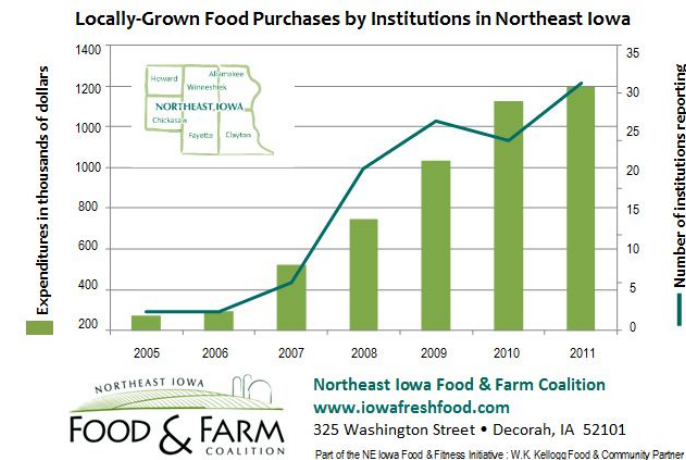
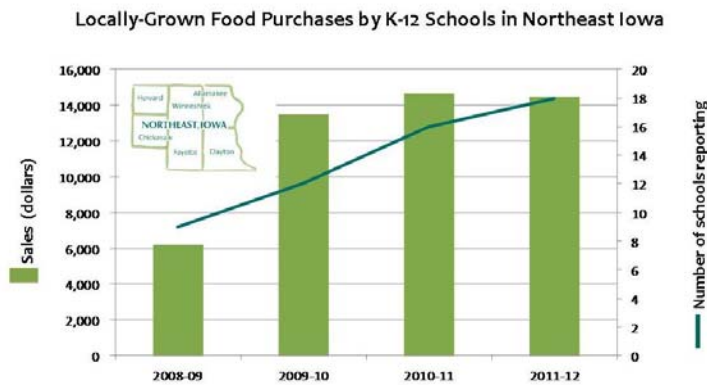
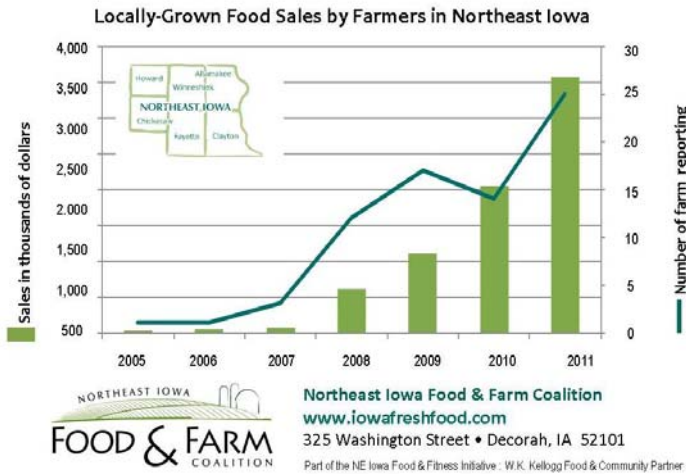




Regional Food System Impact

Sales & Purchases. The sales and purchase data collection for 2011 is complete. 25 farms or farm groups reported \$3.6 million in sales. 26 institutions reported over \$1.2 million in local food purchases. 18 schools reported \$14K of local food purchases.



Farmer and Small Business Outreach & Development

- Co-hosted a Beginning Farmer Workshop with NCAT. 14 learned about business planning and financial management.
- Marketing project in small meat plant was successful. Year over year improvement in profitability will be 35%. Full success was not realized. Based on this year's findings, we know that we will be able to be more aggressive in the slow season next year. They expect better improvement in the coming years.
- New Proof of Concept Marketing Project for Small Meat Plant. One small meat plant is looking to increase their distribution in the region. They are working on low capital ways to do this. Success in the project will pave the way for much needed plant improvements or building a new plant.
- Local Greens Grower to Involved in New Marketing Program. New marketing program will center on increasing sales for high margin products instead of high volume bulk product channels.
- Over 40 farmers, distributors, processors, retail and institutional buyers met at Luther College for a Lunch and Learn. As a result, an email networking group has been created and plans are underway for follow-up meetings.



Food Safety Projects

- Four greenhouses passed USDA GAP audits in May. Three of them had follow-up audits in July.
- Food Safety coaches have been visiting farms to review food safety plans, post-harvest procedures and documentation.
- Submitted a grant application for \$18,750 to IDALS Specialty Crop Block Grant for a GAP Cost-share program. (Winn. Co.). Application was funded for \$15,750 for 2 years.
- Working on a small farm audit program pilot project with Debra Garrison from Primus Labs.

Food Hub Planning

- The Food Hub strategic planning committee met twice this quarter. They heard from two consultants, C.E. Pugh and Bob Olson about food aggregation challenges, market development and business structure. NIFF members have been looking at insurance requirements for farmers to deliver products from other farms.
- GROWN Locally moved their transfer facility to Clermont. They are currently investigating purchase options. The facility has passed a third party audit.

Conducting Practical Marketing Research:

- Been researching the question: How can we justify better margins for local food in retail venues?
- Testing sales offers with local products in local retailers. Findings thus far: 1) Sales cycle is significantly shorter and easier with experimental marketing offer. It is easy to open new accounts. 2) It is possible to generate better margins. 3) If a book of business can be generated rapidly and at sufficient margins, then it will be possible to rapidly expand a food hub enterprise.
- Expand offer to more stores in the region that are not carrying local foods.
- Working with Rockwell Collins to further develop local food CSAs and expand on the initial Luther College success.

Food Processing Project

NIFF members have been meeting with Dan Moris at Sharing Spaces Kitchen in Prairie du Chien, WI on getting local product processed for this growing season. They have purchased a flash freezer. We will be looking at the products needed by schools and are investigating costs to prepare those products.

NE IA Business Network—UE Funding Update

- Submitted a grant proposal to the USDA Farm to School project for a comprehensive F2S program in 6 schools. Develop a seasonal cycle menu and curriculum for youth cafeteria coaches.
- ISUEO submitted a letter of intent to the Leopold Center for parts of the above F2S project.
- CFGD submitted a grant proposal for \$82,000 to the Convergence Innovation Fund to assist expand marketing pilots and develop back office infrastructure for a food hub.
- Hosted a regional legislative event on June 15.
- In planning discussions with Spectrum Industries on the processing kitchen model.
- Developed the Dream Big Grow Here contest for business development – developed marketing materials, rules, etc. – Contest will start in September and will be voting during October. One winner - \$5,000, that winner will go into a state-wide contest for \$10,000

- NIBN Received \$45,000 in RBOG funds for workshops and business counseling – started working on a schedule for counselors and developing workshops needed.
- Update: Proposal to USDA Rural Community Development Initiative grant to build the capacity of local community foundations, leaders, youth and entrepreneurs to tell the transfer of wealth menus. Not funded for a technical reason.
- Update: ISUEO received \$4900 grant from the Leopold Center for expansion of marketing pilots.

Luther College Update

LC hosted a picnic with all the regional Sodexo food service managers. They are interested in how local food producers work with Sodexo at Luther College and how they can get local food incorporated into their menu planning at their respective sites.

Farm to School Update

Six schools are implementing a regional, cycle menu to meet the new nutrition requirements of the Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act: Allamakee, Decorah, Howard-Winn, Postville, S. Winn, Turkey Valley.

Home Grown School Lunch Week has been set for October 15-19, 2012.

ISUEO received funding for the BASICS nutrition education program for Postville and Oelwein, grades K-3 this year.

State and Regional Leadership

A new working group is being formed within the Iowa State University Extension staff to build connections with County Extension personnel and to educate them more about the Iowa food system. There is a huge need to bring ISU-Extension staff up to speed on local food and the groups and systems that are in place. Local food is only one small part of what Extension covers in their work, but there has been no coordinated means to communicate and educate them on the Iowa food system. They will learn about the Iowa Food Systems Council and the Regional Food System Working Group network as a part of their education. Part of this education includes the development of a resource web-hub and a staff conference in September.

Talked with Doug O'Brien, USDA Rural Development when he visited the Sharing Spaces Kitchen in May.

Past Events

- May 22: Lending to Alternative Ag; 20 attended.
- June 9: Small Farm Equipment Field day, Kymar Acres, Waukon. 150 attended.
- June 23: Breakfast on the Farm. 500 attended.
- July 15: Saving Labor on the Market Farm, Rock Spring Farm, Decorah
- July 23: Beginning Farmer meeting, 14 attended.