

Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition Update

March 2007

Web site: www.niffcoalition.org

List Serve: nefoodandfarm@iastate.edu

Mission: To support the development and marketing of locally grown agricultural products to enhance the lives of local citizens.

Goals:

- Provide an opportunity for existing and new producers to diversify.
- Explore the development of regional processing and storage facilities to add value to all agricultural products in the area.
- Increase sale consumption of locally grown food on a local, regional, and national level.

1. Assessment Committee Update:

- **Institutional Survey** – *To identify current and future purchasing patterns of institutions (schools, hospitals, care centers, restaurants, etc.) within our region.*
 - Over 140 surveys were returned. The data has been entered and Craig Chase has begun to analyze the data. Results and an analysis will be presented to Coalition members at our April 5 meeting.
- **Household Consumer Survey Update** – To identify current and potential purchasing patterns of local food products on household consumers in our region.
 - The test-pilot survey was completed with minimum of 10 people in each of the five counties. These test-pilot surveys were sent to Ames the first week in January. The survey was shorted and slightly modified. The survey was sent out to over 1200 consumer in the 5 county region last week.
 - We've approached a local writer (a previous magazine editor and current Web Content Coordinator at Luther College and Beef/Pork Producer with husband) to assist with news releases related to the various surveys and Food & Fitness Team meetings in each county. We will use grant funds budgeted for this task.
- **Asset Mapping** – What fruits, vegetables, dairy, poultry and meat products are produced in our region?

Craig Chase, Eric Nordschow, Mary Steen, Jim Artes and Brenda Ranum met with Tim Johnson (Iowa Farm Bureau Research Analyst) at the Dairy Center in Calmar to prepare him with information needed for this survey.

Tim will use GIS maps to visually create the following scenarios:

- 1st – Map of Institutions in 5 county region that currently sell or are potential sites to purchase local foods (restaurants, schools, colleges, hospitals, etc.)
- 2nd – Map of Farms currently producing and selling food directly to vendors/consumers in 5 county region
- 3rd – Map of Processing Centers (light processing; meat lockers, etc.) in region
- 4th – Map of Trails/RV Parks where tourists would travel, consume food --- opportunity for food institutions to make connection to local foods from producers, healthy foods, safe foods, etc.
- 5th – We discussed listing where current distributors of food are located that serve our region to discuss how to market excess produce.

- **Economic Analysis** – What economic impact does growing these fruits, vegetables, dairy products, poultry and meat products have on our region? (Committee: Craig, Eric and Mary)
 Dave Swenson will begin his work in April 2007. He will need the information prepared by Tim Johnson to begin his work. In summary, we are anticipating 3 scenarios:
 - adult and oldest child current;
 - adult and oldest child consuming 5 servings a day (including meat and dairy);
 - adult and oldest child 7 servings a day (including meat and dairy).
 The assumptions on production and consumption patterns will be same as the previous studies completed by Dave Swenson. That is, we will assume fruits and vegetables are produced seasonally and heavily consumed in the summer to reach the consumption requirements for the year. Meat and dairy will assume a smaller percentage of consumption monthly, but will be consumed year-round to meet consumption requirements. Craig Chase will work with Dave and we may need to hire Angie Tagtow (private consultant and former dietician for the Iowa Dept. of Public Health) to analyze data and connect to the new food pyramid.
- **Base-Line Survey** – What is the base-line sales of dollars locally grown food in our five county region?
 - Data is being collected from Institutions through the Institutional Survey. Craig will be able pull this data out in February when all the Institutional Survey data is entered.
- **Barriers/Challenges/Policy Committee** – In April a committee will be formed to start looking at barriers (local, state, and national) to growing and distributing food?

3. Education Committee Update:

- **Presentations:**

Presentations on NIFF have been made to the following organizations since January 2007:

- County Chamber Ag Committees
- Chamber of Commerce Meetings
- Economic Development Board Meetings
- Regional Supervisors/Engineer Meeting (6 county)
- Added Value Conference in Red Wing, MN
- NE Iowa Rural Vitality Committee (Farm Bureau, Ag Lenders, etc in region)
- NE Iowa Dairy Foundation Director and Board
- Winneshiek County Ag Luncheon
- Rotary Meetings

- **Small Grants to Producers**

The Northeast Iowa Food and Farm Coalition (NIFF) was pleased to be able to provide grants to local producers interested in starting or expanding local food production, processing, marketing or distribution in the five northeast Iowa counties of Allamakee, Clayton, Winneshiek, Fayette and Howard. A total of \$600 is available to each county.

The grant funds could be used for start-up or expansion costs related to planting new crops that will be sold for local consumption, such as grapes, nuts, fruits or vegetables. Producers might use the funds for development of hoop structures or greenhouses to expand their growing season. The funds could also be used to expand the processing capabilities of local food cooperatives to broaden their markets or to increase the shelf life of local foods. Projects related to the marketing or transportation of local foods were also considered.

This grant opportunity was part of a much larger effort to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles in the five-county region. These grant dollars were made available through the Leopold

Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the Regional Food Systems Working Group and Wallace Foundation Funds.

Grant funds awarded are to be spent by June, 2007. County projects awarded were:

ALLAMAKEE COUNTY

Greenhouse Covering

A \$300 award was given to a producer to purchase plastic covering and custom-made end walls for new hoop house which will allow early and late season vegetable production. Total cost of project is \$350.

Community Garden

A \$300 award was given to the Harpers Ferry Boosters to purchase seed, fertilizer, gas for a City Vegetable Garden. Produce will be sold to local restaurants and farmers market with proceed going to health and exercise projects for the town.

CLAYTON COUNTY

Greenhouse Construction

A \$250 award was given to a producer to assist in purchasing a 24' x 48' greenhouse to start his vegetable plants in the spring. He plants on one acre vegetables and sells to Grown Locally in Decorah and to the local Farmers Markets in Clayton County. Total Project cost is \$3000.

Greenhouse Lighting

A \$250 award was given to a producer toward the purchase four high pressure sodium light bulbs and fixtures for their new 20' x 24' greenhouse. This will allow them to grow fresh vegetables year-a-round. The light bulbs stimulate photosynthesis and result in healthier plants and larger produce. The lighting is also needed for spring seedling production. The year-a-round greenhouse will provide quality produce for a healthy lifestyle that customers are demanding from their nursery. Total project cost is \$1400.

FAYETTE COUNTY

Fayette County Economic Development provided matching funds for the following awards. One hundred dollars of the grant award was provided by the NIFF Coalition.

Fruit Trees

A \$600 award was given to a producer to start an orchard. The cost of the trees is estimated at \$14.50 per tree. The plan is to purchase 100 additional trees to fill an orchard that currently has 30 trees. The crop will be marketed direct to consumers through a roadside stand, farmers markets and pick your own.

Asparagus Plants

A \$250 award was given to a producer to buy asparagus roots for a 5 x 100 foot bed. The asparagus will be directly marketed to consumers at the West Union Farmers Market. Full production will take three years for this organic crop.

Greenhouse Construction

A \$600 award was given to a producer to construct a 34 x 96 foot greenhouse for starting vegetable plants. The vegetable and tomato plants will be sold directly to the consumer.

Hoophouse Construction

A \$250 award was given to a producer to build several hoop house structures to start plants during winter for retail in the spring. Hoop houses will also be used for winter cold storage of hardy plants. Additional expenses will include marketing of new products via the website.

Product Marketing

A \$600 award was given to market and promote locally produced goat meat to end users and through a distribution network. There is growing demand for goat meat because of its healthy and nutritional attributes and the expanding ethnic population in NE Iowa and beyond. The company plans to provide a high-quality goat meat product for year-round distribution.

Grape Plants

A \$250 award was given to a producer to purchase grape plants indigenous to NE Iowa to start a vineyard. There is a growing demand for locally grown grapes to the expanding winery businesses in the area. Grapes will be sold directly to wine producers. The estimated time to production is approximately three years.

WINNESHIEK COUNTY

Vineyard Expansion

A \$250 award was given to a producer to buy additional plants for his vineyard. The vineyard is 3 acres and produces wine and table grapes from 1250 plants. The consumption of table grapes continues to increase annually. In the northern plains area, until recently, one could not grow a seedless table grape. With the introduction of cold, hardy varieties from the University of Minnesota, now it is possible. These grapevines can yield up to 4.5 tons per acre of fresh, locally grown table grapes. Total project cost is \$535.

Fruit and Nut Trees

A \$340 award was given to a producer to buy fruit and nut trees to expand an existing vegetable and flower operation. They would like to plant apricots, pears, sweet cherries and peaches. In all, they plan to plant 31 trees and sweet cherries. The new trees would provide additional locally produced and consumed healthy products. It will also enable the producers to dry fruits locally to add even further value to their operation. Increased production on their farm will give them more profit and allow them to continue with their local marketing of produce through diversification. Total project cost is \$680

- **NICC Community Outreach Portal Update** –Lyle Luzum and Teresa Wiemerslage gave lessons and updates to Coalition members prior to the February meeting– This web site can provide the following collaboration tools to the NIFF Coalition: message boards/discussion forums, calendars, task lists, address books, file storage, web bookmarks, and chat

- **Update on State and Local Buy Fresh/Buy Local Campaign**

Local Food Directory

- A draft of the directory has been mailed to producers. The draft was sent along with a letter requesting contributions. We have received \$375 so far from producers for the BFBL directory.
- Funding for \$1,000 was requested from each of the Community Foundations in Allamakee, Winneshiek, Fayette, Clayton, Howard counties and the Upper Mississippi Gaming.

Intern

- Brandy Strub has been serving as an intern since December, 2006 and has been working on the following projects:
 - Preparing community foundation grant applications,
 - Entering data on the institutional surveys,
 - Layout for NIFF local food directory
 - She wrote 20 short news releases about the benefits of local and fresh food to be released May – September 2007
 - Her work was completed at the end of February

Buy Fresh/Buy Local Campaign

- We are one of 8 campaigns in the state.
 - The guidelines for the year have been signed
 - Our next big event will be the Winneshiek County Ag Chamber Luncheon on March 21st in Decorah. We will have a display for NIFF and BFBL and hopefully new directories to share, along with a door prize provided by GROWN Locally.
- **Women Outreaching Women Grant Proposal Update – Teresa**
The pre-proposal that we submitted to host a Women Outreaching Women conference in Decorah in 2008 was accepted and a full proposal was submitted March 1, 2007. This would mean \$15,000 would be available for our conference which is one of three.

Brief Description of Project:

Just as Iowa's agriculture landscape is swiftly changing, so are the roles of rural Iowa women. With these changes, there is a movement gaining momentum in Iowa. It is a movement led by women committed to making rural Iowa a better place today and in the future. These are women committed to stepping up their participation in their agricultural enterprises and in their local food systems.

In the past few years, Iowa State University Extension has developed successful partnerships with groups interested in helping women improve farm business skills, implement risk management strategies, build stronger local food economies, plan for farm succession, diversify their agricultural enterprises, and network. Three of these partnerships are joining together to meet these identified needs of rural Iowa women. These groups are Overall Women, the Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition, and Iowa Women in Agriculture. This coalition will offer three conferences, each with a different risk management focus: 1) farm transitioning, including succession and estate planning (held in Central Iowa) 2) changing the local food system by increasing the market share of locally produced foods (Northeast Iowa) and 3) farm business finances, marketing, and exploring value-added enterprises (Southeast Iowa). The coalition will generate improved promotion and coordination. By marketing these conferences jointly, we can better meet the different identified needs of women and direct them to the appropriate conference.

Another goal of the coalition is to form a statewide mentoring network. Before each conference, at least 5 women will be recruited to mentor other women during and following the conference in areas such as managing farm assets, value-added agriculture ventures, improving income through better planning, and marketing. Time for beginning this mentoring process will be built into each conference.

4. Financial Committee Update:

- Regional County Farm Bureau Boards awarded NIFF \$2,000 from their "Wellness" dollars to assist with the coordination of the Food & Fitness Team Meetings in five county region - Brenda
- Funding for \$1,000 was requested from each of the Community Foundations in Allamakee, Winneshiek, Fayette, Clayton, Howard counties and the Upper Mississippi Gaming.
- Presentation to the Sustainable Agriculture and Food System Funder's (SAFSF's) 5th Annual Forum, June 25-28, 2007 in Des Moines, Iowa; Rich Pirog, Brenda Ranum and Ann Mansfield will present a concurrent session for funders on June 28, 2007 about NIFF's effort to build a local food system in Northeast Iowa, explaining our connections/partnerships toward creating healthy communities
- See above – Grant request for Women Outreaching Women grant request for a conference.

5. Update on W.K. Kellogg Foundation Food & Fitness Initiative

Northeast Iowa will be visited by the W.K. Kellogg Food & Fitness Initiative Directors on Tuesday, Feb. 20. We are in the process of setting up small group meetings with the directors, with representatives from all five counties, as well as state funders.

Northeast Iowa submitted a full proposal for the Planning Phase of W.K. Kellogg Foundation's new national Food and Fitness Initiative. (For the Planning Phase, the Foundation anticipates awarding six (6) communities individual grants of approximately \$250,000 per year for two years.)

In the proposal for the Planning Phase we listed NE Iowa RC&D's Lora Friest serve as Co-Leader and Administrator; ISUE – Winneshiek County's Brenda Ranum serve as Co-Leader and Convener; and Luther College serves as the Evaluator.

Beginning in January, ISU Extension's Brenda Ranum, Ann Mansfield, RN and Facilitator for Luther College and Winneshiek County Medical Center began facilitating a series of 3-4 strategic planning meetings in the 5 county region (Winneshiek, Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette and Howard). The expenses (travel, paper, postage, printing, food, etc.) are being subsidized by funding from the local and state Farm Bureau offices. Each county has nominated between 15-40 community members to serve on a Food & Fitness County Planning Team. These individuals have been contacted to participate in the strategic planning meetings to identify assets and barriers related to the procurement and consumption of healthy local foods, as well as access to physical environments and build structures for physical activity and play. These meetings are being coordinated with the help of the five county ISU Extension Offices, with assistance from Economic Development and Public Health. These meetings will be held between January 2007 and May 2007.

A video to set the background for the reason why the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative is so important to Northeast Iowa was developed using brief presentations from the following four people: Jane Schadle, Iowa Dept. of Public Health; Craig Chase, ISU Extension Farm Management Specialist; Haleshia Johnson, Clayton County Hospital Foundation Director; and Dr. Brian Dougan, Winneshiek County Medical Center. This 35 minute video has been shown at all the County Food & Fitness Planning Team Meetings and has been well received.


The W.K. Kellogg Food & Fitness Program Directors traveled to Cedar Rapid for an interview visit on Feb. 20, 2007. Due to flight delays, a teleconference meeting between the two W.K. Kellogg Program Directors and a Health Assistant was arranged with various stakeholders from our five county region. We should hear in mid- March if we will receive their funding support.

Next Meetings:
Thursday, April 5, 2007, Noon – 2:00 pm
Thursday, May 3, 2007, Noon – 2:00 pm
Thursday, June 7, 2007, Noon – 2:00 pm

Southwest Iowa Food and Farm Initiative

(Cultivators - Growing a Regional Food System)

First Quarter Report
March 9, 2007



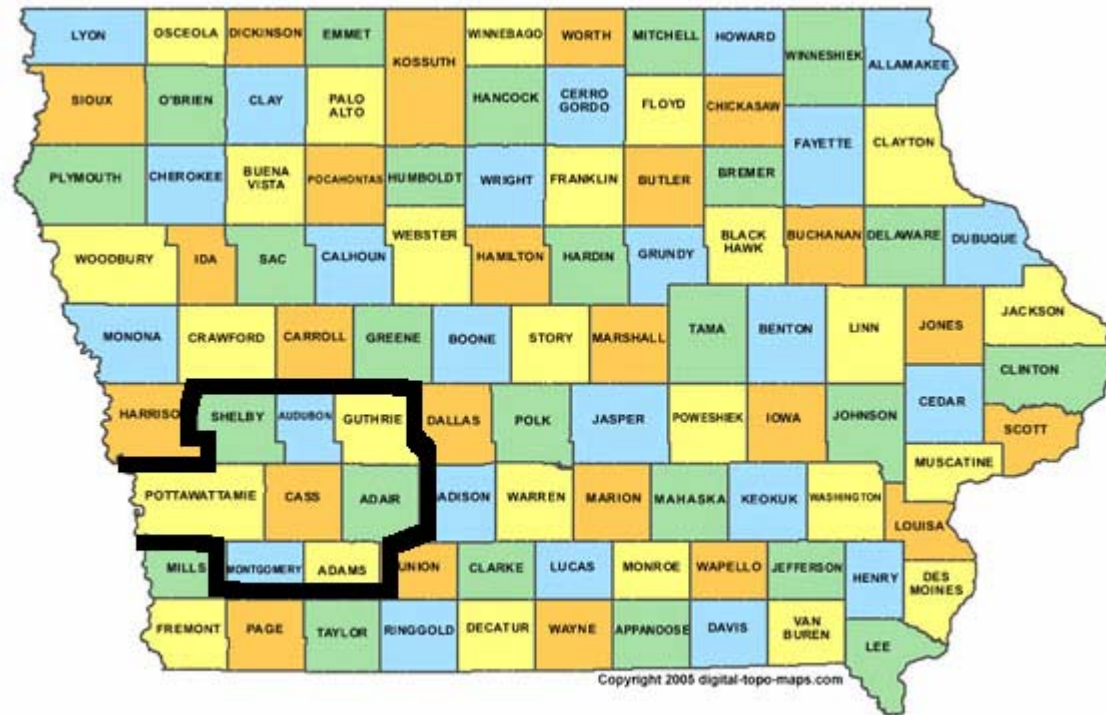
Cultivators: Who We Are

- Wallace Foundation for Research and Development
- Cass County Extension
- Cass County Memorial Hospital
- Cass County Public Health
- Cornell University (Ithaca, NY) Community Nutrition
- Global Horizons, LLC
- Harrisdale Homestead
- National Center for Appropriate Technology
- Women, Food and Agriculture

Cultivators: Where We Work

- 8-county area in Southwest Iowa

- Adair
- Adams
- Audubon
- Cass
- Guthrie
- Montgomery
- Pottawattomie
- Shelby



Cultivators Report

- Progress we have made
 - Laying the ground work
 - Developing communications tools
 - Planning first meeting
- Emily: Institutional Food Service
- Leveraging funding
- Challenges

Progress Made: Laying Ground Work

- Team development exercise with NCRCRD staff
- Phone conferences with Brenda Ranum and Ken Van Meter
- Made list of stakeholders and potential champions in Cass County to use as a model for contacts in other counties
- Developing list of stakeholders and potential champions in other 7 counties

Progress Made: Communications Tools

- Cultivators Fact Sheet completed
- Series of news and radio features being developed
- Cultivators web site under development
- Work underway on Food Atlas project
 - Individual county atlases
 - Regional atlas covering all 8 counties

Progress Made: First Meetings Planned

- Planning first meeting with representatives from all counties—week of March 19th
 - Ken will attend first meeting
- Representatives from first meeting will recruit for second, larger meeting—week of April 9
- Plan to tape Ken to use with groups or individuals who can not attend

Emily Kregel

- Cass County Memorial Hospital Dietitian
- Pioneered institutional purchases of local foods in Cass County
- Accomplishments
- Challenges

Leveraging Collaborations

- Wallace Foundation for Rural Research and Development collaborations:
 - Southwest Iowa Coalition
 - Grow Iowa Foundation
- Result: Rural Development Resource Center
 - Entrepreneurial Center
 - Mentors for expanding & new business startups

Leveraging Funding

- Meeting with Iowa West Foundation
 - “Planning is the cheapest and the best”—Reed Morgan, Grants Program Director
 - Interested in matching \$ for planning
 - Multiphase planning as we progress
- Pottawattamie Co. Board of Supervisors
 - Interest in potential of distribution and processing facility in Pottawattamie County
 - Watching for results of Leopold grant with Floyd Boulevard Local Foods Market

Challenges and Issues

- New concept for our area requiring more education than we had thought
- Coordination and leadership still a “work in progress” ...
 - All Cultivators have full time jobs already
 - Need specific person to fill coordinator role
- Seasonal timing important

Questions for the Group

- How have other groups coped with the need for a dedicated coordinator of their food systems work?
- More ideas on educating and communicating the food system concept and its benefits to the communities in our targeted counties?
 - How can we bring lenders on board?

Questions for the Group

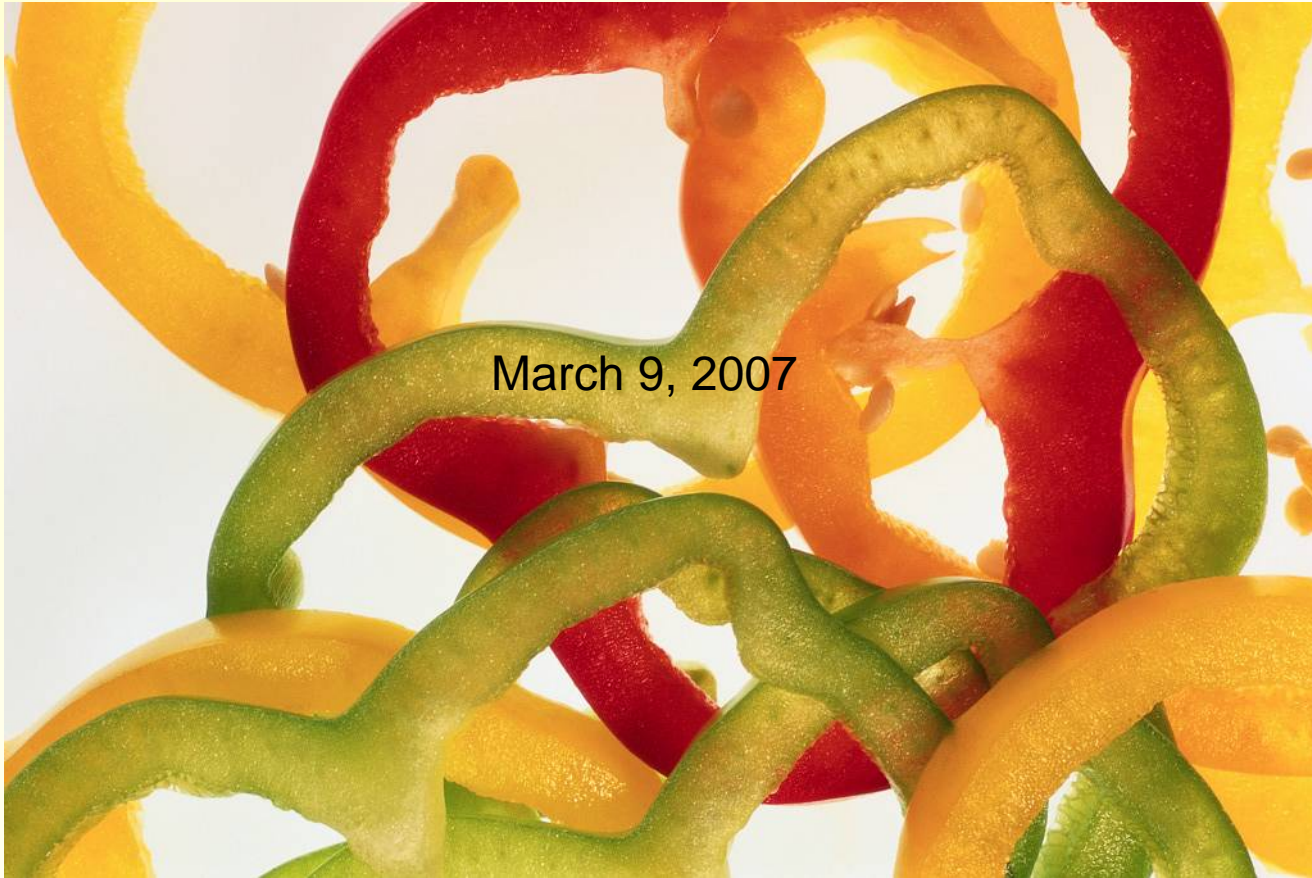
- How to encourage production of new crops in today's \$4 corn environment?
- Are young farmers a target audience we should seek out?
- Is Buy Fresh/Buy Local going to become the identifying factor among local food movements across Iowa or nation?

Pathfinders

Southeast Iowa

Southeast Iowa Food Network

March 9, 2007



Presenting Today

Detra Dettmann

Pathfinders Resource Conservation & Development

Mary Carter

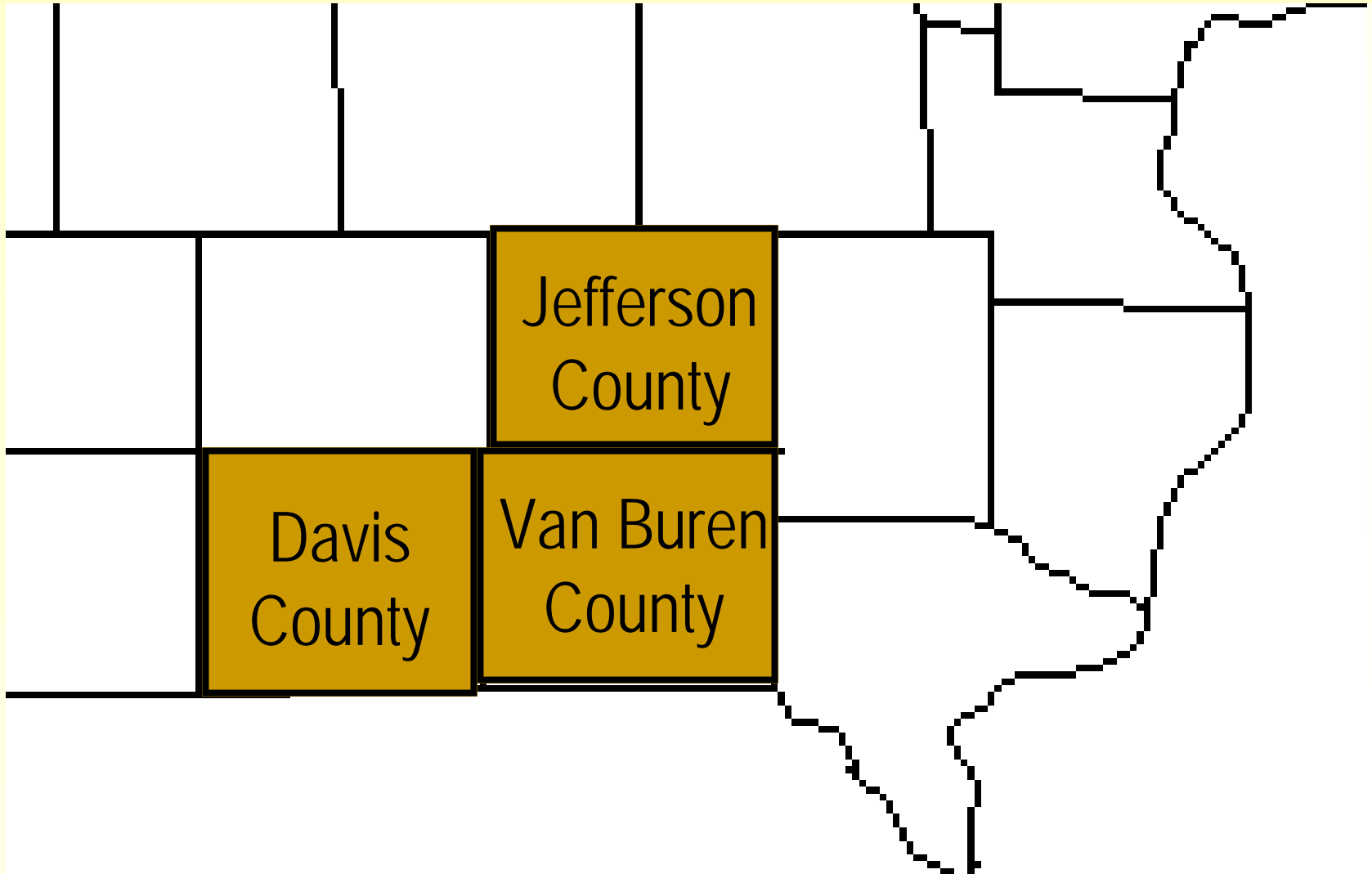
Fairfield BUY FRESH BUY LOCAL Coordinator

Neric Smith

Jefferson County Education Director

Southeast Iowa Food Network

Area



Key Elements SE Iowa
has been working on

Key Element

Social resources / key champions

Hosted two meetings with Ken Meter.

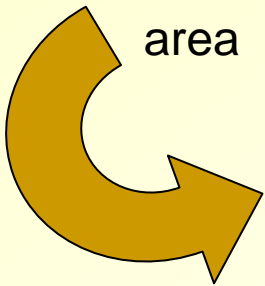
Second meeting titled “*Vibrant Farms
in SE Iowa.*”



Social resources / key champions

Next steps to follow:

1. Identify other key individuals
2. Empower and engage these individuals
3. Begin work on strategic plan for area



With strategic plan in place:

- *Framework of priorities*
- *Specific outcomes*
- *Engage financial resources*
- *Leverage resources*



Key Element

Markets & Viable Infrastructure



Concerted effort to enter producers into MarketMaker and to educate consumers about the program



Success



- Gaining an identity
- Conversation is started
- Momentum continues

Challenges

- Bridge traditional and non-traditional ag groups
- Formulate a clear mission



Questions

- What baseline data are the other groups collecting?
- How are you collecting it?
- Suggestions to improve the efficiency of data collection?



Contact Information

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