

CASE FOR SUPPORT:

To Strengthen Local Food and Farming in the Northern Farms Foodshed

A collaborative, community-based project of the Groundwork Center and the Local Food Alliance of Northern Michigan.



groundwork
CENTER FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

"At Groundwork, we've played a role in building a locally-sourced food system that creates jobs for farmers, preserves precious farmland, and improves the health and connectedness of communities."



~Rob Mossburg
Board of Directors
Groundwork
Center



"The Local Food Alliance is a committed all-volunteer group with strong roots in the community working to promote the culture of local food and to strengthen our economy and communities."



~Dr. Hal Willens,
Local Food
Alliance

TODAY

The value of farm products sold in Emmet and Charlevoix counties declined almost 20% over the past 30 years. Farmers are getting older, and fewer are working primarily on their farms. At the same time, there are more, but smaller, farms, and production has shifted dramatically from livestock to crops. The value of farm products sold directly to individuals increased almost threefold between 2002 and 2012.

Momentum is building toward a more vital local food system in our “foodshed.” For example:

- We’re beginning to see younger farmers build a stake in our area at farms like Pond Hill, Bluestem, Providence, Bear Creek Organic, Spirit of Walloon, and Coveyou Scenic Farm, as well as a number of new wineries. They bring new ideas and technologies and a focus on higher value products.
- New and existing businesses are using local farm products and more locally-grown food can be found in our grocery stores, restaurants, and institutions.
- A Local Food Alliance of community members has been meeting monthly since 2012 to celebrate, educate and promote local food and farming.
- North Central Michigan College has vastly expanded its farming classes and activities.
- The Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation has launched a Good Food Initiative to prioritize the viability of local agriculture.
- ISLAND has catalyzed several farm guilds that offer mutual support and skill-building opportunities.
- Friendship Centers of Emmet County has initiated a program to include food grown by local farmers in its meals programs for seniors.

These efforts are being integrated with broader regional networks like the Food and Farming Network of Northwest Michigan, and Taste the Local Difference®, a social enterprise of the Groundwork Center that helps consumers identify and connect with local food. Linking to these resources strengthens activities in the Northern Lakes “foodshed”.



Dear friend,

We are pleased to have this opportunity to tell you about an exciting new initiative for our region. In early 2015, our two organizations came together to launch a 10-year plan to grow more local food in the Northern Lakes “foodshed” and to keep farming an integral part of our community.

Since 2012, the all-volunteer Local Food Alliance has been a forum to raise awareness about the value of local food and farms, incubate new ideas, and advance strategies that unite farmers with consumers. For more than a decade, Groundwork (formerly the Michigan Land Use Institute) has a successful track record building the necessary networks, implementing effective marketing tools, and raising awareness about the benefits of a strong community food system. This timely convergence of community momentum, coupled with leadership by our organizations, presents a powerful opportunity for the Northern Lakes “foodshed”.

To begin this exciting collaboration, we have concluded that a full-time, paid position based in Petoskey is needed to catalyze and coordinate the efforts of our community to build on our local and regional accomplishments and take them to a new level. A full-time coordinator can build more community support, grow local demand, and strengthen connections among leaders. We are now seeking to raise the resources necessary to support this position for the next 3 years. We hope you’ll join us. Together, we will grow enduring change for the better.

Sincerely,

Hans Voss
Groundwork Center

Scott Smith
Local Food Alliance



TOMORROW

We are working to help create a robust farming community that is integral to healthy living—for our children, our seniors, and those without secure access to food. It’s a vital part of a diverse, resilient local and regional economy, and it preserves the farmland and open spaces that are essential to the character of our part of northern Michigan. Realizing this vision will require collective and well-coordinated efforts from all of us.

Building on today’s foundation and growing momentum, we can make significant progress in the next 10 years toward this vision of a robust farming community. We can achieve:

- Substantially increased contributions by local farms and farm-related businesses to our economy;
- New and expanded markets for local food and farm products;
- More sustainable livelihoods for farmers, jobs that pay living wages, and attractive careers in farming and farm-related businesses;
- Improved access to land, finance, infrastructure, training and mentoring and other resources that help those who want to farm locally to succeed;
- Educated consumers who seek out locally-produced farm products as the norm, not a luxury;
- Vastly increased amounts of nutritious, locally-grown food served in our schools, senior and healthcare institutions, restaurants, groceries, and food pantries;
- A stronger network of collaborators working to advance our food and farming goals;
- Policies that support healthy communities and a resilient local farming economy; and
- A broad and participative process to evaluate our results, improve our performance, and learn from and share our experience.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

When communities grow and market fresh, healthy, local food, it does so much more than change what's on kitchen plates. It creates jobs, saves farmland, and secures a local food supply for the future. The benefits to the land, economy, and people are abundant and enduring. With your support, we can leverage the excellent work already under way, build a stronger movement, and fundamentally transform our food system for generations to come.

We have established a steering committee of community leaders from key organizations to guide the work of a Regional Food & Farming Coordinator. For the next three years, this person's role will be to help existing efforts flourish while identifying new initiatives to move the dial on local food promotion. The coordinator

will make sure there is a comprehensive and far-reaching education and outreach component that encourages the purchase of local food and raises awareness about the benefits of a strong local food economy. Attention also will be given to the creation and promotion of policy initiatives that support the local food system.

To make this vision a reality, we need your help. The new position will require funding to provide an adequate salary, to support expenses, and to acquire office space. It's a small investment with big returns to the community. Together, we can increase awareness that locally grown food not only tastes better, it keeps more money circulating in our towns and villages, keeps farmland productive, and builds community identity and pride.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Larry Dyer, *Local Food Alliance*
Billi Jo Head, *Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians*
Helen Leithauser, *North Central Michigan College*
Jim Lively, *Groundwork Center*
Jen Schaap, *ISLAND, representing the Northern Michigan Small Farm Guild*
Scott Smith, *Community representative*

Chris Scott, *Friendship Centers of Emmet County, representing seniors and other vulnerable groups*
Mindy Taylor, *Grain Train*
Sara Ward, *Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation*
Wendy Wieland, *MSU Extension*
Hal Willens, *Community representative*