local food producers in Story County farm anywhere from one to 100 acres. Accessing productive farmland at this scale is difficult for aspiring farmers as many tracts of productive farmland are sold in larger acre holdings.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 3.1:** Support leasing public land for local food and farm production.
  Story County owns a small portion of tillable farmland, with portions of its land leased for commodity crop production. The County should consider renting a portion of its land holdings for local food and farm production either through a partnership with local mentoring organizations or through private leasing agreements and find local food and farm producers willing to lease the land. Additionally, the County should investigate opportunities for creative arrangements and partnerships utilizing public land for a beginning farmer incubator.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 3.2:** Undertake comprehensive review and assessment of adopted plans and regulations to define barriers.
  A long-standing goal of preserving prime agricultural lands is a foundational element of the *Story County Development Plan* and the *Story County Land Development Regulations.* These two documents guide and govern how property can be divided and the uses that are allowed on property in the unincorporated areas of Story County. With conventional commodity production, larger tracts of land are required; however, local producers tend to make use of smaller parcels of ground. Story County should review adopted plans and regulations to determine if any barriers to allow such types of development exist and review potential amendments needed to encourage such types. In addition, Story County should review the possibility of creating policies and incentives for those producing local foods such as, but not limited to, tax incentives for improvements to existing farm buildings. In addition, Story County should identify vacant parcels categorized by acres, as well as vacant farmsteads that offer opportunities for smaller-sized parcels.

BEST PRACTICES - 3

Several counties lease public land for crop production. In Illinois, there are examples of publicly-leased land used for local food and farm production, including Kendall County's parks which supply local food banks and Kane County which leases 16 acres for organic local food production.

INFRASTRUCTURE

OBSTACLE 4 Systems for Processing Local Food

In the existing system, local food is consumed seasonally as opportunities and systems for processing food are non-existent. As the productive volume of local food increases, the need for coordinated infrastructure, including smaller meat packing and poultry processing facilities, increases.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 4.1:** Support initiatives which sustain existing processing facilities and further the development of new facilities for local food.

  As the productive volume of local food increases, Story County should support opportunities which further the development of local food processing, including smaller meat packing and processing units. Supporting these systems will help local producer's access economies of scale, while creating economic development opportunities for the county. As needed, Story County should expand the infrastructure needed for local agricultural production and the processing and distribution of locally grown produce meats, dairy, and other products.

OBSTACLE 5: Systems for Distributing Local Food

The existing systems for distributing food rely on direct farmer delivery in which smaller volumes are transported direct to market by the farmers. These farmers are unable to access wholesale markets, in part because of inadequate systems of distribution. In addition, producers must meet requirements established by wholesale markets which can prohibit distribution in some venues. Small-scale farmers are often unable to sell their produce and processed meats directly to local markets such as grocery stores, schools, hospitals, prisons, and other institutional dining facilities. Food production and processing are very centralized in America, with most of our food grown and distributed by large-scale or corporate farms—some located in other nations.

Consumers overall are disconnected from one of the most important components for their own health and happiness—the food they eat. Rarely do they have contact with or personal knowledge about the farms and farmers who grow their food. As a result, most consumers have very limited control over the quality and safety of their food.

When small-scale farmers are able to sell their products to local stores and institutions, they gain new and reliable markets, consumers gain access to what is often higher-quality, more healthful food, and more food dollars are invested in the local economy.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 5.1:** Support initiatives which further the distribution and related facilities for local food, such as collaborative marketing strategies, and possibilities of establishing farmers' cooperatives.

  Story County should survey producers and consumers to identify the existing infrastructure to determine areas of strength, concern and over- as well as under-utilized facilities. Strategies to improve the needed infrastructure to levels needed to support local food production successfully should be budgeted and implemented.

  The need to enhance the processing and distribution infrastructure is recognized at the Federal government level, and grants and funding opportunities are present. Story County should actively seek funding opportunities in partnership with other entities to support the enhancement and growth of the processing and distribution system.

  Story County should review produce auctions to determine feasibility of such a distribution mechanism for the Story County Region. A produce auction is a market outlet for locally produced wholesale products. Fresh produce, as well as a variety of other agricultural products, are offered for sale to the highest bidder, and the auction charges the seller a commission, usually a percent of sales, to cover the auction's operating expenses. (University of Kentucky - College of Agriculture)

OBSTACLE 6: Telecommunication Infrastructure

Local food production requires fast access to bodies of knowledge for decision-making and problem solving. Existing telecommunication infrastructure in the rural areas is either limited to very poor access speeds or expensive and

geographically-limited broadband technology. Companies need to be able to find out what producers have - quantities and when available, requiring producers to be able to communicate effectively in several ways, including online.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 6.1:** Story County should advocate for rural broadband and facilitate and support opportunities which increase telecommunication access for the rural areas.
  Local farms and producers need fast and convenient access to information quickly to make decisions, communicate with existing and potential customers and markets, and engage in problem solving and successful marketing endeavors. Story County should facilitate the completion of a sophisticated rural telecommunication infrastructure through efforts, including, but not limited to: identifying and seeking grant funds to complete infrastructure improvements; facilitating discussions amongst customers and carriers; and mapping current inefficiencies and coverage.

MARKETS

OBSTACLE 7: Secure Markets for Wholesale Producers

Farmers either don't recognize the demand for locally-grown food or they perceive existing markets to be unreliable. Farmers growing larger volumes of food for local markets will require a variety of stable markets, reassuring their investment in resources and labor.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 7.1:** Formulate a procurement policy for Story County's food service facilities and purchases.
  Food service facilities managed by Story County, including the Sheriff's Department and Community Life Program, represent opportunities to implement a procurement policy regarding the purchase of locally-grown food. For such purchases made by Story County departments, allocating a small percentage of local first dollars would not only create additional markets for producers, but also leverage tax payer's dollars through local economic development. The County should formulate a local food procurement policy modeling other institutions currently involved in buying. In addition, the policy should specify the incorporation of locally grown/produced products to be served at County-sponsored events.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 7.2:** Educate the public about advantages of buying locally and regionally grown foods.
  One of the most important aspects of helping to nurture and facilitate the local food system in Story County is its potential impacts on the economy, and the opportunities it provides the region for economic development. Economists and policy-makers have long understood the importance of keeping products and services purchased by its consumers close to home. This circulates money though the economy creating more jobs and more income for everyone--commonly referred to as the multiplier effect.

Through various means, Story County can help provide information regarding the benefits of eating locally-produced goods and services. Building on partnerships established, Story County should establish a public education campaign (in conjunction with other entities such as Iowa State Extension) incorporating (but not limited to) the following strategies: consumer/producer education and awareness programs; online inventory of local producers and restaurants serving local foods; and link with local organizations to advertise local food purchasing opportunities when they become available (such as Farm to Folk). Story County should map and maintain the locations of producers, CSAs, community gardens, farmer markets, and other opportunities to purchase locally grown foods, placing such information on-line and provide information about the locations.

BEST PRACTICES - 7

Woodbury County, Iowa has been a national leader in government level support of local food policy. On January 10, 2006, the Woodbury County Board of Supervisors made history by adopting a 'local food purchase policy' mandating a percentage of their food served in the county jail be sourced locally. Additionally, the County created a local food brand titled "Sioux City Sue".

Iowa State University's Dining Services established a "Farm to ISU Program" setting forth a five-year strategic plan. The importance of the program is defined as follows: providing an opportunity for Iowa farmers, processors, and food entrepreneurs to profitably market their products; providing people with a healthy and affordable diet and fresh local foods when in season; providing safe and healthy foods grown with high levels of environmental stewardship; contributing to the vitality of rural and urban communities; and connecting Iowa State University to Iowa communities. The Farm to ISU program sets forth procurement goals for incorporating local foods into the menus and residential dining centers.

COORDINATION

OBSTACLE 8: Centralized Organization Coordinating Local Food

Many individual organizations, businesses, restaurants, governments, and farmers are isolated. There is no centralized means in which all of these organizations can address common concerns. The area currently has many organizations promoting local food including Wheatsfield Cooperative, Grow Your Small Market Farm, ISU Dining Services, Student Organic Farm, Hy-Vee, The Café, and Stomping Grounds. Bringing many of these existing local organizations along with policy makers and economic developers in a collaborative environment would be very productive. A local food and farm collaborative would include:

- Farmers producing local food;
- Infrastructure supporting local food;
- Consumers aware of the benefits for supporting local food; and
- Markets that sell local food.

Local food systems must develop in tandem with production, infrastructure, market access, and consumer awareness as these components reflect the "chicken or the egg dilemma". For example a farmer may struggle to expand their diversified operation because there is a lack of infrastructure support, but infrastructure cannot efficiently develop without farmers growing products. Farmers cannot expand or start a diversified operation without the assurance of a viable market, but restaurants, grocery stores and institutions, tend to shy away from sources that are inconsistent. Building the local food system will require a coordinated effort from a diversity of local stakeholders.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 8.1:** The Story County Board of Supervisors formally establish a "Food Council" as a recommending body regarding the local foods system in Story County, and provide technical support as well as in-kind support such as office space, funding and/or staff assistance.

A food council is a group of stakeholders that provides support to governments and citizens in developing policy and programs related to the local food supply. The members of a food council have a solid understanding of the local food system and represent a diversity of community interests.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 8.2:** The Story County Board of Supervisors formally and actively participates in a Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) through the Leopold Center.
  Iowa has many existing local food and farming action groups. One of the most successful local food groups is the Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) through the Leopold Center at Iowa State. The group's mission is to "support[s] education, conduct[s] research and facilitate[s] partnerships to increase investment and support of community-based, economically sustainable and environmentally and socially responsible regional food enterprise." The Regional Food Systems Working Group is structured by funding, cooperating, and bringing together autonomous local groups across Iowa for information sharing, support and continuous learning. Working in a collaborative support community is the best way to confront the complex obstacles. Appropriate and successful solutions are derived from the interaction with a diversity of stakeholders.

- **SOLUTION STRATEGY 8.3:** Ensure food security is considered in County and jurisdictional emergency preparedness plans.
  A centralized food system is vulnerable to sabotage - this point of view has never been more prevalent than in post-9/11 America. Our food is threatened not just by sabotage. A catastrophe, either natural or human-caused, which cuts off a community or region from the world, is vulnerable to famine. A more decentralized food system, one in which communities are growing more of their own food, is less prone to this risk. As Story County and the communities in Story County update emergency preparedness plans - including the Story County Multi-Jurisdictional Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan - mitigation strategies addressing local food and food security should be addressed and adopted.

BEST PRACTICES – 8

Existing RFSWG

There are currently six areas in Iowa either funded or supported by RFSWG. In northern Iowa, the counties of Bremer, Blackhawk, Benton, Grundy, and Tama began work years ago organizing local food systems. Today, they are the forerunners of local food systems development in Iowa with hundreds of residents meeting each month to plan for community actions which support health food systems. Additionally, the group has been able to leverage funds at the sum of approximately $500,000 from the Kellogg Foundation.

Pottawattamie County Farm to Fork Action Plan

Farm to Fork is part of the Southwest Iowa Food and Farm Initiative (SWIFFI). This is a multi-county coalition of individuals and groups working to build a regional food system in southwest Iowa. Strategies of the Farm to Fork Action Plan seek to continue to increase the number of beginning producers in the region, expand the number and diversity of local growers as well as farmer-led businesses, and build stronger relationships between consumers and producers in the region. To help accomplish such goals, a local foods coordinator was hired to help carry out the strategic plan and expand the Farm to Fork program. To accomplish these things, the coordinator created a food atlas and database of local producers. Pottawattamie County leaders identified economic development and a vibrant community as two of the strongest arguments for involvement in local and regional food systems work.

Food policy councils are established throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can be local (city and/or county) regional, or statewide. They have provided government officials and those interested in food a forum to identify policies that harness the potential of the food system to foster economic development, provide children and those in need with greater access to fresh and nutritious foods, and support stewardship of finite land and water resources.

SOLUTION STRATEGY 3.1: Support leasing public land for local food and farm production.

Map tillable farmland under County ownership.	• County Planning Staff works in GIS to map out County owned lands and perform soils analysis	10 staff hours **July 2012-August 2012**

SOLUTION STRATEGY 2.2: Support programs that introduce and engage youth and citizens in on-farm experiences.

Create public awareness of existing programs and curricula such as ISU's "Growing in the Garden"	• List information and contacts on the County's website. • Annual mailing to teachers in Story County to help build awareness of existing programs.	Ongoing

SOLUTION STRATEGY 1.0: Support new and diversifying farm initiatives creating 100 new farmers by 2020.

Identify all professional development services for beginning or diversifying farmers.	• Contact Leopold Center, Iowa State Extension, Iowa Department of Agriculture, and the Regional Food Systems Working Group for this information	Ongoing as opportunities arrive. Story County should support these efforts, but not be the lead agency.
Create pamphlet of information outlining professional development services and disseminate information online and through traditional means.	• County Planning Staff compiles all the information.	
Schedule meetings with organizations supporting new and diversifying farmers to highlight constraints and to identify opportunities for increasing numbers.	• Continue to attend Regional Food System Working Group meetings to discuss this issue and strategize. • Bring new information to the attention of the Board of Supervisors to discuss further opportunities.	
Complete a feasibility study to set up a beginning farmer incubator.	• Seek partnerships with other agencies, non-profits, and others to identify opportunities for grants and/or other funding mechanisms.	

SOLUTION STRATEGY 5.1: Support initiatives which further the distribution and related facilities for local food, such as collaborative marketing strategies, and possibilities of establishing farmers' cooperatives.

Support and/or actively seek funding opportunities to build infrastructure for a strong local food distribution system.	• Work with Leopold Center to identify funding opportunities. • Apply for as many applicable grants as feasible.	STRATEGY ON-HOLD AND WILL BE REVISITED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AFTER DISCUSSIONS REGARDING A RFSWG FOR STORY, BOONE, AND HARDIN COUNTIES HAS
Review produce auctions to determine feasibility for Story County as a distribution model.	• Review existing produce auctions in Iowa and Midwest. • Contact local food producers to gauge interest in marketing their produce this way.	

	• Contact grocery stores, restaurant and other foodservice enterprises to gauge interest. • Identify other barriers to this marketing model.	OCCURRED.

SOLUTION STRATEGY 2.3: Establish a community garden program.

Map opportunities to set up community gardens at County-owned facilities.	• Work with Facilities Management to identify areas that could be tilled for garden. • Use aerial photos to map land for potential gardens. • Contact county gardening clubs to gauge interest and network further opportunities. • Distribute map to potential growers. • Once opportunities are defined, work with other groups to design gardens, such as master gardeners and/or the Ames Community Garden Coalition.	25 staff hours **July 2012 – September 2012**
Contact service clubs and civic groups to identify partnership for funding and ongoing maintenance of community garden(s).	• Inform each of the goals of the County and gauge interest of their involvement. • Work to create partnerships for collaboration. • Create further action steps based on outcome of conversations and partnerships.	40 staff hours **October 2012 – January 2012**
Review successful inmate garden programs.	• Reach out to Prairie Rivers of Iowa RC&D to see if they can provide technical experience and identify potential grant/funding opportunities. • Review and compile information in a document to present to the Board of Supervisors and Story County Sheriff. • Meet with Story County mail management to identify interest in participation. • Strategize further action steps based on documents.	60 staff hours **January 2013 – June 2013**

SOLUTION STRATEGY 3.2: Undertake comprehensive review and assessment of adopted plans and regulations to define barriers.

Review existing policies – including the 35-acre minimum requirement of the A-1 District – to determine whether it poses limitations to growing a local food system.	• Contact other counties to determine what their regulations and issues pertaining to having a different lot size requirement. • Perform analysis of impact of current policy on land use in the county. • Provide document	20 staff hours **October 2011 – January 2012** **TASK COMPLETED!**

Map vacant parcels (categorized by acreage).	• County Planning staff works with the Assessor's office and GIS coordinator to identify these lands.	10 staff hours **December 2011** **TASK COMPLETED!**
Map vacant farmsteads.	• County Planning staff works with the Assessor's office and GIS coordinator to identify these lands.	10 staff hours **December 2011** **TASK COMPLETED!**
Review feasibility of establishing tax incentive programs	• Identify potential tax incentive programs to be implemented throughout the county. • Analyze the cost impact of each program.	30 staff hours **August – October 2012**