



SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD COUNCILS AND FOOD SYSTEMS

15

local food councils in Michigan supported by the MSU Extension Community Food Systems Team.

7

food summits held in Michigan.

2,004

food summit participants.

\$505,160

in grant funds secured for local food system projects.

PRIORITY

A R E A S

- **Strengthening Farm to Institution Connections** - Organizing farm-to-school and school gardening programming, supporting the Michigan Farm to Institution Network and the Cultivate Michigan campaign, and facilitating local and state efforts to increase institutional purchases of food produced in Michigan.
- **Supporting Food and Farming Business Development** - Working with farmers and food businesses to improve processes, connect with markets, improve profitability, and help overcome structural challenges in the food system.
- **Increasing Public Understanding of Food Systems** - Providing educational opportunities related to food and agriculture, agricultural practices, food production and distribution, and how to affect change in local and regional food systems. Developing and updating the Michigan Fresh fact sheet and recipe series.

Contact one of the CFS Team leaders for more information:

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IMPACTS



74%

of attendees who completed program evaluations said they had gained a new perspective from the Kalamazoo Foodways Symposium.



81%

of evaluation respondents indicated they had made more than one new connection and learned new information or skills at the Macomb Food Momentum summit.



86%

of evaluation respondents said their knowledge of local food systems had increased at the Macomb Food Momentum summit.

“*Local food councils in Michigan are a critical part of the collaboration infrastructure for local food systems education and policy-making. The MSU Extension Community Food Systems Team members play an essential role in many of Michigan’s local food councils – connecting them to resources, programs and networks such as the Michigan Local Food Council Network.*”

- Rich Pirog, Director of the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems



WHAT IS A FOOD COUNCIL?

Food is a fundamental need for all. When food systems are out of balance there are many negative consequences, including unjust labor practices, lack of access to healthy food, excessive food waste, farmers struggling to earn a profit, and people being unable to influence or change their food system. The goal of local food councils is to influence the redesign of local food systems.

As of mid-2019, Michigan had 27 local food councils (<https://bit.ly/3ahKVn8>), 14 of which were supported by the CFS Team (see table). Team members support local food councils in a variety of ways, such as by facilitating meetings, securing funding, participating as members, and leading councils. The Michigan Local Food Council Network (<https://bit.ly/3avOwyl>), which is managed by the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, is the statewide organization serving local food councils.

Local food councils in Michigan that are supported by the MSU Extension Community Food Systems Team, along with the geographic area or group the council serves and the CFS members who acts as liaison to the council.

LOCAL FOOD COUNCIL	AREA OR GROUP SERVED	COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS TEAM LIAISON
Capitol Area Food Council	Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties	Abby Harper
Food Access Collaboration Team of Saginaw	Saginaw	Julie Darnton
Kent County Food Policy Group	Kent County	Garrett Ziegler
Local Food Alliance of North Michigan	Northwest Michigan	Wendy Wieland
Macomb Food Collaborative	Macomb County	Kaitlin Wojciak
Northwest Michigan Food and Farming Network	Northwest Michigan	Wendy Wieland
Oakland County Food Policy Council	Oakland County	Kristine Hahn, Kaitlin Wojciak
Ottawa Food	Ottawa County	Garrett Ziegler
Southwest Michigan Local Food Council	Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties	Mariel Borgman
Thumb Food Policy Council	Thumb region	Joe Bixler
Tribal Food Sovereignty Collaborative	Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians (eastern Upper Peninsula)	Kathryn Jacques
Upper Peninsula Food Exchange	Upper Peninsula	James DeDecker, Kathryn Jacques, Abby Palmer
Washtenaw County Food Policy Council	Washtenaw County	Jae Gerhart
Wiisnidaa Mnomijim Let's Eat Good Food Coalition in Bay Mills Indian Community	Bay Mills Indian Community	Kathryn Jacques



Keynote discussion panelists at the Michigan Racial Equity in the Food System Summit. (Photo by Lindsey Scalera, MSU Center for Regional Food Systems)

IMPACT OF FOOD COUNCILS

In 2018, the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems surveyed Michigan local food council members to learn more about their work. A total of 53 people from 15 local food councils completed the survey.

They identified the top four policy achievements of Michigan local food councils:

1. Increasing the ability of low-income families to access affordable, healthful food.
2. Increasing the number of farmers markets, mobile markets, CSAs (community supported agriculture groups) and other direct-to-consumer efforts.
3. Increasing the number of families who are food secure.
4. Increasing local or regional food sales to public school districts, hospitals and other institutions.

You can read the survey report at <https://bit.ly/2CgqcDG>.

CONTRIBUTING TO MICHIGAN FOOD SUMMITS

The MSU Extension Community Food Systems Team, or CFS, in collaboration with local food councils and partners, hosts food summits throughout the state. Some are annual or recurring summits, while others are single events focused on specific topics.

Each summit is connected to the team's core initiatives:

- **Strengthening Farm to Institution Connections** – Feeding summit attendees and creating opportunities for food buyers (schools, hospitals, universities and other institutions) to develop and strengthen ties with food sellers (farmers and food entrepreneurs) are key parts of this core initiative.
- **Supporting Food and Farming Business Development** – Summits help highlight the ways in which food producers, distribution venues and institutions solve supply chain challenges. Presenters, vendors and other attendees also share new and improved production and management strategies and techniques, recent research, producer experiences, and marketing opportunities and options.
- **Increasing Public Understanding of Food Systems** – Summits help participants understand how food systems operate and where they falter in serving people who need good food and people who are trying to support themselves by producing good food. Each summit helps us move toward a more equitable, fair, sustainable, climate-resilient and healthy food system for all Michigan residents.

The contributions of the CFS Team to planning, organizing and conducting seven food summits in Michigan in 2019 are described in this section.

KALAMAZOO FOODWAYS SYMPOSIUM: MIDDLE EASTERN FOODWAYS IN MICHIGAN

Everyone eats, but how and what everyone eats varies greatly and is influenced by geography, economics, culture and more. The 2019 Kalamazoo Foodways Symposium provided historical, cultural and practical insights into food and food systems in southwest Michigan. At the event, students, practitioners and community members came together to find out how to build a strong, vibrant local food system.

The theme of “Middle Eastern Foodways in Michigan” was chosen to complement a Kalamazoo Valley Museum exhibit called “What We Carried: Fragments and Memories From Iraq and Syria.” Keynote speaker Liana Aghajanian is a journalist specializing in storytelling and international reporting. Aghajanian has focused much of her work on marginalized communities, immigration, displacement and identity. Over 200 people attended the keynote event and reception on opening night and 300 people attended the workshops, demonstrations and talks the next day.



A total of 211 surveys were completed, and 71% of respondents said they had learned a fun new fact at the conference, 60% had learned a new skill and 74% had gained a different perspective.

MACOMB FOOD MOMENTUM

In 2019, the Macomb Food Collaborative hosted the Macomb Food Momentum, its eighth annual local food systems summit, with organizing support from MSU Extension. Conference attendees spent the day learning about food systems and networking.

Of the 99 people who submitted event evaluations, 81% indicated that had they gained more than one connection and had learned new information or skills. Evaluation respondents also indicated that their knowledge of local food systems had increased (86%) and that connections they had made or information they had learned would have a positive impact on their food business or personal life (81%).



A dancer from the group Rootead performs at the Michigan Racial Equity in the Food System Summit. (Photo by Lindsey Scalera, MSU Center for Regional Food Systems)

“It is time our food system and our economic system stop exploiting people of color, immigrants and working class people. Food summits allow for a community conversation to build support for policies where all workers have the right to meet their basic needs with dignity and respect.”

- Tunde Wey, Chef and Keynote Speaker at the 2019 Michigan Racial Equity in the Food System Summit

MICHIGAN RACIAL EQUITY IN THE FOOD SYSTEM SUMMIT

In April 2019, MSU Extension CFS Team members helped plan and host the first Michigan Racial Equity in the Food System Summit in Kalamazoo. People of color led the planning, speaking, performing and hosting of the conference. The conference was designed to address the ways in which the food system is broken in Michigan and recognize that a thriving society and economy must have a food system that serves all people equitably.

Conference sessions included:

- How and why mothers should engage in local food system work
- The intersections of veganism and social justice
- After decades of well-meaning nonprofit work, why is our food system still unjust?
- The connection between race, place and food
- The impact of current labor policies on people of color in the restaurant industry

The conference was attended by 167 people and featured 36 speakers, 10 performers and 25 conference sponsors.

MONTCALM COUNTY FOOD SUMMIT

In March 2019, MSU Extension collaborated with local organizations on the Montcalm County Food Summit. The event drew more than 70 area farmers, institutional food service managers, schools representatives and community members who learned from different actors in the food system, celebrated over meals featuring local food, and made buyer-producer connections that organizers hope will ultimately increase local farm-to-institution food transactions in the county. Educational sessions covered food equity, scaling up for farmers, food hubs throughout the state and countywide feasibility studies related to developing a local food hub.



Naim Edwards, a member of the MSU Extension Community Food Systems Team, presents at the Michigan Racial Equity in the Food System Summit. (Photo by Lindsey Scalera, MSU Center for Regional Food Systems)



NORTHERN MICHIGAN SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

Two CFS Team members were part of the planning and organizing committee for the 20th annual Northern Michigan Small Farms Conference. The event was held at the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa in Acme. Nine MSU Extension staff members led educational workshops and other team members hosted an exhibitor table. At “Farm School,” the optional, full-day preconference session, participants gained concentrated, indepth knowledge on select topics. The conference offered attendees the opportunity to learn about food systems, farming practices, business opportunities, university research, and governmental programs. At the 2019 conference, 1,042 registrants chose from among 34 sessions and could visit the booths of 83 organizations during the trade show. The conference meal was certified as locally sourced, with over 70% of foods from Michigan.



Participants in the Kalamazoo Foodways Symposium learn a traditional Syrian recipe. (Photo courtesy Kalamazoo Valley Community College)

UPPER PENINSULA FOOD SUMMITS

Upper Peninsula Food Summits were held in the U.P. communities of L’Anse, Marquette and Brimley. The events brought together food producers, purchasers and local food advocates for educational presentations and networking and business connection opportunities. Each summit included a regional update, an introduction to an online purchasing platform to connect institutional buyers with farmers and food businesses, and educational sessions. Participants learned about funding school and community garden projects; farm-to-school fundraisers with the U.P. Food Exchange; seed swaps in the Central U.P.; and classroom-based agriculture, food, and natural resources projects in collaboration with Waiskey Bay Farm.

The three events attracted a total of 146 people in 2019. They were co-hosted by MSU Extension, the U.P. Food Exchange and the Western U.P. Food Systems Council.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

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Kalamazoo community members share family *dolma*-making traditions at the Kalamazoo Foodways Symposium. (Photo courtesy Kalamazoo Valley Community College)

TUSCOLA & HURON FOOD SUMMIT

In April 2019, the first Tuscola and Huron Counties Food Summit was held in Cass City. The event attracted 50 participants and focused on helping participants understand the issues of local food insecurity and poverty and identify actions that could improve the food deserts that exist in rural communities in the area. The event was organized by Meeting the Need for Our Village, a spinoff of the 4-H Boots and Bling Club in Huron County.