

**Illinois Local & Organic Food & Farm Task Force  
Listening Sessions**

**Kane County Farm Bureau (St. Charles)  
April 12, 2008**

17 attendees

**Production**

Farmer D: has 12-13 migrant workers (Mexican) – same families come up every year, provides board. Other farmers need labor. High school programs combining classroom and practical, similar to University of Iowa “CO-OP”.

Roadside stand needs a good location.

Grow niche products that won't compete?

Farmer D: Freshest, healthiest. Consumers need education.

Dairy farmer A: What about industry leaders? Wal-Mart affecting market. Illinois milkshed is seven states. How to specify Illinois product as it moves through the system? Best use of land – energy or food?

Farmer DC: Henry and Terra Brockman doing incredible job. Henry just won SARE award.

Dairy farmer A: Proposed Galena dairy a great idea – bringing more infrastructure, more expertise.

California owned – where do profits go?

Depends on incorporation specifics.

Farmer D: Gets real positive feedback from customers. Picks corn every morning. Where can people get locally grown when the season ends?

College kids are clued into difference between farm produce and grocery.

Farmer H: Continuous barrage of rules/regulations/fees. County trying to define agritourism; will require conditional use permit costing \$10,000 for 5 years. New sign ordinance restricts size, but such a small sign doesn't fit their needs along a busy highway. “No temporary sign” ordinance.

Farmer S: If farmer depends on compost for fertility, needs to follow EPA regulations and municipal rules. Local ordinances: commodity agriculture was successful in getting regulations uniform across state. Specialty grower ordinances are not uniform if you're selling directly to consumers.

**Infrastructure**

Peapod has business model – delivers TO consumer. Recommends organic for “lazy” people. Sensitive to cost of gas.

Farmer D: No Illinois processing plants. Corporate ownership, politics. Ships grain east, but not locally.

Farmer H: Attends Skokie farmers market. Illinois Commerce Commission has a new truck fee (UCR ? registration).

Jim: Are there any ag exempt laws?

Farmer S: farm license – less fees but restricted use

Farmer A: Sales tax. All direct costs are exempt from sales tax. Trucks get licensed outside of state.

Who will finance processing plants? Bonds?

TIFs.

Farmer S: Kane County has transitioned to horticulture and grain production.

Existing infrastructure aids large haulers/producers. Should be easier to haul 100 miles than 1500 miles.

Farmer S: California has competitive advantage: growing season, water subsidies. We have a short growing season, 3 months market, 12 months expenses.

Farmer H: Consumers are price shopping. Wisconsin protects farmers – outsiders cannot dump what's in season.

Manages farmers market – not enough producers.

Farmers D, H: people are busy. Skokie market is dying because other markets are popping up (has been doing Skokie market since 1970s).

Market to restaurants institutions, schools.

### **Consumer Access**

Farmer H: Educate. Does talks on honey and honeybees. People are astounded at what bees do.

Farmer J: Bring food to consumers. Farmstand in parking lot of shopping center. In Port Washington, there's a well known corn stand.

Madison market is year-round. Keep people in habit of going, trains people, keeps year-round connection. E.g., Tacoma Park.

Farmer D: Hy-Vee doing some good things for local community.

Only a small amount of food goes through farmers market, but it's the best opportunity for educating consumers.

Debbie: Farmers also learn what consumers want.

Farmer J: U-pick is educational, especially about taste.

Farmer D: People don't know how to shop for produce.

Farmer D: Iowa State – buys local.

What are liability issues (at ISU, Niemann)?

Farmer D: Should there be local food standards, like organic?

International standards for food safety (ISO ?).

Farmer J: Consolidation? (co-op, distribution)

### **Education**

Local producers TV show – showcasing farms.

WGN Radio – breakfast at the farm.

Farmer J: Wisconsin hosts a breakfast at the farm – huge local event.

Could be a big crowd.