Cornell Economic Development Administration (EDA)
University Center

Milestone Report

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Cornell EDA University Center Projects: 2007-2008

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Catch That Bus: Reverse Commute Challenges Facing Low-Income Inner-City Residents of Onondaga County

Principal Investigators: Maralyn Edid and Yael Levitte

Job sprawl – the movement of jobs from the center city to surrounding suburbs – is a post-World War II phenomenon that afflicts most metropolitan areas in the United States. Decentralization of employment tends to accompany the spread of residential housing and reflects a similar preference for avoiding the economic, environmental, and social costs associated with inner-city living. But the ability of low-income, inner-city residents to access suburban jobs is limited by lack of adequate transportation, both public and private. In short, “reverse commuting” is a challenge that bedevils workers, job seekers, employers, and policymakers, alike.

Although the journey to work is almost always made by car, millions of people travel to and from work via public transit. Low-income city residents with jobs in the suburbs face the most daunting transportation challenges. Transit systems have not adapted well to job sprawl, and low-income workers who fill the entry-level jobs in services, hospitality, retail, and warehousing that sustain the suburban economy often struggle to get to work. Making matters worse, many of these jobs require attendance during off-peak and weekend hours, exactly the times when public transit options are limited or non-existent.

Onondaga County has long been aware of weak links in its public transit system. Two comprehensive reports assessing the needs of residents, including people moving from welfare to work and other low-income individuals, and recommending service improvements were completed in 1999 and 2001. The current report was motivated by employers’ expressed concern about labor shortages for entry-level positions in the suburbs and outlying city neighborhoods.

For this project, we reviewed the literature on reverse commuting and conducted focus group interviews with Syracuse residents who work outside the city core. We confined our research to occupations within three industries that employ low-wage workers: food service and housekeeping in the health services and hospitality industries, health aides in the health services industry, and stocking and packing workers in the warehousing industry. Through the efforts of the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, three employers (one from each industry, each with facilities in different geographic areas) allowed us either to convene on-site focus groups or talk to workers individually during shift change. In all, we spoke with 30 workers and obtained background information from three supervisors and one transportation planner.

Transportation Obstacles

- **Limited service at non-standard times.** Chief among the complaints voiced by workers is limited or no service on the weekend and at night. Although Centro, the operating company that organizes and manages the public transit system in the county, augmented Sunday service several years ago, workers claim that Saturday buses run less frequently than during the week and that Sunday service is even more limited. This is a sore point for most of the workers in the focus groups because for them, weekend shifts are the norm. The situation is no better for those working evening shifts. On some routes service dwindles from hourly during the day to every two hours in the evening; all buses are off the road at 12:30am. But coverage is required 24/7 in many health services positions, and hotels with banquet services must staff events that may run past midnight.
• **Out-of-synch schedules.** Bus schedules that do not mesh with shift times, even during traditional work hours, is another source of irritation. Few workers at the warehouse we visited use public transit because the first shift starts before buses are back on the road for the day and the second shift ends too late.

• **Off-schedule and off-route buses.** Buses sometimes arrive early, late, or not at all; the erratic appearance of buses is a topic that evoked lots of commentary during focus group meetings. Workers also complained about buses that veer off the assigned route for no apparent reason.

• **Inconvenient bus stops.** Inconveniently located bus stops require workers to hike long distances to work, to wait for buses at isolated stops, or to cross busy roadways that lack sidewalks or traffic lights.

**Recommendations**
This study did not set out to delineate specific route improvements based on needs and preferences expressed by workers. Instead, we offer general recommendations that could advance the shared interests of transit planners, economic development officials, employers, and employees.

**For transit planners**
1. Coordination among transportation service providers (public, private, and non-profit) to establish a cost-effective system that would offer more frequent bus service during shift changes, on weekends, and at night.

2. Creation of alternate transit arrangements, such as vanpools, that would be jointly supported by employers, employees, and Centro.

3. Fresh evaluation of service recommendations offered by Bergmann Associates and consideration of new routes that would efficiently connect areas of concentrated employment with residential enclaves.

4. Follow-up evaluation of individuals who participated in Rides to Work Program: e.g., Are they still working? How do they get to work and back?

**For transit company**
5. Pick-up and drop-off points that are safe and more proximate to work sites, especially in areas with concentrated employment.

6. Buses that stick to their assigned schedules and routes.

7. Outreach to employers about transportation issues and initiatives that would benefit their operations as well as their employees (including, but not limited to, the Fare Deal program and helping employees arrange carpools).

**For employers**
8. Coordination of shift times in areas of concentrated employment to ensure more bus riders and make it financially feasible for Centro to add service.
New York Angels Network (NYAN)

Submitted by Roger Williams

Background
The original purpose of this project was to explore the need for an upstate NY regional network consisting of angel funding groups. Angel funding groups are organized groups of individual investors (angels) who invest primarily in startup companies at the very early stages of business development known as “seed” or “early stage”. The Angel Capital Association, a national organization for individual investors, estimates that angel investors provide 90% of the capital for these nascent companies and that the amount invested nationally is $22 billion per year.

The geographic focus of the project was originally proposed as upstate including Western NY, the Finger Lakes Region, Central NY, Northern NY, the Southern Tier and the Capitol Region. Other regions and groups were identified throughout the state so the decision was made early on to include all New York angel groups. Eight groups were identified: one each in Albany, Buffalo, Orange County, Long Island, Duchess County and New York City with two in Rochester. Additionally, two groups were forming in Syracuse and Binghamton and have been included in the network – now named the New York Angel Network (NYAN).

Actions Previously Reported (6/07)

• An organizational meeting held in Cortland, NY in March 2007 – 30 attendees from across the state.

• The name of the network is New York Angel Network (NYAN) and the mission is to encourage communication, collaboration and education on a state-wide basis.

• A Steering Committee was set up to initially include a representative from each of the eight organized angel group in NY (including the two groups currently being established).

• The New York Angels, the regional Angel group in New York City, offered to host a website for the New York Angel Network.

• AngelSoftLLC, a NYC based developer of software for the angel investment market, has agreed to provide copies of their software to each of the regional angel groups in order to help facilitate the communication and collaboration aspects of the NYAN program.

The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held in Syracuse in June 2007 and it was decided to collect information from all the angel funding groups to make a composite of organized angel investment. In addition, the Committee decided to concentrate in the area of collaborative co-investment since this was identified as the area that would provide the most valuable networking opportunities. In addition, the Steering Committee agreed that the organization of NYAN should be kept “virtual” with no formal infrastructure and low operating costs so as not to duplicate other state-wide efforts.
Activities in Current Reporting Period (6/07 - 6/08)

- Eight existing angel groups were surveyed in order to quantify their investments. In 2006, they invested a total of $16.47 Million in 17 high-technology, high-growth startup companies. The range of investment is from $350,000 to $4,000,000, with the majority of the investments in the range of $350 – 400,000. The range of investment by individual angel investors in these groups varies from $25000 - 500000, with the majority of investors in the range of $25 - 50,000.

- Three angel groups were added to NYAN during this period: The Seed Capital Fund of Central New York was formed by 42 individual investors who have invested $37.5 apiece to form a managed fund (based in Syracuse). The Southern Tier Opportunity Coalition (STOC) formed an Angel Investment Network with over 25 individual investors from Broome County. The BR Ventures group, a student-run investment fund sponsored by the Johnson School at Cornell University, joined NYAN as a representative from Tompkins County.

- Since BR Ventures has become a member of NYAN, discussion has been centered on the educational opportunities that might be available through NYAN that would benefit NYAN members as well as the students in BR Ventures. The opportunity to do “real-world” technology idea assessment and due diligence for investors are currently under review.

- Eleven representatives from NYAN member groups attended a steering committee meeting in Syracuse in May 2008.

- Forty members of three angel groups (Seed Capital Fund of Central New York, Southern Tier Opportunity Coalition – Angel Investment Network, and Orange County Capital Development Corp.) attended a meeting in Cortland in May 2008. Sue Strommer, president of the National Association of Seed and Venture Funds (NASVF) presented a “state of the industry” view of angel and venture capital investment from a national perspective.

The long term expected outcome of this project would be to provide a resource that will enable individual investors to use their capital and business experience to develop emerging technology companies. By initiating and supporting dialogue among regional funding groups, the likelihood of finding investors and companies that will develop in New York State is enhanced. Companies could benefit from a more efficient process for accessing angel funds and from a more standardized set of terms. Investors could benefit from expanded investment opportunities and from educational opportunities to improve their decision-making process. The deliverables from this first phase of the project were to determine the need for the network and the direction that will best suit the diverse interests of the communities. The creation and development of NYAN fulfills the criteria established in the initial EDA grant. Additional funding and in-kind match have been provided by the New York State Science and Technology Investment Fund and by the Cornell Center for Life Science Enterprise
Survey of NYS Planning Board Members

Submitted by David Kay

Data collected on an occasional basis by the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources has suggested that municipalities have, over the past decade and a half, increasingly adopted significant planning tools including comprehensive plans, zoning, planning boards, site plan review and subdivision regulations. However, because the nature and content of these tools can be quite variable little beyond increased adoption rates is known quantitatively about the significance of this development.

Following up on a survey implemented five years previously, in 2007-2008 we conducted a survey of a representative stratified random sample of planning board chairmen and women in the state’s cities, towns and villages. Like the previous survey, this one explored many questions about board training practices and needs. Unlike the previous survey, this one also focused in on the content, utilization and importance of comprehensive planning in routine planning board practice.

Key results showed near-universal awareness of the mandatory training law that went into effect in 2007, and strong interest in the availability of additional training opportunities. In most but not all municipalities with comprehensive plans, the plans served as an active guide for land use decisions. For example, early half of respondents said they had read or examined part of the plan three or more times in the previous year. Similarly, about four-fifths of respondents felt that existing zoning was mostly or completely consistent with the comprehensive plan – as mandated by state law.

Most board chairs also report high levels of satisfaction with their Board’s abilities to fulfill their basic functions. These and other results suggest that in most but not all municipalities, the practice of planning is fairly healthy.

The survey was endorsed by the NY Planning Federation, Association of Towns, Legislative Commission on Rural Resources and Conference of Mayors. They along with state agencies like DOS who work with the state’s planning community, have endorsed the work in part because they intend to use the survey results to help calibrate their training, policy and outreach efforts.
P4P Regional Action Plan

Submitted by Rod Howe

The Cornell EDA University Center became involved in the development of a regional economic development plan for a 13 county area of New York State. The overall goal is to build a regional alliance that will foster a knowledge based regional economy and that will attract, retain and develop talent.

From the Fall of 2007 through the Summer of 2008 the focus was on regional alliance development which include regional listening sessions, educations webinars, research and data analysis. The collaboration of Cornell University, Three Rivers Development, P4P representatives and the EDA University Center resulted in the development of an action plan. A newly formed P4P Leadership team will oversee the implementation of the recommended strategies.

Cornell Team

Cornell as a land grant university is committed to working with New York State regions to develop innovative economies, livable communities, and collaborative governance through a focus on learning, innovation, and shared leadership.

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The Cornell Team worked under the leadership of Ron Seeber, Vice Provost for Land Grants Affairs and Steve Johnson, Vice President for Government and Community Relations and was comprised of:

- **Warren Brown**, Director, Program on Applied Demographics
- **Susan Christopherson**, Director, City and Regional Planning
- **Laura Cima**, Economic Development Manager, Cornell Center for Technology Enterprise and Commercialization
- **Rod Howe**, Assistant Director for Cornell Cooperative Extension and Executive Director for the Community and Rural Development Institute
- **Ryan Legg**, Program Manager, Center for Sustainable Global Enterprise
- **Yael Levitte**, Senior Research Associate, School of Industrial and Labor Relations

The following are the building blocks for the regional action plan:

1. Analysis of the contemporary regional economy and identification of which industries have competitive and/or comparative advantage as well as exploration and identification of possible new industry clusters.

2. Analysis of the work force and trends affecting the formation and deployment of skilled labor.

3. Analysis of knowledge economy-oriented regional economic development models to provide concepts of best practice, policy innovation and bench-marking.

4. Education, training and listening forums.
Executive Summary

August 2008

Katherine Lang • Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman
This report is a product of the North Country Regional Foods Initiative (NCRFI), a one-year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension associations of northern NY (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University. The full report, including Sections I-IV and appendices is available online at: nnyregionallocalfoods.org.

Acknowledgements:
The authors would like to thank local Cornell Cooperative Extension collaborators on this project, specifically Bernadette Logozar, Anita Deming, Rosalind Cook, Amy Ivy, and Dolores DeSalvo for their time and efforts collecting information for the research component of the Initiative along with their input during the write up and review of this report. Also, the authors thank Executive Directors Clive Chambers, Richard Halpin, Michele Ledoux, Amy Ivy, Anita Deming and Nancy Welch and Northern NY Regional Agriculture Program Coordinator R. David Smith for their support. Rod Howe and Duncan Hilchey at CaRDI have provided invaluable assistance with research and programming suggestions as well as administrative supervision. Todd Schmit, with Cornell’s Department of Applied Economics and Management also provided useful perspective regarding the scope of the project early on. Finally, key to this entire research endeavor are the farmers, food entrepreneurs and organizational representatives who gave generously of their time, shared their experiences, and through thoughtful insight, have helped us to better understand the role, contributions, and potential of local and regional foods in the Adirondack-North Country.

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I. Executive Summary

A. The North Country Regional Foods Initiative and its Research Component

This report is a product of the North Country Regional Foods Initiative (NCRFI), a one-year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country region and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. Project components included research, training, outreach, and network development targeted to farmers, consumers, community and economic development professionals, and local legislators in the region. The information presented herein documents the research component of the NCRFI. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension associations of northern NY (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University. Funding for the Initiative was provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration University Center, designated in New York State as Cornell University and hosted by CaRDI.

Although we recognize that “local” and “regional” food systems are not necessarily the same thing and in many, if not most, cases are very different, we couple the words “local” and “regional” herein and throughout the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region for the following reasons: (1) Given the relative size of the Adirondack-North Country region, even a regional food system is relatively local, particularly in comparison to regional foodsheds that encompass multiple states (e.g. the Northeast Region); (2) Many communities in Northern NY border another state or another country, for people living in these communities, depending on whether or not “local” and “regional” are defined by distance or political boundaries, a distance that is local is literally local and regional at the same time (e.g.: When a NY consumer purchases apples from a Canadian orchard 12 miles away, it is a local purchase in terms of distance, though a regional purchase in terms of political boundaries.); and (3) An overarching goal of the NCRFI is to cultivate a regional approach to economic and community development - this goal is based on the understanding that communities conserve resources and gain assets by working together regionally. However, shifting from a “local” to a “regional” approach is not necessarily intuitive; by coupling “local” and “regional” we hope to cultivate a paradigm shift, one in which one's locality is seen in regional terms.

The NCRFI and, in particular, the research documented in this report reflect a recognition, on the part of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations’ in the Adirondack-North Country, of the need to: (1) identify and better understand their region’s changing food and agricultural landscape, specifically a growing interest in production for local and regional food markets and the internal and external opportunities and challenges associated with these changes for agricultural producers and communities; and (2) to begin to develop a baseline by which we can monitor and evaluate these changes.

B. Research Goals and Methodology

This research was specifically designed to explore:

1. How local/regional food production and marketing in the Adirondack-North Country impacts agricultural production and farm profitability;

2. How local/regional food initiatives contribute to community and economic development in the region;
3. How collaborations and organizations committed to strengthening local/regional food markets influence local/regional food businesses as well as the communities in which they are located and serve;

4. How the region can better support and capitalize on any positive ways local/regional food businesses and their owners/operators contribute to the region.

We sought to address these questions through a variety of methods, including a review of the literature on local/regional food systems studies, analysis of published statistics and secondary data, and qualitative interviews, conducted in early 2008, with select farmers, other food business owners/operators, and organizational representatives in the Adirondack-North Country region.

C. The Report Format and Intended Use

The North Country Regional Foods Initiative project team has designed this report as a resource for farmers, consumers, policymakers and community & economic developers working to sustain and enhance agriculture, build regional food systems, and strengthen communities in Northern New York now and in the future.

The report is divided into five sections, each designed to be read as stand-alone pieces as well as components of a whole:

(I) The Executive Summary provides a brief overview of the content of the report, emphasizing the overall project of which the research documented herein is a part, the questions this research was designed to address, how the research was pursued, the intended use of the report, the report format, key findings, and given these findings, activities the research team recommends be pursued through support of the Northern New York Regional Agriculture Program's Direct Marketing/Local Foods Team.

(II) The Introduction/Overview contains a brief review of published studies that have analyzed local/regional foods and their social and economic impacts as well as a summary of secondary data analysis that is designed to place local/regional food enterprises in the context of Adirondack-North Country agriculture more generally.

(III) The Research Briefs (Market Outlets, Economics, Education, Collaborations, Roles of Local/Regional Food Businesses and Organizational Support in Northern NY) provide six separate summaries of data collected through interviews with farmers and other local/regional food business owners and operators and representatives of organizations whose work supports these businesses.

(IV) The Conclusions and Recommendations section identifies several recommendations for strengthening local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country region.

(V) The Appendices contain North Country Regional Food Initiative Fact Sheets, Interview Guides, and a Select History of Local Food Events in Northern NY as additional resources compiled and generated in support of the North Country Regional Food Initiative project.

D. Key Findings

In this section we summarize key findings that emerged during our analysis of the information shared by farm and food business owners/operators and organizational representatives during our interviews with them. Presented in the Research Briefs section of this report, this information represents the primary source of data for this research study.
The Research Briefs demonstrate an array of preferences and experiences among the farms and food business owners/operators, and representatives of organizations supporting those businesses. This diversity is likely due, at least in part, to the research design: The interviews were designed to capture the distinct characteristics of 2-3 farm and food businesses, that were specifically selected to represent one or more of eleven different types of local/regional food enterprises prominent in the Adirondack-North Country region and all community-based organizations supporting them, no matter their mission. In other words, it is reasonable to expect representatives of enterprises that differ in product and outlet and representatives of organizations that differ in mission to have different experiences.

The relatively small size of our sample of farm and food businesses necessarily limits us from generalizing any particular finding to all similar types of enterprises in the region. However, when taken together, the information shared during each of these interviews provides a snapshot of why and how these owners/operators got into farming and, in particular, local/regional food markets, how they financed start-up costs, how they handle cash flow gaps, how they learn the skills of their trade, how they make decisions about their businesses, whether or not they find collaborative opportunities valuable, the roles they see themselves and their businesses playing in northern New York communities, and the challenges and opportunities they see for their enterprises.

In contrast to the relative nature of the information shared during the farm and food businesses interviews, because the organizations included in the study are all those known to be in some way working to support local/regional food enterprises in the region, the information shared during the interviews with their representatives is presumed to represent the perspectives of the entire known population. In their interviews, the organizational representatives were asked to talk about: how primary support for local/regional food enterprises is to their mission; how they support these businesses; the types of challenges these businesses face in the North Country, and the challenges their own organizations face in their work to support these enterprises.

At the same time this research documents a variety of experiences among local and regional food enterprises, it also reveals several common themes:

1. The business decisions made by the local/regional food business owners and operators interviewed for this study are commonly tied to their personal interests and goals; in other words, their lifestyle goals influence their business decisions.

2. These owners/operators are intentional about contributing to their communities and see themselves doing so in multiple ways, including contributions to the local economy.

3. Experience is the primary way in which these owners/operators have learned about farming but educational training opportunities and informational resources provided by organizations are important to their ongoing professional development.

4. Collaborations, in general, with agencies and organizations are very important to the success of these enterprises.

5. At the same time, ironically, the development of local and regional food businesses is not the primary goal of most organizations which support these businesses; it is rather, an offshoot of more primary programming.

6. The owners/operators are optimistic about the future of local/regional food markets, seeing the profitability of their enterprises steadily growing or providing them with capital to reinvest in the businesses. At the same time, some experience periodic cash flow gaps and/or have trouble affording insurance.

7. The owners/operators have several ideas about the challenges and opportunities they face and the ways North Country communities can help address these challenges and opportunities.
E. Next Steps:

In light of these findings, the North Country Regional Foods Initiative research team proposes that the Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations in the Adirondack North Country region continue working together as a regional partnership to support local and regional food initiatives. More specifically, working through the Northern NY Regional Agriculture Program’s Direct Marketing/Local Foods Team, the Extension partnership should take the following steps to strengthen local and regional food businesses and the organizations that support them, and, through both, help the region’s communities meet their community and economic development goals:

1. Share a copy of this report with the following groups reflecting specifically on the recommendations herein and the relationships between local/regional food-based development and broader community and economic development: study participants, cce-nnylocalregionalfoods-l list serv participants, “The Role of Adirondack-North Country Foods in Community and Economic Development” conference participants, and community and economic development professionals in the region, using a database developed for outreach purposes as part of the North Country Regional Foods Initiative.

2. Request an opportunity to make a presentation on the North Country Regional Foods Initiative, including the purpose of the project, its goals, outcomes, and recommendations, and proposed next steps for CCE, to local legislators and community and economic developers within Adirondack-North Country communities, inviting them to consider the ways they may help address recommendations locally and be part of a regional partnership to do so.

3. Engage interested stakeholders (farmers, other food business representatives, food consumer advocates, community and economic developers, legislators, and other interested citizens) to devise a comprehensive plan for addressing local/regional food market challenges and opportunities in a coordinated and collaborative fashion, one that ensures existing and newly developed resources are used in a regionally efficient manner.

4. Build on to the baseline of knowledge about Adirondack-North Country local/regional foods established through the North Country Regional Food Initiative research component (detailed in this report and its appendices) through further research. Specific items suggested for further study include a market analysis that assesses current and potential consumer demand for regional products at food service and retail outlets in the North Country, a direct marketing producer survey, an agritourisum survey, and an examination of the effectiveness of local/regional brands, including consumer awareness of these brands.²

5. Use the baseline established through the NCRFI and further research to evaluate and monitor progress to strengthen North Country local/regional food businesses and the positive ways they can contribute to community and economic development.

F. Conclusions

The North Country Regional Foods Initiative research highlights the multitude of models and ideas underway in the North Country for furthering a sustainable local/regional food and agricultural system. It is evident that direct market farmers and those using regional identity marketing are building on an agricultural tradition in the Adirondack-North Country region that emphasizes the social and ecological,

²Refer to the “Conclusions and Recommendations” section (IV) of this report for a list of strategies proposed to enhance local and regional food markets and further regional community and economic development in the North Country.
as well as economic, contributions that farms and farmers make to their communities. These business people are working to attain a quality of life for themselves that also lends itself to building trust and confidence in their products among their customers and neighbors, and intentionally contributes to the communities and region they share.

The farmers, food business owners/operators, and organizational representatives interviewed for this work as well as conference presenters and participants at the April 18th, 2008 event in Tupper Lake, NY recognize the potential for and the hard work involved in re-establishing a regional food system. Agriculture and farming are an integral part of life in Northern NY for those pursuing farming as a livelihood and for consumers interested in reconnecting with their food sources. Communities also benefit from these pursuits. The research and recommendations presented in this report are intended to help create a regional environment wherein these related goals - production for local/regional food markets' consumption of locally and regionally produced foods, and community and economic development - can be achieved. As Extension professionals we look forward to working together, in a regional partnership, with Northern New York communities, to support the pursuit and achievement of these goals.
Introduction

A. Overview

The Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region describes the research component of the North Country Regional Foods Initiative.\(^1\)\(^2\) This component includes: a review of other studies about local/regional food systems; analysis of published statistics and secondary data about agriculture, food, and consumer preferences in Northern New York; and, foremost, qualitative interviews with local/regional farm and food business owner/operators and representatives of organizations that support these businesses, conducted in early 2008. Research briefs documenting our analysis of information shared by interview participants comprises the bulk of this report.

Together, the information gleaned through each of these venues helps articulate the contexts in which Adirondack-North Country local/regional food initiatives operate. This information is shared to: (1) demonstrate the reasons communities are increasingly interested in local foods and their potential to contribute to community and economic development; (2) provide an overview of the agricultural industry in the Adirondack-North Country region; and, more specifically (3) share characteristics of the Adirondack-North Country local/regional food businesses and support organizations included in this study, including their contributions to the region.

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1 The North Country Regional Food Initiative is a one year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Northern New York (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University.

2 Although we recognize that “local” and “regional” food systems are not necessarily the same thing and in many, if not most, cases are very different, we couple the words “local” and “regional” herein and throughout the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region for the following reasons: (1) Given the relative size of the Adirondack-North Country region, even a regional food system is relatively local, particularly in comparison to regional foodsheds that encompass multiple states (e.g. the Northeast Region); (2) Many communities in Northern NY border another state or another country, for people living in these communities, depending on whether or not “local” and “regional” are defined by distance or political boundaries, a distance that is local is literally local and regional at the same time (e.g., When a NY consumer purchases apples from a Canadian orchard 12 miles away, it is a local purchase in terms of distance, though a regional purchase in terms of political boundaries); and (3) An overarching goal of the NCRFI is to cultivate a regional approach to economic and community development - this goal is based on the understanding that communities conserve resources and gain assets by working together regionally. However, shifting from a “local” to a “regional” approach is not necessarily intuitive; by coupling “local” and “regional” we hope to cultivate a paradigm shift, one in which one’s locality is seen in regional terms.
B. Research Methodology

Fifteen owners/operators of farm and food businesses and eleven representatives of organizations were interviewed by Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators. Participants in the business component of the study were identified via purposeful sampling, which selects information rich cases for in-depth study. The cases were chosen on the basis of geographic location and direct marketing/local food operation type. In addition to selecting at least one enterprise from each county to ensure for regional geographic representation, we selected enterprises representative of the commodity and marketing outlets prevalent in local/regional foods arena in the Adirondack-North Country including the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity Type</th>
<th>Marketing Outlet Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Regional identity marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple syrup/honey</td>
<td>Farmers’ Markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/eggs</td>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Farm to Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>Roadside stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct wholesale (wholesale markets, auctions, supermarkets, gourmet shops, food co-ops, restaurants, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The organizations were selected based on the criteria that one of their primary programming areas includes support for ‘local and regional food’ markets (retail and wholesale), or connections between local and regional producers and consumers. Detailed notes taken during the interviews were compiled and analyzed. Common and recurring themes were identified and noted as signifying similar experiences among study participants. Uncommon experiences have been noted as well. The results of this analysis are presented in the remaining sections of this report.

C. Feeding a Region

1. Local and regional food impacts

As interest in producing for and purchasing within local and regional markets grows, so do efforts to understand the impacts – potential and real – of these activities. Local/regional food practitioners and scholars alike (with some being one and the same) have identified multiple potential benefits of local/ regional foods as well as reasons local/regional food initiatives might not fulfill this potential. The impacts associated with local/regional food systems can be categorized in terms of how they influence the economic, social, and ecological well-being of individuals (farmers and consumers) and communities. 4, 5, 6

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3 Interview guides for both organizations and farm/food businesses can be referenced in Appendix A of this report (see www.nnyregionallocalfoods.org).
### Table 1: Potential Benefits of Local/Regional Foods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Economic</strong></th>
<th><strong>Social</strong></th>
<th><strong>Health/Environment</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Level – Farmers</strong></td>
<td>Farmers receive a higher percentage of the cost to consumer</td>
<td>Farmers have the opportunity to develop relationships with their customers</td>
<td>Relationships with consumers increase mental well-being of farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job creation as more producers and processors are needed to meet consumer demand for local/regional food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Level - Consumer</strong></td>
<td>Consumers may pay more for direct markets</td>
<td>Consumers have the opportunity to develop relationships with the farmers/producers growing their food</td>
<td>Consumers have greater access to fresh fruits and vegetables when food is grown and sold locally/regionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consumers may pay less through direct markets</td>
<td></td>
<td>Consumers have the peace of mind of knowing where their food comes from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consumers improve cooking skills by learning how to cook new and different products</td>
<td>Consumers may increase consumption of produce, if it is grown locally/regionally and made available to them soon after it has ripened, as fresh food usually tastes better than food that is not fresh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Level</strong></td>
<td>Local/regional food markets circulate dollars within the community and region versus permitting them to leak outside of the region.</td>
<td>Relationships between producers and consumers extends to other aspects of community life, creating a sense of community and shared commitment to broader community development goals</td>
<td>Through conversations with those growing their food, consumers are often exposed to the realities of farming and in particular the connections between the food they eat, the environment, and public and ecological health, increasing their awareness of environmental issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consumers and producers better understand one another’s needs and, as such, work together to meet the needs of both</td>
<td>Locally/regionally grown food is, by definition, essential to food security; that is, when food is grown locally/regionally, it is at the very least, available for citizens in the region to consume. When food is not grown locally/regionally, citizens are less food secure and at greater risk of hunger because food grown elsewhere may not be readily available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farmers that live where they produce have a vested interest in their community and regularly support their community in multiple ways.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Farms that market directly to their consumers are held accountable for their management practices by those consumers and, therefore, use practices which enhance the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Locally/regionally produced and consumed food reduces agriculture’s contribution to global climate change as less fuel consumption is required to get food from farm to plate and less packaging waste and landfill costs are created</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While Table 1 (see previous page) focuses primarily on the positive claims about how local/regional food initiatives can contribute to individuals and communities, researchers and practitioners alike have questioned whether or not local/regional food systems really live up to these ideals. These questions have been explored through research that suggests local/regional foods, in fact, do not always fulfill the promise with which they’ve been credited and identifies reasons why they fall short. Reflecting on her personal experience as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) producer, for example, Laura Delind (1991) articulates several ways CSA is less of a community effort than it is purported to be, including the tendency for producers to assume the risks that are, in theory, to be shared by producers and members alike.7 Jennifer Wilkins (n.d.) examines claims about health impacts of local/regional foods, making the case that whether or not locally/regionally produced and consumed food is healthier than food which travels thousands of miles before it is consumed, depends on several factors, including production methods, variety, ripeness at time of consumption, post harvest handling, processing and packaging, and storage.8 Other researchers have questioned whether or not locally/regionally produced foods are really that much better than foods transported over long distances when it comes to reducing greenhouse gases. Weber and Matthews (2008) argue that purchasing locally/regionally produced foods may be less important to reducing contributions to global warming than modifying the type of food one eats.9

2. Studies of local/regional food system impacts

While at least one of the aforementioned studies has examined the impacts of specific local/regional food market outlets, others, like ours, have, sought to examine the impact of these outlets as a system (comprised of multiple local/regional market outlets) operating across a region. Examples of two such studies include “Why Local Linkages Matter, a study of the Seattle Local Food System” and “Growing Local: Expanding the Western North Carolina Farm and Food Economy.”10

The study of the Seattle food system examines “the dollar flows and economic linkages of food-related businesses in the Central Puget Sound region of Washington State. The analysis shows that locally directed spending by consumers more than doubles the number of dollars circulating among businesses in the community. This means that a shift of 20% of…food dollars into locally directed spending would result in a nearly half billion dollar annual income increase in King County alone and twice that in the Central Puget Sound region.” It also concludes that locally and regionally based food markets forge a “a relationship-based economy.” Relationship-based economies are important because “the more dollars circulating locally, the greater the number of community linkages and the greater their strength.” Furthermore, “research indicates that more and stronger linkages provide for a healthier, more diverse and resilient local economy. Simply put, locally directed buying and selling connects the community’s resources to its needs resulting in relationships that serve to restore the land and regenerate community.”11

The report on the North Carolina study, states at the outset that it is based on the premise that local/regional foods are making positive contributions to local economies. Based on this premise, it “looked at: (1) what food and farm products are currently produced in the region; (2) how much of what is produced is also consumed in the region; (3) the potential for increasing local consumption of locally-produced food and farm products as a way to strengthen the regional farm economy; and (4) where investment of resources or other actions could eliminate barriers currently impeding the purchase of local food.”

The study concludes that there is tremendous economic opportunity in strengthening connections between producers and consumers for the purpose of sales of local/regional foods: “If just half of [Western North Carolina’s] families spend $11 each week on locally-grown food for four months of the growing season over $36.5 million stays in the local economy helping sustain [their] family farms.”

We used these studies and others as a starting point for exploring the impact of local/regional foods in the Adirondack-North Country region with the clear understanding that limited time and financial resources prevented us from employing the comprehensive analysis included therein. At the same time, while our study was significantly more limited in scope, it is important to note that the results of our research lead to some of the same conclusions as these studies: Local/regional food initiatives are contributing to the well-being of individuals and communities but the degree to which they fulfill the promise associated with them is limited by multiple factors - factors which, if addressed at a regional level, through community-based resources, could increase the chances that the promise of local/regional foods be fulfilled.

D. Food & Agriculture in Northern NY

Statistical data on agriculture in Northern New York (NNY) reflects farms and farming operations in the six counties including Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis & St. Lawrence. The 2002 Census of Agriculture data for NNY provides a snapshot of agricultural production here. NNY has 1,292,493 acres of land or approximately 17.7% of the Adirondack-North Country region and 16.9% of NYS’s farmland spread across 4,572 farms, which amounts to 12.3% of farms in New York State. For 2,966 farm operators, farming is their primary occupation. The average age of all principal operators across the region is 53.38 years old.

Most farms in Clinton, Essex and St. Lawrence Counties have between 50 and 179 acres; in Franklin, Jefferson and Lewis Counties, the greatest number of farms have between 180 and 499 acres. All six counties have some farms with less than 10 acres and some with more than 1,000 acres. Figure 1 depicts a comparison of NNY farms with those of NY and other states based on average value of products sold. The region’s total market value of production is more than $406.5 million.

12 Adapted from Northern NY Agricultural Development Program Fact Sheet: Six-county Regional Profile
Changes in farming have resulted in new opportunities arising for those interested in agriculture in NNY. In particular, dairy, the largest sector of the agricultural industry in the region has seen decreases in numbers of farms while experiencing increases in the total market value of dairy products sold between 1992 ($262,661,000) and 2002 ($300,884,000). Some of the reduction in numbers of dairy farms has been due to consolidation of smaller farms into larger operations, thereby showing an overall decline in numbers. Figure 2 illustrates this change along with increases in other types of farms, representing an overall diversification in farm types across NNY. Not included in this data are farms with agritourism operations as it is not collected through the Ag Census, though, this too would reflect the diversification of farm types and changes in agriculture in the region.

Direct to consumer sales in this region have also changed dramatically. Direct market producers sold almost $3.5 million in food directly to residents and visitors to the region in 2002. This represents a near doubling (83% increase) over the 1997 figures of $1.89 million (see Appendix B, Fact Sheet 2: Local Food and Agriculture Trends, at www.nnyregionallocalfoods.org, for a more detailed analysis of this data). In addition, the numbers of farms selling direct to consumer increased from 441 to 506 during this same period.

As a result of this changing landscape, there are in the Adirondack-North Country region, today, “hotbeds” of local/regional foods activities that didn’t exist ten years ago. The Adirondacks have summer tourists who support their local farms through their purchases at markets, restaurants, and summer events. Adirondack Harvest, a regional ‘buy local’ campaign, has helped make these connections. St. Lawrence County has institutions like SUNY Potsdam and St. Lawrence University interested in buying more local/regional products. GardenShare and North Country Grown Cooperative, two organizations committed to promoting local/regional food initiatives, have helped make that happen. In Lewis County, marketing efforts have increased the area’s reputation for local/regional products such as maple syrup. A fast growing Jefferson County has a lot of untapped potential for local marketing of food with Ft. Drum, Thousand Islands and Tug Hill Plateau as areas that draw a lot of people either seasonally or as permanent residents. Throughout the area there are additional restaurants, schools, and colleges/universities interested in buying local products.

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13 2002 Census of Agriculture
14 2002 Census of Agriculture
These activities have been driven by the growing producer and consumer interest noted above as well as the response of agencies and organizations that recognize the positive ways these businesses can and do contribute to the region. Cornell Cooperative Extension, for example, working with partners, has collaborated regionally to provide a series of events designed to strengthen direct market farms, build relationships between producers and consumers in the region, and help communities capitalize on the ways these local food initiatives contribute to the region.

Starting with a conference in 1995 (“21st Century”), wherein a long range planning process identified the need to support local and regional food businesses to preserve the working landscape, producers, consumers, community service agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local officials have come together through various forums to support and strengthen the food system, and the local/regional food component in particular. Most recently, Cornell Cooperative Extension and partners have hosted annual regional programs designed to build awareness of opportunities in this arena. Highlighted in A Select History of Local Foods Events in Northern New York (see Appendix C at www.nnyregionallocalfoods.org) is an event sponsored in 2008 through the North Country Regional Foods Initiative: The Role of Adirondack-North Country Foods in Community and Economic Development. This event was designed to build on previous efforts by broadening awareness about the impacts of local/regional foods among local and state officials and community and economic developers, and strengthening relationships among these individuals, farmers, and institutional representatives. Specific steps for moving forward as a region to strengthen local food initiatives were identified during the conference, and have been incorporated, when appropriate, within the recommendations at the end of this report (see Section IV: Conclusions and Recommendations). The conference also led to the creation of a listserv designed to support peer learning and provide connections among Northern New York’s local/regional food stakeholders. The forty-five conference participants who asked to be subscribed to the listserv demonstrate the growing interest in regional collaboration in this arena.15

As a result of these events, we have seen the formation of farm-to-school committees, new farmers’ markets, local/regional food events, a new growers’ cooperative, a Seaway Wine Trail, a regional Maple Weekend, and new local/regional food guides. We have also seen the emergence of several recurring themes: (1) consumers want to be able to purchase fresh, locally produced foods; (2) growers need support (education and infrastructure) to be able to meet an increasing demand for consistent quality and quantity, and (3) communities can benefit from working together, on a regional level, to capitalize on the positive ways local/regional foods can and are contributing to the region. Given this interest, it is important to examine in more detail the current and potential impacts of these initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country. The remainder of this report documents the results of our efforts to do so.

15 To subscribe to the listserv (cce-nnylocalregionalfoods-l@cornell.edu) send an email to Bernadette Logozar (bel7@cornell.edu) with the words “Add me to the NNY Local/Regional Foods List” in the subject line.
E. Characteristics of Northern NY Local/Regional Foods Farms and Food Businesses

With the goal of providing a general sense of the characteristics of the farms and food businesses employing direct market strategies in the Northern New York, Table 2 presents general business summaries of the 15 case studies.

Table 2: Business data (n=15)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade area **</th>
<th>Years in farm/food business</th>
<th>Legal structure</th>
<th>Annual payroll</th>
<th>Off farm employment</th>
<th>Gross farm/business receipts, 2007</th>
<th>Acres in production (maple, vegetables, hay, orchards)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 25 miles: 2</td>
<td>0-4 yrs: 1</td>
<td>Sole proprietorships: 8</td>
<td>7 do not have established annual payrolls</td>
<td>5 have at least one spouse with part-time position off farm</td>
<td>$5,000 – $19,999: 1</td>
<td>5 or less: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 50 miles: 6</td>
<td>5-9 yrs: 3</td>
<td>Corporations: 2</td>
<td>6 with annual payrolls, range from $2400 to over $120,000, from 1 employee to 14 full time and part-time/seasonal</td>
<td>8 have both spouses with positions off farm (at least part-time)</td>
<td>$20,000 – $39,000: 1</td>
<td>6-10: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local to Regional: 2</td>
<td>10-14 yrs: 2</td>
<td>Cooperative corporations: 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>$40,000 – $99,999: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>11-20: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local to State: 1</td>
<td>15-19 yrs: 2</td>
<td>Partnership: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$100,000 -$249,999: 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>21-50: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local, Regional, National to International: 4</td>
<td>20+ yrs: 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$250,000 or more: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>51-200:3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Responses not totaling 15 reflect questions not answered by interviewees.
** Trade area definitions were provided by interviewees, some responded in actual distances and others in descriptive terms.

The following descriptions outline the business evolution for the owners/operators of these farms/food businesses, both in terms of their personal growth and that of their operations. Table 3 provides some examples in terms of products carried/sold.

In addition to noting some of their quantifiable characteristics, to more fully understand these farm and food businesses and the roles they play in Northern New York, it is helpful to consider how/why their owners/operators got into farming, the ways the businesses have evolved since their inception, and the types of things their owners/operators consider as they make decisions about the future of these enterprises. These matters are summarized below:
The primary owners/operators of the farm/food businesses involved in this study got into farming/food business by:

- Being born into business or having grown up on a farm.
- Marrying into it
- Retiring into it.
- Following their educational background or long term interest.

Changes that occurred in the business over the time of the primary owner’s/operator’s involvement:

- Diversification and business expansion (new additions to operation – animals, crops, varieties).
- Adding value (new product development).
- Lifestyle choices (life changes affecting business decisions – retirement, working towards self sufficiency).
- Maturation and development of business model and farm itself.

**Table 3: Composite of responses to changes in products sold/produced**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 head of beef</td>
<td>70 head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25 acres vegetable production</td>
<td>2 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 hives honey production</td>
<td>20 hives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 fowl – poultry production</td>
<td>300 fowl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 dozen eggs</td>
<td>3500 dozen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 horses (boarding)</td>
<td>20 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25 acres mixed vegetable</td>
<td>3 acres mixed vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 acres maple syrup production</td>
<td>40 acres maple syrup production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 head of beef</td>
<td>over 100 head of beef (buy in from 2 other farms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8,000 maple syrup sales</td>
<td>$17,000 maple syrup sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7,191 tomatoes sales</td>
<td>$10,521 tomatoes sales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Motivation for business decisions:

- Self-sufficiency/something of own (looking to avoid economic downturns in off-farm jobs).
- Lifestyle and quality of life.
- Consumer awareness and interest in food quality (which affects decisions regarding production techniques, such as use of pesticides/herbicides).
F. Concluding Comments

In the next sections of this report, we build on this introduction to local/regional food businesses in the Adirondack-North Country to explore in more detail how they contribute to our communities and the challenges and opportunities involved in doing so. We also explore the ways Northern New York can, as a region, support these businesses and capitalize on their positive contributions.


Funding for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative is from the U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration University Center designated for New York State at Cornell University and hosted by Cornell’s Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI). For more information on CaRDI, contact Rod Howe, (607) 255-2170, rlh13@cornell.edu or visit www.cardi.cornell.edu. To learn more about the North Country Regional Foods Initiative Project, contact Bernadette Logozar (518) 483-7403 or Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman at (607) 255-0417.

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.
Research Report on the Impacts of Local & Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region:

III

Impact Analysis Research Brief A: Market Outlets

A. Overview

This brief, one of six in the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region, presents results from a study of local/regional foods operations in Northern New York and is focused specifically on why and how these businesses started using their current marketing approach. There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The overall goal of this research is to better understand and document the impacts this type of production and marketing has on individual farms and food businesses, and the roles these businesses and markets play in Northern New York community and economic development. Community leaders are also exploring ways to support these local food businesses, wanting to capitalize on ways they can benefit communities. With the goal of helping this region better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets and enhance the positive ways these businesses contribute to the region, the results of this analysis are intended as a resource for other farmers, food business owners/operators, consumers, policymakers and community & economic developers working to enhance and sustain agriculture in Northern New York.

1 The North Country Regional Food Initiative, is a one year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Northern New York (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University.
2 Although we recognize that “local” and “regional” food systems are not necessarily the same thing and in many, if not most, cases are very different, we couple the words “local” and “regional” herein and throughout the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region for the following reasons: (1) Given the relative size of the Adirondack-North Country region, even a regional food system is relatively local, particularly in comparison to regional foodsheds that encompass multiple states (e.g. the Northeast Region); (2) Many communities in Northern NY border another state or another country, for people living in these communities, depending on whether or not “local” and “regional” are defined by distance or political boundaries, a distance that is local is literally local and regional at the same time (e.g.: When a NY consumer purchases apples from a Canadian orchard 12 miles away, it is a local purchase in terms of distance, though a regional purchase in terms of political boundaries.); and (3) An overarching goal of the NCRFI is to cultivate a regional approach to economic and community development - this goal is based on the understanding that communities conserve resources and gain assets by working together regionally. However, shifting from a “local” to a “regional” approach is not necessarily intuitive; by coupling “local” and “regional” we hope to cultivate a paradigm shift, one in which one’s locality is seen in regional terms.
B. Market Outlets

A summary of responses from qualitative interviews with 15 direct market farmers and food businesses are presented below. Themes common to multiple interviews are highlighted. We use direct quotes (in italics) to place the challenges, opportunities, and strategies faced and employed by these businesses in the context of Northern NY. To respect interviewees’ confidentiality, individuals’ or farms’ names are not used in association with their quotes.

To understand how businesses producing and processing food for local and regional markets start, manage, and plan for the future of their markets, interviewers asked farmers and food business representatives questions such as:

- What market outlets do you use in the North Country?
- How do you find these markets?
- How far are you willing to travel for these markets?
- What advertising methods do you utilize to attract customers to them once established?
- How do you get your products to the markets?
- What determines your pricing strategy?
- Once established, how are you able to adjust your product mix to meet market demand?

Finding markets Most interviewees in this study have been involved in farming and agriculture for twenty plus years, many with their family backgrounds playing a significant role in their decision to pursue agriculture. Use of a local/regional foods component in their farm/food business was of a shorter duration, but not a new concept to these farmers (a majority having used a local/regional foods approach for 5-9 years). The most frequently cited methods of finding a market for products was trial and error along with some type of market research.

We keep trying different outlets to see what works (least time, most money, most fun!)

While many farmers stated that they know products should be sold prior to planting, trial and error helps them to determine the market outlet that works best for them and provides them with immediate customer feedback as to preferred product varieties. Often by trying out a market, farmers can determine the trade-offs between economic returns and costs (in time, money, and energy) of a particular outlet. This information helps the farmers and other business owners/operators interviewed to determine whether or not a market is profitable and, in turn, whether or not to modify their market strategies.

Those that utilize market research to find their markets mainly use direct connections with consumers to determine potential for sales. They engage current and potential customers at restaurants, stores, civic forums and through advertising at their market outlets, such as a farm stand. By establishing these direct links with customers, the farmers and owners/operators are able to receive immediate feedback regarding prices and types of products, in established markets and, in some cases, at markets they have not yet made a commitment to. In terms of market research, one farmer stated:

[I] looked through the Dining Guide...for high end/premium locations then pursued restaurants.

Another farmer identified the importance of documenting sales in order to compare guaranteed (pre-ordered) sales with those that are not guaranteed; this strategy provides good information in terms of being able to adjust his product mix to best fit each market.
[I] balance guaranteed sales (CSA and farm to school) with market sales (currently three markets/week) and a roadside stand. I track sales very carefully at the market so that I know what sells at each market. And then I adjust accordingly to maximize sales.

Some farmers reported using existing distributor/marketing networks to find their markets. These include belonging to producer associations (e.g., maple) and cooperatives, or using established food brokers, farmers’ markets and promotions through food shows. Other farmers find market research to be unnecessary; markets come to the business. The following statement reflects this experience:

[My market outlet] was started in part by a customer – through that success other [customers] expressed interest in [my] product; [we], have expanded to other markets based on growing season and need for [sales] when [our original outlet] was not in session.

Other methods farmers reported using to find their markets include general advertising - mailings and lots of emails. Market opportunities are also determined by farmers’ personal preferences and current market demand. One farmer reported that she does not seek out additional outlets as she feels compatibility with current growing capacity is important to her operation. Avoiding fuel costs was a factor in determining markets cited by another farmer. As well they cited the need to diversify outlets according to product supply. Diversifying outlets has been especially important for a meat producer for whom demand for choice cuts required the producer to find additional outlets for cuts less popular with existing markets (e.g. ground beef).

**Trade areas** Without providing any definition of local/regional marketing, interviewers inquired as to the owners'/managers' own definitions of “trade area” for their farm/food products. The most frequently cited responses incorporate an actual distance and falls within a 25-50 mile radius, and the second most common response was one or more of the following terms: “local, regional, national and international.”

Local, regional, inter-state, other states, anyone with internet access and a sweet tooth!

Those that cited a local to regional trade area highlighted the tri-lakes region and Northern NY as well as the Adirondack region. There are two farms that sell only to customers <25 miles from their location, and one for which “local to state” is its prescribed trade area. An especially noteworthy description of “trade area” falls within the local, regional, national and international grouping:

Some seasonal mail orders for Christmas [come from] current customers that leave [the] area in winter.

This comment suggests that seasonal direct market connections in the Adirondack-North Country region lead to sales outside of the region when visitors return home.

**Delivery methods** Of the farms and food businesses that deliver products (five utilized on site farm stands), the most frequently cited delivery method is a farm/business-owned vehicle that makes direct deliveries to stores, restaurants, farmers markets or institutions. Vehicles range from personal pickup trucks to professional delivery trucks with freezer units and generators. A few farms reported using established distributors including those that use mail order shipping through Internet, catalogs, or direct orders.
Advertising/promotional strategies  All but one interviewee reported using at least one type of advertising or promotional strategy that goes beyond word of mouth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Number of Farms/Businesses that reported using this strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buy Local, Farm and Shopping Guides:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adirondack Harvest (8)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local Harvest (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pride of NY (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local Food Guide (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shopping guide (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NOFA NY listing (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochures</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid press coverage</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point of Sale (e.g., restaurant advertising (on menus))</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays at events</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations/Sponsorships</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labels</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailings/Newsletters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper ads</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Radio/TV ads, church bulletins</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Establishing prices  A variety of methods are used to determine how much to charge customers for products. Many businesses reported utilizing more than one method. Most methods are related to cost of production. As one farmer described it, the costs to consumers are based on

production costs: fertilizer + seed + labor + profit margin.

Additional methods include: Looking at other (farm) markets and grocery stores, or talking with customers. Some producers utilize national average price publications:

[I] check the publication “Growing for Market” which lists current national average prices.


One farmer reported that suppliers often give [him and his partner] an idea for prices, or they refer to past prices charged. A particular farm identifies the gross projected income she expects per acre then breaks it down per bed and per bunch of produce. In this way, she projects the income she needs to keep the farm viable although the actual income attained is dependent on sales.

Adjusting to market demand  When asked about how their farm is able to adjust to market demand, the most common response from those interviewed was by regular assessment. The farmers and food businesses reported ongoing methods to determine the success of different products, measured both in terms of profit and effort/cost required to grow that product. Some emphasized profitability as foremost
in planning for future growing seasons; others factored customer demand (that is actually meeting with customers ahead of time to plan crops). Mainly interviewees reported seeking a balance between profit, demand, their own capacity for production, and their desire to have an operation that can be managed by their family. Some interviewees found that through **market expansion** they were ‘maxed out’ and thus want to

*stay the same; [we are] maxed out [in] acres and time; we are bigger than we want to be.*

Diversifying the operation is another strategy farmers use, both in terms of product mix and market strategy.

*[We] have always been [a commodity crop producer], [we] needed to diversify [our] operation/expand – so [we] started other business ventures: We started a direct market business when [we] sold veggies to campers in the area on their request, and word of mouth expanded it from there.*

Seasonality also plays a role in most interviewees’ farm operations. Peak tourist times require some growers to adjust their operations so as to maximize production to coincide accordingly with an increased customer base. For others, particularly those selling to k-12 schools, the school year requires that they tailor production and distribution to a shorter window with higher volume in late summer/early fall for fresh produce and season extenders for earlier spring production. Products that can be produced year round and those with a long shelf life (meat, maple, honey) also help to maintain customers despite Northern New York’s limited growing season.

### C. Challenges³

**Advertising** Farmers feel that in many settings customers do not recognize that the food they are eating or being served is locally sourced and, thus, see a need to educate consumers. Advertising challenges relate to many outlets – point of sale materials for schools and institutions as well as limited or a lack of educational outreach at farmers markets and CSAs; in the case of the latter, interviewees fault vendors and the markets for not, themselves, doing enough in terms of education. A few interviewees also commented on the need to address **sale of non-local products at markets**, that is vendors bringing products produced outside the region into Northern New York and selling them as ‘farm fresh’ at roadside stands, farmers markets and even restaurants. From the perspective of some of those interviewed for this study, this behavior results in unfair competition for those producing and selling products locally and needs to be curbed.

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³ Although we did not specifically ask study participants to identify challenges, opportunities, and strategies potentially impacting the future of their local/regional food market enterprises, all three were clearly articulated in their responses to the questions posed. In general, the challenges shared are of a specific nature in the sense that they relate to the individual topic addressed in each Research Brief on the farm and food business operations (not the one on organizational support for these operations): Market Outlets, Training and Educational Resources, Farm/Food Business Economics, Collaborations, and the Roles of Local/Regional Food Businesses in Northern NY in this report. Conversely, the opportunities and strategies that were identified are of a general nature and, as such, are equally relevant to all five research briefs included in the report. Thus, while the “Challenge” sections of these five research briefs are different, the “Opportunities” and “Strategies” sections, are verbatim.
**Limits to production** - Multiple reasons were given as to why farmers are unable to meet customer demand. The most frequently cited of these reasons is the lack of labor, especially competent labor that is worth the employing farm owners’ investment. Those interviewed seek more time to manage production, harvest, and marketing. Each is a full-time job.

Another highly cited limitation is infrastructure/equipment, examples of this include: production/processing equipment, conveniently located USDA-inspected facilities, transportation, regulations. Specifically in regards to sales to schools, storage facilities and delivery capacity are perceived limitations. Other challenges include the growing season, space – particularly cleared space – pests, and climate.

*Weather – both the length of the growing season, and actual weather events – dry, wet, etc.*

**D. Opportunities**

While every challenge can also be seen as an opportunity, opportunities specifically identified by study participants include the new and expanding interest in local/regional foods, in New York, and nationally, and room for growth of this market in Northern New York. Citing the nationwide trend towards increased awareness regarding food sources, many farmers see the opportunity for more farms to become involved in local/regional food markets and the need for more farmers to meet this demand. They also see opportunities for collaboration: Shared purchasing of supplies, equipment, and marketing materials were all suggested as specific collaborative opportunities. Interviewees also see the emergence of more support groups as an opportunity, viewing these groups as important to their success.

**E. Strategies**

What should communities do through local officials and community & economic developers in collaboration with agricultural organizations to better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products?

Based on these interviews, two types of strategies are needed to encourage further growth of a vibrant local food economy in the Adirondack-North Country region: **education** and **infrastructure development**. Interviewees seek consumer education that: (1) addresses the importance of healthy diets (not just low fat) and the relationships between healthy diets and local foods; (2) identifies sources of local foods, and recognizes local foods as valuable, quality products and a community resource. Interviewees also seek educational materials that offer assistance with enterprise and market analysis, particularly regarding pricing strategies and expected profit margins for specific market outlets. They also seek educational opportunities, ranging from fact sheets to demonstrations, that share successful farm models and help them better understand production, equipment, and insurance concerns.

In terms of infrastructure development, producers seek support for working together to strengthen production/storage/transport/handling linkages. From their perspective, collaboration in the development of these types of infrastructure would benefit local and regional food producers and the communities they reside in through increased enterprises, market outlets, and export opportunities.
F. Conclusions

The farms and food businesses explored herein represent a small subsection of agriculture in the Adirondack-North Country region. However, local and regional farm and food businesses are filling a growing niche in the region’s agriculture and business sectors through the products they supply and the lifestyles they offer farmers and business owners/operators. The market outlets employed by local/regional farms and food businesses are diverse but also tailored to the needs and interests of their owners/operators as well as their customers. In this way they are people-oriented and involve relationship building, both of which are an important part of community and economic development. Communities across the country can and are working together to strengthen these businesses. This research suggests Northern New York should consider exploring ways to support relationship building and tapping into relationships within the local/regional foods arena as a means to broader community and economic development. In the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region we share several recommendations designed to help Adirondack-North Country communities work together as a region to support these enterprises and capitalize on the ways they contribute to life in Northern New York.

4 To learn more about these businesses refer to the other Research Briefs in Section III of this report at: www.nnyregionallocalfoods.org.


Funding for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative is from the U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration University Center designated for New York State at Cornell University and hosted by Cornell’s Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI). For more information on CaRDI, contact Rod Howe, (607) 255-2170, rlh13@cornell.edu or visit www.cardi.cornell.edu. To learn more about the North Country Regional Foods Initiative Project, contact Bernadette Logozar (518) 483-7403 or Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman at (607) 255-0417.

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.
Impact Analysis Research Brief B: Farm/Food Business Economics

A. Overview

This brief, one of six in the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region, presents results from a study of local/regional foods operations in Northern New York and is focused specifically on start-up costs, sources of investment funds, profitability, and cash flow.\(^1\)\(^2\) There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local/regional foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The overall goal of this research is to better understand and document the impacts this type of production and marketing has on individual farms and food businesses, and the roles these businesses and markets play in North Country community and economic development. Community leaders are also exploring ways to support these local/regional food businesses, wanting to capitalize on ways they can benefit communities. With the goal of helping this region better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets and enhance the positive ways these businesses contribute to the region, the results of this analysis are intended as a resource for other farmers, food business owners/operators, consumers, policymakers and community & economic developers working to enhance and sustain agriculture in Northern New York.

\(^1\) The North Country Regional Food Initiative is a one year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Northern New York (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University.

\(^2\) Although we recognize that “local” and “regional” food systems are not necessarily the same thing and in many, if not most, cases are very different, we couple the words “local” and “regional” herein and throughout the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region for the following reasons: (1) Given the relative size of the Adirondack-North Country region, even a regional food system is relatively local, particularly in comparison to regional foodsheds that encompass multiple states (e.g. the Northeast Region); (2) Many communities in Northern NY border another state or another country, for people living in these communities, depending on whether or not “local” and “regional” are defined by distance or political boundaries, a distance that is local is literally local and regional at the same time (e.g.: When a NY consumer purchases apples from a Canadian orchard 12 miles away, it is a local purchase in terms of distance, though a regional purchase in terms of political boundaries.); and (3) An overarching goal of the NCRFI is to cultivate a regional approach to economic and community development – this goal is based on the understanding that communities conserve resources and gain assets by working together regionally. However, shifting from a “local” to a “regional” approach is not necessarily intuitive; by coupling “local” and “regional” we hope to cultivate a paradigm shift, one in which one’s locality is seen in regional terms.
B. Farm/Food Business Economics

A summary of responses from qualitative interviews with 15 direct market farmers and food businesses are presented below. Recurring themes from individuals’ responses are highlighted. We use direct quotes (in italics) to place the challenges, opportunities, and strategies faced and employed by these businesses in the context of Northern NY. To respect the confidentiality of the interviewees, individuals’ or farms’ names are not used in association with their quotes.

Interviewers inquired of the farmers and food business owners/operators:

- What was the level of investment to begin your operation?
- How did you obtain this funding?
- What are your feelings in regards to profitability?
- Have you experienced problems with cash flow and if so when during the production cycle?

**Level of investment at beginning** The farms and food businesses interviewed for this study represent a wide range of enterprises from businesses with roadside stands as their only market outlet to multi-million dollar operations, with multiple market outlets. Eight operate as sole proprietorships, two as corporations, three as cooperatives, and two as partnerships. This diversity in scale is also reflected in the required investment for start up, as outlined in the table below and further explained by the funding sources for the investment, which indicate that these operations can be initiated through a range of financial resources. At the higher end of the range for investments are animal operations, reflecting purchases of cattle and horses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Investment</th>
<th>Farms/Businesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $5,000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000 - $10,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$11,000 – $20,000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$21,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$51,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$100,000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dollar figure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Funding for the investment** The majority of respondents identified self savings or other as sources of funds to initiate the farm or food business. Some cashed in on previous enterprises (e.g., past business ventures and real estate) to fund the start-ups. Others relied on personal savings or member investments, as in cooperatives. At least two of those interviewed highlighted the desire to stay debt free in putting together their initial investment.

We were debt free, had some savings, and cash flowed it [made it work]. Using credit card (paid off in full each month) helps cash flow start-up … in the spring. We chose [to grow] things that would have low capital costs and quick return.

The second most common response was use of loans from family and friends. These resources are used to supplement other sources of investment for particular components of the operation. Two interviewees
reported relying on loans through commercial lenders; one specifically cited source of these funds is First Pioneer Farm Credit. One response was unique in that initial investment came primarily from community support, donations, and volunteer labor. This operation still relies primarily on community support, but has recognized the need to take steps to move toward a more sustainable business model.

**Profitability** Views on the profitability of the local/regional food market enterprises included in the study ranged widely. However, the majority of farms/food businesses feel that profitability is improving. Some have seen profits from the start of their businesses:

> [The] potential for profitability is huge and amazing. [We] made a profit in the first year and it always gets better if you stay on top of changes and pay attention to shifts in marketplace and customer demand.

For others, it took longer to see profitable returns:

> [It] took 10 years to be independent of [my] outside job. Profitability has been improving each year.

Strategies such as diversification in products and outlets were reported as key to enhancing profitability. Some owners/operators also reported that although profits are improving, they still need to maintain an outside source of revenue to help pay mortgage payments and support the enterprise in unprofitable years.

A distinction made by some interviewees in response to profitability is that their operation provides a living and more, beyond economics, suggesting that profitability is relative to personal goals.

> My personal goals were to establish an example business that would allow one spouse to work at home, and to help get the market used to prices that can economically support small farms…We need to get customers used to what good produce costs, to value it.

Compared to nine farmers/food business owners that feel profitability was improving, four reported that their operation was not profitable, but only because they are still reinvesting enterprise income into their businesses. For some this reinvestment involves paying off an initial investment, for others it involves making ongoing improvements (buying equipment), and for still others it involves not paying oneself for one’s labor in support of the business. At least one business cited the overall market and a need to establish their product as unique from national brands, to avoid competition based on economies of scale, as a means to building profitability.

**Cash flow for the operation** Those with no cash flow problems reported managing seasonal income differences primarily by setting aside money for slow seasons, building reserves, or diversifying into year-round products.

> My cash flow is fairly stable – U-pick strawberries pick up when [the] last of [my] commodity crop leaves storage[and] provides year round income.
C. Challenges

When asked about cash flow for the operation, the majority of interviewees reported some cash flow problems particularly in spring. Seasonal start-up costs precede later revenues so that time lag required some interviewees to use credit or other means to cover costs. Other means include operating as a community supported agriculture farm (wherein consumers pay for the products a farmer will grow for them in advance of the growing season), or paying workers based on commission for sales rather than monthly salaries.

At least one business reported always having cash flow problems which reflects issues with initial financing of the operation. For this business, short term money typically used for day-to-day operations is regularly used to fund capital projects, making cash flow constantly short.

Another economic issue is liability insurance; specifically interviewees were asked whether liability insurance is an important issue. Ten respondents have it and felt it is important for their operation, four reported having it, but that it is not currently required of them. Five cited liability insurance as difficult to get and/or a major expense. In discussing insurance at least one interviewee also cited the importance of adequate health insurance to her and described wanting to be able to purchase health insurance through the farm.

D. Opportunities

While every challenge can also be seen as an opportunity, opportunities specifically identified by study participants include the new and expanding interest in local/regional foods, in New York, and nationally, and room for growth of this market in the North Country. Citing the nationwide trend towards increased awareness regarding food sources, many owners/operators see the opportunity for more farms to become involved in local/regional food markets and the need for more farmers to meet this demand. They also see an opportunity for collaboration; in particular, shared purchasing of supplies, equipment, and marketing materials were all suggested. Interviewees also see the development of more support groups as an opportunity, viewing these groups as important to their success.

E. Strategies

What should communities do through local officials and community & economic developers in collaboration with agricultural organizations to better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products?

Based on these interviews, two types of strategies are needed to encourage further growth of a vibrant local/regional food economy in the North Country: education and infrastructure development. Interviewees seek consumer education that: (1) addresses the importance of healthy diets (not just low fat) and the relationships between healthy diets and local/regional foods; (2) identifies sources of local/
regional foods, and recognizes these foods as valuable, quality products and a community resource. Interviewees also seek educational materials that offer assistance with enterprise and market analysis, particularly regarding pricing strategies and expected profit margins for specific market outlets. They also seek educational opportunities, ranging from fact sheets to demonstrations, that share successful farm models and help them better understand production, equipment, and insurance concerns.

In terms of infrastructure development, producers seek support for working together to strengthen production/storage/transport/handling linkages. From their perspective, collaboration in the development of these types of infrastructure would benefit local and regional food producers and the communities they reside in through increased enterprises, market outlets, and export opportunities.

F. Conclusions

The farms and food businesses explored herein represent a small subsection of agriculture in the Adirondack-North Country region. However, local and regional farm and food businesses are filling a growing niche in the region’s agriculture and business sectors through the products they supply and the lifestyles they offer farmers and business owners. Specific to farm and food business economics, these owners/operators are using personal resources and those of family and friends to start businesses that can and are contributing to their communities in multiple ways. At the same time, while economic success is paramount, this research suggests that what defines economic success varies in accordance with other goals, like supporting a particular lifestyle, developing market support for small farms, educating consumers, and strengthening local food systems. Communities across the country can and are working together to strengthen these businesses. This research suggests Northern New York should consider exploring ways to address cash flow and insurance costs as a means to further strengthening local/regional farms and food businesses and, in turn, communities in the region. In the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region we share several recommendations designed to help Adirondack-North Country communities work together as a region to support these enterprises and capitalize on the ways they contribute to life in Northern New York.

To learn more about these businesses refer to the other Research Briefs in Section III of this report at: www.nnyregionallocalfoods.org.
Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region

III
Impact Analysis Research Brief C:
Training and Educational Resources

A. Overview

This brief, one of six in the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region, presents results from a study of local/regional foods operations in northern New York and is focused specifically on how the farmers and other food business owners/operators interviewed educate themselves about farming and marketing.1,2 There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local/regional foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The overall goal of this research is to better understand and document the impacts this type of production and marketing has on individual farms and food businesses, and the roles these businesses and markets play in Adirondack-North Country community and economic development. Community leaders are also exploring ways to support these local/regional food businesses, wanting to capitalize on ways they can benefit communities. With the goal of helping this region better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets and enhance the positive ways these businesses contribute to the region, the results of this analysis are intended as a resource for other farmers, food business owners/operators, consumers, policymakers and community & economic developers working to enhance and sustain agriculture in Northern New York.

1 The North Country Regional Food Initiative is a one year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Northern New York (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University.

2 Although we recognize that "local" and "regional" food systems are not necessarily the same thing and in many, if not most, cases are very different, we couple the words "local" and "regional" herein and throughout the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region for the following reasons: (1) Given the relative size of the Adirondack-North Country region, even a regional food system is relatively local, particularly in comparison to regional foodsheds that encompass multiple states (e.g. the Northeast Region); (2) Many communities in Northern NY border another state or another country, for people living in these communities, depending on whether or not "local" and "regional" are defined by distance or political boundaries, a distance that is local is literally local and regional at the same time (e.g.: When a NY consumer purchases apples from a Canadian orchard 12 miles away, it is a local purchase in terms of distance, though a regional purchase in terms of political boundaries.); and (3) An overarching goal of the NCRFI is to cultivate a regional approach to economic and community development - this goal is based on the understanding that communities conserve resources and gain assets by working together regionally. However, shifting from a "local" to a "regional" approach is not necessarily intuitive; by coupling "local" and "regional" we hope to cultivate a paradigm shift, one in which one's locality is seen in regional terms.
B. Training and educational resources

A summary of responses from qualitative interviews with 15 direct market farmers and food businesses are presented below. Recurring themes from individuals’ responses are highlighted. We use direct quotes (in italics) to place the challenges, opportunities, and strategies faced and employed by these businesses in the context of Northern NY. To respect the confidentiality of the interviewees, individuals’ or farms’ names are not used in association with their quotes.

Interviewers inquired of the farmers and food business owners/operators:

- How did you educate yourself about farming and marketing?

Twelve of the fifteen interviewees cited experience as a main source of learning about farming; some referred specifically to trial and error, while others cited their backgrounds:

*We were both born on farms (dairy farm); [we] have it in our blood.*

Others refer to previous work or personal experiences such as participating in community supported agriculture (CSA) operations, farm hopping (meaning working on multiple farms), and home gardening.

The second most common form of education reported was workshops/classes/meetings/conferences/tradeshows. These include Cornell Cooperative Extension and Cornell University programs, Northeast Organic Farming Association of NY conferences, producer association meetings, and NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and Farmers’ Market Federation of NYS meetings. These forums include general training (e.g. Marketing 101 and sessions on production techniques) as well as specific certifications (e.g. pesticide applicator training) and coursework (e.g. Quickbooks).

Another source of training and educational resources cited is other farmers/mentors. Some examples of resources include: formal programs, like the Regional Farm & Food Project mentor program and ‘twilight meetings’ at farms through Extension; and informal collaborations with past owners of an operation and farm visits in general. Some respondents seek input from customers for certain market outlets (college food service directors or cow dealers), while one interviewee commented on the value of just watching how others do things, reading fliers and advertising, and listening to customers’ feedback regarding that farm operation as well as those of others.

As frequently cited as other farmers/mentors was reading/websites/internet lists. These resources range from organizational newsletters, to Extension fact sheets, to farm magazines/trade publications and regulatory materials.

Interviewees mentioned organizations as playing a role in their education, through membership or resource sharing. Often the Small Business Administration is accessed for business plan development, as well as Cornell Cooperative Extension, and, interestingly, non-farm related groups for general leadership skill building and facilitation skills (St. Lawrence Leadership Institute and PTA).

Only two interviewees referred to formal education as a factor in their farm/food business training, both attended college level courses in some type of agricultural field.
C. Challenges³

A specific barrier raised by an interviewee in regards to training and educational resources is that the cost of workshops and related travel are getting too expensive.

This seems especially relevant as many educational programs of interest to farmers are held outside of the region.

D. Opportunities

While every challenge can also be seen as an opportunity, opportunities specifically identified by study participants include the new and expanding interest in local/regional foods in New York, and nationally, and room for growth of this market in the Adirondack-North Country region. Citing the nationwide trend towards increased awareness regarding food sources, many owners/operators see the opportunity for more farms to become involved in local/regional food markets and the need for more farmers to meet this demand. They also see an opportunity for collaboration; in particular, shared purchasing of supplies, equipment, and marketing materials were all suggested. Interviewees also see the development of more support groups as an opportunity, viewing these groups as important to their success.

E. Strategies

What should communities do through local officials and community & economic developers in collaboration with agricultural organizations to better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products?

Based on these interviews, two types of strategies are needed to encourage further growth of a vibrant local/regional food economy in Northern New York: education and infrastructure development. Interviewees seek consumer education that: (1) addresses the importance of healthy diets (not just low fat) and the relationships between healthy diets and local/regional foods; (2) identifies sources of local/regional foods, and recognizes these foods as valuable, quality products and a community resource. Interviewees also seek educational materials that offer assistance with enterprise and market analysis, particularly regarding pricing strategies and expected profit margins for specific market outlets. They also seek educational opportunities, ranging from fact sheets to demonstrations, that share successful farm models and help them better understand production, equipment, and insurance concerns.

In terms of infrastructure development, producers seek support for working together to strengthen production/storage/transport/handling linkages. From their perspective, collaboration in the development of these types of infrastructure would benefit local and regional food producers and the communities they reside in through increased enterprises, market outlets, and export opportunities.

³ Although we did not specifically ask study participants to identify challenges, opportunities, and strategies potentially impacting the future of their local/regional food market enterprises, all three were clearly articulated in their responses to the questions posed. In general, the challenges shared are of a specific nature in the sense that they relate to the individual topic addressed in each Research Brief on the farm and food business operations (not the one on organizational support for these operations): Market Outlets, Training and Educational Resources, Farm/Food Business Economics, Collaborations, and the Roles of Local/Regional Food Businesses in Northern NY in this report. Conversely, the opportunities and strategies that were identified are of a general nature and, as such, are equally relevant to all five research briefs included in the report. Thus, while the “Challenge” sections of these five research briefs are different, the “Opportunities” and “Strategies” sections, are verbatim.
F. Conclusions

The farms and food businesses explored herein represent a small subsection of agriculture in the Adirondack-North Country region. However, local and regional farm and food businesses are filling a growing niche in the region’s agriculture and business sectors through the products they supply and the lifestyles they offer farmers and business owners. The training and educational resources offered by publicly funded institutions, professional associations, and community-based organizations, are clearly important to these businesses. Local/regional farm and food business owners/operators draw heavily on these resources for professional development opportunities, with few having pursued agriculture through higher education channels. Communities across the country can and are working together to strengthen these businesses. Based on this research, professional development opportunities are an important resource communities can provide in their efforts to support local/regional food enterprises and reap the benefits they provide to communities. In the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region we share several recommendations designed to help Adirondack-North Country communities work together as a region to support these enterprises and capitalize on the ways they contribute to life in Northern New York.


Funding for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative is from the U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration University Center designated for New York State at Cornell University and hosted by Cornell’s Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI). For more information on CaRDI, contact Rod Howe, (607) 255-2170, rlh13@cornell.edu or visit www.oed.cornell.edu. To learn more about the North Country Regional Foods Initiative Project, contact Bernadette Logozar (518) 483-7403 or Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman at (607) 255-0417.

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.
A. Overview

This brief, one of six in the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region, presents results from a study of local/regional foods operations in Northern New York and is focused specifically on which organizations and individuals, if any, these enterprises collaborate with and how, if at all, collaborations impact the enterprises.¹ ² There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local/regional foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The overall goal of this research is to better understand and document the impacts this type of production and marketing has on individual farms and food businesses, and the roles these businesses and markets play in Northern New York community and economic development. Community leaders are also exploring ways to support these local/regional food businesses, wanting to capitalize on ways they can benefit communities. With the goal of helping this region better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets and enhance the positive ways these businesses contribute to the region, the results of this analysis are intended as a resource for other farmers, food business owners/operators, consumers, policymakers and community & economic developers working to enhance and sustain agriculture in Northern New York.

¹ The North Country Regional Food Initiative is a one year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Northern New York (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University.

² Although we recognize that “local” and “regional” food systems are not necessarily the same thing and in many, if not most, cases are very different, we couple the words “local” and “regional” herein and throughout the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region for the following reasons: (1) Given the relative size of the Adirondack-North Country region, even a regional food system is relatively local, particularly in comparison to regional foodsheds that encompass multiple states (e.g. the Northeast Region); (2) Many communities in Northern NY border another state or another country, for people living in these communities, depending on whether or not “local” and “regional” are defined by distance or political boundaries, a distance that is local is literally local and regional at the same time (e.g.: When a NY consumer purchases apples from a Canadian orchard 12 miles away, it is a local purchase in terms of distance, though a regional purchase in terms of political boundaries.); and (3) An overarching goal of the NCRFI is to cultivate a regional approach to economic and community development - this goal is based on the understanding that communities conserve resources and gain assets by working together regionally. However, shifting from a “local” to a “regional” approach is not necessarily intuitive; by coupling “local” and “regional” we hope to cultivate a paradigm shift, one in which one’s locality is seen in regional terms.
B. Collaborations

A summary of responses from qualitative interviews with 15 direct market farmers and food businesses are presented below. Recurring themes from individuals’ responses are highlighted. We use direct quotes (in italics) to place the challenges, opportunities, and strategies faced and employed by these businesses in the context of Northern NY. To respect the confidentiality of the interviewees, individuals’ or farms’ names are not used in association with their quotes.

Interviewers inquired of the farmers and food business representatives:

• Which organizations or individuals do you collaborate with?
• Can you estimate the value of collaboration to your enterprise?

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<tr>
<th>Collaborators</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCE/Cornell University</td>
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<tr>
<td>• NE Regional Fruit Program</td>
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<td>• Good Agricultural Practices Program</td>
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<td>• Local associations – classes, demonstration, resources</td>
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<td>• Beginning Farmer Project</td>
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<td>• Adirondack Harvest</td>
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<td>• Traditional Arts in Upstate NY</td>
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<td>Market outlets</td>
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<td>• Adirondack Farmers Market Cooperative</td>
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<td>• Finger Lakes Organic</td>
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<td>• North Country Grown Cooperative</td>
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<td>Northeast Organic Farming Association</td>
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<td>• Adirondack Harvest</td>
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<td>• Pride of NY</td>
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<td>• Seaway Valley Wine and Viticulture Association</td>
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<td>• Maple Producers Associations</td>
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<td>NYS Department of Agriculture &amp; Markets</td>
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**Value of collaboration to the enterprise** In determining the estimated value of collaborations to their farm/food businesses, respondents primarily referred to value in terms of non-economic impacts. Overwhelmingly, though they couldn’t place a dollar figure on the value of collaborations, study participants feel the collaborations contribute significantly to their operations.

*Invaluable, hard to estimate – save time/free!*

*Without these we would not exist – especially for start up.*

*We could not put a value on the knowledge and attention these entities have given us.*

For those that were able to calculate **dollar figures as a percentage of their overall income**, the values were high. Commenting in particular on collaboration through market outlets, one respondent indicated that these collaborative opportunities contribute to at least 75% of the enterprise’s sales. Further reflection
prompted the respondent to suggest that the other 25% of earnings are also attributable in part to collaboration around shared promotion - a Local Food Guide.

75% of profits for everything but roadside stand (although that was mentioned in the local food guide).

Another type of collaboration exists for those that sell through farmers’ markets, and have access to Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)/Food Stamp program income and/or the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). FMNP provides income eligible seniors, families with young children and pregnant mothers set benefits to be spent at farmers’ markets through local Office for the Aging and WIC agencies, while Food Stamp Program participants are able to utilize their EBT cards at participating markets. All of these programs require collaborating agencies and market entities to exist. Of the 15 interviewees, three participated in both programs and one FMNP only. The value of this collaboration ranged from 1% of sales, or as another farmer reported $90-$100/year, to 2/3 of sales at the farmers’ market (no dollar figure was given).

C. Challenges

At least one respondent found collaborations not effective:

I am too busy and have not found “teamwork” effective. I try to do things that will benefit others, but it seems to happen better if I just go ahead and do what I can rather than working in organizations.

Likewise, another respondent conveyed that while she had worked collaboratively with several groups on specific projects, she has also been invited to participate in or give presentations about her operation. She saw these invitations not as collaborative opportunities but as relationship building. She feels these opportunities are important for raising awareness about her business, but also time consuming. For her, determining which opportunities to pursue for collaborative work is difficult, as so many times these collaborations end up being more work on her part than if she does not participate in them.

D. Opportunities

While every challenge can also be seen as an opportunity, opportunities specifically identified by study participants include the new and expanding interest in local/regional foods, in New York, and nationally, and room for growth of this market in the Adirondack-North Country region. Citing the nationwide trend towards increased awareness regarding food sources, many owners/operators see the opportunity for more farms to become involved in local/regional food markets and the need for more farmers to meet

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3 Although we did not specifically ask study participants to identify challenges, opportunities, and strategies potentially impacting the future of their local/regional food market enterprises, all three were clearly articulated in their responses to the questions posed. In general, the challenges shared are of a specific nature in the sense that they relate to the individual topic addressed in each Research Brief on the farm and food business operations (not the one on organizational support for these operations); Market Outlets, Training and Educational Resources, Farm/Food Business Economics, Collaborations, and the Roles of Local/Regional Food Businesses in Northern NY in this report. Conversely, the opportunities and strategies that were identified are of a general nature and, as such, are equally relevant to all five research briefs included in the report. Thus, while the “Challenge” sections of these five research briefs are different, the “Opportunities” and “Strategies” sections, are verbatim.
this demand. They also see an opportunity for collaboration; in particular, shared purchasing of supplies, equipment, and marketing materials were all suggested. Interviewees also see the development of more support groups as an opportunity, viewing these groups as important to their success.

E. Strategies

What should communities do through local officials and community & economic developers in collaboration with agricultural organizations to better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products?

Based on these interviews, two types of strategies are needed to encourage further growth of a vibrant local/regional food economy in the Adirondack-North Country region: education and infrastructure development. Interviewees seek consumer education that: (1) addresses the importance of healthy diets (not just low fat) and the relationships between healthy diets and local/regional foods; (2) identifies sources of local/regional foods, and recognizes these foods as valuable, quality products and a community resource. Interviewees also seek educational materials that offer assistance with enterprise and market analysis, particularly regarding pricing strategies and expected profit margins for specific market outlets. They also seek educational opportunities, ranging from fact sheets to demonstrations, that share successful farm models and help them better understand production, equipment, and insurance concerns.

In terms of infrastructure development, producers seek support for working together to strengthen production/storage/transport/handling linkages. From their perspective, collaboration in the development of these types of infrastructure would benefit local and regional food producers and the communities they reside in through increased enterprises, market outlets, and export opportunities.

F. Conclusions

The farms and food businesses explored herein represent a small subsection of agriculture in the Adirondack-North Country. However, local and regional farm and food businesses are filling a growing niche in the region’s agriculture and business sectors through the products they supply and the lifestyles they offer farmers and business owners/operators. Specific to collaborations with other individuals and organizations, this research suggests that collaborative activities contribute significantly to these organizations. While further research is needed to determine what, if any, type of collaboration is more useful than another, team work at the local/regional level clearly benefits these businesses, increasing the likelihood that they will, in turn, contribute to the social and economic well-being of the communities in which they exist. Communities across the country can and are working together to strengthen these businesses. This research suggests the communities of Northern New York should consider thinking about
ways to promote opportunities for further collaboration: between local/regional food enterprises and the organizations that support them, among these organizations; and between these local/regional food businesses and organizations and enterprises in other sectors. In this way, the region would be expanding the network of support between and among its business sectors and organizations committed to furthering these sectors, and the communities in which they exist. In the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region we share several recommendations designed to help Adirondack-North Country communities work together as a region to support these enterprises and capitalize on the ways they contribute to life in Northern New York.


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Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.
A. Overview

This brief, one of six in the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region, presents results from a study of local/regional foods operations in Northern New York and is focused specifically on the roles the owner/operators of these operations see themselves and their businesses playing in Adirondack-North Country communities. There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local/regional foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The overall goal of this research is to better understand and document the impacts this type of production and marketing has on individual farms and food businesses, and the roles these businesses and markets play in Northern New York community and economic development. Community leaders are also exploring ways to support these local/regional food businesses, wanting to capitalize on ways they can benefit communities. With the goal of helping this region better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets and enhance the positive ways these businesses contribute to the region, the results of this analysis are intended as a resource for other farmers, food business owners/operators, consumers, policymakers and community & economic developers working to enhance and sustain agriculture in Northern New York.

1 The North Country Regional Food Initiative is a one year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Northern New York (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University.

2 Although we recognize that “local” and “regional” food systems are not necessarily the same thing and in many, if not most, cases are very different, we couple the words “local” and “regional” herein and throughout the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region for the following reasons: (1) Given the relative size of the Adirondack-North Country region, even a regional food system is relatively local, particularly in comparison to regional foodsheds that encompass multiple states (e.g. the Northeast Region); (2) many communities in Northern NY border another state or another country, for people living in these communities, depending on whether or not “local” and “regional” are defined by distance or political boundaries, a distance that is local is literally local and regional at the same time (e.g.: When a NY consumer purchases apples from a Canadian orchard 12 miles away, it is a local purchase in terms of distance, though a regional purchase in terms of political boundaries.); and (3) An overarching goal of the NCRFI is to cultivate a regional approach to economic and community development - this goal is based on the understanding that communities conserve resources and gain assets by working together regionally. However, shifting from a “local” to a “regional” approach is not necessarily intuitive; by coupling “local” and “regional” we hope to cultivate a paradigm shift, one in which one’s locality is seen in regional terms.
B. Roles

A summary of responses from qualitative interviews with 15 direct market farmers and food businesses are presented below. Recurring themes from individuals’ responses are highlighted. We use direct quotes (in italics) to place the challenges, opportunities, and strategies faced and employed by these businesses in the context of Northern NY. To respect the confidentiality of the interviewees, individuals’ or farms’ names are not used in association with their quotes. At our invitation, the farmers and food business owners/operators interviewed for this study reflected on how they, as business persons with a local/regional focus, contribute to their communities. In their responses, they described their roles in terms of interactions as buyers and sellers of food and farm products, as land owners, and as business people and citizens concerned about public health. What came across clearly is that many of these individuals see themselves as business persons and much more; they also see themselves as educators, and food security facilitators, that is, providing access to products that may not otherwise be available to local consumers. It is important to note that they not only see themselves as playing these roles but as responsible for fulfilling these roles – in other words they are intentional about contributing to their communities in the ways they identify.

It is my responsibility to provide a clean, fresh, safe quality product. I want to be proud of the products I offer and of my farm where it is grown.

In terms of education, the farmers and processors we interviewed see themselves as obligated to both convey the work and costs involved in food production to the public, and promote the benefits of their products in terms of quality and taste. Moreover, some businesses see their educational work as one of a mentoring nature – that is, they strive to model for others the potential of local production and local consumption and the ways both are possible.

Many of the owners/operators in this study also feel they are maintaining the knowledge base of agricultural production in this area by continuing its practice, and, most importantly, by doing so in an economically viable and environmentally sustainable way. They also believe that by providing their products to local consumers they are supporting and strengthening demand for such goods and, in so doing, ensuring their own future as well as that of other farmers needed to meet a growing demand.

[We are] an educational organization, a community development group – helping local agriculture come back to a healthy state – especially vegetable production, creating income opportunities for farmers, stopping economic leakages (purchase of products from outside the area that are produced here), providing healthy, good quality food to community, [and] keeping land in production rather than going back to brush.
C. Opportunities

Opportunities specifically identified by study participants include the new and expanding interest in local foods, in New York, and nationally, and room for growth of this market in the Adirondack-North Country region. Citing the nationwide trend towards increased awareness regarding food sources, many farmers see the opportunity for more farms to become involved in local/regional food markets and the need for more farmers to meet this demand. They also see an opportunity for collaboration; in particular, shared purchasing of supplies, equipment, and marketing materials were all suggested. Interviewees also see the development of more support groups as an opportunity, viewing these groups as important to their success.

D. Strategies

What should communities do through local officials and community & economic developers in collaboration with agricultural organizations to better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products?

Based on these interviews, two types of strategies are needed to encourage further growth of a vibrant local/regional food economy in the Adirondack-North Country region: education and infrastructure development. Interviewees seek consumer education that: (1) addresses the importance of healthy diets (not just low fat) and the relationships between healthy diets and local/regional foods; (2) identifies sources of local/regional foods, and recognizes these foods as valuable, quality products and a community resource. Interviewees also seek educational materials that offer assistance with enterprise and market analysis, particularly regarding pricing strategies and expected profit margins for specific market outlets. They also seek educational opportunities, ranging from fact sheets to demonstrations, that share successful farm models and help them better understand production, equipment, and insurance concerns.

In terms of infrastructure development, producers seek support for working together to strengthen production/storage/transport/handling linkages. From their perspective, collaboration in the development of these types of infrastructure would benefit local and regional food producers and the communities they reside in through increased enterprises, market outlets, and export opportunities.

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3 The opportunities and strategies shared by study participants are of a general nature and, as such, are equally relevant to the five research briefs (Market Outlets, Farm/Food Business Economics, Training and Educational Resources, Collaborations, and the Roles of Local/Regional Food Businesses in Northern NY) documenting the experiences of farmers and food business owners/operators included in the report. Thus, the “Opportunities” and “Strategies” sections are verbatim.
E. Conclusions

The farms and food businesses explored herein represent a small subsection of agriculture in the Adirondack-North Country. However, local and regional farm and food businesses are filling a growing niche in the region’s agriculture and business sectors through the products they supply and the lifestyles they offer farmers and business owners/operators. Communities across the country can and are working together to strengthen these businesses. This research suggests Northern NY communities should continue to support these enterprises and consider exploring ways to meet the challenges they face as a means to realizing their contributions to the region. In the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region we share several recommendations designed to help Adirondack-North Country communities work together as a region to support these enterprises and capitalize on the ways they contribute to life in Northern New York.

4 To learn more about these businesses refer to the other Research Briefs in Section III of this report at: www.nnyregionallocalfoods.org.
Impact Analysis Research Brief F: Organizational Support

Overview

This brief, one of six in the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region, presents results from a study of North Country organizations working to support connections between local and regional food producers and consumers. Our study examined the activities of each of these organizations, in order to understand the impacts they have on farms and communities in Northern New York. We also explored opportunities for collaboration on a regional basis. With the goal of helping communities better support businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products and enhancing the positive ways these businesses contribute to the region, the results of this analysis are intended as a resource for other farmers, food business owners/operators, consumers, policymakers and community & economic developers working to enhance and sustain agriculture in northern New York.

B. Organizational Support

A summary of responses from qualitative interviews with representatives from eleven Adirondack-North Country organizations is presented below. Recurring themes from individuals' responses are highlighted. We use direct quotes (in italics) to place the challenges, opportunities, and strategies faced and employed...
by these organizations in the context of Northern NY. To respect the confidentiality of the interviewees, individuals’ and organizations’ names are not used in association with their quotes.

Interviewers inquired of the organizational representatives:
• Is working to build and strengthen the local food system within your area a primary goal of your organization, if so why?
• Could you briefly describe the work your organization is doing in support of this?
• Where do you think there are gaps in our ability to pursue meaningful change in the local food system?
• What are the barriers you think must be overcome in order to build strong local food systems within the North Country?
• In what ways could a partnership of organizations and agencies working to support local/regional food initiatives address these barriers?

**Why work to build and strengthen the local/regional food system?** Reasons for pursuing the goal of building and strengthening the local/regional food system range from connecting farmers and consumers, to appreciation of local/fresh produce, to adding income to the county. For most organizational representatives, however, local/regional food system development is not a foremost part of their mission but rather a by-product in their pursuit of a more primary goal. One organization, for example, has as its mission the development of new agricultural products, new cultivars (e.g. cold-hardy grapes), and new industries in the region. Local/regional food systems development, has however, resulted from these activities.

*The group would like to build the industry locally* ... certain varieties grow well here that wouldn’t thrive in other areas.

Furthermore, of the organizations which do not see local or regional food system development as their primary goal, some support producers and consumers participating in local and regional food markets as part of assistance provided for all farms in support of agriculture development.

*We have a lot of farmers’ market and livestock producers that sell a lot of product locally. We represent all commodity groups, as well as direct market farmers who market more locally.*

*One of the top five priorities [of this organization] is improving the viability of farms. Do [we] care if sales are local? No, but production is local and the dollars are coming back into the community. As long as the farm is profitable and viable, then that is good for the local economy.*

**Ways of supporting local and regional food connections** Organizations in the Adirondack-North Country region are helping farmers make connections within their communities in a variety of ways. Specific approaches reflect the overarching mission of the organization, some examples include:

Through promotion of food security, various organizations encourage increased access to local/regional foods for all individuals within a community. They help farmers learn about consumer preferences, their ability to pay and even how they get to a market.
People come to the market because they expect fresh, local vegetables and fruits. We actively encourage growers to know their audience and grow for them. Seniors want their beets and Swiss chard; young families want…fruit.

Organizations are also creating tools and resources to connect producers and consumers. These include a website, a regional map, and guides or directories to local food. Organizations also create educational programs for producers, consumers and elected officials, and develop tools, such as cookbooks and recipes, to help farmers’ market and consumers use locally/regionally grown products. Some examples of the types of tools and resources reported include:

- Mentoring programs for new farmers
- Research and demonstration of innovative agricultural ideas
- An educational DVD [for consumers showcasing several farms selling their products through local/regional market outlets]

Another approach that many organizations use to support local and regional food connections are promotional events and activities: Harvest festivals, farmers’ markets, legislative receptions, and press coverage.

[During] our annual Legislators Reception…legislators, their staff and Commissioners of various state agencies are invited to partake in the food products of NYS provided by our members.

Organizations often also provide press for such promotions. Having relationships with media outlets and receiving regular coverage through the newsprint, radio or web enables organizations to draw attention to new businesses or initiatives that might not otherwise be on the radar screen of media outlets. This type of publicity is important because it is free to the enterprises showcased.

Some organizations offer direct support services:

- We secure [farmers’] market locations with owners, zoning boards, planning committees, local governments, etc. We offer insurance to all our sponsored markets. Most of the vendor fee goes into advertising and promotion of the markets.

Grant writing is also a type of service organizations provide that supports and assists connections between farmers and communities.

Facilitation is an essential role for organizations. Connecting farmers or communities to resources that will enable them to achieve their goals saves time and money for both. Organizations reported serving as a resource locator (e.g. helping to find grants and loans, buildings, and mediators), as an interpreter of local, state and federal regulations, and as a convener for individuals and groups to work together on common issues.

Though not every group reported this, lobbying, was seen as an important role for some organizations; they represent farmers in the region in their legislative lobbying efforts. This support is important because
legislation can be critical in enabling or restricting farm operations, from tax laws to processing regulations, zoning ordinances, and other issues at the intersection of community and commercial interests.

Helping a community work towards broader economic and social well-being goals, some organizations reported supporting local and regional food connections as a method of community development. Specifically, they have created opportunities for agri-tourism, worked with youth, and collaborated on fairs and special events that attract tourists to the region.

C. Challenges

Organizations described challenges to their own success and to the viability of farms in the Adirondack-North Country region. They recognize that their ability to effectively support local and regional food system development is related to the viability of the farms they work with. In terms of challenges to the organizations, a lack of financial resources, limited consumer knowledge regarding local/regional foods, poverty in northern NY and world views were all cited as barriers within their work. With respect to farming and marketing, the organizations cited national policy, regulatory issues, inadequate infrastructure and climate as challenges to marketing and production. More detailed descriptions of each of these challenges are provided below.

Very limited financial resources mean that few organizations have any full-time employees, and most are staffed by part-time or consulting personnel; all but one organization reported having volunteer assistance. As one interviewee put it, his organization lives on a

‘shoestring existence,’ [with substantial] reliance on volunteers

Organizational representatives also reported feeling that they are often challenged in achieving their goals by a lack of consumer knowledge about healthy foods and how to use them (cooking with raw ingredients, label reading) and the constant presence of conflicting mass media messages.

The food marketing gurus have the public pretty much reliant on all those high cost/low nutrition convenience foods. But, the cost of convenience has sky-rocketed, so perhaps folks will really start to buy local.

Commercial syrups! Aunt Jemima & Mrs. Butterworth [exasperate another organizational representative: from her perspective] more education [is] needed [to help consumers understand how much better locally produced syrups are than these products].

Another interviewee identified poverty in northern NY as a challenge, describing purchasing habits that focus on price and quantity over nutrition. This interviewee feels people are paying more for the processing and packaging of the food they purchase than for the nutritional quality of that food.

Many organizational representatives described certain world views or perspectives as posing challenges to their work. One described a lack of pride in local/regional products and feels,

we should [instead] strut our stuff [and] be proud of our ability to grow and produce terrific food.

Similarly, another respondent expressed concern that there is a world view in the region which holds that the majority of resources (organizational, financial, and institutional) allocated in support of the
agricultural industry should be dedicated to the large scale dairy farms that make a significantly greater contribution to the Northern New York economy than the small-scale diversified enterprises that typically support local/regional food systems.

Perspectives reflecting a sense of territoriality among organizations was also cited as a challenge. Respondents shared the sentiment that there is

[a] need for more sharing and cooperation where everyone feels like they will come out ahead.

Challenges that interviewees feel farms themselves face, and thereby affect their work, include national policy, regulatory issues, and inadequate infrastructure. Examples that illustrate these themes include one interviewee’s description of federal subsidies that favor ‘cheap and imported foods’ and undermine the prices local/regional farmers are able to charge. Water testing and farm to school and farmers’ markets regulations are other regulatory issues that are difficult. In regards to infrastructure, several organizations identified the following concerns: the lack of transportation to markets for both consumers and producers (the need for a distribution system); the absence of processing facilities that are accessible to small-scale entrepreneurs; increasingly limited financial support – specifically a decline in agricultural lenders in the region; farm labor; the need for technology specific to agricultural production in the Northern NY climate; and, an overarching concern that the number of farms currently operating in Northern NY is inadequate to meet the demand for local/regional products.

A few interviewees also see the northern climate as a challenge to the viability of local/regional market enterprises but also see season extension practices as one means to overcoming this challenge.

D. Opportunities

Overwhelmingly, the greatest asset interviewees see in this region and therefore the greatest opportunity is the people resources in the Adirondack-North Country region, that is, the skills and talents of those committed to making local/regional foods work. This includes an

enthusiastic and knowledgeable farmer base and a rural region with residents that still possess an agricultural memory and are familiar with farming and are supportive of local farms.

In addition to people, interviewees see the physical resources (land/water) in the area as both an asset and a means to further opportunity. As described by one respondent, the Adirondack-North Country region has:

Decent soils, a decent growing season, good climate, and land prices that are really low compared to almost any other part of the country.

Other opportunities stem from forces that, though based outside of the region, have a direct impact on the area: These include the growing interest in relationships between local/regional foods and health, the draw of the Adirondacks, and tourists with money to spend that visit the area. Moreover, outside funds are available to organizations in the area from various institutions and agencies as well as individuals.

Interestingly, both a growing population and the region’s overall small population were cited as opportunities; the former being particular to a single county in the region and the latter being seen as making it easier for direct communications and fewer distractions within relatively small communities.
Though many aspects of the region’s infrastructure were cited as challenges, one item noted as an opportunity is the presence of Interstates 81 and 87. On the flanks of the Northern New York, these routes enable transportation and therefore sales of local/regional products within and just outside the region.

**E. Strategies**

What should communities do through local officials and community & economic developers in collaboration with organizations to better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products? A majority of organizational representatives interviewed see two strategies as being critical for furthering their work and strengthening the local/regional food system. The strategies identified are promotion and education for both consumers and producers.

**Promotion** entails event coordination across the region, increasing events that showcase local/regional foods and agriculture, as well as promotion of farming in general to increase the available local/regional food supply. Promotion also refers to that within the agricultural community itself, with one interviewee suggesting that farmers need to be more positive about themselves.

**Education** of producers refers primarily to increasing variety and supply of quality local/regional foods. Education of consumers ranged from providing a better understanding of the real costs of growing food and the benefits of supporting local/regional farms to cooking demonstrations at farmers’ markets. It was mentioned that Cornell Cooperative Extension already does food and nutrition education, but that markets need to make better and more frequent use of this resource.

Another strategy for strengthening the local/regional food system includes coordinated collaboration among organizations:

[One organizational representative urged Cornell Cooperative Extension to] help [the organizations] work together, learn from each other.

Likewise encouraging local government support for local/regional food initiatives including expansion of agri-tourism and securing financial support for these initiatives – in particular start up capital for new farmers – as well addressing regulatory issues with a unified voice and increasing the amount of technical support available to farmers were cited.

Two final strategies mentioned by interviewees that could be explored by building on all of the above suggestions are further market development, linking farmers and chefs, food service, institutions, etc. and identifying and learning about successful delivery systems for getting products to markets.

**F. Conclusions**

The information shared by organizations included in this study reflect the accomplishments of many individuals in the Adirondack-North Country region committed to making a local/ regional food system a reality. By documenting the accomplishments of these organizations as well as opportunities and challenges related to their success, and strategies for addressing both, from the perspective of representatives of these organizations, we hope this brief provides further impetus for communities to recognize these efforts, and the ways they contribute to the region, and work together with them to realize their potential benefits.³

³ To learn more about these businesses refer to the other Research Briefs in Section III of this report at: www.nnyregionallocalfoods.org.

Funding for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative is from the U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration University Center designated for New York State at Cornell University and hosted by Cornell’s Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI). For more information on CaRDI, contact Rod Howe, (607) 255-2170, rlh13@cornell.edu or visit www.cardi.cornell.edu. To learn more about the North Country Regional Foods Initiative Project, contact Bernadette Logozar (518) 483-7403 or Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman at (607) 255-0417.

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.
Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region:

IV
Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Overview

This final section of the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region presents recommendations related to a study of local/regional foods operations and the organizations that support them in Northern New York.\(^1\)\(^2\) It is focused specifically on strategies for addressing challenges and capitalizing on opportunities for enhancing local/regional food businesses and the ways these businesses contribute to broader community and economic development goals in the region. The recommendations come from a combination of sources including: (1) the farm/food business operators/owners and local/regional foods organizational representatives interviewed during the study; (2) ideas shared during the North Country Regional Foods Initiative’s April 18, 2008 conference for community and economic developers on The Role of Adirondack North Country Foods in Community & Economic Development; and (3) the experiences of the research team members, all of whom work to strengthen farm and food businesses in Northern New York. There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local/regional foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The overall goal of this research is to better understand and document the impacts this type of production and marketing has on individual farms and food businesses, and the roles these businesses and markets play in Adirondack-North Country community and economic development. Community leaders are also exploring ways to support these local/regional food businesses, wanting to

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\(^1\) The North Country Regional Food Initiative is a one year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Northern New York (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University.

\(^2\) Although we recognize that “local” and “regional” food systems are not necessarily the same thing and in many, if not most, cases are very different, we couple the words “local” and “regional” herein and throughout the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region for the following reasons: (1) Given the relative size of the Adirondack-North Country region, even a regional food system is relatively local, particularly in comparison to regional foodsheds that encompass multiple states (e.g. the Northeast Region); (2) Many communities in Northern NY border another state or another country, for people living in these communities, depending on whether or not “local” and “regional” are defined by distance or political boundaries, a distance that is local is literally local and regional at the same time (e.g.: When a NY consumer purchases apples from a Canadian orchard 12 miles away, it is a local purchase in terms of distance, though a regional purchase in terms of political boundaries); and (3) An overarching goal of the NCRFI is to cultivate a regional approach to economic and community development - this goal is based on the understanding that communities conserve resources and gain assets by working together regionally. However, shifting from a “local” to a “regional” approach is not necessarily intuitive; by coupling “local” and “regional” we hope to cultivate a paradigm shift, one in which one’s locality is seen in regional terms.
capitalize on ways they can benefit communities. With the goal of helping this region better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets and enhance the positive ways these businesses contribute to the region, the results of this analysis are intended as a resource for other farmers, food business owners/operators, consumers, policymakers and community & economic developers working to enhance and sustain agriculture in Northern New York.

B. Recommendations

Specific to enhancing food and farm businesses

Improve farmer collaboration
• Establish a regional network of farmers for communication, buying cooperatively, mentoring one another, and education; include a newsletter.
• Develop sources of funding to support mentoring programs and study groups.

Improve farmers’ access to information and resources
• Use the Cornell Small Farms Program publication “Guide to Farming in NY” to develop a farmer-accessible guide to regionally specific information on resources for:
  • Insurance
  • Financing
  • Professional development/professional associations
  • Marketing
  • Enterprise analysis
  • Equipment and supplies
• Look into travel stipends and scholarships for farmers to attend conferences outside of the region, include money to attend trainings/events in grant budgets.
• Adapt or create revolving loans and micro loan opportunities for farmers to access capital for short term or smaller sums.

Build regional infrastructure for distribution and processing
• Create a task force of representatives from the six northern counties to specifically look at regional infrastructure needs for local/regional products and devise options to address them:
  • Production
  • Processing
  • Grading
  • Transportation/Distribution
  • Handling
  • Storage

Specific to enhancing community and economic development through local/regional foods

Identify shared goals and develop a collaborative regional model to achieve them
• Establish a regional network of organizations working in support of local/regional agriculture and broader community food issues; share regular communications of related local and statewide
organizations, programs and policy issues via cce-nnylocalregionalfoods-l list serve; and host annual meetings (consider a combination of venues/technologies to achieve this).

- Identify mutual and individual benefits to be achieved through regional collaboration, including long and short term objectives.
- Strengthen existing local/regional food organizations by including representatives on community and economic development boards, planning boards and committees.
- Conversely, be sure that local/regional food related issues are taken to community and economic development arenas, as well as placed on local legislative agendas.

Connect local and regional food markets to broader community and economic development initiatives

- Further link tourism and agriculture - support food, farm products and farms themselves as part of regional identity, history, arts and culture.
- Help tourism businesses (e.g. restaurants/hotels) understand the potential value of working with local/regional food businesses, given consumer interest in regionally produced products.
- Include diverse farming options in promoting business development (including recruiting new farmers) within the region.
- Explore the local/regional food network and related activities with local officials and community and economic developers as a model of or, even a means to, regional collaboration to achieve other community and economic development goals.

Support local, state and national policies that encourage local and regional food production, marketing and sales

- Support training for planning boards on agricultural issues including agricultural districts and farmland protection.
- Raise awareness of policies that impact local/regional food and farm issues.

Specific to enhancing both businesses and communities

Highlight successes

- Identify and share examples of successful individual local/regional food enterprises and collaborative businesses (cooperatives, distribution systems, processing centers), both from within and outside of the region and state with area farmers/food entrepreneurs. Use these as models/guides or mentors for area farmers. Include thorough enterprise analysis and business information as part of learning guide.
- Identify and share examples of public support for successful local/regional food initiatives with municipal, county and regional leaders.

Educate Consumers on…

- New and changing farm enterprises
- Nutritional information relating to local/regional foods
- Connections between health, diet, and local/regional foods
- Connections between local/regional foods and community and economic development opportunities
Conduct further research to further our understanding of
• The overall economic impact of local/regional food businesses in the region
• The market potential for local/regional foods

C. Conclusions

The North Country Regional Foods Initiative research highlights the multitude of models and ideas underway in the Adirondack-North Country region for furthering a sustainable local/regional food and agricultural system. It is evident that direct market farmers and those using regional identity marketing are building on an agricultural tradition in the Adirondack-North Country that emphasizes the social and ecological, as well as economic, contributions that farms, food businesses, and their owners/operators make to their communities.3 These business people are working to attain a quality of life for themselves in a way that also lends itself to building trust and confidence in their products among their customers and neighbors, and intentionally contributes to the communities and region they share.

The farmers, food business owners/operators, and organizational representatives interviewed for this work as well as conference presenters and participants at the April 18th, 2008 event in Tupper Lake, NY recognize the potential for and the hard work involved in re-establishing a regional food system. Agriculture and farming are an integral part of life in Northern NY, for those pursuing farming as a livelihood and for consumers interested in reconnecting with their food sources. Communities also benefit from these pursuits. The research and recommendations referred to throughout this report are intended to help create a regional environment wherein these related goals - production for local/regional food markets, consumption of locally and regionally produced foods, and community and economic development - can be achieved.

As Extension professionals we look forward to working together, in a regional partnership, with Northern New York communities, to support the pursuit and achievement of these goals.

3To learn more about these businesses refer to the Research Briefs in Section III of this report at: www.nnyregionallocalfoods.org.


Funding for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative is from the U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration University Center designated for New York State at Cornell University and hosted by Cornell’s Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI). For more information on CaRDI, contact Rod Howe, (607) 255-2170, rlh13@cornell.edu or visit www.cardi.cornell.edu. To learn more about the North Country Regional Foods Initiative Project, contact Bernadette Logozar (518) 483-7403 or Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman at (607) 255-0417.
Research Report on the Impacts of Local & Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region:

Appendices

The North Country Regional Food Initiative, is a one year project dedicated to understanding economic and social impacts of local and regional food initiatives in the Adirondack-North Country and enhancing the ways these initiatives positively contribute to the region. The project is a collaborative effort of the seven Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Northern New York (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties) and the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) at Cornell University.

Although we recognize that "local" and "regional" food systems are not necessarily the same thing and in many, if not most, cases are very different, we couple the words "local" and "regional" herein and throughout the Research Report on the Impacts of Local and Regional Foods in the Adirondack-North Country Region for the following reasons: (1) Given the relative size of the Adirondack-North Country region, even a regional food system is relatively local, particularly in comparison to regional foodsheds that encompass multiple states (e.g. the Northeast Region); (2) Many communities in Northern NY border another state or another country, for people living in these communities, depending on whether or not "local" and "regional" are defined by distance or political boundaries, a distance that is local is literally local and regional at the same time (e.g.: When a NY consumer purchases apples from a Canadian orchard 12 miles away, it is a local purchase in terms of distance, though a regional purchase in terms of political boundaries.); and (3) An overarching goal of the NCRFI is to cultivate a regional approach to economic and community development - this goal is based on the understanding that communities conserve resources and gain assets by working together regionally. However, shifting from a "local" to a "regional" approach is not necessarily intuitive; by coupling "local" and "regional" we hope to cultivate a paradigm shift, one in which one's locality is seen in regional terms.

The full report can be found online at: www.nnyregionallocalfoods.org
Case Study Protocol

The purpose of documenting North Country farm and food businesses that use a direct marketing or ‘local foods’ approach to selling their agricultural product(s) is to obtain a detailed impact analysis of this approach on: the business of each operation; the community that each is located in; and, the larger implications for the agricultural sector in the North Country.

The guiding questions for the case studies (i.e., questions the investigator must keep in mind during the interview) are:

How does regional/local food production and marketing in the North Country currently affect:

1. Agricultural production and farm profitability?
   (Examples: diversity of farm products/value-added products, new markets and more sales)

2. Community and economic development?
   (Examples: job/enterprise creation, cultural opportunities, social institutions, public health)

3. The environment?
   (Examples: land use practices, food safety, open-space issues)

Each Extension Educator in the six North Country counties will be responsible for interviewing two businesses, total. The final 12 farm or food businesses will be selected by the team to represent an overall diversity of locations in the North Country and a mix of approaches to direct or ‘local foods’ marketing, including a dairy processor that uses regional identity marketing, a maple or honey producer that uses regional identity marketing, a Community Supported Agriculture farm, a farmers market vendor, a meat and/or egg producer that sells locally, a cooperative member that sells locally, a producer that sells Farm-to-Institution, a producer with a roadside stand, two producers that sell direct wholesale (wholesale market, auction, supermarket, gourmet shop, food co-ops, and/or restaurants), and two farms that are listed in a ‘local food guide’ (e.g., Adirondack Harvest member, ANCA Arts, Crafts, & Food guide, localharvest.org, Jefferson County or GardenShare’s Local Food Guides).

Once the farms and food businesses have been identified, the case study interviews will be implemented as follows:

1. Extension educators will send a letter introducing the project and requesting an opportunity to interview a principle owner of the business or a representative of the owner (see “Letter of Introduction” included in this document).
2. Three days after the educator has sent the letter, the educator will call the business owner, reference the letter and the project, and request an opportunity to interview him or her, or a designated representative.
   a. If the owner agrees, the educator will schedule a meeting.
   b. If the owner declines to be interviewed, the educator will ask if the owner would be willing to reconsider given more information about the project.
      i. If the owner agrees, the educator will call Katherine or Heidi to share more information.
Case Study Protocol

1. If, after conversing with Katherine or Heidi, the owner is then willing to participate, the educator will be advised to contact the owner and schedule a meeting.

2. If, after conversing with Katherine or Heidi, the owner is still unwilling to participate, Katherine or Heidi will thank the owner for his or her time.
   ii. If the owner disagrees, the educator will thank the owner for his or her time.

3. Once the meeting has been scheduled, the educator will send a confirmation letter, indicating the time, and referencing the following documents which will be included in the confirmation letter mailing:
   a. The Human Subjects approved informed consent form (double-sided).
   b. The ‘Case Study Interview Guide’, questions 1-32.
   c. The Case Study Enterprise Information Form (double-sided).

4. Before going to the scheduled meeting the educator should print the following materials to share with the interviewee during the interview: (1) Two copies of the informed consent form; and (2) A second copy of the Case Study Enterprise Information Form of the interview guide and a stamped, return envelope addressed to Katherine Lang at CCE St. Lawrence County, which should be used for returning the completed Case Study Enterprise Information Form.

5. The educator will then meet with the owner / representative as scheduled to conduct the interview according to the following protocol:
   a. After introducing herself, the educator will hand the director a second copy of the informed consent form and read the form with the owner/representative.
   b. The educator will then ask the owner /representative if he or she has any questions about the project and the informed consent form.
   c. The educator will then ask the owner /representative to share his or her understanding of the project.
      i. If the understanding is accurate, the educator will ask the owner/representative to sign two copies of the informed consent form; one for the owner’s files and one for the project files (send this one to Heidi at CaRDI).
      ii. If the understanding is not accurate, the educator will clarify the issue at hand and assess the owner’s/representative’s understanding again.
         1. If the understanding is accurate, the educator will ask the owner/representative to sign two copies of the informed consent form; one for the owner’s files and one for the project files.

6. Once the informed consent form has been signed, the educator will:
   a. If given permission to do so during the informed consent process, turn on a tape recorder and proceed with the interview, also taking notes.
   b. If not given permission to use a tape recorder, proceed with the interview, recording it with notes only.

7. At the end of the interview, the educator should:
   a. Remind the interviewee to complete and return the Case Study Enterprise Information Form, which we are asking them to fill out on their own.
   b. Address any questions or let them know their question will be addressed by the project coordinators.
   c. Ask that the completed form be returned in a pre-addressed, stamped envelope within one week’s time.
   d. Thank the owner/representative for his or her time, and remind him or her that we will send them a draft copy of any publications relating to their interview, for their approval prior to publication and a final copy of the published document.

8. Once back at the office, within two days of the interview, the educator should:
Case Study Protocol

a. Send the owner/representative a signed thank you note (see below), including a reminder to complete the interview form and a second form and stamped, return envelope, addressed to Katherine Lang.

b. If the form has not been received within two weeks of the interview, follow-up with a reminder that we need the form.

c. Send the signed informed consent form and interview tape to Heidi

d. Send the interview notes (one copy each) to Katherine and Heidi.

9. No more than six months after the interview, destroy the interview tapes (Heidi).

10. No more than three years after the interview, destroy the interview notes and data (Heidi).
Case Study Letter of Introduction

**To be printed on letterhead of the Association staff conducting the interview.**


Business Name
Business Address Line 1
Business Address Line 2

Date

Dear [Business Owner Name]:

I am an Educator, specializing in ___________________, with Cornell Cooperative Extension of ___________________ County. I would like to interview you about your [farm/food business] as part of a project called the North Country Regional Foods Initiative. You may have read about this project in the paper. The purpose of this study is to document the impact local/regional marketing has on a farm or food business, and the role local food markets play in North Country community and economic development. Ultimately, our goal is to use this impact analysis to help the North Country better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products.

Specifically, we would like to interview you about your business to get a detailed look at your direct marketing/local/regional foods operation – with a focus on why and how you started using your current marketing approach. There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. Learning about your operation will help us to better understand the impacts of local and regional foods in the context of individual enterprises.

This interview should take about 2 hours. I will call you in approximately three days to follow-up on this letter and, if you are willing to participate in our study, set up a time when we can meet for the interview.

Thanks very much for your time,

Sincerely,

[Name of Interviewer]
Case Study Confirmation Letter

**To be printed on letterhead of the Association staff conducting the interview.

[Business Name]
[Business Address Line 1]
[Business Address Line 2]

[Date]

Dear [Business Owner Name]:

On behalf of the North Country Regional Food Initiative Project team, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in our study of the social and economic impacts of local and regional food markets in the North Country.

This letter is to confirm that you’ve agreed to be interviewed by me on [day of the week, month, date] at [time of the day.] As we discussed, I will meet you at [location where you agreed to conduct the meeting.]

In preparation for the meeting, I’ve enclosed the interview guide I will be using to talk with you about your business operation and an “informed consent form.” The informed consent form describes the focus of our study, the nature of the questions I will be asking, and your rights as a participant in the study. Although I will go over both the interview guide and the informed consent form with you prior to the start of our interview, please read both of these documents prior to our scheduled interview time and call me if you have any questions or concerns about either document. My number is [interviewer’s phone number.]

Thanks again and know I look forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,

[Interviewer’s name.]

Name: ________________________________

Interviewer: ______________

Farm/Business Name: ________________________________

Date: __________________

Phone number: ________________________________

Time: ______________

Address: ________________________________

County: ______________

City: ______________

State: _____

Zip: ______________
Case Study Interview Guide

Interview Introduction and Informed Consent Review
**Hand consent form to interviewee prior to reading the statement below.

As I’ve mentioned, I am an Educator, specializing in ____________________, with Cornell Cooperative Extension of __________________ County. I am interviewing you as part of a project called the North Country Regional Foods Initiative. You may have read about this project in the paper. Thanks for agreeing to participate in our case study of direct marketing/local foods businesses. The purpose of this interview is to get a detailed look at your direct marketing/local/regional foods operation – with a focus on why and how you started using your current marketing approach. There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The purpose of this study is to document the impact this type of marketing has on a farm or food business, and the role local food markets play in North Country community and economic development. Ultimately, our goal is to use this impact analysis to help the North Country better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products.

This interview should take about 2 hours. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. However, you are in no way obligated to participate in it. You will not be penalized in any way if you decline to participate in it. You may ask questions about the study both before committing to participate in it and at any time throughout the study. If you do choose to participate in the study, we would like to tape record our interview with you so we have something to refer to, to check facts. You may refuse to have the interview taped and still participate in the study. If you grant us permission to use the tape recorder, you may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any time. We will destroy the tapes no later than six months after the interview. We will destroy the interview guide notes and data no later than three years after the interview. You may also refuse to answer any question at any time and you may choose to end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time.

The information we will be asking you to share WILL be published in a research report. However, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data for publication purposes. Instead, this information along with other direct marketing/local foods growers/processors’ will be used to illustrate general estimates on levels of investment, income, and profitability. If there is something you prefer not to have publicly disclosed, please be sure to let me know. You will also be asked to review and approve any written materials before they are published. You will also be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.* You may contact Cornell University’s Institutional Review Board (the institutional program that ensures studies are conducted in an ethical manner), with any questions, concerns or complaints. They can be contacted via: email at uchs@cornell.edu, phone (607-255-5138) and website (http: www.irb.cornell.edu).

**Interviewer breaks from reading the informed consent form to address the following:

Do you understand these conditions? If so, please tell me what your role in this project is and the rights you have as a participant in this study.

If not, please let me know what I haven’t explained sufficiently. [Clarify anything that the interviewee was unclear about.]
Case Study Interview Guide

*Once it is clear that the interviewee understands the project, his/her role in it, and his/her rights, continue on to finish reading and ask them to sign the informed consent form:

I have read/heard and understand the above conditions for this interview. I understand that the information, including financial data about the organization, will be published in research reports exploring the impact of local and regional foods initiatives in the North Country. I acknowledge that I have been informed that I will have the opportunity to review and approve any written materials before they are published. I hereby agree to participate in this interview.

Signed: _____________________________________________   Date:_____________________
(Interviewee)

I addition to agreeing to participate in this interview, I hereby give _____ / do not give ______ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to record this interview.

I also hereby give _____ / do not give _____ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to include information about my organization in reports, and use the name of our organization in forthcoming publications.

Signed:________________________________________  Date:_____________
(Interviewee)

Signed:________________________________________  Date:_____________
(North Country Regional Foods Initiative Representative)

Project Coordinator Contact Information:
Katherine Lang       Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman
St. Lawrence County Cooperative Extension   Community and Rural Development Institute
1894 State Highway 68      Development Sociology, 39 Warren Hall
Canton, NY 13617      Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853
Phone:  315-379-0926      Phone:  607-255-0417
Email: kaa20@cornell.edu     Email: hmm1@cornell.edu

*This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on ______________________.
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
North Country Regional Foods Initiative Case Study

This interview is part of a project called the North Country Regional Foods Initiative. Thanks for agreeing to participate in our case study of direct marketing/local foods businesses. The purpose of this interview is to get a detailed look at your direct marketing/local/regional foods operation – with a focus on why and how you started using your current marketing approach. There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The purpose of this study is to document the impact this type of marketing has on a farm or food business, and the role local food markets play in North Country community and economic development. Ultimately, our goal is to use this impact analysis to help the North Country better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products.

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The information we will be asking you to share WILL be published in a research report. However, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data for publication purposes. Instead, this information along with other direct marketing/local foods growersprocessors’ will be used to illustrate general estimates on levels of investment, income, and profitability. If there is something you prefer not to have publicly disclosed, please be sure to let me know. You will also be asked to review and approve any written materials before they are published. You will also be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.* You may contact Cornell University’s Institutional Review Board (the institutional program that ensures studies are conducted in an ethical manner), with any questions, concerns or complaints. They can be contacted via: email at uchs@cornell.edu, phone (607-255-5138) and website (http: www.irb.cornell.edu).

over
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
North Country Regional Foods Initiative Case Study

I have read/heard and understand the above conditions for this interview. I understand that the information, including financial data about the organization, will be published in research reports exploring the impact of local and regional foods initiatives in the North Country. I acknowledge that I have been informed that I will have the opportunity to review and approve any written materials before they are published. I hereby agree to participate in this interview.

Signed: _____________________________________________   Date:_____________________
(Interviewee)

I addition to agreeing to participate in this interview, I hereby give _____ / do not give _____ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to record this interview.

I also hereby give _____ / do not give _____ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to include information about my organization in reports, and use the name of our organization in forthcoming publications.

Signed:________________________________________  Date:_____________
(Interviewee)

Signed:________________________________________  Date:_____________
(North Country Regional Foods Initiative Representative)

Project Coordinator Contact Information:
Katherine Lang       Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman
St. Lawrence County Cooperative Extension   Community and Rural Development Institute
1894 State Highway 68      Development Sociology, 39 Warren Hall
Canton, NY 13617      Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853
Phone:  315-379-0926      Phone:  607-255-0417
Email: kaa20@cornell.edu     Email: hmm1@cornell.edu

*This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on ____________________.
Case Study Interview Guide

I. Farm Characteristics

1. What is your role on the farm/in the food business?

2. What is the name of the primary owner (if not interviewee) or owners not in his/her/your immediate family?

3. If interviewee is primary owner:
   What is the number of family members that work on the farm? And hours worked?

   What, if any, is a family member’s non-farm occupation? And hours worked?

4. What are the number of paid employees, hours worked, and annual payroll on the farm/food business?
Case Study Interview Guide

5. What is the legal structure of the operation? (Sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, cooperative, other)

6. How many years have you been in the farming/food business in general?

7. How many years have you had a direct marketing/local/regional foods aspect to the farm/food business?

8. Can you tell me how you got into farming/food business?

- Market Outlets
9. How do you find/choose the markets for your products? (Was there market research? How? What methods?)

10. What do you consider the trade area for the farm/food products?
11. How are you able to adjust to market demand within the farm/food business? (i.e., expand, shrink, change varieties). What are limits to production?

12. What are your current delivery methods?

13. What are the advertising/promotional strategies for the farm/food business? (Local food guides, Adirondack Harvest, newsletter, labels, brochures, POS materials)

14. How do you establish your prices?

15. How are your customers currently involved with the farm/food business (work days, tours, CSA members)? Do you have a lot of repeat customers? Do you track this? Do you think it is an important issue?
Case Study Interview Guide

- **Economics Note:** Information from the following section will only be used in combination with data from other businesses for publication, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data.

16. How many acres are there in production? How many in total? Rented?

17. What was the level of investment to begin this operation?

18. Where did the funding come from for the investment (loans/commercial lenders, family, friends, investors)?

19. What are your general feelings about the profitability of the direct marketing/local food operation? (How long did it take to make a profit? Has profitability been improving each year?)

20. Have there been cash flow problems? At what times in the production cycle? What has caused these problems?

21. Is liability insurance an important issue?
**Case Study Interview Guide**

- **Collaborations**

  22. What organizations or individuals in the community, county or state do you collaborate with? In what ways?

  23. Can you estimate the value of this collaboration to the enterprise?

  24. Do you participate in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program or accept Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)/Food Stamps?

  25. Can you estimate the value of this collaboration to the enterprise?

  26. What do you see your role as in the community as a farmer/food business owner? (land use, public health)
Case Study Interview Guide

II. Farm/Food Business Evolution
I’d like to hear a little more about how this operation came to be and what changes have occurred over time:

27. How did you educate yourself about farming and marketing in general? (e.g., trial and error, workshops, organizational memberships, reading, a mentor, etc.)
   - Identifying alternatives, options - where do you get info?

28. How has the business changed over the time of your involvement?

29. Why-motivation? – what was the big picture driving the business?

30. How are decisions made to change?
31. What information would help you in making such decisions in the future?

32. What else would like to share with me regarding local/regional foods and direct marketing operations in the North Country?

Thanks!
**Case Study Interview Guide**

***Interviewer breaks from asking questions to give a hand a copy of the following form “Case Study Enterprise Information Form” to the interviewee, along with a self addressed envelope for returning the completed question to the project coordinators. (Use Katherine’s St. Lawrence County address). Interviewer should review the question with the interviewee before completing interview. If this form has been completed in advance of the interview, please be sure to ask the participant if he or she wishes to change anything now that they’ve read and signed the informed consent form.***

**Case Study Enterprise Information Form**

Note: **Information from the following section will only be used in combination with data from other businesses for publication, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data.**

What is the current enterprise mix?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Products/Services</th>
<th>Scale (acres/head)</th>
<th>2007 Volume of Production (bushels/lbs.)</th>
<th>% Total Gross Farm Receipts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasture-raised beef</td>
<td>15 yearling Holstein steers</td>
<td>21 cattle – brood cows, feeder, stocker and finished cattle</td>
<td>2800 lbs. retail-cut beef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>.5 acres</td>
<td>.5 acres</td>
<td>160 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over
Case Study Interview Guide

Within the following ranges please indicate total gross farm/business receipts for 2007:

- Less than $5,000
- $5,000 to $19,999
- $20,000 to $39,999
- $40,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $249,999
- $250,000 or more

Thank-you
Note: **Information from the following section will only be used in combination with data from other businesses for publication, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data.**

What is the current enterprise mix?

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<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over
CASE STUDY ENTERPRISE INFORMATION FORM

Within the following ranges please indicate total gross farm/business receipts for 2007:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $5,000</td>
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<td>$100,000 to $249,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 to $39,999</td>
<td>$250,000 or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank-you
Dear [Business Owner Name]:

On behalf of the entire North Country Regional Food Initiative Project team, I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your business in the context of local and regional food markets. You have helped provide us with a snapshot of how local food market opportunities impact your business, the North Country region and the agricultural sector in the North Country more generally. We are grateful to you for your time and insights.

We will be compiling and analyzing the information you and other business owners shared with us and publishing it in a report on the social and economic impacts of regional foods in the North Country. Before our report is published, you will have an opportunity to review the information you provided us to be sure it is accurate. Once the report is published, we will also send you a copy.

In addition, as a token of our appreciation, we’ve entered your name into a drawing, along with others who also participated in the case study component of our project. The winner of this drawing will receive a gift certificate to Hohmeyer’s Lake Clear Lodge.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please call either of the two project coordinators of our regional initiative:

Katherine Lang, Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County, 315-379-9192, x 261

Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, Community and Rural Development Institute, Cornell University 607-255-0417

Sincerely,

[Interviewer’s Name]
Organization Interview Protocol

The purpose of interviewing North Country organizations working to support connections between local and regional food producers and local and regional consumers is to: (1) understand what each organization is doing to explore opportunities for collaboration on a regional basis and (2) understand the impacts these organizations have on farms and communities in the North Country.

Along these lines, the guiding questions for the interviews (i.e., questions the investigator must keep in mind during the interview) are:

1. Why does this organization support local and regional food connections?
2. How does this organization support local and regional food connections?
3. What would enhance this organization’s ability to support local and regional food connections?
4. How might collaborative work with this organization strengthen local/regional food initiatives in the North Country?

Each organization we interview will have as one of its primary programming areas support for “local and regional food” markets (retail and wholesale), supporting connections between local and regional producers and consumers. Working together, the North Country Regional Foods Initiative project team will identify organizations that meet these criteria. To the extent possible, we will strive to include organizations within each of the six North Country counties involved in the Initiative.

Once the organizations have been identified, the organizational interviews will be implemented as follows:

1. Extension educators will send a letter introducing the project and requesting an opportunity to interview a representative of the organization to the director of the organization (see “Letter of Introduction” included in this document).
2. Three days after the educator has sent the letter, the educator will call the executive director of the organization, reference the letter and the project, and request an opportunity to interview him or her, or a designated representative of the director.
   a. If the director agrees, the educator will schedule a meeting.
   b. If the director declines to meet, the educator will ask if the director would be willing to reconsider given more information about the project.
      i. If the Director agrees, the educator will call Katherine or Heidi to share more information.
      1. If, after conversing with Katherine or Heidi, the Director is then willing to participate, the educator will be advised to contact the Director and schedule a meeting.
**Organization Interview Protocol**

2. If, after conversing with Katherine or Heidi, the Director is still unwilling to participate, Katherine or Heidi will thank the Director for his or her time.
   
i. If the Director disagrees, the educator will thank the Director for his or her time.

3. Once the meeting has been scheduled, the educator will send a confirmation letter *(See “Confirmation Letter” below)*, indicating the time, and referencing the following documents which will be included in the confirmation letter mailing:
   
a. The Human Subjects approved informed consent form (double-sided)
   
b. The ‘Organization Interview Guide’
   
c. The ‘Organization Background Information Form’ (double-sided)

4. Before going to the scheduled meeting the educator should print the following materials to share with the interviewee during the interview: (1) Two copies of the informed consent form; and (2) A second copy of the “Organization Background” form, and a stamped, return envelope addressed to Katherine Lang at CCE St. Lawrence County, which should be used for returning the completed “Organization Background” form.

5. The educator will then meet with the Director or Representative as scheduled to conduct the interview according to the following protocol:
   
a. After introducing herself, the educator will hand the director a second copy of the informed consent form and read the form with the director.
   
b. The educator will then ask the Director/Representative if he or she has any questions about the project and the informed consent form.
   
c. The educator will then ask the Director/Representative to share his or her understanding of the project.
      
i. If the understanding is accurate, the educator will ask the Director/Representative to sign two copies of the informed consent form; one for the Director’s files and one for the project files (send this one to Heidi at CaRDI).
      
ii. If the understanding is not accurate, the educator will clarify the issue at hand and assess the Director’s/Representative’s understanding again.
         
1. If the understanding is accurate, the educator will ask the Director/Representative to sign two copies of the informed consent form; one for the Director’s files and one for the project files.

6. Once the informed consent form has been signed, the educator will:
   
a. If given permission to do so during the informed consent process, turn on a tape recorder and proceed with the interview, also taking notes.
   
b. If not given permission to use a tape recorder, proceed with the interview, recording it with notes only.

7. At the end of the interview, the educator should:
   
a. Introduce the form we are asking them to fill out on their own
   
b. Address any questions or let them know their question will be addressed by the project coordinators
Organization Interview Protocol

c. Ask that the completed form be returned in a pre-addressed, stamped envelope within one week’s time.
d. Thank the Director/Representative for his or her time, and remind him or her that we will send them a draft copy of any publications relating to their interview, for their approval prior to publication and a final copy of the published document.

8. Once back at the office, within two days of the interview, the educator should:
a. Send the Director/Representative a signed thank you note, including a reminder to complete the “Organization Background” form, and a second copy of the form, along with a stamped, return envelope addressed to Katherine Lang.
b. If the form has not been received within two weeks of the interview, follow-up with a reminder that we need the form, and a third copy of the form, along with a stamped, return envelope addressed to Katherine Lang.
c. Send the signed informed consent form to Heidi.
d. Send the interview notes (one copy each) to Katherine and Heidi.

9. No more than six months after the interview, destroy the interview tapes (Heidi).

10. No more than three years after the interview, destroy the interview notes and data (Heidi).
Organization Interview Letter of Introduction

**To be printed on letterhead of the Association staff conducting the interview.**

Business Name
Business Address Line 1
Business Address Line 2
Date

Dear [Organization Director]:

I am an Educator, specializing in ________________, with Cornell Cooperative Extension of ________________County. I would like to interview you about your organization as part of a project called the *North Country Regional Foods Initiative*. You may have read about this project in the paper. The purpose of this study is to document the impact local/regional marketing has on a farm or food business, and the role local food markets play in North Country community and economic development. Ultimately, our goal is to use this impact analysis to help the North Country better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products.

Specifically, we would like to interview you about [the name of the organization] to better understand how and why organizations in the North Country are supporting local and regional food initiatives, and how your efforts might be better supported through a regional approach. As you know, there are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. Learning about your organization will help us to better understand the impacts of and opportunities for local and regional foods in the North Country.

This interview should take about 1 hour. I will call you in a couple of days to follow-up on this letter and, if you are willing to participate in our study, set up a time when we can meet to do the interview.

Thanks very much for your time,

Sincerely,

[Name of Interviewer]
Organization Interview Confirmation Letter

**To be printed on letterhead of the Association staff conducting the interview.

[Business Name]
[Business Address Line 1]
[Business Address Line 2]

[Date]

Dear [Organization Director]:

On behalf of the North Country Regional Food Initiative Project team, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in our study of the social and economic impacts of local and regional food markets in the North Country.

This letter is to confirm that you’ve agreed to be interviewed by me on [day of the week, Month, date] at [time of the day.] As we discussed, I will meet you at [location where you agreed to conduct the meeting.]

In preparation for the meeting, I’ve enclosed the interview guide I will be using to talk with you about your organization and an “informed consent form.” The informed consent form describes the focus of our study, the nature of the questions I will be asking you and your rights as a participant in the study. Although I will go over both the interview guide and the informed consent form with you prior to the start of our interview, please read both of these documents prior to our scheduled interview time and call me if you have any questions or concerns about either document. My number is [interviewer’s phone number.]

Thanks again and know I look forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,

[Interviewer’s name.]
Interview Introduction and Informed Consent Review

**Hand form to interviewee prior to reading the statement below.

Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed. As I mentioned, I am an Educator, specializing in ____________________, with Cornell Cooperative Extension of ______________________ County. This interview is part of a project called the North Country Regional Foods Initiative. You may have read about this project in the paper. It is designed to understand the impacts of regional (including local) foods in the North Country and identify ways to enhance positive impacts for the benefit of North Country farmers and communities. Towards this end, we have identified several organizations like this one which support local and regional food markets and are interviewing them to (1) understand their work and the impacts it has in the North Country and (2) explore ways we might collaborate in support of that work.

The information we will be asking you to share includes some financial data about the organization. This and the other information you will be providing with us WILL be published in a research report. However, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data for publication purposes. Instead, this information along with that of other direct marketing/local foods organizations will be used to illustrate general estimates on levels of investment in the region. If there is something you prefer not to have publicly disclosed, please be sure to let me know. You will also be asked to review and approve any written materials before they are published. You will also be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.* You may contact Cornell University’s Institutional Review Board (the institutional program that ensures studies are conducted in an ethical manner), with any questions, concerns or complaints. They can be contacted via: email at uchs@cornell.edu, phone (607-255-5138) and website (http: www.irb.cornell.edu).

**Interviewer breaks from reading the informed consent form to address the following:

Do you understand these conditions? If so, please tell me what your role in this project is and the rights you have as a participant in this study.

If not, please let me know what I haven’t explained sufficiently. [Clarify anything that the interviewee was unclear about.]

*Once it is clear that the interviewee understands the project, his/her role in it, and his/her rights, continue on to finish reading and ask them to sign the informed consent form:
Organization Interview Guide

I have read/heard and understand the above conditions for this interview. I understand that the information, including financial data about the organization, will be published in research reports exploring the impact of local and regional foods initiatives in the North Country. I acknowledge that I have been informed that I will have the opportunity to review and approve any written materials before they are published.

I hereby agree to participate in this interview.

Signed: _______________________________________  Date:_____________________

In addition to agreeing to participate, I hereby give _____ / do not give ______ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to record this interview.

I also hereby give _____ or do not give _____ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to include information about my organization in reports, and use the name of our organization in forthcoming publications.

Signed:________________________________________  Date:_____________

(Interviewee)

Signed:________________________________________  Date:_____________

(North Country Regional Foods Initiative Representative)

Project Coordinator Contact Information:

Katherine Lang     Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman
St. Lawrence County Cooperative Extension     Community and Rural Development Institute
1894 State Highway 68     Development Sociology, 39 Warren Hall
Canton, NY 13617     Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853
Phone:  315-379-9192     Phone:  607-255-0417
Email: kaa20@cornell.edu     Email: hmm1@cornell.edu

*This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on January 29, 2008.
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
North Country Regional Food Initiative Organization Study

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This interview should take about 1 hour. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. However, you are in no way obligated to participate in it. You will not be penalized in any way if you decline to participate in it. You may ask questions about the study both before committing to participate in it and at any time throughout the study. If you do choose to participate in the study, we would like to tape record our interview with you so we have something to refer to, to check facts. You may refuse to have the interview taped and still participate in the study. If you grant us permission to use the tape recorder, you may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any time. We will destroy the tapes no later than six months after the interview. We will destroy the interview guide notes and data no later than three years after the interview. You may also refuse to answer any question at any time and you may choose to end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time.

The information we will be asking you to share includes some financial data about the organization. This and the other information you will be providing with us WILL be published in a research report. However, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data for publication purposes. Instead, this information along with that of other direct marketing/local foods organizations will be used to illustrate general estimates on levels of investment in the region. If there is something you prefer not to have publicly disclosed, please be sure to let me know. You will also be asked to review and approve any written materials before they are published. You will also be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.* You may contact Cornell University’s Institutional Review Board (the institutional program that ensures studies are conducted in an ethical manner), with any questions, concerns or complaints. They can be contacted via: email at uchs@cornell.edu, phone (607-255-5138) and website (http: www.irb.cornell.edu).

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North Country Regional Food Initiative Organization Study

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I hereby agree to participate in this interview.

Signed: _______________________________  Date: __________________

In addition to agreeing to participate, I hereby give _____ / do not give ______ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to record this interview.

I also hereby give _____ or do not give _____ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to include information about my organization in reports, and use the name of our organization in forthcoming publications.

Signed: _______________________________  Date: _____________

(Interviewee)

Signed: _______________________________  Date: _____________

(North Country Regional Foods Initiative Representative)

Project Coordinator Contact Information:

Katherine Lang                    Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman
St. Lawrence County Cooperative Extension        Community and Rural Development Institute
1894 State Highway 68                    Development Sociology, 39 Warren Hall
Canton, NY 13617                        Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853
Phone: 315-379-9192                    Phone: 607-255-0417
Email: kaa20@cornell.edu               Email: hmm1@cornell.edu

*This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on January 29, 2008.*
Ok, let’s get started.

1. Please describe the services provided or main goal (mission) of your non-profit organization.

2. What is your geographic focus?

3. How did it get started?

4. What is its organizational structure (nonprofit, not-for-profit, informal, etc.).

5. How is it organized in terms of staff and programming?
6. Would you say that working to build and strengthen the local food system within your area is a primary goal of your organization --- a number one or two priority?

   a. Please explain why.

7. Could you briefly describe the work your organization is doing in support of your goal to build and strengthen local/regional food systems and your major successes so far.

8. What would you say have been the impacts (i.e. social, economic, environmental) of your organization’s work in support of local/regional food initiatives on the individuals and communities in the region you serve/North Country?
Organization Interview Guide

9. Do you have any resources, which you’ve developed to promote local and regional foods (e.g. a local food guide)? [If so, is it on the web and at what address or could you send us a copy?]

10. What do you think are the strengths or assets within our region that position us to succeed in this local/regional foods work?

11. Where do you think there are gaps in our ability to pursue meaningful change in the local food system? In other words, what are the barriers you think must be overcome in order to build strong local food systems within the North Country.

12. In what ways could we (a partnership of organizations and agencies working to support local/regional food initiatives) address these barriers?
13. Would you be interested in being part of a “learning community or network of organizations working on local food projects in the North Country where you could share best practices, lessons learned and information with others?

14. Do you have any suggestions for how such a learning community ought to function or be organized.

***Interviewer hands a copy of the “Organization Background Information” form to the interviewee, along with a self addressed envelope for returning the completed form to the project coordinators. (Use Katherine’s St. Lawrence County address). Interviewer should review the question with the interviewee before leaving.

Note: If this form has been completed in advance of the interview, please be sure to ask the participant if he or she wishes to change anything now that they’ve read and signed the informed consent form.
1) Name of your organization ____________________________________________
   a) Address __________________________________________________________

2) Name/title of person completing this questionnaire ______________________

3) Current number of full time employees ________________________________

4) Current number of part time employees ________________________________
   a) How many work 20 to 40 hours per week? ___________________________
   b) How many work fewer than 20 hours per week? ____________________

5) Total number of volunteers _________________________________________

6) Total number of volunteer hours per month (on average) ________________

7) When was your organization formed? ________________________________
   a) How long has your organization been doing local foods work? _______

8) What was the total revenue for your organization in 2007 or for the latest year that figures are available? ____________________________

9) What percentage of your total organization expenditures were spent in the North Country (defined as Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, & St. Lawrence Counties during 2007 (or for the latest year figures are available)? __________

10) What was the total amount of your organizational budget committed to support for local/regional food programming in 2007 (or for the latest year that figures are available)? ____________________________

11) What was your organization’s payroll cost in 2007 (or in the latest year that figures are available)? ____________________________

12) What was the percentage of revenue for your organization from each source listed below in 2007? (or for the last year that figures are available - this should be readily available on your 2007-year-end financial statements)
   a) Federal sources of revenues/grants/contracts ____________%
   b) State sources of revenues/grants/contracts ____________%
   c) County appropriations ____________%
   d) Other grants/contracts ____________%
   e) Contributions ____________%
   f) Investment earnings ____________%
   g) Program/operating revenues ____________%
   h) Fundraising ____________%
   i) Other revenues ____________% (please explain: __________________________)
   j) Total: 100% over
ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM

13) What percentage of your revenue came from these sources in 2007 (or for the last year available)?
   a) Inside the North Country (again, defined as Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, & St. Lawrence Counties) ________%
   b) Inside New York State but outside the North Country ________%
   c) Outside of the state ________%

14) What percentage of your services, programs or clients are located outside of the North Country (as defined above)? ________%

15) Please circle the categories that best describe your non-profit organization? _______
   a) education
   b) human services
   c) arts and culture
   d) health
   e) economic assistance
   f) recreational
   g) other – please list category ______________________________________

16) Does your organization attract visitors to the North Country (as defined above) (circle one) yes  no
   a) If yes please estimate the number of visitors your organization brings to the North Country each year: ________
   b) What percentage of these visitors stay in the North Country for one or more nights? ________%
   c) If your organization coordinates events related to local foods (e.g. harvest festivals, local food dinners, etc.) that draw visitors from outside the North Country, please estimate the dollar income generated by those events in total dollars $ ________.

17) Please describe any economic impact your organization has in the region that would be missed by previous questions.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you!!!
Organization Interview Thank you Letter

Business Name
Business Address Line 1
Business Address Line 2

Date

Dear [Organization Director]:

On behalf of the entire North Country Regional Food Initiative Project team, I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me about [insert the name of the organization] in the context of its support for local and regional food markets. You have helped provide us with a snapshot of how local food market opportunities impact farm and food businesses and communities in the North Country region. We are grateful to you for your time and insights.

We will be compiling and analyzing the information you and other organization representatives shared with us and publishing it in a report on the social and economic impacts of regional foods in the North Country. Before our report is published, you will have an opportunity to review the information you provided us to be sure it is accurate. Once the report is published, we will also send you a copy.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please call either of the two project coordinators of our regional initiative:

Katherine Lang, Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County, 315-379-9192, x 261

Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, Community and Rural Development Institute, Cornell University, 607-255-0417

Sincerely,

[Interviewer’s Name]
The Adirondack–North Country region is actually a cluster of smaller, very diverse agricultural regions. At the core are the Adirondack Mountains, which include the subregions of the Northern Adirondacks, Champlain Valley, High Peaks, Saranac Valley, Keene Valley and Ausable River Valley. Despite its remoteness and a shorter growing season than the rest of the New York State, there are pockets of livestock and specialty-crop production permitted by unique soils and microclimates. The photo above was taken outside the Village of Lake Placid.

The early settlers of the Adirondack–North County region adapted to the limitations of their surroundings in order to successfully feed their families and their neighbors, by focusing on processed and preserved foods which could last through long winters. Later these same savory products also became prized by seasonal residents and tourists. Today the region’s signature foods reflect this rich heritage, and include processed meats, aged cheeses and maple sugar.

Surrounding the Adirondack Region are several more commercially friendly agriculture regions: the North Country Region (including the Thousand Islands) between the Northern Adirondacks and the St. Lawrence River, the Black River–Mohawk Region, the Mohawk–Hudson Plains, and the Hudson Hills Region. Lake Champlain borders on the east (not shown on the map above). Tug Hill and the Oneida Plain may also be considered part of the “Greater Adirondack–North Country Region.” With a generally warmer climate (see Figure 1) and better soils, these “gateway” or “peripheral” subregions are dominated by dairy and field-crop farms, with a smattering of other enterprises that include maple sugaring, horse raising, and fruit and vegetable production. Owing to the microclimate and landscape, the Champlain Valley produces superlative apples; the region’s

### Signature Foods and Farm Products of the Adirondack–North Country Region

- aged and smoked cheeses
- McIntosh and other fine apples
- venison jerky
- smoked fish
- cole crops
- Croghan Bologna
- maple products
- smoked sausages
- root crops
- wild harvested foods
- regional breweries and microbreweries
McIntosh apples highly prized for their red color, flavor and firmness. Onions are a major crop in the mucklands of Oswego County; Lewis and St. Lawrence counties lead the state in maple sugar production. The Black River and North Country regions are among the most productive milk sheds in the Eastern U.S. and some of the largest dairy processing plants are found here. In Lowville, Lewis County, one can buy McCadam’s Adirondack Reserve Cheddar from the Lowville Producers Cheese Store, which is owned by a dairy cooperative with over 200 members.

It should be noted that several ethnic cultures continue to influence Adirondack–North Country foodways. These include French Canadians, Native Americans, Yankees, Italians and Mennonites. Croghan Bologna, for example, is a smoked sausage with a German pedigree that is still made from local beef in the village of Croghan, Lewis County.

A regional brand — Adirondack Harvest — was formed out of concern for the loss and abandonment of farmland in the region. The organization’s approach in supporting farms, farmers and farmland is to build regional identity that captures the region’s unique food and agricultural geography. This, in turn, leads to increased sales and enhanced profitability. To learn more about Adirondack Harvest, visit them online at www.adirondackharvest.com or call 518-962-4810 ext. 404.

Figure 1. Degree Days in New York State
NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL FOODS INITIATIVE*  
Fact Sheet 2: Local Food and Agriculture Trends

Adirondack-North Country Local Food and Agriculture Trends
Using USDA Census of Agriculture data we can generate indicators or benchmarks which help us see trends in the viability and growth or decline of local food and agriculture production.

Local Food Producers and Sales on the Rise in the Region
The number of local food producers and their sales have experienced dramatic growth in the Adirondack-North Country†. While the total number of farms declined between 1997 and 2002 in the region (the latest period we have USDA Census of Agriculture data), the number of farmers selling direct-to-consumer (“D2C”) grew 15% (see Tables 1 and 2). Anecdotal evidence suggests that this growth has continued since 2002.

Table 1. Number of All Farms in Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>North Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4,761</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>North Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4,550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Number of Local Food Producers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>North Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are perhaps several reasons for this growth trend. For example, farmers in the region might see direct marketing of fresh and value-added products as a source of additional income to offset potential losses on commodity products. There is also a growing number of new farmers who find direct marketing (e.g. in farmers’ markets) a low cost and low risk entry into agriculture. In 2002, the Adirondack-North Country had a larger share of D2C farmers than New York State as a whole (11.7% versus 10% respectively) and the growth rate in the number of D2C farms is faster than the State as well.

Local Food Sales
D2C producers in Adirondack-North Country sold almost $3.5 million in food directly to residents and visitors in 2002. This represents a near doubling (83% increase) over the 1997 figure of $1.89 million (see Table 3.).

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* Funding for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative is from the U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration University Center designated for New York State at Cornell University and hosted by Cornell’s Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI). For more information on CaRDI, contact Rod Howe, 607-255-2170 or rlh13@cornell.edu, or visit www.oed.cornell.edu. To learn more about the North Country Regional Foods Initiative Project, contact Katherine Lang at 315-379-9192 x261, or Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman at 607-255-0417.

† Adirondack North Country (or North Country) includes Lewis, Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Hamilton, Clinton, and Essex Counties.
Furthermore, per capita direct-to-consumer sales in the region grew at a faster rate than the state as a whole from about $4 to $8. This figure may rise even further between 2002 and the 2007 census currently taking place.

**Local Food Share of Total North Country Grocery Purchases and Total Agricultural Sales**

A valuable way to understand the scale of local food is in the context of its share of total grocery purchases and total agricultural sales in the region (see Tables 5 and 6). In 2002, D2C sales were a little over one-half of one percent (.59%) of total groceries purchased by residents of the Adirondack North Country. It should be noted that this share is larger than the state as a whole and grew faster than the state as a whole between 1997 and 2002.

**Conclusion**

Local food production, as measured by USDA Census of Agriculture data on direct-to-consumer sales between 1997 and 2002, is in a growth phase in the Adirondack-North Country. Most indicators point to robust growth when compared to the state as a whole. However, the data also indicate that local food production (i.e. direct-to-consumer sales) is a tiny fraction of the overall agriculture and food system and there is much room for continued growth. The indicators presented in this fact sheet may be generated for future comparison using 2007 Census of Agriculture data to measure if the growth trend in D2C farms and sales continues.

**Prepared by Duncan Hilchey, Community and Rural Development Institute, Cornell University v 4.10.08**
Potential Community Impacts of Adirondack-North Country Regional Foods

There is considerable information available from organizations around the country which tout the benefits of local foods over long-hauled or imported food—including superior nutrition and reduced impact on the environment. However, this information is sometimes exaggerated or not based on scientific facts. For example, very little research has been conducted to demonstrate nutritional superiority of locally produced food over long-hauled or imported food. From existing research, here’s what we are confident in stating about the potential benefits of local foods produced in the Adirondack-North Country Region:

1. Some sectors of Adirondack-North Country agriculture have significantly high “economic multipliers.” The income multiplier for the dairy processing sector is, for example, over 2.5. This means for every dollar of income generated by the export of dairy products outside the region another $1.50 is generated elsewhere in the regional economy (Bills, 1996). However, Adirondack-North Country farm products sold within the region (not exported) have a different type of impact. In effect these products are replacing some which were formerly brought in from outside the region (e.g., a head of cabbage). See #2.

2. Buying any locally produced products such as food contributes to the regional economy since much of the profits and some of the input dollars (for purchases such as feed, seed, and fertilizer) stay in the region and may replace inputs produced outside the region. Buying locally produced products is a community economic development strategy sometimes referred to as “import substitution” or “plugging economic leaks” (Bellows, 2001).

3. The potential exists for local produce to be fresher and more nutritious than imported or long-hauled produce. However, this depends on how well the farm products are handled (e.g., immediately removing field heat). Following best management practices in post-harvest handling local farmers can reduce the loss of water soluble nutrients such as Vitamins B and C (Yahia, 2001). The result can be fresh fruits and vegetables which have longer shelf life than long-hauled or imported produce. Therefore, fresh regional food may be an excellent value since there is less waste. (http://video.aol.com/video-detail/small-scale-postharvest-handling-practices-hort-crops-part-1/2396612065); retrieved 3.31.08.

4. By providing sales opportunities at low cost and low risk farmers’ markets help small farmers in the region stay in business, which in turn, helps sustain some acreage of working landscapes and pastoral countryside. (Hilchey, 1995)
5. By bringing Adirondack-North Country residents together, farmers’ markets and harvest festivals enhance opportunities for social interaction and help farmers and residents learn about each others’ interests and needs. (Lyson, 2004).

Local Agriculture Contributes a Wide Range of Social, Economic, and Environmental Benefits to the Adirondack North Country Region

In a 2004 study that included focus groups of New York State farmers and non-farmers attitudes toward agriculture Cornell researchers found that residents were able to articulate a wide range of benefits that agriculture contributes to their communities (Hilchey, 2008). See Table 1, below:

Table 1. Focus Group Study Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENEFIT THEME CATEGORY</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social/Cultural (143 Comments)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to community &amp; quality of life</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote public awareness of importance of ag.</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains important heritage/tradition/work ethic</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides high-quality &amp; local food</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes to local food security and safety</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental (94 Comments)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides aesthetic benefits &amp; open space</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture consistent with environmental ethic &amp; wildlife</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture is a clean industry</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic (71 Comments)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides employment</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports economy (including local)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides tourism benefits &amp; opportunities</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes taxes &amp; public services</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other/uninterpretable/adverse impacts (30 Comments)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Comments</strong></td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources Focusing on the Community Impacts of Regional Foods

The following websites offer a sample of publications and tool kits which provide more details on the impacts and benefits of local food and agriculture. However, refer to the above caveats about non-scientific claims of benefits.

www.adirondackharvest.com
www.foodroutes.org/toolsforaction.jsp
www.gardenshare.org
www.harvesteating.com
www.locovores.com
www.oxfamamerica.org/resources/files/Food_and_Farm_Toolkit.pdf
www.sitestories.com/chefsafield
Citations


Regional Food Processing Trends

Food processing in the Adirondack-North Country region is a significant industry with businesses that range from small bakeries to large milk processing plants. *County Business Patterns* is a database that tracks income and employment over time for many industries including food processing.

Table 1 shows that the total number of food processors declined in the Adirondack-North Country Region between 1998 and 2005 from 48 to 43. All declines in processors during the period were in the 1 to 9 and 10 to 99 employees categories. Meanwhile those processors with 100+ employees stayed very stable. The stability of these large plants is important for the farming community overall in the region since the majority of farms that produce milk and field crops depend on them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region Food Manufacturing Businesses by Number of Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>1999</td>
</tr>
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<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though they are currently declining, small and medium sized plants constitute the bulk of processors in the region and therefore make an important contribution to the regional economy. However their impact on farms producing food for local markets is to a lesser degree than the large processors since many prepare foods using ingredients which come from outside the region (e.g., a small bakery which imports wheat flower).

There are also many microenterprises which do not have employees so they are not included in *County Business Pattern* data. These may be in a home or in a farm building. Microenterprises may or may not need county health department or NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Food Safety inspection and licensing. Generally, processed foods that are not made with dairy products and/or that do not need
acidification (pickling) can be produced in the home or on the farm without a separate commercial licensed and inspected kitchen.

**Needs of Small-Scale Food Processors**

In a 1998 Cornell study,¹ a sample of New York State small-scale processors reported the following as the main challenges to their business:

- Affordable advertising
- Finding technical information
- Getting equipment and supplies at reasonable prices
- Developing markets

The New York State Small-Scale Food Processing Association (SSFPA of NY) was established as a result of these needs. Adirondack-North Country processors with 10 or fewer employees are encouraged to join the Adirondack or the 1000 Islands Chapters of the association (www.nyssfpa.com). The activities of SSFPA of NY include:

- Conducting joint marketing and having access to specialty food shows
- Accessing regulatory information and participating in decisions about regulations
- Providing mentoring to new processors and those considering starting up businesses
- Negotiating group-rate product liability insurance
- Purchasing cooperatively
- Advertising together and assembling directory information
- Accessing food processing and small business technical assistance
- Initiating a micro-loan program
- Showcasing member products on the SSFPA website

**Additional Resources:**

**New York State Food Venture Center (NYSFVC)**
Phone: 315.787.2273
Email: necfe@nysaes.cornell.edu
Website: www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe
Food Research Lab
630 W. North Street
Geneva, NY 14456

**NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Division of Food Safety Inspection**
For contact information visit the following website to identify the appropriate regional office:
www.agmkt.state.ny.us/fs/general/contactinfo.html

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¹ Results of the study by G. Gillespie and D. Hilchey are found in “Adding Value for Sustainability: A Guidebook for Extension Agents and Other Agricultural Professionals by Kristen Markley and Duncan Hilchey, published by the Cornell University Farming Alternatives Program, 1998.
Today there are “hotbeds” of activity in the local food arena throughout our region. The Adirondacks have summer tourists who support their local farms through their purchases at markets, restaurants, and summer activities. Adirondack Harvest, a regional buy local campaign, has helped make these connections. St. Lawrence County has institutions like SUNY Potsdam and St. Lawrence University interested in buying more local product. Garden Share and North Country Grown Cooperative, two organizations committed to promoting local food initiatives, have helped make that happen. In Lewis County, efforts have increased the area’s reputation for local products such as maple syrup. A fast growing Jefferson County has a lot of untapped potential for local marketing of food with Ft. Drum, 1000 Islands and Tug Hill Plateau as areas that draw a lot of people either seasonally or as permanent residents. Throughout the area there are additional restaurants interested in buying local products.

These activities have been driven by the growing producer and consumer interest as well as the response of agencies and organizations that recognize the positive ways these businesses can and do contribute to the region. Cornell Cooperative Extension, for example, working with partners, has collaborated regionally to provide a series of events designed to strengthen direct market farms, build relationships between producers and consumers in the region, and help communities capitalize on the ways these local food initiatives contribute to the region.

Starting with the “21st Century” conference in 1995, wherein a long range planning process identified the need for these activities to preserve the region’s working landscape; producers, consumers, community service agencies and organizations, and local officials have come together through various forums to support and strengthen our food system, and the local food component in particular. For example, during the winter of 1997 and 1998, Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations in collaboration with local Community Action Agencies across the region hosted Community Food and Economic Security conferences. These conferences utilized a participatory approach to bring together invited community residents representing food, agriculture and human services fields to address issues of sustainability, food insecurity, and a changing agricultural sector. Thirty-four work groups emerged from the six county-based events. The ideas and connections formed through these gatherings were mainly incorporated into ongoing work efforts, though some did result in newly formed initiatives. Growing out of these early events are more recent annual programs designed to further build awareness of opportunities in this arena. Local Foods I, II, III, and IV, described below represent a series of efforts, each progressively broader than the last, in terms of the breadth of its outreach to the entire Adirondack North Country region.

**September 2005 Local Foods I: Annual Harvest Celebration**

This celebration of the region’s bounty was kicked off with farm tours, where 21 farms opened their space to visitors primarily in the Eastern Adirondack North Country Region. Approximately 85 people then came together to enjoy a sumptuous meal prepared by local chefs from products grown and raised by the area’s farmers. The celebration also included recipe taste-offs held at area farmers’ markets and Adirondack Architectural Heritage and the Boquet River Association held tours during this week. This event formally recognized the local foods market and set the stage for future events designed to build this market.

**January 2006 Adirondack Harvest’s Farmer to Chef Program 2006**

The Farmer to Chef Program was a tradeshow designed to cultivate relationships between farmers and retail markets, including restaurants and stores interesting in purchasing from local farmers. Another goal was to help farmers
interested in diversifying into direct markets explore opportunities. As a result of this event, awareness of local foods availability was raised and farmers established some initial relationships with restaurant and stores.

March 2007  
**Local Foods II: Adirondack Harvest – Connecting Farmers and Consumers**

Similar to the Adirondack Harvest Farmer to Chef Program one year before, this event was targeted at farmers interested in direct wholesale and retail markets, including farm to chef sales, farm tours, and marketing directly to consumers, chefs committed to buying locally, and agencies, organizations, and local governments working to support these connections and capitalize on the ways they contribute to the local economy. Agriculture Development Specialist, Duncan Hilchey, from Cornell University shared community-based strategies for supporting local food markets. In addition to also increasing awareness of foods produced in the region, this event furthered understanding of the work of Cornell Cooperative Extension and many other organizations and agencies in support of local food producers, consumers and the markets that bring them together. In the words of one participant, “Some great energy was generated from this event that is still resonating.”

April 2008  
**Local Foods III: The Role of Adirondack North Country Foods in Community and Economic Development**

This event, held at the W!LD Center in Tupper Lake, was designed to build on the relationships started through earlier meetings by broadening awareness about the impacts of local foods among local officials and community and economic developers, and strengthening relationships among these individuals, farmers, and institutional representatives. Sponsored by the North Country Regional Foods Initiative, the Initiative represents a first attempt to formalize a regional network drawing together organizations focused on local food issues. By the end of the day, through a ‘policy forum’, a list of specific steps was created to move these efforts forward as a region and strengthen local food initiatives. Recommendations include: of the North Country Regional Foods Initiative final report to be shared among participants and other partners within the North Country.

May 1 – 3, 2008  
**Local Foods IV: Challenges and Opportunities in the North Country**

Sponsored by New Strategies: Enhancing Profitability on North Country farms, a project of New York State Farm Viability Institute. This project focuses on working with entrepreneurial farmers to develop new agricultural production enterprises either alongside existing enterprises or new business start-ups. This event welcomed New Strategies participants and others to a mini-road show hosted by partners in Lake Clear, Alexandria Bay, and Croghan. The series celebrated the progress of farmers and community members in establishing direct marketing connections across Northern New York. They continued the discussion threads that emerged through each of the earlier Local Foods events with the goal of improving our understanding of the challenges we face in the region and identifying specific possibilities for furthering growth in numbers of direct market farms and markets. These day long events featured guest speakers: Barbara Damrosch, author of *The Garden Primer* and Shannon Hayes, author of *Grass-fed Gourmet*, in addition to a line-up of local farmers, chefs, and businesses working towards local food sustainability.

As a result of these events and the time and energy of various organizations and individuals, we’ve seen the formation of Farm to School Committees, new farmers’ markets, local food events, a new grower cooperative, a Seaway Wine Trail, a regional Maple Weekend, and new local food guides. We’ve also seen the emergence of several recurring themes: (1) consumers want to be able to purchase locally produced foods; (2) growers are working hard to meet an increasing demand for consistent quality and quantity, and (3) communities are benefiting from working together with one another, and with producers and consumers, to capitalize on the positive ways local foods contribute to the region. Together, these themes and collaborations suggest the stage has been set and the time is ripe for institutionalizing
regional collaboration in support of local/regional foods and the ways they enhance the economic, ecological and social well-being of the North Country.