

Regional Food Systems Working Group Overview



Value Chain



Partnerships

*An Iowa-Based Network for Food
and Agriculture Working Groups*

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Value Chain Partnerships:

An Iowa-based Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups

Pork Niche Market



Grass-Based Livestock



Fruit and Vegetable



Regional Food Systems



Small Meat Processors

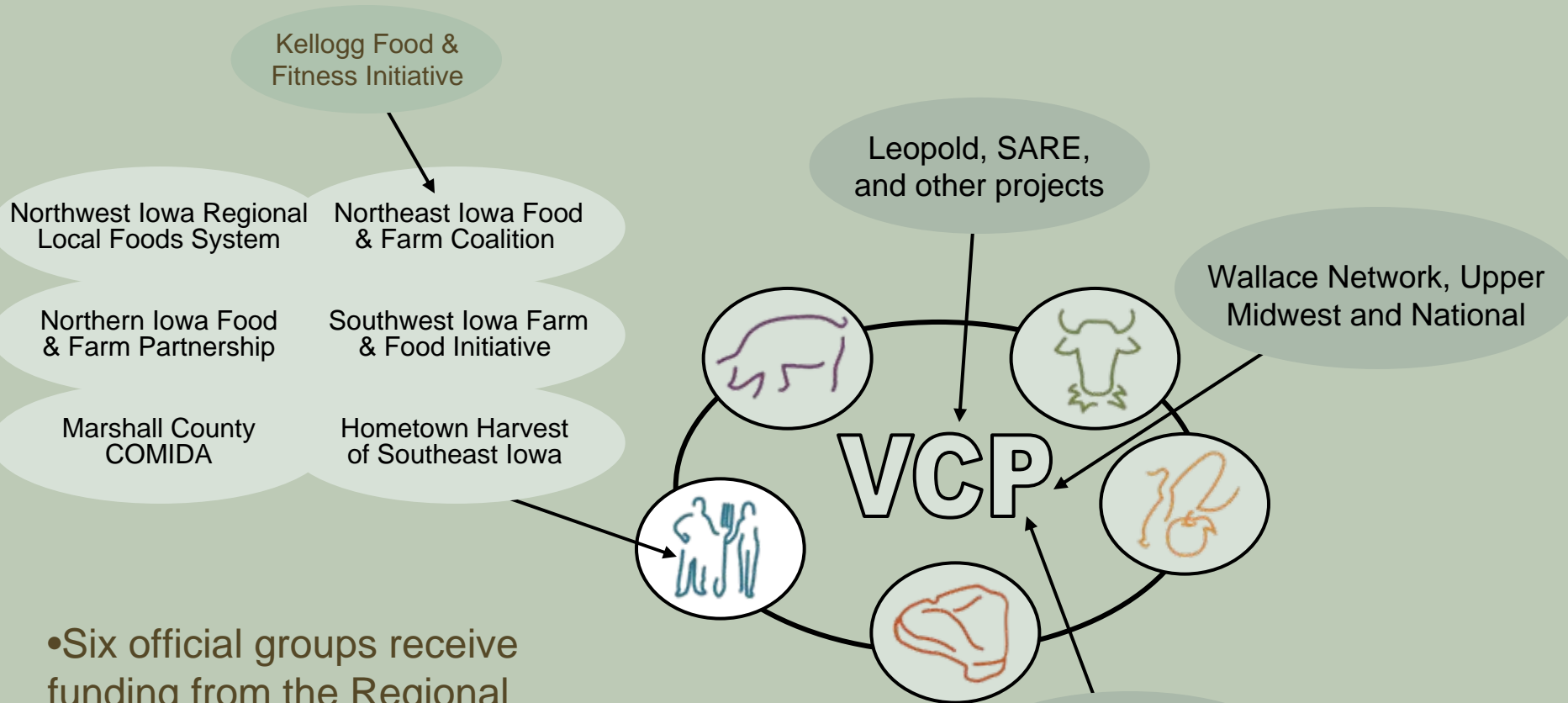


The Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) is one of the 5 working groups associated with Value Chain Partnerships





Value Chain Partnerships: An Iowa-based Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups



- Six official groups receive funding from the Regional Food Systems Working Group
- Additional groups also participate

* On-Farm Energy, Food Access and Health, Immigrant Farmers



Regional Food Systems Working Group

- RFSWG's mission is to conduct research, support education, and facilitate partnerships to increase investment and support of community-based, economically sustainable, and environmentally and socially responsible food enterprises
 - Initiated in 2003
 - Comprised of more than 20 organizations
 - Part of Value Chain Partnerships and the Leopold Center's Marketing and Food Systems Initiative





RFSWG Objectives

- Identify the key elements found in specific geographic areas that create a vibrant and sustainable regional food system
- Work with leaders and food businesses in specific geographic areas and/or communities to identify and support the key elements that are not yet well developed
- Help identify and measure key indicators that determine whether there is a positive change in the regional food system as a result of projects or programs
- Develop and implement a process for continuous learning across Iowa about what it takes to make a regional food system more vibrant and sustainable





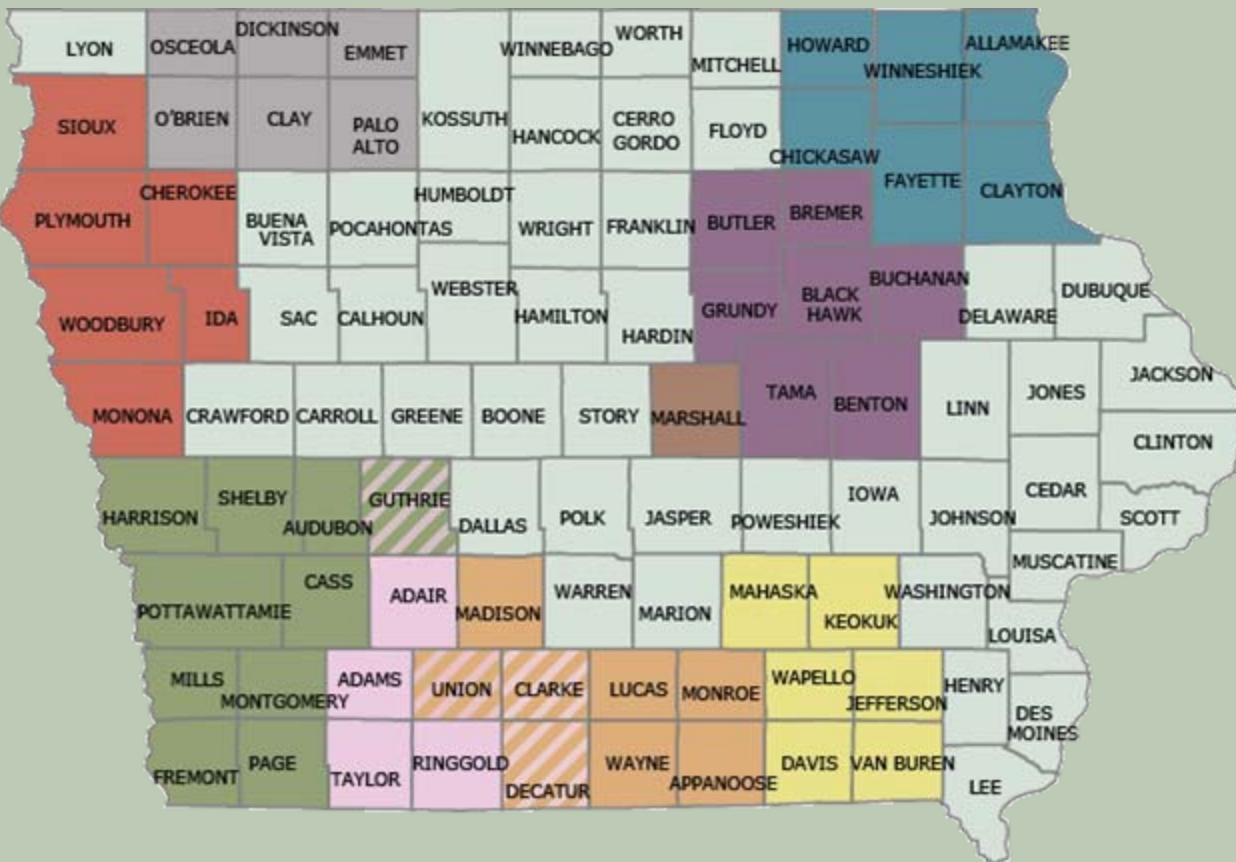
How RFSWG functions

- Group meets quarterly to share information, network, and identify new opportunities
- Seed grants awarded to local groups to strengthen key elements needed to build a more resilient food system
- Funds used for planning, assessment, coordination, leadership development, and other activities proposed by each group
- Experienced groups provide feedback as new groups develop





Regional Food Systems Working Groups in Iowa



- **Northwest Iowa Regional Local Foods**
- Iowa Great Lakes Local Foods Network
- **Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition**
- **Northern Iowa Food & Farm Partnership**
- Harvest from the Heart (COMIDA)
- Southwest Iowa Food & Farm Initiative
- **Farm Fresh, Local Harvest Food Alliance**
- **South-Central Iowa Area Partnership**
- **Hometown Harvest of Southeast Iowa**

Hatched counties indicate a county belonging to more than one local group.





Northeast Iowa Food & Farming Coalition (NIFF)

- The NIFF Coalition's mission is to support the development and marketing of locally grown agricultural products to enhance the lives of local citizens
- Its goals are to:
 - 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





Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition (NIFF)

- The NIFF Coalition's successes include:
 - In two years, the initial \$20,000 provided by the RFSWG in 2006 to support the NIFF Coalition has leveraged approximately \$1.2 million in food and fiber infrastructure and resources for the region
 - Includes investment in greenhouses, apple and pear trees, grapes, poultry expansions, garden expansions, honey bee production, farm stand marketing, packing shed construction, hydroponic production, etc.
 - Included in \$1.2 million is a \$500,000 planning grant for the NE Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
 - Increase of more than \$377,000 in local food purchases from four institutions (2 years)
 - NIFF Coalition has documented more than \$222,000 in increased local food sales from farmers, restaurants, food co-ops





Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition (NIFF)

- The NIFF Coalition applied for and received a Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI) grant from the Kellogg Foundation
- FFI strategies include:
 - Ensuring that school district policies and practices support healthy living of children, families, and community members
 - Ensuring that fresh, local, healthy food is available and affordable in all communities, neighborhoods, and institutions
 - Ensuring that communities have a built environment that supports abundant opportunities for physical activity and play





Hometown Harvest (Southeast Iowa)

- Hometown Harvest's mission is to help align the goals and needs of food consumers, food buyers, and food producers to create a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable local food economy.
- The group is led by Pathfinders RC&D in Fairfield, Iowa
 - Its leadership team includes representation from all six participating counties





Hometown Harvest (Southeast Iowa)

- Education and Public Outreach
 - Creating a regular Local Food Spotlight (feature individual producers, crops, retail businesses, etc.) and submit it to newspapers in the six-county area
 - Encouraging and facilitating Farm to School programs
 - Goal of starting 6 programs in the region in 2009–2010
 - Awarding mini-grants to schools to facilitate local food purchasing
 - Setting up at farmers' markets to interact and talk with public
 - Website-sharing information about Hometown Harvest, resources, other local food efforts, educational materials, etc.
 - New logo developed to assist “brand” recognition





Hometown Harvest (Southeast Iowa)

- Support for Farmers and Producers
 - Awarded mini-grants to producers for two years
 - Providing “email” alerts to inform producers about upcoming workshops, grant deadlines, and other items of interest
 - Researching and applying for grants to increase local food production
 - Determined market feasibility for a farmer-owned aggregation and distribution cooperative
 - Hired a Local Food Coordinator in 2009





Hometown Harvest (Southeast Iowa)

- Recent events:
 - “Weekends on the Farm”: tours of local farms (ongoing through September)
 - 2009 edition of the Local Food Directory printed (6,000 copies)
 - Hosting Tri State Local Food Conference in September 2009, titled “Producing Sustainability”





Northern Iowa Food & Farm Partnership (Waterloo/Cedar Falls)

- The Northern Iowa Food and Farm Partnership strengthens the local food economy in Iowa by:
 - Publishing both a printed and an online directory of local growers and participating food businesses and institutions
 - Notifying food buyers of local food availability on a weekly basis
 - Promoting farmers markets, organizing farm tours, and sponsoring regional food festivals and related events
 - Managing our local Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign
 - Participating in regional food systems working groups, collaborating with other food systems communities of practice, and sharing our successes with other communities and policy makers
 - Securing funding to ensure our organization's future and recruiting new food campaigns join us in our work
- The partnership is led by the UNI Center for Energy and Environmental Education





Northern Iowa Food & Farm Partnership (Waterloo/Cedar Falls)

- Successes include:
 - The move from a single leader of this work (on a volunteer basis) to the Northern Iowa Food & Farm Partnership
 - Involving many more institutional food buyers
 - Investing in the development of a farmer distribution network
 - Fostering leadership in public schools and local governments





Northern Iowa Food and Farm Partnership (Waterloo/Cedar Falls)

- Additional successes:
 - NIFFP has made connections between local producers and institutions
 - Currently purchasing some food items produced locally:
 - 15 restaurants
 - 1 college (UNI)
 - 1 hospital (Allen Memorial in Waterloo)
 - 5 retirement Homes
 - 7 grocery stores
 - 2 school districts
 - Sales of local foods in the area totaled approximately \$2.5 million in 2008
 - For each \$1 in grant money received, \$7 of local food purchases were created and retained in the local economy





COMIDA (County of Marshall Investing in Diversified Agriculture)

- COMIDA's goal is to connect local growers with buyers
- COMIDA is a partnership between Iowa State University Extension, Marshalltown Community College, Prairie Rivers RC&D, and Marshalltown Chamber of Commerce





COMIDA (County of Marshall Investing in Diversified Agriculture)

- COMIDA is working with the Marshalltown Community College “Start Your Own Diversified Farm” eight-week beginning farmer program
 - Program is offered in English and Spanish
 - Provides graduates of the program access to lease organic crop ground at the college
 - Micro-loans have been made available





COMIDA (County of Marshall Investing in Diversified Agriculture)

- 12 of the participants will be farming at the MCC farm, selling produce to local markets and at the Downtown Des Moines Farmers' Market
- 18 people from diverse backgrounds (Anglo, Mexican, Sudanese) graduated from program on March 8, 2009



COMIDA (County of Marshall Investing in Diversified Agriculture)

- The group will capitalize on a recent survey of Marshalltown groceries and restaurants:
 - More than 50% of surveyed businesses have bought some items from local farmers in the past
 - 73% would like to have more opportunities to establish new or stronger links with local producers





Southwest Iowa Food and Farming Initiative (SWIFFI)

- SWIFFI is a multi-county coalition of individuals and organizations that are working to build a regional food system in Southwest Iowa
- SWIFFI's vision is to build a sustainable regional food system linking production, processing, distribution, and consumption for better health, food security, and community and economic development





Southwest Iowa Food and Farming Initiative (SWIFFI)

- Participants:

- Funders

- Iowa West Foundation
 - Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors
 - Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

- Partners

- Henry A. Wallace Country Life Center
 - Adams County Cooperative Extension
 - Audubon County Cooperative Extension
 - Cass County Cooperative Extension
 - Cass County Memorial Hospital
 - Harrisdale Homestead
 - Iowa Farmers Union
 - Montgomery County Cooperative Extension
 - Golden Hills RC&D
 - Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors
 - Shelby County Cooperative Extension





Southwest Iowa Food and Farming Initiative (SWIFFI)

- Group efforts:
 - SWIFFI/Pottawattamie County Farm to Fork has recently hired a regional foods coordinator
 - SWIFFI mentors each county in their area as they build a county food council
 - Mini-grants: SWIFFI awarded 12 grants totaling \$4,000 in 2008 to producers and retailers to assist in the advancement of local food production and consumption





Southwest Iowa Food and Farming Initiative (SWIFFI)

- Group efforts:
 - Food producer and buyer interviews conducted May 2008 to identify needs
 - Individual county food mapping begun, and will finish this year





Northwest Iowa/ Woodbury County

- Past efforts have involved Woodbury County Board of Supervisors to develop incentive policies for farmer transition to organic production, the first such program in the nation
- Woodbury Co. “Local Food Purchase Policy”: mandating county offices purchase local (100 mile radius) and organic food when possible
- “Sioux City Sue”: logo developed for marketing locally produced food
- Group is currently seeking to rebuild leadership in the area, especially in outlying counties





Other groups that participate in RFSWG

- RFSWG led to the formation of the Iowa Valley Regional Food Initiative in January 2007
- With funding from the Leopold Center and other partners, the Iowa Valley Regional Food Initiative worked diligently to:
 - Address regional food concerns
 - Develop a draft local food system strategic plan
 - Provide the impetus to develop an innovative food and agriculture park facility in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City corridor





Other groups that participate in RFSWG

- Buy Fresh, Buy Local chapters
 - National organization overseen by FoodRoutes Network
 - In Iowa, sponsored by Practical Farmers of Iowa
 - 10 groups in Iowa (one in north-central Iowa)
 - Humboldt, Kossuth Counties included in Prairie Partners Buy Fresh, Buy Local chapter
- Iowa Farm to School
 - Currently 9 chapters in Iowa:
 - Price Lab
 - South Clay
 - Independence Area
 - I-Food
 - Lakeside Area
 - Atlantic Farm
 - Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative
 - Villages – Van Buren Community School District
 - Oelwein





Measuring success

- Each local group collects local food sales data
- Each group tracks leveraging of local and state funds
- County government investing in local foods in Pottawattamie, Linn, Blackhawk, and Cass counties
- Involvement of county foundations
- Shift in existing businesses
- Accelerated learning through sharing of success and challenges

