



From the Field

Summer 2009/Vol. 4 No. 2

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

Reflections from the Board Chair

Susan Schmidt

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I sometimes marvel at how FSEP has grown and matured as an organization over the past five years. What began as a gathering of minds in a drafty agricultural building has become a vibrant and robust non-profit that is helping to realize positive change in the regional food system. As a unique start up project we certainly have had our share of opportunities and challenges but our demonstrated progress is a testament to the dedication and talent of our leadership.

Recently we decided that it was the appropriate time to step back to re-evaluate our original strategic plan and vision, so last fall we convened for a team retreat. Frank and purposeful debate, discussion, and celebration ensued as we broke bread and envisioned how to

best go forward in our work to continue catalyzing change in the regional food system. A facilitated visioning process resulted in a prioritized list that will formulate the next phase of actions and activities for our work. A smaller team of Committee Chairs, Board and Project Leaders are currently at work on articulating and consolidating these strategies to guide FSEP into the future. Meanwhile, our "on the ground" outcomes are affecting real and positive results for regional farmers, food businesses and consumers.

This is an exciting crossroads of imagining the future, measuring current progress and learning from past work and experiences. Our state and the Southeast Michigan region are especially on the

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FSEP Leadership Team

Getachew Abate, *MSU Product Center*

Rena Basch, *Locavorious & Ann Arbor Township Clerk*

Ruth Blackburn, *Ecology Center*

Tom Bloomer, *Writer*

Rodger Bowser, *Zingerman's Community of Businesses*

Garry Bulluck, *Wayne County MSU Extension*

Susan Cociarelli, *C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at MSU **

Al Connor, *Michigan Farmers Union*

Larry Gould, *Lenawee County **

Tamara Harmon, *Wayne County **

Robb Harper, *edible WOW*

Rick Katterman

Susan Lackey, *Legacy Land Conservancy*

David Lutchka, *Jackson County **

Jeremy Moghtader, *MSU Student Organic Farm & Agrarian Adventure*

Leslie Mortimer, *21st Century Seeds of Hope*

Brenda Reau, *Monroe County MSU Extension **

Hank Reed, *Michigan Coalition of Black Farmers*

Susan Schmidt, *The Henry Ford **

Mike Score, *Washtenaw County MSU Extension & MSU Product Center **

Matt Shane, *Lenawee County MSU Extension*

Sharon Sheldon, *Washtenaw County Public Health*

Matt Shields, *Michigan Dept. of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth*

Deirdra Stockmann, *PhD Candidate—U-M School of Urban & Regional Planning*

Joan Tobin, *Eat Local Food LLC*

Phil Tocco, *Jackson County MSU Extension*

Ginny Trocchio, *The Conservation Fund*

Anthony VanDerworp, *Washtenaw County Dept of Planning & Environment*

Van Varner, *MSU Extension-Southeast Region*

*denotes FSEP Board of Directors

Staff

Jane Bush, *Business Development Specialist*

Jennifer Fike, *Executive Director*

Michaëlle Rehmann, *Farm to School Program Director*

Interns

Angela Bozell

Stacey Choate

Melissa Karlak

Katherine Westra



Jennifer's Food for Thought...

A message from the Executive Director

Time flies when you're having fun! I can't believe that we're approaching our fourth annual conference and amazed at the progress we've made since the first one. We're delighted that Kamyar Enshayan, Director of the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Energy & Environmental Education will present the keynote address. He will share with us strategies that have been used to connect institutional food buyers to nearby farmers and processors, and how he and others has worked to make locally grown foods more visible and available to the tune of \$2.2 million in institutional purchases from local food and farm businesses. As Michigan continues to struggle economically, we can look to innovative examples like these in Northern Iowa that show how capitalizing on our existing agricultural resources can help to transform the economy.

I'm constantly impressed by the dedication and commitment of the FSEP Leadership Team members. These volunteers spend countless hours assisting the organization by providing leadership and vision for the creation of a sustainable, regional food system. We've been working on the first strategic plan for FSEP and though the plan is not yet final, here are a few highlights. Through our experience with the Farm to School program, we've learned that the supply of local food is not keeping up with demand. One way we will work to change this problem is by helping those who are interested in farming obtain the skills necessary to be successful. Another goal of ours is to expand the Farm to School program into all of five counties that we serve with plans to serve additional institutions including universities and community colleges, restaurants, hospitals, nursing homes, food banks, and other institutional buyers. These are just a few of the plans we have in the works for the next few years. As we strive to achieve these goals, we hope that you'll be a part of our success. Contact the FSEP office to learn about ways to become involved in your local food system.

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 southeastern 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.

Bizzy Lizzy Bakery Goes to School

Michaelle Rehmann

Bizzy Lizzy Bakery owners, Sheila Rae and Erik Olson got their start making nutritious and delicious cookies when they noticed their son was repeatedly heading off to school without breakfast. Concerned about his health and well being Sheila and Erik who have worked in food service for a number of years, headed off to the kitchen and created a cookie that meets nutritional serving requirements from both the bread and protein groups. The healthy and flavorful cookies are flourless and feature flax seed and oatmeal, as well as, delicious fruits and vegetables, many of which are Michigan grown.

Concord Community Schools Food Service Director Alan Breneman, who has made a commitment to serving fresh, local foods in his school meals program, first met Erik and Sheila at a “Meet and Greet” event in January hosted by FSEP and Jackson County MSU Extension. During the meeting Sheila spent a few minutes talking about the cookies, which are a meal in themselves, while Erik shared samples of several different flavors. Intrigued by the quality and flavor of the cookies, Alan followed up with Bizzy Lizzy Bakery to see how he could incorporate the product into his school meals program. He first tested the cookies during a staff meeting in March and received positive feedback, which provided the encouragement he needed to try them with the students.

Early one morning in May, Alan highlighted the cookies by having Sheila offer taste testing to parents and students during a Mother’s Day event. The response

from both parents and students alike was positive and the following Monday, Concord Community Schools began highlighting the cookies as part of the school breakfast program. Parents are delighted that their students have the opportunity to eat a healthy, delicious breakfast that will keep their children full and help them pay attention in class until lunchtime. They also like that the cookie is purchased from a Michigan company and includes local ingredients. Students like the flavors and variety the cookies offer and the single serving packaging makes grab and go easy in the morning. The partnership with Concord Community Schools and Bizzy Lizzy Bakery reiterates the commitment Breneman has made in supporting his community through purchasing from local businesses and farmers.

FSEP is delighted with the success of Bizzy Lizzy Bakery and is pleased that their quality product meets the needs of school meal programs that seek to increase healthy, nutritious options for their students. To learn more about



Concord Schools Mother’s Day Tasting Event

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Bizzy Lizzy Bakery Goes to School

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Concord Community Schools and their commitment to fresh, local food in their school meal program go to www.ccs.k12.mi.us or contact Alan Breneman at brenemana@ccs.k12.mi.us or (517) 524-8131. To learn more about Bizzy Lizzy Bakery and their delicious, nutritious products, visit www.bizzylizzybakery.com or contact Sheila Rae at: sheilarae@bizzylizzybakery.com or (517) 610-1467. You can also attend the FSEP conference where Sheila and Erik will present information about their business during a break-out session.

Michaëlle Rehmann is the FSEP Farm to School Program Director.



Sheila Rae displaying Bizzy Lizzy Cookies at Mother's Day event

Reflections

Susan Schmidt

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cus of a new economic reality. FSEP recognizes the critical importance of the food system as a social and economic driver. As our staff and Leadership Team continues our work, we remain dedicated to sustaining FSEP as an innovative and collaborative organization within the agricultural sector of Michigan's emerging new economy.

Susan Schmidt is the FSEP Board Chair and the Director of Food Service and Catering at The Henry Ford (Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum).



Remember June 18th is the FSEP Annual Conference!

Farm to Food Service: Michigan Department of Corrections Food Service Provides Economic Opportunity for Local Growers

Michaëlle Rehmman

Having grown up on a farm in rural Jackson County, Michigan Department of Corrections Region III Food Service Administrator Denise Worden knows firsthand the challenges of keeping a farm viable. That's why she has taken Governor Granholm's challenge to *BUY LOCAL* to heart. At first things started small and slow with the food service incorporating potatoes grown by DuRussell Farms in Manchester into the weekly menu. But now, nearly a year later Region III kitchens have standardized their menus allowing them to order consistent quantities of potatoes, collard greens, cabbage, onions, radishes, sweet corn and winter squash from local farmers.

These local foods will represent more than five million pounds of produce this year from Southeast Michigan farmers and invest thousands of dollars into our communities. But that's not all, by purchasing locally, Region III saved more than

\$250,000 on the cost of purchasing food in the fourth quarter of 2008. In a time when money is tight and budgets are shrinking, this is music to Worden's ears. Not only has she been responsible with taxpayers money, she has also invested the money in our communities, which is great news for a struggling state such as Michigan. Commitments like the one Ms. Worden has made to purchase locally are what help build the state's economy, helping our Agricultural Industry continue to grow.

So how did the kitchens in Region III do it? By developing strong relationships with area farmers and a four week cyclical menu in which locally grown produce is featured daily. This allows them to order the



same quantity each week and provides the farmer with the consistency and stability he needs. Using potatoes as an example,

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

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Farm to Food Service

Michaelle Rehmman

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Region III serves them in a variety of ways such as mashed, baked, cut into French fries, sliced into chips, shredded for hash browns or diced for potato salad. The staff is able to keep their meals interesting while using the same core ingredients.

Now that they have figured out some of the logistical challenges, Worden and her staff will continue to incorporate more locally grown produce and products from Michigan companies such as Dawn Food Products and Jiffy Mix into the weekly menus. But, the good things don't stop there. Worden is encouraging other Regions of Department of Corrections to follow suit and Michigan State Industries Area Manager Dale Baum is helping look at ways to leverage their buying power to help soup kitchens, food pantries and schools procure more locally grown produce into their meal programs. FSEP's Business Innovation & Networking Committee Members will be working with Worden and Baum in the coming months as they continue to catalyze change in the food system of Southeast Michigan.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact Michaëlle Rehmman, FSEP Farm to School Program Director at rehmannm@ewashtenaw.org or (734) 222-3817.



Meet the Summer 2009 FSEP Interns



Angie Bozell is going into her junior year at the University of Michigan and is studying the environment. This summer Angie will be focusing specifically on the FSEP Farm to School program. She grew up in suburban Detroit and is very excited to be part of the farm to school team. Eating less meat and going to local farmers' markets in Detroit are two food related initiatives that she participates in. Aside from her interest in the environment, Angie enjoys running, swimming, and playing sports.



Melissa Karlak is a student at Schoolcraft Community College. She has worked with a variety of organizations, from food banks in Sacramento to Katrina recovery projects along the Gulf. Next summer she will be traveling to Nepal to work in an orphanage for several months. After completing her prerequisites at Schoolcraft, Melissa plans to transfer to the University of Michigan School of Nursing. She became involved with FSEP through U of M's Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program. Her role as an intern will be to assemble an agricultural report card for the five county FSEP region, so that farmers, planners, policy makers and others can understand the health of the agriculture industry in their area.



Katie Westra is going into her senior year at the University of Michigan and is pursuing a concentration in economics and U.S. history. She is originally from Portland, Maine but lives for most of the year in Ann Arbor. Her hobbies include cooking, running, and being outdoors. She just recently became interested in local economies and food systems and is excited to learn more from her experiences as an FSEP intern.

Farm Profile

Back Forty Acres

Katherine Westra

Back Forty Acres is a family operated farm located in Chelsea Michigan, on a picturesque dirt road a couple miles from old US-12. The farm is run by the Doll family, which consists of Larry and Kevin Doll, their wives Stephanie and DeAnn, and Kevin's sons Nick and Ben, who all bring unique talents to the team. While Back Forty Acres is a relatively new enterprise, the farmland has a long history for the family. Simeon Weber, great-great grandfather of the Doll brothers, bought the land in 1864 and it has been in the family ever since.



Larry and Stephanie Doll of Back Forty Acres in Chelsea

The Doll brothers grew up on the farm, but it was not until a few years ago that they decided to make it their business. Kevin Doll decided to take something he had already been doing for friends and family, and do it on a larger scale. He approached Larry and Stephanie with the idea and Back Forty Acres was born. Since then, the farm has expanded in response to demand and continues to change and grow.

“One– Stop Shop”

When I went to visit the 180 acre farm, on a beautiful late-afternoon in May, Larry and Stephanie graciously gave me the grand tour. The tour felt like a whirlwind because Back Forty Acres is doing so much. The best way to describe the farm comes from the words of Larry and Stephanie, who described it as a “one-stop shop” for meat. Back Forty Acres carries a wide range of meat products, including pasture-raised broiler chickens, turkeys and ducks, stewing hens, grass-fed lambs and goats, pork, and rabbit. They also collect about 220 eggs a day, including a variety of blue eggs that look like painted Easter eggs and come from the Ameraucana breed of chickens. In addition to raising many different types of animals, Back Forty Acres also carries a variety of different breeds, including several heritage breeds, which expand their selection even more.

While Back Forty Acres can sell their eggs, chicken, turkey, duck, and rabbit at local farmers’ markets, they sell the rest of their products through “on farm” sales. Customers can order either a half or a whole animal and specify what cuts of meat they would like. Buying meat directly from the farmer can require certain adjustments in the way that consumers think about their food. Just like with local produce, consumers have to think seasonally. Eggs are available all year round, but animals reach maturity at different points within the year. In addition, while the Doll’s can estimate when products will be available, there is always a level of uncertainty with smaller scale farming. However, with a little planning ahead and a measure of flexibility, customers can easily reap the many benefits of buying meat locally. Back Forty Acres has many loyal customers who have been steadfast despite the recent economic downturn. For example, this

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Farm Profile

Back Forty Acres

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year Back Forty Acres had one family buy five whole goats.

Besides their wide variety of products, Back Forty Acres has a great deal of other qualities worth highlighting. They do not have an official organic designation because the value added would be small, but they raise all of their animals naturally and ethically. For example, the goats and sheep are raised in a large pasture on a “salad bar” of different grasses and legumes that the Doll’s have planted without any chemical fertilizer and once the weather permits, they free range their laying hens as well. Back Forty Acres is also experimenting with sustainable methods wherever possible, including a hoop house designed for their laying hens with rabbit cages hanging above the ground. The hens scratching through the straw and droppings create a rich compost. Natural methods, sustainability, and humane treatment of the animals are all major tenets of their vision for Back Forty Acres.



Larry Doll in the hoop house where rabbit cages hang above the ground, a sustainable farming practice.

Heritage Breeds

Another unique aspect about Back Forty Acres is their effort to raise heritage breeds. Commercial farmers typically offer one breed of livestock that are bred to grow fat quickly. As a result, some of the more unique breeds of livestock are at risk of dying out. By raising heritage breeds, farms like Back Forty Acres promote biodiversity and offer customers variety and taste that they cannot find elsewhere.

The first stop on my tour of the farm was the pig pen, where the Dolls raise Tamworth pigs. They have three gilts for breeding and one boar. Tamworths are on the American Livestock Breed Conservancy’s list of threatened livestock, so by raising and breeding these pigs, Back Forty Acres is part of the effort to revive them. According to the ALBC’s website, Tamworths grow more slowly, making them less desirable for commercial farming. The same goes for their heritage turkeys they raise for Thanksgiving. Farmers that choose to raise heritage breeds say this extra time is well worth the effort.

Heritage breeds, sustainability, and natural farming techniques are just a few of the good things that Back Forty Acres is doing but the bottom line is, Back Forty Acres provides a high quality, tasteful product. Larry and Stephanie testify that it is hard for them to eat at restaurants because the food simply doesn’t taste as good as the food they produce themselves. In addition, buying food from their farm is an experience that allows the customer to restore the connection between their food and where it comes from. At the end of my tour, the Dolls sent me home with two dozen eggs that came from the hoop house I visited and I can confirm that they make for delicious omelets.

For more information about Back Forty Acres visit www.backfortyacres.com.

Katherine Westra is an intern for FSEP and a student at the University of Michigan studying economics.

Farm to School: Programs Continue to Grow in Southeast Michigan

Michaelle Rehmann



This spring FSEP's Farm to School Program continued to grow as we began working with school districts in Wayne County and the City of Detroit. Food Service Directors across the region are looking at Farm to School as a way to expose their students to locally grown fruits and vegetables, as well as, an opportunity to reiterate the lessons of social responsibility and good nutrition that are being taught in their classrooms.

In the Taylor School District, Food Service Director Debbie Burris and her staff seek to highlight the bounty of spring by offering students the opportunity to taste fresh, crisp salad greens and pea pods. The district serves

nearly 4,500 lunches per day, representing at least 300 pounds of locally grown salad greens. Just one purchase translates into 750 food dollars remaining right here in Southeast Michigan. When considering the multiplier effect of money spent in our communities, just one purchase of local salad greens by the school has an estimated impact of \$5,250 to \$6,750! At the same time Burris has made a commitment to incorporating locally grown fruits and vegetables into the school meal program, the parents, teachers and staff at Blair Moody Elementary School have been busy this spring building a Hoop House on the school grounds.

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FSEP Business Planning Services Can Help Your Farm Business



FSEP is pleased to provide business planning services to farmers and food system entrepreneurs. Funded by the State of Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth's Michigan Regional Skills Alliance (MiRSA[®]) program, FSEP offers these services to help jump start your new (or existing) agriculture venture. Jane Bush, FSEP's Business Development Specialist is happy to help you with the business planning process. As owner of AppleSchram Orchard which produces apple products like cider, applesauce, and apple butter, as well as other value-added farm products, Bush knows the importance of diversifying production and creating products for the local market. AppleSchram Orchard was the first certified organic apple orchard in Michigan and also produces pasture-raised pork products. Bush also has experience in hoop house production, distribution, and the formation of cooperatives.

Please call Jane Bush at (517) 231-2240 or email her at bushj@ewashtenaw.org to schedule an appointment.

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Just down the road at Lincoln Park Public Schools, Food Service Director Mark Rodriguez is excited about the opportunity to highlight locally grown food this summer through the districts summer feeding program. By starting in the summer, not only will students have access to a variety of fruits and vegetables, the district staff will also learn which adjustments need to be made in their kitchens to accommodate fresh, whole un-cut fruits and vegetables during the school year when they serve 1,000 meals per day from one kitchen.

But Farm to School interest is not limited to just these two school districts in Wayne County as interested parties in the City of Detroit are busy laying the groundwork for charter and public schools to become a part of this growing movement. Urban Farmers Leslie Huffman and Cornellius Williams of Vandalia Gardens have been encouraging the staff at University Prep Academy to incorporate more fresh fruits and vegetables. The relationship between the school and farmers is somewhat natural as Huffman's children attend UPrep. Recognizing that UPrep has made substantial changes to the school lunch menu over the past year and has a commitment from both parents and staff to provide healthy, nutritious food to their students, Farm to School seemed like a logical next step for the charter school group to pursue. In the coming months, FSEP will be providing encouragement and support to this district as they begin to develop a Farm to School program.

Across town, Mandell Crawford, Chef and owner of Touch of Class Catering has expressed an interest in working with area farmers to provide students of Nsorma Institute, Aiesha Shule, W.E.B. DuBois and Timbuktu Charter Schools

with locally grown vegetables. Crawford is looking forward to the opportunity to provide his students with a greater variety of fresh fruits and vegetables as they become available this spring, summer and fall.



FSEP Farm to School Program Director, Michaelle Rehmann

Finally, FSEP will be working this summer with parents, teachers and community members interested in helping Detroit Public Schools (DPS) enter the Farm to School movement. Through partnerships with organizations such as Greening of Detroit, Warren Conner CDC, Vanguard CDC, Next Detroit Neighborhood Initiative, and Wayne County MSU Extension we will be developing programming and working with schools and community gardens to help tie locally grown produce into the school meal program.

In the coming months FSEP will provide technical support and assistance to both food service directors and farmers as these programs begin to take shape. We are excited about the growing interest and opportunity within Farm to School and look forward to a busy and productive summer. To learn more about how you can get involved, contact Michaelle Rehmann, FSEP Farm to School Program Director at (734) 222-3817 or at rehmannm@ewashtenaw.org.

~ *Save the Date* ~

June 13– Women’s Farm and Garden Association 2009 Garden Walk. This year’s walk includes the Agrarian Adventure and Growing Hope Education Center. Proceeds from the walk benefit Phase II of the Agrarian Adventure at Tappan Middle School. Visit www.annarborfarmandgarden.org for ticket information.

June 16– Local Food Fair at the Ann Arbor Summer Festival. Think Local First! is hosting a local foods educational tent open to the public. FSEP will be participating with other partners. Michigan League on Ingalls Mall (North Tent), Ann Arbor, MI. For more information visit www.thinklocalfirst.net

June 18– Food System Economic Partnership Annual Conference. LISD Tech Center. Adrian, Michigan. Early registration date is June 1st. Visit www.fsepmichigan.org

June 30– July 1– Food Med 2009: Third Annual Conference on Healthy Food in Healthcare. MGM Grand Hotel. Detroit, MI. Visit www.foodmed.org

September 12—HomeGrown Festival. Ann Arbor Farmers’ Market, Ann Arbor, MI. 5-10:00 p.m. Visit www.homegrownfestival.org.

Chicken and Dumplings

Back Forty Acres Recipe

1 Stewing Hen

1 medium onion, roughly chopped

2 qts water

2 tsp salt

1/8 tsp pepper

1 cup potatoes, diced

1 cup celery, chopped

1 cup carrots, diced

6 T flour

Chicken

Cut chicken into pieces and put in a Crockpot. Add onion, water, salt & pepper. Cook for about 8 hours until meat falls off the bones.

Remove chicken & bones from the Crockpot with a slotted spoon. Take meat off the bones, discard the skin, bones, and grizzly parts. Chop meat. Put stock from the Crockpot and meat into a Dutch oven. Bring mixture to a boil.

Dissolve flour in about 1/2 cup warm water. Whisk flour mixture into the stew, making a gravy. Add potatoes, celery & carrots. Simmer until vegetables are tender.

Dumplings

Buy local Jiffy All Purpose Baking mix and make their dumpling recipe!



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We are on the web!

fsep-michigan.org

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
State of Michigan—DELEG

Farm Business Organizations

Michigan Coalition of Black Farmers
Michigan Farmers Union

Businesses/Community Organizations

Agrarian Adventure
The Conservation Fund
Eat Local, LLC
edible WOW
Ecology Center
The Henry Ford
Lenawee Economic Development Corp.
Legacy Land Conservancy
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21st Century Seeds of Hope
Zingerman's Community of Businesses

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