



From the Field

Summer 2008/ Vol. 3 No. 2



From Farm to Table, Building a Better Food System in Southeast Michigan

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A Look Back at the FSEP Annual Conference

Brenda Reau

The third annual FSEP Conference was held April 3 at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Motherhouse in Monroe. The conference drew 200 participants from across the region, who came to participate in nearly 20 educational sessions focused on local food system opportunities in production, processing, marketing, distribution, sales and consumption of locally grown foods.

Conference participants also enjoyed a lunch prepared by IHM executive chef Patrick Cavanaugh featuring foods from farms and businesses that have received business development assistance through FSEP.

Fresh greens from Goetz Farm in Riga were used in the salad, and participants enjoyed bread from The Henry Ford. Ernst Farm from Ann Arbor provided beef and the MSU Student Organic Farm provided carrots for the soup. Calder Dairy, located in Carleton, provided milk and ice cream. The featured foods were supplemented by other locally grown foods to create a memorable meal for conference participants.

Eighty four percent of conference

participants who completed an evaluation said that after taking part in the event that they better understood local food system opportunities. Ninety seven percent checked at least one of five actions that they plan to take as a result of what they learned at the conference.

Seventy eight percent of participants reported that they planned to educate others about local food system opportunities. Sixty eight percent said they planned to develop collaboration with others involved in the local food system. Purchasing more local food for their personal consumption was reported by sixty four percent of respondents. Thirty three percent stated they planned to explore ways to incorporate local food into their business or organization. Twenty percent of participants reported they plan to develop a food product or business related to the local food system.

The conference offers a unique setting for people to learn more about local food system opportunities. It also serves as a venue for networking and developing collaboration across the food system.

Brenda Reau is the MSU Extension Director for Monroe County.



FSEP Leadership Team

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Ruth Blackburn, *Ecology Center*

Rodger Bowser, *Zingerman's Community of Businesses*

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Jennifer's Food for Thought...

A message from the Executive Director

I thought this day would never come! My local farmers' market opened and I picked up my first CSA farm share. Never heard of a CSA? CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture and is a way to directly support your local food system. Typically, a subscriber pays a fee to the CSA farmer, usually upfront prior to the growing season, to become a CSA member. Then each week (or during another designated time), the CSA members receive their allotment of food. Some CSA farms require members to volunteer a certain number of hours on the farm. By subscribing to a CSA, I'm establishing a connection with the farmer who grows my food; at the same time, I share in the risks and rewards of the season. If it's a bad year for corn, I may not receive much; if it's a great year for tomatoes, I'll be making lots of salsa. By subscribing to a CSA, I'm cutting down on food transportation, contributing to the local economy, and preserving agricultural land. You can join one, too! For a list of local CSA's, visit the Michigan CSA website – www.csafarms.org.

We wrapped up another successful conference in April. Over 200 participants learned more about the regional food system, and the local food served during lunch was excellent (see Brenda's recap on page 1). We were thrilled to be able to highlight the delicious food produced in Southeast Michigan even during the winter.

Welcome to new FSEP Leadership Team members! Robb Harper, publisher of *edible WOW*, a wonderful quarterly publication focused on local food, recently joined our Team. I highly recommend checking out this beautiful magazine. Former Washtenaw County Commissioner Vivienne Armentrout has also joined us. We've added another member to our Education and Outreach Committee - Sharon McNeil, Ecology Director at the St. Mary Organic Farm in Monroe. Sharon was instrumental in helping us

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The Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP) is an urban-rural collaboration dedicated to the tenets of local food systems within Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties.

Our mission is to catalyze change in the food system to enable strong farms, healthy cities, community wealth, and job creation in southeast Michigan.

FSEP provides research, education and outreach with urban and rural partnerships, resulting in agricultural development opportunities, sustainable communities, and healthy, local economies. A central strength of FSEP comes from the collaboration of our diverse leadership: the combined effort of five county administrations, farm organization leaders, food industry entrepreneurs, community groups, food system and economic development experts and resource providers.

FSEP programs include Farm to School, Business Innovation and Networking, Education and Outreach for Change, and Research.

Farm to School

Farmers and Farm Food in the Classroom

Ruth Blackburn

Farm to school programs often refer to making an impact in three areas, sometimes called the three Cs – Cafeteria, Community and Classroom. For the first two areas, the FSEP Farm to School Pilot Program worked with the participating schools to bring farm fresh food into the cafeterias, and offered opportunities for school communities to learn more about the local food system. Within the third “C,” FSEP Farm to School offered unique farm and food classroom activities that brought farmers into the Ann Arbor schools, and showed teachers and students at Henry Ford Academy ways to use local food to teach history.

The Ann Arbor schools were very interested in a classroom component, especially in the elementary schools where parents had been asking for a more nutrition and food related-curriculum. A very basic plan was developed called “Farm Fresh Food in the Classroom.” Michele Madden, the K-8 Math and Science curriculum coordinator for AAPS, sent teachers an e-mail invitation describing the program and offering the opportunity for a classroom visit from a farmer that would serve as “a nice reinforcement of the locally grown farm fresh produce being served in the cafeteria on Fridays.” Teachers were told that a box of farm fresh fruits and/or vegetables would be delivered to their classroom. The farmer guest would then share information about how and where the foods were grown, prepare the food items for tasting by the students, and lead students in a grade-appropriate activity.

This invitation was met with great interest. Within the first 12 hours, 30 teachers had requested the activity and a total of 60 teachers responded. They represented all 21 of the elementary schools in the district. Two farmers volunteered to help with the presentations. Deb Lentz, from Tandre Farm, is a former teacher and welcomed the chance to get back in the classroom. Alex Young, farmer and chef at Zingerman’s Roadhouse, loved the idea of bringing vegetables right to the classroom. Each of the farmers brought their own personality and



Chef Alex and fresh stir fry at Haisley Elementary.

knowledge to the presentations.

Deb designed her presentation around the parts of the plant. She reviewed the parts that we eat, and then engaged the kids in a guessing game with paper bags labeled “I am a Root” (or a Leaf, Flower, etc.) while reviewing the function of each part. After they guessed or the item was revealed, samples were shared with the eager students. Chef Alex brought equipment to do cooking demonstrations and fielded questions from the students about everything from farming to cooking for celebrities. A popular feature was freshly prepared potato chips from two different potatoes, with samples of the potatoes in each phase of chip making.

Grade-level specific activities included emphasizing use of the five senses for the kindergarteners, creating a tally sheet with first graders and asking the second graders to tell or write a story using one of the food items as a character. The third grade activity used Social Studies concepts as the students worked in small groups to talk about what natural, human and capital resources are needed for a vegetable farm. Fourth graders did math calculations using a yield and harvest date worksheet developed by the FSEP Farm to School Coordinator, and fifth graders were asked to write

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Farm to School

Farm to School in the Classroom



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a news story or journal entry about the presentation.

A total of 409 students participated in the fall presentations. There were a total of 30 different foods offered, with each classroom seeing and tasting an average of 10 different vegetables or fruits. Many students tasted a vegetable that they would invent a recipe for (Barbecued Squash and Chocolate Covered Kohlrabi were two of the favorites). Several items showed up in the lists of what they would ask a parent to buy. One child brought his parents to the Tantre farmers market booth to introduce them and buy more of his favorites.

Nutrition interns Rachel Johnson, Tracy Patterson and Natalie Zima from the University of Michigan School of Public Health assisted with the presentations. The interns also helped develop evaluation tools for the students and the teachers. 13 teachers out of 19 completed evaluations and all were satisfied or very satisfied with the activity. Teachers were also asked how they might use the information from the activity in other areas of their curriculum. Responses included “We used the visit to write about during Writer’s Workshop time,” and “Discussion of Native foods in North America vs. new foods brought by colonists in our Social Studies curriculum.”

Classroom visits began again in the spring with a new twist on the presentation. Deb Lentz brought two planting activities that Tantre had used at other events. One used origami –folded newspaper cups, and the other had the kids create a seed ball based on a Native American tradition. Students were also able to taste some spring greens and radishes. Chef Alex shared radish tea sandwiches (with Roadhouse bread and fresh butter) and the freshly made potato chips. 15 classes representing 8 schools and over 300 kids participated in the spring farmer presentations.

At the Henry Ford Academy, FSEP Farm to School was invited to present to the 10th grade history classes. Two interns, Eve Van Dalsen from Wayne State University and Mariel Steiner from the University of Michigan, assisted the FSEP Farm to School Coordinator in designing the multimedia presentation.

Potatoes were chosen to illustrate how food can be used to learn about history and the local food system. Sysco provided a box of assorted potatoes and students found the first reference to potato chips on www.foodtimeline.org. They also viewed a video about how potato chips are made, and learned about which varieties are grown on the Greenfield Village farm.

The students worked in small groups to investigate ingredients on various potato chip labels, discussed the origin of the ingredients and which might have been in potato chips that their grandparents ate. The session ended with the students tasting two varieties of potatoes prepared as French fries. Teachers and students provided positive feedback on the presentation, with one teacher already planning to use food again in future history lessons.

All of the materials developed for the FSEP Farm to School classroom activities are ready to be made available to other schools in the FSEP region. The Ann Arbor Farm to School Collaboration is already making plans to continue the farmer visits this coming school year.



Deb Lentz leads “Parts of the Plant” skit with kindergarteners at Northside Elementary.

A Word from the Executive Director

Jennifer's Food for Thought...

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make the connections at the IHM Motherhouse that allowed us to serve local food at the conference. Rachel Luria, a Master's student in the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment, has joined us this summer as a volunteer intern. And special thanks to Rosanne Bloomer who served on the Leadership Team over the past two years. We appreciate your service to FSEP.

Thank you to Whole Foods Market for supporting FSEP and our Farm to School program. FSEP received \$5,235 during the Community Support Day at Whole Foods Market in Ann Arbor on June 5. Without this kind of support, our work to advance agricultural economic development opportunities in Southeast Michigan would not exist. We truly appreciate the support of our community partners and contributors.

FSEP Community Support Day at Whole Foods—June 5, 2008

Whole Foods Market in Ann Arbor selected FSEP as its Community Support Day recipient on Thursday, June 5, 5% of the proceeds from purchases made on this day went to support FSEP.

FSEP was fortunate to be the local group selected, and received a total donation of \$5,235. FSEP Staff chatted with curious shoppers, and encouraged some customers to participate in a store-wide scavenger hunt for local food items. The day was a success in both raising funds and our community profile. Many thanks to Whole Foods Market for their generous sponsorship, and to anyone who scheduled their shopping to support FSEP!



Jennifer Fike shows off the FSEP logo during Community Support Day at Whole Foods.

Food System Economic Partnership FSEP is a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. If you enjoy this newsletter, please consider supporting us. FSEP projects include Business Innovation and Networking, Farm to School, Research, and Education and Outreach.

Yes! You can support agricultural development opportunities in Southeast Michigan!

Please enclose your check with this form, and make checks payable to:

Food System Economic Partnership
705 North Zeeb Road
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All contributions are tax deductible.

Farm Profile

Lutchka Angus and Farmstand

Sarah Cwiek

Grass Lake, Michigan is a tiny town on the eastern edge of Jackson County, where sprawling farmland disguises a closely-knit community. One of those farms belongs to Dave Lutchka, a Jackson County Commissioner who has been raising purebred Angus breeding cattle for over 50 years. Dave and his wife, Joan, co-own and operate Lutchka Angus here. They also operate a roadside market, selling fresh produce from their on-farm “garden” to neighbors and passers-by along this sparsely populated stretch of road.

I visited Dave and Joan at their farm on a sunny afternoon in late March, the day after an early spring snowstorm. While a farm never entirely shuts down, it was certainly far from peak levels of activity, and the fresh snow cover meant I couldn’t get as close a look at the farm’s operations as I might have liked. However, it did mean Dave and Joan had plenty of time to sit down with me in their living room and discuss the farm.

The first thing that becomes obvious is that this is very much a joint endeavor. Dave and Joan own 109 acres that extends out from their house off Francisco Road to just about the Washtenaw County line. The house and the land have been theirs since 1967, when they bought it knowing that “we wanted to retire into a farming life,” Joan explains. Both had grown up in some version of that life, though in different places: Joan grew up in a house on her grandfather’s farm in Oceana County, helping out on the farm and harvesting fruit in the summers. Dave was born in Detroit to a family that did what was then called “truck farming:” hauling vegetables in from farms and selling them out of the back of bakery trucks. The family later moved on to more rural Hartland and South Lyon, and when Dave was 11 his parents bought him his first heifer. It was then, in a sense, that Lutchka Angus was born.

The “Garden” and Farmstand—“You name it, we’ve got it.”

The Lutchkas run two distinct but very much overlapping operations: the cattle that make up Lutchka Angus, and what they understatedly call Joan’s “garden”—really a mini-farm unto itself. The garden itself is 5 acres of mostly vegetables, including potatoes, onions, asparagus, radishes, cucumbers, green beans, over 15 varieties of peppers...the list continues. There’s also fruit: cantaloupe and watermelon, to name two. “You name it, I’m sure we’ve got it,” laughs Joan. Dave notes that when they heard the nearby St. Louis Boys Center had a new priest from India who “couldn’t find anything hot enough for him [to eat],” the Lutchkas swooped in with their 10 varieties of hot peppers. “That did it for him,” Dave says.

While Joan is unofficially “in charge” of the garden, both of the Lutchkas put in a lot of work on it. That’s because they garden mostly without the aid of herbicides or other chemical inputs (those they do use are organic, such as manure from their cows). Joan is careful to choose disease-resistant strains when she selects seeds



Dave and Joan Lutchka on their farm in Grass Lake.

Lutchka Angus and Farmstand

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from the catalogue each spring, but maintaining the garden still requires a lot of vigilance and hard labor.. Common sense guides much of the work; the single most important element in keeping a garden healthy is getting rid of diseased plants, Joan asserts. Rotating plants—and altering the variety of crops grown each year—also helps. Crop rotation helps balance the soil’s nutrient content, as year after year of planting the same crop in the same place can deprive the soil of essential nutrients (certain crops require more or different types of nutrients than others). It also helps foil insect and disease outbreaks, and deters weeds. Still, Joan and Dave spend a lot of their time weeding. “My daughter once said that if she ever saw one more weed, she’d go crazy,” Joan laughs. “But it’s part of the job. I like to take a cup of coffee and see what’s going on with my plants. Gardening is relaxing for me.”

The garden is productive enough for the Lutchka’s to be self-sustaining food-wise, and for a number of years they were. To this day there are a number of things that Joan won’t buy, such as tomatoes, peaches, and asparagus, preferring the home-grown version. Still, economics dictate they must sell most of what they grow. Like many of the area’s farmers, Joan and Dave sell much of their produce at local farmers markets in Chelsea and Grass Lake, but they also have their own roadside farmstand. The 10-by-20 foot tent that stands in front of their house is open every day in season, roughly July through October. When I note that just running that part of the business must take up a fair amount of time, the Lutchkas inform me that the whole operation is self-serve—customers take what they need and put money in the cash box . The unmonitored self-serve concept may seem a bit foreign to urban dwellers like me, but apparently it works just fine. This summer marks the 11th year of their “roadside market” business. It’s been remarkably successful as a small-scale operation, at least in part because “We have a captive audience here,” Joan notes of their neighbors along Francisco Road.



Over 50 years of Lutchka Angus

2005 marked the 50th year that Dave has raised a herd of Angus cattle, which the American Angus Association has designated

as a Historic Herd. Dave notes that while the basics of raising breeding cattle are much the same, the trade has undergone significant changes during that time. Perhaps the most significant is the advent of artificial breeding, which allowed them to improve the livestock more quickly than would normal selective breeding. Artificial breeding has allowed Dave and Joan to keep a closed herd since 1999, which virtually eliminates the risk of disease that comes with introducing a new animal into the herd. As a result, their beef is certified at the highest quality levels.

Beef farming on a fairly small scale (the Lutchkas keep 50-55 head of cattle each year) requires both intensive land management and problem-solving skills. Dave and Joan say that their methods have changed and grown throughout the years as they gain experience as farmers, exchange ideas on best practices with other farmers and read the latest research. Currently, they use a system of intensive rotational grazing that splits 12-acre fields into 6-acre pasture lots. This allows them to rest pasture for longer periods, retaining nutrients in the grass that would be depleted if grazed more frequently. It also requires a lot of labor, such as the hand-eradication of thistle grass. The younger cattle are fed on hay, which Dave farms (they also grow their own feed corn) and spend the winter in the garden, where their manure fertilizes the soil. Dave sells the majority of the cattle on-farm, or at the Michigan Angus Association’s fall and spring sales.

Raising cattle has moved beyond a money-maker to become a family tradition. One of Dave and Joan’s sons raises cattle in Nebraska, and each of their three grand-

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Traditional, Full-Flavored...and Local

Zingerman's Roadhouse Chef Alex Young makes a commitment to local food

Sarah Cwiek

Walking into Zingerman's Roadhouse, you immediately get the sense that this is a place with a sense of place. The walls are adorned with food items the Roadhouse serves and information on their origins: cheese from the Pleasant Ridge Reserve in Dodgeville, Wisconsin, and Edwards Country Ham from Virginia. All of this serves to remind the customer that food comes from somewhere—and often comes a long way—before it is served up on a restaurant plate. But in the case of the Roadhouse, much of that food hasn't come from very far away at all.

That fact is due in large part to the efforts of James Beard-nominated Chef Alex Young. A California native, Young worked as a chef throughout the country and the world before being invited to open the Roadhouse over four years ago. The fact that the Roadhouse is a Zingerman's operation is no small part of why the operation puts such an emphasis on local food. "Working out of Zingerman's, it's a normal expectation to go across the street to the farmers' market and pick up food," Young says. And just as the original Zingerman's Delicatessen developed strong ties to the Ann Arbor Farmers' Market near Kerrytown, the Roadhouse now supports the Westside Farmers' Market that operates out of its parking lot.

Nonetheless, Young deserves at least some of the credit for the amount of local food the Roadhouse serves up. It's a substantial amount—at least half of the produce served in season. But Young has branched out beyond produce, finding in-state sources to provide the restaurant's eggs, honey, maple syrup, jams, and some chickens. Other meats have been harder to come by, but Young has managed to track down farmers to source local hogs (the Roadhouse specializes in barbeque) and even local goats. Still, Young says the amount of local food served at the Roadhouse is "too small. It should always be more."

In addition to procuring as much local food as possible for the Roadhouse, Young goes a step further: he supplies his own. What began as a garden has blossomed into a mini-farm that specializes in 3 crops:

fire-roasted heirloom red peppers, potatoes, and heirloom tomatoes. The potatoes have been a special project that seems to keep growing; Young put in an acre this year, and plans to get up to 10 eventually. This work has introduced Young to the constant balancing act that is farming, or "trying to square the system with scale," as he puts it. The whole operation is organic, too. "I've learned that balance and diversity are the most important elements in a garden," Young says. All waste from the Roadhouse is composted into fertilizer, and 300 foot rows of potatoes are hoed by hand. "It takes a little bit of insanity and dedication, I guess," he half-jokes.

Working with so much local food requires a few adjustments, some of which Young anticipated from the start, and others that had to be made along the way. He designed the Roadhouse kitchen himself to accommodate more fresh, local fare, and that meant making changes to deal with that food's decreased shelf life. Unlike most restaurant kitchens, the Roadhouse kitchen has a very small storage area for dry goods—mostly things like sugar and coffee that have to be imported from a distance—and 6 walk-in fridges to accommodate fresh and semi-prepared foods. The Roadhouse also started out printing their own menus for about a year, switched to pre-printed menus for cost reasons, but ultimately switched back so that "we can change the menu whenever we want and we aren't forced to buy anything," Young says.

Young notes that making the adjustments to accommodate local food is, like gardening, something that gets easier as you go along. "Getting people to even think about it is the hardest part," he asserts. "How do you convince America's chefs to work that much harder?" Making concessions to seasonality in a temperate climate is something that would be unthinkable for most restaurants, but the Roadhouse makes creative adjustments. They incorporate a lot of seasonal fruit onto the menu: strawberries in the summer, peaches and apples in the fall. Even such a seemingly essential ingredient as tomatoes came off the menu out of season. "I wanted to take off-season tomatoes off the menu for the longest time!" Young says. "Now

Going Local at Zingerman's Roadhouse

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we use them on our burgers and that's it. Nobody's complained. It's fantastic."

Despite the Roadhouse's best efforts to keep things as local as possible, some compromises do have to be made from time to time. Making the restaurant-local farm connection work is something that Young still struggles with. "It's difficult, and it takes time," he says. "I don't work as hard at it as I should." Still, he says that when it comes down to it, with effort and a little creativity on both sides, "It's usually not that hard to get people to supply you food." Strengthening and smoothing out the kinks in the direct farmer-restaurant connection has been the "subject of a lot of debate and discussion over the past 5-10 years," Young says. "It's the customers that will change things, ultimately—not the chefs or the farmer. The demand has to be there. It starts with small groundswells in communities like this one. And we have to come to terms with things like the seasonality of food, and the fact that real food has a shelf life and can be much more expensive."

Widespread acceptance of the caveats that come with "real" food may be a ways off, but Young says that he sees progress, at least on the restaurant side of the demand equation. "The local economy is getting people to think about it more. Whether you

shop at Wal-Mart or the Farmers' Market, people are thinking about where their food dollars are going," he says. "And people are starting to realize that good food, properly produced food, is just much better for people all the way around. Everyone's concerned with some aspect of that now, whether it be the health consequences of eating too much processed food, the environmental consequences of conventional agriculture, or the economic consequences of paying to have our food shipped from a long ways away."

Young's work in procuring local food for the Roadhouse menu, and his own efforts at farming, has given rise to some new ethical commitments. "The more I learn about conventional agriculture and what it's doing to the earth, the more strongly I believe in doing what I'm doing," he says. "How we shop and how we eat currently has serious negative effects on society."

Still, Young's craft is cooking, and when it comes down to it, it's all about the food. "Here [at Zingerman's], we practice what we preach, and what we preach is two things: that food should be traditional, and that it should be full-flavored," he says. "Those are our non-wavering criteria. And the only way you know how good your food is is to know the people who are producing it."

~ Save the Date ~

August 10—Slow Food Huron Valley Dinner in the Vineyard: A Celebration in Support of Terra Madre. This 5 course fundraiser dinner with wine pairings will be held at Lone Oak Vineyard Estate, and is a benefit that will send 3 local farmers, chefs, and producers to the Terra Madre Slow Food world-wide meeting in Turin, Italy. Visit www.sfhv.org for more information

August 12-13—Choices Conference. The Conference that Celebrates Food and Health. Dearborn Inn, Dearborn, MI. For more information, visit: <http://mnn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/Portals/mnn/2008RegPgm.pdf>

August 14—Blues, Brews, and Slow Food BBQ at Greenfield Village. Enjoy mouthwatering BBQ and other summer favorites sourced from local farms. Visit <http://www.thehenryford.org/slowFoodDining.aspx>

September 13-HomeGrown Festival. A celebration of local food including cooking demos, kids activities, food and beverages. Located at Community High School field in Ann Arbor across from the Ann Arbor Farmers' Market. Visit www.homegrownfestival.org for more information.

September 21-Hope's Harvest-A benefit dinner for Growing Hope featuring local chefs and a variety of delicious local food. Visit www.growinghope.net

Lutchka Angus and Farmstand

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children received a heifer when they were born. The proceeds from sale go into a scholarship fund. This reflects much of a family endeavor Lutchka Angus and the farm itself has become. Two of Dave and Joan's three children live just down the road and help out with on-farm labor and transporting goods to the farmer's market.

Dave says that farming on a fairly small scale works for them. Both he and Joan are perfectly happy to keep their business focused on retail sales directly to the customer because "the food is just fresher that way," Dave says. "I don't want to get any bigger or work with distributors. As primarily beef farmers, it suits us to keep things pretty small."

The future of farming

Dave says that his sense of shifting economic trends was part of what spurred him to get involved with FSEP as a Leadership Team member. "I was excited about the idea of an organization that was devoted to supporting local agriculture," he says. "I thought that interest in local food would grow because of rising energy prices—though I never thought they would go as high as fast as they actually have."

Dave and Joan exhibit a quiet but firm environmental ethic in how they farm. They avoid chemical inputs as much as possible, preferring to use organic matter such as cattle manure. Their rotating grazing and cropping systems allow soils time to regenerate and build up organic matter that would be depleted through more intensive use. The Lutchkas say that they foresee a growth in farming practices that emphasize land stewardship, such as no-till farming, in which farmers plant seeds without using a plow to turn the soil. Tilling releases carbon from the soil, hastening erosion and removing carbon-dependent nutrients. Dave also points me to a row of trees lining a ridge on the north side of their property. The trees function as a windbreak, which protects the cows and soil from the wind and



Lutchka cows winter in the garden, where their manure acts as a soil-replenishing fertilizer.

prevents snow from blowing, preserving moisture on the farm.

As much as any single group of people on the planet, farmers are on the front lines of environmental change. They are acutely aware of changing weather patterns and conditions in the natural world that most people would not even look for. Joan says she has noticed small changes: migratory birds arriving earlier in the spring and leaving later in the fall, for example. They have also noticed a trend of high temperatures lasting longer through the summer into the fall, which increases evaporation and reduces soil moisture.

Listening to Dave and Joan talk about farming, it becomes clear to me that farmers understand the intimate interactions of land and economy in ways that relative outsiders (such as myself) have only the barest grasp of. Dave and Joan say they are well-adapted to the farming life, and don't see themselves changing much in the near future. But farming is anything but a static endeavor. Even in the most stable of times, farming requires a kind of calculus, constantly balancing shifting inputs and outputs. But today's farmers, even those like Dave and Joan who farm on a relatively small scale, must respond to unprecedented economic and environmental changes that even the most seasoned farmer might find head-spinning.

Small, mixed-use farms like theirs are increasingly a vanishing breed, but the Lutchkas have no desire to "go big or get out." And as farmers everywhere react to un-

Lutchka Angus and Farmstand

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stable global commodities markets, rising energy costs and environmental change, the kind of farming that Dave and Joan do—fairly small-scale, non-fuel-intensive, doing the vast majority of their own on-farm labor—may allow them to adjust more easily. Such changes may provide the boon for local agriculture that Dave foresaw and spurred his work with FSEP. But however the future pans out, look for the Lutchkas to continue doing things much the same as they always have: producing good food, cultivating relationships with customers, and working to strengthen the local agricultural system as they have for nearly half a century.

Sarah Cwiek is an FSEP intern.

“Good Food, Great Kids”

FSEP Monroe Youth Farmstand Project

Brenda Reau

An exciting new FSEP project is the Monroe County Youth Farmstand Project. The project is a joint collaboration with the Monroe County MSU Extension, the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at Michigan State University, and the Arthur Lesow Community Center. Funding for the project is being provided by the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program and the Monroe County Environmental Fund.



The goal of the project is to teach youth about the food system and give them hands-on experiences in growing and marketing fresh produce. Another goal

of the project is to provide improved access to fresh produce in at-risk neighborhoods.

The project is located at the Arthur Lesow Community Center on the east side of Monroe. Over 30 youth are enrolled in the project and began learning about local foods, nutrition and gardening in March. They have planted twelve raised beds and 20 container gardens with

an array of vegetables and herbs. The gardens are flourishing with guidance from local Master Gardeners.

The youth are a very inspired group who are being led by Allen Russell, MSU Extension Youth Development Volunteer for the project. They have formed a 4-H group called the Green Growers.

In June, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for the public to showcase the opening of the gardens. Over 100 people attended the event, including public officials and neighborhood residents. The youth gave tours of the gardens and talked about the foods they are growing.

On July 17, the farmstand had its official opening and began selling fresh produce, which was very well received in the neighborhood. In addition to what the youth are growing in their gardens, they are sourcing additional produce from local farms to offer for sale. The farm stand will be open on Thursdays from 3 -7 p. m. through the end of August. The farmstand is certified to accept Project FRESH coupons.

FSEP is pleased to have facilitated this expansion of the local food system in Monroe, where the slogan for the project is “Growing good food and great kids.”



Shoppers browse the selection of fresh produce at the Farmstand grand opening.



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FSEP is a non-profit collaboration of urban and rural community and business leaders that exists to catalyze change in the food system of Southeastern Michigan. We provide research, education and outreach with urban and rural partnerships, resulting in agricultural development opportunities, sustainable communities, and healthy local economies. The geographic focus area of FSEP encompasses the five counties of Jackson, Monroe, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties.

FSEP Partner Organizations:

Governments

Jackson County
Lenawee County
Monroe County
Washtenaw County
Wayne County

Farm Business Organizatons

Michigan Coalition of Black Farmers
Michigan Farmers Union
Organic Growers of Michigan

Businesses/Community Organizations

Agrarian Adventure
The Conservation Fund
Detroit Microenterprise Fund
Eat Local Food, LLC

edible WOW

Ecology Center
Food Gatherers
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Slow Food Huron Valley
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