Local and Regional Food Systems Driving Community Wealth Creation

Mary Hendrickson, PhD
Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology

What makes community food systems work? Networks....
Why do farmers participate in local food systems?

Farmers surveyed indicate that producing food and food products for their local market ...  
• Provides an additional level of pride in their products (91.3%)  
• Provides an added level of satisfaction (88.7%).

A high number of respondents are motivated by their ...  
• Contribution to the quality of life in their community (78.6%)  
• Additional income local foods provides to their operation (79%)  
• ... and to family members (63.7%).

Many respondents agree that local food markets ...  
• Provide an added level of independence for agricultural producers (79.1%)  
• Provides for a better working environment for themselves, their families and workers (64.1%).  
• Allows them to concentrate on high quality products (77.2%)

Source: Cornelia Flora and Jan Flora, Iowa State University
Creating wealth that is “rooted in place through local ownership and control and building more self-reliant and resilient economy.”

Build lasting livelihoods – the capabilities, the assets - both material and social resources - and the activities required for a means of living.

Think in terms of Net – Measuring both what creates and what takes away from the capitals

Human Capital: The existing stock of skills, understanding, physical health, and mental wellness in a region’s people

Leadership capacity
Wisdom
Knowledge & Skills
Self-Efficacy
Health

**Indicators**
- Increase the number of food and farm businesses employing new and innovative techniques
- Improve a health outcome for a target population
- Increase the number of transactional partners (businesses, producers, growers) participating in an educational program
- Increase the number of business people and consumers participating in educational programs

**Strategies**
- Technical assistance on latest techniques
- Providing educational opportunities, including mentoring and networking
- Community leadership programs that explore community assets
Social Capital: The existing stock of trust, relationships, and networks in a region’s population

Interactions Among Groups
Collective Identity
Sense of Shared Future

**Indicators**
- Increase the number of partners in a value chain
- Increase diversity of partners (number of economic sectors represented, demographic diversity, or other metric of interest to region) involved in leadership roles in the value chain
- Increase number of low-income people who engage with/influence/make decisions in the value chain
- Increase the number of volunteers in a project

**Strategies**
- Community leadership programs that explore community assets
- Opportunities and spaces for interactions among diverse stakeholders in the food system
- Place-building and space-making

**Small farms band together to grow their connections to consumers who hunger for local food**

*By Anne Brochhoff*
Special to The Star
July 28, 2015 03:00 AM
Updated July 28, 2015 08:08 PM

At first glance, Howard’s Grocery, Café & Catering seems exactly what the name implies. When it opens next month, the grocery will carry local products, and the café will serve cheeseburgers, grilled-cheese sandwiches and seasonal fare. Owner Craig Howard will
Natural Capital: The existing stock of natural resources in a region’s places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Quality</th>
<th>Soil Health</th>
<th>Natural Beauty</th>
<th>Diversity of animals and plants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Indicators**
- Increase the number of acres of land growing produce for a market opportunity
- Increase the number of acres or sites where residents and visitors can enjoy natural amenities
- Improve regional air quality or water quality measured by national standards
- Increased volume of waste recycled, such as glass in value chains focused on bottled products

**Strategies**
- Encourage farmers to diversify operations through new market opportunities
- Provide on-going technical assistance on sustainable soil and water management strategies
Natural Amenities are important for people to feel attached to their place and want to live there.

Political Capital: The existing stock of goodwill, influence and power that people, organizations and institutions in the region can exercise in decision-making.

- Civic engagement
- Decision-making
- Broadly shared
- Groups can influence standards, regulations and enforcement

Indicators:

- A broad range of consumers become active in food and farm policy at local, state and national levels
- Increase the number of value chain stakeholders on nonprofit boards of directors related to value chain work and on citizen’s advisory committees or task forces at area educational institutions, healthcare institutions, or other regional anchors
- Increase the number of opportunities to communicate value chain priorities to elected officials, such as through site visits, meetings or phone calls, testimony
- Increase the number of new policies supporting value chain strategies and outcomes
“Maybe at first you come because you think the food’s better for you. Before you know it you find yourself curious, finding yourself with questions. How was it grown? Were chemicals used? How were the animals treated? And at places like farmers’ markets you get to ask those questions, to people who actually have answers for you. . . . Pretty soon you start caring more about things like sustainability than you might have before. (Julian, farmers’ market)"

Perhaps in this sense especially—in growing citizens attuned to justice—we can say some of these spaces are engaging in a political project, versus practicing politics as usual. While citizenship-as membership governs conduct within social groups, more-than-active citizens seek bridges across social groups.

Carolan 2016

Built Capital: The existing stock of constructed infrastructure—for example, buildings, sewer systems, broadband, roads—in a region’s places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregation and distribution</th>
<th>Processing plants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road improvement</td>
<td>Broadband</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indicators**
- Increase the capacity of regional infrastructure
- Improve storage capacity for regionally produced products, such as square feet of cold storage
- Grow the regionally owned/controlled processing capacity for value chain products,
- Increase the locally controlled distribution points or points of sale for regional products or services, such as regional food hubs, local retailers selling local foods or beverages, or businesses offering specialized services

**Strategies**
- Developing private-public partnerships
- Investing in public goods like community owned processing or storage – or marketing and internet access
Resilience

Capacity of the system to absorb shocks and bounce back

- Longer, specialized, centralized and consolidated supply chains are vulnerable to disruption

Tornados  Hurricanes  Floods  Pandemics  Global trade
“When Hurricane Matthew hit, the eye went directly over Simply Natural Dairy. They are grass fed, so didn’t lose feed and could keep feeding. In the past, they had received two USDA Value-Added Producer Grants to put in bottling and to establish ice cream production. Their milk is in stores, and they also have a on-farm ice cream store with agrotourism. When the hurricane hit, theirs was the only bottled milk in the local stores for over a week. This is one of the benefits of the VAPG. And this is also part of the loss of transportation and infrastructure in the hurricane.” – Scott Marlow, RAFI-USA, Pittsboro North Carolina

Mary Hendrickson, PhD
University of Missouri
200 B Gentry Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
Tele: 573-882-7463
Email: HendricksonM@Missouri.edu
Web: https://localfoodlinkages.wordpress.com/
https://maryhendrickson.wordpress.com/

Division of Applied Social Sciences
University of Missouri