

Community Food Systems: Resources & Information for the North Bay

Background - What is a local food system?

The long-term health of a community's food system is an important indicator of its vitality and sustainability (Feenstra¹). It can be difficult to define what a community food system is because so many visions and projects that are creating community food systems in parallel exist.

In *Growing a Community Food System*², Steven Garrett and Gail Feenstra offer this definition: A community food system is one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place. It is a long-term goal toward which many communities are striving.



The creation of food policy councils, regional food guides, direct marketing and aggregation efforts, community food security policies and practices, and community economic development are positive indicators that local governments and community partners are moving forward towards a vibrant community food system. This factsheet is offered as a partial compendium of efforts to date.

Why the North Bay focus?

The North Bay includes four counties. Marin, Sonoma, and Napa border the North edge of San Francisco Bay; and Mendocino County, while not bordering the Bay, is closely tied to the region (Lake County is also tied to these counties). The Bay Area consumer base (8+ million) provides a unique opportunity for both agricultural producers and food processors and purveyors to deliver high quality food and fiber products. These local economies are rooted in agriculture and agricultural-related businesses. See Table 1 for a description of the regional value of agriculture. The North Bay is home to the largest concentration of artisan cheesemakers in the state, and is long famous for its world-renowned wineries and unique wine growing appellations. There is strong interest in developing sustainable food systems that contribute to food security. This is evidenced by the agriculture and food summits held in Sonoma (2011), Marin (2010), Napa (2009), and Mendocino in 2012. A 2010 report from the American Farmland Trust (AFT) outlined Bay Area opportunities for direct marketing and food system development and reinforces the need for region-wide solutions to infrastructure problems. Despite the recent economic difficulties, there is strong demand for sustainably and regionally produced food products in the North Bay and Bay Area; however, the lack of appropriate processing and distribution infrastructures and various regulations are significant limiting factors.

¹ Gail Feenstra is the Food Systems Coordinator at the Agricultural Sustainability Institute (ASI) and University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SAREP). SAREP's Food Systems Program encourages the development of regional food systems that link farmers, consumers and communities.

² Steven Garrett and Gail Feenstra. 1999. *Growing a Community Food System*. Pullman, WA: Western Rural Development Center.

Table 1: Regional Agriculture Value (2007)³

	Sonoma	Lake	Marin	Napa	Mendocino
Number of farms	3,429	845	255	1,638	1,136
Land in farms (acres)	530,895	124,199,147	161,339 ⁴	223,246	608,674
Average farm size (acres)	155	147	523	136	536
Total cropland (acres)	134,418	28,997	29,040	66,184	53,838
Total pasture (acres)	91,197	18,800	132,299	51,860	31,609
Cattle & calves (nos.)	75,464	3,270	33,729	6,952	19,299
Crop sales (\$)	422,538,000	59,713,000	6,075,000	371,961,000	106,614,000
Livestock sales (\$)⁵	225,041,000	1,389,000	51,795,000	4,906,000	15,795,000
Total market value of products sold (\$)	647,579,000	61,102,000	57,871,000	376,868,000	122,408,000
Top crop product (\$)	wine grapes	wine grapes	dairy	wine grapes	wine grapes
Top crop value (\$)	381,092,000	34,227,000	35,578,000	399,913,000	62,047,000
Direct sales⁶	0.7%	0.9%	2.9%	0.3%	1.0%
Organic farms / acres	177 / 15,973	90 / 2,038	56 / 20,598	103 / 2,566	202 / 7,799
Certified Farmers Market	18	3	8	5	8
Number of CSA's⁷	32	2	3	4	12

Source: Agricultural Census Overview, USDA, 2007; Summary of California Crop Reports 2007-2008, CDEA.



³ The Census of Agriculture was conducted in 2012 and statistics will be available in 2013.

⁴ Includes 28,064 acres of land in ranching at PRNS and GGNRA.

⁵ Includes sales of all livestock and poultry such as sheep, goats, and pigs, as well as dairy production values.

⁶ USDA 2008 ARMS data used to analyze direct-to-consumer sales at farmers markets, roadside stands, on farm stores, & CSA's.

⁷ Local Harvest website.

County Food Forums & Agriculture Summits

North Bay counties have hosted farm and food summits, and created or updated their action plans. These templates for inspiration and action can be found at the following links:

- **Marin Agriculture Summit Action Plan 2010** - ucanr.edu/sites/2010AgSum2/Summit_Outcomes/Marin_Agricultural_Support_Action_Plan/
- **Marin Food System Assessment Report 2012** - marinfoodsystem.wordpress.com/report-2/
- **Mendocino Local Healthy Food Summit 2010** - gardensproject.org/blog/index.php?id=5139335795704474156
- **Mendocino Food Action Plan 2013** - mendocinofood.org
- **Napa Food Forum 2009** - countyofnapa.org/AgCommissioner/NLFF/
- **Napa Food Shed Survey 2011:**
 - **NVC Small Business Development Center Foodshed Survey** - countyofnapa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=4294974440
 - **Recommendations** - countyofnapa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=4294974441
- **Sonoma Food Forum 2011** - sonoma-county.org/public_reports/
- **Sonoma County Healthy & Sustainable Food Action Plan 2012** - aginnovations.org/images/uploads/SonomaFAP.pdf

The North Coast Regional Food Systems Network

In 2011 area leaders initiated a North Coast Regional Food Systems Network, a multi-county network addressing economic, social and environmental interests in the region's food system. The group is composed of representatives from the five northern California counties listed on the first page, including three county supervisors, producers, farm bureau leaders, retail food outlets, local government departments, the financial sector, and underserved communities. There are currently 85 individuals working on this multi-county effort focused on aggregation, processing infrastructure, marketing, and financing, guided by a 15-member steering committee. The USDA Rural Development program and participating counties are funding this effort.



Accomplishments to date:

- A GrownLocal marketing campaign began in Marin, Mendocino and Lake based on the success of Sonoma GoLocal efforts. GrownLocal Marin - ucanr.edu/sites/Grown_Local_Marin/
- Support of Buckelew's People's Harvest facility in Petaluma; with on-going support for CAFF's efforts to create viable and regional aggregation
- Supervisors Valerie Brown (Sonoma) and Carrie Brown (Mendocino) co-sponsored an Economic Development Forum for producers in 2012
- The Cottage Food Law – Local implementation and streamlining

Community Food Systems, Food Aggregation Hubs & Value Chain Resources

The Agricultural Sustainability Institute (sarep.ucdavis.edu/sfs/VBSC) located at UC Davis hosts a resources page with numerous links to other regional, state, and national studies.

Food Hubs and Values Based Supply Chains: A Toolkit for California Farmers and Ranchers (sarep.ucdavis.edu/sfs/VBSC%20farmer%20toolkit%207.27.12.pdf) is a report describing some of the value-based supply chain enterprises in California and analyzes the benefits and constraints of these new marketing opportunities for farmers and ranchers, supported by a grant from the USDA Rural Development program.

Agricultural Value Chains and Economic Impacts: Dairy, Grass-Fed Beef and Grains in the North Bay (sonoma.edu/sbe/2012/11/agricultures-impact-on-the-north-bay-economy.html) is a report that looks at the way North Bay farmers build value in their products for dairy, grass-fed beef, and grain operations in the North Bay. Prepared by Robert Eyler, Sonoma State University Economist, for the North Coast Food System Network.

Beginning Farmer & Rancher Training

Strong land protection programs and policies in these counties make land available for new producers as well as protect current agricultural lands. The average age of a farmer in California is 57, and USDA expects that 500,000 farmers will retire in the next 20 years. Building entrepreneurial and business skills is another area of need and opportunity. A young farmer program in Sonoma County is beginning its second year of operation, and sustainable agriculture programs at three local community college campuses in the region are gearing up to transfer students to 4-year colleges.

Agropreneurship Program (ucanr.edu/sites/BFRSOCO): The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) is beginning the second year of its agriculture and business training for beginning farmers and ranchers (BFRs) in Sonoma County. UCCE is partnering with Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC). Courses are taught by SRJC agriculture instructor, Robert Landry, and other experts. Students have the opportunity to create enterprise projects using practice plots at SRJC's Shone Farm.

Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden (marin.edu/IVC/organic-farm.html): This flagship organic farm and teaching garden is a place to grow good soil, food, and farmers. The Conservation Corps North Bay, College of Marin, UC Cooperative Extension Marin, and other partners embarked on this landmark project in 2008 which established the 5.8 acre certified organic education farm and garden located at College of Marin's Indian Valley Campus. Patterned after successful teaching farms at universities, the farm is part of an initiative developed from a countywide commitment to teach Marin residents about the valuable role of agriculture in Marin County, and to promote local food systems. Students learn about soils, agriculture methods, and complementary business methods in specialized workshops, career certificate, and degree programs. Core courses address the fundamentals of plant selection and propagation, landscape, farm and garden design, installation, and maintenance.

The Small Farms Program is operated by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (sonomaopenspace.org). The District leases land to farmers who grow vegetables, flowers, herbs, and berries. This initiative aims to ensure and enhance the continued viability of agricultural lands in Sonoma County by keeping land in agriculture.

Area Feasibility Studies

The Bay Area Agricultural Sustainability Project's mission is to keep the Bay Area's agriculture competitive and economically viable. The Project's first study, *Sustaining Our Agricultural Bounty* (greenbelt.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/report_Sustaining_Our_Agricultural_Bounty.pdf) in 2011, found that despite a tremendous amount of urban development, the Bay Area's farms and ranches still produce \$1.8 billion in meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables annually. It also found that Bay Area agriculture is facing challenges such as the high cost of farmland and inadequate local distribution networks that threaten its viability.

This project, a collaborative initiative of AFT, the Greenbelt Alliance, and SAGE, received a grant from the California Coastal Conservancy's Bay Area Program to complete a feasibility study and business plan template for an agricultural economic development strategy. The primary focus of the strategy is to attract and deploy investment capital for the purpose of dramatically expanding the production and consumption of locally grown food. Key objectives of this project are: to build the business case for investing in Bay Area agriculture; to attract capital investment to sustainable agricultural production in the Bay Area; to build stronger regional markets; and to improve agricultural infrastructure to connect expanded supply and demand within the Bay Area. Another key objective is to identify an appropriate organizational structure to implement the strategy.

Contact: Kathryn Studwell, consultant, kmstudwell@gmail.com or Serena Unger, AFT sunger@farmland.org

Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) was funded by the USDA Rural Development program in 2010 to conduct a feasibility study on *Establishing an Aggregation & Marketing Center for California's North Coast* (caff.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/CAFF_Study.pdf). CAFF has received grant funds to pursue development of this center. Susan Stover is the aggregation specialist for this North Bay project. Her primary goal is to launch an aggregation center in the North Bay region.

Contact: Susan Stover, susan@caff.org.

Niche Meat Processing Resources for the North Coast

Various feasibility studies about meat processing can be found here: http://ucanr.edu/sites/Grown_in_Marin/Resources/Resources_for_Farmers/Livestock_resources/Niche_Meat_Processing_Resources_for_the_North_Coast/

The Economics of Going Local: Oliver's Market as a Case Study

Sonoma State School of Business & Economics, 2011. Study examining the economics of using a "go local" strategy: oliversmarket.com/assets/files/goLocal-042111.pdf

Farm Business Development & Financing

The USDA Rural Development program in California has published *Access to Capital Guidebook* (rurdev.usda.gov/Reports/CA-CalFOR.pdf). The California Financial Opportunities Roundtable (CalFOR), a group of over 90 experts and activists representing large banks, small financial institutions, wealth advisors, fund managers, the business community, and economic development organizations as well as local, state and federal government agencies, released their guidebook *Access to Capital*. This document offers a one-stop-shop resource for anyone seeking capital, in a straightforward, easy to use format. Local resources for the North Bay area are included.

California FarmLink (californiafarmlink.org/farm-business-management) staff and consultants offer a wide range of technical farm business planning on a fee-for-service basis, as well as a variety of loans. Their North Coast office is located in Sebastopol.

Agriculture Ombudsman Offices

UC Cooperative Extension in Marin and Sonoma Counties offer Agriculture Ombudsman services to help agricultural producers navigate the permitting process. Typical activities that fall under this purview are enterprise expansion projects such as agritourism, milk and meat processing and value-added products. The Agriculture Ombudsman also provides up-front investigation of what might be required for a new project.

Sonoma Contact: Karen Giovannini, kgiovannini@ucdavis.edu or (707) 565-2328

Marin Contact: Lisa Bush, lisab@sonic.net or (707) 829-0107

The **Grown in Marin** website hosted by UCCE Marin (http://ucanr.org/sites/Grown_in_Marin) has many handouts that are customized for Marin and North Bay producers as well as information on organic practices, niche meat production, cheese production, business development, and much more - http://ucanr.org/sites/Grown_in_Marin/Resources/Resources_for_Farmers.

More detailed information regarding cottage food operations, as well as a range of common permitting questions are available at: ucanr.edu/sites/CESonomaAgOmbuds

Small Business Development Centers

The Office of Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) provides management assistance to current and prospective small business owners. SBDC's offer one-stop assistance to individuals and small businesses by providing a wide variety of information and guidance in central and easily accessible branch locations. Free, specialized technical assistance is provided to small businesses looking to develop and refine business plans, loan applications, cash-flow management strategies and marketing plans. The program is a cooperative effort of the private sector, the educational community, and federal, state and local governments.

- Marin SBDC: sonomasbdc.org
Contact: Ann Johnson-Stromberg, clientservices@santarosabdc.org
- Mendocino SBDC: mendosbdc.org
Contact: Pamela Patterson, Pamela@westcompany.org
- Napa Valley College SBDC: napasbdc.org
Contact: Charlie Monahanm, cmonahan@napavalley.edu
- Sonoma SBDC: sonomasbdc.org
Contact: Mary Cervantes, MCervantes@napavalley.edu

County Economic Development Services

- Marin Economic Forum - marineconomicforum.org
- Napa Valley Economic Development Corporation - cityofnapa.org
- Mendocino Economic Development - co.mendocino.ca.us/econdev
- Sonoma County Economic Development Board - edb.sonoma-county.org



Community Gardens, Farm to School, & Gleaning Programs

Community Gardens

A community garden is any piece of land gardened by a group of people, utilizing either individual or shared plots on private or public land. The land may produce fruit, vegetables, and/or ornamentals. Community gardens may be found in neighborhoods or at schools, any may be connected to institutions such as hospitals, and on residential housing grounds. See Table 2 for a current listing of the number of school and community gardens in the region. The Marin County Community Garden Needs Assessment (ucanr.org/sites/Community_Gardens/files/75850.pdf) was completed in 2010. In 2011 the first community garden summit was held in San Rafael and another followed in Sonoma County in 2011.



UCCE Master Gardeners form the nucleus of garden volunteers who work with communities to foster food gardens in their neighborhoods and schools. There are very active programs in Marin, Napa and Sonoma counties.

- Marin - ucanr.edu/sites/MarinMG/Community_Service_Projects/Marin_Community_Gardens
- Napa - ucanr.edu/sites/ucmgnapa
- Sonoma - ucanr.edu/sites/scmg

The Gardens Project of North Coast Opportunities' Community Action Agency (ncoinc.org) is the coordinating agency for **The Gardens Network** (ncoinc.org/gardens-project). They facilitate the development of community-supported gardens throughout Mendocino County. They also support various projects including the After School Nutrition Programs, Farm-to-Cafeteria, Food Stamp Outreach, and the Mendocino Food Policy Council.

A **Community Garden Network** (communitygardensonoma.org) was formed in Sonoma County in 2012. Their website lists 80 community garden sites. Sonoma County has made available county lands for food production through an Request For Proposal process, with the first phase focused on several community garden properties. Phase two will include farming and grazing lands.

Health Action (igrowsonoma.org) is a partnership of community leaders and organizations committed to improving the health of all Sonoma County residents. They created igrow to improve the health of Sonoma County residents by increasing access to healthy food.

School Gardens

The **School Garden Network of Sonoma County** supports and promotes sustainable garden and nutrition-based learning programs in Sonoma County schools, connects school communities with fresh, locally grown foods, and provides a forum for exchanging information and resources. The School Garden Survey conducted by Sonoma State University students in 2011 led to the 2012 report that provides an overview of 113 school gardens in Sonoma County, highlighting the identified successes and challenges to creating and sustaining school gardens. View the full report at: schoolgardens.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Sonoma-County-School-Garden-Report-1.pdf.

Table 2: Number of North Bay School and Community Gardens

County	Schools	Communities	Source
Marin	60	29	Community Garden Needs Assessment Report, 2010
Mendocino	32	26	Mendocino Community Food Assessment, 2012
Napa	26	6	Napa Farm Bureau, 2013
Sonoma	113	80	School Gardens Reports, 2012; Community Gardens Directory, 2012

Farm to School Sonoma County is a local produce survey of school food service leaders (cesonoma.ucanr.edu/files/161998.pdf). Completed in 2011 by UCCE Sonoma, the Sonoma County Dept. of Health Services, and Ag Innovations.

The 2010 **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act** (care2.com/causes/michelle-obama-helps-debut-healthier-school-lunches.html) has made the promise of healthier school lunches a reality, as will new initiatives that support locally sourced, minimally processed foods to be delivered directly to school cafeterias. The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) in partnership with the Santa Rosa City Schools, received funds to ramp up efforts. The project proposes a Harvest of the Month Tasting Kit program, packages of fresh, locally sourced fruits and vegetables, farmer profiles, and a nutrition curriculum for more than 9,000 students to experience, and for the district to pilot, and then expand for use in 40 school districts. farmtoschool@caff.org.

Check out the **Harvest of the Month** programs in other counties organized by the State Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California* - harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/program-overview.asp.

Gleaning Programs

Community gleaning initiatives across the country have become an integral part of the solution for school lunches, food pantries, and community centers. Every Monday afternoon, the **Marin Organic Glean Team** (marinorganic.org) harvests extra foods from the fields of Marin Organic member farms for the Organic School Lunch and Gleaning Program, enabling kids throughout the county to eat local organic foods at school. By supplementing weekly orders with gleaned products, this program enables 10,000 students to choose nutritious local food options, every week, while the schools stay within their tight budgets.

For gleaning organizations in Sonoma County, see igrowsonoma.org/sites/default/files/u606/gleaningorganizations.pdf

Local Food Policy Councils

Local Food Policy Councils were launched as early as 1998 to address problems of food access and community food security as they affect local communities. Councils have developed policies for inclusion into County General Plans, collaborated with county health departments to develop farm to school programs, and surveyed food shed efforts. Since the state California Food Policy Council (CAFFPC) was created in 2012, new and current county policy councils have reinvigorated and ramped up efforts. Check their websites for their latest efforts.

- California Food Policy Council - rootsofchange.org/content/activities-2/california-food-policy-council
- Marin - Second council in the nation formed in 1998 - ucanr.edu/sites/MarinFoodPolicyCouncil
- Mendocino - Initiated in 2011 as an outgrowth of the Mendocino Food Summit - gardensproject.org/projects/foodpolycouncil
- Napa - Local Food Advisory Council was created in 2011 - countyofnapa.org/lfac

The Sonoma County Food System Alliance (aginnovations.org/alliances/sonoma) is a forum created for diverse stakeholders such as food producers and distributors, food security organizations, public health advocates, and other community leaders, to work on increasing access to healthy food in Sonoma County, as well as to envision, advocate for, and to create a vibrant local food system in Sonoma County.

Food System Alliance members, supported by Ag Innovations, will be leading the effort to implement the Sonoma County Healthy and Sustainable Food Action Plan, securing adoption and commitments from Sonoma County Departments, local cities, school and hospital districts, businesses and individuals. CAFF staff and the Alliance support are housed at the Ag Innovation offices in Sebastopol.

Other Resources

Please visit the following websites for more information:

- UC Cooperative Extension in Marin - cemarin.ucdavis.edu
- UC Cooperative Extension in Napa - cenapa.ucdavis.edu
- UC Cooperative Extension in Sonoma - cesonoma.ucdavis.edu
- UC Cooperative Extension in Mendocino - cemendocino.ucdavis.edu

Kathy de Master is the new Assistant Professor of Agriculture and Society; Environmental Science, Policy and Management, at the University of California, Berkeley. She is also the new Food Systems Specialist who will be working with colleagues and community partners to facilitate and expand the productivity and accessibility of food systems at the county level.

Contact: Kathryn.DeMaster@berkeley.edu.

A search is underway for an UCCE area food systems advisor who will serve Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Mendocino counties. This individual will be based in the UCCE Marin offices in Novato.

