



Marketing Potential for Local Producer to Restaurants in Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw and Wayne Counties



Executive Summary

The following report outlines information gathered from personal interviews, focus groups of which ten restaurant owners, managers and chefs participated in, and surveys sent to 500 restaurants in the five counties. In addition, a literary review and analysis of programs throughout the United States was conducted to provide a background from which an economic development plan can be derived.

Focus Groups and Surveys Indicate

Obstacles restaurants in the five counties face in purchasing locally include:

- Lack of knowledge about product availability
- Not knowing how to find farmers
- Inconsistent pricing
- Not enough product to meet demand
- Delivery difficulties
- Lack of consumer education



Those who are purchasing locally indicated they do so because they get a better tasting product, and have a personal desire to support local agriculture. Many respondents indicated they desired a personal relationship with the farmers and felt a sense of responsibility to the community.

Similar Research Has Found

Similar studies conducted by Iowa State University, Michigan Land Use Institute, University of Massachusetts Lowell and University of Nebraska found:

Obstacles facing farmers:

- Not knowing how to market product
- Lack of understanding pricing
- Difficulty finding new customers
- Lack of dependable market

Obstacles facing restaurants:

- Lack of consistent supply
- Lack of knowledge about products
- Time consuming – too many farmers
- Higher price of products





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What Others Are Doing

To overcome barriers, non-profit groups such as The Vermont Fresh Network, Farm to Chef Express in New York, New Hampshire Farm to Restaurant Connection, and Hancock County Buy Local Eat Fresh Campaign in Maine have formed. These organizations assist with supporting the farm to restaurant relationship by:

- Providing marketing avenues
- Establishing delivery routes
- Taking orders from restaurants
- Distributing product availability lists
- Create avenues for networking
- Sponsor dinners at restaurants using local products
- Host farm tours
- Promote consumer education on importance of buying locally.



Photo: farmtochefexpress.org

Opportunity

Research indicates that a support network is needed in Southeast Michigan, which will link farmers to local restaurants. This group can provide guidance, networking opportunities, marketing and distribution capabilities to enhance the economic potential of the farm to restaurant relationship. As manufacturing jobs continue to decline in the region, it is increasingly important to find new and innovative ways to stimulate the economy. Supporting the farm to restaurant connection will result in a larger portion of the food dollar staying in the local economy, where its benefits will impact the entire community.

