

Farmland Preservation Strategies

Agency Support Activities

One estimate puts the loss of farmland to nonagricultural development in the United States at about 1 million acres per year. Some communities are happy to trade some farmland for residential and commercial development. For residents in these towns sprawl can mean more jobs or a better way of life. For other communities, loss of farmland not only involves loss of business, but also loss of a sense of identity and quality of life. However, even where compromises must be made, farmland can be preserved to continue to make important economic and non-economic contributions to the community. The advent of the concept of *smart growth* (www.smartgrowth.org) came about in recent years as a way to balance these interests of the community.

The best long-term strategy for preserving farmland is, of course, a working landscape that is supported by a diversified and entrepreneurial farm community. However, communities can tap a growing list of farmland preservation strategies if the pace of non-farm growth is faster than the pace of the community's establishment of a viable long-term local food and agriculture system. These stop-gap measures can be generally classified into three groups: (1) regulatory tools; (2) market-based incentives; and (3) voluntary strategies. These differ in how quickly and how permanently they preserve land and how expensive they may be to taxpayers.

Regulatory tools include property-tax relief, zoning, comprehensive planning, urban-growth boundaries, and agricultural districts. These rely on passage and enforcement of local laws to help farmers and protect farmland. These tools are relatively quick to get in place, but the politics of public control of private lands is almost always a sticking point. Even farmers may have problems in supporting such land regulation.

Market-based incentives include the purchase or transfer of development rights. These are strategies for compensating farmland owners for the loss of their right to develop their properties. The costs to preserve a viable core of farmland can be extraordinarily expensive, and so this measure is typically only successful in wealthy communities on the urban fringe.

Voluntary strategies include cluster developments and "planned-unit" developments. These are the least controversial methods of farmland preservation, but also the most difficult to implement because they can reduce profits on the sale or development of land.

State-of-the-Art Farmland Preservation in Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor, Michigan)

The Agricultural Lands and Open Space Preservation Plan of Washtenaw County, Michigan, was defeated in a 1998 election, but the county government is keeping the report

available for the public to view on its Web site (see excerpts and the Web address for the full report in Appendix C, page 149). This is a valuable model of local land-use planning that includes community visioning, consensus-building and state-of-the-art farmland preservation strategies. While not for every growing community, the report does provide a glimpse at the full range of farmland preservation techniques.

References and Resources for Farmland Preservation

American Farmland Trust, 1920 N Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 659-5170; farmlandinfo.org. Specific resources include:

- AFT Farmland Protection Toolbox: farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/tafs-fptool.html.
- AFT Farmland Information Library: farmlandinfo.org/fic.

Land Trust Alliance, 1319 F Street NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC 20004; (202) 638-4725; Web site www.lta.org.

Trust for Public Land, 116 New Montgomery Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105; (415) 495-4014; Web site www.tpl.org.

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Resource tip



Copies of the Agricultural Lands and Open Space Preservation Plan of Washtenaw County, Michigan, are available for \$15.00 plus \$1.00 for shipping and handling from the Washtenaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission, attn: Terry Brinkman, P.O. Box 8645, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8645, or on the Web at www.co.washtenaw.mi.us/CURRENT/agtoc.html.

<h3>Financing Agriculture Development</h3>	<h3>Agency Support Activities</h3>
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A number of federal grant programs (and a growing number of state programs) are available for communities and organizations for funding food and agriculture systems development. These funds may be used to establish locally administered loan programs for agricultural entrepreneurs, as well as for grants and low-interest loans to finance agriculture development projects. Establishing local (e.g., county) agriculture development positions, however, are difficult to fund with grants, and are more typically supported as part of county Cooperative Extension, economic development, or planning agency department funding.

Here are some basic funding sources available from the federal government. Contact your state's department of agriculture to see what additional programs are available in your state.

Federal Grant Programs

Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEGs)

USDA Rural Development makes grants to finance and facilitate development of small and emerging private businesses in areas with up to 50,000 in population. Eligibility is limited to public agencies or municipalities and nonprofit groups. Grants can be used for land acquisition and development, construction, equipment, access streets and roads, parking areas, utility and service extensions, refinancing, fees and technical assistance. Grants may also be used to establish revolving loan funds. For more information, contact:

Rural Business Enterprise National Program Office
Carole Boyko
USDA, Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS)
Room 6868 South Building, Stop 3225
Washington, DC 20250
(202) 720-1400; fax: (202) 720-2213
Web site www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.htm

Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOGs)

Grants may be made to promote sustainable economic development in rural communities when sufficient financial strength and expertise in activities proposed in an application are shown to ensure accomplishment of the grant program activities and objectives. Eligibility is similar to RBEGs.

Wayne Stansbery
Rural Business-Cooperative Service
Specialty Lenders Division
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 3225
Washington, DC 20250-1521
(202) 720-6819; fax (202) 720-2213
E-mail: wstansbe@rus.usda.gov
Web site www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbog.htm

Appalachian Regional Commission Grants

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) covers 13 states and 406 counties (see Figure 18). ARC provides “programs grants” which are awarded to state or local agencies and governmental entities (such as economic-development authorities), local governing boards (such as county councils), and nonprofit organizations (such as schools or organizations that build low-cost housing). All grants must conform to the five goals identified by the commission in its strategic plan, and must be approved by the governor of the state in which the project is located. The five goals include:

1. Appalachian residents will have the skills and knowledge necessary to compete in the world economy in the 21st century.
2. Appalachian communities will have the physical infrastructure necessary for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life.
3. The people and organizations of Appalachia will have the vision and capacity to mobilize and work together for sustained economic progress and improvement of their communities
4. Appalachian residents will have access to financial and technical resources to help build dynamic and self-sustaining local economies.
5. Appalachian residents will have access to affordable, quality health care.

Figure 18. Area served by the Appalachian Regional Commission



Broadly defined, agriculture development projects may easily fit under all of the first four goals. For more information on ARC programs, visit its Web site: www.arc.gov.

Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers

This program is designed to assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (including women and people of color) to own and operate farms, participate in agricultural programs, and become fully integrated into the agricultural community. Funds are available to qualifying community organizations and public agencies that work with socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers National Program Office
 Sherie Hinton Henry, Acting Director
 (202) 720-6350; (800) 880-4183; fax (202) 720-7489
 Web site www.fsa.usda.gov/DAFL/disadvan.htm

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)

SARE farmer grants may be used to test the practical merit of a practice or idea that might contribute to sustainability. Individuals can be awarded up to \$5,000 for research, and groups of three or more producers can be awarded up to \$10,000 from the USDA program for working on creative marketing projects. Funding decisions are

made at the SARE regional office level. For a list of regional offices visit National SARE's Web site at www.sare.org.

Community Food Projects for Low-Income Residents

This new program supports the development of community food projects designed to meet the food needs of low-income people; increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own needs; and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues.

Other objectives of the program are to (1) develop linkages between two or more sectors of the food system; (2) support the development of entrepreneurial projects; (3) develop innovative linkages between the for-profit and nonprofit food sectors; and (4) encourage long-term planning activities and multisystem, interagency collaborations.

A match of 50 percent non-federal support for a project is required during a grant's term. The non-federal share may be provided through payment in cash or in-kind contributions in the form of facilities, equipment or services. The non-federal share may be derived from state or local governments, or from private sources.

Community Food Projects for Low-Income Residents National Program Office
Dr. Mark R. Bailey, (202) 401-6488 and Dr. Elizabeth Tuckermanty, (202) 205-0241
Program Co-Directors
USDA-CSREES, Stop 2241
Washington, DC 20250-2241
E-mail: m Bailey@reeusda.gov or etuckermanty@reeusda.gov.

Loan Programs

Business and Industrial Loan Guarantees

The Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program provides guarantees on loans to improve, develop or finance business, industry and employment, and to improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities, including pollution abatement and control. This is achieved through bolstering existing private credit structures by guaranteeing quality loans, which provides lasting community benefits.

Business and Industrial (B&I) Direct Loans

The Business and Industry (B&I) Direct Loan Program provides direct loans to improve, develop or finance business, industry and employment, and to improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities, including pollution abatement and control.

Rural Development-Intermediary Relending Program (IRP)

The purpose of IRP is to finance business facilities and community-development projects in rural areas. This is achieved through loans made by Rural Development to intermediaries. Intermediaries establish revolving loan funds so that collections from loans made to ultimate recipients (in excess of necessary operating expenses and debt payments) are used to make new loans from the revolving fund. Relending in a city with a population of 25,000 or more is ineligible. Financing is limited to 75 percent of the total cost of the ultimate recipient's project, up to \$250,000.

Rural Economic Development Loans and Grant Program (REDLG)

The REDLG program makes direct zero-interest loans and grants to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) electric and telecommunication utilities that use the funds to provide financing for business and community-development projects. Loans are provided to finance a broad array of projects, including for-profit businesses. Grants are provided to the RUS utility to establish revolving loan funds, which are used to finance activities for such purposes as community-development assistance, education and training for economic development, medical care, telecommunications for education, job training, medical services, business incubators and technical assistance. Program funds can be used for value-added projects.

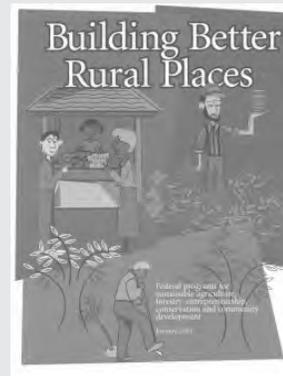
REDLG National Program Office
Mark Wyatt, Team Leader
USDA, Rural Business-Cooperative Service
Specialty Lender Division
14th and Independence Avenue, SW, STOP
3225
Washington, DC 20250
(202) 720-1400; fax (202) 720-2213
E-mail: mwyatt@rus.usda.gov

References and Resources for Financing Agriculture Development

Rural Development-USDA
Rural Business-Cooperative Service Administrator, Rural Business Cooperative Service,
(701) 530-2065 or (800) 582-7584, ext. 5;
Web site www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/index.html.

Resource tip: One-stop shopping for federal funding sources

Building Better Rural Places provides a comprehensive listing of federal funding programs related agriculture, forestry, conservation and community development. It was published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in collaboration with The Michael Fields Agricultural Institute.



A PDF version (152 pages, 789 KB) can be downloaded at www.attra.org/guide.

Summary

In this chapter we have examined some of the current *Growing Home* food and agriculture system development projects and strategies. These vary greatly by size, complexity and organizational difficulty. But they share the characteristics of bringing people together around common interests, and, in this process, both utilize and generate social capital. In Chapter 4 we will examine in detail how you can make agriculture and food system development happen in your community.

Chapter 3 Additional References and Resources

Kuehn, D., and D. Hilchey. 2001. Agritourism in New York: Management and operations. New York Sea Grant Fact Sheet. New York Sea Grant Extension Program, Oswego, NY.

Lyson, Thomas A. 2000. Moving toward civic agriculture. *Choices*. Third Quarter: 42–45.

Lyson, Thomas A. and Judy Green. 1999. The agricultural marketscape: A framework for sustaining agriculture and communities in the Northeast. *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*, 15(2/3):133–150.

Poe, G., R.K. Koelsch, N.L. Bills, P.E. Wright, P. B. C. Bellows, and P. Crosscombe. 1997. *Survey of Manure Management on New York Dairy Farms*.

Sorensen, A. Ann, Richard P. Greene and Karen Russ. March 1997. *Farming on the Edge*. American Farmland Trust, Center for Agriculture in the Environment, Northern Illinois University: DeKalb, Illinois.

Chapter 4 Making It Happen in Your Community

Introduction

The preceding chapters have provided some of the context and principles of community-based food and agriculture system development, and a wealth of examples of *Growing Home* projects that might be undertaken. How do you put this information to work, and really make a difference in your own community?

Every community is unique... There is no cookie-cutter process for successful agriculture development.

Every community is unique, with its own possibilities and constraints, its own history, and its own assortment of resources, organizations, institutions, businesses, and even personalities. Much will depend on what efforts have already been made to address food and agriculture issues. Some communities have already undertaken a community-planning or “visioning” process, and have identified

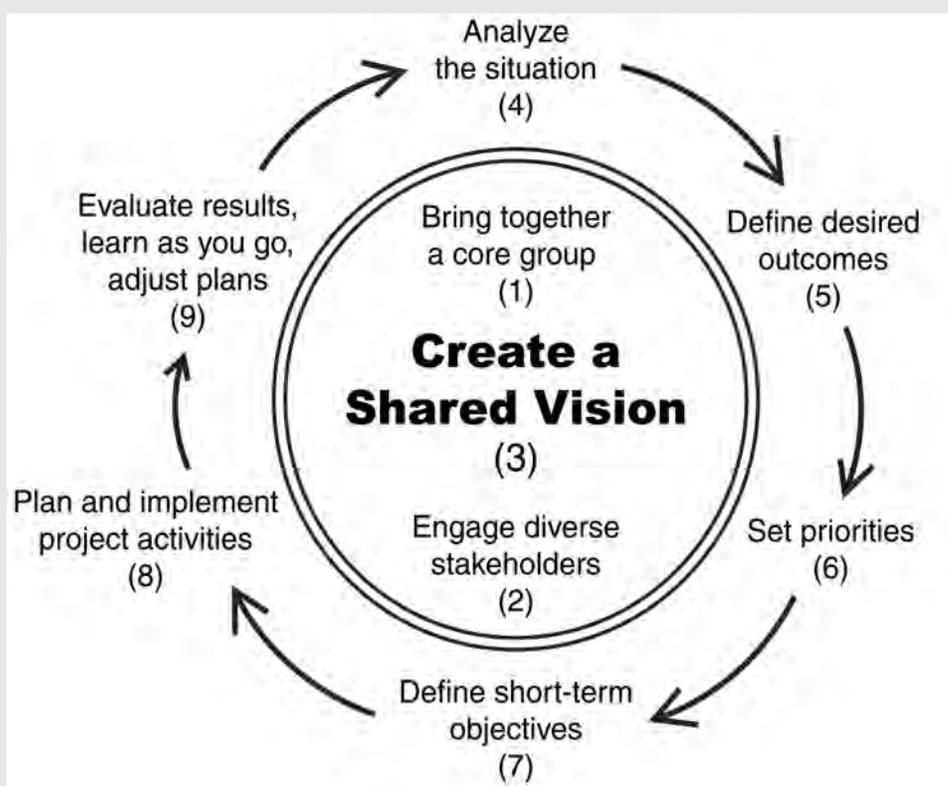
goals and actions relating to food and agriculture. Some communities have never done any planning for the future.

There is unfortunately no cookie-cutter process for successful agriculture development. Even so, we thought it would be helpful to outline an **idealized process**, which puts together what we have found to be some of the best practices for community-based food and agriculture system development. Chapter 4 presents this idealized process not as a road map to success, but more as a self-guided tour. Readers will want to pick and choose among the suggestions provided, which include guidelines for getting started from scratch, bringing in other partners and the wider community, and getting actual projects underway. Figure 19 is a graphic representation of this idealized community-based development process.

Development with a Vision

The most important feature of this development process is that all the steps are organized around a broadly shared and inspiring vision for the future of your community. What would the community be like if you really did bring about the ideal future? Rather than remaining trapped in all the problems and limitations that confront the community, this process asks you to step outside the box and reinvent what is possible. A clear vision of an inspiring future creates the energy and excitement that allows people to take the risk of believing in, and making a commitment to, that future. The vision is the guiding light for making decisions, setting priorities, and evaluating results. (See Figure 19 on the following page.)

Figure 19. The Vision-Driven Development Process



Ideally, the community-based food and agriculture systems development process is...

- **Visionary:** Driven by a broadly shared vision of the future, which addresses a community's concern about its quality of life, landscape and natural resources, and economy.
- **Inclusive:** Involves many and diverse stakeholders and takes advantage of their many different points of view, types of expertise, resources and personal networks.
- **Collaborative:** Strengthens working relationships within a community.
- **Incremental:** Takes the long-term view, and builds a community's capacity to define its own future.
- **Outcome-oriented:** Designed around specific outcomes that will help a community move toward its preferred vision of the future.
- **Positive:** Cultivates a can-do attitude. Resists the "inevitability argument" that the future is out of the hands of local communities.

Getting Started: The Core Group

Sometimes you can take advantage of a crisis situation or an immediate opportunity to focus your community's attention on local agriculture and/or food issues. Initial

Capitalize on a crisis if you need to. But build toward a long-term, holistic strategy.

organizing efforts can capitalize on this “teachable moment” and work from this to build toward a more holistic, long-term strategy. In Dutchess County, N.Y., it was the closing of an IBM plant—the area's largest employer—that sparked a renewed commitment to agriculture as part of a diversified economic development plan. In Suffolk County on Long Island, extreme development pressures made

farmland protection a top priority. And a difficult conflict over water quality in Wyoming County, N.Y., spawned the formation of Friends of Agriculture, which went to work on strengthening farmer-neighbor relations.

But if there's general complacency about local agriculture, you need to work on creating awareness of the issues, problems and opportunities facing local farmers, and mobilize the community's energy from a state of relative inertia.

The core group will drive the initiative forward. Its members may change over time.

Is there a group of people who share your concern and are ready to act? If not, it's up to you to get the ball rolling. Your first step is to try to team up with a few individuals who share your concern and commitment. This step may take a few phone calls or a series of personal visits in which you share your ideas and hear what others have to say.

Make sure that your core group includes farmers, and make it easy for them to come to your meetings. Schedule meetings at times farmers can attend. Winter is obviously better than planting or harvesting seasons, and evenings are often better than mid-day. Move meetings around the county if appropriate, to share the burden of travel.

The process of organizing the core group may take a week, or it might take a few months. Don't be discouraged. Your group will need time to hash things out and come to general agreement on the scope of issues you're trying to address. You'll need to build trust among yourselves. When you believe that you have a critical mass of interested, committed people, you can begin to work together toward the next steps.

It's important to recognize that your core group will most likely change over time. This is inevitable as peoples' lives and work situations change. Anticipate turnover and avoid getting caught short-handed, by inviting new members into the group as the opportunity arises. Stay flexible and open to newcomers' energy and enthusiasm.

What if you don't know any farmers?

If you're not a farmer yourself, and do not know any farmers in the community, don't give up! You'll just need to do some homework before proceeding. Take time to become thoroughly knowledgeable about local agriculture. Talk to your county Cooperative Extension agriculture agent. Visit a local farm stand, U-pick farm, or farmers' market and talk to the vendors. Ask them questions like "what are the concerns you have as a farmer in this community?"

Talk to as many farmers as you can. Most farmers are approachable and willing to talk about what they do and the problems they face if you are willing to be a good listener. Go to meetings. With time, you may become an important bridge-builder between agriculture and the rest of your community.

Who Cares? Understanding the Stakeholders

The initial core group represents only a small subset of the organizations and interest groups that will eventually need to be brought into the development process. The group's first task is to identify the rest of the players. These are all the various interest groups who will either be affected by changes in the local food and agriculture system, or who have the power to make changes in the system. They include farmers, of course, but also farm neighbors, food buyers, consumers, local government officials, economic development officials, environmentalists, agency staff, and many others. Naturally, at some level everyone is affected, but in terms of strategic planning it is helpful to differentiate between groups that directly impact or are impacted by agriculture, and those with an indirect impact.

Use **Worksheet 1: Stakeholder Analysis** in Appendix B (page 142) to think about different stakeholder groups in your community. The purpose of stakeholder analysis is to understand better *who* needs to

Who has an interest in community-based food and agriculture development?

- Farmers, farm employees and farm organizations.
- Area residents, consumers.
- Local governments.
- Churches, schools and civic organizations.
- Cooperative Extension educators.
- Economic developers and land-use planners.
- State agriculture departments.
- USDA and other agencies.
- Farm and commercial lenders.
- Agribusinesses.
- Environmental and conservation groups, land trusts.
- Food-marketing businesses.
- Business community, Chamber of Commerce.
- Many others.

be involved in a community-based organizing effort. First list the key groups or individuals most critical to your efforts. Then ask: What agricultural and/or food-related issues are they likely to feel strongly about, and what positions are they likely to take on these issues? What are their underlying personal or organizational interests, and what interests might they have in preserving and strengthening local agriculture? What resources and strengths could they offer?

Positions and interests

The distinction between “positions” and “interests” is key to working effectively with others. A **position** is a particular stance—pro, con or neutral—that we take on a specific issue. It usually reflects our understanding of what’s in our own self-interest, but is often based on partial information and even misunderstanding. Focusing on our positions encourages conflict: I fight for my position and try to defeat yours.

Our positions on issues are often polarized.
Our underlying interests are often shared.

On the other hand, our **interests** are our actual underlying needs and desires. When we talk in terms of our real interests, we often find we share them with others. At the very least we can understand and empathize with others’ interests. The process allows our assumptions and stereotypes about “farmers” or “environmentalists” to be challenged and our understanding expanded as we find common ground.

Getting beyond our stated positions to explore and understand our true underlying interests is absolutely central to a collaborative process. This is not to say that different groups do not have truly different interests at times. Conflicts will always exist. Effective collaboration doesn’t require people to give up their different interests, only that they work together for solutions that will advance many of their shared and separate interests.

Going through this process theoretically with other core group members can help you anticipate how and why various interest groups or agencies might assist or obstruct your efforts. It may suggest important questions you need to ask them, to better understand their positions and their underlying interests. Listening and understanding is the first step toward working with these stakeholders in a win-win development strategy.

Mobilizing the Community

Once the core group has gotten together and identified the other key groups who ought to be included, how can you actually get them to the table and keep them involved? There are a variety of approaches that have been used by community-based food and agriculture systems development groups. Your efforts may initially be “problem-driven” in

reaction to an immediate critical issue, such as a proposed “big-box” development on prime farmland on the edge of town. In that case, a well-facilitated community meeting could lead immediately to the formation of task groups.

Or perhaps there is an immediate opportunity, such as a new grants program for agri-tourism development in your region. A meeting of key agencies, farmers, tourism groups and community leaders could get the ball rolling on this as the first building block of a broader, longer-term development effort.

Launch the agriculture development process with an energetic, well-planned mobilizing effort.

If you’re not facing a crisis, you might begin working toward a community visioning process, which could take several months of planning. Or you could begin with a simple series of informal dialogue meetings among key agencies in the community, as a way to begin building more comfortable working relationships. Or a day-long study tour for elected officials and community members could be followed up with a discussion of the issues raised, and a series of strategy sessions.

Short-term planning: designing the collaborative process

Ideally, community-based food and agriculture systems development is a collaborative, participatory process that brings together different interest groups, and is carefully guided to produce results. Some phases should involve as many stakeholders as possible, including develop-

Getting the right people involved at the right time takes careful planning.

ing a shared vision of the future and a set of working goals.

There are many other jobs that are best done by a small committee or working group. These might include drafting a farmer or consumer survey questionnaire, interviewing leaders from other communities that have tackled similar challenges, compiling land-use data, or any number of tasks that contribute to the overall effort.

✓ **Resource tip:**
Community Toolbox for community organizing

The University of Kansas’s *Community Toolbox* offers tips on community organizing, such as getting grassroots involvement,



agenda setting and group facilitation. The *Community Toolbox* also features a troubleshooting guide for problems like not having enough people involved, poor communications, and dealing with opposition. See more at ctb.lsi.ukans.edu.

Think carefully about *who* needs to be involved in the various phases of collaborative planning and action, and *how* and *when* to involve them. An effective process en-

gages stakeholders at a level of participation that is appropriate to their level of interest and commitment to the issues being addressed. Organizers need to be realistic about how much time and energy people can contribute. *The process will fall apart if the individuals or partner organizations are stretched beyond their capacities to participate.*

For example, a well-organized public meeting can very effectively involve a large number of people and generate significant community interest in the issues. But expecting such a large group to follow through with regular meetings is not usually realistic. Instead, organizers can use a public meeting to recruit people for small task groups or committees that take on limited assignments, with a follow-up public meeting scheduled some time later. Be realistic: Most of the real work will be done by the fairly small number of people who have the biggest stake in the issues. But keeping the process open to the general public through the larger meetings is critically important, and provides useful deadlines for working groups to complete their assignments.

Plan out the organizing process you will use, outlining goals, action steps, participants and their responsibilities.

The core group should spend considerable time and creativity in planning a good process for this “launch” phase of the process. Having an experienced facilitator as part of the core group helps, or you might consider engaging one as a consultant to help you design the process.

What you want is a written or pictorial map outlining your first few months’ activities (or more), in terms of goals, action steps, participants, and responsibilities:

Short-term goals (outputs). What are the specific “outputs” you are trying to achieve in the next several months? Are you working to create a broadly shared vision statement? Do you want to establish an Agriculture Development Task Force for your county? Or does a specific critical issue need to be addressed in a certain time frame? A farmer-neighbor crisis? An upcoming referendum on a proposed farmland protection program? (We are using the term “outputs” here to refer to the short-term goals of your launch phase, as opposed to the longer-term “outcomes” considered starting on page 118.)

Action steps and participants. What steps need to be taken to move toward the desired outcomes, and who needs to be involved in each step? Should you schedule a public meeting right away, or do you need to cultivate some personal contacts first to involve some key stakeholders? Would it make sense to incorporate a survey or fact-finding interviews at a certain point? What about the media? When and how should they be involved?

Responsibilities. What roles will each of the core group members—and the agencies or organizations they represent—play in the process? Who will coordinate the effort?

Who will act as spokespersons? What resources will each group commit?

If you find that the same individual or agency is responsible for most of the work, then you don't really have a collaborative process. The effort will be perceived, probably correctly, as the agenda of that individual or agency, a done deal. But if you are trying to build a collaborative effort, getting "ownership" and commitment of partners needs to happen well before this step. Go back to square one and work on cultivating a core group of partners who can really own the effort and who will share in the responsibility for making it happen.

Naturally, a collaborative process will evolve and change as it develops, often in unpredictable ways. But don't use that as an excuse not to plan well ahead for the various phases of your effort. Just don't think of your plan as set in stone. Be flexible, ready to adjust as the process unfolds.

Creating the Vision

Often, a community-based development effort begins not with a good look at the big picture, but with a focus on a particular problem or opportunity facing the local food and agriculture system. That's not necessarily a bad thing—sometimes you have to jump right into action rather than miss a critical opportunity. Ultimately though, if the goal is to create significant positive change in the long term, the community needs to spend time defining its vision of the future, and defining how agriculture contributes to that vision. This long-term vision is what provides a consistent framework for community-wide planning and action over the long haul.

Without a shared vision, we spend our energy reacting to problems rather than creating the community we want.

A growing number of communities have undertaken visioning processes of some sort, and many different approaches are used. If your community already has a vision statement that includes the food and agriculture system, or a comprehensive long-term plan of any sort, by all means take a good look at it before proceeding. Unfortunately, many visioning processes don't do a very good job of addressing food and agricultural issues.

On the other hand, you may already have gone through a visioning process specifically geared toward food and agriculture. But the process may not have included anyone outside of the food and agriculture community! It has created not a broadly shared vision statement, but a "tunnel-vision" statement.

There are three important reasons why you need to include many diverse viewpoints

in the visioning process. First, the main value of the process is that it enables people with distinctly different viewpoints and positions on issues to recognize their common values and interests. This shared recognition becomes a basis for increasing trust and ability to work effectively together. Second, such a group has an enormous base of knowledge, experience and personal contacts that can be tapped. And third, cultivating broad diversity early in the community-development process promotes broad-based ownership of the process and its outcomes, and builds commitment to action. Important stakeholder groups or individuals who are left out may later obstruct the implementation phase.

The most meaningful vision emerges from a diversity of viewpoints.

Creating a shared vision

There are many approaches you can use to generate a shared vision statement. However you structure the process, make sure you:

- Include diverse participants.
- Have a clear process and an experienced facilitator.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere and encourage creative thinking.
- Discourage posturing and debate, by asking people to put their personal hats on, and leave their professional hats at the door.
- Use a clearly stated focus question or questions.
- Use a long enough time frame that people can imagine substantial change—at least 10, and up to 30 years.
- Explain that the group is imagining its *preferred* future, not its *probable* future.
- Take time for individual reflection.
- Keep ideas separate from personalities.
- Write it up, use it, revise it.

Example: The Future Search approach

A Future Search generates action plans based on a shared vision in a very short time.

Future Searches have been used successfully over the past 30 years in hundreds of different contexts as a way of quickly generating vision-based plans with an immediate and long-range action agenda. It compresses the process into a two-and-a-half-day participatory event that moves from a recounting of shared history, through ideal futures, to action plans. A successful search ends with commitments by the participants to undertake the next steps. Future Searches typically involve 60 to 70 invited participants, who are selected through a deliberative process

called the Community Reference System. Professional guidance is essential, as the success of the process depends on the quality of planning and facilitation.

Example: A half-day visioning exercise

The half-day community visioning exercise outlined below can be done with up to 60 people. It requires careful planning to get the right mix of invitees to the table, and it requires follow-up to synthesize and refine the output from the whole group. The resulting statement may be recorded on

Worksheet 2: Shared Vision Statement in Appendix B (page 143).

Resource tip

The **Future Search Network** can provide additional information and put you in contact with experienced facilitators. Contact the Future Search Network at (800) 951-6333, or www.futuresearch.net.

Remember that the larger the group, the longer some of the steps will take. The exercise begins by dividing the whole group into small groups, with 3 to 6 people per small group. Before beginning the steps below, participants should introduce themselves with a short icebreaker exercise of some sort. A single facilitator can provide instructions, clarification and timekeeping for the whole group, while each small group is self-managed. Be sure you have enough wall space for all the small groups to work with. Before beginning, each group should be given a stack of sticky notes, or index cards and masking tape.

1. Facilitator introduces the process and states the focus questions (5 min.)

The facilitator asks everyone to consider a question in each of three categories, “quality of life,” “future landscape” and “farming and food system”:

- “What is it that you value most for yourself, your family and your community?” (Quality of life)
- “What do you want the local landscape and natural resource base to be like in thirty years?” (Future landscape)
- “What kinds of farms and agriculture-related businesses do you imagine will help create the quality of life you desire, and help create your vision for the landscape?” (Farming and food system)

2. Quiet reflection (5–10 min.)

The questions are posted for all to see, and each individual jots down one or more ideas or images in each category (quality of life, future landscape, farming and food system). It’s important that each idea or image is written on its own sticky note or index card for later sorting and clustering.

3. Cluster individual ideas into themes (20–40 min.)

Each small group is assigned an area of wall space. Group members take their cards over to the wall and post them under the appropriate category. At first the group works together silently, reading each other's notes and organizing similar ideas and images into clusters. After a few minutes of silent clustering the facilitator gives permission to begin negotiating. The group works together to decide which images fit together as a theme, but there is no debate about the validity of any of the images. No image or idea is discarded—it can stand alone if it is unique. At the end of this process there should be several clusters of related ideas under each category.

4. Defining the themes (15–20 min.)

Each small group then works on defining the theme—a phrase or sentence that captures the ideas and images in each cluster. When everyone is satisfied, each theme is written out on a sheet of paper and its individual images (the sticky notes or index cards) are attached to that sheet. Later they can all be transcribed.

5. Whole-group synthesis (30–45 min. depending on number of small groups)

A spokesperson for each small group then shares the themes of its vision with the larger group, and posts them on the wall. (To save time, the individual images and ideas are not shared, except that one or two may be used to illustrate or clarify the theme.) The facilitator helps to group these themes again into clusters, and then to find the best phrase or sentence that captures each group of themes. At this point, the results can be recorded and refined by a subcommittee, or the large group can prioritize the themes under each category.

6. Prioritizing the themes (20–40 min. depending on total group size)

Even a large group can prioritize fairly efficiently using a “multi-voting” process. Participants use a colored marker or stickers to mark the themes that are most important to them personally. The facilitator decides how many rounds of voting and how many votes each person gets, depending on the number of themes and the number of participants. One to three rounds will identify the themes in each category that have the strongest support from the large group.

7. Writing it up

Finally, a subcommittee is empowered to take the prioritized list of themes and refine it. The group may decide to discard themes that did not get strong group support, or to list them all in order of greatest to least group support. It is always a good idea to then send the prioritized list of themes to the group for comments, to ensure that everyone is satisfied with the results.

Analyzing the Current Situation

Understanding the present helps the community move toward its vision of the future.

Getting a solid grasp of the current status of agriculture in your community is an important step to take before determining the priorities for action. There are a variety of approaches to situation analysis. It can simply involve gathering “secondary” data—published statistics and other existing information, or it can also involve collecting “primary” data—new information gathered through surveys, interviews, tours, presentations, case studies or other research methods. Cooperative Extension staff, farm agency personnel or local planners can often help conduct surveys or assemble secondary data. Reports can be prepared summarizing the data collected, and presentations can be made to the public or to a larger working group. Important findings may be published in the local news media as well.

When outside experts are brought in, we miss a key opportunity for building the community’s capacity.

But first consider the timing of this fact-finding phase. Frequently the small group of initial organizers will decide that a thorough study is needed, so they can then present the community with the facts about the local food and agriculture system to initiate action of some sort. Quite often they hire a consultant to conduct an excellent study. Then they’re puzzled when the community fails to respond to the facts. The report sits on the shelf while organizers complain that the public just doesn’t care about agriculture.

Unfortunately, studies conducted by outsiders, even respected university researchers, or by any one agency or small group, will almost always be seen as biased by one or more local stakeholder groups. Or these studies may only tell people what they already know!

In contrast, facts that are gathered and presented by a broad-based coalition of interest groups, that answer the questions they themselves have asked, that present the understandings they themselves have gleaned through their own investment of time and energy, can be powerful motivators for action. They are credible and meaningful to a wider segment of the community than would be an outside consultant’s report. Since the goal of community food and agriculture systems development is to build collaborative solutions to complex problems, you will miss an important opportunity for shared learning and trust-building among participants if the fact-finding process is delegated to a consultant.

Rather than chase after all available data simply because it is available, spend time up front deciding what the important questions are to ask about the local food and

agriculture system, and let these questions guide your fact-finding strategy. If an immediate crisis or opportunity needs a response, then the fact-finding agenda may be straightforward. But if your goal is developing a long-term strategy for strengthening the local food and agriculture system, then the fact-finding phase ought to be “vision-driven.” The important questions will be those that help your community identify strategies for moving closer to its vision of the future for the local food and agriculture system.

There are several approaches to fact-finding that engage a variety of stakeholders in the process, build trust and communication among them, and lay a natural foundation for taking action in the implementation phase.

Example: Study circles

In a study circle people cooperatively investigate an issue.

and create a foundation for collaborative action. It’s also an effective trust-building process, allowing participants to get to know one another through regular, informal, face-to-face interaction.

A variation of the working group is the “study circle,” a small group that meets regularly over a limited time to cooperatively investigate an issue in depth. A study circle combines individual reading and research assignments with regular group discussions to develop a body of shared knowledge,

The Berkshire Regional Food and Land Council in Massachusetts used study circles very effectively to analyze the forces affecting local agriculture (see below) and to generate recommendations for action. Study circles of 10 to 15 people met for five to eight evenings over three months. Study circles can be used in a variety of ways and at different points in a community-based food and agriculture systems development process to engage a large number of people in identifying problems and creating solutions.



Resource tip

The **Study Circles Resource Center** provides information and resources for starting up a study circle on any topic: www.studycircles.org.

Example: Force-field analysis

Force-field analysis builds on the community’s vision statement.

Force-field analysis is one helpful technique for organizing the fact-finding process around a shared vision. Force-field analysis is the process of identifying and analyzing the forces and trends working for and against progress toward your preferred future.

Force-field analysis was a tool used by the Berkshire Regional Food and Land Council’s study circles described above. They identified the following forces working in support of their vision: A significant base of natural resources, including 10,000

acres of farmland; knowledgeable farmers and models of successful diversified farming; an existing food distribution system; an established waste-management infrastructure; available local financial resources; and a strong tourism market which values local produce.

Forces they felt were working against their vision included lack of public awareness of the food system; development pressures on agricultural land and natural resources; government planning and policies that benefit large growers; a food system infrastructure that inadequately supports local production; vested interests of corporate agribusiness; and marginal economics of local agriculture.

Based on this thinking, they identified several leverage points, or particularly promising opportunities for changing the system: food system infrastructure; networks of food system participants; the Berkshire name; public education; and public planning and policy making.

Worksheet 3: Force-Field Analysis (in Appendix B, page 144) provides a framework for recording the results of a force-field analysis, if you choose to use this analytical tool in your community.

Force-field analysis

- Examine the forces which work *in support of* your shared vision.
- Examine the forces which work *against* your vision.
- Identify *leverage points*, or opportunities for change.
- Make *recommendations* for action.



Resource tip

The **Berkshire Regional Food and Land Council** published a very valuable and readable summary of their process and its outcomes. “Building a Better Local Food System” is available from UMass Extension at (413) 448-8285.

Example: The BR&E approach

BR&E studies the issues facing businesses and seeks solutions to their problems.

The Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) approach has been used successfully in many communities to find ways to support and strengthen the local businesses that already exist, rather than “smokestack chasing” to bring in new businesses. BR&E is now being applied to the agriculture sector in some communities. When applied to agriculture, we prefer the phrase Business Retention and Enhancement, which suggests that diversification, better marketing, adding value, improving relations with neighbors or other strategies may be preferable to business expansion in many cases.

The BR&E approach involves assembling a team of community members to interview business owners about their needs and concerns, their plans for the future, the inputs and services they depend on and where they get them, barriers to doing business, and their ideas for strengthening the local business economy. If done well, these survey results will **not** sit on a shelf. That's because the BR&E team makes a commitment to seeing that the issues raised by business owners are addressed in some way, whenever possible and appropriate. Thus there is a built-in progression from fact-finding to action, and the process builds the credibility of the BR&E team.

In a community food and agriculture systems development effort, the BR&E team might be your core group or a special working group, but in either case it ought to include leadership not only from the agriculture community, but also from the food marketing sector, finance, business development, education, local government and other sectors. Involving them in developing and conducting a BR&E survey is an excellent way to forge the link between agriculture, food and economic development.

One limitation of the traditional approach to BR&E is that, rather than being driven by a broadly shared vision of the community's future, it focuses on the short-term concerns and needs of the business sector alone. It tends to be reactive and problem-driven. However, some newer programs are expanding the BR&E approach to include community visioning processes and broader participation.

In any case, the BR&E approach can be adapted and used as a component of a community-based local food and agriculture systems development process. For example, let's say that your community's vision includes stronger linkages between local farmers and local food markets. A BR&E effort could be organized in which participants would analyze the food processing, marketing and distribution sectors, as well as the production and input sectors. Interviews with these businesses would identify barriers and opportunities for increasing the marketing of local and regional farm products. The BR&E survey itself would help to educate food buyers about their potential role in supporting local agriculture, and it would certainly help educate farmers about buyers' needs for convenient, consistent, reliable, and high-quality sources.



Resource tip

Information, resources and training for communities interested in conducting a BR&E visitation program are available from the **Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development**, (814) 863-4656, www.cas.psu.edu/docs/casconf/nercrd/Publications/BR&E/bre.html.

Example: Researching market opportunities

A vision-driven fact-finding strategy should pay at least as much attention to opportunities as to problems facing the local food and agriculture systems. Many regions of the country are blessed with abundant marketing opportunities, if only folks can get organized to tap them effectively.

Analyzing new marketing opportunities may be a great help to area farmers.

Certainly some of the responsibility for exploring market opportunities rests with the individual farmer. There are many options, such as direct marketing, Community Supported Agriculture, local wholesale, and even some export markets, that can be developed by a good farmer who is also a good marketer. But there are many, many farmers who are not inclined toward marketing. These

farmers will have a hard time holding their own in the contemporary food marketing system without assistance. They may need your group's help in figuring out how to work more effectively together, through cooperatives and other types of associations, to gain access to good markets. (See "Community-Based Marketing and Value-Adding" starting on page 33 of Chapter 3 for some innovative marketing ideas that communities can implement.)

Your community-based food and agriculture systems development group can play a vital role in exposing farmers to new marketing opportunities, helping them make connections with potential buyers, fostering consumer support for local foods, and supporting the development of marketing cooperatives, where appropriate. All of this involves doing basic market research to identify potential buyers, their product requirements, and what it would take for local farmers to effectively service these markets.

This kind of research is often delegated to professional market research firms, but in fact is something that a committee of volunteers, with some guidance, can do very effectively (see "The BR&E approach," above). The advantages of doing the work yourself is that you begin to develop personal relationships with buyers, educate them about their potential contributions to sustaining local agriculture, and win their active support of food and agriculture systems development efforts. A paid consultant can't do this for you.

Secondary data sources

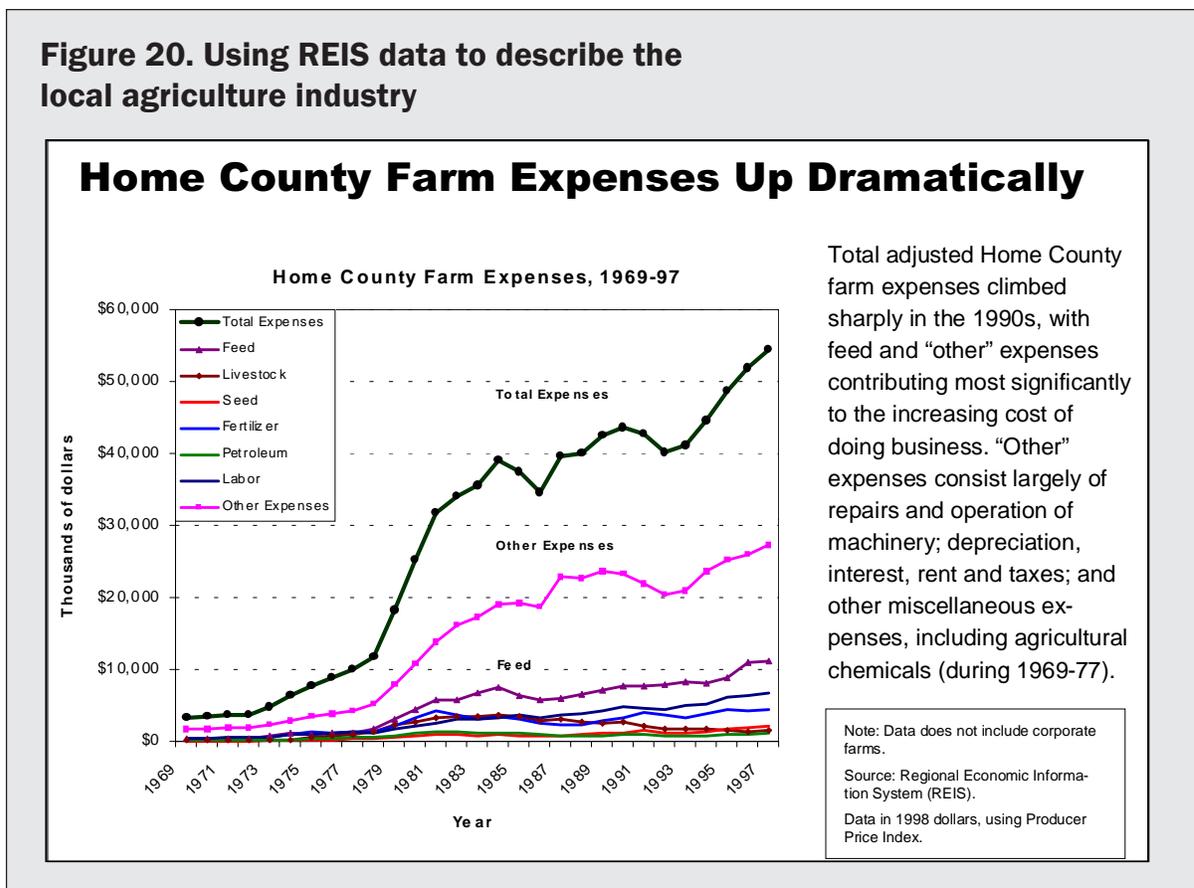
A lot of useful data is already available, and shouldn't be overlooked.

So far we've emphasized *primary data*—new information that is gathered by or for your group. But *secondary data*—information that is already published—can also be very valuable. There is a wealth of information already available that can be compiled relatively easily and inexpensively by a knowledgeable individual.

If your community has done any previous studies of the food and agriculture sector, for example an analysis of farmland resources, or a comprehensive plan that included the food industry and agriculture, by all means review this information. Valuable data is available through your local planning office, Industrial Development Agency, tax assessor's office, Cooperative Extension office and other information providers. The following are additional sources of secondary data:

The **Regional Economic Information System (REIS)** is a database maintained by the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis. A Web site maintained by Oregon State, govinfo.kerr.orst.edu/reis-stateis.html, provides annual farm income, expense and net income data for every county in the U.S. Figure 20 provides an example of how REIS farm data can be used to show trends in local agriculture.

Figure 20. Using REIS data to describe the local agriculture industry



Although far from perfect, the **Census of Agriculture** is your country's best accounting of agricultural production. The USDA claims it is "the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the Nation" (www.nass.usda.gov/census/pub_bro1.htm). Taken every five years in the years ending in "2" or "7," the census attempts to enumerate every farm from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products are produced and sold, or normally would be sold during the year. Figure 21

Figure 21. Using Census of Agriculture data to describe the local agriculture industry

Home Co. Agriculture Undergoes Consolidation

Home County Comparative Inventory

FARM INVENTORY TRENDS	1997	1982	% Change		
			County	Region	State
Cattle and Calves Farms	185	286	-35%	-21%	-37%
Cattle and Calves (number)	10,466	16,273	-36%	-4%	-26%
Beef Farms	122	154	-21%	5%	-27%
Dairy Farms	40	107	-63%	-21%	-51%
Hog Farms	20	49	-59%	-57%	-69%
Hogs Sold	8,866	4,707	88%	25%	-55%
Sheep and lambs Farms	26	21	24%	-28%	3%
Sheep and lambs (number)	1,469	381	286%	7%	1%
Wheat for Grain Farms	95	106	-10%	-46%	-26%
Wheat for Grain (acres)	6,639	3,677	81%	-3%	44%
Corn for Grain Farms	170	277	-39%	-28%	-51%
Corn for Grain (acres)	19,570	31,159	-37%	-30%	-35%
Barley for Grain Farms	37	64	-42%	-36%	-99%
Barley for Grain (acres)	1,859	1,902	-2%	-14%	-99%
Hay Farms	212	279	-24%	-10%	-22%
Hay (acres)	8,523	10,079	-15%	4%	-3%
Soybeans for beans Farms	127	147	-14%	-13%	-19%
Soybeans for beans (acres)	14,203	10,685	33%	45%	23%
Total Cropland Farms	421	470	-10%	-7%	-27%
Vegetable Farms	22	27	-19%	4%	-32%
Vegetable (acres)	102	539	-81%	-44%	-6%
Horticultural Specialties (Farms)*	16	18	-11%	27%	-7%
Animal Specialties (Farms)**	20	43	-53%	-38%	-71%

With the exception of sheep and hog production, livestock are experiencing absolute declines (that is, declines in both the number of head and farms). With the exception of soybeans and wheat, field crops and vegetable production are also experiencing absolute declines. Declines in vegetable production is unusual for urbanizing counties.

Sources: Census of Agriculture, USDA, and US Dept. of Commerce.

It should be noted that data for 1982 and 1997 are not fully compatible. While the 1982 data point lists the number of all farms in Horticultural specialties (SIC 018), the 1997 data point is based on the number of farms with income of \$10,000 or more in Greenhouse, nursery and floriculture production (NAICS 1114).

It should be noted that the data for 1982 and 1997 are not fully compatible. While the 1982 data point lists the number of farms in Animal specialties (SIC 027), the 1997 data point is based on the number of farms with sales of \$10,000 or more in Animal aquaculture and Other animal production (NAICS 1125, 1129).

provides an example of how Census of Agriculture trend data can be presented as an inventory of a county's products and commodities. This is useful in seeing what parts of local agriculture are consolidating, declining or growing. Census of Agriculture data for counties and states are available at the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Web site, www.nass.usda.gov/census.

Agriculture is more than farming, and there are sources of data on agribusiness. **County Business Patterns (CBP)** is a Census Bureau database that provides county, state, and national level business data from 1977 to the most recent year available. Data on agribusinesses (e.g., veterinary services, food manufacturers) can be downloaded for analysis. Statistics include number of firms, payroll (annual and first quarter), number of employees and number firms by size class for two-

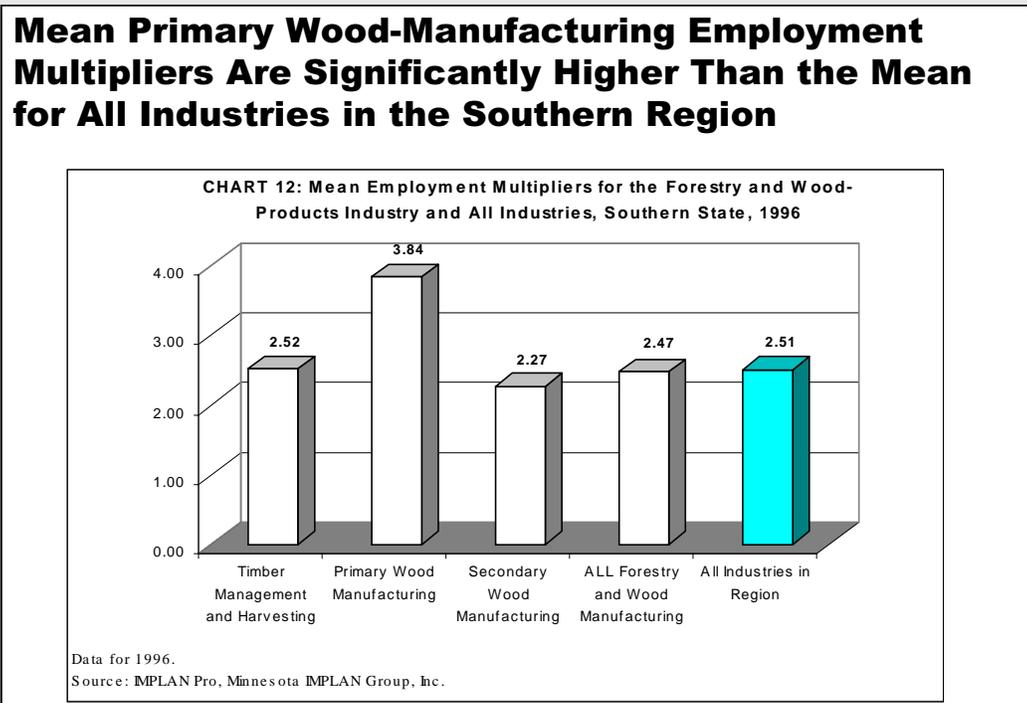
A note on data

To be accurate, financial data must be **adjusted for inflation** using a price index such as the consumer price index (CPI), producer price index (PPI), or the prices received (by farmers) index maintained by the USDA. The National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) maintains a Web page with a number of inflation calculators, at www.jsc.nasa.gov/bu2/inflate.html. For a primer on how the calculations are made see www.pitt.edu/~beeson/jan29a.htm.

digit SIC industry groupings. The data is collected annually by the Bureau of the Census. The University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center maintains an easy-to-use Web site for selecting and gathering CBP data, at fisher.lib.virginia.edu/cbp.

Many communities want to know what agriculture's contribution is to the local economy. IMPLAN software is an expensive but useful tool for conducting economic analysis, such as calculating the multiplier for over 500 local industries, including farming and agribusinesses. There are two basic components to IMPLAN: PC-based software, and data files. The program is fairly sophisticated and is best left to local agencies such as planning or economic development departments, or consultants, since understanding IMPLAN's capabilities and weaknesses requires some training and experience. Figure 21 shows the economic multipliers for the various segments of the forestry industry in a southern state. For more information on IMPLAN, visit the **Minnesota IMPLAN Group's** Web site at www.economicanalysis.com.

Figure 22. IMPLAN data example of multipliers



Planning for Longer-Term Results

The process of defining a shared vision of the future has provided the critical reference point for decision-making and action. It has given you a general sense of where you want to be in twenty years or so. Your analysis of the current situation has provided a solid understanding of the forces and trends affecting local food and agriculture systems, and some of the opportunities that might be pursued.

Focus on expected outcomes in the real world

The challenge at this point is to formulate some specific, practical goals that are both achievable and measurable over the next three to five years, and which move your community toward its long-term vision of the future. Using the phrase “outcomes” instead of the more wishy-washy “goals” reminds us we’re really trying to create change in the world. Ask yourselves, “*What’s the difference we’re trying to make? What will have changed in our community as a result of our efforts? And how will we know that it has changed?*”

Making real change depends on translating your vision statement into specific desired outcomes.

outcomes, define indicators of success, and monitor them regularly. Instead we jump enthusiastically into a project without fully coming to agreement about our expectations, and having only the vaguest idea what success would look like in the real world. When the project is finished, we often don’t know whether our food and agriculture systems development efforts have been effective.

It’s surprising how challenging this process can be, even for the most high-powered and dedicated group! More often than not, we fail to articulate desired

Outcomes, outcome indicators and measurement strategies

Outcomes:

What real differences are we trying to make in our community or region?

Outcome indicators:

What parameters will have changed as a result of our efforts?

Measurement strategies:

How will we find out whether the parameters have changed?

Outcomes-based planning and evaluation: Some terminology

Before we go further into the process of planning for results, defining some terms is in order. What we’re talking about is a process of “outcomes-based planning and evaluation.” In this approach, planning and evaluation are seen as interactive processes in an ongoing cycle of learning by doing. (See Figure 24. The Action/Evaluation Feedback Loop, on page 126.) Increasingly, project funders such as the United Way are recommending

Outcomes-based planning and evaluation can help you become more effective in creating real change.

or even requiring outcomes-based evaluation, because it can help organizations become more effective in creating positive change in the world. It is replacing the practice of evaluating programs simply according to their outputs.

Glossary of outcomes-based planning and evaluation terms

Inputs are resources a program uses to achieve program objectives. Examples are staff, volunteers, facilities, equipment and money. A program uses *inputs* to support *activities*.

Activities are what a program does with its inputs—the services it provides—to fulfill its mission. Examples are educating the public about local agriculture, linking retiring and beginning farmers, organizing a farm-to-restaurant marketing initiative, conducting educational workshops and so on. Program *activities* result in *outputs*.

Outputs are products of a program's activities, such as the number of brochures distributed, workshops taught or participants involved. A program's *outputs* should produce desired *outcomes* for participants and for the community.

Outcomes are the actual benefits for participants and for the community that are produced by the program. Examples of potential social, economic and environmental outcomes are given on page 120.

Outcome indicators are the specific items of information that track a program's success on outcomes. They describe observable, measurable characteristics or changes that represent achievement of an outcome. Examples are given on page 124.

Measurement strategies are the methods used to assess changes in your chosen indicators. Examples are given on page 124.

Assessment tools include surveys, checklists, inventories or other research instruments that your measurement strategy requires.

Source: Adapted from the United Way's Outcomes Measurement Resource Network.

A small group with limited resources might feel intimidated by all this talk about outcomes and indicators and measurement. But the point is not that you should spend lots of *money* on the process. It's mostly *brainpower* that should be spent in becoming clear about your expectations. If you can communicate clearly what the expected benefits of your efforts are, then you should be able to enlist partner organizations to help you measure your results. For instance, a local college or planning office might be able to help in designing surveys and collecting data. Or local media might help with an opinion poll. Even local schoolteachers and their students might be able to help. Use your networks and your creativity!

Even a small group working with limited resources can plan for outcomes.

Integrate social, environmental and economic outcomes

Outcomes should reflect all three “legs” of the sustainability stool: society, environment and economy.

Development should never sacrifice social or environmental well being to achieve economic goals, or vice versa. By linking social, environmental and economic outcomes up front, you can be more selective about proposed development strategies and be more likely to avoid unintended negative consequences.

Every community needs to identify its own desired outcomes based on its own unique circumstances. The following examples of social, environmental and economic outcomes are given as illustrations only. Note also that a given outcome might fit under more than one heading.

Examples of social outcomes

- Local citizens will be more knowledgeable about the food and agriculture system.
- Local farm families will have a better quality of life, a greater sense of optimism, and more supportive relationships with non-farmers.
- More young people will be involved in farming.
- More and better policies will support local agriculture at the town and county levels.
- The organizations, agencies and individuals involved in agriculture development will have an improved ability to work effectively together.

Examples of environmental outcomes

- A critical mass of farmland will be protected from development.
- Water quality and soil quality on participating farms will be improved.
- Wildlife habitat and biodiversity in the county will be enhanced.
- Recycling of organic materials and soil nutrients will be increased in our town while consumption of nonrenewable resources will be reduced.

Examples of economic outcomes

- The percentage of locally grown food eaten by area residents will increase by 10 percent in the next three years and by 25 percent in five years.
- Average net farm income will increase to the point where farming provides a wage on a par with other skilled occupations in our county.
- The number of farms and the number of locally owned agribusinesses will stabilize or increase in our county by the year 2010.
- Farm-related employment will stop declining, and actually begin to increase within ten years.
- The volume of local farm product that undergoes value-added processing by locally owned businesses in our five-county region will increase by 25 percent in the next decade.

For a particular program, there can be various levels of outcomes, with initial outcomes leading to longer-term ones. For example, a beginning farmer in a farmer-mentoring

program who receives one-to-one training and encouragement may (1) improve her farming practices and business management skills, so that she (2) improves the profitability of her farm, so that she (3) expands her operation and creates several new jobs in the community.

Use **Worksheet 4: Desired Outcomes** in Appendix B (page 145) to brainstorm a list of specific outcomes that reflect the important features of your vision statement. Your list should reflect all three legs of the sustainability stool: society, environment and economy.

Set priorities

Once your group has articulated some specific desired outcomes, prioritize them to reflect the group's sense of how it should focus its efforts to make the biggest impact. Here are some principles to guide your priority-setting process:

Address root causes, not just symptoms of the problem. For example, "farmland protected from development" may be a worthy outcome, but in some situations higher priority should be given to "new and expanded markets for local farm products." The first outcome addresses the symptom of farmland loss, while the second outcome more directly addresses the root cause of declining farm income.

Set priorities strategically. Focus your energy and resources for maximum results.

Focus on weak links in the system. Say your situation analysis has shown that consumers want more local produce in the grocery stores, grocery-store buyers want to stock more local produce, and farmers would like to sell more to local groceries (this is often the case!). But the weak link is lack of coordination among growers to meet the needs of grocery buyers. Directly addressing this weak link should be a higher priority than launching a consumer education program to promote local foods. Consumer demand is not the weak link in the system.

Capitalize on available energy, skills and resources. Finally, priorities must also reflect the resources and abilities of your group. Primary among these are the interest and enthusiasm of its participants. If there's a critical mass of people who really want to invest time and energy in a particular issue, then other resources, including funding, can usually be found.

Measuring Results

Define outcome indicators and measurement strategies

The high-priority outcomes, as well as short-term objectives, should reflect the most important aspects of your group's vision of the future. They also need to be linked to specific indicators that will tell you whether or not they are being accomplished. Say, for

Each expected outcome should be linked to one or more measurable indicators.

triple the dollar value of local farm products purchased annually by local wholesale markets in the next five years.”

example, that one of your high-priority outcomes is “better linkages between local farmers and local wholesale markets.” One obvious indicator would be the dollar value of local products purchased annually by local wholesale markets. Your outcome statement could be refined to incorporate this measurable indicator, and even to set a specific target outcome and a timeline: “Our target outcome is to

It’s useful to have a simple, easily quantifiable outcome indicator, but some of the most important outcomes may be trickier to document. Social outcomes, for example “stronger community support for agriculture” or “greater optimism and sense of pride among local farm families,” may reflect more qualitative, less tangible changes than do economic or environmental outcomes, like increased product sales or reduced non-point source pollution. Even when you’re able to define an indicator which is simple in concept, like “the dollar value of local farm products purchased annually by local wholesale markets,” there may be a lot of work involved in actually measuring it. Since the necessary data is not available from any other source, you would need to develop your own measurement strategy and an assessment tool to document the dollar value of local sales. Use **Worksheet 5: Outcome Indicators and Measurement Strategies** in Appendix B (page 146) to assist your group in designing specific outcome indicators and measurement strategies.

Indicators may be simple, concrete and easily quantified, or may be more complex, and more challenging to measure.

empowerment or disenfranchisement of various groups within a community. Our ability to document these outcomes may make it or break it for agriculture in the Northeast. It all goes back to recognizing and promoting the multiple benefits that agriculture provides to our communities and region. Thinking only in terms of easily quantifiable measures like dollars or acres no longer makes sense.

But don’t make the mistake of ignoring important outcomes because they’re hard to measure. Our biggest challenge is to design indicators and measurement strategies to assess the important things like quality of life, the sense of vitality and pride in a community, an increase or decrease in social capital, people’s feelings of connection or alienation from the land and from their neighbors, the sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with aesthetics of the local landscape, or the

Defining indicators and figuring out how to measure them is a creative process.

What would be some appropriate indicators to assess something like “stronger community support for agriculture?” Here you’ll need to get creative. There are several aspects of the concept of “community support” which could be assessed with different indicators. One indicator might be the

percentage of local residents who show a positive attitude toward agriculture in the community. As a measurement strategy you might design a simple opinion poll, conduct a baseline poll before your project begins, and repeat it, perhaps annually, to document shifts in public attitudes. The opinion poll serves as your assessment tool, and can provide both quantitative and qualitative information about public attitudes toward agriculture.

Another indicator of “community support” is local policy that affects agriculture. Land-use regulations, local interpretations of what is “real” agriculture and what isn’t, signage restrictions, tax-assessment practices, right-to-farm regulations, and a host of other local policies can have profound impacts on farmers’ profitability, not to mention morale. One simple indicator might be the number of local government policy statements that explicitly support agriculture in the community. More complex, but probably more meaningful, would be to design your own local policy inventory and assessment process. Fortunately, an outstanding assessment tool has already been developed by the New Hampshire Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture. It has designed a simple but very thorough checklist that will provide excellent baseline data about your community’s current policy situation. But even better than that, the checklist itself is a great educational tool, making lots of excellent suggestions for how your community can provide a more supportive policy environment for farming.

Resource tip

Preserving Rural Character Through Agriculture: A Resource Kit for Planners from the New Hampshire Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture offers insights, tools and resources to prevent the unintended negative consequences of land-use regulations and decisions on agriculture, along with specific suggestions for enhancing and supporting agriculture. It includes a local policy assessment checklist, “Is Your Town Farmer-Friendly?” which is also available online at cecf1.unh.edu/sustainable/farmfrnd.cfm.

The resource kit is intended to inspire towns to take steps toward making their community more farm-friendly, and as a consequence, make an important contribution to preserving their community’s rural character.

To order the kit, contact University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension at (603) 679-5616 or send e-mail to nada.haddah@unh.edu.

Some potential outcomes, outcome indicators and measurement strategies are shown in the table that follows, as examples only. Communities need to identify their own, based on their unique circumstances and priorities.

Figure 23. Examples of outcome indicators and measurement strategies

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Measurement Strategies
<p>Stronger community support for local agriculture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Percentages of residents and local policy-makers showing a positive attitude toward agriculture. ■ Existence of local policies which support or inhibit agriculture. ■ Dollar value of local farm produce sold at local farmers' markets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop an opinion poll. Conduct a baseline poll before start of project, and annually thereafter. ■ Use the checklist "Is Your Town Farmer-Friendly?" developed by NH Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture (see Resource Tip on page 123). ■ Work with farmers' market managers and vendors to develop a sales reporting system.
<p>A critical mass of farmland that is protected from development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number and location of acres protected by conservation easements vs. number and location of acres approved for subdivision. ■ Number and size of contiguous blocks of preserved farmland. ■ Long-term: number of farms and farm-support businesses (machinery dealers, feed mills, processors, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create inventory of easements held by local and state governments and land trusts. ■ Create GIS mapping system and monitor both acres developed and acres preserved. ■ Conduct annual inventory of local ag businesses.
<p>Reduced nonpoint-source pollution from farms in the watershed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of farms adopting protective measures, including buffer zones, manure storage or composting systems; number of acres affected. ■ Actual levels of pollutants in a sample of wells, streams and lakes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monitor data available from county ag agencies, or develop your own survey. ■ Develop and implement a water testing protocol.
<p>Better quality of life, greater optimism and more supportive relationships for local farm families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number and percent of farm family members showing positive attitudes, opinions and expectations for the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a survey that can be used periodically, ideally annually, to assess local farm family attitudes, opinions and expectations for the future.

Learning by Doing: The Action/Evaluation Feedback Loop

Action and evaluation are complementary phases of the learning cycle. If your group takes the time to reflect on your experiences as you proceed (not waiting until the project is completed!), you'll be constantly improving your effectiveness. In this frame of reference, "failures" are just as important as "successes" in figuring out what works and what doesn't.

"Learning by doing" only happens when you link action with evaluation.

Figure 24. The Action/Evaluation Feedback Loop on the following page shows how action and evaluation go

hand in hand, connecting your short-term project objectives with expected long-term outcomes in the community.

Develop short-term objectives and an action plan

Plan for some short-term successes to build momentum and support.

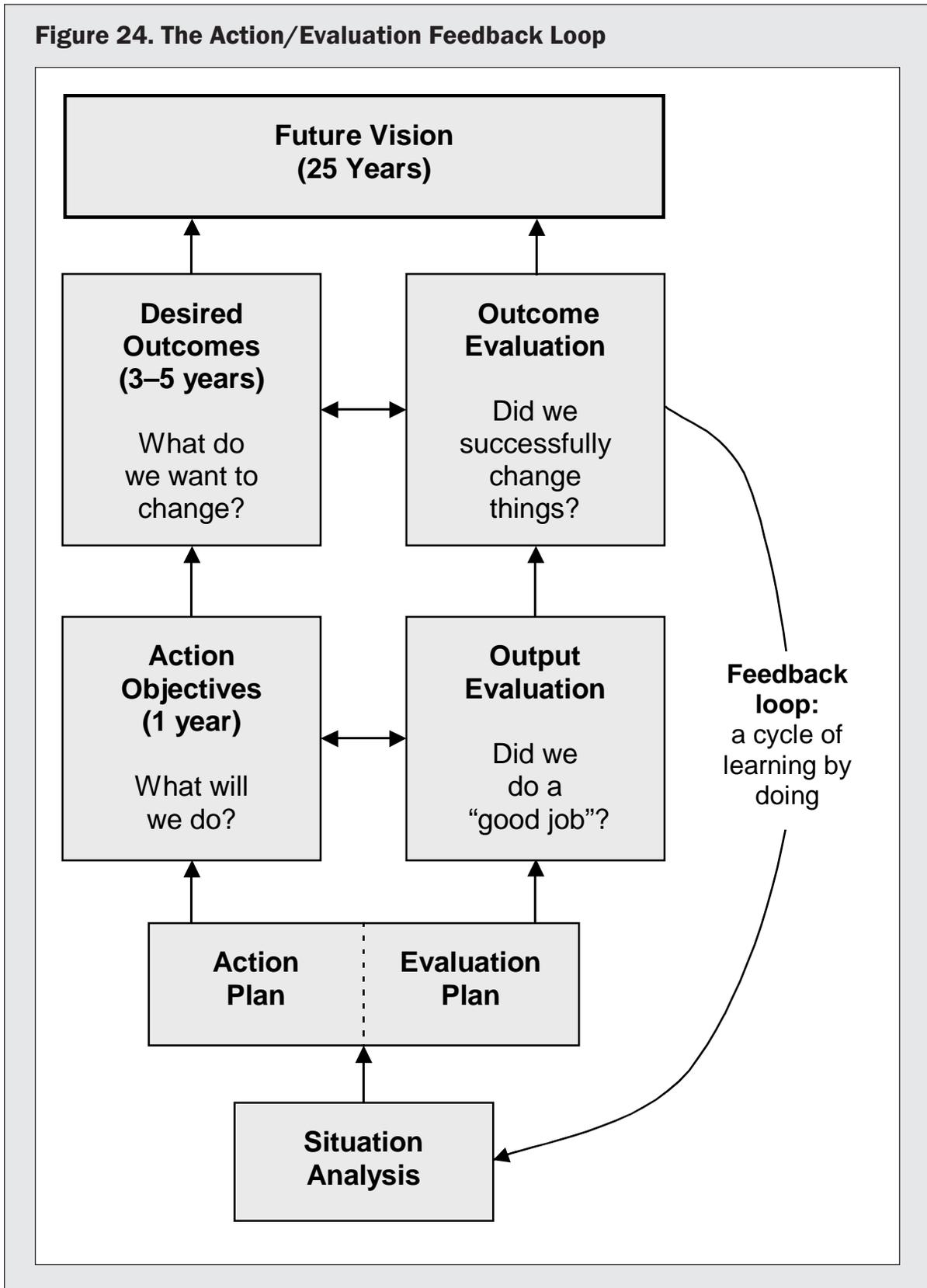
Setting short-term project objectives is important, not only because they represent steppingstones toward longer-term outcomes, but also because they provide focus, and progress toward them gives a sense of accomplishment for participants and helps build momentum and credibility for the longer-term effort. Be very sure, however, that your short-

term objectives are doable. An early failure, even if it is a good learning experience, makes it much harder to keep the effort going.

Example short-term objectives

- Develop a simple opinion poll and use it to assess the attitudes of local policy-makers and residents toward agriculture in your town.
- Communicate with three key local government committees to educate them about the importance of agriculture in the local economy this fall.
- Organize farm tours for ten fifth grade classes in the county this year.
- Establish one new farmers' market in the community by June 1.

Figure 24. The Action/Evaluation Feedback Loop



Your action plan should map out the steps needed for each short-term objective, and include a timetable with important deadlines; a statement of who is responsible for what, including overall coordination; and when and how results will be evaluated. What are the resources you will need for each step? When and how will you involve the media, if appropriate, and potential funders or other key groups? Naturally, your action plan is not written in stone, and will evolve as you proceed. Still, you need to write it down, or better yet, sketch it out graphically as you did for the initial process design.

Your process is just as important as your objective.

Keep in mind that the process you use to achieve your objective is just as important as the objective itself. If your group does a good job of keeping the public informed, involving local government leaders when possible, maintaining the interest and enthusiasm of project participants, and

so on, you are not only far likelier to achieve your short-term objectives, but you will be building the strong, effective collaborative effort and the broad-based community support you will need to reach your longer-term goals.

Complete the feedback loop with participatory evaluation

Short-term objectives are usually pretty simple to evaluate. Either your group did or did not do what you set out to do. People gave you pats on the back or they did not. But ultimately it's progress toward the long-term vision that's really important. Are your efforts actually making a difference for farming and your community? If you've done a good job defining the outcomes you desire, and the indicators and measurement strategies you'll use to assess your progress, you will have laid a solid foundation for evaluating your successes as well as your "failures," and you'll have learned from both.

So make sure that your action plan includes time set aside to reflect on the outcomes you're trying to achieve, to study the outcome indicators you developed, and to make adjustments in strategy if needed. Whenever you can, ask for

Build in checkpoints throughout your action plan to see what's working well and what's not.

feedback to understand better how others in your community are perceiving and responding to the development effort. Plan a focus-group discussion with participants, for example, to review what is working well and what isn't. Sit down with local government officials to update them on the project and get their feedback. Think about other important

stakeholder groups, and involve them in reviewing your progress. Get their ideas for how to do a better job. Get them involved. Build momentum!

"Participatory evaluation" is a term given to this kind of evaluation process, which brings together stakeholders to figure out what's working, what's not, and how to do a better job. Outside consultants can be helpful in organizing a participatory evaluation process, but it can also be done much more informally. In any case it should be driven by and for participants in the local community.

Participatory evaluation

- Guides internal development and provides external accountability.
- Helps organizations carry out their missions.
- Occurs in an environment where people can examine why something succeeds or fails without fear of negative consequences.
- Is everybody's job—everyone asks questions and shares information, contributing to a common goal.
- Is an ongoing process that is connected to other organizational tasks—it is the “real work.”
- Involves collaborative interaction among stakeholders as they seek to solve problems and deal with issues more effectively.
- Uses both quantitative measurements and narrative descriptions that give a holistic picture.

Adapted from a paper by Carolyn Ashton, July 1998, prepared for the Action Evaluation Research Initiative's on-line conference, September 1998.

Maintain momentum by anticipating stumbling blocks

Maintaining excitement and momentum for the long run is a tough challenge. Common stumbling blocks include the following:

- **Group fatigue.** At some point the initial burst of energy and enthusiasm fades away, to be replaced by a sense of persistence and dedication. If that persistence turns into tedium or exhaustion, people will drop out and your project will lose steam or die altogether.
- **Weakening of commitment in a key agency.** Organizational priorities change, sometimes through conscious decisions and sometimes through neglect or happenstance. If a key agency withdraws or fades from the collaborative partnership, the effort is compromised.
- **Staff (or leadership) turnover.** It can be a serious setback when a collaborative effort loses a key organizer, for example through staff changes in a participating agency.

One important strategy for short-circuiting these processes is to anticipate them. Know that energy levels fluctuate. Plan for some bursts of concentrated effort, punctuated by slower phases where participants can catch up on other things and return with renewed enthusiasm. Plan for an occasional fun learning experience, such as a group study tour, just to keep the creative juices flowing.

Keep tabs on the energy levels of key partner groups and individuals. Maintain strong communications with them to ensure that the collaborative effort remains a priority. Encourage participants to inform the group in advance when they will be facing other pressures and their contributions to the effort will decrease temporarily.

And finally, don't depend too much on the leadership of a single individual. Consider rotating the leadership responsibilities so that fresh energy can continually come into the project. Plan for turnover by recruiting new participants regularly. If you know that someone in a key position will be leaving, make advance preparations for a transition process. In the long run, we all need to be nurturing new leaders from the ranks of our younger, less experienced food and agriculture systems development collaborators.

Worksheet 6: Project Status Checklist in Appendix B (page 147) summarizes the sequence of steps we have described in this chapter. Its purpose is to help you assess where you are in the development process and where you ought to focus your next efforts. In a year you should be able to look over this checklist and see significant progress. Good luck!

Summary

In this chapter we presented an idealized model for community-based food and agriculture system development, which ties together a variety of “best practices” for *Growing Home*. This model is intended not as a recipe for success, but as a source of ideas and suggestions for getting an initiative started, identifying and understanding the various stakeholder groups, mobilizing the wider community, analyzing the current situation, developing a longer-term plan, and evaluating outcomes. Worksheets accompanying this chapter can be found in Appendix B (beginning on page 141).

Chapter 4 References and Resources

Berkshire Regional Food & Land Council. 1997. *Building a Better Local Food System*. Order from www.berkshiregrown.com.

Garrett, S. and G. Feenstra. 1999. *Growing a Community Food System*. Community Ventures: Partnerships in Education and Research Circular Series Topic. Washington State University Cooperative Extension.

Gillespie, A. and G. Gillespie. 2000. *Community Food Systems: Toward a Common Language for Building Productive Partnerships*. Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Kinsley, Michael. 1994. *Economic Renewal Guide: How to Develop A Sustainable Economy Through Community Collaboration*. Rocky Mountain Institute. Information at www.rmi.org.

Kloppenborg, Jack, John Hendrickson, and G.W. Stevenson. 1995. Coming into the foodshed. In W. Vitek and W. Jackson (eds.), *Home Territories: Essays on Community and the Land*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Rich, Bob. 1996. Strategic planning: The Search Conference approach, In *The Community Agriculture Development Resource Notebook*, Farming Alternatives Program, Cornell University.

Winne, M., H. Joseph and A. Fisher. 1997. *Community Food Security: A Guide to Concept, Design, and Implementation*. Community Food Security Coalition. Los Angeles, CA.

Useful Web Sites

Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E): www.cas.psu.edu/docs/casconf/nercrd/Publications/BR&E/bre.html.

Information, resources and training for communities interested in conducting a BR&E visitation program. Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, (814) 863-4656.

Community Food Security Coalition: www.foodsecurity.org.

Provides technical assistance to local communities and information about the programs funded by USDA Community Food Project grants nationwide.

Future Search Network: www.futuresearch.net.

Provides information on using the Future Search process to catalyze a community planning-to-action process. Includes contact information for experienced Future Search facilitators. (800) 951-6333.

Measuring Community Success Interactive Workbook: www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/rdev/Community_Success/why.html.

North Central Regional Rural Development Center site offers an interactive workbook to help communities measure the local or regional impacts of economic and community development processes aimed at enhancing rural community sustainability.

Study Circles Resource Center: www.studycircles.org.

Provides information and resources for starting up a study circle on any topic.

United Way Outcomes Measurement Resource Network: www.national.unitedway.org/outcomes/index.html.

Provides information and resources to support outcomes-based planning and evaluation.

USDA Community Food Security Initiative: www.reeusda.gov/food_security/foodshp.htm. Provides information, technical support and funding for grassroots partnerships that build local food systems and reduce hunger.

Appendix A Resources for Agriculture Development

Cornell Community, Food and Agriculture Program Resources

Many of the following publications are available from the Community, Food and Agriculture Program (formerly the Farming Alternatives Program), Department of Rural Sociology, Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853; (607) 255-9832; www.cfap.org.

Alexander, Kate. 1996. *Ithaca Farmers' Market: A Case Study in Small Business Incubation*. Farming Alternatives Program Student Project Series. The Ithaca Farmers' Market is recognized as one of the most successful in the U.S. This study is based on interviews with four diverse vendors.

Booker, Karene. 1994. *Community Agriculture Development: Profiles of 32 Initiatives in New York State*. Farming Alternatives Program.

Frost, Jason. 1996. *Two Small Mills in New York State: Contributions to Sustainable Agriculture*. Farming Alternatives Program Student Project Series. Profiles two small grain mills and their business relationships with local farmers.

Green, J., D. Hilchey and J. Padula. 1997. *Community Agricultural Development Resource Notebook*. Farming Alternatives Program. A compilation of resource materials on topics ranging from community strategic planning to agricultural economic development to urban-rural connections.

Grudens-Schuck, Nancy, et al. 1988. *Farming Alternatives: A Guide to Evaluating the Feasibility of New Farm-Based Enterprises*. Farming Alternatives Program/NRAES. Step-by-step workbook includes chapters on setting goals and assessing markets, production feasibility and financial feasibility.

Hilchey, D. 1993. *Agritourism in New York State: Opportunities and Challenges in Farm-Based Recreation and Hospitality*. Farming Alternatives Program. Four in-depth case studies with discussion of management concerns and New York tourism trends. Includes economic analysis. 122 pages.

Hilchey, Duncan, et al. 1996. *Horticultural Innovators: Case Studies of Seven Entrepreneurial Growers in New York State*. Farming Alternatives Program.

Hilchey, D. and N. Leonard. 1995. *Cultivating Farm, Neighbor, and Community Relations: Creative Approaches For Reducing Farm-Related Land-use Conflict*. Farming Alternatives Program. Describes the kinds of farm-related land-use conflicts which may be found in urbanizing areas. Suggests ways of maintaining good relations and outlines alternative approaches for dealing with conflict.

Hilchey, D., T.A. Lyson, G.W. Gillespie. 1995. *Farmers' Markets and Rural Economic Development: Entrepreneurship, Small Business Incubation and Job Creation in the Rural Northeast*. Farming Alternatives Program. Reports on a study of how farmers' markets contribute to local economic development.

Kuehn, Diane, et al. 1998. *Considerations for Agritourism Development*. New York Sea Grant. Focuses on three main components of agritourism development: small businesses, agricultural events, and regional agritourism initiatives.

Kuehn, Diane, and Duncan Hilchey. 1999. *Agritourism in New York: A Market Analysis*. New York Sea Grant. SUNY Oswego.

Kuehn, Diane, and Duncan Hilchey. 2000. *Agritourism in New York: Management and Operations*. New York Sea Grant. Reports on a study conducted by Sea Grant and Cornell's Farming Alternatives Program regarding the status of New York state agritourism business owners and their customers.

Lyson, Thomas A. 1999. From plow to plate: The transformation of New York's food and agricultural system since 1910. In T.A. Hirschl and T.B. Heaton (eds.), *New York in the 21st Century*, pp. 157–168. Greenwich, CT: Greenwood Press.

Lyson, Thomas A. 2000. Moving toward civic agriculture. *Choices*. Third Quarter:42–45.

Lyson, Thomas A., Charles C. Geisler, and Charles Schlough. 1998. Preserving community agriculture in a global economy. In R.K. Olson and T.A. Lyson (eds.), *Under the Blade: The Conversion of Agricultural Landscapes*, pp. 181–216. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Lyson, Thomas A., Gilbert W. Gillespie, and Duncan Hilchey. 1995. Farmers' markets and the local community: Bridging the formal and informal economy. *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture*, 10(3):108–113.

Lyson, Thomas A. and J. Green. 1999. The agricultural marketscape: A framework for sustaining agriculture and communities in the Northeast. *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*, 15(2/3):133–150.

Markley, Kristin, and Duncan Hilchey. 1998. *Adding Value for Sustainability: A Guidebook for Cooperative Extension Agents and Other Agricultural Professionals*. Farming Alterna-

tives Program. Provides background on small-scale processing enterprise development for those assisting producers, processors and communities.

Ruhf, Kathy, and Gretchen Gilbert. 2000. *Land, People and Profits: Integrating Agriculture, Communities and Economic Development*. Farming Alternatives Program. Resource notebook from the November 2000 Northeast Agricultural Development Symposium.

Welsh, Rick. 1993. *Practical, Profitable and Sustainable: Innovative Management Strategies on Four New York State Dairy Farms*. Farming Alternatives Program. In-depth case studies with discussion and economic analysis of the changes these farmers made to make their farms more sustainable.

Other Print Resources

Alcantara, Leslee. 1999. *Catalysts for Growth: Farmers Markets as a Stimulus for Economic Development*. Greenpaper of the Economics Institute, Loyola University.

Berkshire Regional Food & Land Council. 1997. *Building a Better Local Food System*. Order on-line from www.berkshiregrown.com.

Corum, V., M. Rosenzweig and E. Gibson. 2000. *The New Farmers' Market: Farm-Fresh Ideas for Producers, Managers and Communities*. Chelsea Green, (800) 639-4099; Web site www.chelseagreen.com.

Frisch, Tracy. 2000. *Building Sustainable Farms Through Peer Relationships*. Regional Farm and Food Project, www.capital.net/~farmfood.

Garrett, S. and G. Feenstra. 1999. *Growing a Community Food System*. Community Ventures: Partnerships in Education and Research Circular Series Topic. Washington State University Cooperative Extension.

Gillespie, A. and G. Gillespie. 2000. *Community Food Systems: Toward a Common Language for Building Productive Partnerships*. Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Henderson, Elizabeth, with Robyn Van En. 1999. *Sharing the Harvest: A Guide to Community-Supported Agriculture*. Chelsea Green, (800) 639-4099; Web site www.chelseagreen.com.

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. 1999. *Adding Value Through Environmental Marketing: Opportunities for Food Producers, Processors, and Retailers*. Available at www.iatp.org/labels/envcommodities.

Kinsley, Michael. 1994. *Economic Renewal Guide: How to Develop a Sustainable Economy Through Community Collaboration*. Rocky Mountain Institute. Web site www.rmi.org.

Kloppenborg, Jack, John Hendrickson, and G.W. Stevenson. 1995. Coming into the foodshed. In W. Vitek and W. Jackson (eds.), *Home Territories: Essays on Community and the Land*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

New Hampshire Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture. 1999. *Preserving Rural Character Through Agriculture: A Resource Kit for Planners*. Suggestions for enhancing and supporting local agriculture; tools and resources to prevent unintended negative consequences of land use regulations on agriculture. UNH Cooperative Extension, (603) 679-5616; e-mail nada.haddad@unh.edu.

Strange, Marty. 1988. *Family Farming: A New Economic Vision*. University of Nebraska Press and the Institute for Food and Development Policy. Web site www.igc.apc.org/foodfirst.

USDA. 2001. *Building Better Rural Places: Federal Programs for Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry, Entrepreneurship, Conservation and Community Development*. Free from ATTRA, (800) 346-9140 or www.attra.org.

Wilkins, Jennifer. 1998. *The Northeast Regional Food Guide*. Information for consumers, including the Northeast Regional Poster and Produce List and a set of eight Northeast Regional Food Guide Fact Sheets. Cornell University Resource Center (607) 255-2080; Web site www.nutrition.cornell.edu/FoodGuide.

Winne, M., H. Joseph and A. Fisher. 1997. *Community Food Security: A Guide to Concept, Design, and Implementation*. Community Food Security Coalition. Los Angeles, CA.

Useful Web Sites

Community and Rural Development

Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E): www.cas.psu.edu/docs/casconf/nercrd/Publications/BR&E/bre.html.

Information, resources and training for communities interested in conducting a BR&E visitation program. Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, (814) 863-4656.

Center for Rural Affairs: www.cfra.org.

Free e-mail newsletter offers critical analysis of agricultural, rural-development and policy issues.

Community Food Security Coalition: www.foodsecurity.org.
Provides technical assistance to local communities, and information about the programs funded by USDA Community Food Project grants nationwide.

Future Search Network: www.futuresearch.net.
Provides information on using the Future Search process to catalyze a community planning-to-action process. Includes contact information for experienced Future Search facilitators. (800) 951-6333.

Measuring Community Success Interactive Workbook: www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/rdev/Community_Success/why.html.
North Central Regional Rural Development Center site offers an interactive workbook to help communities measure the local or regional impacts of economic and community development processes aimed at enhancing the sustainability of rural communities.

Robyn Van En Center for CSA Resources: www.csacenter.org.
Provides a state-by-state directory of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms, as well as resources, referrals, links, listings of publications and products, on-line postings of events, positions and information, and contact information for technical assistance and support in starting or managing a CSA. (717) 264-4141 ext. 3352.

Smart Ag and Smart Growth: www.smartag.net.
Shows the connections between agriculture development and Smart Growth strategies to strengthen town centers and prevent sprawl development.

Study Circles Resource Center: www.studycircles.org.
Provides information and resources for starting up a study circle on any topic.

USDA Community Food Security Initiative: www.reeusda.gov/food_security/foodshp.htm.
Provides information, technical support and funding for grassroots partnerships that build local food systems and reduce hunger.

USDA's National Rural Development Partnership: www.rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp.

United Way Outcomes Measurement Resource Network: www.national.unitedway.org/outcomes/index.html.
Provides information and resources to support outcomes-based planning and evaluation.

Marketing

Chef's Collaborative: www.chefnet.com/cc2000.
The Chef's Collaborative is a network of chefs, restaurateurs and other culinary pro-

professionals who promote sustainable cuisine by teaching children, supporting local farmers, educating each other and inspiring their customers to choose clean, healthy, local foods.

Food Marketing Institute: www.fmi.org.

Web site for food retailers and wholesalers that provides an insider's view of the food-marketing industry.

Global Agribusiness Information Network: www.fintrac.com/gain.

Information on commodity markets and prices around the world.

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS): www.ams.usda.gov.

Provides market news information for many farm products, including weekly price reports; commodity program information; how to sell farm products to USDA food programs; National Organic Program; and more.

USDA Direct Marketing: www.ams.usda.gov/directmarketing.

Information, resources and support programs for direct marketing of farm products to consumers.

USDA Farmers' Markets Information: www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets.

Information, resources and support programs for beginning and established farmers' markets. Includes a state-by-state directory of farmers' markets. Also operates a Farmers' Market Hotline at (800) 384-8704.

Data Sources

Agricultural Census Data by State: www.econ.ag.gov/epubs/other/usfact.

Summaries by the Economic Research Service of USDA for agricultural, farmland and demographic data.

County Business Patterns: www.census.gov/epcd/cbp/view/cbpview.html.

Although it does not include farming, this Census Bureau data includes number of firms, number of employees, and payroll for agribusinesses, food processing and all other NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) business categories at the county level.

Regional Economic Information System: fisher.lib.virginia.edu/reis.

Compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, REIS provides detailed data on personal income, sales, and other measures for both farm and non-farm business categories.

U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder: factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet.

U.S. Census of Agriculture for 1987, 1992 and 1997: govinfo.kerr.orst.edu/ag-stateis.html.

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service: www.nass.usda.gov.
Agriculture census information, available by state and county.

Other Web Resources

Agriculture in the Classroom: www.reeusda.gov/serd/hep/agclass.htm.
Contact information and Web site links to all Ag in the Classroom programs in every state.

American Farmland Trust: www.farmland.org.
AFT works to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment. Site provides access to research and information on farmland trends and protection mechanisms.

National Farm Transition Network: www.exnet.iastate.edu/pages/bfc/national/homepage.html.
Information and support for beginning and retiring farmers.

Northeast New Farmer Network: www.Northeastnewfarmer.org.
Multistate, USDA-funded initiative to provide support for beginning farmers.

Sustainable Farming Connection: www.ibiblio.org/farming-connection/index.html.
Information on organic farming, marketing and certification.

Sustainable Agriculture Network: www.sare.org.
Information from the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.

USDA/Economic Research Service (ERS): www.ers.usda.gov.
The main source of economic information and research from the USDA, including a summary of federal laws and regulations affecting agricultural employers, and a section on organic farming and marketing.

USDA National Agricultural Library's (NAL) Web Gateway to AGRICOLA (AGRICultural OnLine Access): www.nal.usda.gov/ag98.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: www.nrcs.usda.gov.

Appendix B

Worksheets for Community-Based Food and Agriculture System Development

The following worksheets are designed to help you, your core group and other partners to focus on important steps in the process of engaging your community, building a strong collaborative partnership, and defining the outcomes you want to achieve. These exercises are not written in stone. We hope you will adapt them to your needs and let us know what works for you. E-mail Joanna Green at jg16@cornell.edu with your feedback. Thanks!

Worksheet 1: Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder groups	Key issues	Positions on key issues	Underlying interests	Resources, strengths to offer	

Worksheet 2: Shared Vision Statement

Quality of Life: What do we value most for our families our community and ourselves?

Future Landscape: What do we want our local landscape and natural resource base to be like in thirty years?

Food and Agriculture System: What kinds of farms and businesses do we imagine will help create the quality of life we desire and our vision for the landscape?

Worksheet 3: Force Field Analysis

Forces working in support of our vision:

Forces working against our vision:

Leverage points (opportunities for change):

Worksheet 4: Desired Outcomes

Social outcomes:

Environmental outcomes:

Economic outcomes:

Worksheet 5: Outcome Indicators and Measurement Strategies

Outcome	Outcome indicators	Measurement strategies

Worksheet 6: Project Status Checklist

Do you have a strong, committed core group?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	
Is your core group functioning well as a team?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	
Have you identified all important stakeholder groups?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	
Have you designed a process for involving these stakeholders?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	
Have you generated, in collaboration with diverse stakeholders, a written statement expressing your broadly shared vision of the future?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	
Have you identified specific measurable outcomes that you'd like to achieve in the next 3 to 5 years?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	

(continued)

Have you integrated social, environmental and economic outcomes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	
Have you identified outcome indicators that will tell you whether or not you're making progress toward your desired outcomes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	
Have you devised a measurement strategy for your outcome indicators?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	
Have you agreed on one or more achievable short-term objectives, which will serve as stepping stones toward your outcomes and your vision of the future?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	
Do you have a written action/evaluation plan that includes how you will evaluate your progress and how you will learn from your experiences?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	

Appendix C

Excerpts from the Agricultural Lands and Open Space Preservation Plan of Washtenaw County, Michigan

Copies of this report are available for \$15.00 plus \$1.00 for shipping and handling from the Washtenaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission, attn: Terry Brinkman, P.O. Box 8645, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8645, or on the Web at www.co.washtenaw.mi.us/CURRENT/agtoc.html.

OBJECTIVE 1: Maintain a minimum of 120,000 acres of agricultural land through the year 2020 in Washtenaw County.

Rationale for 120,000 acres: Between 1982 and 1992, Washtenaw County has lost an average of 3,500 acres of farmland per year. The total farmland acreage for Washtenaw County in 1992 was approximately 189,000 acres. By the year 2020, it is projected that Washtenaw County will have approximately 90,000 to 100,000 acres of agricultural land if the current decreasing rate of 3,500 acres per year continues. The 120,000 acres represents maintaining the 90,000 to 100,000 acres plus a goal of actively preserving an additional 20,000 to 30,000 acres of agricultural land that would otherwise be converted to a non-agricultural use. This total acreage would provide a basis for sustaining an agriculture industry.

Recommended Strategies:

The following five possible strategies are recommended to address this objective with the understanding that no single tool can be effective by itself. The Task Force has concluded that a combination of several tools is needed to effectively preserve agricultural lands and open space.

- a. Identify and prioritize agricultural lands, including large contiguous blocks of agricultural land. Utilize existing information resources, including the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, MIRIS, etc.
- b. Encourage and facilitate using the following planning and zoning tools and processes at the township level:

Sliding Scale Zoning: Reduces the density of non-farm dwellings as the size of the parcel increases; for example, in a typical sliding scale district, one buildable lot is permitted on the first five acres, one on the next ten acres, and another unit for every 30 acres beyond that.

Cluster development and **planned unit development** with appropriate design standards. Cluster development includes more concentrated grouping of houses on a property than required by local zoning ordinances to protect sensitive, scenic, agricultural or other natural resources. Often used in combination with conservation easements. Planned Unit Developments (PUD)—type of development characterized by comprehensive planning for the project as a whole, clustering of structures to preserve usable open space and other natural features, a mixture of housing types and sometimes a variety of non-residential uses as well.

Deed Restrictions are clauses in deeds limiting the future uses of properties. Deed restrictions may impose a vast variety of limitations and conditions on property use, for example, they may limit the density of buildings, dictate the types of structures that can be erected or prevent buildings from being used for specific purposes.

Voluntary Agricultural Security Areas are voluntary agreements encompassing a minimum amount of contiguous agricultural land (250 acres, for example) by one or more landowners stating the land would not be developed for a period of years, except for family member residences; often are accompanied by tax incentives and sometimes required for participation in a purchase or transfer-of-development-rights program.

These strictly voluntary areas could incorporate the following:

- **Large Lot Zoning** (greater than 40 acres): Ordinances which establish a large minimum lot size with the intention of precluding conversion to non-agricultural uses by virtue of high price and large distances between potential development sites.
 - **Exclusive Agricultural Zoning:** A zoning designation which attempts to limit the conversion of land to non-agricultural uses by restricting the housing density, establishing large minimum lot sizes, requiring clustering of residential development, etc.
- c. Discourage development of “residential estate” lots of 3 to 10 acres.
- d. Encourage and facilitate the use of the following agricultural land preservation tools as appropriate:

Public

Purchase-of-Development-Rights Programs: Public programs that pay landowners the fair market value of their development rights in exchange for permanent conserva-

tion easements that restrict development of such property. PDR programs are strictly voluntary and are usually funded by the sale of bonds or property-tax revenues.

Purchase and Leaseback Programs: Land is purchased outright and then leased to an individual who will seek economic returns from the land from agricultural uses or open space, usually a farmer.

Fee Simple Acquisition: Outright purchase of a property by an individual, government agency or land trust that includes all available rights to the land.

Land Swaps: Trading of land in fee simple involving two parties, usually a private individual and a government agency or land trust.

Transfers of Development Rights: Transfer development potential (right to develop) of one piece of property either to another property held by the same owner or to a different landowner in same area; often used as a means for preserving historic sites, open space, or fragile lands held by private owners.

Private

Land Trusts: Private, nonprofit organizations that work with philanthropic donors and private landowners to protect the sensitive and important features of properties, primarily by fee-simple acquisition of land for management as nature preserves. Also accept and administer conservation easements on land.

Land Donations/Reserved Life Estates: Outright donation of properties by individuals, government agencies or land trusts that includes all available rights to the land involved.

Land Swaps: Trading of land in fee-simple involving two parties, usually a private individual and a government agency or land trust.

- e. Develop an Implementation Committee or utilize the County Planning Commission to monitor ongoing implementation and evaluation of progress toward meeting the 2020 objective.



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