



Linn County Food Systems Council Food System Assessment

NEW VENTURE ADVISORS LLC
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This study was conducted by New Venture Advisors for the Linn County Food Systems Council. The report was published in September 2020 by Linn County Planning & Development, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



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Linn County Food Systems Council

The Linn County Food Systems Council (LCFSC) was created in 2012 by resolution of the Linn County Board of Supervisors. The Linn County Planning and Development Department, in partnership with Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development, provides financial and staff support to the council. The LCFSC advises on policies and programs with the objective of making the Linn County food system economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. Current membership is made up of local food and service organizations, local government representatives, local business representatives, and local producers.

<https://www.linncounty.org/735/Food-Systems-Council>

Linn County Planning & Development

Linn County Planning & Development is responsible for providing fair, consistent and objective administration of zoning and building regulations for the unincorporated areas of Linn County and cities that contract with the department. The Planning & Development Department is also responsible for balancing the needs of the customers and the public through building safety and the wise use of land and environmental resources. <https://www.linncounty.org/>



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New Venture Advisors LLC

New Venture Advisors (NVA) is a consulting firm that specializes in food system planning and infrastructure development. Since 2009, NVA has helped more than 100 communities across North America identify strategies to develop food systems, food enterprises and food policies that are good for farmers, food entrepreneurs, consumers, and the intermediaries that connect them.

<https://www.newventureadvisors.net/>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Linn County food system is going through an exciting growth phase amid an incredibly difficult time in history, presenting a wide variety of challenges and opportunities for the broader community as well as the Linn County Food Systems Council (LCFSC). As an urban county located in a predominantly rural state, Linn County is in a unique position to leverage the wealth center created by Cedar Rapids to catalyze this rapid development of the local food system. The COVID-19 pandemic as well as the recent severe derecho storm have had serious implications across the local food system, the effects of which will continue to unfold in coming months and years. Although these factors did influence the assessment process, the goal remains the same: strengthen the system in order to build resilient supply chains that feed the community and stimulate economic development.

The LCFSC has ambitious goals to improve Linn County's food system from production to consumption. Currently, the council is focusing on increasing access to and consumption of nutritious foods by boosting the volume and diversity of food produced within the county. They recognize the importance of establishing a baseline assessment of four factors that are foundational to food system development: production, procurement, processing, and barriers to entry and expansion of businesses working within the food system. It is imperative that the council fully understand and integrate all of the external and existing work completed to date across sectors, especially the efforts continued through Healthy Hometowns as well as the most recent Public Health Food Access assessment.

The findings of the food system assessment process extend far beyond recommendations intended only for government agencies or even the members of the LCFSC itself. To capture the incredible wealth of knowledge, perspective, and feedback from the community and the team at New Venture Advisors (NVA), the report includes broader "opportunities" as well as specific recommendations targeted toward the LCFSC. These broader opportunities could easily be adopted by a range of nonprofit and for-profit entities as well as state-level organizations to serve the needs of Linn County. The core recommendations focus on strengthening the foundation of the overall system as well as providing targeted interventions, both of which are necessary to support the cultivation of the food system as a driver for economic growth, community health, and land conservation. To expand on these opportunities and recommendations, examples from across the country are provided to spark ideas and provide models for success.

As the LCFSC moves forward to develop an action plan, it will be important for them to consider the juxtaposition of being an urban county in a rural state with significant political and cultural differences as well as a wide range of farm production methods. These differences should be acknowledged, celebrated, and integrated into future efforts while fostering representation and relationships to ensure buy-in from across the food systems industry.

The following recommendations for Linn County would build capacity for the local food system to act as an economic driver that increases food access, catalyzes community engagement, and strengthens community connections.

1. **Hire a Food System Coordinator.** A dedicated staff person will provide the capacity to drive forward the recommendations in the report and will help the council gain better perspective, cultivate diverse relationships, and build credibility as they begin to expand outside of their own organization.
2. **Coordinate an Educational Campaign.** Coordinate a targeted educational campaign on why and how to eat local to increase demand across sectors (from residents to elected officials to buyers).
3. **Strengthen Partnerships.** Many similar organizations are serving in the same spaces in Linn County, the region, and the state. This presents an opportunity for organizational inventory, mapping, and communication to leverage efforts in sustaining the local food system through cross-sector collaboration.
4. **Utilize Investment, Funding, and Taxes.** Municipalities can lead by example through local food system investment, financial incentives, and collaboration on grants.
5. **Reinforce Existing Initiatives.** Any new efforts can build on the existing initiatives happening in Linn County to honor the work done to date and leverage established partnerships, from the Dows Farm Project and the adopted procurement clause to the activities developed through Healthy Hometowns and food recovery initiatives.
6. **Support New Markets.** There are several avenues that support market growth opportunities for local farmers. Specifically, this is an opportunity for the County to lead by example in establishing a workplace community-supported agriculture (CSA) program and implementing the procurement clause for all sponsored events.

PROJECT GOALS

This project is the initiation of a broader goal of the LCFSC to improve Linn County's food system from production to consumption. The first step toward accomplishing this goal is the completion of a comprehensive baseline Linn County food system assessment focused on four factors foundational to food system development: production, procurement, processing, and barriers to entry and expansion of businesses working within the food system.

PROJECT TEAM

Name	Association	Role
Les Beck	Linn County Planning Department	Project Oversight
Mike Tertinger	Linn County Planning Department	Project Management
August Stolba	Farmer	Co-Chair; Food Systems Council
Charlie Nichols	Linn County Planning Department	Core Team; Food Systems Council
Laura Seyfer	Iowa BIG	Co-Chair; Food Systems Council
Stephanie Schrader	City of Cedar Rapids	Core Team; Food Systems Council
Chris Thoms	Member	Core Team; Food Systems Council
Evan Langston	Member	Core Team; Food Systems Council
Kim Guardado	Member	Core Team; Food Systems Council
Eileen Horn	New Venture Advisors	Project Manager
Nikki Seibert	New Venture Advisors	Project Manager
Sheree Goertzen	New Venture Advisors	Research Analyst
Kathy Nyquist	New Venture Advisors	Oversight

METHODOLOGY

This report was developed using both primary and secondary research. Primary research consisted of two series of interviews and surveys of three different stakeholder groups. Secondary research accessed public and syndicated data to create an overview of the local, regional, and statewide food systems.

The LCFSC provided NVA with an overview of the County's goals for the project and a list of stakeholders recommended for interviews. The County's recommendations were based on a desire to gain perspectives from and insight into the four primary categories of the assessment. NVA authored a tailored interview guide (found in the appendix. Interviews of 13 stakeholders took place between December 2019 and January 2020. Initial themes from the first round of interview were reviewed with the council on January 17, 2020 and the existing stakeholder list was broadened to include individuals and businesses targeted for the surveys.

Initially, NVA proposed a community meeting to be held in March 2020 for input from the larger community. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on large gatherings, the scope was adjusted. Instead, NVA conducted a second round of interviews with individuals recommended by the council and by those interviewed in the initial round (snowball sampling). The NVA team also conducted additional research for stakeholders outside of the council's network to ensure a broad range of respondents. The second round of interviews was conducted March–April 2020.

Interviews

The following is a list of stakeholders interviewed in the first round.

Name	Association
RJ Carson	Conventional Farmer
Laura Krouse	Abbe Hills Farm
Pam Oldham	Buyer at Mercy Care Hospital
Scott Koepke	Etzel Sugar Grove Farm Manager
Julie Parisi	Director at NewBo City Market
Suzan Erem	ED at Sustainable Iowa Land Trust
Stacey Walker	Linn County Board of Supervisors
Linda Fritz-Murphy	Lead Purchaser at New Pioneer Coop
Jason Grimm	Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development
Emma Johnson	Buffalo Ridge Orchard
Doug Neumann	Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
Michelle Kenyon	Field to Family Food Hub
Patrick O'Malley	ISU Extension

The following is a list of stakeholders interviewed in the second round.

Name	Association
Ilsa DeWald	Johnson County Local Foods Coordinator
Lois Pavelka	Pavelka's Point Meats
Les Beck	Linn County Planning Department
Tim Keegan	Farm Bureau (Farmer Member)
RaeAnn Gordon	Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
Liz Kolbe	Practical Farmers of Iowa
Meghan Filbert & Sarah Carlson	Practical Farmers of Iowa
Sofia Mehaffey	Horizons, A Family Service Alliance
Courtney Long	Iowa State Community Food Systems
Jake Kundert	Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development
Jason Grimm	Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development
August Stolba	Farmer

Surveys

In addition to interviews, the LCFSC and NVA worked together to develop three targeted surveys using Survey Monkey. In order to obtain an accurate picture of the local food system landscape, surveys were tailored for food buyers, growers, and food businesses. NVA coordinated with the LCFSC on developing an outreach list and worked with the Linn County marketing staff on outreach and communication of the survey, including posting the survey on the Linn County website.

The number of questions varied by survey as follows: Grower (28), Buyer (18), Food Business (23) (see the appendix for complete survey questions and responses). Council members led the outreach for the survey through partnerships with key stakeholders with support from NVA. As there were challenges in getting responses, a second push for surveys concentrated in areas in which responses were lacking. In all the survey was live from February 10 to April 13, 2020, with 71 responses.

1. There were 23 responses to the Grower Survey.

- There was a balanced representation of farmer experience from beginning farmers to those farming over 20 years.
- The majority of respondents own their land (57%).
- Of the respondents: 57% produce vegetables, 39% produce protein/meat, 35% produce fruit.
- The majority of respondents grow crops on four acres or less (48%).
- Six of the respondents were from outside of Linn County.

2. There were 17 responses to the Buyer Survey.

- The majority of respondents were associated with a food bank or food pantry (53%). Other respondents' affiliations include a food hub, school, hospital, farmers market, and restaurant.
- Of the respondents, 53% buy directly from farmers. The primary product categories purchased are vegetables (65%), dairy (53%), protein (41%), and fruits (41%).

3. There were 31 responses to the Business Survey.

- The majority of respondents were restaurant/coffee shops (65%); 19% of respondents were food specialty businesses.

Project Timeline

Kickoff meeting with Core Team	November 2019
Finalize project plan	November 2019
Finalize interview instruments	December 2019
Research on food system landscape in Linn County	January 2020
Conduct first round of interviews	December 2019–January 2020
Synthesize interview notes	January 2020
Finalize survey instruments	February 2020
All surveys opened	February 2020
Present interview summary to Food Systems Council	March 2020
All surveys closed	April 2020
Project rescoped	March 2020
Conduct second round interviews	April–May 2020
Synthesize surveys and interviews	June 2020
Presentation to Board of Supervisors	July 26, 2020
Develop final report and story map	August–September 2020

FOOD SYSTEM LANDSCAPE

Secondary research was conducted between January 10 and January 31, 2020, to gain a better understanding of regional demographics, economic conditions, and the food system landscape. These factors have been considered in the recommendations.

Area Demographics

Linn County, located off of I-380, is the second largest county in Iowa, by population. Since 2010, the population of Linn County has grown by 7% to 225,909 people. The largest city is Cedar Rapids with 133,174 residents, followed by Marion with 39,979. In Linn County, 88% of the population is White, 6% African American/Black, and 3% Latino. It also has a growing aging population; in 2010 13% of Linn County residents were 65 years and older compared to 15.8% in 2018. The median age for Linn County residents is 37.8 years, which has increased since 2010 when it was 36.5 years.¹

The median household income in 2018 in Linn County is \$62,707, which is higher than the median for the state of Iowa at \$56,570 and a 35.7% increase from 2010. Linn County's unemployment rate is 3.8%, slightly lower than the state of Iowa (4.1%).² The largest employers are Collins Aerospace, TransAmerica, Pearson, General Mills, Cargill, and Quaker Oats. Linn County is considered a commodity (corn, soy, oats) processing center for the Midwest.³

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "2014-2018 5-Year Data Profile- Demographic and Housing Estimates," 2018, Accessed 20 September 2020

² U.S. Census Bureau, "2014-2018 5-Year Data Profile- Economic Demographics," 2018, Accessed 20 September 2020

³ Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, "Major Employers," accessed 20 September 2020, <https://www.cedarrapids.org/our-region/major-employers>

Agriculture Markets

Production

Linn County has 324,507 acres in agriculture production, with 312 acres in production for vegetables, fruit, and berries. Linn County ranks 10th in the state of Iowa in vegetables sales. Sales in vegetables grew modestly from \$611,000 in 2012 to \$686,000 in 2017. (In comparison, sales in Johnson County grew from \$494,000 to \$974,000 in the same time period.) The number of fruit/nut/berry producers increased from 13 in 2012 to 14 in 2017 with \$123,000 in sales in 2017. There is only one certified organic farm operation in Linn County and two that are registered as transitioning.⁴

The top direct market crops of the 37 primary products grown in Iowa include apples, apricots, asparagus, snap beans, blackberries, blueberries, broccoli, cabbage, cantaloupes, carrots, cauliflower, cherries, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, grapes, greens/collards, head lettuce, leaf lettuce, nectarines, okra, onions, peaches, pears, bell peppers, plums, fresh potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, radishes, raspberries, spinach, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, tomatoes, and watermelons.⁵ Table 1 shows the top products grown in Linn County.

Table 1: Top Products Grown in Linn County

Product	# of Producers	# of Acres
Sweet Corn	16	148
Pumpkins	9	29
Potatoes	9	11
Snap Beans	9	4
Squash	8	7
Peppers	8	7
Tomatoes	8	3
Apples	3	< 3
Berries	8	34

Greenhouse production is growing in Linn County. The number of greenhouse operations that produce vegetables including cut herbs increased from 7 to 11 from 2012 to 2017, with sales increasing from \$148,086 to \$230,236 over the same period. The largest contributor of sales was tomatoes, which totaled \$223,200.⁶

Processing

Within Linn County there is a lack of processing options. There are no produce processing options as the only business closed down in recent years. Additionally, there are no meat lockers processing for resale in Linn County. The closest meat lockers that processes for resale are the following:

⁴USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service, "2017 Census of Agriculture," 2017, accessed 20 February 2020, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/CDQT/chapter/2/table/8/state/IA/county/113

⁵ Laura Krause and Teresa Galluzzo, "Iowa's Local Food Systems: A Place to Grow," 2007, accessed 9 September 2020, <https://www.iowapolicyproject.org/2007docs/070206-LocalFood.pdf>.

⁶ USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service, "2017 Census of Agriculture," 2017.

- Edgewood Locker—55 miles north of Cedar Rapids
- Newhall Locker—20 miles west of Cedar Rapids
- Gilbertville Locker—44 miles north of Cedar Rapids
- Wholesale Meats and Processing—60 miles northeast of Cedar Rapids, in Dyersville, IA
- Bud's Custom Meats—40 miles south of Cedar Rapids, in Riverside, IA

Procurement

The closest serving food hub for farmers is Field to Family in adjacent Johnson County. Field to Family launched in 2018 and started full operations in 2019. They service 24 institutional customers in the region, although only three are in Linn County. Currently, six Linn County farmers sell to Field to Family.⁷

At the state level, the following chart indicates that the majority of crops consumed in Iowa are imported.⁸

Table 2: Iowa Crop Imports

The Difference between the Amount Grown in State and Iowans' Demand for 37 Produce Items			
Produce Item	Surplus/Deficit	Produce Item	Surplus/Deficit
Sweet Corn	34%	Grapes	-96%
Pumpkins	-15%	Peppers, Bell	-96%
Apples	-50%	Onions	-97%
Beans (Snap)	-70%	Pears	-97%
Cabbage	-75%	Plums	-97%
Watermelon	-77%	Cherries	-98%
Blackberries	-78%	Okra	-98%
Cantaloupe/Muskmelon	-81%	Broccoli	-99%
Potatoes, Fresh	-82%	Cauliflower	-99%
Squash	-88%	Eggplant	-99%
Raspberries	-90%	Greens/Collards	-99%
Tomatoes	-90%	Peaches	-99%
Asparagus	-91%	Potatoes, Sweet	-99%
Strawberries	-91%	Spinach	-99%
Cucumbers	-92%	Garlic	-100%
Apricots	-93%	Lettuce, Head/Semi-Head	-100%
Blueberries	-94%	Lettuce, Leaf/Romaine	-100%
Carrots	-95%	Nectarines	-100%
Radishes	-95%		
Source: Iowa Produce Market Potential Calculator, Center for Transportation Research & Education and The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture			

⁷ Farm to Family Website, accessed 20 February 2020, <https://fieldtofamily.org/certified-local/>

⁸ Krause and Galluzzo

Despite these numbers, responses from interviews and surveys indicate that supply exceeds demand in Linn County with farmers having limited choices in market outlets and consumers not willing to pay for local products. Additionally, buyers need education on the value of local products. For comparison, Table 3 illustrates the perceptions among growers, buyers, and businesses about the market for local products.

Table 3: Perceptions About the Market for Local Products

	Grower			Buyer			Business		
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Shoppers seek local products	9	3	11	13	2	2	11	2	18
Shoppers are willing to pay more for local products	10	3	10	11	3	3	15	7	9
Shoppers in Linn County need education on the value of local products	20	0	3	13	2	2	18	1	12
Institutional buyers seek out local products	8	7	8	2	7	8	7	5	19
Institutional buyers are willing to pay more for local products	6	9	8	3	11	3	2	10	18
Farmers sell large quantities of local products	6	11	6	7	1	9	12	3	16
Farmers grow and sell a diverse set of products	8	6	9	8	1	8	15	4	12
Farmers have a diverse choice in customers to sell to	5	10	8	4	6	7	10	5	16
The demand for local product exceeds supply	4	10	9	5	5	7	4	10	16

Direct-to-Consumer Markets

The largest farmers market is the Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market, which is held every other Saturday for a total of eight markets per season. There are eight other tertiary farmers markets throughout the week that run during the growing season in Cedar Rapids, Marion, Mount Vernon, Hiawatha, Central City, Washington, Ely, and Center Point. There are seven CSAs in Linn County and six on-farm food stands.⁹

Grocery Store Markets

The grocery retail landscape in Linn County is diverse, ranging from big box store chains to local independent-run grocery stores. The largest retailer of local produce is the New Pioneer Food Co-op, which supports 123 Iowa farmers, 44 farmers within an hour of their stores (statewide), and on average less than 10 farmers from the immediate Linn County area.¹⁰

⁹ Farm to Family, *2019 Local Food & Farm Guide*, accessed 10 October 2020, https://fieldtofamily.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/F2F2019_Insert.pdf

¹⁰ New Pioneers Food Coop Website, accessed 23 September 2020, <https://www.newpi.coop/meet-the-locals>

Hy-Vee is the largest grocer in Linn County with 13 stores. Hy-Vee expanded its retail model to include local produce on a smaller scale that varies from store to store, and it is unclear how many Iowa and Linn County farmers they are currently purchasing from. Faraway stores also carry local products but no further information can be provided about their purchasing model. Unfortunately, COVID-19 hindered the ability to gather further input from grocery retailers as data gathered for the report coincided with the beginning of the pandemic when grocery stores were most impacted.

The NewBo Market currently lacks space for local produce retail aside from a seasonal outdoor farmers market.

Local Food System Trends & Infrastructure

Local Food Systems Council

The LCFSC was created on March 28, 2012, by resolution of the Linn County Board of Supervisors. The Linn County Planning and Development Department, in partnership with Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development (IVRCD), provides financial and staff support to the council.

The LCFSC advises on policies and programs with the objective of making the Linn County food system economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. The council identified the following five goals to guide their operations and help them achieve their mission:

1. Achieve a sufficient and balanced local food production and market.
2. Eliminate food insecurity and ensure access to healthy foods.
3. Promote education and literacy regarding food choices.
4. Ensure the safety and security of our food supply.
5. Protect important environmental resources that contribute to food production and healthful lifestyles.

In addition to creating policy plan recommendations for review by the Board of Supervisors, the LCFSC will hold two public forums every year for the community in order to bring food and agriculture issues to the community's attention.

County Engagement/Policies

Linn County developed a comprehensive plan in 2013 that covers goals and objectives for 10–20 years.¹¹ Agriculture, featured in goal 2 of the plan, focuses on encouraging its long-term viability, outlined in the objectives below.

- **Objective 2.1** Protect land best suited to a variety of agricultural practices. **Strategy:** Utilize the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system to retain high-value and high-quality agricultural land, and to direct development away from areas best suited for agriculture.
- **Objective 2.2** Maintain agriculture as an integral part of the county's economy, landscape, and natural resource base. **Strategies:** Encourage development and retention of agricultural-related

¹¹Linn County Planning and Zoning Division, "Comprehensive Plan," accessed 9 September 2020, <https://www.linncounty.org/299/Comprehensive-Plan>.

businesses. Support and encourage youth educational programs such as 4-H and Future Farmers of America.

- **Objective 2.3** Discourage non-agricultural uses in the agricultural areas of the county; discourage scattered, leapfrog development. **Strategies:** Utilize the LESA system to retain high-value and high-quality agricultural land, and to direct development away from areas best suited for agriculture. Utilize the Minimum Levels of Service (MLS) requirements to ensure that adequate public facilities and services are available, or can be provided, to new development.
- **Objective 2.4** Minimize conflicts and incompatibilities between agriculture and other land uses and limit the circumstances under which farming operations may be deemed a nuisance. **Strategies:** Utilize the LESA system to retain high-value and high-quality agricultural land, and to direct development away from areas best suited for agriculture. Utilize the Agricultural Land Use Notification form to inform rural residents of the possible impacts associated with rural living.
- **Objective 2.5** Support sustainable farming and value-added agriculture initiatives. **Strategies:** Support, through policy and regulation, local food production (such as Community Supported Agriculture) and value-added agriculture operations in close proximity to local markets.

The most recent amendments (2019) to the City of Cedar Rapids Comprehensive Plan include “requirements for urban agriculture to allow for more flexibility, such as gardens in the right-of-way and front yards; allow beekeeping in certain zoning districts. Within 1 Year Lead: Community Development Complete ReZone Cedar Rapids updated requirements for urban agriculture and allows beekeeping as a special use.”¹² In addition to the policy, “the Linn County Food Systems Council has created and will provide updated listings of local food producers and distributors, restaurants, and catering services that use local foods. This listing will be shared on the Linn County website and other appropriate Linn County literature to promote these local food vendors to institutions, businesses and the public to strengthen the Linn County food system.”

This policy has no enforcement mechanism and gives responsibility to “Elected Officials, department heads, and supervisors...to encourage adherence to this policy and to enlist the cooperation of employees in accomplishing these objectives.”

Linn County also practices the “Right to Farm” approach in building code enforcement and provides a farm exemption, stating, “A county building code shall not apply to farm houses or other farm buildings which are primarily adapted for use for agricultural purposes, while so used or under construction for that use.”

Similarly, at the county level, a wide variety of state, regional, and local organizations, agencies, and businesses are working in the local food sphere with overlap and lack of delineation around the organizational goals and/or objectives carried forward by each group. Despite a number of groups working in the sector, Linn County residents and representatives either are not provided access to or made aware of the resources and information being surfaced by these groups. The Iowa State Extension services in the local area have limited resources/staffing for supporting farmers interested in growing for

¹² “Envision CR: A Comprehensive Plan for Cedar Rapids, Iowa,” updated December 2019, accessed 9 September 2020, http://www.cedar-rapids.org/local_government/departments_a_-_f/community_development/plans/envisioncr_Comprehensive_Plan.php.

market, but there are other agencies providing support to farmers interested in local food production. It was indicated antidotally through interviews that there are too many coalitions and groups with very similar missions, creating confusion for businesses and organizations about who is doing what and where people can plug in (e.g., Food Systems Council, Environmental Alliance, Food Rescue Committee, etc.).

Based on county demographics and feedback from respondents, the footprint of the project extended beyond Linn County in discussions related to production, while also focusing heavily on Cedar Rapids (with frequent comparisons to Iowa City) in discussions related to consumer sales. Linn County and the City of Cedar Rapids have a limited amount of recent collaboration in food systems. There are some emerging relationships and attempts at building bridges.

The Linn County Department of Public Health and the Farm, Food, and Enterprise Development Program at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach conducted a food rescue assessment. As noted in the study report, “The goal of the assessment is to provide information on existing infrastructure as it relates to food donation in Linn County; including research through secondary and primary data collection of retail and food businesses, non-government agencies (service providers) that support food access and food donations, and individuals served through food donations.¹³” Suggested next steps stated in the report include (1) Develop a food donation app (such as ChowBank) to support logistics and connections between food businesses and service agencies; (2) Promote awareness efforts about ongoing and relevant activities for food rescue; and (3) Increase partnerships between agencies for infrastructure and logistics opportunities.

Regional Food Systems Trends

Linn County is juxtaposed as a metropolitan center with less farming activity adjacent to rural counties with more farmers. Neighboring Johnson County with Iowa City has had much greater success in its local foods efforts that resulted in sales almost doubling within the five-year period of 2012–2017. Areas of growth and activity in Johnson County include a food hub, farmers market, and a robust farm-to-school program, among other initiatives. At one point, the two counties had a joint working group for a research project that ended upon the completion of the study.

Iowa boasts a variety of relevant statewide networking groups working in food systems. Overlap exists between these groups, to such an extent that they applied for a USDA Regional Food System Planning Grant to address the issues. These groups include (1) Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG), a statewide networking group of coalitions and councils that meet quarterly with open membership, supported by Iowa State and managed by external partners with a steering committee; (2) The Food Hub Managers Working Group, managed by Jason Grimm, open only to groups managing food hubs; (3) Farm to School and Early Childcare Development Group, open to anyone to join statewide and led by support from Iowa State; and (4) The Coalition of Policy Council Across Iowa, an emerging group with monthly meetings in which Linn County takes part.¹⁴

¹³ Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. “Linn County Food Rescue Assessment,” June 2020, accessed 9 September 2020, <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/wp-content/uploads/Final-Linn-County-Food-Rescue-Report.pdf>.

¹⁴ This is NOT the Iowa Food Policy Council that is defunct, rather a new group of three to four councils.

There is an annual meeting in January hosted by Iowa State, in which all of the above groups are welcome to participate alongside a variety of state, regional, and local agriculture organizations. Membership within these groups includes but is not limited to a variety of successful state/regional nonprofit organizations (Practical Farmers of Iowa, Sustainable Iowa Land Trust [SILT], IVRCD, etc.), state agencies (USDA NRCS, USDA FSA), and University of Iowa Extension serving farmers working in local food production as well as row crop farmers interested in conservation practices and/or diversification.

Initially Cedar Rapids was part of Iowa's Blue Zone Project®, a community-by-community movement to improve the well-being of all Iowans. However, in 2018, Cedar Rapids opted to transition to Healthy Hometown, led by Wellmark and the Healthiest State Initiative, which focuses on efforts to make Iowa the healthiest state in the nation.¹⁵ Cedar Rapids received the 2018 Healthy Hometown Community Award for the City's work in improving access to fresh produce to low-income households and offering healthful food options at concession stands. As part of Healthy Hometown, Linn County has access to resources that improve the community's ability to eat well and move better.

FINDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities for production, procurement, processing, and food businesses are based on findings from both interviews and surveys.

Production

Production Findings

By and large, fruit and vegetable producers in Linn County are farming on small acreage as noted in Table 4, but many indicated an interest in expanding production if there were market demand. Of the survey respondents, the majority of vegetable/fruit producers are selling direct to consumer and/or to retail customers. Only a few producers are currently selling to wholesale markets. However, there was high interest in expanding into wholesale and institutional markets.

Table 4: Acres of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Farmed

Approximately how many acres of fresh fruits and vegetables do you farm? (Q.5)	Count
<4	11
5-9	3
10-24	4
Not applicable	5

Both interviewees and survey respondents mentioned several challenges prohibiting them from expanding their production and market demand.

¹⁵ Healthy Hometown—Iowa website, accessed September 9, 2020, <https://www.wellmark.com/about/community/community-health-improvement/iowa>.

Access to Land

Access to land was indicated by survey respondents to be a significant barrier in Linn County and adjoining counties. Interestingly, the amount of acreage needed for expansion is relatively small in comparison to the overall land in production in the county.¹⁶ Of the survey respondents, 74% indicated they would seek additional acreage given a market outlet for products, often seeking less than five acres. A majority of the produce farmers responding to the survey are growing on less than four acres.

Table 5: Additional Acres Sought

If you are seeking (or would seek) additional acreage for the production of fresh fruits, vegetables or livestock, how many acres would you need? (Q.8)	Count
0-4	9
5-9	4
10-24	1
25-49	1
50-99	2
Prefer not to say	6

Despite access to land being a challenge, all of the respondents indicated they had access to additional acreage not currently in production. However, it is not clear why this land is fallow, if they would be willing to lease it to other farmers, or if they intend to put it into production themselves if the market demand increases. Land matching programs have limited funding; many people buy halve or quarter acreages from individual farmers. It was noted during an interview that a significant percentage of farmers are about to go through ownership transition either within families or from out-of-state owners (the out-of-state ownership/lease scenario creates its own set of challenges relating to production practices, land tenure, and ownership).

Table 6: Additional Acres Available

Approximately how many more plantable acres do you have access to in addition to what is currently in use? (Q.7)	Count
0-4	12
5-9	1
10-24	4
25-49	2
50-99	1
100+	2
Prefer not to say	1

¹⁶ As noted previously, in 2017 there are 324,507 acres in production in Linn County.

Access to Capital

Cost of land is prohibitive to small/beginning farmers. Unfortunately, most of the land that is being purchased in Linn County is leveraged by land that is already owned. It is important to note that survey respondents were skewed toward ownership in Linn County (57%), a slight variance from the national statistics in which 51% of farmers (100+ acres) do not own their land, making them beholden to banks/lenders.¹⁷

Farmers feel as though accessing capital is a challenge, although depending on the type of farm and level of experience, there are differing opinions as to why this is an issue. Newer farmers, especially first-generation farmers, indicate that lenders will not lend funds to their businesses based on a lack of understanding of the market potential of non-commodity crops. In contrast, larger farmers working in row crops indicate that the challenge is not the banks but the fluctuating price of the crops.

Individuals working with farmers in a supporting role feel as though the lenders are willing to lend money but only to businesses that have existing relationships with their lenders and can demonstrate a strong business plan and realistic financials. There are very mixed feelings about the idea of the County providing funds directly to individual operations. Based on survey results, almost 80% of farmer respondents are interested in micro grants, although in contrast some interviewees felt strongly that this was an inappropriate use of taxpayer dollars.

Survey respondents also highlighted lack of labor/manpower as a barrier preventing them from expansion. Not only is labor cost-prohibitive, but a lack of skilled labor was noted, especially with training specific to the small/diversified scale of production.

Lack of New Markets

Currently, supply exceeds demand in Linn County. Producers indicated on the survey they are interested in increasing their production if markets are available.

Table 7: Interest in Increasing Production

Would you be interested in devoting additional acreage to fresh fruit and/or vegetable production if there was a market for the product? (Q.6)	Count
Yes	12
Unsure	5
No	4
Yes, but I don't have additional acreage	2

One existing market approach discussed repeatedly was the Cedar Rapids Farmers Market and the need for another, smaller, mid-sized market focused on local foods that is designed to meet the needs of farmers while being easily accessible to consumers. The every-other-week schedule of the farmers market does not provide a consistent market for growers. It was also noted that the smaller markets in

¹⁷ "Farmland Ownership and Tenure," USDA Economic Research Service, last updated August 20, 2019, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/land-use-land-value-tenure/farmland-ownership-and-tenure/>.

communities around Cedar Rapids do not bring in enough foot traffic for many farmers to justify attending. As a result of these market challenges, farmers are leaving the county to participate in the Iowa City Market, which, according to respondents, is viewed as a well-designed market that is easy for farmers to access and has a good customer base.

Several producers indicated a desire for support in meeting local buyers and for organizations in the area to advocate for local procurement, with an emphasis on the City of Cedar Rapids and the County leading by example for the community.

Farmers are mixed on whether or not consumers seek out local food or are willing to pay for it, but most agree that consumer education is needed.

Farmer Education

Producers need education on financing, regulations, and market access. Interviews indicated a lack of understanding and/or awareness around resources available, the role of different organizations/entities, the regulatory/zoning process, and steps necessary to access capital. Topics for farmer education include ag exemption and other regulations, loans and lending, market opportunities, SNAP and other programs, pricing, and determining the best market for your business.

Additionally, farmers are concerned about having to take on the risk of trying to grow new products or work in new markets at their own expense. Even commodity producers are interested in transitioning to produce grains for local markets, but additional research is needed to build their confidence in expanding their businesses.

For example, respondents indicated that more research is needed on growing cereal grains to see what is possible and what will sell and what banks will back. The approach for mitigating this risk varied widely by respondent, with some open to direct support from government/non-profit organizations or research grants while others simply wanted connections to the right buyers.

Consumer Education and Demand

Both interviews and surveys indicated that farmers have tapped out all of the markets for direct to consumer in Linn County and adjacent counties. There is also consensus that there is a need for buyers across the supply chain to understand the value of local produce as indicated by the broader consumer demand education question. Many see that a consumer education campaign will be necessary to grow demand.

Table 8: Barriers for Producers

Please indicate which, if any, of the following are barriers preventing you from reaching your farm production and business goals. (Select all that apply) (Q.23)	Count
Lack of customer knowledge on the value of buying local	11
Risk	9
Buyers	7
Grants	7
Labor availability	7
Pricing	7
Land cost	6

Please indicate which, if any, of the following are barriers preventing you from reaching your farm production and business goals. (Select all that apply) (Q.23)	Count
Weather (extreme)	6
Delivery	5
Equipment	5
Meat processing	5
Other (please specify)	5
Processing	5
Weather (seasonal changes)	5
Capital	4
Land availability	4
Management skill	4
Food safety	2
GAP	2
Post-harvest equipment	2
Recordkeeping	2
Financial mgt	1
Tools	1

Respondents also indicated a gap/disconnection between food access, healthful food, and local food. Finding from all three surveys showed that consumers need more education on the value of buying local as shown below in Table 9. The Blue Zone program with local businesses was mentioned several times as a jumping off point for a follow-up focused on eating local while eating healthfully. This feedback tied in directly with the findings of the Linn County Public Health and Iowa State Food Rescue Assessment as mentioned previously. However, one interviewee noted that people are more concerned with feeding their families than they are with where their food comes from. Unfortunately, fresh produce at farmers markets is overpriced and/or unaffordable for under-resourced individuals.

Table 9: Consumer Education about Local Products

	Grower			Buyer			Business		
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Shoppers in Linn County need education on the value of local products	20	0	3	13	2	2	18	1	12

As indicated by this information, consumer/buyer education should focus on the value of buying local produce. Currently, farmers carry the burden of education through farm tours, newsletters, and the like. The findings indicate that there are not enough “foodies” to support more markets. The Economic Alliance’s “Buy Here, Give Here, Grow Here” program is a good place to start but needs to build out a stronger focus on eating local and supporting local farms, food artisans, and farm-to-table restaurants.

Production Opportunities

Land Access	<p>Provide support for farmers willing to mentor, to transition to growing produce for local markets, to utilize conservation practices, to lease their land to new farmers, to incubate farm businesses, and to incentivize out-of-state owners to keep land in ag and require conservation practices for leases.</p> <p>Example: Historic Poor Farm</p>
Education	<p>Coordinate farmer training/education/resource information sharing. Topics for farmer education: ag exemption and other regulations; loans and lending; market opportunities; accepting SNAP; pricing; and determining the best market.</p>
Capital and Incentives	<p>Promote existing programs and organizations providing incentives and/or support for agricultural production.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Program• Farm Credit• USDA Farm Loan Programs <p>Develop a microlending program from the County for expenses such as reimbursement for organic and GAP certification costs; equipment grants for the building of cold storage using cool-bots; disaster relief funds for crop loss; and mini grants for new enterprises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Rural Advancement Foundation International in North Carolina is an example of an established microlending program. <p>Establish a loan program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity offers a Participation Loan Program, which offers the type of gap financing agricultural producers are requesting.• Kansas Department of Commerce manages an Entrepreneurship Community Partnership program, run by local counties, which provides funding to local communities to support entrepreneurs through a matching loan program. A more local example is the Healthy Food Financing partnership between a health foundation and K-State University.

New Markets	<p>Strengthen existing markets and cultivate new markets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a workplace CSA program using this guide from Fairshare • Coordinate a farmer/buyer meet-up to help producers expand their networks and cultivate purchasing partnerships. • Explore opportunities to sell directly to hunger relief agencies.
Season Extension	<p>Update the ag exemption to include greenhouse production/nurseries. Support training and mentorship programs focused on season extension.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor program at Practical Farmers of Iowa
Transition Farming and Conservation Practices	<p>Support farmers in shifting production practices that result in the increase in food production and/or the adoption of conservation practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monetize transition farming that utilizes ecosystem practices by purchasing carbon or water quality credits. • Facilitate private industry collaboration with farmers. For example, companies like Quaker can invest in supply chain changes to support farmers in making transition to organic or small grain through purchasing of products. • Encourage custom/contract grazing as part of no-till production for farmers that do not have livestock, through direct connections and/or in partnership with the NRCS programs. These farmers can work with livestock farmers interested in marketing pasture raised meat in need of access to land to graze, with animals eating cover crops.
Board of Supervisors Oversight	<p>Promote the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit, which encourages landowners to lease to beginning farmers.</p> <p>Conduct feasibility studies to assess new market opportunities for growers as an economic development initiative.</p>

Procurement

Procurement Findings

There is no “one size fits all” market for producers. For example, wholesale is a market better suited for larger producers who can absorb the lower price point. Within Linn County, there are only a few wholesale buyers. Furthermore, retail markets vary widely and are dependent upon the interest and capacity of the grocer/chef (which also means they can change with personnel changes). Some buyers (e.g., New Pioneer Food Co-op) excel at selling locally grown products, but their buying power is limited. Other retailers (e.g., Hy-Vee) have varying capacities depending upon the particular store manager.

Consumer, buyer, and food business demand for “local” is low. When focusing specifically on buyers and food businesses, demand for local borders on indifference based on the Likert scale and other survey findings. Additionally, the majority of buyers and food businesses indicated their operations defined “local” as being from within the borders of Iowa, not giving preference to those products produced in or near Linn County. While “local” (i.e., statewide) is the top certification, or qualifier, for purchasing, the second selected was “none of the above,” indicating a greater lack of interest in any value-added production methods (local, organic, etc.) or regional branding. Price, effort, and supply (in that order) are reasons for not buying local. Restaurants struggle more with the effort due to the one-on-one transactions. In all, over 60% of respondents are spending less than 10% on local, with 30% spending less than 5%, as indicated in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10: Current Local Food Purchases

What percentage of your total annual food budget is spent on locally sourced products? (include ALL categories - produce, proteins, value-added, etc.) (Buyer Q.5)	Count
0-5%	5
6-10%	5
11-20%	2
21-30%	1
31-40%	0
41+%	3
Prefer not to answer	1

Table 11: Current Local Food Purchases Produced in Linn County

Approximately what percentage of your annual spending (in dollars) on food ingredients is for items produced in Linn County? (Food Business Q.15)	Count
0-5%	20
5-10%	5
11-20%	0
21-30%	2
Prefer not to answer	4

Wholesale/Institutional Sales

It comes down to finding the right market for the right grower. Producers are indicating that in this area, wholesale is better for mid-sized to larger farms. All farmers struggle with pricing and scale, but this is especially challenging for small to mid-sized diversified farms. Market opportunities are not one-size-fits-all, especially wholesale. As indicated in the survey, these challenges come through on the buyer end as issues with price, supply, and volume. Food businesses, on the other hand, indicated that the top challenges in keeping them from purchasing local food ingredients are pricing, effort, and supply. It should be noted, however, that 50% of food businesses indicated willingness to pay a premium for locally grown products (Q12).

The largest institutional buyer (at 60,000 lbs./yr.) is Mercy Hospital. Their success is attributed to their committed staff, willingness to enter into contracts with growers, flexible menu planning, and fair pricing. Buyers are primarily interested in purchasing fruit and vegetables (Q12) with some interested in proteins and dairy. A small number of buyers indicated in their survey responses a willingness/interest in buying processed (chopped, bagged, frozen, etc.), but feedback from interviews indicated the community could not directly support the operation of a processing facility without other markets and/or exporting products.

The current lack of GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certification for local products presents an opportunity for farmers to participate in institutional markets, although with the roll-out of the Food Safety Modernization Act, this window of opportunity is closing quickly. Many Linn County farmers sell produce to Field to Family, a local food hub located in Johnson County. Across the board, respondents felt this hub needs time and support to grow and that this hub can adequately serve both Linn and Johnson.

Table 12: Challenges in Purchasing Local Farm Products

What are the top three challenges you face when purchasing local farm products? (Buyer Q.8)	Count
Pricing- product is too expensive	10
Supply- not able to consistently provide product	8
Volume- unable to fill the quantity needed	8
Timing- seasonality of produce does not align with consumer demand	4
Effort- too much effort required on my part to find and source local	3
Diversity of product- not enough selection	2
Not applicable	2
Other (please specify)	2
Quality- product does not meet grading standards	1
Professional skills of suppliers- unprofessional or poor communication	0

Table 13: Challenges in Purchasing Local Food Ingredients

What are the top three challenges you face when purchasing local food ingredients? (Food Business Q.17)	Count
Pricing- product is too expensive	12
Effort- too much effort required on my part to find and source local	11
Supply- not able to consistently provide product	10
Timing- seasonality of produce does not align with consumer demand	9
Volume- unable to fill the quantity needed	7
Other	6
Diversity of product- not enough selection	6
Quality- product does not meet grading standards	2
Professional skills of suppliers- unprofessional or poor communication	2

Farm to School

There is still a lot of untapped potential for farm to school efforts in Linn County. However, with the strong farm to school program in neighboring Johnson County, it is unclear if there are enough growers able to sell products at institutional pricing. Survey respondents indicated challenges in trying to purchase local while meeting their federal contract requirements as well as nutritional guidelines (including developing recipes with local products). Field to Family and IVRCD would be key agency contacts in exploring future growth opportunities for this market.

Procurement Opportunities

Buy Local Initiatives	<p>Encourage compliance with existing Linn County local food purchasing policy. Consider opportunities at</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Linn County Correctional Facility• County-sponsored meals, events, etc. <p>Support farm to school programs in area school districts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Field to Family created a helpful guide for working in schools• Food Corp in schools <p>Lead by example: There is an opportunity for the County to purchase local foods for events or sponsor an employee CSA share pickup that connects to workplace wellness initiatives or health insurance incentives.</p> <p>Support the aggregation of proteins and eggs to be able to meet institutional market demand and prices, thus reducing work for farmers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a local brand label. Example Appalachian Grown <p>Promote local purchasing incentives: Incentivizing the Sale of Healthy and Local Food</p>
Buyer Education	<p>Educate buyers on why and how to buy local. Provide resources specific to their industry, such as how institutional buyers can renegotiate their contracts to include a local procurement provision/clause. Below are examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farm to Institute New England Guide for Institutions that Work with Food Service Management Companies• University of Kentucky Local Foods Procurement Contract
Food Access	<p>Provide supplemental funding for food pantries to purchase from local farmers. Facilitate SNAP training for farmers and support of purchasing any necessary equipment to participate.</p>

Processing

Processing Findings

There is a lack of support for both animal and vegetable processing in Linn County. On-farm processing is an opportunity for producers to expand into new markets. Support from the County such as small technical assistance grants that could cover costs for coolers, shipping containers, or regulatory support, could help increase on-farm processing.

Animal Processing

Lack of meat processing options in Linn County is a barrier. Livestock producers in Linn County are challenged with access to clean and humane processors that do custom processing and can handle the volume of direct-to-consumer farmers. There have been attempts at meat processing and flash freezing, but these have folded due to lack of profit. Processors are challenged with finding, training, and paying labor, meeting food safety regulations, and having enough consistent volume to maintain profitability.

Both processors and farmers are challenged with having access to enough cooler and freezer space. Respondents indicated a level of confusion or lack of understanding around permitting required for on-farm processing (which agencies and regulations apply to them, whether or not their activities are considered exempt, etc.). These issues have been greatly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as larger processors have faced closures.

Vegetable Processing

The biggest challenge for food businesses with processed ingredients or products is distribution / supply chain. For-profit attempts at food processing have only folded due to lack of profit margin. Only one farmer responded that if given the opportunity they would increase production to include grab-and-go veggies, only one mentioned value-added products, and one indicated a need for support with processing. Among farm respondents, 20% indicated that lack of processing is a barrier. Among buyers, those purchasing locally are utilizing 30% processed foods, but only 1% are interested in buying more.

Table 14: Additional Local Food Purchases

Fruit	Vegetables	Protein/ Meat	Eggs	Processed F&V	Dairy	Legumes
560 lbs. apples per menu day, 525 lbs. oranges per menu day	260 lbs. frozen veg per menu day, 280 lbs. baby carrots per menu day	800 lbs.	100 dozen	50K+ lbs. of frozen fruit annually	5000 pints of milk per school day	75 lbs. per menu day
400 lbs.	200 lbs.	40 lbs.	20 dozen	30 lbs.	100 gallons	20 lbs.
10 lbs.	10 lbs.	100 lbs.	10 dozen	100 lbs.		
200 lbs.	200 lbs.	300 lbs.				
200 lbs.	200 lbs.					
20K lbs. annually	30K+ lbs. of carrots, celery, cucumbers, kale, zucchini					

Processing Opportunities

Support Local Food Distribution Network	<p>Develop a regional/statewide network able to haul cold and frozen products.</p> <p>Examples from other communities include providing facilities, grant partnership, tax incentives, and technical expertise/support. NOTE: Jason Grimm is working with several other farms/businesses on this issue.</p>
Meat and Produce Processing	<p>Develop a local procurement guide for producers and small businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Example from the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association Regulatory Guide <p>Encourage participation in the USDA Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program (rolling out this year but delayed).</p> <p>Support a small business fund for processors to make needed upgrades.</p>
Board of Supervisors Oversight	<p>Regulation: Explore the promotion of the Iowa Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) program.</p> <p>Assessment: Partner with statewide organization to assess regional needs post-COVID-19, as processing has changed dramatically.</p>

Food Business

Food Business Findings

Linn County is positioned to support entrepreneurship and small food businesses. However, the general consensus is that it is easy to start but hard to grow and scale businesses. Findings from both the interviews and survey show that businesses need help in scaling up production. At the same time, markets need to be strengthened to sustain local food businesses.

Organizational Support

One key theme is the need for networking between the different sectors. Food and farm businesses of all types (but especially restaurants) are interested in networking with other farm-to-table businesses and farmers, especially for help to overcome barriers in their operations. A formal network would strengthen collaborations such as between farmers and chefs creating menus/recipes using seasonal foods. Two respondents—one school and one restaurant—are interested in this type of partnership.

While there are a variety of business resources available, respondents indicated that they are often unable to find professional support with a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities for

food and farming businesses. There are many business and agricultural professionals (from business support organizations to extension agents) that need specialized training in local food systems such as direct-to-consumer markets, specialty product development, local food supply chain management, and diversified production.

Regulation, Zoning, and Exemptions

A number of businesses directly tied to farming indicated that zoning laws need to be evaluated to determine opportunities to decrease barriers for farmers. For example, there could be allowances for new farmers to buy small acres for agriculture or for parallel support businesses to qualify for some type of zoning exemption (e.g., greenhouse, commissary kitchen, processing). Responses indicated that food businesses could use support on how to navigate regulatory processes, especially as it relates to on-farm activities. There were multiple mentions of the need for the definition of farm businesses in codes and regulations to be expanded to include niche operations such as greenhouses, wineries, and so on.

Infrastructure and Transportation

There is a perception that Linn County lacks the facilities new farmers/producers need to start a business, such as shared kitchen space, processing facilities, or restaurant incubators. This was only from a small number of respondents, and it is unclear if they are aware of facilities in Johnson County. When pushed during interviews for details on the type of facilities needed, two respondents stated a specific need for shared cold and frozen storage.

Several interviewees indicated a need for support in reducing the barriers in delivery to expand their markets. This challenge was especially noted for those businesses unable to sell at their full capacity due to limited demand in the local markets. So even if businesses scale, there is no local distributor. It was noted that food hubs could help with this but only in direct markets. They are not able to support distribution at a larger scale (including cross-hauling and cross-docking opportunities). In parallel, the findings of the Linn County Public Health and Iowa State Food Rescue Assessment indicated that the broader food system could benefit from the continuing development of a food donation app (such as ChowBank) to further support logistics and connections between food businesses and service agencies.

Food Business Opportunities

Business Support	<p>Develop guide to navigating the ag exemption and processing regulations.</p> <p>Support food and farming entrepreneurship programming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner with Kirkwood Community College to offer relevant job training/entrepreneurship programs for food businesses.
Networking	<p>Pair networking with other education or training (e.g., restaurants are seeking additional ServSafe training, and local food businesses are also seeking resources on how to get local products to markets).</p> <p>Host a food and beverage hiring fair.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS / CONSIDERATIONS

The following recommendations are complementary to all of the opportunities presented above but are focused on activities specific to the Local Food Systems Council, the Board of Supervisors, and both the County and City municipalities. Recommendations are focused on strengthening the foundation of the overall local food system as well as targeted interventions, both of which are necessary to support the cultivation of the food system as a driver for economic growth, community health, and land conservation. These recommendations are listed in order of importance and each build upon the other, although many activities can be executed simultaneously.

Hire a Food System Coordinator

To realize the potential of the local food system, Linn County and the City of Cedar Rapids should work together to hire a local food system coordinator leveraging the structure and experience of Johnson County as well as other similar positions in the region. The local food system coordinator's sole focus should be working on the various policies, programs, and partnerships that would drive change and growth in the food system. The individual would work with partners from the farming community and the business community to align resources in support of food system development. The position would support the implementation of the recommendations to ensure the work of the LCFSC can be done internally at government agencies while promoting and supporting the work of local, state, and regional organizations.

Staff at the City of Cedar Rapids have expressed interest in exploring a joint city/county position that would work with both local governments. Creating this position would provide the staff support needed to accelerate growth in this sector of the Linn County economy. An alternative model is to solicit formal commitments from several municipalities to include a portion of a relevant staff person's time to the recommendations provided in this report. While it is possible to move forward in the absence of dedicated staffing, the outcomes and efficacy of the recommendations will only yield what is invested. The work presented here fully justifies at least one full-time staff person. This role is interdisciplinary, rooted in relationships, and has potential to generate both goodwill and revenue far exceeding any initial investment.

Coordinate an Educational Campaign

Education rose to the top as one of the most significant themes of the assessment, second only to capacity addressed earlier. From farmers to grocers to chefs, all voiced a need for consumers to be educated about the benefits of supporting the local food system. These messages can align with the efforts of health programs (e.g., Healthy Hometowns), food access (e.g., Double Bucks or USDA Box programs), and local economy campaigns (e.g., Buy Local) or focus on supporting the agriculture and heritage of a county. Many counties across the nation have taken on this effort—of doubling down on their local agricultural economies to keep dollars circulating locally.

A campaign will have a larger impact if the County either leads or partners on the effort. This could be a key initiative of a local food system coordinator. There is an abundance of examples of these types of campaigns that can build on local/national/global events such as World Food Day, National Farmers Market Week, and Restaurant Week. Existing resources such as the Field to Family "Local Food and Farm

Guide” and the Iowa Department of Agriculture seasonal availability chart can be leveraged and promoted in conjunction with recipes from Iowa State Extension, information on where to access local foods, details on how to utilize public assistance programs such as SNAP/WIC/Vouchers and with maps highlighting local transportation. In light of COVID-19, many communities are finding mapping tools valuable in providing regular updates as location, times, and available resources change regularly, especially as it relates to emergency assistance programs.

Beyond general public education, targeted education should be developed for each group of stakeholders in the food system. For example, educational materials should be developed to help farmers and food businesses navigate all food and farming related regulations and zoning requirements with explicit directions and key contacts to ensure an aspiring business can grow from concept to implementation.

One model for an initial event is a “Resource Rodeo” in which agencies relevant to a particular topic of interest are rounded up into one location to share their programs. These events often include a guest speaker, a panel of key technical assistance providers, and a hands-on demonstration of online resources to help farmers find information after the event. Sponsors for these events could include attending organizations, farm equipment dealers, farm supply stores, and so on (recommend Practical Farmers of Iowa as a partner).

In parallel, both farmers and food businesses indicated challenges in finding labor. Further analysis of the labor demand, availability of skilled/trained labor, and current training programs is necessary to determine the supply and demand of labor by trade. Regardless, partnering with relevant entities to host a food and farming job fair would provide valuable anecdotal information to gauge interest, provide a mechanism for data collection, and begin developing relationships with relevant stakeholders.

The above suggested programs tie directly into the following recommendation to strengthen partnerships and can be achieved simultaneously.

Strengthen Partnerships

Many similar organizations are serving in the same spaces in Linn County, the region, and the state. This presents an opportunity for organizational inventory, mapping, and communication that would be valuable to both the participants and the general public. There are opportunities for the Food Systems Council to partner more strategically with Linn County Public Health Department, Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, statewide organizations (e.g., Practical Farmers of Iowa and SILT), and Johnson County. This includes writing grant applications, and doing so collaboratively so staff are not overextended, to fund these and other efforts to organize resources that reduce redundancy and overlap. It will be important to better understand and adapt programs and partnerships that recognize the cultural divide between urban and rural as well as from one county to another. These recommendations fall in line with the findings of the Linn County Public Health and Iowa State Food Rescue Assessment suggesting the need for increasing partnerships between agencies for infrastructure and logistics opportunities.

As noted earlier in the assessment, Linn County needs to ensure that programs bring farmers of all types to the table. Located in the heart of the corn belt and playing a key role in processing (corn, soy, and

oats) while also home to the second most populous city in the state, Linn is uniquely positioned to cultivate bridges between rural farming communities, emerging urban farmers, and Cedar Rapids' consumers. Representation from all of these farming communities is essential in developing programs that support farmers at every scale and serving customers across the county. A local foods coordinator or third-party contractor is essential to facilitate the relationship and coalition building necessary to develop trust and buy in with such a diverse audience. Not all programs will serve every farmer or cater to the needs of every customer but with careful stewardship, each player in the local food system will have a clear pathway to participation.

Leadership within key organizations have the opportunity to participate in the two certifications offered by the Iowa State Community Food Systems program: Local Food Leader and Community Food Systems. Linn County staff and organizations could also participate in the Iowa State "Annual Community Food Systems Meeting" in January to increase their knowledge, awareness, and connections to others working in food systems and the resources and programs offered by these organizations. If there is interest, organizers of this meeting noted that Linn County could present the findings of this report at the event.

Utilize Investment, Funding, and Taxes

Linn County, the City of Cedar Rapids, and other area municipalities have an opportunity to design their taxes, investments, and bonds to support local food production and food businesses while also seeking state and federal funding to support local food system activities. Initial funding investments should be focused on securing staffing support and then building the above educational campaign to lay the foundation for further activities. Due to the disruptions caused by COVID-19 to the food system, there are currently unique opportunities to seek federal support in addressing many of the recommendations.

One way is to leverage tax breaks as incentives such as for farmers who grow food for the local market, businesses that support the local supply chain, and processors who support small to mid-sized growers. This aligns with the Growing Food Connections report "Incentivizing the Sale of Healthy and Local Food," which outlines the economic power created by policies, programs, and projects that further the availability, purchase, and use of local food sources for local consumers.¹⁸ Cities across the country have implemented programs such as the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, partnerships with markets that incentivize healthy food purchasing by offsetting the cost of CSA programs, and investing in Double Bucks programs to increase SNAP benefits for fresh produce. Currently, there are Double Up programs at one grocery store in Cedar Rapids and at the farmers market.

¹⁸ Ann Dilleuth and K. Hodgson, "Incentivizing the Sale of Healthy and Local Food," in Kimberley Hodgson and Samina Raja, series eds., *Planning and Policy Briefs: Growing Food Connections*, accessed September 9, 2020, http://growingfoodconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/11/GFCHealthyFoodIncentivesPlanningPolicyBrief_2016Feb-1.pdf.

At a local level, there have been unique collaborations to serve as examples of creative approaches to supporting protection of agricultural lands, such as the transition of up to 10,000 acres west of Cedar Rapids into grass and/or putting in cover crop paid for by a partnership between Cargill (that bought carbon credits) and City Waterworks (that bought the water quality credits). Other opportunities include developing a partnership with the Linn County Conservation Board to integrate sustainable local food production at the Linn Learning Farm. For example, the council could encourage the Water and Land Legacy Public Review Board to consider sustainable local food production as a conservation practice and/or find ways to adapt the fund so the improvement of areas on private farms that serve a public good (waterway buffers) can be supported.

Further exploration of county, city, and state tax code, regulations, policy, and ordinances by local experts in the field is recommended as well as continued research on potential funding opportunities that support recommendations provided here.

Reinforce Existing Initiatives

Much work has been done to date to support the growth of the local food system, efforts that should be built upon and expanded when possible to diversify participants and integrate into any new initiatives. Reinforcing initiatives needs to build off of strengthened partnership; an activity that can be achieved through the suggested new educational campaign activities. Throughout the development of these programs, staff have the opportunity to re-engage partners in the existing work of the county to strengthen and rebuild bridges as needed. While there is an array of parallel and related programs, the following are focused projects with direct implications for the provided recommendations:

1. Dows Farm Project: This project is unique and presents an opportunity to create a space for additional local foods activity. However, there are mixed views in the community ranging from enthusiastic support to a belief that the project demonstrates government overreach. Efforts should be renewed to host a non-biased facilitator to integrate divergent opinions and find middle ground where possible. Any demonstration projects should be developed to capture the diverse and wide range of production styles in the region with regional experts in the industry bringing innovation and inspiration to the project.
2. Incentivize existing procurement clause and update the companion resource materials: <https://farmlandinfo.org/law/linn-county-ia-food-purchasing-policy/>.
3. Utilize resources and guidelines made available through Healthy Hometowns.
4. Build connections between local food and food access efforts relating to the recent food recovery study conducted by Linn County Public Health and Iowa State.

Support New Market Opportunities

There are several avenues for the Food Systems Council to support market opportunities growth for local food producers.

1. **Establish a workplace CSA program.** This could be developed in partnership with the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance that provides incentives for businesses who participate. A pilot could be led by the City/County itself or by Geonetric, where a current LCFSC member works.

2. **Coordinate a farmer/buyer meet-up.** This should be organized in partnership with groups such as Field to Family, the Farm Bureau, and local buyers to help buyers (institutions) learn how they can support local farmers and purchase produce.
3. **Develop a year-round covered farmers market.** Further assessment should be conducted to determine the best location, size, and infrastructure. It was noted that there was interest in having such a structure at Dows Farm, but without additional assessment, especially with consumer and farmers market manager input, such a recommendation cannot be presented at this stage.
4. **Support feasibility studies.** New market ventures always require feasibility studies, something even more essential in the current changing market due to COVID-19. One specific market surfaced during the process was production of dried beans for local consumption as a transition or alternative crop for soy farmers. With several farmers already demonstrating success in this process, further research could provide additional information on production best practices, necessary equipment, shared use facility needs, and market opportunities. The target market of special interest noted during the study was integrating beans into school lunches, a project that has already developed recipes and could expand to serve a great number of students.

NEXT STEPS

The assessment process surfaced an incredible number of opportunities for improving Linn County's food system from production to consumption. With the leadership of the LCFSC, support from the Linn County Board of Supervisors, and the hiring of a dedicated local food system coordinator, the recommendations provided in the report can be translated into action. While the assessment provides an array of opportunities, recommendations, and case studies, it will be up to the LCFSC and staff to develop an action plan with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals tied to a clear timeline and duties assigned to specific members of the council.

In the building of this action plan, it is recommended that the council invite both City and County staff as well as other key partners, such as Economic Alliance, to ensure the plan leverages additional agency resources and staffing while avoiding duplication of efforts. The Board of Supervisors has a key role to play in the process through their awareness of the challenges and opportunities presented in the assessment, through the support in funding for a full-time position, and the ongoing engagement in food system activities increasing the health of their community and economy. Additionally, the importance of engaging and including the full range of farm business and agribusiness types cannot be stressed enough. Row crop farms, large livestock operations, commodity processors, and the membership organizations serving these groups represent a significant component of Linn County's food system and without their input and engagement, many opportunities for inclusive and pioneering food system development will be missed. To ensure the action plan is developed within the context of existing initiatives and informed by a broader perspective, it is recommended that the action plan be reviewed by broader partners at the state level such as Practical Farmers of Iowa and SILT.

The plan should include documents such as logic models, budgets, timelines and other organizational documents necessary to pursue funding opportunities to implement the activities recommended in the

plan. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are a number programs focused on addressing the challenges facing the community while also supporting the growth and development of the local food system. Examples of federal and state funding programs include the following:

- Coronavirus Food Assistance Program
- USDA grants such as the Community Food Projects, Local Food Promotion Program, Farm to School, Farmers Market Promotion Program, and Regional Food System Partnerships.
- The Economic Development Authority has released funding through the CARES Act to support economic development projects.
- The Department of Agriculture Specialty Crops Block Grant
- Rural Business Development Grants

Through collaboration with parallel industries such as public health, there are a greater number of funding opportunities that would enable the LCFSC to increase the project impact while building and strengthening bridges in the community. As the community looks ahead, the LCFSC can leverage this assessment to provide guidance and inspiration on building a more resilient, sustainable food system for Linn County.

APPENDIX

Interview Guide

Goal: Reach out to 8 key stakeholders in the Linn County food system, learn about the Linn County food system, establish basic understanding of key issues/challenges/opportunities. Conduct a baseline assessment of four factors that are foundational to food system development: production, procurement, processing, and barriers to entry and expansion of businesses working within the food system.

I. Introductions

- a. NVA team
 - i. NVA Background
 - ii. Project roles
 - iii. Outline expectations for the call – fluid, conversational, helps us establish a baseline understanding for the project, and understand what key issues/challenges/opportunities exist in the Linn County food system.
- b. Study background:
 - i. The Linn County Food Systems Council is a Board of Supervisors appointed group established to advise the County on policies and programs that support an economically, environmentally, and socially resilient food system in Linn County.
 - ii. **Part of the council's current efforts is an exciting process that will help us better understand the opportunities and challenges in growing our local food system.**
 - iii. The result will be a **Linn County Food System Assessment and Plan** that will be used to guide our community for years to come.

II. Interview Questions:

- a. Tell us a little bit about your role in the Linn County Food System
- b. Have you ever (or do you currently) serve on the Food Systems Council?
- c. What are some of the biggest challenges you see facing the local food system in Linn County?
- d. The RFP for this project specifically focused on four categories. Tell us what you know to be some of the challenges and opportunities in each of these areas:
 - i. Local food production
 - ii. Local food procurement
 - iii. Processing of local food
 - iv. Barriers to entry or expansion for new food and farm businesses
- e. What other factors should we know about your community and the local food system? (can be political climate, availability of funding, etc.)
- f. Who else should we definitely talk to in this process?

Interview Summary

Producing Findings

- Access to land is nearly impossible in Linn Co and adjoining- large demand
- Cost of land is prohibitive to small/beginning farmers- (most land being purchased is leveraged by land that is already owned)
- 51% of farmers (100+ acres) do not own their land- so they are beholden to markets and banks
- Farmers are limited in what they grow- up to banks/gov/markets/seed companies
- Lack of financing options for non-commodity farming- Ag Lender's may have some ideas in terms of policy of how they may loosen up their loan requirements
- More research needed on growing cereal grains to see what is possible and a) what will sell AND b) banks will back
- There is little support on the retail front for local producers/value added processing
- Competitive pricing and scale for small producers- difficult for local producers to compete with large grocery store prices
- Most farmer do not have the time to try new crops (risk is too high)
- Climate change/weather unpredictability
- FSMA and becoming certified organic present challenges for small producers
- Educate on business opportunity. Need more focus on offering new business opportunities to larger farmers- some have transitioned from large row crop to produce or grains or meat. Note- this is changing mindset from volume to quality, but they are comfortable with wholesale markets.

OPPORTUNITY: Eco-system practices (like paying for cover crops and carbon) will monetize transition farming

- Private Industry + Farmers- if large production companies like Quaker invested in supply chain changes (example Pepsi has a fund for growers to grow covers crops to be used in mayo, partnering with Oatly to buy oats) to support farmers in making transition to organic or small grain. Example: Help work small grains into the protein rations for livestock (opportunity if Quaker takes the high quality and the rest goes for feed)
- Custom/Contract Grazing- Many farmers do not have livestock and those that raise livestock need access to land to graze. Pair row crop with livestock (if they are supplying a local market)
- Government + Farmer + Private Industry- Farmers planting large scale cover crops and grazing can work with Water Quality Initiative (farmers get \$25/acre for cover crop/grazing through Dept of Ag conservation/NRCS); Processors/wholesalers pay farmers higher prices for livestock grazed on cover crops.

Procurement Findings

- Used to be an online food hub (Iowa Valley Food Hub) that brought together people who were interested in local- but it closed a few years ago- there is a similar model in Des Moines that is successful
- Many Linn Co farmers sell produce to Johnson Co Food Hub (closest food hub ~ miles)
- Hyvee and New Pioneers approach to buying local- give autonomy to produce managers to build relationships with local producers- could do more to move larger volume of produce
- Need for a year-round farmer's market option

- Farmers Market in Cedar Rapids- Farmers would like to see longer weekly market with more focus on local products.
- Desire for a better design with farmers in mind (access, shade, trailers, etc.)
- Potential to Leverage the DOW Farm Property for the development of a farmer's market structure
- Perception that farmers have tapped out all of the markets for direct to consumer in LC and adjacent counties
- Iowa City Market is viewed as a better designed market and easy to access for farmers with a good customer base
- Consumer education needed about value of local- currently the farmer has the burden of education thru farm tours, newsletters, etc.
- Unsure if there are enough "foodies" to support more markets though focus for food production is to address food insecurity

WHOLESALE, GROCERY STORES

- Competitive pricing and scale for small producers- difficult for local producers to compete with large grocery store prices
- New Pioneer is a great partner- they highlight the product and educate consumers
- HyVee is a challenging partner- it comes down to the produce buyer at the store- purchasing is not consistent, they are unwilling to buy local varieties, do not present themselves to be collaborative with local farmers. Need to be educated on why and how to buy local

OPPORTUNITY: Aggregation of proteins and eggs to be able to meet institutional market demand and prices thus reducing work for farmers (in process) Fairway could be a good fit for an IOWA Branded meat.

- Opportunity for the County to be proactive in purchasing local beef, milk, yogurt
- Opportunity with the school system BUT there needs to be education to menu writers of seasonal availability, relationship built with the nutrition director, and subsidies available for farmers to ensure they are paid a fair price

Processing Findings

- Need more support from county for on-farm processing (such as smalls grants for coolers for new farmers, shipping containers)
- There have been attempts for meat processing/flash freezing but have both folded due to lack of profit margins
- Biggest challenge for processed food businesses: There is no local distributor- there is no network within Iowa with distribution points- Can Iowa build a distribution network to connect the western to the eastern part of the state?
- Need more meat processing options in LC that are clean, humane, and able to handle volume
- Food safety regulations for meat lockers are onerous (not a lot of mid-level growers to sustain the processing)
- Need for more cooler and freezer space- (this has been a rising issue because of COVID)
- Labor challenges: lack of butchery training, low-paying wages

OPPORTUNITY: USDA Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program (rolling out this year but delayed)

- Small business fund for processors to make needed upgrades
- If LC processors are hesitant to join the program, farmers could organize and advocate

VALUE-ADDED, PRODUCE

- Easy to start, hard to grow/scale business
- Perception that LC lacks affordable facilities new farmers/producers need to grow a business (shared kitchen)-especially for those trying to make something for the market/trial restaurant concept
- Even if businesses scale, there is no local distributor

OPPORTUNITY: Seek partnerships to support the development of a distribution network to connect the western to the eastern part of the state?

Business and Barrier Findings

- Zoning Laws need to be more flexible (so beginning farmers can buy small ag acres)
- Need more buy-in from Kirkwood Community College
- People are more concerned with feeding their families vs where it comes from- fresh produce at coops/FM is overpriced/higher than what is in under resourced communities (easier/cheaper to go to McDonalds than coop)
- Need more work in community outreach to help people eat more local/seasonal and what it means (and expand Farmer's Market)
- Lack of cold and frozen storage- There is also the challenge with moving/selling products to meet supply/demand
- Easy to start hard to grow/scale business
- LC lacks the facilities new farmers/producers need to start a business (shared kitchen)- no space that is not cost prohibitive to make something for the market/trial restaurant concept
- More Education- From consumers and farmers to government agency employees and policy makers.
- Opportunity to leverage marketing efforts from Practical Farmers of Iowa
- Opportunities for the Food Policy Council to partner more strategically with LC Public Health Dept (currently a lot of competing interest vs collaboration), Economic Alliance, Statewide Organizations (Practical Farmers of Iowa & SILT), and Johnson County. This includes writing collaborative grant applications to fund these efforts so staff are not overextended
- Important to better understand and adapt programs and partnerships that recognize the cultural divide between urban and rural as well as from one county to another
- Leverage bond money in LC for transition commodity farmland into land for conservation farming practices, new farmers growing produce/livestock for local markets
- Tax Breaks as incentives for farmers to grow food for local markets, businesses that support the local supply chain, and processors supporting small to mid-sized growers
- Case Study: Cargill is trying to buy carbon credit- setting up 10,000 acres west of CR to transition into grass or putting into cover crop. City (waterworks) is going to buy the water quality credits and Cargill will buy carbon credits

Grower Survey Responses

Q1. In what zip code is your farm located?

Zip Code	Count
50682	1
52053	2
52213	1
52214	4
52218	1
52233	1
52253	1
52306	1
52314	3
52322	1
52346	1
52352	1
52404	2
52405	1
52411	1
52715	1
Total	23

Q2. How many years have you been farming?

Years	Count
0-5	5
6-10	6
11-20	6
21+	6

Q3. Please select the option that best describes your land access for farming activities.

Own/Rent	Count
I own all of the land	13
I own and rent the land	5
I rent all of the land	2
Other (please specify)	3

Other (please specify):

- Indoor organic farmer
- Rented building
- Land is owned by the non-profit I manage it for

Q4. What volume of each of the following do you currently grow or produce on your farm? For example, volume can be estimates listed in pounds, acres, sales, cases, etc. If you do not wish to share specific volumes, please simply put an “x” next to those products produced on your farm. Check as many as apply.

Products	Count
Vegetables	13
Protein/Meat	9
Fruit	8
Grains	6
Other (please specify)	5
Eggs	4
Flowers	4
Legumes	3
Value added products	3
Prepared foods	1
Dairy	0
Processed fruits and vegetables (frozen, chopped, etc.)	0
I'd prefer not to say	0

Other (please specify):

- Herbs
- Syrup & jams
- Mushrooms (less than 1 acre)
- Micro Greens, Edible Flowers and Sprouts
- Herb plants, \$12,000

Crosstab: Q4 Products Currently Produced on Farm x Q1 Farm Zip Code

Products	50682	52053	52213	52214	52218	52233	52253	52306	52314	52322	52346	52352	52404	52405	52411	52715
Vegetables	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
Fruit	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Eggs	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dairy	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protein/Meat	0	2	0	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Grains	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Legumes	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flowers	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Value added	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Prepared foods	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Processed F&V	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I'd prefer not to say	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0

Q5. Approximately how many acres of fresh fruits and vegetables do you farm?

Acres	Count
<4	11
5-9	3
10-24	4
Not applicable.	5

Q6. Would you be interested in devoting additional acreage to fresh fruit and/or vegetable production if there was a market for the product?

Additional Acres	Count
Yes	12
Unsure	5
No	4
Yes, but I don't have additional acreage	2

Crosstab: Q4 Products Currently Produced on Farm x Q6 Interest in Devoting Additional Acreage

Product	Yes	No	Yes, but*	Unsure
Vegetables	8	0	1	4
Fruit	4	0	1	3
Eggs	1	1	1	1
Dairy	0	0	0	0
Protein/Meat	4	4	1	0
Grains	5	1	0	0
Legumes	2	1	0	0
Flowers	3	0	0	1
Value added products	2	0	0	1
Prepared foods	0	0	0	1
Processed fruits and vegetables (frozen, chopped, etc.)	0	0	0	0
I'd prefer not to say	0	0	0	0
Other (please specify)	3	0	0	2
Total	32	7	4	13

* I don't have additional acreage

Q7. Approximately how many more plantable acres do you have access to in addition to what is currently in use?

Excess Acres	Count
0-4	12
5-9	1
10-24	4
25-49	2
50-99	1
100+	2
Prefer not to say	1

Crosstab: Q7 Excess Acres x Q6 Interested in Devoting Additional Acreage

Excess Acres	Yes	No	Yes, but*	Unsure
0-4	5	4	2	1
5-9	0	0	0	1
10-24	3	0	0	1
25-49	1	0	0	1
50-99	0	0	0	1
100+	2	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	1	0	0	0

* I don't have additional acreage

Q8. If you are seeking (or would seek) additional acreage for the production of fresh fruits, vegetables or livestock, how many acres would you need?

Acres Seeking	Count
0-4	9
5-9	4
10-24	1
25-49	1
50-99	2
Prefer not to say	6

Crosstab: Q8 How Many Acres Seeking x Q6 Interest in Devoting Additional Acreage

Acres Seeking	Yes	No	Yes, but*	Unsure
0-4	6	1	0	2
5-9	3	0	1	0
10-24	1	0	0	0
25-49	0	1	0	0
50-99	0	1	1	0
100+	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	2	1	0	3

* I don't have additional acreage

Q9. If you produce goods other than fresh fruits and vegetables, please indicate your volumes and acres used here. For example, 50 head of cattle on 100 acres or 100 acres of soy, etc.

Other Goods
Cut flowers - 3 acres Organic grains - 80 acres Medicinal herbs - 80 acres
30 head of cattle, 140 acres of plantable for anything
20 acres for hay
96 head cattle on 160 acres
100 acres organic grain
300 meat chickens on 3 acres
30 head of cattle/150 acres

Other Goods
produce food grade corn for Quaker Oats or Cargill, depends on the year and contracts offered
150 head goats on 28 acres
40 head of beef, 70 acres corn, 65 acres beans and 15 acres hay on 150 acres
eggs on 10-20 acres pasture
45 acres of row crops (corn and soybeans)
100 bred ewes, 12 cattle, on grass/hay, 12 bred sows and 50 hogs on feed ...have adequate acres for these

Q10. If your pricing and other market requirements were met, what type and volume of new or additional products would you be interested in selling to local customers/buyers? Indicate volume next to the appropriate category, for example 100 dozen eggs or 200 pounds of frozen berries, etc.

Product (Count)								
Vegetables (8)	We can ramp up production of slicing tomatoes, cucumbers	Microgreens 100lbs And boutique lettuce 200lbs	depends on the prices, 1 mini van / week to start	400 pounds rhubarb	3 acres worth	Potatoes	100000 lb	52000 lb
Protein/Meat (6)	6000 lb poultry + beef cattle	Beef - unsure on the volume	5 whole steers	1000 head	60,000 lbs beef	15000 pound		
Value added products (5)	Salsa, pesto, pickled vegetables-as much as the market could handle	Wine and distilled spirits less than 10k gallons	40 acres of specialty grains	Soups, Salads, Jams	Sprouts 100lbs			
Eggs (4)	2000 cases	30 doz/week	150 dozen eggs	20-40 doz / week				
Flowers (3)	200 flower csa shares + whole sale market	Increased production of cut flowers	Edible Flowers 100lbs					
Fruit (3)	Blackberries, Strawberries, Fruit Trees	1000 lb	3 acres worth					
Grains (2)	44000 lbs	10 to 40 acres						
Prepared foods (2)	Ready to eat soups and salads, jams	Breads						
Processed (1)	Grab and Go Chopped Veggies							
Legumes (1)	10 to 40 acres							
Dairy (0)								
N/A (1)								

Q11. What are the barriers preventing you from expanding into producing the new or additional products listed above?

Expansion Barriers
Marketing and delivery
What equipment I have
I don't want to.
Zoning won't recognize it as a farm activity even though the input materials are produced by our farm
Labor
Labor
market
The wholesale channel that we built our system on does not seem to be ready for the medium scale local production channel.
reliable markets and price
It is hard to find labor and impossible to pay them the truly livable wage they deserve. We don't even pay ourselves (owner/operator) a proper hourly wage. Wholesale markets (schools, food hubs, hospitals) pay a lower price than we need for our products. Climate change has us feeling less confident about what the future of our farm will look like. We already have a list of projects on stack that don't get done year after year. Green washing by local restaurants makes things challenging. Farming is hard.
Availability of adequate processing facilities, price, and lack of access to the market (other than word of mouth or farmer's markets)
Difficult to raise Additional steers if the product isn't sold
The price of Microgreens is high because they are new, and they have a relatively short shelf life. Marketing and publicity of their nutritional value would help too. Cash to invest in the company is always nice.
Lack of available land surrounding current acreage is making expansion difficult.
Market demand, financing scaling out
Manpower and time
making sure that there is a secure market for the product I produce, if I meet their quality and grade standards
Access to land ownership
land access
Customer base
qualified workers when I need them
Market viability and equipment

Q12. How would you describe the market for locally grown and raised products? Please rate the following statements from agree to disagree.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Shoppers seek local products	9	3	11
Shoppers pay more for local products	10	3	10
Shoppers need education about local products	20	0	3
Institutional buyers seek local products	8	7	8
Institutional buyers pay more for local products	6	9	8
Farmers sell large quantities of local products	6	11	6
Farmers sell diverse products	8	6	9
Farmers have diverse customers	5	10	8
Local product Demand > Supply	4	10	9

Q13. Which of the following distribution strategies do you employ on your farm? Select all that apply.

Distribution Strategies	Count
Personal vehicles (car, van, pick-up truck)	18
Buyer picks up	13
Farmer's market	4
Refrigerated vehicle	3
We sell only at the farm	3
Farm-owned delivery vehicles	1
Home delivery	1
Not applicable	0

Q14. How would you describe your production practices? (Select all that apply)

Practice	Count
Organic methods, not certified	14
Conventional	8
Pasture based	6
Regenerative agriculture	5
Certified organic	4
Other (please specify)	4
Hydroponic	3
Permaculture	1
Biodynamic	0
I would prefer not to answer.	0

Other (please specify):

- IPM
- Wild growth
- No hormones & no antibiotics
- Ipm for orchard crops

Q15. Do you have any of the following certifications? (Select all that apply)

Certifications	Count
I do not have any certifications.	12
GAP (Good Agricultural Practices)	7
Other (please specify)	5
Organic	4
Non-GMO	2
HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points)	1
Naturally Grown	1
American Grass Fed Association	0
Animal Welfare Approved	0
Certified Humane	0
Food Justice Certified	0

Other (please specify):

- FSMA
- No hormones/no antibiotics
- Exempt due to size and recent start up
- We had Organic Cert on a specific crop and not on others
- PQCI

Q16. Approximately what percentage of your 2019 gross income from farming operations was through each of the following channels? Please enter percentages as whole numbers (e.g. enter 20 to denote 20%)

Channel	Responses	Average
Wholesale/food hub	4	64%
Community Supported Agriculture/CSA or pre-sold boxes	4	63%
On-farm sales/retail	11	43%
Farmers Markets	12	42%
Restaurants	10	27%
Other (please specify)	5	X
None of the above	1	x
Produce auctions	0	0

Other (please specify):

- Institutions, Businesses
- 5-web sales
- Nursing Homes

Q17. In which of the following channels, if any, would you like to expand your sales? (select all that apply)

Channel Expansions	Count
Wholesale, Institutional Sales, Food Hub	16
On-farm sales/retail	13
Restaurants	13
Community Supported Agriculture/CSA or pre-sold boxes	11
Farmers Markets	8
Produce auctions	2
None of the above	1
Universities	1

Q18. If you are considering wholesale, please indicate the top three possible barriers preventing you from entering or increasing participation in these non-direct-to-consumer channels.

Wholesale Barriers	Count
Pricing - receiving too low a price	13
Volume - having enough product to fill their orders	9
Distribution/transportation - complex logistics selling to wholesale customers	8
Accessibility - unsure how to meet buyers	6
Other (please specify)	6
Requirements - unable or unsure about meeting standards for quality, handling, packing, service	5
Capital - ability to cover the upfront expense of land, labor or raw materials	3
Not applicable	2

Other (please specify):

- Tariffs have affected pricing in our area. Larger companies like Hy-Vee mass buy produce from other sources at lower prices and drives down quality and price in our area.
- 5 years into this, and ultimately, there is but one barrier for wholesale production. Love to talk in person sometime.
- Scaling up labor and equipment
- Meat locker access; usda inspected meat processor for resale
- Right mix of products. Example, I need to sell entire beef. Restaurants may want only steak. It is hard to balance inventory if buyer does not buy entire beef
- There are few buyers actually interested in buying local

Q19. What ideas do you have that would reduce the barriers to selling locally grown and raised products in Linn County?

Ideas to Reduce Barriers
Teach the public How to buy Good Food. Where to buy Good Food. Feature local growers on the evening news, in local papers, have local growers invited to high school business classes, consumer education classes, to speak to what they do and why they grow what they grow. Invite growers to Business groups, BBB, Kiwanis, Rotary. Set guidelines for a Farm Markets. In order to be a Farmer's Market they have to have 60% of Venders be PRODUCING FOOD, not arts and crafts- That's called a Fair.
Recognition of value added products that come from the farm production
If we had a labor pool willing to do farm work.
A solid one. We should talk sometime. We're going to do this, and I think your organization could help.
customer education
Creating programs that center racial and social equity as well as those working in the food system (farmers)
more advertising needed for the public
Should be tax incentives for local restaurants and commercial kitchens to buy all their food local. If Cedar Rapids wants to continue with the healthy trend then putting your money where your mouth is. Pepsi Cola, Dominoes and Taco Bell have no shortage of dollars committed to our citizens doing the opposite.
Grant assistants to add Value Added Products (including building, equipment, land access)
Education of consumers and institutions
Access to land, resources, and support
affordable, convenient retail / distribution points are lacking. Convenient access to customers is important. Transportation of cold items is challenging.
Market meet and greet for Institutional buyers. I am thinking a market where vendors set up a booths and market their product. Institutional and individual buyers visit booths of interest all in one location at one time to get an idea who is out there and who is buying/selling. Kind of like a home and builders show or an ag expo. I am also thinking a chamber of commerce type organization dedicated to local foods.
Consumer education, especially about seasonal nature of food production. CR market every Saturday, through end of October. Farmland access for beginning farmers. More consistent quality available from the farmers.
Somehow give credit to those buyers who are actually buying and selling local produce. There are many grocery stores and restaurants that advertise local products but when you investigate they don't actually have anything produced from Iowa. It is hard to convince a company to buy your local product if all they have to do is claim they have local products to get customers in the door. Maybe an Iowa local sticker could help. Also put pressure on public institutions to buy local produce. Support (provide \$\$) for programs such as double up food bucks which increases the affordability of produce for those with lower income.
We have sold in both Linn and Johnson County. Our sales are much better in Johnson County, hence I no longer sell in Linn County. Customer in Johnson Co. are willing to pay the prices I need to survive.

Q20. Do you currently have the following [infrastructure]? (Select all that apply)

Infrastructure	Count
Cooler	14
Greenhouse	9
Other (please specify)	9
Packing shed	7
Washing station	7
Dry storage	6
High tunnel	6
Wash line	4
Packing line	4
Certified kitchen	2
Refrigerated truck	2
Chopping equipment	1
None of the above	1
Meat processing equipment	0
Slaughter facilities	0

Other (please specify):

- Egg processing equipment / walk in freezers / walk in cooler
- Mobile case packing system (primitive, but semi-efficient)
- walk in freezer (x2)
- It is an in home basement garden. A small operation that is up and profitable. It is easily expandable but getting to the next level requires access to supermarkets.
- We have food truck that is a certified kitchen but need to build a commissary to make it more feasible.
- Via a rental and sharing, do not own that infrastructure
- Processing plant license
- all meat is processed in a State inspected facility. We have freezers and walk in freezers on the farm for storage.

Q21. Do you have excess capacity in any of the infrastructure you described above (delivery vehicle, cooler, processing equipment) that you might be willing to make available to neighboring growers or a food hub for a fee?

Excess Infrastructure	Count
Yes	6
No	17

Q22. If you answered YES above, please describe what infrastructure you could make available.

Excess Infrastructure Available
If zoning would allow I would add a production facility, but they currently don't see that as a farm operation
We have some soil prep / planting equipment that could be avail. Suggestion: implement central control of equipment. Things break...we all know that. Some are better at maintenance than others...we know that too.
freezer storage
If we are able to secure funding to build commissary we will be looking for neighboring growers to rent to for a fee.
Storage shed Large size flatbed truck or semi-truck & trailers
We have extra cold storage March through July (before apple season).

Q23. Please indicate which, if any, of the following are barriers preventing you from reaching your farm production and business goals. (Select all that apply)

Production Barriers	Count
Lack of customer knowledge on the value of buying local	11
Risk	9
Buyers	7
Grants	7
Labor availability	7
Pricing	7
Land cost	6
Weather (extreme)	6
Delivery	5
Equipment	5
Meat processing	5
Other (please specify)	5
Processing	5
Weather (seasonal changes)	5
Capital	4
Land availability	4
Management skill	4
Food safety	2
GAP	2
Post-harvest equipment	2
Recordkeeping	2
Financial mgt	1
Tools	1
Post-harvest knowledge	0

Other (please specify):

- Tariffs and changes in weather have changed our operation
- Zoning
- Over-reaching government regs
- Qualified labor
- We would take advantage of a very well run, well attended, well promoted year-round farmer's market. Hoop houses and storage make nearly year-round production possible, but markets and customers are limited after Christmas until May 15 when the early farmers markets open and people feel like it should be time to buy fresh local food.

Q24. If available, would you be interested in applying for a micro grant (\$5,000-\$10,000) to support the growth of your business?

Micro Grant	Count
Yes	17
No	6

Buyer Survey Responses

Q1. Choose the option below that best describes your operation.

Type	Count
Food Bank or Food Pantry	9
Food Hub	2
School	2
Farmers Market Organizer	1
Hospital	1
I do not buy for a food business, only for personal use.	1
Restaurant	1
Total	17

Q2. In what zip code is your business located?

Zip Code	Count
52214	1
52233	1
52240	3
52302	3
52317	1
52401	2
52402	1
52403	1
52404	2
52405	2

Q3. Please indicate which of the following, if any, you are willing to pay a premium for when purchasing agricultural products for your business?

Pay Premium	Count
Locally grown	10
None of the above	6
GAP (Good Agricultural Practices)	4
Organic	4
American Grass Fed Association	2
HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points)	2
Other (please specify)	2
Certified Humane	1
Food Justice Certified	1
Naturally Grown	1
Non-GMO verified	1
Animal Welfare Approved	0

Q4. How does your organization define “local” when referring to locally grown or produced food products?

"Local" Definition	Count
We do not specifically define local	5
Grown in Iowa	4
Grown within a radius between 0-120 miles	3
Grown within a radius between 0-60 miles	2
Grown within a radius between 0-200 miles	1
Grown within a radius between 0-400 miles	1
Grown in Iowa or adjacent states	1

Crosstab: Q1 Type of Operation x Q4 “Local” Definition

Local Definition	Food Hub	School	Food Bank / Pantry	Hospital	Personal Use	Farmers Market Organizer	Restaurant	Total
Grown within a radius between 0-60 miles	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Grown within a radius between 0-120 miles	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Grown within a radius between 0-200 miles	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Grown within a radius between 0-400 miles	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Grown in Iowa	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	4
Grown in Iowa or adjacent states	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
We do not specifically define local	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	5

Q5. What percentage of your total annual food budget is spent on locally sourced products? (include ALL categories - produce, proteins, value-added, etc.)

Annual Spending on Local Products	Count
0-5%	5
6-10%	5
11-20%	2
21-30%	1
31-40%	0
41+%	3
Prefer not to answer	1

Q6. Of your total local purchases, please indicate the percentage breakdown from each of the following categories. For example, if you spend \$100 total on local food, what percentage of that is spent on vegetables? Please enter percentages as whole numbers (e.g. enter 20 to denote 20%).

Budget Breakdown	Count	Average
Vegetables	11	44%
Legumes	1	35%
Value added products (i.e. salsa, jam, jerky)	1	30%
Processed fruits and vegetables (frozen, chopped, etc.)	3	23 %
Protein/Meat	7	23%
Dairy	9	23%
Fruit	7	21%
Eggs	5	6%
Prepared foods (i.e. pastas, tamales, etc.)	1	3%
Other (please specify)	1	x
Not applicable	3	x
Flowers	0	0
Grains	0	0

Other (please specify):

- First 6 months just produce, dairy and eggs- growing inventory for 2020.
- Don't purchase local foods - all are donated
- We invite local farmers/growers to participate in all categories above

Q7. Who are your primary suppliers of local farm products?

Primary Supplier (Mode)	Count
Farmers	9

Q8. What are the top three challenges you face when purchasing local farm products?

Challenges	Count
Pricing- product is too expensive	10
Supply- not able to consistently provide product	8
Volume- unable to fill the quantity needed	8
Timing- seasonality of produce does not align with consumer demand	4
Effort- too much effort required on my part to find and source local	3
Diversity of product- not enough selection	2
Not applicable	2
Other (please specify)	2
Quality- product does not meet grading standards	1
Professional skills of suppliers- unprofessional or poor communication	0

Other (please specify):

- USDA/ Dept of Ed procurement process is more work than some farmers are willing to take on or understand
- Transportation

Q9. What do you require of suppliers in terms of food safety?

Food Safety Requirements (Mode)	Count
None of the above	8
Food safety certification (i.e. Good Agricultural Practices/GAP)	5

Q10. How much more would you purchase of the following locally sourced products if it were available and the necessary requirements were met? (Indicate volume next to the appropriate category, for example 100 dozen eggs or 200 pounds of frozen berries, etc.)

Product (Count)						
Fruit (6)	560 lbs apples per menu day, 525 lbs oranges per menu day	400 lb	10 lb	200 lb	200 lb	20 k pounds annually
Vegetables (6)	260 lbs frozen veg per menu day, 280 lbs baby carrots per menu day	200 lb	10 lb	200 lb	200 lb	30K or more pounds of carrots, celery, cucumbers, kale, zucchini
Protein/Meat (4)	800 lb	40 lb	100 lb	300 lb		
Eggs (3)	20	10	100			
Processed fruits and vegetables (3)	50K or more pounds of frozen fruit annually	30 lb	100 lb			
Dairy (2)	5000 pints of milk per school day	100 gallons				
Grains (1)	15,000 pounds annually					
Legumes (2)	75 lbs per menu day	20 lb				
Prepared foods (2)	Maybe	30 lb				
Value added products (1)	Maybe					
Not applicable (3)	we don't have a budget to purchase local	Only buy for me and my family.	We are open to opportunities to offer the community more locally sourced product.			

Q11. Which of the following describes your standard pricing strategy with respect to local farm products?

Pricing Strategy	0-5%	6-10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	41+%	Other	Total
Generally lower than non-local				1				1
Generally a small premium compared to non-local	2	1	1			1		5
Generally the same as non-local		2				1		3
Other (please specify)							All our products are local. We aim for a 20% margin but it has come out more like 11-16 so far.	1
Not applicable	3	2	2					7

Q12. What are the top farm products you are interested in getting from local sources? Select all that you are interested in.

Desired Products	Count
Fruit	17
Vegetables	17
Protein/Meat	9
Dairy	8
Eggs	7
Processed fruits and vegetables (frozen, chopped, etc.)	7
Legumes	3
Grains	2
Prepared foods	2
Flowers	1
Other (please specify)	1
Value added products	1

Other (please specify):

- Canned would be excellent

Q13. How would you describe the market for locally grown and raised products? Please rate the following statements from agree, neutral, disagree.

Market	Agree	Percentage	Disagree	Percentage	Neutral
Shoppers and diners seek out local products	13	19.70%	2	5.56%	1
Shoppers and diners are willing to pay more for local products	11	16.67%	3	8.33%	2
Shoppers and diners in Linn County need education on the value of local food	13	19.70%	2	5.56%	2
Institutional buyers seek out local products	2	3.03%	7	19.44%	7
Institutional buyers are willing to pay more for local products	3	4.55%	10	27.78%	3
Farmers have the opportunity to sell large quantities of local products	7	10.61%	1	2.78%	8
Farmers have the opportunity to grow and sell a diverse set of products	8	12.12%	1	2.78%	7
Farmers have a diverse choice in customers to sell to	4	6.06%	5	13.89%	7
Demand for local product exceeds supply	5	7.58%	5	13.89%	7

Q14. What are some of the Linn County Food System challenges you've experienced? Any that we missed in this survey?

Linn Challenges
The market has changed significantly in the past few years, with a larger demand from Linn County restaurants but lower from institutions.
As a food pantry, we are grateful for all the donations we get from local food producers.
Timely access, cost
quantity needed to feed the 3500 unduplicated people we see each mont
Not enough money to buy these products
In the institutional arena, the management companies to not allow the users to buy off contract.
source for locally donated goods not just purchased
Limited delivery opportunities, I have a hard time promoting my growers. I would like signage.
I think there is a barrier for new farmers who want to start growing sustainable produce and other food for human consumption including land prices, loan barriers, etc.
Growers willing to participate in events like farmers markets. Ability for buyers who use programs like WIC and Snap to find places to buy locally sourced goods (it was difficult to get our market certified because of frequency.

Q15. What are some of the Linn County Food System opportunities you see?

Q15 Linn Opportunities
Consumer education of the benefits of buying local is vital.
I see the opportunity to offer more local fruits and vegetables to our students through advanced planning and following the USDA/ Dept. of Ed procurement process.
Working more with local food pantries to ensure excess food is not wasted.
Better ways to network
Maybe lower prices
Education
Lots of local involvement
Make it easy for people to choose local. Make local accessible and competitively priced.
There is a lot of room for expansion of our local food system. In Iowa, we could grow a lot of food we currently import and support our farming communities.
Encouraging diversity of product. Eliminating barriers like frequency of farmers markets (state level) to open up more opportunities. Create fun programs that get populations like youth and seniors and underserved populations to try to products. What products can be grown/produced in our zone that buyers aren't as familiar with that could be marketed for sale.

Food Business Survey Responses

Q2. Select the option below that best describes the type of business you operate.

Type	Count
Restaurant	17
Other (please specify)	10
Specialty product / consumer packaged goods (i.e. pasta, sausage, granola, etc.)	3
Caterer	1

Other (please specify):

- Winery
- Grass Fed Beef, Raw Honey, garden produce
- Food Pantry Site
- Pastries
- Franchise Coffee Shop
- QSR, no seating.
- Coffee House
- School/RCCI
- Corn Milling Business
- K-12 School

Q3. In what zip code is your business located?

Zip	Count
50644	1
52227	1
52233	1
52302	6
52314	2
52324	2
52336	1
52401	5
52402	6
52403	2
52404	8

Q4. Where do you currently produce your goods?

Production Location	Count
A commercial kitchen on-site	22
A food manufacturing facility	4
At home	2
Other (please specify)	2
I am not current producing	1

Q5. If you use a shared kitchen/incubator kitchen, which one do you utilize?

Kitchen Use	Count
N/A	7

Q6. Where do you/would you sell your products?

Selling Location	Count
My own store, business, or food trucks	20
Restaurants and cafes	8
Farmers market	7
Other (please specify)	5
Distributors	3
Institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.)	3
My E-commerce shop	3
New Bo City Market	2
Online grocers	2
Retailers, grocery store, cooperatives	2
Food Hub	0
My farm stand or CSA	0

Q7. How would you describe the market for locally grown and raised products? Please rate the following statements from agree, neutral, disagree.

Market	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Neutral
Shoppers and diners seek out locally-produced products	11	11.7%	2	4.3%	18
Shoppers and diners are willing to pay more for locally-produced products	15	16.0%	7	14.9%	9
Shoppers and diners who reside in Linn County need education on the value of buying locally-produced food	18	19.2%	1	2.1%	12
Institutional buyers seek out locally-produced products	7	7.5%	5	10.6%	19
Institutional buyers are willing to pay more for locally-produced products	2	2.1%	10	21.3%	18
Farmers have the opportunity to sell large quantities of locally-produced products	12	12.8%	3	6.4%	16
Farmers have the opportunity to grow and sell a diverse set of products	15	16.0%	4	8.5%	12
Farmers have a diverse choice in customers to sell to	10	10.6%	5	10.6%	16
The demand for local product exceeds supply	4	4.3%	10	21.3%	16
Total	94	100%	47	100%	136

Q8. What are your top two or three growth goals for your business? Examples of goals might include getting stocked at a large grocery store, launching a new product line, or turning a profit.

Growth Goals
To have Linn county recognize that a farm winery is a farm operation. Move to a larger building to increase production. Get picked up by more distributors.
providing a service
More repeat customers at farmers market More customers come to farm for product to reduce the labor of going to a farmers market.
Increased corporate opportunities Increase product line
Making supply available to those in need Providing a variety of healthy options to low income/homeless
Turning a profit, sourcing more local foods, maintaining high customer satisfaction
Lower food cost and profit
Increase sales, speed of service, and customer satisfaction.
Being referenced in a grocery store
selling more food at a better profit
Turning a profit
Update menu items
Sally's on Broadway
Growing sales, controlling costs
increasing gross revenue to better compensate employees, and improving operations.
increase staff to serve more people
Turning a profit Locally owned awareness
Turning a profit, meet the needs of customers, change as the demand changes
Top line sales and team member development.
Running a \$6.5 million business with about 20% growth this year.
Turning a profit obviously Creating a better community of local restaurants, changing the culture Helping the growth of Cedar Rapids
Grow catering business Eventually move from NewBo to our own restaurant
Consistency, Good Place to work, Profitable
More profit/increased menu items
We are a corporate location; therefore, most of our product is specifically brought in by Sysco. We would love the opportunity to do more locally but will be limited.
1. Turning a profit/Increasing profits 2. Growing catering business
Offering more local produce as our budget allows, have teaching opportunities with farmers and students about the local food item(s) that we serve.
To find a major distributor. To increase profits. To put onto more trucks.
Customer retention keeping up with current food trends as we change our menu every season

Q9. What are the main challenges you face in growing your business? Examples of challenges might include limited time for sales and marketing, lack of capital, or permitting challenges.

Growth Challenges
Zoning!! Marketing skills
Lack of time to prepare
Since we do not want employees; time to do everything is limited. So need to develop more efficient and mechanized ways of doing thing.
Lack of capital
Lack of capital and administrative infrastructure
Limited time for sales and marketing, recruiting and obtaining decent employees, limited financial resources
Labor-employees
We have an odd parking lot.
Professionnals are not really open minded to try new products
Labor
Staffing
Space for more products
Lack of capital
Brand recognition
Operational learning curve
Adequate workforce
The "big box" coffee houses
Finding out the needs, adapting to meet those needs, cost of changes
Quality team member availability, low unemployment rate.
Inability for guests to travel straight into our restaurant.
Staffing
Wearing too many hats. I can't do everything well.
Hiring talent, Markets
I am inside a factory my business depends on how many workers the factory has
Price points and overall volume. Labor
Finding marketing that works
Quantity of produce available, budget limitations, procurement process.
Lack of funds. Not getting our product on time and customers waiting.
Finding staff who care enough to do the job well enough to retain customers

Q10. What types of business support services would help you reach your business goals? Examples of services might include training on accounting or food safety, support with recipe development, or networking with other local food businesses.

Support Services
Getting information to be able to present to large distributors
Ability to purchase wholesale ingredients
The Extension service thru Iowa State is an example of a source for knowledge that does a good job but lacks some categories of information that need expansion.
Board of Directors from diverse backgrounds with access to and knowledge of capital opportunities
Training on accounting The economic alliance and "buy here, give here, grow here" program doesn't support local businesses without an annual membership fee
Having people apply and want to work
Supply of quality employees.
Networking in order to reach a larger audience
Support with staffing
Training
Social media assistance and local impressions.
Training on restaurant trends, advertising, networking
Safe food handling training, how to get local products to market.
Easier to train staff on food safety.
Training on accounting, support with recipe development, or networking with other local food businesses, marketing
Development of Talent
Having a restaurant association that helped be liaison with the county and local sourcing.
Marketing support, networking with other local food businesses (yes!)
Connecting with others
Staff training - please help train them to show up to work and be on time because I am not getting through to them

Q11. If available, would you be interested in applying for a micro-grant (\$5,000-\$10,000) to support the growth of your business?

Grant	Count
Yes	16
No	15

Q12. Please indicate which of the following, if any, you are willing to pay a premium for when purchasing agricultural products for your business?

Pay Premium	Count
Locally grown	15
None of the above	10
Naturally Grown	4
Non-GMO	4
Certified Humane	3
HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points)	3
Other (please specify)	3
GAP (Good Agricultural Practices)	2
Organic	2
American Grass Fed Association	0
Animal Welfare Approved	0
Food Justice Certified	0

Q13. How does your organization define “local” when referring to locally grown or produced food products?

"Local" Definition	Count
Grown in Iowa	11
Grown within a radius between 0-60 miles	5
Grown within a radius between 0-120 miles	4
Grown in Iowa or adjacent states	4
We do not specifically define local	4
Other (please specify)	2
Grown within a radius between 0-200 miles	1

Q14. Approximately what percentage of your annual spending (in dollars) on food ingredients is for items produced locally?

Local Annual Spending	Count
0-5%	12
5-10%	10
10-20%	2
20-30%	0
30-40%	1
40+%	2
Prefer not to answer	4

Q15. Approximately what percentage of your annual spending (in dollars) on food ingredients is for items produced in Linn County?

Linn Annual Spending	Count
0-5%	20
5-10%	5
11-20%	0
21-30%	2
Prefer not to answer	4

Crosstab: Q2 Type of Operation x Q14 Local Annual Spending & Q15 Linn Annual Spending

Type	Annual Spending on Local							Annual Spending Produced in Linn				
	0-5%	5-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40+%	Prefer not to answer	0-5%	5-10%	11-20%	21-30%	Prefer not to answer
Restaurant	7	6	2	0	0	0	2	11	2	0	1	3
Specialty	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0
Other	4	3	0	0	0	1	2	6	2	0	1	1
Caterer	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	12	10	2	0	1	2	4	20	5	0	2	4

Q16. Who are your primary suppliers of local farm products?

Primary Suppliers	Count
Farmers	10
Traditional Wholesalers (i.e. Sysco, US Foods, etc.)	10
Retailers (i.e. other grocery stores)	9
Not applicable	6
Other (please specify)	2
Agricultural Cooperative	0
Food Hub	0
Produce auctions	0

Other (please specify):

- Meat-Sausage Foundry, butchers
- DOD Fresh Produce Program (FFAVORS)

Q17. What are the top three challenges you face when purchasing local food ingredients?

Challenges	Count
Pricing- product is too expensive	12
Effort- too much effort required on my part to find and source local	11
Supply- not able to consistently provide product	10
Timing- seasonality of produce does not align with consumer demand	9
Other (please specify)	6
Volume- unable to fill the quantity needed	7
Diversity of product- not enough selection	6
Quality- product does not meet grading standards	2
Professional skills of suppliers- unprofessional or poor communication	2

Others (please specify):

- My ingredients are not available locally
- Franchise Specific
- Franchise restrictions
- Not allowed to
- Procurement process
- We don't purchase it ourselves

Crosstab: Q2 Type of Operation x Q17 Challenges When Purchasing Local Ingredients

Q2 Type x Q17 Challenges	Restaurant	Specialty	Other	Caterer	Total
Pricing- product is too expensive	7	0	5	0	12
Volume- unable to fill the quantity needed	4	0	3	0	7
Quality- product does not meet grading standards	2	0	0	0	2
Supply- not able to consistently provide product	5	1	3	1	10
Timing- seasonality of produce does not align with consumer demand	5	1	2	1	9
Diversity of product- not enough selection	2	0	3	1	6
Professional skills of suppliers- unprofessional or poor communication	1	0	1	0	2
Effort- too much effort required on my part to find and source local	8	0	3	0	11
Other (please specify)	3	2	3	0	8