

Urban-Rural Interface

Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition Food Policy Brief



The Problem:

Realizing a more sustainable and healthy food system for Cleveland and Cuyahoga County requires a regional perspective that considers the linkages between urban and rural counties in Northeast Ohio. Production and processing resources and capabilities in Cleveland alone cannot support the dietary needs of the city's population. In order to create a self-sufficient sustainable food system, inputs must come from beyond Cuyahoga County. While urban vacant land re-utilization can raise the productive potential for food grown and consumed in Cleveland, there will always be a need for broader linkages to rural areas where larger land tracts can enable the production of food, energy crops, or even building materials that would be difficult to produce within the confines of an urban center. The true opportunity of a healthy rural-urban interface lies in building both an economic, as well as a social community between the two.

Goals:

The primary goal for an urban-rural interface is to better connect rural and urban areas in our region, in order to create rural opportunities, and improve urban and rural food access. This primary goal includes improving food access through increases in seasonal availability and improving access in

under-served urban and rural communities as well as developing food processing infrastructure through the development of shared kitchen incubators and improved livestock processing facilities. Additionally, the FPC hopes to improve access to information through new media production, regional resource mapping, and publications to exchange information and grow awareness, encourage new farmers through young farmer opportunities, the promotion of urban agriculture, and linking farmland preservation with local food efforts. The FPC finally hopes to encourage local food policy councils modeled after the CCCFPC to cross-link food policy efforts between urban and rural communities.

Our whole food system is now just a transportation system. Our community has been disconnected, the country from the town. The country is really the lifeblood of adjoining villages and cities. It is where our food comes from. It is our natural ecosystem and one that we should be strengthening rather than weakening.

*-Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur
9th Congressional District*

Progress to Date:

The Rural-Urban interface working group identified avenues for connecting the goal of healthy food access in the city to opportunities for growth in rural communities. This working group grew into an effort to organize a second Regional Food Congress in November of 2008. The Food Congress brought together a mix of policy makers, farmers, business owners, students, and others to identify priority opportunities for collaboration across the region. Following

the Congress, parallel food policy councils were developed in Lorain, Summit, Mahoning, and Portage counties to replicate some of the processes established by the CCCFPC and to increase opportunities for collaboration regionally. According to the North East Ohio Food Web, if the 16 county region of Northeast Ohio were to shift 25% of their food production and consumption to local production and consumption, over 27,000 new jobs would be created, and the annual regional output of Northeast Ohio would increase by \$4.2 billion. Growing a sustainable food system can produce numerous opportunities for rural and urban communities alike. The extent of collaboration will shape the overall growth potential for the region.

Example:

Many economic opportunities in the local food system can build regional prosperity, including:

- Cottage industries for food processing,

jams, sauces, jellies, etc.

- Composting and re-use of organic urban wastes to build topsoil and the productive potential of land
- Energy generation through methane capture from compost
- Integration of advances in green building and renewable energy for prototype greenhouses to provide year-round production
- Absorption and collection of stormwater for irrigation or habitat
- Using chickens, bees, and other livestock to improve soil and diversify diets
- Farm stands, farmers markets, and community-supported agriculture programs to increase market outlets in urban neighborhoods
- Youth entrepreneurship opportunities
- Hydroponics or mushroom production in old factory buildings
- Urban beekeeping and wildflower meadows on urban rooftops
- Fish farming and aquaponics

