

What's a regional food center? Emerging community initiatives in partnership with producers

Local producers are not only finding expanding markets for local foods at farmer's markets, retail outlets and restaurants, but increasingly with community initiatives that are seeking partnerships with multiple producers to expand opportunities and grow a community food system. Emerging and established regional food centers have been working together since meeting for the first time at the last NOFA conference to expand opportunities for farm incubation programs, development of food hubs for cooperative marketing, distribution and storage, and exploring new ways of working together to support strong farm networks with a strong and growing consumer base. This workshop will bring together some of the existing centers and farm partners to discuss the possibilities for further developing this regional approach and growing it across the state.

Facilitated by **Glenn McRae**, Executive Director, The Intervale Center

Panel: **Sona Desai**, Intervale Food Hub Manager **Eric Seitz**, Pitchfork Farm, Burlington Intervale
Martin Kemple, Two Rivers Center/Foodworks **Lee Blackwell**, of Blackwell Roots Farm in Cabot

Advancing Food Systems through Learning, Planning and Action

Collaborative Member goals:

- Support production of more food for the local and regional market.
- Increase and improve infrastructure that supports diverse farm operations and value added processing.
- Expand economic opportunities in farming, access to land, and food system services.
- Expand existing farm operations and open new opportunities for farm incubation.
- Expand local food access for all Vermonters.
- Engage communities in learning about and contributing to a viable local food system.
- Increase food security and self-reliance of communities and regions.
- Engage communities in retention of important agricultural lands for current and future productive usage.

Action Agenda: *Collaborative Priorities for Project Leadership and Common Action*

1. **Advance and Build Infrastructure to meet regional needs**
2. **Grow New Farms**
3. **Consumer Food Education Campaigns**

For more information and a copy of the full platform:

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Additional Action Elements

In addition, centers may prioritize some of these elements in the near term as part of their regional strategy:

1. Build Farmer Networks and Collaborative Marketing Opportunities
2. Expand Composting
3. Steward Agricultural Soils
4. Ensure Seed Security
5. Expand Energy Efficiency & Renewable Generation
6. Advocate to Improve Regulation
7. Research
8. Expand Tourism Opportunities
9. Improve School Foods
10. Organize to Advance Community Food Systems

Vision

The Vermont Regional Food Centers Collaborative envisions...

A vibrant, economically just and environmentally sustainable food system, where locally-produced food is available and affordable for all Vermonters, and where the vitality of agriculture in Vermont is key to the conservation of our land and the progress of our sustainable economy.

Participating Centers:

Food Works at Two Rivers Center (Montpelier)
 ACORN Local Food Collaborative (Middlebury)
 LACE - Local Agricultural Community Exchange (Barre)
 Post Oil Solutions: Greater Falls Regional Food Center (Bellows Falls)

The Center for an Agricultural Economy (Hardwick)
 The Intervale Center (Burlington)
 Rutland Area Farm and Food Link – RAFFL (Rutland)
 Vital Communities: Valley Food and Farm (WRJ)

