



## LOCAL FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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**We envision** a vibrant, affordable, and resilient local food and agriculture economy in the Missoula community with an educated consumer base that creates sufficient demand for local food.

**Our community** will educate Missoulians about the importance of climate change's effect on local agriculture, assist farmers in food production and irrigation efficiencies, enhance our ability to use local foods, and protect our remaining agricultural land from future development.

**Snapshot:** Western Montana's changing climate will alter the agricultural industry in the region, with research pointing to hotter and dryer summers, more aggressive weeds and pests, and a decline in crop yields as well as an increase in costs. Coupled with these local challenges will be external pressures from other food producing regions of the nation more severely affected by climate change, creating increased demand for our locally produced food. We also face the anticipated need to feed incoming "climate refuges". And growing and consuming local foods reduces our carbon footprint by shortening the food miles travelled. Given these concerns and opportunities, we must take immediate steps to secure our future food security from anticipated climate change by engaging in the strategies outlined here. We believe these efforts will work together to create a vibrant, and healthy local food and agriculture industry in Missoula that is accessible to all and strengthens our regional economy.

### KEY STRATEGIES:

#### 1. Engage in comprehensive education

**Goal:** Create a multi-pronged education and messaging strategy to target producers, consumers, institutions, and youth by stressing the impact of climate change on our future food security and provide options for minimizing the adverse effects of climate change.

#### Activities:

- A. Develop and deliver educational materials for producers that will assist them in understanding the differences between normal weather fluctuations and long term climate change, as well as provide information on the agricultural crops, varieties, and methods most suitable for our area.
- B. Develop and deliver educational materials for irrigators and incentivize implementation of educational materials to improve irrigation methods to conserve water and reduce sediment, fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide runoff into waterways.
- C. Develop and deliver educational materials for community members to establish a consumer base for local foods by developing the message and distributing it to the general public.
- D. Develop and implement a curriculum around local food, climate change, and food security for local public schools.
- E. Continue Farm Field Days. Expand CFAC sponsored "Beginning Farmer Education" programs throughout Western Montana.
- F. Encourage and incentivize personal and neighborhood backyard fruit and vegetable gardens.

#### Metrics and Timetable:

- a. 3-5 roundtable discussions convened (1 in 2015; rest in 2016)
- b. Educational materials for producers, irrigators, and consumers developed and distributed. Use Climate Smart Missoula website to make these available to all.
- c. 5 workshops and field days to connect farmers for sharing best practices in 2015-2016.



## **2. Expand local food distribution and establish food processing facilities**

**Goal:** Enhance existing distribution centers, as well as plan for and build food processing facilities in order to meet the expected increase in demand for locally grown food products.

### **Activities:**

- A. Coordinate with the University of Montana, local hospitals and schools to expand their use of local foods.
- B. Create or expand facilities to source and distribute local foods; work with Western Montana Growers Co-op and the Missoula Food Co-Op, and other commercial food processing centers.
- C. Encourage CSAs, markets, urban gardens, etc. and provide support incentives for these projects.
- D. Analyze the need and start planning for local food processing plants to include a mobile animal slaughter unit.
- E. Conduct outreach on newly passed state legislation regarding “cottage food industries” (Yes)

### **Metrics and Timelines:**

- a. Connect with Farm to School and UM Dining to provide resources to area schools and other institutions to increase local food procurement.
- b. Provide resources to restaurants, local producers and independent grocery markets for Choose Local Campaign to incentivize local food purchases during Fall 2015.
- c. Expand Double SNAP Dollar Program to area independent grocery stores and CSA markets.

## **3. Promote the use of land planning tools**

**Goal:** Promote land use planning tools and policies that will preserve our agricultural lands, keep wildlife habitat connected, protect our riparian areas, guide development away from sensitive areas, and provide predictability in land use planning.

### **Activities:**

- A. Support policies in the Missoula County revision of subdivision regulations that will more effectively mitigate the loss of agricultural land to development. This is ongoing through the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition (CFAC)
- B. Build support for and pass a new Open Space Bond.
- C. Review other proposed tools for preserving agricultural land to enhance future food security.
- D. Help with outreach for meetings, public comment periods, and additional

### **Metrics and timeline:**

- a. Missoula County commissioners will make these final land use decisions fall of 2015, and we'll know of our success for this specific planning regulation then.
- b. We can track participation in public hearings and open comment periods.

## **ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES:**

- Study the possibilities of a water trust and water rights reallocation to coordinate water use across the region and ensure water sustainability (see Water bucket).
- Promote Conservation Stewardship Program and reward conservation practices through available federal programs.



- Involve County Extension Office and Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) as well as other existing agencies to further our goals.
- Work with community social service partners to provide health care and other support for labor workers in our local food system.
- Encourage local food vendors to use locally produced fresh and/or prepared food for farmers' markets, festivals, and other community events.
- Promote locally produced food as a community amenity that can enhance tourism and economic development.
- Encourage and support the acceptance of Electronic Benefits Transfer (formerly food stamps) at all markets and groceries, and educate EBT/SNAP users about using their benefits to purchase local food. Develop a Double SNAP Dollar program at all participating Farmers Markets, and expand the program to new farmers markets within communities.

## A CLIMATE SMART WAY FORWARD

Presently there is a strong and growing enthusiasm in the Missoula area for enhancing local food and building resilient local agriculture systems, yet our dedicated community organizations need additional capacity to advance all these interwoven efforts. We also need to continue to build programs that allow lower income community members opportunities to grow and enjoy local foods. Climate Smart can help foster productive conversations between a diverse group of stakeholders in the industry, including interested and curious community members. These conversations can inform the process moving forward to advance the bucket's goals.

**Potential Partners:** Community Food and Agriculture Coalition, Missoula Open Lands Committee, Western Montana Grower's Cooperative, Five Valleys Land Trust, Garden City Harvest, University of Montana Sustainability Center and Dining Services, Center for Rural Affairs, 10,000 New Gardens, Clark Fork Coalition, Farm to School, Clark Fork Farmers Market, Missoula Food Bank, Missoula County Public Schools, City of Missoula, Missoula County, and more.



*Developing Local Food and Agriculture strategies during Summit #2*