



FRANKLIN COUNTY FARM & FOOD SYSTEM PROJECT

Infrastructure * Access



***A food system planning project for Franklin County
linked to the New England Food Vision***

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HENRY P. KENDALL FOUNDATION

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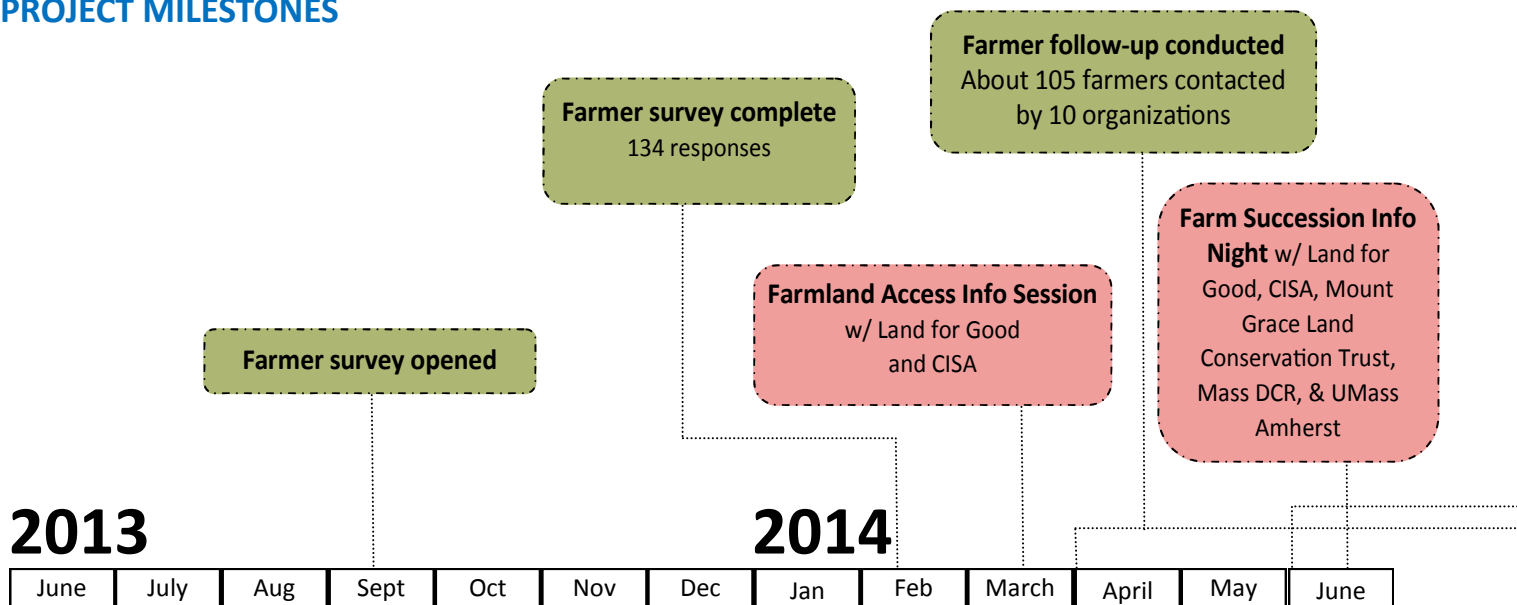
INTRODUCTION

A strong food system is one in which farmers are able to make a viable living and have access to the land and equipment they need to do so; and in which consumers are able to afford fresh, local food. These are the elements of the food system on which this project focused: food production and processing, land, and food access and consumption.

These elements fit well with the three-part framework of the New England Food Vision: increased local production, increased farmland and a move toward healthier diets. The Franklin County Farm and Food System Project considered the goals of the New England Food Vision and its implications for Franklin County in terms of these three key elements. Some of the challenges Franklin County faces in the context of the New England Food Vision – or in any scenario in which local food production and consumption is increased – are how to expand the amount and variety of locally produced food, expand the amount of agricultural land in production, and change the dietary habits of consumers to prefer more fresh, local foods.

The Franklin County Farm and Food System Project has been one of action and results. A comprehensive farmer survey conducted early in the project led to substantial farmer outreach and informational events, brought about with the considerable involvement of the Advisory Group and other partner organizations. A several-months-long assessment of produce prices at area supermarkets and farmers' markets led to launching the Market Dollars program, designed to introduce farmers' market shopping to more low-income individuals. This project also delved into the potential for a Franklin County-based poultry processing facility and brought together several individuals and organizations to plan for this to occur. In addition to many other actions and activities, this project also helped begin a multi-agency conversation about a statewide hunger summit (slated to happen in fall 2015) and has prompted the addition of town-level community food assessments to the FRCOG's portfolio of services it offers to member towns.

PROJECT MILESTONES

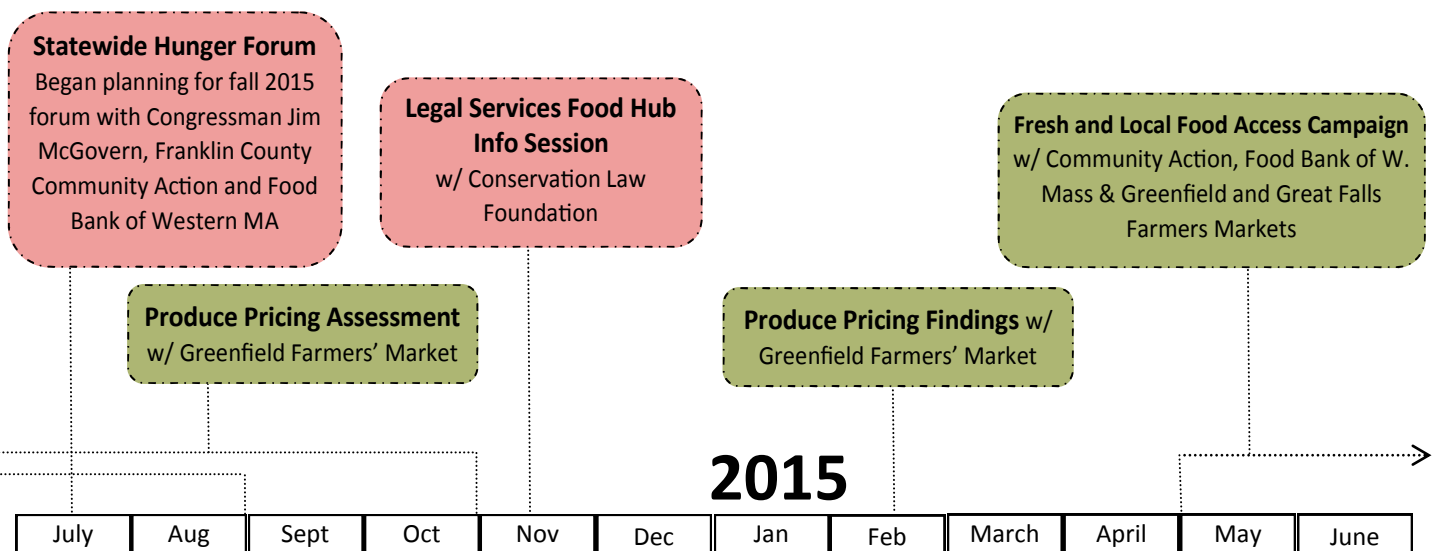


Although the focus area of this project was primarily Franklin County, statewide and regional context was regularly considered. The FRCOG’s role on the Massachusetts Food System Plan project team helped enrich and broaden the context of this project and strengthen its connections to other parts of the State’s food system. This project’s action plan was also bolstered by the statewide perspective. This broader involvement and perspective helped put in context the trajectory required to meet the goals of the New England Food Vision.

It is with much gratitude to the Henry P. Kendall Foundation that we present the Franklin County Farm and Food System Project Report.



Viable farms, plentiful farmland and access to fresh, local food for all are key elements of this plan.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What do Franklin County farmers need to help them scale up their production of food and how can more of that food reach residents of Franklin County, particularly low- and moderate-income people? These are the primary questions this project set out to answer.

INCREASED PRODUCTION

- ⇒ **more farmland access**
- ⇒ **more farmland in active production and permanently protected**
- ⇒ **more on-farm and small-batch processing**
- ⇒ **more purchasing of local food**

Inspired in part by Food Solutions New England’s 50-by-60 Vision, in which New England produces 50% of its food by 2060, our research found that there would need to be substantial shifts in what Franklin County farmers grow and their that production would need to at least double. To support this significant increase in production, there would need to be over 40,000 additional acres of land devoted to farming in Franklin County by 2060, some of which might be developed by bringing recently idle farmland back into production and by prioritizing developing land for farming on prime farmland soils.

Our research also found there is a vast difference between the current diet of Franklin County residents and the diet suggested by the 50-by-60 Vision. Dietary changes by Franklin County residents would need to include increased fruit, vegetable, whole grains and legumes, nuts and seeds consumption, and decreased consumption of meat, fish and eggs, though much more of the meat, fish and eggs consumed would come from local sources. Expenditures by Franklin County residents on local products would need to increase by approximately five times to reach the 50-by-60 Vision.

Recommendations to support increased production related to land include increasing farmers’ access to land, through land matching and leasing as well as by making public-owned land available for farming, where appropriate. Other land recommendations include increasing the amount of land under permanent protection, and preventing land from being converted from farming to other uses, in part by offering farmers more technical assistance with farm transition and estate planning. To boost production, our recommendations include more funding for on-farm infrastructure, more technical assistance for farmers on their farms and additional small-batch processing facilities for poultry and dairy.

These recommendations are supported by the findings of our Farmer Survey, released in 2014. Farmers said they need access to more land and that farmland is too expensive. They also indicated they need support with farm transition planning, with nearly 70% of responding farmers 64 years and younger indicating they do not have a transition plan in place for their farm when they retire.

Farmers also indicated an interest in more options for small-batch processing, especially for poultry processing in Franklin County. Top barriers identified by Franklin County farmers to selling more of their products to local consumers include not having time to look for places to sell their product, being able to get a better price elsewhere and that many people in Franklin County cannot afford local produce. In a farmer survey conducted in Worcester County and modeled on the Franklin County Farm and Food System Survey, barriers to increasing production identified by farmers were similar. In both counties, farmers need to upgrade or purchase new equipment to be able to process more food.

INCREASED ACCESS

- ⇒ **more public education**
- ⇒ **increased retailing of local, fresh food**
- ⇒ **more SNAP utilization**

Over 10% of people in Franklin County are food insecure. Additionally, not all residents have good access to an adequate selection of healthy, fresh food. Community Action's *Food Access Survey: Rural Food Access in the North Quabbin*, released in 2014, shows that nearly one third of the respondents said price is a barrier to buying fresh fruits and vegetables.

Although no communities in Franklin County meet the USDA's definition of having food deserts (based on limited income and distance from food stores), many residents do not in fact have good access to fresh food. Some residents have no food stores nearby and have to drive a significant amount of time (up to 40 minutes in good weather) to reach a supermarket.

Our recommendations related to food access include boosting public education related to nutrition and food preparation, increasing the utilization by qualified residents of SNAP benefits, and providing technical support to existing small food markets and convenience stores to increase their sales of local, fresh foods, helping to fill the food access gaps, particularly for rural residents.

Addressing the question of whether local food is really more expensive, the Produce Pricing Assessment we conducted looked at prices of produce at local farmers markets and like products at local supermarkets. Our findings show that produce pricing is complex: in some cases produce is less expensive at farmers' markets than at supermarkets while in other cases it is the same or more. Seasonality is key. Produce in season in Franklin County can often be a good value at farmers' markets and sometimes cannot be found at supermarkets. Having said this, local produce is becoming more commonplace at some supermarkets in Franklin County, with displays that feature locally grown fruits and vegetables.

The findings of the Produce Pricing Assessment were shared with the general public at farmers markets via the Fresh and Local campaign. Additionally, to boost shopping at farmers markets by low-income individuals, about 300 low-income residents were provided coupons through the Fresh and Local Campaign for the purchase of fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets. Early data showed a modest number of individuals using their market dollars, many purchasing vegetable plants along with produce.

Our recommendations related to food access also call for increased public education on fresh produce, affordability and seasonality as well as increasing local produce in all food stores, including supermarkets and smaller markets and convenience stores.



ACTION PLAN

Throughout the project, information was gathered about food production and processing and access to food in Franklin County, including input from our Advisory Group members and the many farmers who contributed to the project. Our findings formed the basis for this Action Plan.

Funding is essential for implementation. Many of the goals, objectives and action items are replicable in other parts of the State and region, so investment in implementation of this action plan in Franklin County would be an investment in the broader food system.

LAND
Goal 1: Improve current and new farmers' access to farmland.
Objective 1.1: Identify ways to make more town-owned vacant or open land available to farmers.
Action 1.1.1: Work with towns to identify vacant or open lands, particularly those with prime farmland soils, that could be leased to farmers.
Action 1.1.2: Draft model lease agreements that municipalities could use with interested farmers; agreements would be favorable to both parties and could offer reliable tenure to farmers and a revenue stream for municipalities.
Action 1.1.3: Host town and farmer matching sessions to help link interested parties.
Objective 1.2: Identify ways to make more land that is owned by non-farming land owners available to farmers for lease or purchase.
Action 1.2.1: Prepare maps of Franklin County to identify prime agricultural soils, open land, parcel data and other relevant information. Identify parcels that may have the potential to be farmed.
Action 1.2.2: Host informational sessions on leasing land to farmers and invite land owners in areas identified as having potential farmland. Identify barriers to land owners leasing their farmland to farmers.
Action 1.2.3: Host matching session between willing land owners and interested farmers.
Action 1.2.4: Provide technical assistance to land owners and farmers interested in creating lease agreements.
Objective 1.3: Identify state-owned and other public land that could have the potential to be farmed.
Action 1.3.1: Work with state agencies to determine viability of farming on particular parcels.
Action 1.3.2: Host land matching sessions, should state-owned land become available to farm.
Objective 1.4: Assess the potential for the land at the Franklin County House of Correction to be farmed.
Action 1.4.1: Conduct a site assessment of the Jail to determine soil and land suitability for farming.

Goal 2: Permanently protect more farmland and land with prime farmland soils.

Objective 2.1: Identify ways to make the APR program more flexible to meet the changing needs of farms and farmers.

Action 2.1.1: Advocate for changes to the APR program to allow for smaller parcels to qualify, for higher percentage of impervious coverage for farm infrastructure, and for the relaxation or elimination of the requirement that land be in active agricultural use for two years to be eligible for the program.

Action 2.1.2: Advocate for more funding to be allocated to the APR program.

Objective 2.2: Provide education to towns with CPA to ensure that farmland preservation is being prioritized for CPA funding.

Objective 2.3: Support the development of more Conservation Restrictions by land trusts that promote farming activities.

Goal 3: Keep more land in farming.

Objective 3.1: Support aging and other farmers who want to exit farming but keep their land in farming.

Action 3.1.1: Use maps developed by American Farmland Trust which identify farmers who are over age 65 and who have no “next generation” operators farming with them and develop a list of “at-risk” for development farms in Franklin County.

Action 3.1.2: Host farm transition workshops and invite owners of “at-risk” farms.

Action 3.1.3: Host free Conservation Law Foundation workshops, connecting farmers with pro bono legal assistance.

Action 3.1.4: Host sessions to link “at-risk” farm owners with farmers seeking land.

Objective 3.2: Support Transfer of Development Rights programs to encourage more compact development

Action 3.1.4: Assess the feasibility and legality of developing a county or statewide Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bank, where municipalities could send and receive development rights outside their own municipality. See Maryland’s TDR program for an example.

PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING

Goal 4: Expand markets for locally grown food.

Objective 4.1: Support efforts for more procurement of local food by institutions and schools.

Action 4.1.1: Work with members of the Franklin County Food Council to promote the 10% local food procurement challenge to institutions, schools and other organizations.

Objective 4.2: Identify ways to create connections between farmers and local businesses seeking more local food.

Action 4.2.1: Host meet-the-farmer sessions to encourage more businesses to do business with local farmers.

Objective 4.3: Support efforts of the Western Mass Food Processing Center to increase capacity for pre-serving crops for year-round consumption by adding infrastructure such as cold storage.
Objective 4.4: Develop data and metrics to better understand the amount of food being produced in Franklin County and how much of it is being consumed in Franklin County versus exported. (see goal 8)
Action 4.4.1: Conduct research into production of local food products, including the amount of food types being produced.
Action 4.4.2: Conduct research to assess the types and amount of local food products that are currently being exported from Franklin County and their destination – within Massachusetts, New England or beyond.
Action 4.4.3: Research the amount of food being imported into the region for which local products could be substituted.
Objective 4.5: Conduct research on crop yields and best performing crops to grow in Franklin County.
Goal 5: Increase support for farmers related to production and processing.
Objective 5.1: Support fully funding UMass Extension Service and reinstate more Extension agents for on-farm technical assistance.
Objective 5.2: Research relationship between soil types and crop yields to maximize food production in Franklin County .
Goal 6: Increase processing capacity and capabilities including on farms.
Objective 6.1: Support more up-front funding and grants for infrastructure needed for on-farm processing.
Objective 6.2: Support more education and streamlined information for farmers about regulations and on-farm processing.
Objective 6.3: Support more technical assistance for farmers in product development, labeling, marketing and other business skills.
Objective 6.4: Continue outreach to farmers about services available at the Western Mass Food Processing Center (WMFPC).
Goal 7: Increase small-batch poultry, dairy and value-added meat processing.
Objective 7.1: Support the advocacy efforts to site a small-batch poultry processing facility in Franklin County.
Action 7.1.1: Continue to convene meetings of the poultry processors and advocates for the purpose of sharing information, developing strategies for siting of a poultry processing facility, and addressing regulatory issues and concerns.
Action 7.1.2: When site is identified for a poultry processing facility, host an information session for farmers who have an interest in using the facility.

Objective 7.2: Support the creation of value-added meat processing facilities and/or businesses in Franklin County.
Objective 7.3: Support small-batch dairy and value-added processing facilities and/or businesses in Franklin County.
Objective 7.4: Measure the potential for increase in demand for local products by area businesses.
Action 7.4.1: Conduct a survey of area supermarkets and institutions to gauge the potential for and barriers to increased purchasing of local poultry, dairy and meat products.
FOOD ACCESS AND CONSUMPTION
Goal 8: Increase public knowledge about the benefits of locally-grown, fresh foods.
Objective 8.1: Support school curricula that includes nutrition education and home economics.
Objective 8.2: Support increased funding and programming for adult nutrition education.
Objective 8.3: Fund coupon or voucher programs for parents of students who participate in school-based programs to provide household sampling of locally-grown fresh food. (Example: Kindergarten Initiative of MA Farm to School)
Objective 8.4: Improve employer education around workplace practices and policies that encourage healthy eating.
Action 8.4.1: Provide employers with information on forming workplace wellness initiatives.
Action 8.4.2: Provide employers with resources on workplace CSAs, food gardens and other strategies for increasing fresh food access.
Action 8.4.3: Provide employers with information on creating healthy, local meeting menus and food sourcing guidelines.
Goal 9: Increase public knowledge of food growing, preparation and preservation.
Objective 9.1: Support school curricula that includes food-related skills and/or home economics.
Objective 9.2: Support the installation of food gardens at schools, daycares and other childcare facilities.
Objective 9.3: Support the increased use of town-owned land for community gardens.
Action 9.3.1: Work with towns to identify vacant lands, particularly those with prime farmland soils. This activity can be paired with work related to identifying land for potential lease by farmers.
Action 9.3.2: Draft model agreements municipalities could use with interested community groups to establish community gardens, including access to water, electricity and parking.
Action 9.3.3: Identify potential volunteer community garden managers and host community garden information sessions.
Objective 9.4: Support efforts to fully fund the UMass Extension Service and reinstate more Extension agents who can provide backyard or community food gardens technical assistance.

Goal 10: Increase the utilization of SNAP benefits for all who qualify.

Objective 10.1: Ensure that staffing and training are sufficient at state SNAP agency (DTA) to effectively support enrollment and application reviews .

Action 10.1.1: Continue efforts to increase staffing and fix technology issues that resulted in precipitous drop in SNAP enrollment during 2014-2015.

Action 10.1.2: Fund intensive outreach and education efforts to change public perception that people can't enroll in SNAP.

Action 10.1.3: Restore the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) office in Franklin County.

Goal 11: Strengthen the Franklin County Food Council to create increased capacity.

Objective 11.1: Provide administrative and facilitative support to the Franklin County Food Council.

Action 11.1.1: Seek funding to support a part-time administrator and / or facilitator for the Franklin County Food Council.

Objective 11.2: Continue to identify initiatives on which the Council should focus and seek funding to implement the initiatives.

Goal 12: Increase the consumption of in-season, local produce.

Objective 12.1: Improve public education about the affordability and freshness of locally-grown produce.

Action 12.1.1: Evaluate the success of the Franklin County Farm and Food System Project's Market Dollars initiative by determining the participation rate of low income individuals.

Action 12.1.2 Seek funding for an additional season of Market Dollars to provide more opportunities for low-income individuals to shop at farmers' markets.

Objective 12.2: Expand the selection of fresh and local food at supermarkets, smaller markets and convenience stores.

Action: 12.2.1: Conduct consumer surveys to help owners of small markets and convenience stores evaluate consumer demand for a broader selection of healthy, local foods.

Action: 12.2.2: Work with existing stores in key locations to expand healthy food offerings and reduce the isolation of "food access challenged" communities. Possible locations include Conway and Charlemont.

Objective 12.3: Fund additional research to analyze local shopping and transportation patterns to better understand where and how to make local produce available to residents.

Objective 12.4: Draft model wellness policies and food service contracts that can be used by local school districts to increase purchase and consumption of locally-grown food.

Objective 12.5: Create funding to coordinate distribution and delivery of local food to Franklin County and area school districts.

Objective 12.6: Continue to promote participation among school children in free/reduced meals programs and increase the local fresh foods contained in those meals
Objective 12.7. Continue to implement/expand school-based programs that increase awareness among students about fresh, local and healthy food.
Action 12.7.1 Fund programs that expose students to local food, including field trips to farms and in-school taste testing.
Objective 12.8. Develop an educational and social marketing campaign based on newly available data (from recommended research), in order to shift the eating habits of residents of Franklin County to align with the USDA myPlate.
Objective 12.9: Expand winter farmers’ markets to provide local option for fresh and healthy food during winter months.
Goal 13: Reduce transportation barriers to food stores.
Objective 13.1: Increase the availability and use of public transportation to food stores.
Action 13.1.1: Work with FRTA to examine bus lines and schedules in relation to full line super-market shopping options and to change policies that support residents bringing greater amounts of groceries onto buses.
Objective 13.2: Develop more local food shopping options that provide healthy options with less driving.
Action 13.2.1: Improve existing farmers markets by increasing vendors, hours, and selection of fresh and healthy food.
Action 13.2.2: Determine the demand to site a new farmers’ market to serve “food access challenged” communities, such as Charlemont (being aware that farmers’ markets may have reached a saturation point in Franklin County).
Goal 14: Develop data on Franklin County residents’ diet and food consumption
Objective 14.1: Conduct research on the eating habits of residents of Franklin County to inform strategies for shifting diets.
Objective 14.2: Conduct research to better understand the actual consumption patterns of Franklin County residents regarding local food products.
Goal 15: Decrease food waste.
Objective 15.1: Increase refrigerated storage capacity at food pantries through more funding or co-use of under-used existing nearby facilities to allow food pantries to accept more donations of fresh, perishable foods and local food.
Objective 15.2: Develop opportunities for processing and preserving surplus produce, such as at community kitchens and community preserving events, that may otherwise be diverted into the food waste stream.

New England Food Vision and Franklin County: Summary Findings

Summary: This project was inspired in part by elements of the New England Food Vision, in particular the idea that New England might work toward the goal of producing 50% of its food by 2060 (the 50-by-60 Vision). Our research found that there is a significant gulf between what people are eating now and what they could potentially be eating to meet the 50-by-60 Vision, and that expenditures on local food by Franklin County residents would need to increase fivefold under the 50-by-60 Vision. Our research also found that food production in Franklin County would need to double by 2060 and that there would need to be substantial shifts in what farmers are currently growing to meet the demand of changing diets called for in the 50-by-60 Vision. There would also need to be an increase of over 40,000 acres of land being farmed and/or an increase in productivity to grow this additional food.

NEW ENGLAND FOOD VISION

Franklin County and Its Role in Contributing to Food Solutions New England's 50-by-60 Vision

The New England Food Vision, a report produced by Food Solutions New England, envisions how our regional food systems may be developed to nourish “a social, economic, and environmental landscape that supports a high quality of life for everyone, for generations to come”. The Vision is broader than just the food system, and recognizes that food impacts all elements of society. The stated core values of the Vision are food rights, healthy eating, sustainability, and community vitality.

The New England Food Vision lays out three potential scenarios: Business as Usual, Omnivore's Delight and Regional Reliance. The Business as Usual scenario imagines New England continuing to rely almost entirely upon a global food system vulnerable to increased environmental degradation, water shortages, and rising food prices – and determines such a scenario is not sustainable. The Omnivore's Delight - also known as the 50-by-60 Vision - envisions growing 50% of our region's own food by 2060 and shifting our diet to support a sustainable and expanded regional agricultural capacity. This model emphasizes growing a lot more of what grows well in the region while continuing to import other food from outside the region.

This project focused on the 50-by-60 Vision and assessed Franklin County's role in contributing to that regional vision.

50-BY-60 VISION

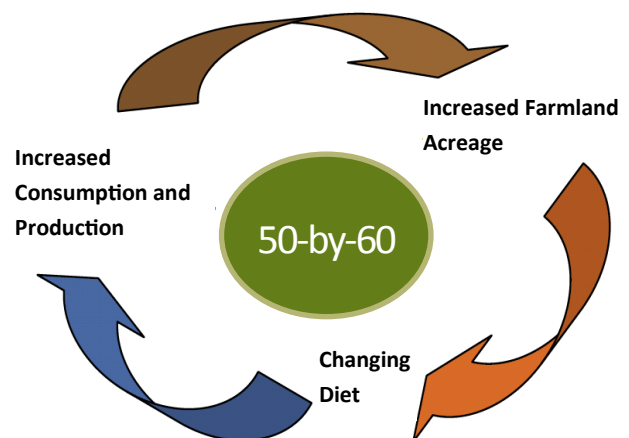
The 50-by-60 Vision “projects that half a century from now, New England could produce half of the food its residents need.” This is based on analysis of three key factors:

Changing Diet: The types of food that the region's populations would consume

Increased Consumption and Production of Local Food: The amount of food that the region's residents would consume in relation to the amount of food being produced in the region

Increased Farmland Acreage: The amount of farmland in New England that would be needed for food production

The 50-by-60 Vision is one of regional “self reliance” as opposed to “self-sufficiency”; one in which we grow more of the products that grow well in New England and we import those which require large swaths of land to produce or which do not grow well or at all in New England.



50-by-60 VISION AND DIET

How would what we eat change in the 50-by-60 Vision?













The 50-by-60 Vision model assumes that about 2,300 calories would be consumed per day per person. This is based on calculations informed by the Institute of Medicine’s Estimated Energy Requirements¹, and data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control² and U.S. Census³. The distribution of foods in the 50-by-60 Vision is based on the USDA MyPlate⁴ and the Harvard School of Public Health’s Healthy Eating Plate⁵.

The 50-by-60 Vision diet is intended to move people “toward healthier diets with adequate fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, as well as more diverse sources

of protein”. Specifically, the diet would include “few refined carbohydrates, reduced (and healthier) fats, current levels of dairy and egg consumption, more fish, more whole grains, and more fruits and vegetables than people consume today”. The diet calls for significantly less meat but much more of the meat eaten purchased from local sources.

The ability to shift the food system toward the 50-by-60 Vision would be challenging from a consumer behavior perspective. It would require changes in consumer eating habits, in some cases, significant changes. Some of the per day changes are shown below.

50-by-60 Vision Dietary Shifts

	DAILY CHANGE	NOW	2060
VEGETABLES	88% increase: 1.6 to 3.0 cups per person		
FRUIT (COOL CLIMATE)	150% increase: 0.4 to 1 cup per person		
FRUIT (WARM CLIMATE)	233% increase: 0.3 to 1 cup per person		
WHOLE GRAINS	436% increase: 0.7 to 3.75 ounces per person		
PROTEIN-RICH PLANTS (such as legumes, nuts, and seeds)	167% increase: 0.6 to 1.6 ounces per person		
MEAT, FISH AND EGGS	-27% decrease: 7.1 to 5.2 ounces per person		

¹Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science, National Research Council. 2005. “Dietary Reference Intakes for Select Dietary Components.” Washington, DC: National Academies Press. www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/DRI/DRI_Energy/energy_full_report.pdf

²2013b. “Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System: Prevalence and Trends for Obesity and Overweight by State 2012.” <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss>

³2013. United States: 2010. Summary Population and Housing Characteristics. <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/cph-1-1.pdf>

⁴2014. “Choose MyPlate: Food Groups.” <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/>

⁵Harvard School of Public Health. 2011. “Harvard Researchers Launch Healthy Eating Plate.” <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/healthy-eatingplate/>.

50-by-60 VISION AND CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

How much food do we currently consume?

When determining how much food a population is consuming, a frequently used proxy for food consumption is food expenditures – or the amount spent on food. The 2013 Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Expenditure

report indicated that in the Northeast (the smallest reported unit), the average annual food expenditures were \$6,998 household. See Table 2. Roughly speaking, given Franklin County’s 31,031⁶ households, the

value of current food consumption in Franklin County is \$217,154,938 annually. This is an annual food expenditure of about \$3,043 per person.

\$3,043
the approximate average a person spends for food in one year in Western MA

Annual Household Food Expenditures

Cereals	\$ 595
Meat, Poultry, Eggs	\$ 919
Dairy	\$ 455
Fruit	\$ 413
Veg	\$ 395
Sugars	\$ 141
Fats & Oils	\$ 116
Misc	\$ 670
Beverages (non-alcoholic)	\$ 383
Food prepared by consumer unit on out-of-town trips	\$ 50
Food Away from home	\$ 2,858

Note: There is a negligible discrepancy in the USDA total of \$6,998 and the actual above total of \$6,995.

How much of the food we consume is produced in Franklin County?

Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) estimates that 10% of all general food expenditures in Western Massachusetts, including Franklin County, are from local food sources. Based on this calculation, of the \$217,154,938 spent on food in Franklin County, approximately \$21,715,494 came from local sources (local farmers, food producers, and value-added food businesses). The annual per person expenditure on local food is about \$304 in Franklin County.

\$304
the approximate average a person spends for LOCAL food in one year in Western MA

How much food do we produce in Franklin County?

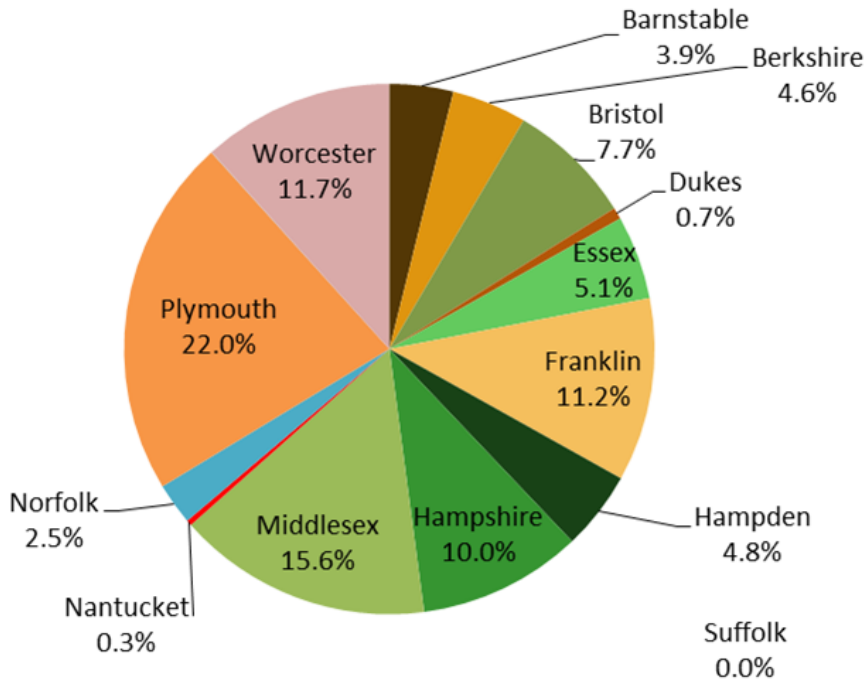
The 50-by-60 Vision aspires to 50% of our food being produced in New England and 50% continuing to be imported from other parts of the country and globe. This vision is based on practical and strategic factors. The 50% of food produced in New England would concentrate on things we grow well, such as vegetables, apples, dairy and meat. The 50% of food imported from other parts of the country and globe would be made up of things we cannot grow (oranges, bananas and coffee) and/or which require large acreage for production (grains).

According to the USDA’s Census of Agriculture 2012 the total value of agriculture produced in Franklin County was \$55,056,000. This was 11.2% of the state’s \$492,211,000 total market value of agriculture produced in 2012, making Franklin County the fourth-most productive county in Massachusetts by market value, behind Plymouth, Middlesex and Worcester Counties. In our calculations, we assume that Franklin County will continue to maintain the same or greater percentage of statewide production in order for Massachusetts to reach the 50-by-60 goals.

⁶The population of Franklin County is 71,372 and the average household size is 2.3 people, or 31,031 households. Using data from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, a 2013 report by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (Sustainable Franklin County) estimated that the population of the county will grow by 7% by 2035, resulting in a population of approximately 77,000, or about 33,203 households. There were no population projections available beyond 2035, so our calculations are based upon projected population of 77,000.

⁷According to IMPLAN, an economic modeling program, 15.8% of the total value of household food purchases in our region result in income for local farmers, food producers, and value-added food businesses. CISA decided to err on the conservative side and assume that 10% of total

Percent by County of Statewide Annual Agricultural Market Value 2012



Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2012

What is the different between our consumption and production?

In a 2008 article in the Journal of Extension entitled “Local Foods: Estimating Capacity”, the challenges for determining measures of local food are identified. The article states that despite the growing interest in local foods, there is little information available to measure how much food might be local in any given place. Without such information, it is difficult to assess what opportunities exist, to set goals, or to measure change.” Given these limitations, they suggest that the best measurement is to compare figures for consumption and production.

Using the article’s methodology, the relevant figures for Franklin County are as follows (rounded to the nearest million dollars):

DESCRIPTION	VALUE
Value of all food consumed by Franklin County residents annually (USDA actuals)	\$217 million
Value of local food consumed by Franklin County residents annually (based on CISA calculation)	\$21 million
Approximate target value of local food consumed under 50-by-60	\$108 million
Value of agriculture produced annually (USDA actuals)	\$55 million

⁸ <http://www.joe.org/joe/2008october/a7.php>

Under the 50-by-60 scenario, the amount of money spent on locally produced food could increase to about \$108 million. At this level, one-half of all food expenditures (currently \$217 million) would be on local products. To achieve this, expenditures on local products, currently at \$21 million, would need to increase by approximately five times. Similarly, production would need to at least double (assuming exports out of the region remain similar to current levels) and the products being produced would have to change dramatically, as discussed in the next section. The remaining agricultural products that would make up the 50-by-60 diet would be imported to the region.

How would what is grown in Franklin County change in the 50-by-60 Vision?

According to 2012 USDA figures, the statewide market value of food-related agricultural products is over \$278 million, of which over \$34 million or 12%, is produced by Franklin County. See Table 3, which shows the breakdown of market value for food and non-food agricultural products. Nearly 20% of food-related agricultural products raised by farmers in Franklin County are grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas, while over 20% are vegetables, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes.

In making a shift to the 50-by-60 Vision, Franklin County farmers would not only need to double what they are currently producing, they would also need to shift to new or additional products to satisfy the demand for increased fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy and other foods.

2012 Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold in State and Franklin County

2012 Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold	Massachusetts Market Value	Franklin County Market Value	FC % of State Total
Food-related Agricultural Products			
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	\$722,000	\$141,000	19.53%
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	\$81,209,000	\$18,199,000	22.41%
Fruits and tree nuts	\$22,146,000	\$1,934,000	8.73%
Berries	\$103,440,000	\$1,473,000	1.42%
Maple Syrup	\$2,261,000	\$1,099,000	48.61%
Milk from cows	\$44,250,000	\$8,289,000	18.73%
Poultry and eggs	\$11,748,000	\$1,498,000	12.75%
Cattle and calves	\$9,503,000	\$1,390,000	14.63%
Hogs and pigs	\$2,898,000	\$52,000	1.79%
FOOD SUBTOTAL	\$278,177,000	\$34,075,000	12.25%
Food as Percentage of Total Agriculture	57%	62%	
Non-Food Agricultural Products (including tobacco, Christmas trees, wool, nursery, sod, draft animals, etc.)	\$213,934,000	\$20,981,000	
TOTAL	\$492,111,000	\$55,056,000	11.19%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2012

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2012

Food Solutions New England identified several product-specific factors that would need to be addressed in order to reach the 50% local production goal.

Vegetables: There were two challenges identified to growing the required amount of vegetables: 1) growing the produce as locally as possible so that it is as fresh as possible and 2) growing it sufficiently in all seasons.

Fruit: Most of the growth in fruit production in New England would likely be with apples. Warm climate fruits would continue to be imported.

Grains: It is recommended that most grains, especially wheat, be imported. According to the New England Food Vision, wheat comprises 2/3 of Americans' daily consumption of grains. Specialty grain products could continue to be produced locally.

Dry Beans and Peas: These crops, like grains, require significant acreage to grow. While they can be grown in rotation with hay and grains, the New England Food Vision recommended that these be among the imported products.

Dairy: Currently 1/2 of New England's dairy needs are met in the region. The New England Food Vision projects meeting 2/3 of that need. This would require adequate pastureland, more options for dairy processing, including small-batch and private label, and likely new on-farm infrastructure.

Imported Foods: Some of the 50% of foods that would continue to be imported under the 50-by-60 Vision are:

- Citrus, bananas, and other warm climate fruits
- Half the dry beans
- Most grains for human consumption; all grains for feed
- Vegetable oils
- Nuts
- Coffee, tea and chocolate
- Most alcoholic drinks
- Spices



Growing sufficient produce in all seasons is a challenge for Franklin County in achieving the 50-by-60 Vision.

50-by-60 VISION AND LAND

How much land does 50-by-60 require in New England?

Using information provided in the New England Food Vision, according to the USDA Census of Agricultural 2007 data only about 5% of the land in New England (less than 2 million acres) was used for producing food. According to the New England Food Vision, in order to meet the suggested agricultural production for all of New England, land in agricultural use would need to increase from 2 million to 6 million acres, a level last seen in 1945. For Massachusetts, total land in farms would need to increase from 5% of all land (2007 figures for farmland) to 16% of all land in farming by 2060; these figures track closely to the change for the entire region. See Tables below.

Farmland in New England 2007					Percent of total acres of land		
2007	Total acres	Cropland acres	Pastureland acres	Total farmland acres	Farmland	Forest	Developed land
CT	3,101,000	164,000	33,000	197,000	6%	60%	34%
ME	19,746,000	529,000	62,000	591,000	3%	94%	3%
MA	4,993,000	187,000	48,000	235,000	5%	65%	30%
NH	5,729,000	129,000	34,000	163,000	3%	89%	8%
RI	662,000	24,000	6,000	30,000	5%	55%	40%
VT	5,899,000	517,000	137,000	654,000	11%	85%	4%
New England	40,130,000	1,550,000	320,000	1,870,000	5%	75%	20%

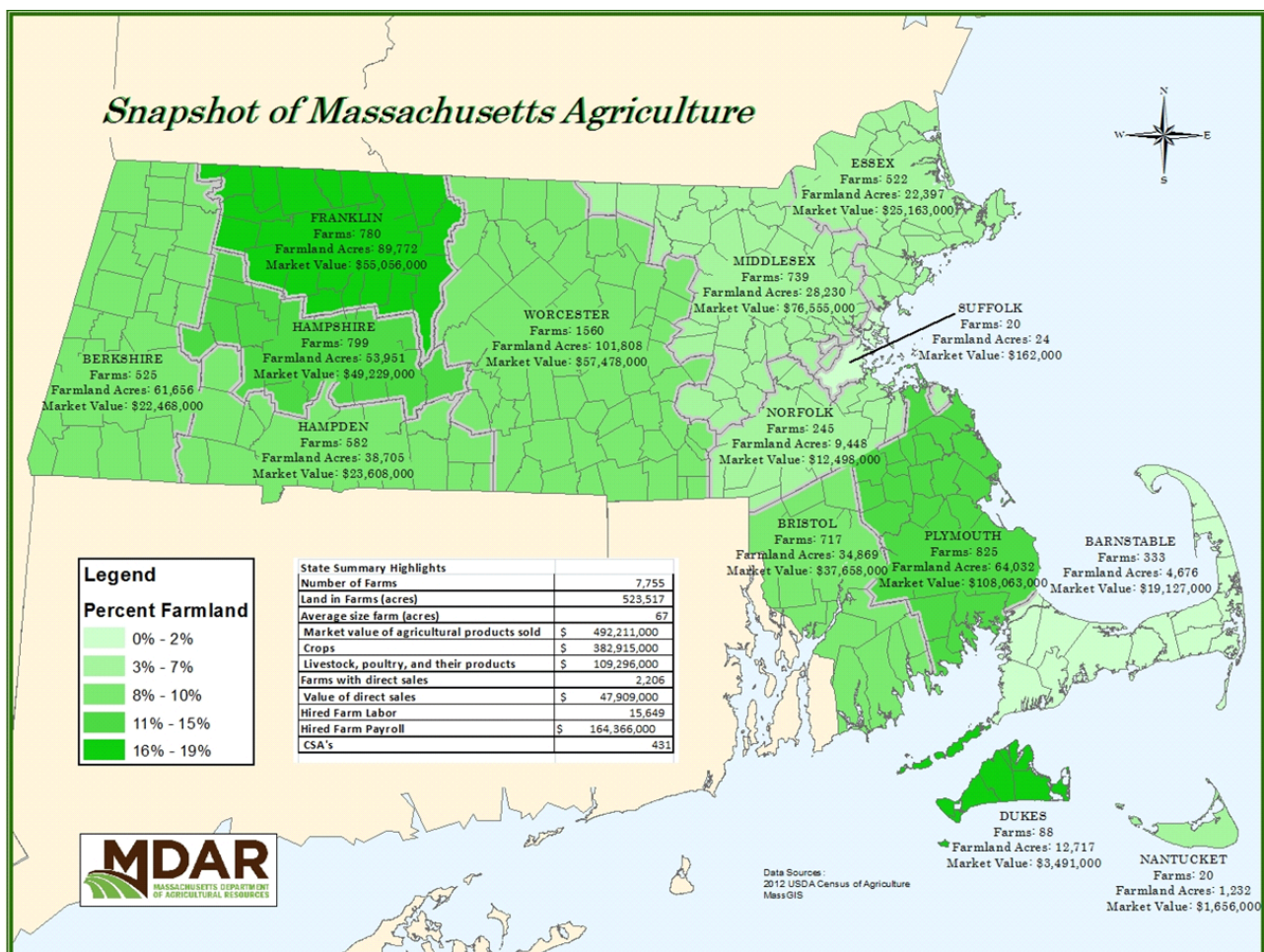
Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2007; Food Solutions New England

Projected Farmland in New England: 2060 Vision					Percent of total acres of land		
2060	Total acres	Cropland acres	Pastureland acres	Total farmland acres	Farmland	Forest	Developed land
CT	3,101,000	370,000	40,000	410,000	13%	50%	37%
ME	19,746,000	1,400,000	850,000	2,250,000	11%	84%	5%
MA	4,993,000	600,000	200,000	800,000	16%	50%	34%
NH	5,729,000	550,000	350,000	900,000	16%	75%	9%
RI	662,000	30,000	10,000	40,000	6%	50%	44%
VT	5,899,000	1,050,000	550,000	1,600,000	27%	68%	5%
New England	40,130,000	4,000,000	2,000,000	6,000,000	15%	73%	22%

Source: Food Solutions New England

What portion of the land required by 50-by-60 would come from Franklin County?

For Franklin County, we can estimate what percentage of our land might be in farmland in 2060 by looking at our current standing in the State and projecting it out to 2060. In 2012, Franklin County's farmland made up 89,772 acres or 17% of all farmland in the State. Massachusetts is projected to need 800,000 acres by 2060 under 50-by-60. If Franklin County's percent of the State's farmland continues to be around 17%, the total acres needed would be about 137,000 of which, in 2007, Franklin County had 79,465 acres. See the Snapshot of Massachusetts Agriculture Map on the following page.



Calculations for the Food Vision use 2007 as the base year. Since these calculations were made, 2012 Census of Agriculture data has been released. The amount of land in farmland increased 1% in Massachusetts from 2007 to 2012. For Franklin County there was nearly a 13% increase from 2007 to 2012. Given these increases, Franklin County needs about 47,000 more acres of farmland in production in order to meet the goals of the 50-by-60 Vision.

Farmland in New England 2007

	Acres "in farms"
2007 land in farms – MA (actual)	517,879
2012 land in farms – MA (actual)	523,517
2060 land in farms – MA (projected)	800,000
Land Needed - MA	276,483
2007 land in farms – FC (actual)	79,465
2012 land in farms – FC (actual)	89,772
2060 land in farms – FC (projected)	137,183
Land Needed - FC	47,411

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2007 & 2012; Food Solutions New England

Does Franklin County have enough farmable land to achieve 50-by-60?

Franklin County is a primarily rural county with significant open space and low population density. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, it has the lowest population density in the state with an average of 102 people/square mile.

According to the U.S. Census, Franklin County's total land area is 724 square miles, the fourth largest county in the state. Massachusetts Audubon's 2014 *Losing Ground* report which documents patterns of development and their impact on the nature of Massachusetts, ranks Franklin County as the least developed of all 14 counties in the state with only 5% developed land. In terms of open land, Franklin County ranks 5th of all counties in the Massachusetts. Of the county's total land, 9% is considered open land consisting of agricultural areas, bare soil, or low vegetation. Franklin County ranks 1st in natural land with 87% being considered forest, wetland, and water⁹.

In 2013, as part of the Franklin Regional Council of Government's (FRCOG) *Sustainable Franklin County* project, the Conway School conducted a study of the capacity of Franklin County's land to feed Franklin County's residents. A summary of the findings is in the appendix of this report. The *Franklin County Farmland and Foodshed Study* suggested that Franklin County could pursue self-reliance through a regional approach as reflected by the 50-by-60 Vision. The Study noted that "although about 50 percent of the county's soils are suitable for agriculture, only about 13% of those soils are currently being used for agricultural production. The land identified for possible expansion for agriculture is distributed unevenly across the county: 47% could be found in West County, 35% in East County and 18% along the Connecticut River Valley.

Soil suitability is important to understand when considering how Franklin County will increase its production. Even though both Massachusetts and Franklin County increased their farmland from 2007 to 2012, some agricultural uses increased more than others. Over the five year period, 2007 to 2012, land used for vegetables grew while land for orchards did not. At the state level, pastureland did not grow but in Franklin County it nearly doubled. Particularly important is the relationship between soil suitability and crop yields—crops that grow well and yield the most calories per acre may play an important role in reaching the 50-by-60 Vision. More analysis is needed in this area.

Farmland by Type

	2007 acres	2012 acres	% increase/ decrease
Land for vegetables – MA	15,764	17,770	+13%
Land for vegetables - FC	2,794	4,002	+43%
Land for orchards - MA	5,416	4,146	-23%
Land for orchards - FC	564	426	-24%
Land for pasture - MA	86,192	85,760	-1%
Land for pasture - FC	6,425	11,867	+85%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2007 & 2012; FRCOG calculations

SUMMARY

It is possible for Franklin County to achieve the changes in diet, food consumption and production, and land use required to reach 50-by-60; however attaining that goal will require significant commitment and effort in each of the three areas. Given Franklin County's prominent agricultural production within the context of Massachusetts and its existing and potential farmland, if Franklin County can achieve its goals as a county, the state as a whole is well-positioned to contribute to the 50-by-60 Vision.

Recommendations for making progress toward the 50-by-60 Vision are included in the action plan on pages 4-7.

⁹Developed land is defined as low density residential and commercial/ industrial/ high density residential development., Open land consists or agricultural areas, bare soil, or low vegetation, Natural land consists of forest, wetland, and water

Franklin County Farmer Survey: Findings

Summary: Farmers need more infrastructure, both on farm and off, to support increased production. Farmers also need more land. Farmers responding to the question of whether they needed more land indicated 69 separate needs for more land. As for land currently being farmed, nearly 70% of farmers 64 years and younger do not have a transition plan for their farm when they retire and nearly 40% do not have an identified successor. Identifying strategies to manage the farmland shortage and to keep current farmland from being developed is essential for Franklin County to sustain and increase production. Farmers in Worcester County have needs that in some cases diverge from those in Franklin County, likely due to Worcester County farmers' closer proximity to large population centers and areas experiencing development pressures.

FRANKLIN COUNTY FARMER SURVEY

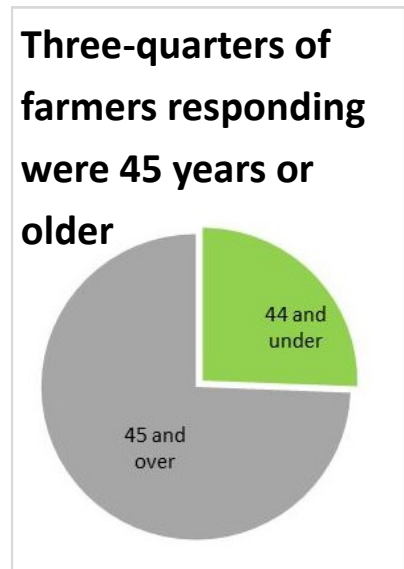
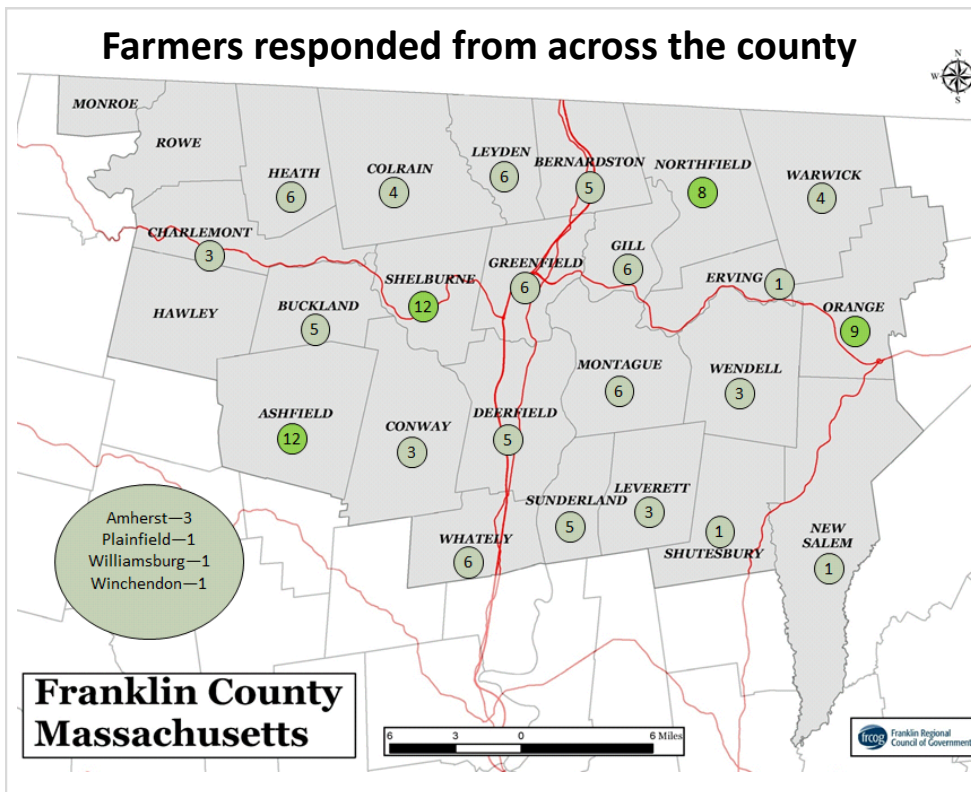
Selected Survey Results

What kinds of resources and services could help Franklin County farmers scale up their production? This question and others were explored in the **Franklin County Farmer Survey**, one of the primary focuses—and deliverables—of the first phase of this project. Of the nearly 300 farmers and growers contacted in Franklin County, 134 (or nearly 50%) participated in the Farmer Survey. Note: According to the USDA Census of Agriculture 2012 data, there were 780 farms in Franklin County.

By design, the Farmer Survey sought to identify common needs of farmers in Franklin County related to scaling up food production and processing, and to use that data to help attract funding for specific projects identified. It also built upon findings of CISA's *Scaling up Local Food*. In addition, the survey incorporated a comprehensive array of topics important to the Project Advisory Group and their organizations. The Survey was also designed to offer farmers the option of requesting assistance on a variety of topics including farm transition and estate planning, new product development, farm business financing, and others.

What follows are highlights of the survey findings. The complete Franklin County Farmer Survey findings are available at <http://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Franklin-County-Farmer-Survey-Responses-Final.pdf>.

Who responded to the farmer survey?



Other highlights of responding farmers include:

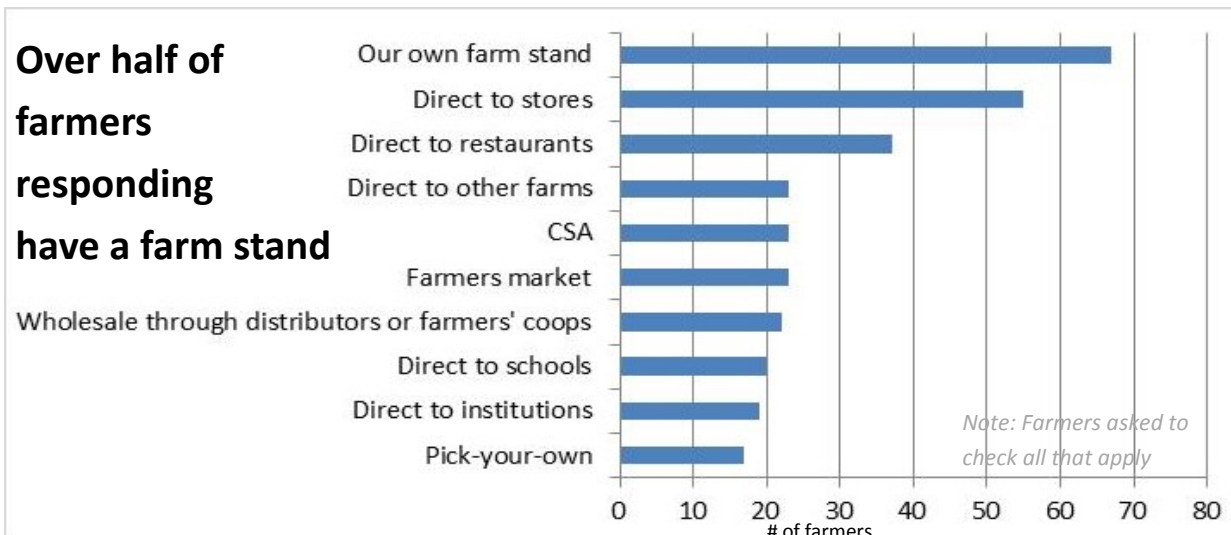
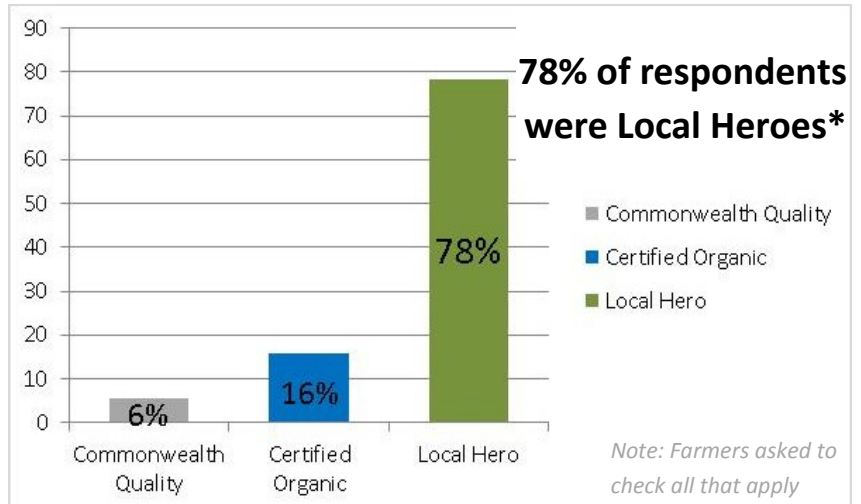
- The most prevalent products produced by responding farmers: hay, vegetables, and fruits and berries.
- The total annual market value of responding farmers: 54% were below \$25k and 46% were \$25k and higher.
- The age of responding farmers: 75% were 45 years old and older.

THE FARMER SURVEY ON PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING

Where and how do farmers sell their products?

Farmers use the buy-local campaign and/or certifications to help market their products. Over three-quarters of the respondents say they are a member of CISA's Local Hero program.

Farmers indicate they sell primarily on their own farm and/or direct to stores, restaurants and other farms. Fewer farmers currently sell direct to schools and institutions.



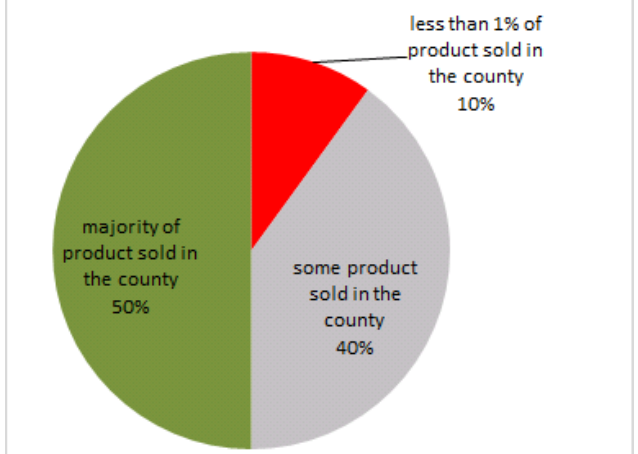
Over half of farmers indicate that more than 50% of their products are sold in Franklin County. Farmers site **three primary barriers** to selling more products in Franklin County:

1. Many people can't afford to buy local produce in Franklin County
2. Farmers don't have time to look for new markets
3. Farmers can get better prices elsewhere

The perception that people cannot afford local produce is one shared by both farmers and consumers. See page 55 for results of a produce pricing assessment hat was conducted to compare costs of farmers' markets with costs at supermarkets and the subsequent outreach to low-income families and individuals to encourage more shopping at farmers markets.

Another barrier to selling more products in Franklin County is that farmers can't find new places to sell their products.

Over half of farmers responding sell more than 50% of their products in Franklin County

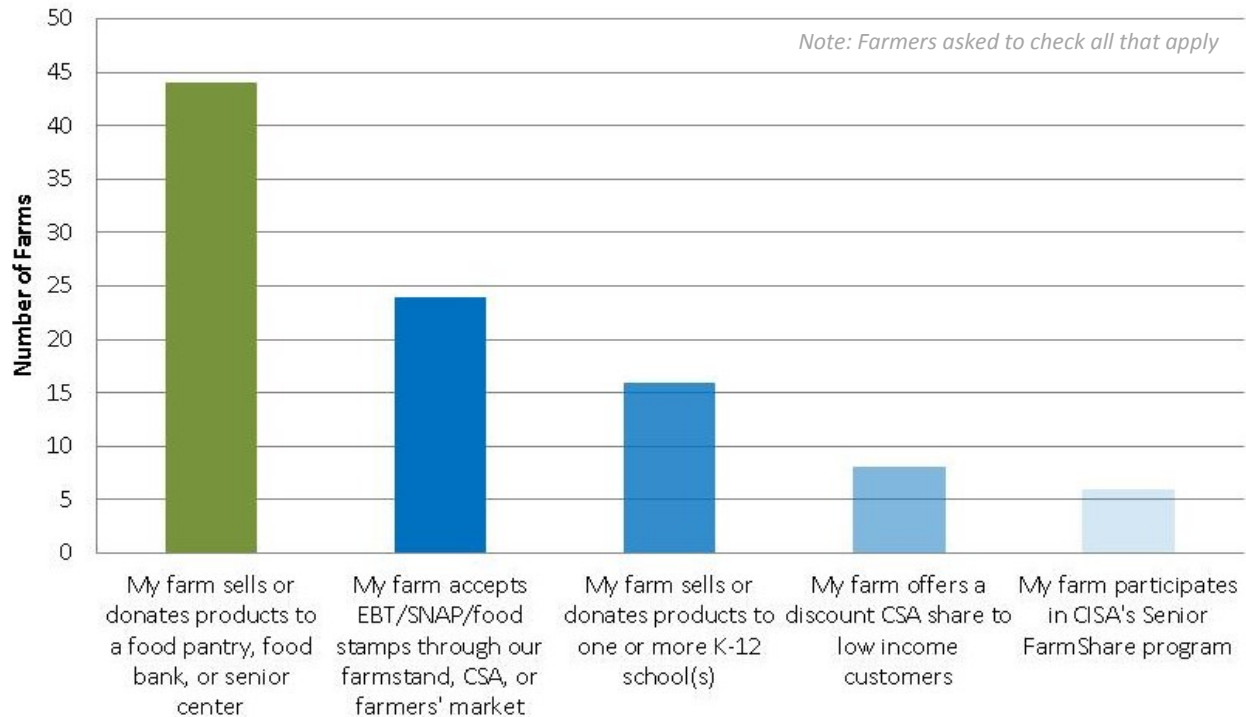


*CISA's Local Hero - www.buylocalfood.org | Certified Organic- <http://www.nofamass.org> | Commonwealth Quality - <http://thecqp.com/>

Where and how do farmers sell their products? (cont.)

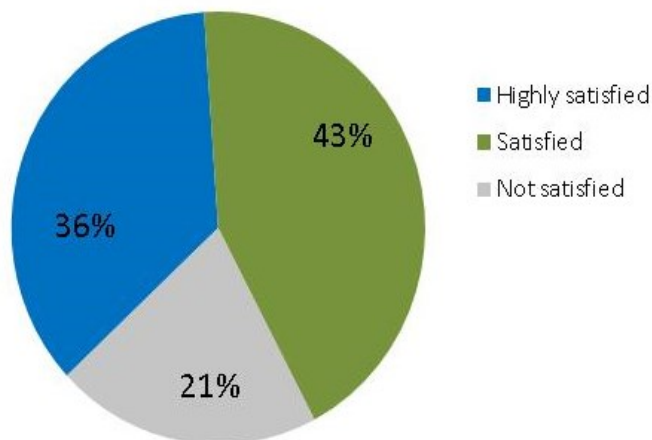
Many farmers in Franklin County are keenly aware of the challenges of hunger and food insecurity that numerous families and individuals are facing. At the same time, some of the same farmers who donate food make little enough themselves that they too qualify for SNAP. (Gross monthly income for a 2-person household is \$1,705 or less based on 2014 SNAP eligibility criteria.)

Nearly half of responding farmers sell or donate to hunger organizations

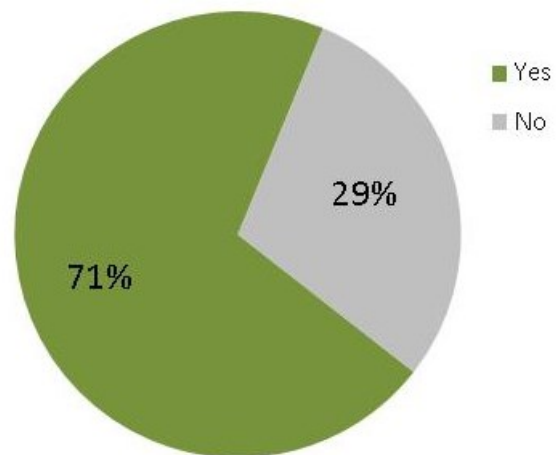


What did farmers say about processing and production?

Over three quarters of responding farmers are satisfied or highly satisfied with their meat slaughter facility



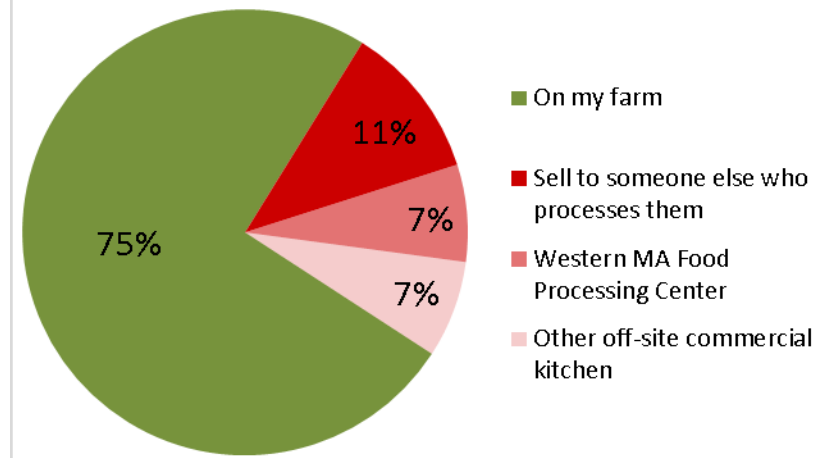
Nearly three quarters of responding farmers are able to sell meat and poultry products at an acceptable profit margin



Farmers cited the distance needed to travel to slaughter services and errors made by slaughter facilities as issues with their current facility. Those not able to get an acceptable price for their meat cite high costs of production as a barrier.

What did farmers say about produce processing and what they need to process more products?

Three-quarters of farmers process their produce on their farm



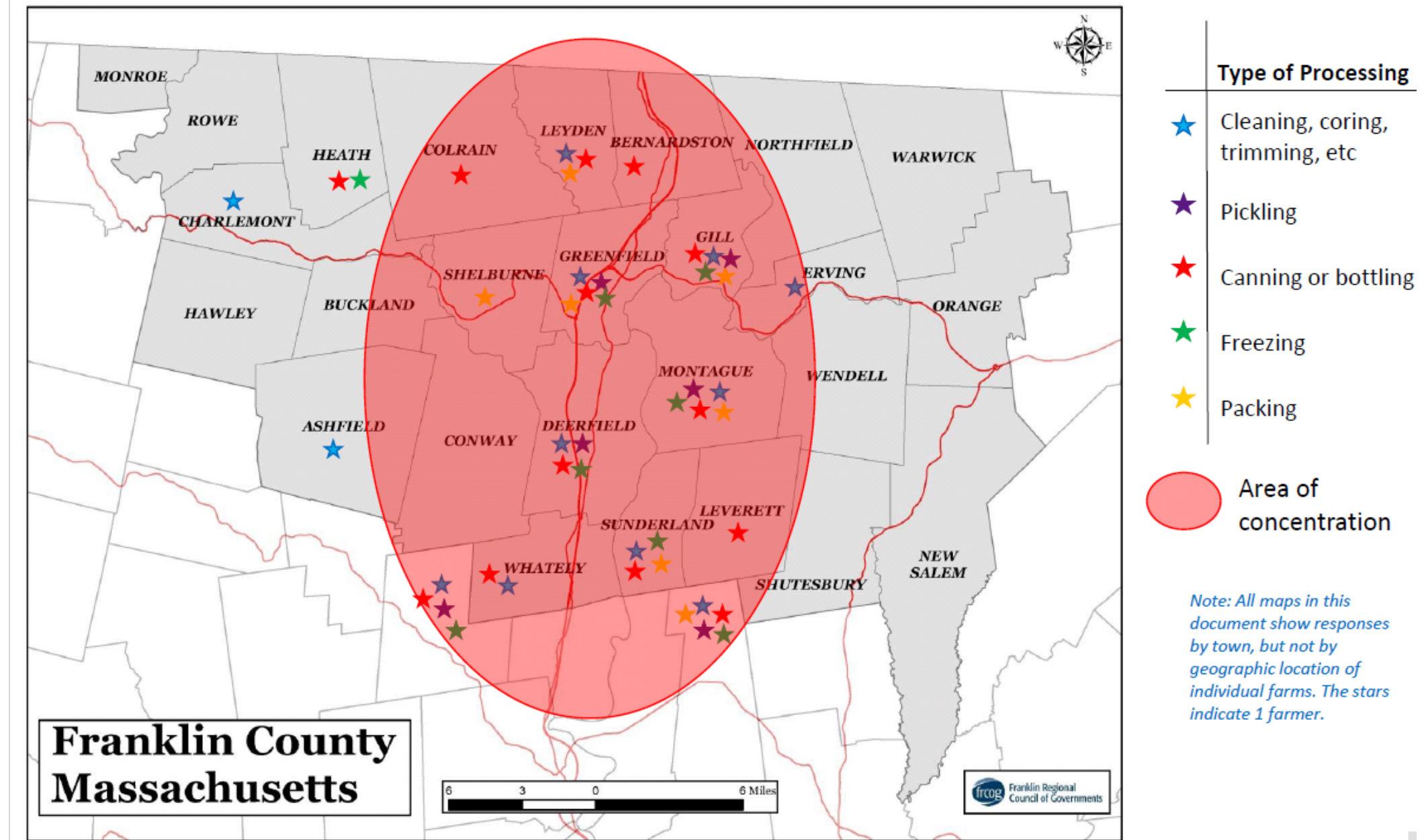
Farmers who need fruit and vegetable processing services and facilities are mostly concentrated in or near the Connecticut River Valley, as highlighted in the red oval on the map.

The Western MA Food Processing Center (WMFPC), part of the Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC), is in an excellent location to serve these farmers. While this facility is making remarkable advances in its equipment and services, some farmers who need access to a processing facility have not yet tried the WMFPC.

When asked about barriers to selling more products in Franklin County, some farmers indicated they needed product development or marketing assistance. When asked what is keeping them from processing more of their produce and creating value-added products, some farmers said they need to upgrade or purchase new equipment or facilities to process on their farm or that their farm is too small to use a processing facility.

Since the WMFPC can likely meet these needs of farmers, it seems like additional outreach and education is needed to increase awareness of the WMFPC. Informing farmers about complementary services offered by WMFPC's parent organization, FCCDC, such as business planning and marketing assistance, might also be helpful.

Most farmers needing fruit and vegetable processing services and facilities are centrally located in Franklin County

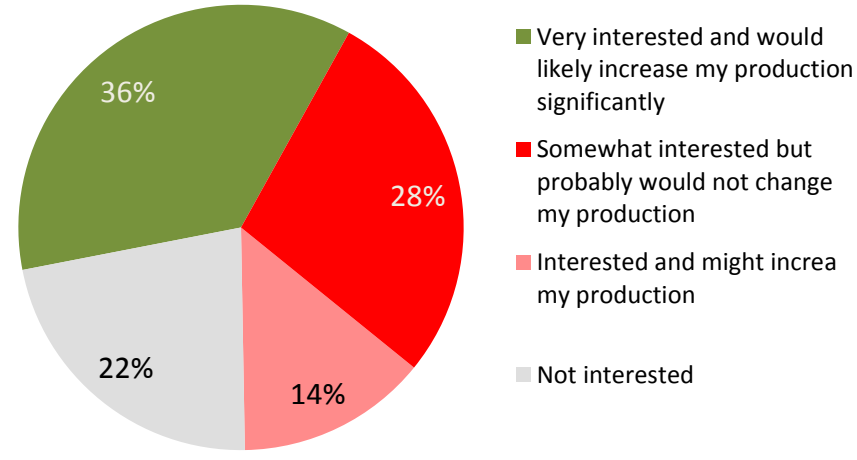


These findings will help shape future education and outreach to farmers. For example, farmers also responded that their batches would be too small to be processed or that processing was too expensive. In many cases the WMFPC might be a viable processing option for local food producers.

Additionally, it may be valuable to identify smaller commercial kitchens (such as the one recently developed in the Wendell Town Hall or others provided by churches and other organizations) as stepping stones farmers could use on their way to scaling up their businesses to the point where the WMFPC works well with their business model.

Meat

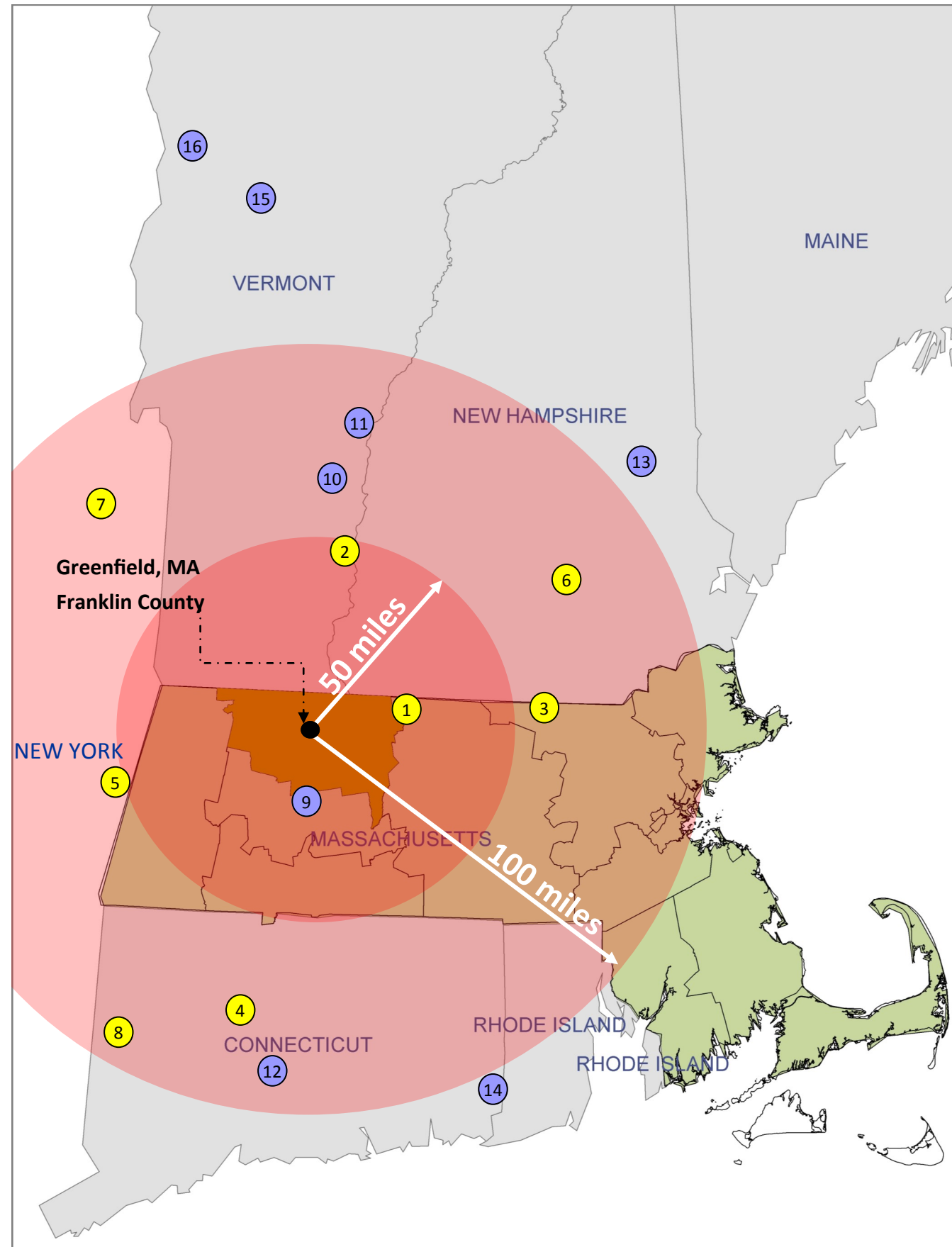
Nearly three quarters of responding farmers have some level of interest in processing meat at the Western MA Food Processing Center



#	Name	Slaughter	Post Slaughter	Approx. Round Trip Mileage from Greenfield, MA*
1	Adams Farm—Athol, MA	x		56
2	Westminster Meats—Westminster, VT	x		84
3	Blood Farm—Groton, MA	x		122
4	Bristol Beef—Bristol, CT	x		165
5	Hilltown Pork—Canaan, NY	x		162
6	Lemay and Sons—Manchester, NH	x		175
7	Locust Grove Farm—Argyle, NY	x		179
8	Tarzia Meats—New Milford, CT	x		242
9	Sutter Meats—Northampton, MA		x	40
10	Black River Produce—Springfield, VT		x	124
11	Green Mtn Smokehouse—Windsor, VT		x	140
12	Noack's Meat Products—Meriden, CT		x	167
13	Mike's Custom Meats—Pittsfield, NH		x	218
14	Westerly Packing Co—Westerly, RI		x	242
15	Mad River Food Hub—Waitsfield, VT		x	310
16	Vermont Smoke & Cure, Hinesburg, VT		x	348

*Source: Google Maps.

Note: Typically slaughter requires two round trips, one to drop off and one to pick up.



A study on meat slaughter and processing in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts was published by CISA in 2013. *Confronting Challenges in the Local Meat Industry* assessed the local meat slaughter industry and discussed regulatory conditions in the state.

According to this study, “In Massachusetts, producers must have their livestock slaughtered and processed in a USDA inspected facility if they wish to sell the meat. There are only two USDA inspected slaughter facilities in Massachusetts—Adams Farm in Athol and Blood Farm in Groton. There are currently no USDA inspected meat processing facilities located in Franklin, Hampshire, or Hampden counties. Adams Farm, located in Worcester County, is a much-used facility among commercial meat producers in the Pioneer Valley. Adams and Blood Farm both provide cutting and other value-added processing services. A few custom slaughter facilities also exist in Massachusetts, although they are not able to kill and process livestock for resale, and therefore serve commercial meat producers, since the facilities are not inspected by the USDA.”

Using information from the meat study, the map and table (left) were developed. As illustrated, there are 16 slaughter and post-slaughter facilities within driving distance from Franklin County. Using Greenfield, MA as the center of a 50-mile radius circle, there are three slaughter and one post-slaughter facilities within 100 miles (round trip) and another six slaughter and three post-slaughter between 100 and 200 miles (round trip). Four more post-slaughter facilities are further than 200 miles round trip from Greenfield.

According to CISA’s study, “The mean round-trip distance traveled by a producer in the Pioneer Valley to the processing facility is roughly 73.8 miles, with travel time totaling over an hour and fifty minutes. This represents an additional expense of roughly \$87 per trip to producers in terms of vehicle and gasoline usage, which results in an even higher cost of meat products, as well as the large opportunity cost of spending this time away from on-farm activities.

Poultry Processing

As discussed previously, the need for a small-batch poultry processing facility was identified in CISA's *Scaling Up Local Food* and validated by the Franklin County Farmer Survey. As shown on the map developed from Farmer Survey results, interest in a poultry processing facility is shared by a portion of the farmers throughout Franklin County who responded to the Survey, with the exception of six towns, four of which are located in the westernmost reaches of the county.

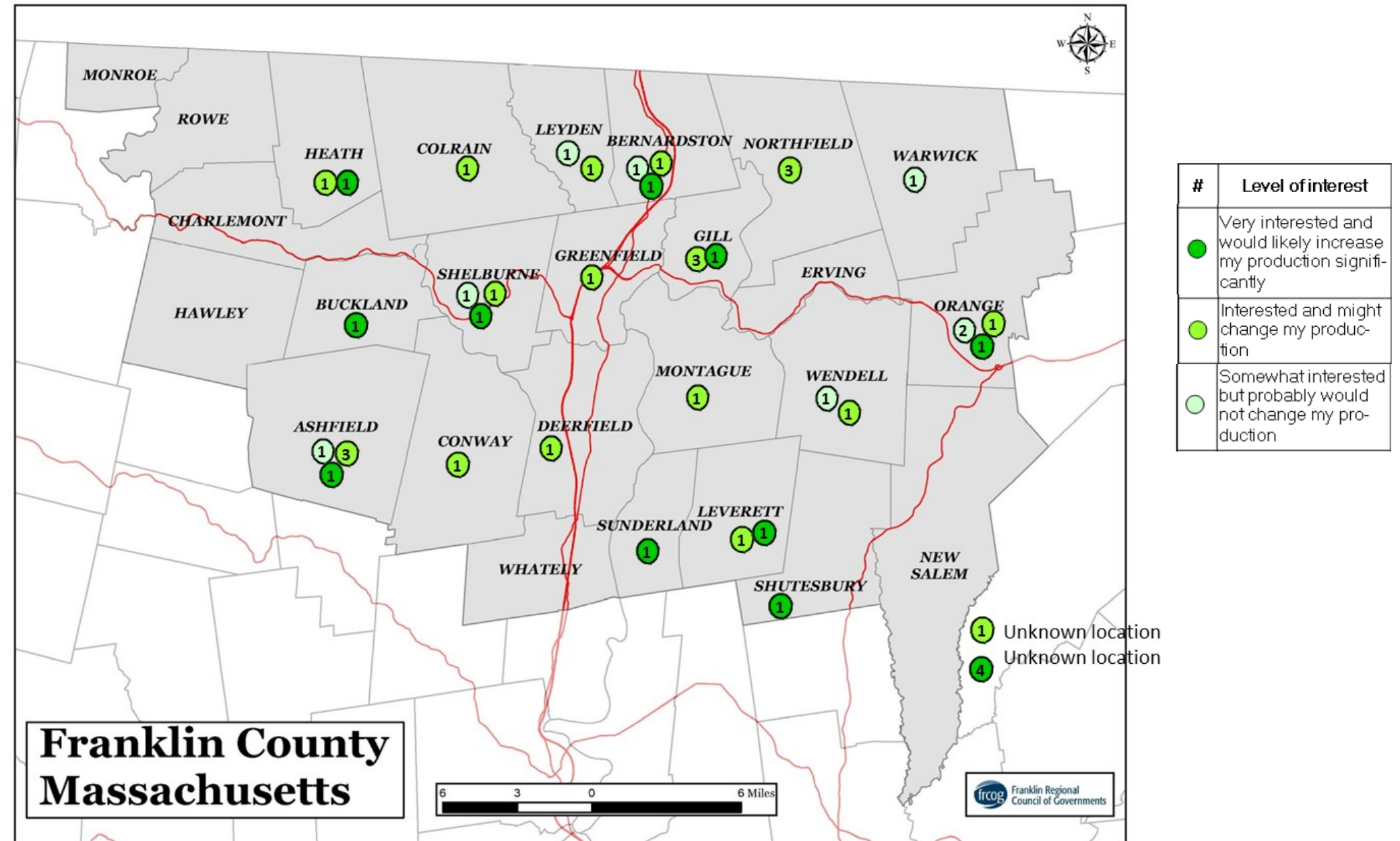
Although New England Small Farm Institute houses a Mobile Poultry Processing Unit (MPPU), up until 2014 there was not widespread use of it. Other potential options for poultry processing which would allow the farmer to sell their birds to consumers include building a licensed on-farm facility or traveling to Westminster Meats in Westminster, VT, shown on the map on the previous page. Westminster Meats processes poultry one day per week, from August through December.

During this project, a group of poultry processors and allies met to identify challenges to siting a facility (regulations and profitability, to name a couple) and to discuss potential sites. A farmer in Greenfield has been exploring the possibility of hosting the MPPU at her farm and/or at a centrally located neutral site.

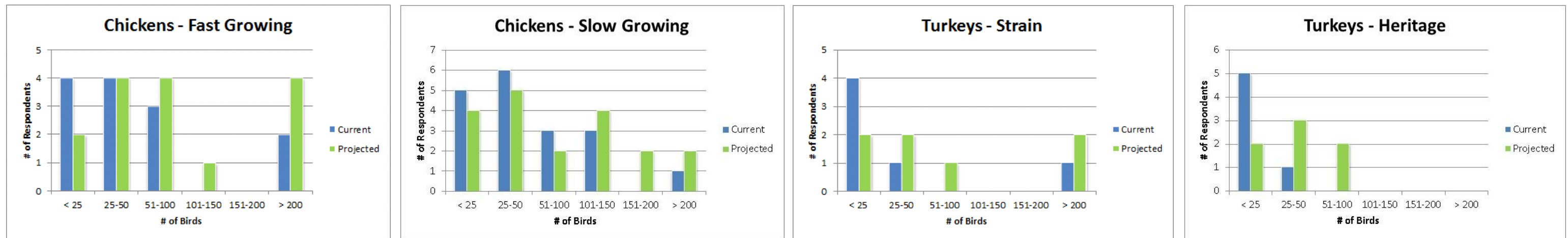
Given the interest in small-batch poultry processing revealed by the farmer survey, a subsequent poultry questionnaire was conducted with farmers who said they were interested in increased poultry slaughter options. The questionnaire helped clarify the types of birds raised, the slaughter cycle and the potential increase in birds and new markets that could be accessed if a new slaughter facility was available in Franklin County.

Farmers consistently indicated they would increase production for each type of poultry identified. Shown in the charts below, the number of small flocks decreased and the number of large flocks increased. Farmers also indicated they would increase retail and wholesale markets both inside and outside Franklin County.

Farmers interested in a small-batch poultry processing facility are distributed across Franklin County



Potential increase in poultry production with the addition of a small-batch poultry processing facility in Franklin County



Dairy

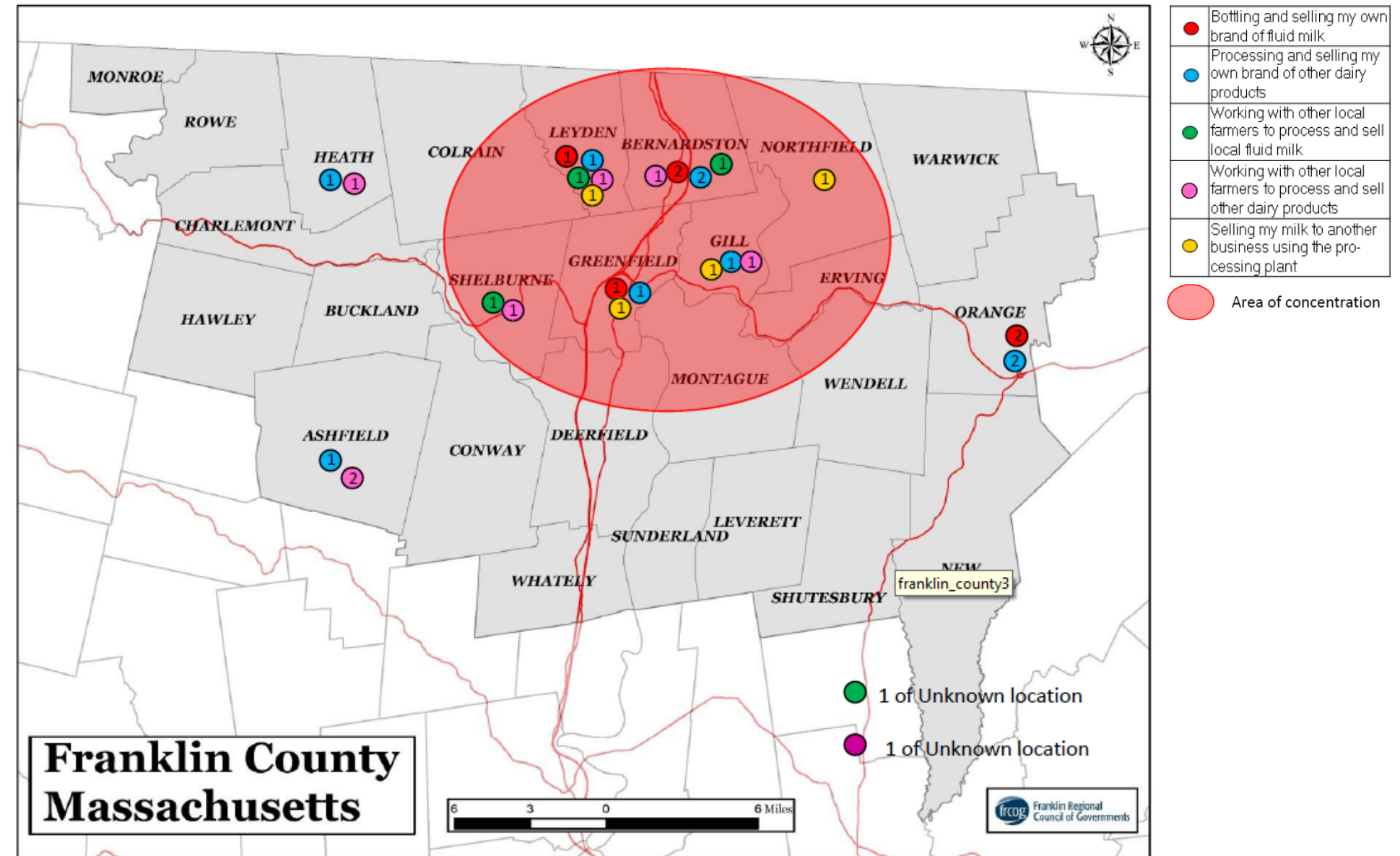
A small number of farmers (14) responded to the Farmer Survey question about a dairy processing facility in Franklin County. The farmers interested in such services are primarily located in north-central Franklin County, with some outliers in Heath, Orange, and Ashfield. Farmers responding to this Survey and others questioned at farmers' markets and other agricultural venues said they would like the option of small batch processing, where their milk would be processed without being aggregated with other farmers' milk. They would like to have the option of developing their own labels, processing cheese, yogurt, butter, and other dairy products. Some would also like to work with their neighboring farmers on locally raised and processed dairy products.

Vermont is an excellent example of a state that has invested in and grown their dairy market focusing particularly on cheese.

There has been work going on for quite some time in Franklin County to bring a small-batch dairy processing facility to the region. The FRCOG has spoken with some of the key individuals involved in this planning and have offered to provide assistance as needed.

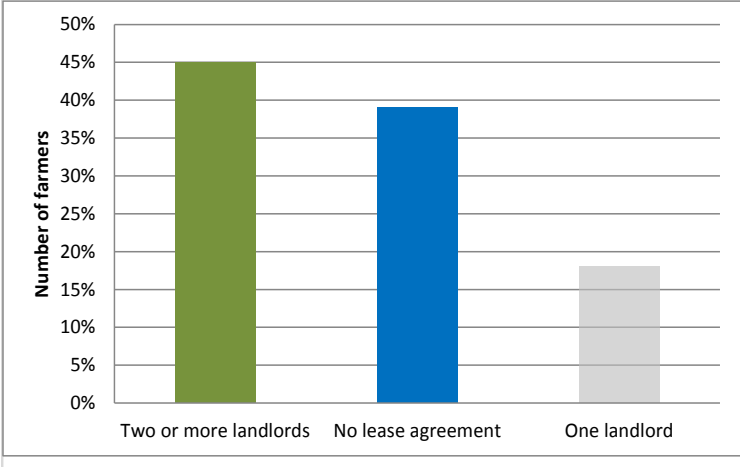


Farmers interested in a dairy processing facility were located primarily in north-central Franklin County



THE FARMER SURVEY ON LAND

45% of responding farmers who lease land have two or more landlords and nearly 40% have no lease agreement

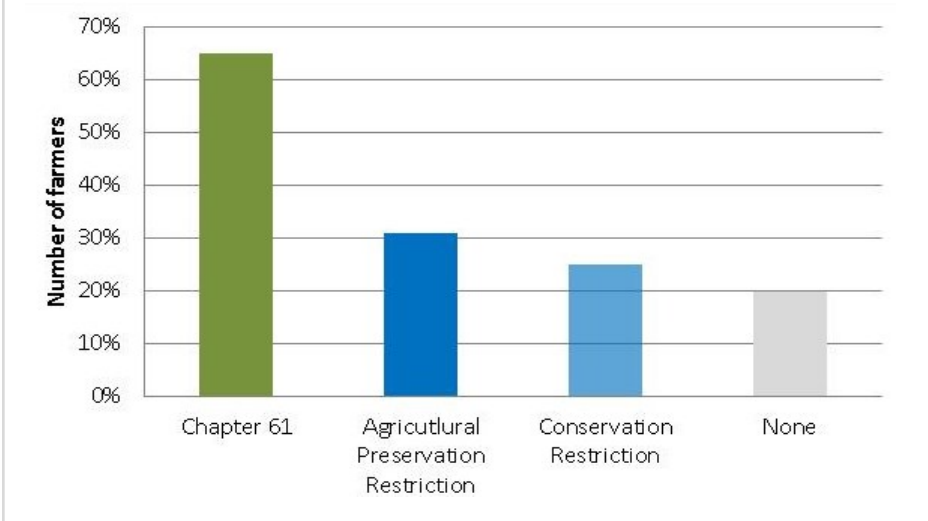


Increased production, such as that called for in the 50-by-60 Vision depends heavily upon good, available farmland. Many farmers lease land, either in addition to land they own or as their primary farmland. According to American Farmland Trust, approximately 20% of all the farmland in Massachusetts is leased.

As shown to the left, 45% of farmers leasing land have two or more landlords and nearly 40% do not have a lease agreement. Both of these conditions could be a challenge to farmers who want to increase production. If a farmer is leasing from two or more land owners, they may have to spend valuable time and fuel traveling from one parcel of farmland to another. With no lease agreements, it is risky for farmers to invest in improvements to the farmland.

Insecure farmland tenure calls for solutions. Non-farming land owners who have land that could potentially be good farmland should be engaged to learn how leasing their farmland may benefit them and the farmers who might lease the land. Also, public land that could potentially be farmed should be identified and public officials should be provided support to understand the potential benefits of public land being used for food production and to learn how to craft lease agreements that are mutually beneficial for farmers and the public.

Two thirds of responding farmers have their land in Chapter 61 and nearly one third have land in APRs.



Permanent protection of farmland is key to preventing more development of farmland for housing and other uses. Chapter 61, a temporary protection and tax relief program, is utilized by about two thirds of responding farmers. Permanent protection programs are used by farmers, such as Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (30%) and Conservation Restrictions (25%).

Findings from the MA Food System Plan show that the APR program needs some changes, to keep up with the changing face of farming. These include lowering the minimum acreage size for farms to qualify (currently at 10 acres)

raising the maximum percentage of land that can be covered by infrastructure to allow for more greenhouse growing, and eliminating the requirement that land be in active farming for at least two years before it qualifies for the program. The MA Food System Plan also seeks strategies to ensure that farmers do not lose the value of their land by placing it under permanent protection.

Farmer Survey on Land (cont.)

There is a significant need for more farmland in Franklin County. Farmers say they need cropland—up to 200 acres in some cases. They also need land for pasture, hay, orchards and woodlots. Some farmers are looking for more sugarbush, from 1,000 to 4,000 taps.

The needs for more farmland spans much of Franklin County, with Shelburne and Northfield having the most farmers indicating they need more land.

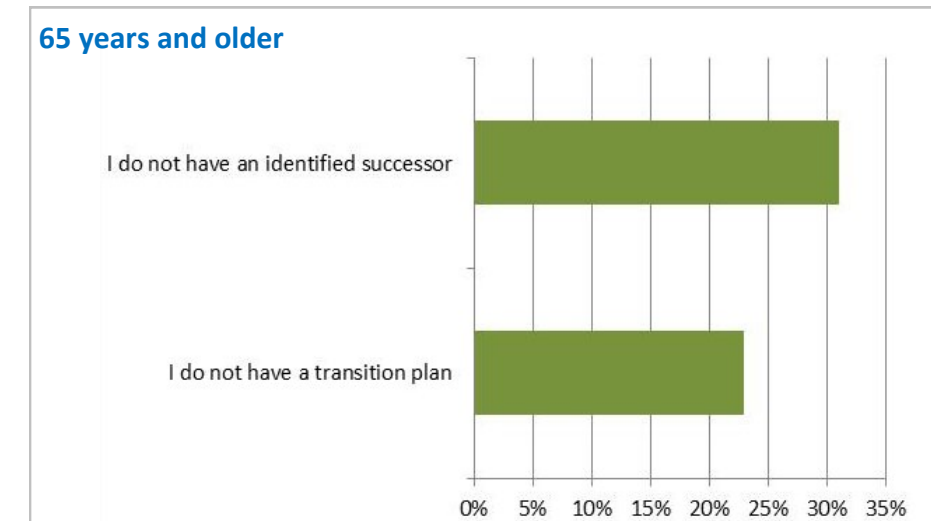
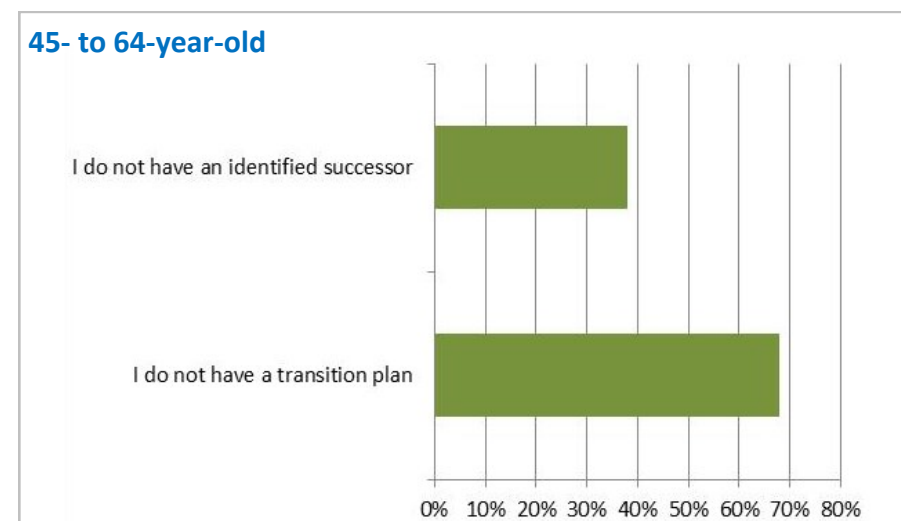
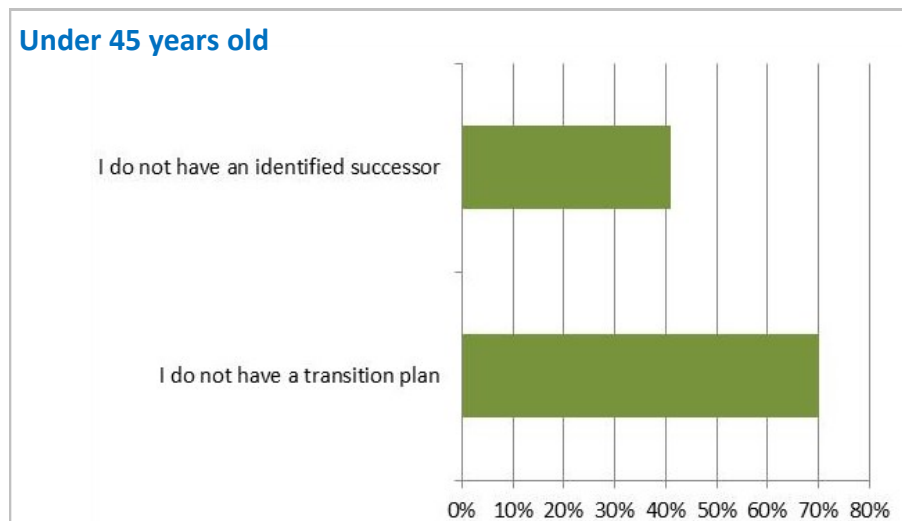
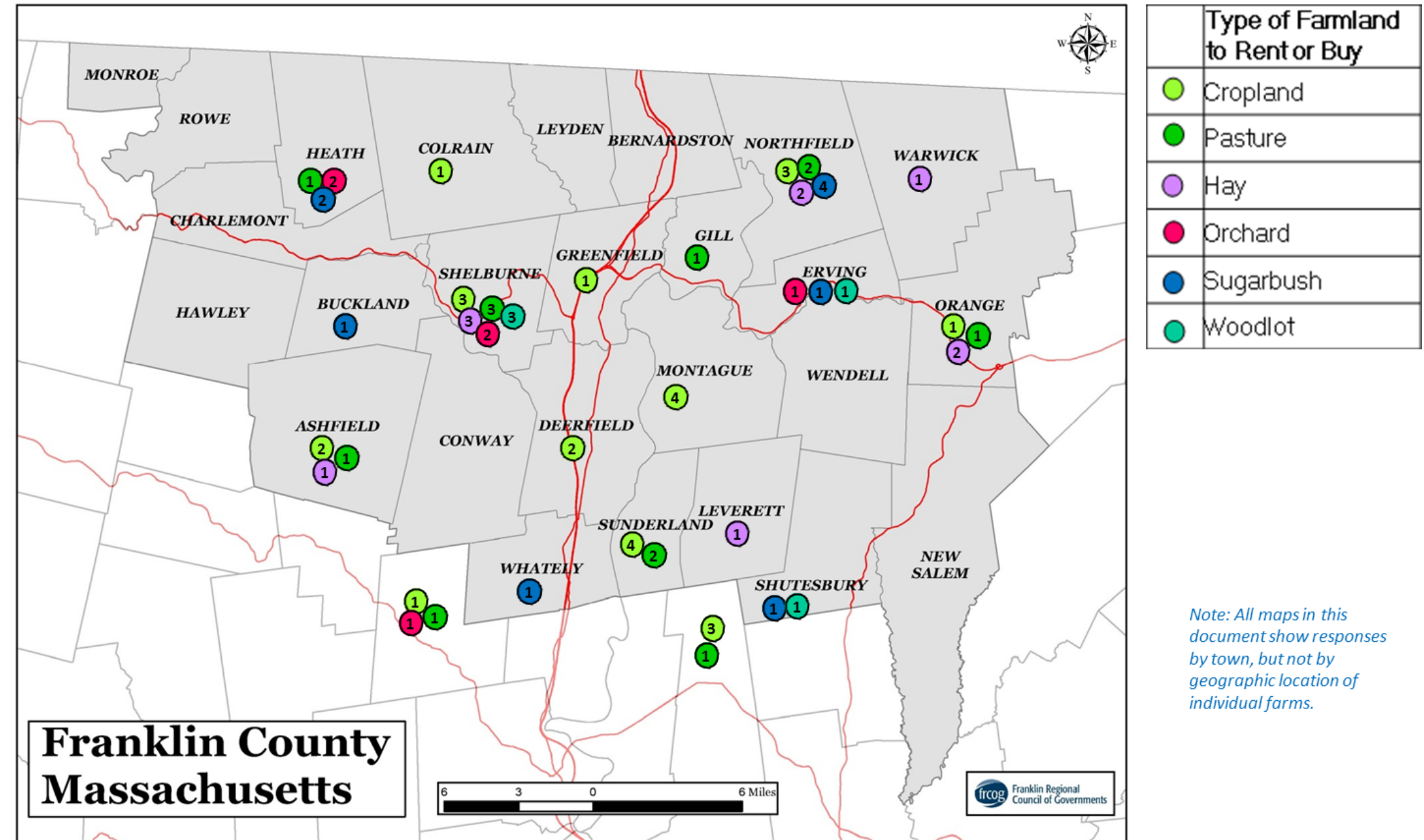
Area land trusts and realtors are aware of this need and can sometimes alert a farmer of a pending sale, however these situations are infrequent.

Land that is currently being farmed may be at risk for development as farmers reach retirement age and need to be able to fund their retirement. For farmers 65 years or older, over 30% do not have an identified successor to take over or purchase their farm and over 20% do not have a succession plan in place for their farm.

Farmers need ongoing support and assistance with the legal and emotional aspects of retirement, transition and estate planning and business transfer. Farmers also need assistance in developing a plan that will provide them with the financial needs to retire while protecting their land from development.

Nearly 70% of farmers under 64 years old do not have a transition plan for the farm—and nearly 40% do not have an identified successor.

Farmers surveyed identified 69 separate needs for additional farmland—including all types of farmland.



THE VALUE OF THE FARMER SURVEY BEYOND FRANKLIN COUNTY

Farmer outreach that was requested is detailed in the table below, including the type of assistance offered, the number of farmers asking for the assistance, and the organizations who agreed ahead of time to follow up with any requests in their areas of expertise.

Franklin County Farmer Survey Follow Up

FOLLOW UP OFFERED	# of Requests	Responsible Organization
Recycling collection for agricultural plastic	41	Franklin County Solid Waste District
Farm transition planning	33	Land for Good
On-farm energy production	32	CISA, MDAR
New product development (eg: value-added products)	28	FCCDC
Farm business planning or marketing	22	CISA
Training in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)	19	UMass Extension
Information on being a mentor or finding a mentor	17	CISA, NOFA Mass
Assistance finding farmland to buy or lease	17	Land for Good
Farm business financing	16	FCCDC
Assistance with farmland protection programs	15	Franklin Land Trust, Land for Good, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust
Info on the Western MA Food Processing Center	15	FCCDC
Training in using EBT / SNAP at my farm stand or CSA	13	CISA
Hiring farm workers	11	MA Workforce Alliance
Training in organic farming	10	NOFA Mass
Information on the Local Hero program	7	CISA
Assistance leasing farmland to others	5	Land for Good
FOLLOW UP IF IT BECOMES AVAILABLE:		
Meat processing facility in Franklin County	43	CISA, FCCDC
Poultry processing facility in Franklin County	38	CISA, FCCDC*
Value-added meat processing at the WMFPC	27	CISA
Dairy processing facility in Franklin County	12	CISA, FCCDC
Shared transport of meat animals to / from slaughter	18	CISA
Retail food waste recovery program	11	FRCOG
Service for last-minute scheduling of meat slaughter	11	CISA
Program for retaining workers year-round	10	MWA
Producer organization to work with meat processors	9	CISA

It is the FRCOG's aim to see this survey and its model for farmer outreach be implemented in other parts of the state and region. The Farmer Survey—and the project as a whole—has received widespread support from food and hunger-focused organizations in the region. Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission has modified the survey and distributed it to farmers in their region. At writing has received over 120 responses. See the summary of some preliminary findings on the next pages. It is hoped that other regions around the state will administer similar surveys to help strengthen the data and paint a clearer picture of farmers needs across the state.

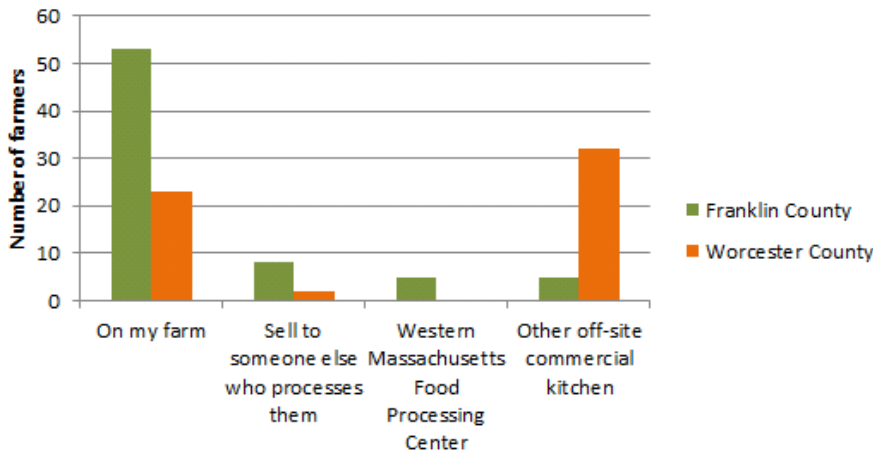
PRELIMINARY FARMER SURVEY FINDINGS FROM WORCESTER COUNTY

The Worcester County Farmer Survey was conducted by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) in 2014 and 2015. The Worcester County survey used the Franklin County survey as a template, modifying and adding questions to fit their specific needs. As a result, some of the data between the two surveys can be compared.

Among the 123 responses to the Worcester County survey, 107 indicated they were located in Worcester County. This represented 38 of the 60 towns and cities in Worcester County, or 63% of the total towns and cities. Of these, the greatest number of farms were located in Brookfield (12%), followed by Princeton (8%) and Petersham (6%). The following provides a few highlights of the preliminary findings.

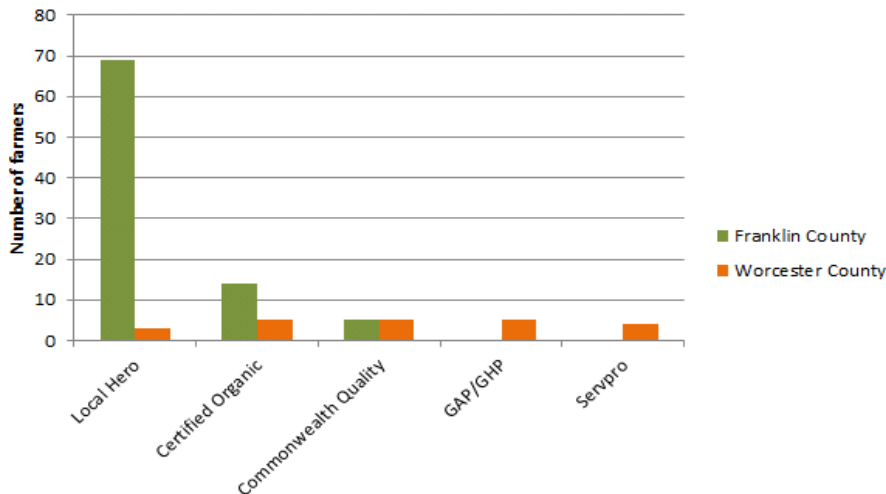
What is the difference between the counties in where farmers process their products?

About twice as many farmers process their products on their farm in Franklin County; about six times as many farmers in Worcester County use a commercial kitchen



Of those farms that processed their products, the majority (53%) in Franklin County processed the food on their farm. In Worcester County, the greatest amount of processing occurred at an off-site commercial kitchen (32%); an additional 23% of farms processed their Worcester County products on their farm.

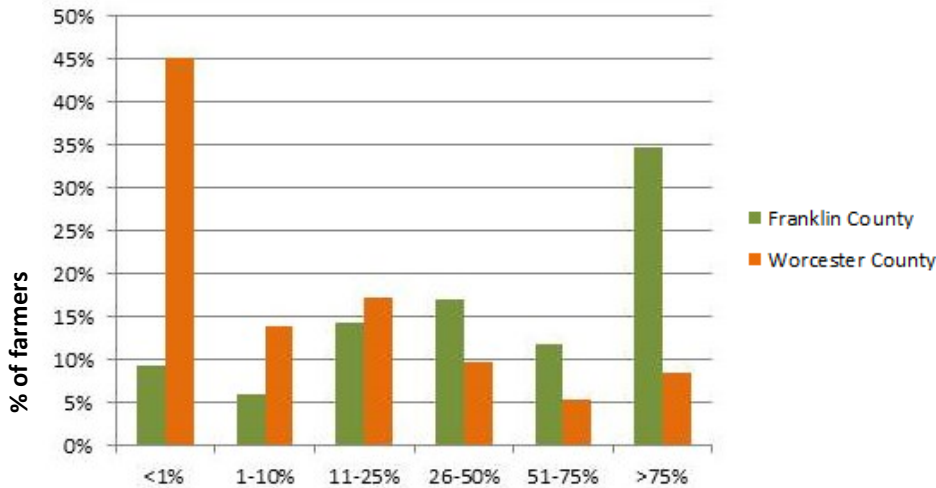
Many in Franklin County are Local Hero members



With the new “Central Mass Grown” buy-local campaign, farmers in Worcester County have a new way to market and brand their products. If Local Hero is any indication, Central Massachusetts’ recently-introduced buy-local campaign could have significant name recognition and appeal for consumers—and could help promote and spread the word about buying local agricultural products.

What is the difference between the counties in where farmers sell their products?

Nearly half of farmers in Worcester County sell less than 1% of their products in Worcester County while most in Franklin County sell more than 75% in Franklin County

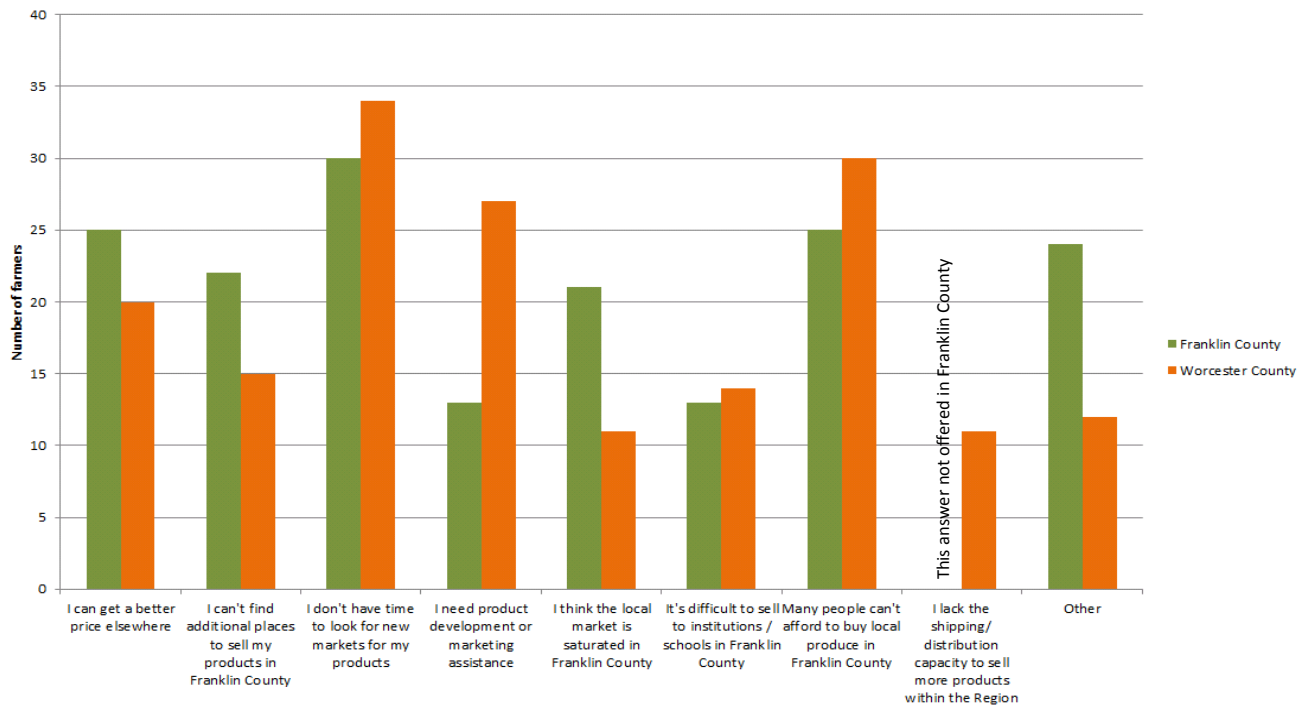


In Worcester County, 45% of farmers sell less than 1% of their goods in Worcester County, while in Franklin County, nearly 35% of farmers sell more than 75% of their products in Franklin County.

For farms selling products outside Worcester County, 68% is sold within Massachusetts; 27% of this amount goes to metro-Boston and 13% goes to Western Massachusetts. 17% is sold to other parts of New England, and 9% is sold nationally.

What are top barriers to farmers selling more products in their counties?

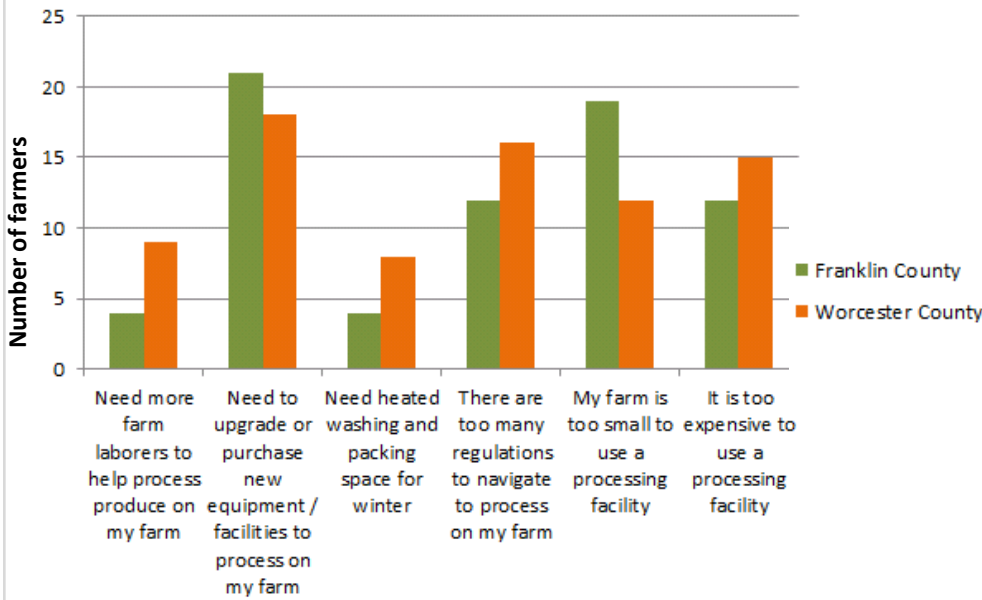
Top barriers to selling more local food for both counties: farmers don't have time to look for new markets and many people can't afford to buy local produce



In both Franklin and Worcester Counties the greatest barrier to expanding markets is time. Thirty Franklin County farmers and 34 farmers in Worcester County reported that they did not have adequate time to look for new markets. Pricing was another major barrier. Twenty five Franklin County farmers and 20 Worcester County farmers reported that they could get a better price elsewhere. Farmers also indicated that local residents couldn't afford local products: 30 Worcester County farmers and 25 Franklin County farmers noted this barrier.

What are the barriers to farmers doing more value-added processing?

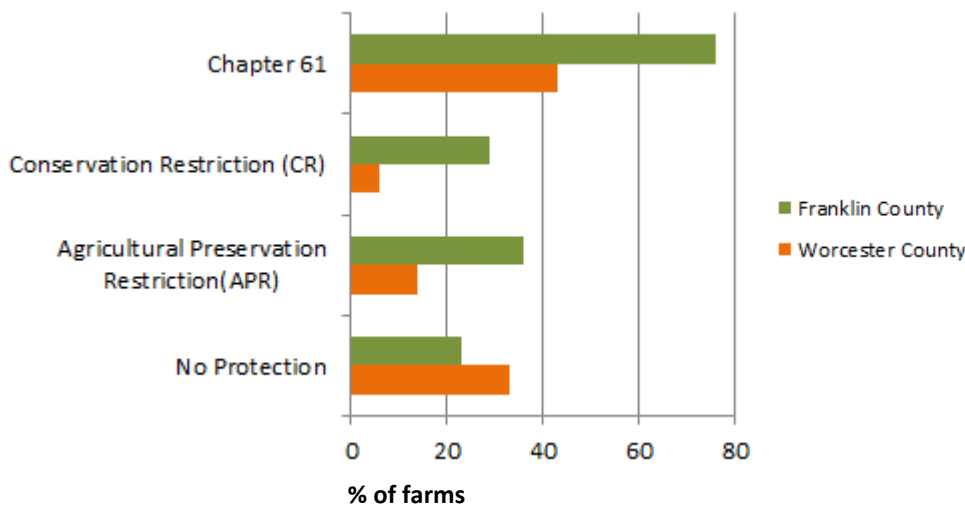
In both counties, a need to upgrade or purchase new equipment is a primary barrier to value-added processing



Franklin and Worcester Counties both reported a range of barriers to value-added processing for their products. In addition to the need to upgrade or purchase new equipment, cited by farmers from both counties, Worcester County farmers indicated regulations and the expense of using an off-site processing facility are also barriers to processing more of their products.

What did farmers say about land protection?

A higher percentage of farms in Franklin County are under protection, both temporary and permanent.*



*This is likely primarily due to the fact that there is less development pressure in Franklin County than in Worcester County

In both Franklin and Worcester Counties, of the land that is protected, the primary protection program used is Chapter 61. This is true for a majority of the respondents in Franklin County (80), and 43 among respondents from Worcester County.

Increasing protection of farmland in both counties is critical to scaling up production. As discussed earlier, modifying the APR program could allow for more farmers to permanently protect their farmland, and writing more CRs with agriculture as an allowable use could encourage additional farmers to preserve their farmland.

Franklin County Farmland Mapping: Findings

Summary: There is abundant undeveloped land in Franklin County, most of it under private ownership. Identifying potential additional farmland is vital to increased production, such as that envisioned in the 50-by-60 vision. There are opportunities to increase farmland on the edges of where existing farmland meets forest, while maintaining large swaths of forest. There are also opportunities to identify non-farming land owners who might be willing to lease land to farmers and town-owned land that might be leased or sold to farmers in a manner that is mutually beneficial to both the land owner and farmer.

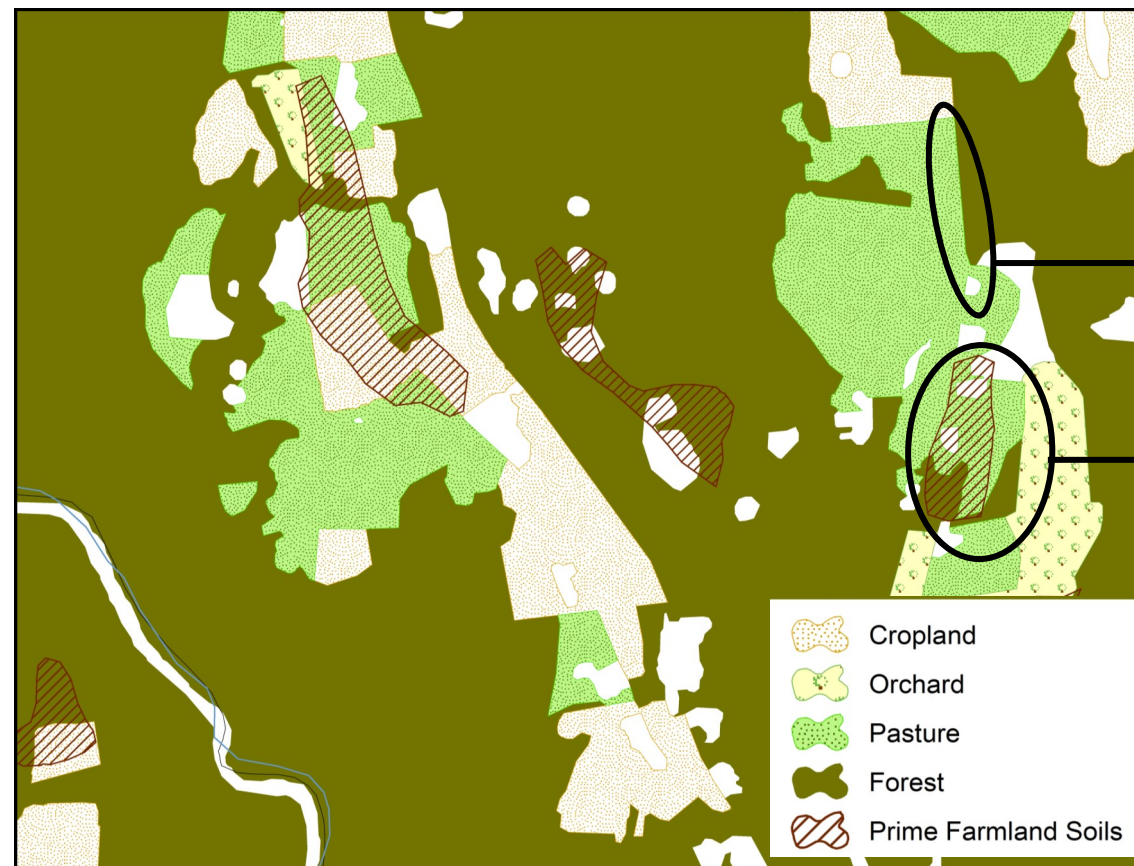
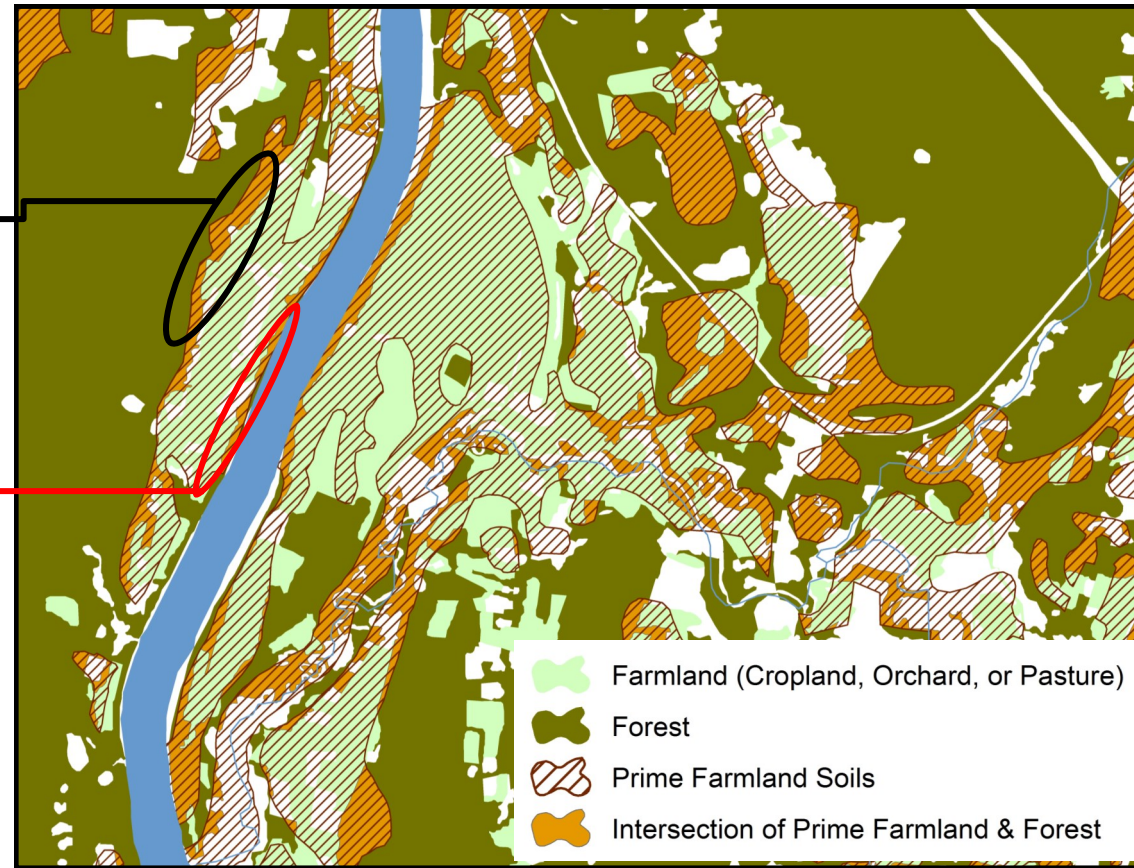
Potential Priority Farmland Development Areas

Farmland Expansion Priority Land:

Forested land with prime agricultural soils adjacent to land already being farmed. This option has benefits such as avoiding clearing interior forest, enabling farmers to concentrate their operation in one location, and minimizing the visual impact of the newly-cleared land.

Farmland Expansion Land to Avoid

Although this land meets the criteria of Farmland Expansion Priority Land (above), it is also adjacent a water body. Besides the regulatory implications, buffers along water bodies (riparian buffers) should be preserved to absorb agricultural runoff and to provide important wildlife habitat and migration corridors.



For the 50-by-60 Vision to come to fruition, there would need to be a significant expansion of farmland acreage while retaining over 60% of New England in permanent, mostly sustainably-managed forest. The goal of retaining a substantial portion of land in forest comes from Food Solutions New England stated intention to also support the New England-wide Wildlands and Woodlands vision¹⁰.

The map to the left illustrates a typical land use pattern in the Connecticut River Valley of Franklin County. The dark green represents forest, the light green represents farmland (cropland, orchard, or pasture) and the white represents all other land uses. The hatched areas are those lands that contain prime farmland soils, soils best suited for agricultural production. The orange areas are those where forest covers prime farmland soils.

In thinking about where forest might be cleared to accommodate an expansion of farmland, it might be best to look first to those areas that are prime farmland soils cover by forest (shown in orange) and are adjacent existing farmland (excluding buffers along water bodies).

Other strategies for farmland conversion could be for a farmer to identify existing pasture land that contains prime farmland soils and determine if some of it could be converted to cropland. A farmer could also decide to offset the loss of pasture by allowing animals to graze in a wooded area along the forest edge (silvopasture) and adjacent existing pasture.

This mapping methodology and analysis could be conducted throughout Franklin County as a way to identify potential future farmland. Results of the mapping and analysis could be used to help support the work of identifying land owners who might be interested in expanding their own farmland or in leasing land to others.

Other Farmland Expansion Strategies:

Silvopasture, or the practice of grazing animals in a wooded area, can expand the reach of a pastured area and would require only average soils.

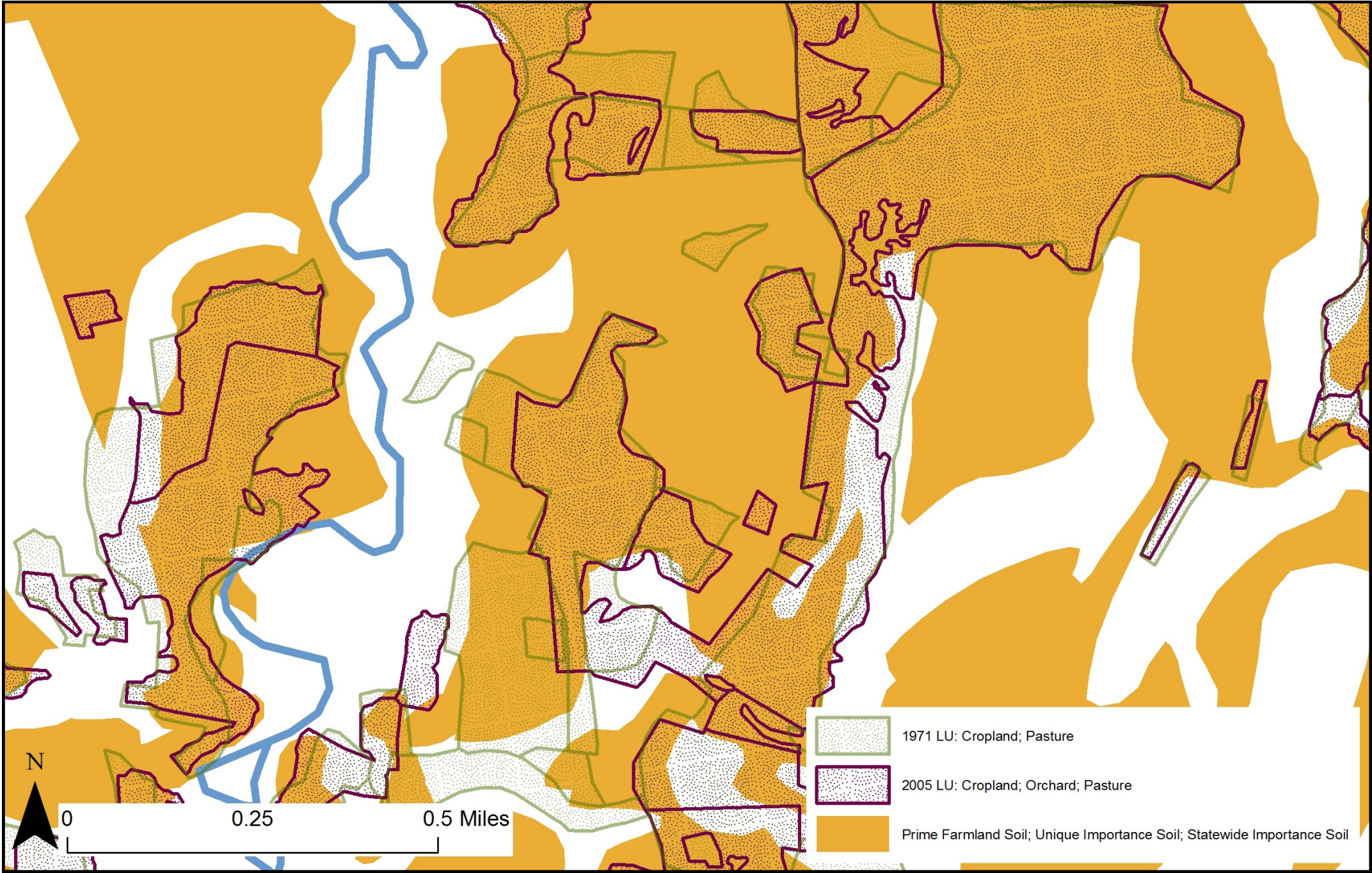
A farmer could choose to convert land in pasture on prime farmland soils to crops.

¹⁰www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/vision/vision-new-england

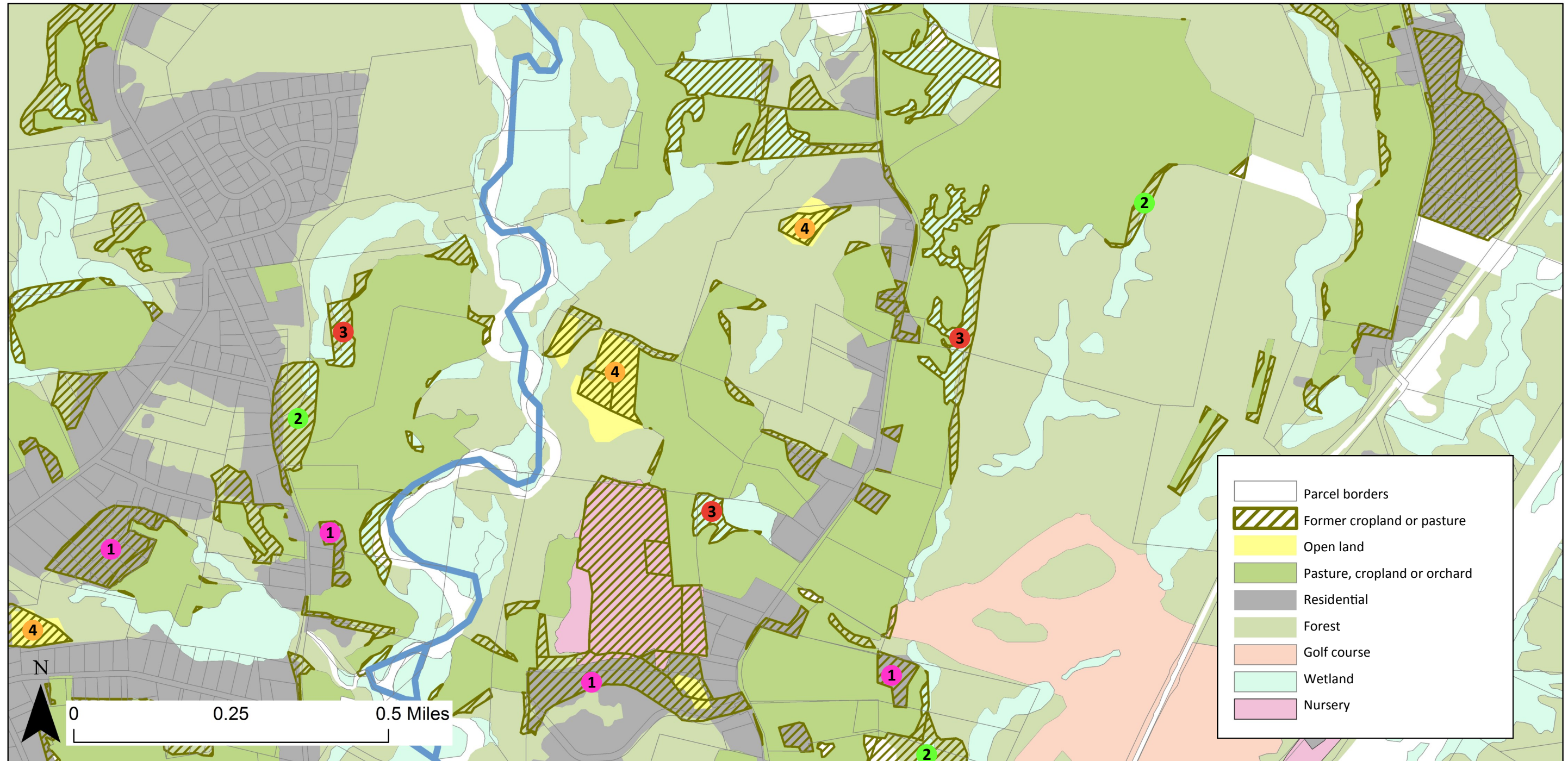
Land Formerly Farmed and Its Potential for Farming Again

Land formerly in farming could potentially be returned to active agricultural use, depending upon how long it has been idle and whether it has been maintained or allow to return to forest. Analysis of land in a sample area of Franklin County for the purpose of identifying potential future farmland began by displaying Prime Agricultural Soils, including Soils of Unique Importance and Soils of Statewide Importance. Prime Farmland Soils was overlaid with 1971 and 2005 Land Use data for cropland and pasture.

Areas in green are those that were in farming in 1971 but were no longer in farming in 2005. Some of these formerly farmed areas are located on prime farmland soils and are now forested areas while some are classified open land or residential. Knowing where this formerly farmed land is located is useful because land that ceased being farmed in the last few decades could be less difficult to ready for agricultural use once again.



Former Agricultural Land and Current Uses



What has happened to the land that was Former Cropland or Pasture?

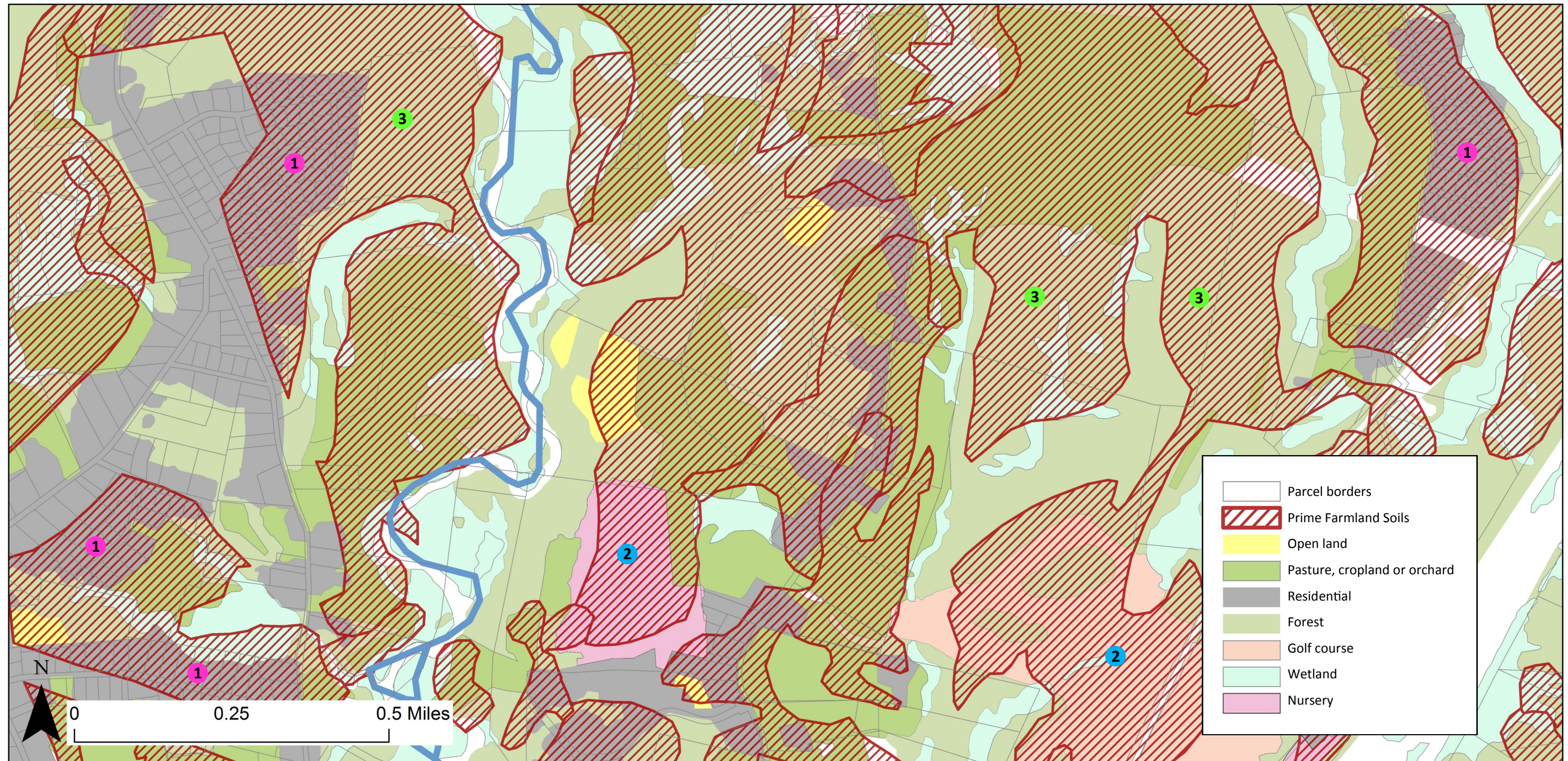
- 1 Parcels like these have been developed for residential use, effectively taking them out of farmland forever.
- 2 Forest has taken over these parcels which were formerly farmed. They could be converted to farmland again.
- 3 These wetland areas were once in active farmland production and likely should/could not be converted to farmland.
- 4 Some former agricultural land is now open land* and may be available for redevelopment as farmland.

*Mass GIS Open Land Definition: Vacant land, idle agriculture, rock outcrops, and barren areas. Vacant land is not maintained for any evident purpose and it does not support large plant growth.



Sources: Map produced by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planning Department. GIS data sources include MassDOT, MassGIS and FRCOG. Depicted boundaries are approximate and are intended for planning purposes only, not to be used for survey.

Prime Farmland Soils and Current Uses



What types of land use are on lands containing Prime Farmland Soils? The map provides an example of an area of Franklin County that was mapped to look at patterns of land use on Prime Farmland Soils. Findings include:

- 1 Substantial swaths of Prime Farmland Soils have been developed for homes
- 2 Other uses such as plant nurseries and golf courses take up some Prime Farmland Soils
- 3 Forest covers significant areas of Prime Farmland Soils

Of these three scenarios, converting forest on Prime Farmland Soils to farmland may be the most feasible, especially forest adjacent existing farms, where the visual and environmental impacts of the conversion could be less severe than converting forest amidst a large tract of forestland. Environmental factors such as endangered species areas and wetlands would have to be considered.



FRANKLIN COUNTY
FARM & FOOD SYSTEM PROJECT
 Infrastructure * Access

Sources: Map produced by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planning Department. GIS data sources include MassDOT, MassGIS and FRCOG. Depicted boundaries are approximate and are intended for planning purposes only, not to be used for survey.

Food Access Findings

Summary: Food access in Franklin County and the region is complex. Although we have bountiful farm fields throughout the area, many people do not get enough to eat. Over 10% of people in Franklin County are food insecure (hungry). Additionally, residents may not have access to an adequate selection of healthy, fresh food. Some residents have no food stores nearby and have to drive a significant amount of time (up to 40 minutes in good weather) to reach a supermarket. Existing small food markets, convenience stores and farmers' markets may hold the key to filling the gap for people in very rural areas, where there is not enough population to support a larger store.

Food Access and the North Quabbin Food Security Survey

Selected Survey Results

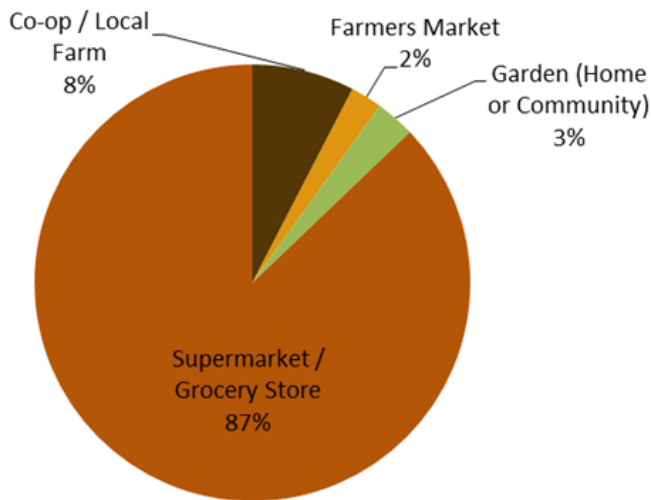
BACKGROUND

In an effort to assess food access in the North Quabbin region (Athol, Erving, New Salem, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Warwick and Wendell), the North Quabbin Community Coalition conducted a survey in 2013. The resulting report, *Food Access Survey: Rural Food Access in the North Quabbin* was released in 2014.

In total, data from 347 respondents was compiled. Respondents included individuals who either worked or lived in the North Quabbin region. The proportional representation among the towns compared well to available census population data, but low income households might have been under-represented. Data from the survey was analyzed to better understand food access and security in the region and summary findings are provided on the following pages.

What are the basic shopping patterns of survey respondents?

Nearly 90% buy groceries at supermarkets

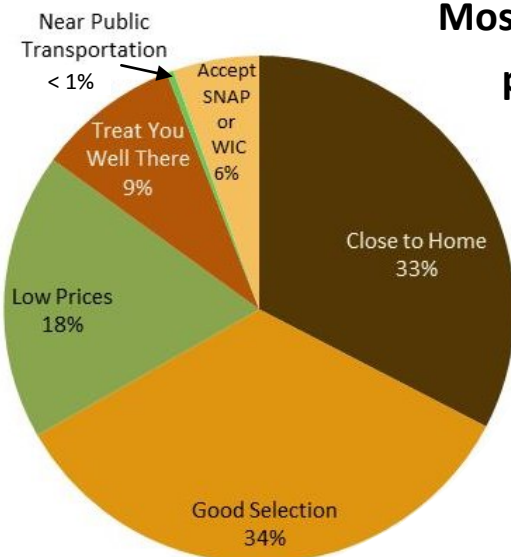


With so many people primarily shopping at supermarkets, this finding indicates that in order to substantially increase the consumption of fresh, local food, supermarkets need to regularly stock these items. A key to supermarkets stocking more fresh food is for them to develop relationships with local farmers and to offer fair contracts under which farmers can anticipate demand and scale up production.

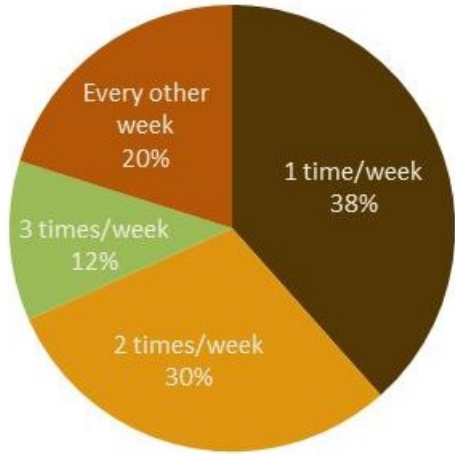
Additionally, there could be room for growth in market share for food co-ops, farm CSAs and farmers' markets which now only comprise 10% of the primary food shopping providers.

Most prevalent reasons

people shop at a particular food store include "close to home" and "good selection"



Respondents' motivations for where they shop indicate that there may be an opportunity for increasing food access by ensuring that the region has high-quality local shopping options available within reasonable proximity to people's residences. It is also encouraging that only 18% of respondents are motivated by low prices. This may mean there is room for growth in local quality food production that can provide a fair price to food producers.

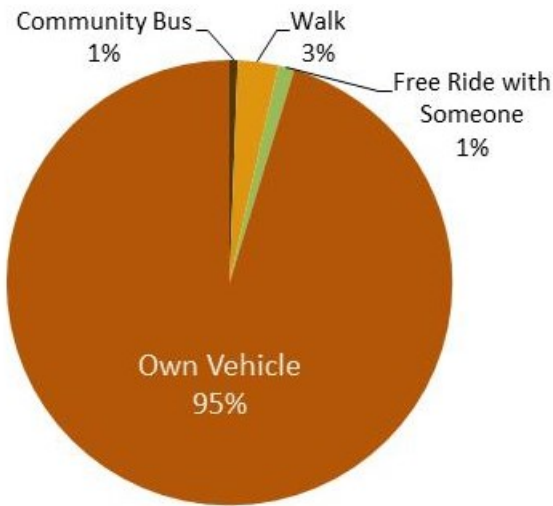


Respondents primarily shop for food one or two times per week.

The majority of respondents (58%) do their primary food shopping between 1-2 times per week. This means that in order to increase local, fresh and healthy food consumption, food needs to be well stocked and available at most times in order for respondents to make adequate purchases when they show up.

Given the rural nature of the region, most respondents are dependent on cars to get food. This might change slightly if, in the more densely populated centers, more food shopping options were available. Public transportation is a challenge within the region, with limited routes and schedule options cited as challenges to increasing ridership. Further analysis of transportation routes in relationship to food shopping outlets is recommended.

Income Under \$10,000: For respondents with income under \$10,000, half use their own vehicle while the remaining use the bus, walk or catch a ride.

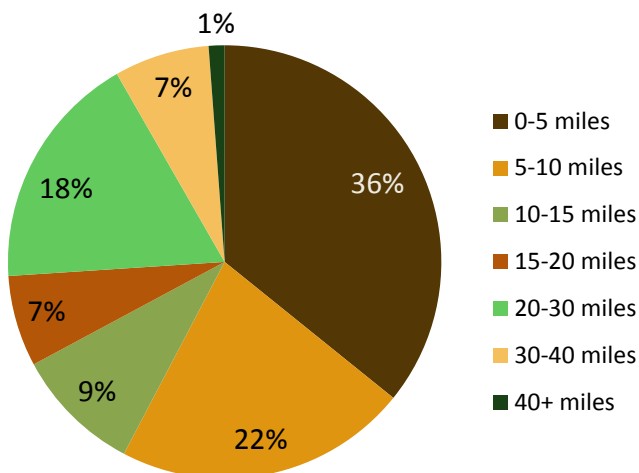


Almost all respondents use their own car to go food shopping

Respondents say they travel as much as 40 miles to do their primary food shopping. However more than half travel less than 10 miles and slightly more than one-third travel less than 5 miles. Understanding why respondents travel more or less can help inform how to make food consumption more local and/or more effective.

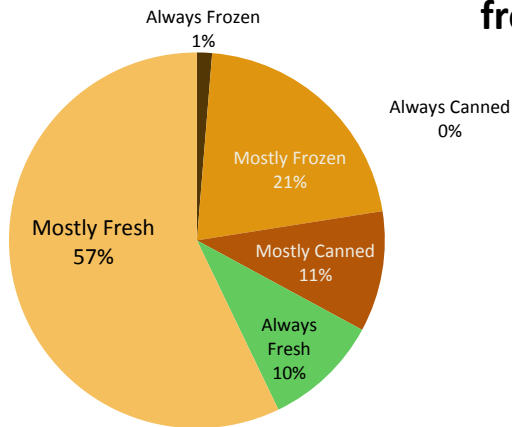
Note: It may be this finding is flawed and that respondents had difficulties guessing how far they traveled. It is recommended that subsequent surveys identify destinations rather than mileage.

Over half of respondents travel 10 miles or less to buy food—a third travel 5 miles or less



What are survey respondents eating?

Nearly two thirds of respondents choose fresh foods

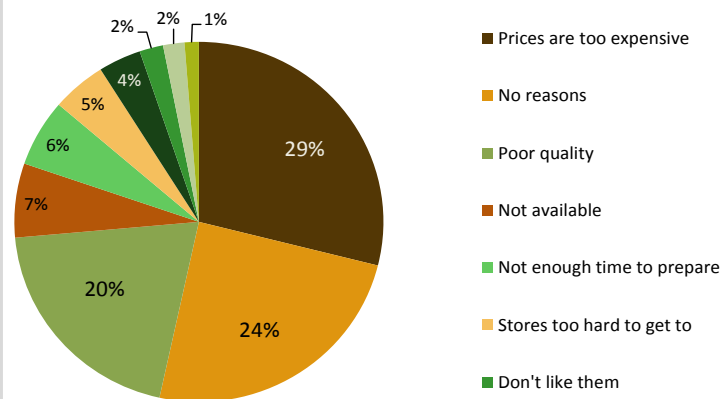


Responses indicate that the majority of respondents seek fresh food. Sixty seven percent of respondents indicated that their food was mostly or always fresh. Another 22% indicated that their food was mostly or always frozen.

This finding indicates that in expanding food access, strategies should be promoted to make local food and to a lesser degree, frozen food, available. There seems to be a market for locally grown frozen food. Increased processing infrastructure, such as that recently added at the Western Mass Food Processing Center, could increase local food purchases and farmers' production.

What keeps respondents from buying fruits and vegetables?

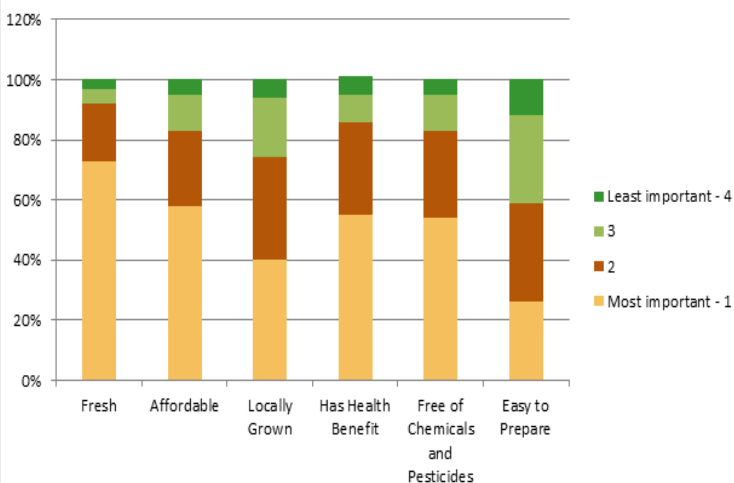
Nearly one third say prices are a barrier to buying fruits and vegetables.



Although cost was not the highest factor for choosing food, when asked what stopped respondents from purchasing fruits and vegetables, the most frequent response is that these items are too expensive (29%). Another 20% indicate that the quality of these items is poor quality where they shop. Fresh, local produce may often be more appealing and of higher quality.

Quality and expense are both subjective and are widely experienced as barriers across all income groups. Eleven percent of the lowest income group and 11% of the highest income group reported quality and expense as a barriers.

Freshness is primary factor in choosing food



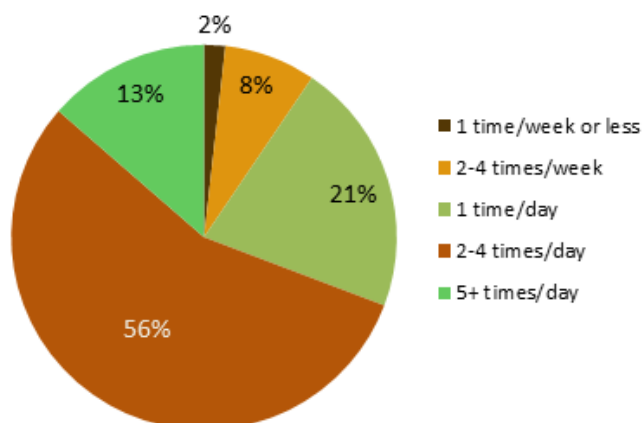
When shopping for food, the most important factor for respondent was freshness. Of all the factors considered, having food that is easy to prepare is the least important.

While price is more important than being local, it is similar in importance to food having a health benefit or being free of chemicals or pesticides. This supports earlier findings that respondents are in search of high-quality fresh food, with cost and ease of preparation a secondary concern. Food being grown locally is of moderate importance, although local food may often address freshness, affordability and chemical concerns of consumers.

¹¹Massachusetts Department of Public Health Prevention and Wellness Trust Fund Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 3-year average 2005, 2007, 2009

What do respondents say about fruits and vegetables?

90% of respondents eat fresh fruits and vegetables at least once a day

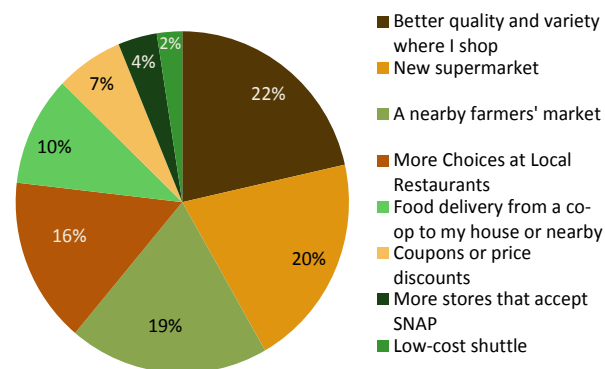


At least 90% of respondents indicate that they eat fruits and vegetables at least one time per day. Most people (56%) indicate that they eat fruit and vegetables between 2-4 times/day. Note: Statewide data show that only one quarter of Massachusetts adults eat the recommended five fruits and vegetables per day¹¹, so respondents to the North Quabbin Survey may have over-estimated their consumption.

Despite the potential over-reporting, strategies for expanding food access should include making fresh fruit and vegetables broadly available and promoting them.

What could increase fruit and vegetable purchasing?

Better quality and variety could increase purchasing of fruits and vegetables



of fruits and vegetables

When asked what could be done to help respondents eat more fruits and vegetables, three options were identified with almost equal frequency: improve quality and variety where they shop (22%), open a new supermarket (20%), and establish a nearby farmers' market (19%).

North Quabbin Food Security Survey Conclusions and Next Steps

Conclusions of this survey provide helpful information that describes the status and dynamics regarding food access in the region and points to some general directions for next steps. Most notably, respondents prioritize high-quality and fresh food as a key motivation over price, even though food being too expensive is consistently reported by some respondents. Quality and freshness should be a key guide in promoting access to food in the region.

The vast majority of shopping occurs in supermarkets and grocery stores. This indicates two opportunities for improving food access. First, there is room for growth by co-ops, farms and farmer's markets to expand their market share. Secondly, it is imperative that quality and choice be a priority for all supermarkets and grocery stores in the region. This includes offering fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetables.

Finally, while the distance travelled to obtain food can vary, creating more opportunities in areas of the region where less purchasing options exist may help reduce the distances travelled by some respondents. New shopping opportunities that are closer to home or en route could help if these options can provide adequate fresh, local food.

The food shopping patterns of consumers in the region is crucial to understand and to improve in order to achieve the goals of 50-by-60. As noted earlier, achieving these goals involve not only producing food and expanding farmable land, but also in shifting the diets of residents. In order to achieve the goals of 50-by-60 and the USDA myPlate, some dramatic shifts are required. Using the reported data and future information on resident food shopping patterns and dynamics, Franklin County is better able to develop strategies that can increase healthy diets among its residents.

Food Insecurity in Franklin County and the North Quabbin

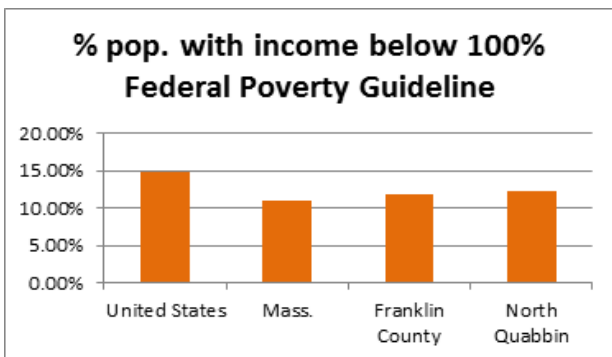
OVERVIEW

The 50-by-60 Vision calls for residents to change their diets significantly, transitioning from processed foods to more whole, fresh fruits and vegetables, and whole grains. The 50-by-60 Vision also calls for eating less meat. For some people in Franklin County and the North Quabbin, though, gaining access to any food—much less local, healthy, whole foods is a challenge. This challenge is due to several factors including high unemployment, insufficient income, distance to food stores, and availability of food. The following provides information on food access and insecurity in the region.

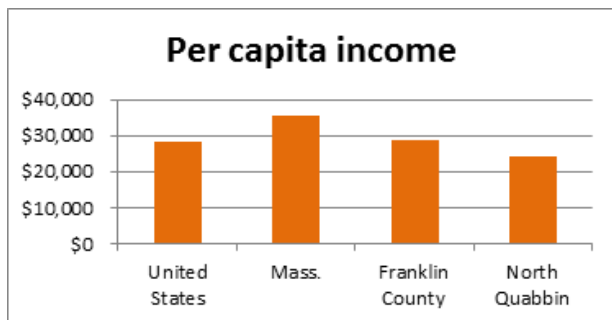
DEMOGRAPHICS

Based on a Community Action of Franklin, Hampshire and North Quabbin Regions' report, *Needs Assessment and Community Action Plan FY2015-FY2017*, Franklin County and the North Quabbin are characterized “primarily by low wages and high proportions of lower-income workers rather than high levels of officially-defined poverty”.

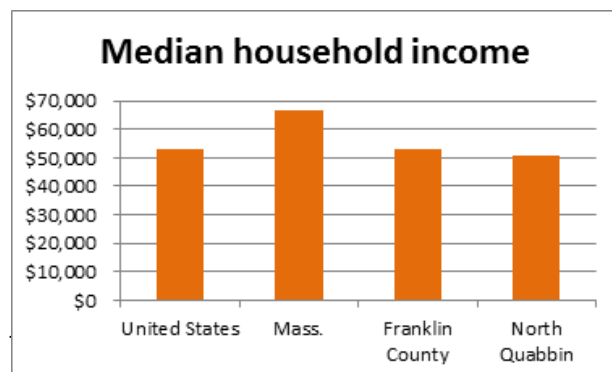
The region has a relatively high cost of living driven mostly by the high cost of transportation and energy. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (USEIA) for the past four years, New England has had highest electrical rates in the 48 states in the continental U.S. In 2014 the New England rate was 15.45 cents per kilowatt hour; the Massachusetts rate was 15.34 cents. Similarly, the USEIA identifies New England as being the region with the third highest gasoline prices, behind the West Coast and Central Atlantic.¹² Given the distances travelled in this region, the cost of automobile transportation is significant.



According to the Community Action report, the real median household income (in 2012 dollars) eroded between 2009 and 2012, following a trend throughout Massachusetts; Franklin County decreased by \$2,540 and the North Quabbin by \$1,877. This downward shift in annual average household income was attributed to increased unemployment. The 2010 unemployment rates for Franklin County (7.8%) and Massachusetts (8.3%) were the highest rates experienced since the early 1990s. In 2012, Franklin County had an unemployment rate of 6.3%, which was lower than the state's unemployment rate of 6.7% and the national rate of 8.1%.



Relative to the rest of the State, which is one of the wealthiest states in the U.S., Franklin County and the North Quabbin region have a higher percentage of the population with income below 100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline. While economic challenges face individuals living below the official poverty rate, there is also a significant percentage of the population between 100% and 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (\$46,100 for a household of four) who face financial hardship. At this level of income, households are eligible for reduced price school lunch and for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (W.I.C.). The challenges of unemployment remain despite general recovery from the recession, impacting income and poverty. According to the U.S. Census, in 2013 8.1% of Franklin County residents in the labor force were unemployed.¹³



¹²S. Energy Information Administration, <http://www.eia.gov/>

¹³U.S. Census Data

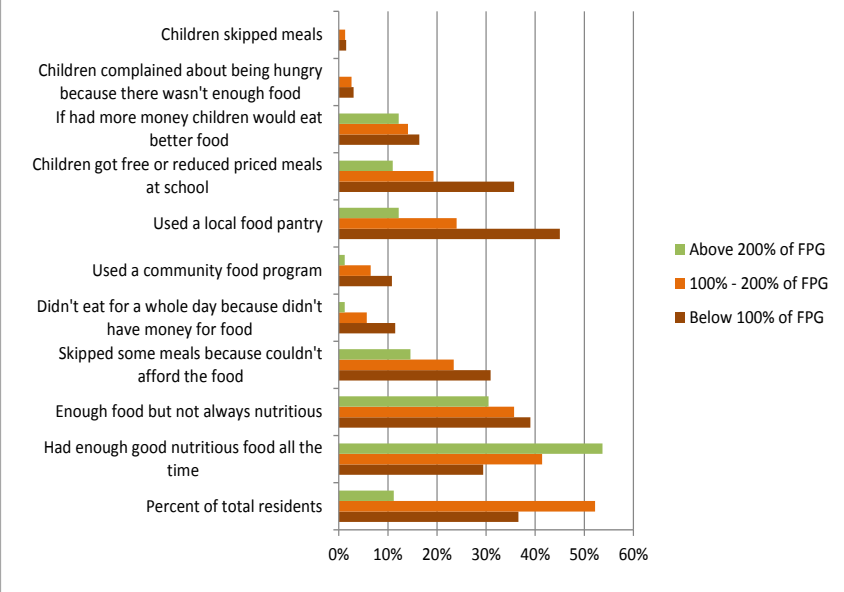
According to the 2014 USDA annual data report on the extent of food insecurity in the U.S for the period 2011 – 2013, the prevalence of food insecurity for Massachusetts was 10.6%. Feeding America, a leading anti-hunger organization, estimated a similar level of overall food insecurity for Massachusetts in 2012 as being 11.9%, and for households with children the rate was 16.6%. Franklin County had a rate of 10.2% for all households.

Nearly 10% of people experience food insecurity in Franklin County

The 2013 Community Action **Needs Assessment** addressed the day-to-day effects of food insecurity. It found that the less income a resident had, the more likely the residents: lacked nutritious food all the time, skipped some meals, went without food for an entire day, used a local food pantry, or had children enrolled in the school meals program .

Additional findings from a 2010 survey by the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts confirm the challenges of low income households to survive in the context of a high cost of living environment. There is documentation that many of residents who have access to food-related benefits “find that the benefit amount is inadequate to fully address their needs”. The Food Bank survey found that:

Less income can mean less nutritious food, skipped meals and use of food pantries



- 42% of respondents reported they had to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel.
- 36% said they had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage.
- 26% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.
- 34% had to choose between paying for food and paying for transportation.

In a separate report, Feeding America determined that based on an average meal cost of \$3.17 in 2012, the 7,330 food insecure individuals residing in Franklin County needed an additional \$4 million to meet their local food needs. The average meal cost in Massachusetts was \$3.04. Similarly, a 2011 USDA report on food security found that 52% of households that received SNAP benefits in

2010 were food insecure, and 48% of households whose children received free or reduced cost school lunch were food insecure.¹⁴

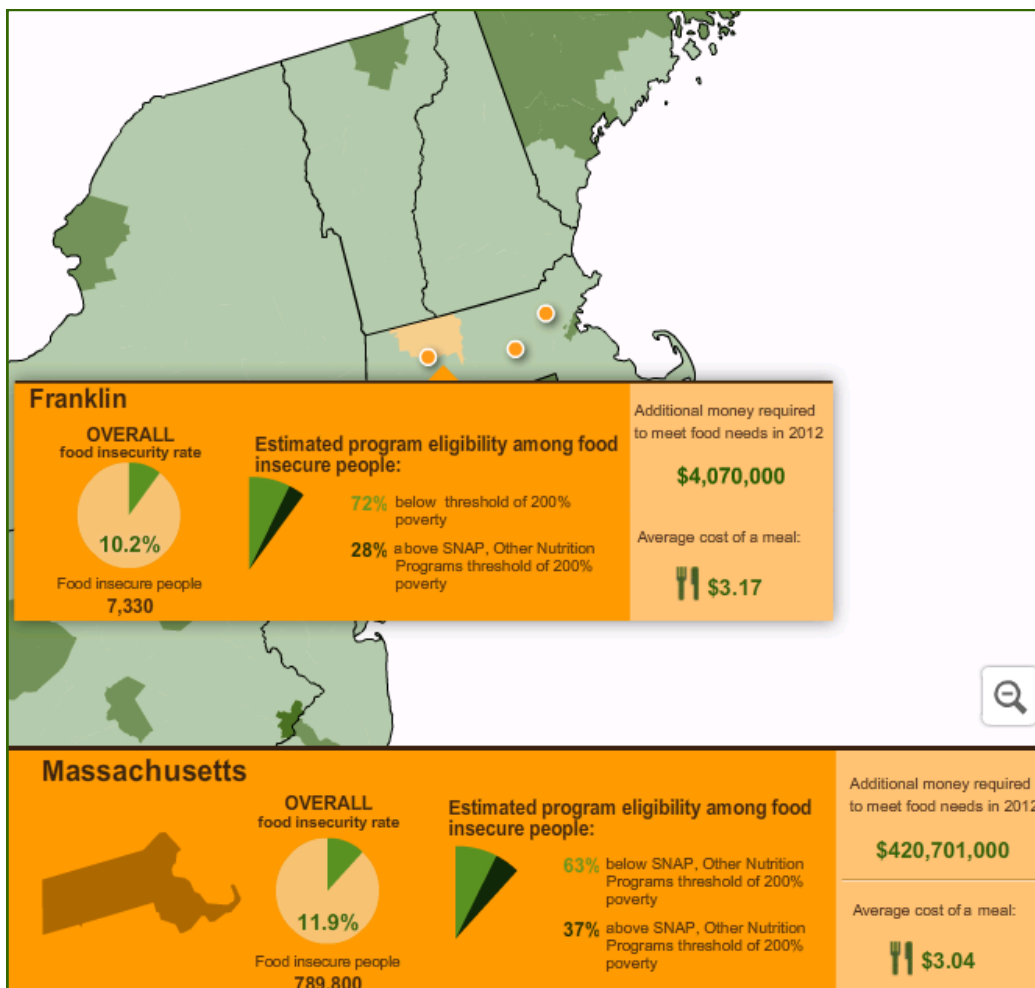
Unfortunately, despite having food assistance programs in place, it has been found that food assistance programs are not reaching everyone who needs them and food insecurity remains a significant factor in people’s lives. The USDA report found that, among those people who are food insecure, only 40.9% were receiving SNAP benefits, and 32.4% received school lunches.¹⁵

The limits to eligibility for food insecure people was also documented by the 2010 Food Bank survey. Of all the food insecure households in Massachusetts, 37% are estimated to be ineligible for any food assistance programs in 2012; the Franklin County rate was 44%.

44% of food insecure households in Franklin County do not qualify for food assistance programs

¹⁴<http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2013/overall/massachusetts/county/franklin>

¹⁵<http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/fooddeserts.aspx>



FOOD ACCESS

Food Deserts

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Treasury (Treasury) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have defined a food desert for the purpose of funding programs. This federal definition identifies census tract with a substantial share of residents who live in low-income areas that have low levels of access to a grocery store or healthy, affordable food retail outlet. Census tracts qualify as food deserts if they meet the following low-income and low-access thresholds:

- They qualify as "low-income communities", based on having: a) a poverty rate of 20 percent or greater, OR b) a median family income at or below 80 percent of the area median family income; AND
- They qualify as "low-access communities", based on the determination that at least 500 persons and/or at least 33% of the census tract's population live more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (10 miles, in the case of non-metropolitan census tracts).

Source: <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/fooddeserts.aspx>

"Food Access Challenged" Communities

Given the official definition, no communities in Franklin County and the North Quabbin region technically meet the definition of being a food desert. That said, using the federal logic, the communities in this region are certainly "food access challenged" due to both income and distance.

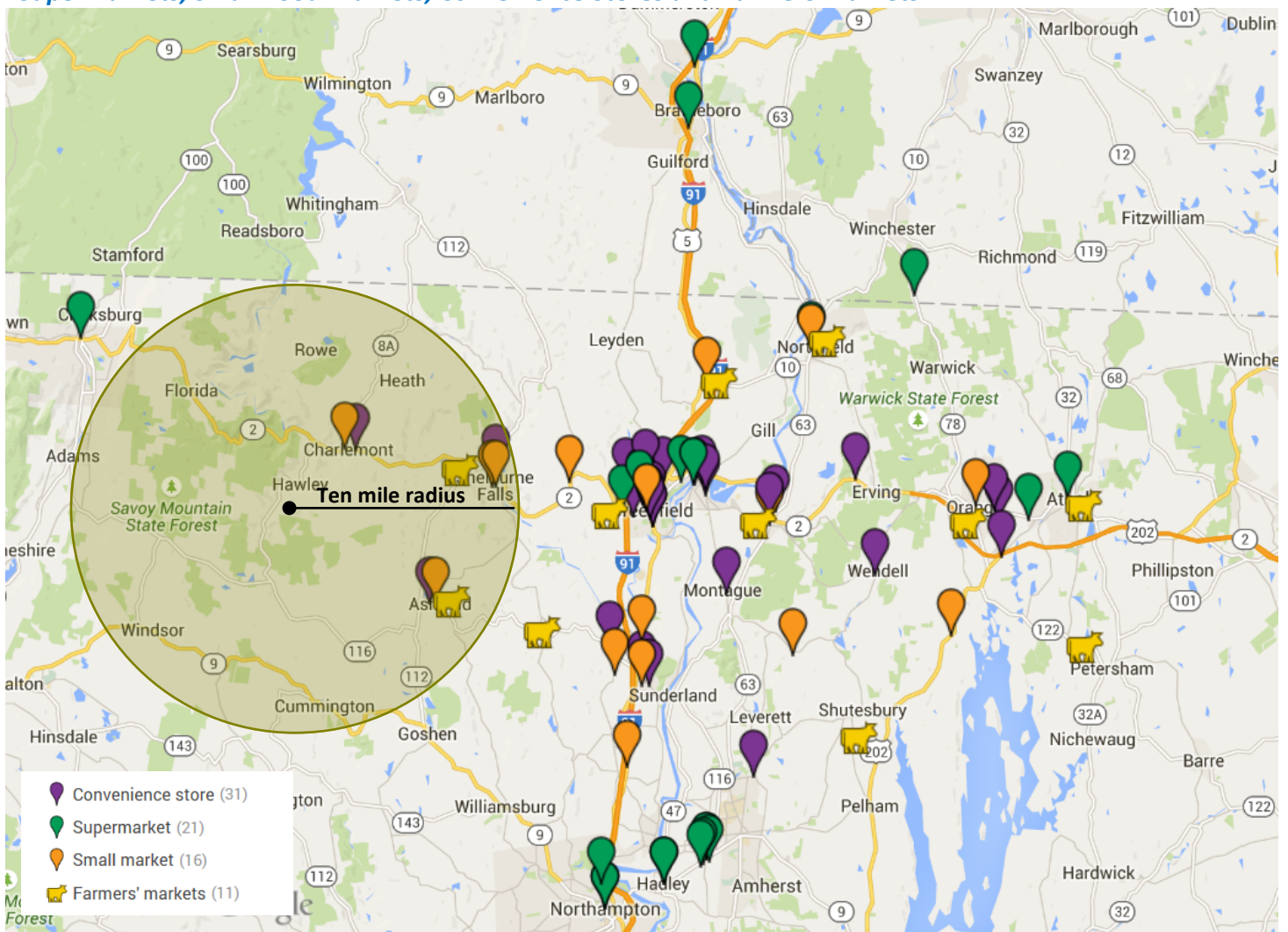
A less stringent definition has been used by researchers as being areas that are more than 10 miles and 20 minutes from a supermarket. As Blanchard and Lyson explained in 2006 based on research in the rural south, "the proliferation of convenience stores and gas stations ensure that some type of food is accessible to almost all residents. However,

the quality and pricing of food products available in U.S. convenience stores and supermarkets varies dramatically. Consumers purchasing food at a convenience store pay a premium for access to food products. Additionally, consumers choose from a smaller variety of food products that may not be suitable for the maintenance of a healthy diet. Thus, the application of the food desert concept in the U.S. elucidates a great divide between those with and without access to low cost, high quality foods.”

This description holds for the Franklin County and North Quabbin region. The region is characterized by both very rural communities and several more densely populated municipal centers – primarily Greenfield and Turners Falls. Both types of communities face food access issues:

- ⇒ **Distance:** For some communities the distances necessary to reach a grocery with an adequate selection may be significant. The rural communities in the region are connected primarily by two lane roads with speed limits of 30-45 miles per hour that wind through varied terrain including hills and valleys. New England weather complicates access especially in the winter.
- ⇒ **Selection:** In some communities there is access to convenience stores (purple markers) or small markets (orange markers) which provide food basics. These stores also offer a small selection of healthy foods. Many of these communities are without immediate access to a full-line supermarket (green markers).

Supermarkets, Small Food Markets, Convenience Stores and Farmers Markets



Challenged Communities Using USDA Logic of Poverty and Distance

Based on an analysis using the logic of the USDA food desert definition, there are communities in the region that can be described as “food access challenged”. They do not achieve the federal definition but face the same income/distance challenges, albeit to a lesser extent. They are Hawley, Leyden, Monroe and Wendell.

Other communities are food access challenged simply by distance from a full line supermarket.

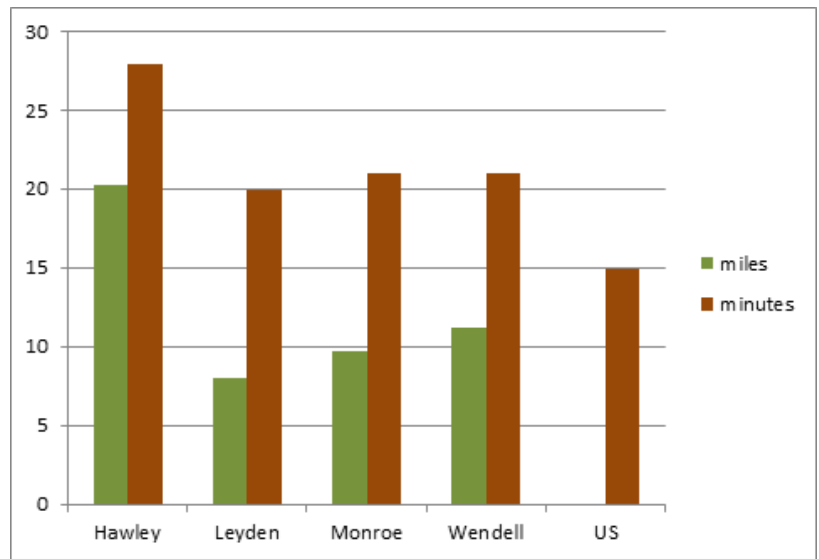
A 2009 USDA report, *Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences*, established a drivability rating for rural areas. Drivability is categorized as either 1) high, if a supermarket is within 10 miles; 2) medium, if a supermarket is between 10 and 20 miles; and 3) low, if a supermarket is greater than 20 miles away.

In terms of distance it is important to recognize that residents travel outside the Franklin County and North Quabbin region to shop. This travel can be determined by several factors including proximity or being on the way (to work and other activities). Residents in southern Franklin County likely shop in Hampshire County (Hadley and Northampton) and those living in northern Franklin County/North Quabbin may shop in Vermont (Brattleboro) or New Hampshire (Winchester). Residents in western Franklin County may primarily shop in Berkshire County (North Adams).

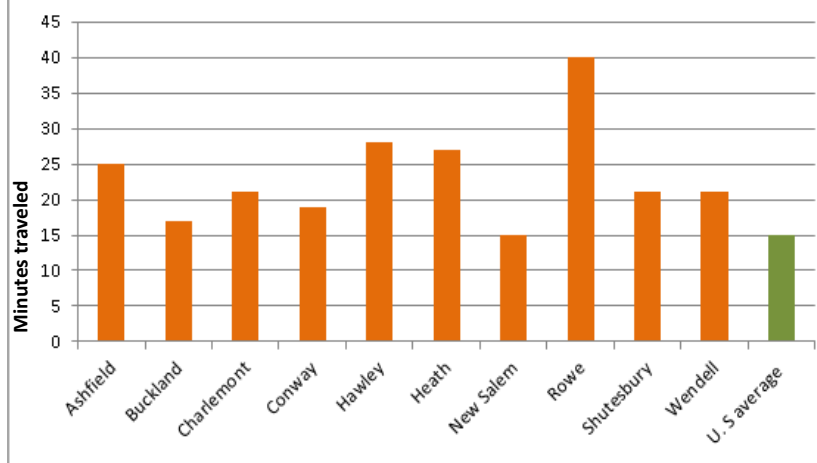
The other related challenge is travel time. In good weather conditions, several communities in the region are well beyond the national average of fifteen minutes drive time to a supermarket or equivalent. Depending on the destination, these travel times can range from 17 minutes to 40 minutes.

New England weather can affect travel times. Rain, fog, ice and snow are all regular weather conditions that impede travel times and reduce road capacity. A 2006 report by the U.S. Department of Transportation, *Empirical Studies on Traffic Flow in Inclement Weather*, documented that rain can reduce travel flow from 2% to 11% depending on if it is light or heavy rain. Similarly, travel flow is reduced from 5% to 20% with snow; increased reductions can be experienced with storm events and depending on local road clearing and maintenance ability. (<http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/weatherempirical/weatherempirical.pdf>)

Rural communities with low income and long drives to food stores are food access challenged

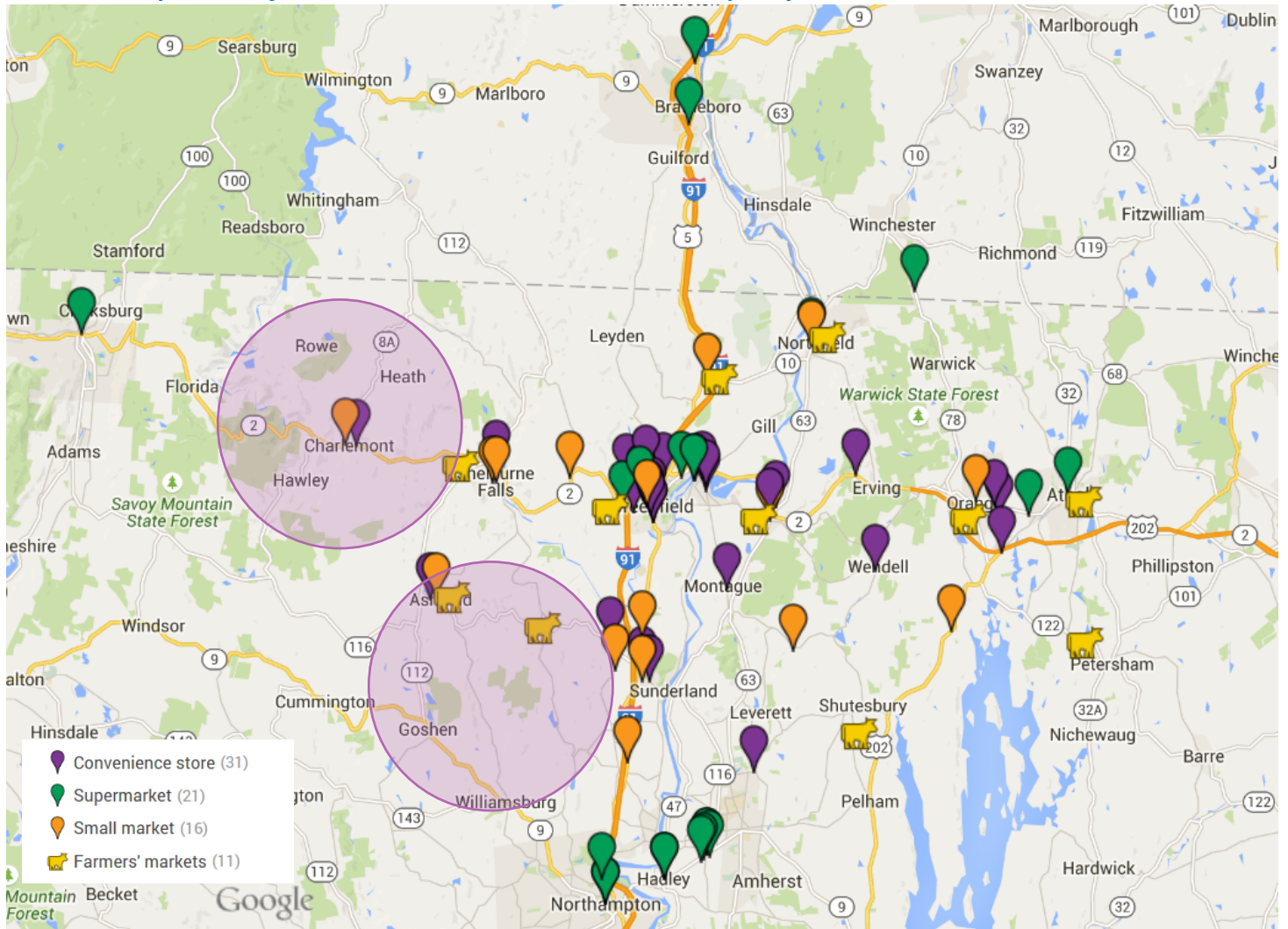


People from rural communities drive up to 40 minutes to a food store (in good weather)



Rural parts of Franklin County do not have the population necessary to support a full line supermarket, but there are smaller markets, convenience stores and farmers markets that could bridge the gap and provide an alternative to driving up to forty minutes in the winter to a supermarket. Specifically, Conway and Charlemont are locations where expanded food options would be ideal. The map below shows the two areas markets in these towns serve, highlighted by the circles. Expanded selection of fresh and frozen local foods in these markets could be beneficial to the surrounding communities, could increase store sales and could be new markets for farmers. While there is an abundance of spring, summer and fall farmers' markets, a winter farmers market in these areas could help fill a food need as well. More study is needed to determine the actual demand in these market areas.

Potential Expansion of Current Food Market Selection and Capacity



Produce Pricing Assessment: Findings

Summary: Farmers identified people not being able to afford local food as a barrier to selling more products in Franklin County and consumers in Franklin County think local food is too expensive. The Produce Pricing Assessment found a more complex reality. Some produce is less expensive at farmers' markets than at supermarkets while other is the same or more. The key seems to be seasonality: produce in season in the Pioneer Valley can often be a good value at farmers' markets and sometimes cannot be found at supermarkets. At the same time, supermarkets are increasing the amount of local produce they are carrying. A win-win situation would be one in which local produce is available in all types of food markets and consumers can have increased access, whether shopping at a farmers' market or supermarket.

Produce Pricing Assessment

Price Comparison

The Product Pricing Assessment was conducted in response to questions from our Advisory Group and others about the perception that local food is too expensive for many people. The assessment was carried out between early May and late October 2014. During this time, nearly 1,600 data points were collected. Some of the challenges encountered during the assessment and analysis of data included the varying ways in which produce is sold (such as by the pound, bunch or quart). Also, little conventional produce is carried at the farmers market primarily surveyed, making it difficult to compare prices of conventional produce at farmers' markets with that at supermarkets. Additionally, the organic produce supermarkets carry is certified organic, while farmers' markets tend to carry either low-spray, organically grown, or other non-certified organically-grown produce. This makes it difficult to compare non-certified organic produce from farmers' markets with that sold in supermarkets.

Some produce was found to be consistently more expensive at farmers' markets, such as scallions. Tomatoes and lettuce, two staple grocery items, were notably competitive at farmers markets. Organic broccoli, beets, and head lettuces were also a good value at farmers' markets. Other produce that was less expensive at supermarkets included carrots, cucumbers and summer squash.

Tomatoes and lettuce are competitively priced at farmers' markets; carrots, cukes and summer squash are less expensive at supermarkets.

Produce	Growing Method	Unit	Super-market	Farmers Market	# of Data	Supermarket Source
Carrots, All Varieties	Certified Organic	Bunch	\$2.80	\$3.00	14	California, USA
Corn	Conventional	Ear	\$0.49	\$0.50	11	Local, USA, Connecticut
Lettuce, Head Varieties	Conventional	Head	\$2.15	\$2.50	29	USA
Lettuce, Head Varieties	Certified Organic	Head	\$2.74	\$2.48	29	Local, USA
Onions, All Varieties	Conventional	Pound	\$1.13	\$1.00	12	USA, Peru, Local, Washington
Onions, All Varieties	Certified and Non-Certified Organic	Pound	\$1.33	\$2.10	26	
Peppers, Colored Bells	Conventional	Pound	\$3.49	\$2.66	8	USA, Canada
Peppers, Green Bell	Conventional	Pound	\$1.92	\$2.09	11	USA, Local
Peppers, Green Bell	Certified and Non-Certified Organic	Pound	n/a	\$3.00	12	
Potatoes, All Varieties	Conventional	Pound	\$0.85	\$0.91	24	USA, Local
Squash, Summer	Conventional	Pound	\$1.61	\$1.94	36	Local, USA
Tomatoes	Conventional	Pound	\$2.61	\$2.43	29	USA, Canada, Mexico
Tomatoes	Certified Organic	Pound	\$4.12	\$3.50	10	Vermont

 = less expensive at farmers' markets

Origin of Produce

The origin of produce was recorded as part of the Produce Pricing Assessment. The far-right column of the table on page 2 shows the origin of supermarket produce. The most common origin for supermarket produce was “USA”, with no other specific information provided regarding the location or origin of the produce. In some cases, additional information could be found on produce container labels or from produce employees. Related to origin, there were many examples of supermarket produce being sourced from other parts of the country—or world—during the produce’s peak season in the Pioneer Valley. Examples included asparagus sourced from Peru in May, carrots sourced from California at the height of summer in the Pioneer Valley, and potatoes sourced from Washington in August. Finally, blueberries labeled “peak of season” might lead consumers to believe the fruit is local, but the blueberries were in fact sourced from many places such as Oregon, Washington, Florida, Central California, New Jersey, North Carolina, Chile, Mexico or Argentina.

For consumers shopping for fresh, local produce at area supermarkets, all the supermarkets surveyed did a good job of identifying local produce. Some use the “Local Hero” branding, while one market uses “locally grown” signage which includes the origin of the produce. One market has a promotion called “Local Route” and does an excellent job of merchandizing and marketing local produce in high-profile locations. Sourcing more produce locally and emphasizing in-season produce could be good strategies for supermarkets to increase consumers access to fresh, local food.



Consumers shopping at farmers markets will always find fresh produce, but they will not find all produce available at all times. In addition to fresh produce, farmers markets provide customers a chance to meet the farmers who grew the produce and opportunities to learn about unfamiliar produce and how it should be cooked. Farmers markets are often socially important, with fun family activities, food tastings, and live music. A challenge to encouraging more shopping at farmers markets is that they do not provide busy families with the one-stop shopping they typically do at supermarkets. In addition to continuing to offer competitive pricing and freshness, farmers markets will need to develop strategies to entice consumers to spend more of their food dollars at their local farmers markets.

Fresh and Local Outreach

Summary: Sharing the findings of the Produce Pricing Assessment with the general public and supporting low-income families and individuals to shop at a farmers market were primary goals of the Fresh and Local campaign. Three hundred low-income residents were provided Market Dollars to shop at local farmers' markets, via the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and Franklin County Community Action. Early data showed a modest number of individuals using their market dollars, many purchasing vegetable plants. The same individuals took taking advantage of an incentive to use Market Dollars on a return visit to the Farmers' Market. The goals were to help people become more comfortable and familiar with their local farmers' market – and to increase the number of people buying local food, thereby increasing demand for local food.

Fresh & Local



Doesn't have to cost more

Outreach to Increase Food Access and Utilization of Farmers' Markets

The **Fresh and Local campaign** was developed in response to the Produce Pricing Assessment, to communicate the idea of shopping in season and to encourage shopping at farmers' markets by low income individuals and families. The campaign was designed to build upon the strong presence of local partners in the community to complement their existing food access and outreach activities. The campaign focused on low-income populations in its outreach and education efforts and offered financial support for initial purchases at selected farmers' markets.

There were three local programs which provided outreach and education activities as part of the campaign: the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Women, Infants and Children (W.I.C.) and the Center for Self Reliance (CSR), a local food pantry. The latter two partners are programs of Community Action, an agency promoting economic justice and improved quality of life for people with lower incomes. The outreach and education was intended to engage individuals about eating healthy food and to increase awareness of the two local farmers' markets serving greater-Greenfield area. In particular, partners sought to reduce some of the perceived barriers that prevent low income individuals from purchasing local food and utilizing farmers' markets. This included an effort to dispel the myth that local food was too expensive; partners were provided with the summary findings of the FRCOG's 2014 Product Pricing Assessment which compared product pricing at area supermarkets and farmers' markets.

FRCOG also partnered with the Greenfield Farmers' Market, which is well established in downtown Greenfield and the Great Falls Farmer's Market, which is a developing market in neighboring downtown Turners Falls. FRCOG designed the Fresh and Local campaign based on discussions with the Market Managers to ensure ease of operations and maximum impact.


The Fresh and Local campaign used a hybrid outreach model to engage residents and potential market customers. The Food Bank and W.I.C. conducted traditional outreach with low income individuals. The Food Bank conducted outreach in two locations – the Greenfield Senior Center and the Winslow Building, an affordable housing property owned by the Greenfield Housing Authority which is home to a mix of low income residents. W.I.C. conducted outreach and education in their Greenfield offices and at regular outreach events.

Outreach and incentives were focused on low income and elder populations in Greenfield and Montague

Both organizations provided interested individuals with a written invitation to shop at either farmers' market and provided five Market Dollars when they met with the Market Manager to hand in their invitation. This system provided the Market Manager with the opportunity to welcome and orient each new market customer. The Market Dollars were available in denominations of one dollar each and have the equivalent purchasing power of one U.S. dollar, to be used directly with market vendors in lieu of cash. All items with the exception of "ready to eat" food could be purchased with Market Dollars including fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy, honey, maple products, baked goods and plants.

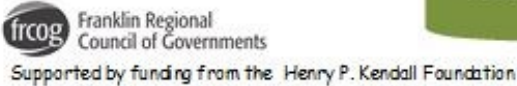
Beyond getting low income individuals to visit the market and shop at the farmers' markets, the Fresh and Local campaign sought to influence behavior change. To promote this, the program encouraged users of Market Dollars to return to the Market Manager to show their day's market purchases (no receipt necessary). If they made a purchase during this first visit to the market, each individual would receive an additional five Market Dollars for a subsequent visit to the farmers market.

Fresh and Local



Greenfield Farmers' Market

Market Dollars



\$1 value

Use your market dollars for vegetables, fruits, meat, honey, maple products, dairy, baked goods, vegetable plants and more food items

For purchases from Farmers' Market vendors only
 Not for purchase of "ready-to-eat" items
 Not redeemable for cash
 Expires October 31, 2015

Market Hours: Saturdays
 8:00 am to 12:30 pm
 Court Square, Greenfield

The Center for Self Reliance used a more experimental approach to outreach, seeking to reach beyond those individuals it had a direct relationship with via the food pantry. CSR used a "Friend of a Friend" outreach model based on the use of peer referral. This approach was premised on the belief that everyone looks to their peers (friends, family, and other trusted sources) for recommendations. Not only would this enable CSR to reach deeper into the community but there might be a higher likelihood that a peer referral would result in greater follow-through than a referral from a professional. Since CSR has had an existing farmers' markets coupon program for its pantry clients, CSR staff was able to review their records and identify individuals who had used their pantry coupons in recent years at the farmers' market. This yielded a pool of about 400 people. CSR offered these people the opportunity to find another low income person who had never shopped at a farmers' market and make a peer referral to them. The referred individual would get the same five and five Market Dollar deal that other Fresh and Local campaign referees received. CSR clients who made the referrals would also receive five Market Dollars for making the referral.

At the time of writing, most of the Market Dollars had been distributed and a modest redemption rate was reported by the Greenfield Farmers' Market. There will be a final assessment of the Market Dollars program at the end of calendar year 2015.



The Fresh and Local outreach and education activities are notable for several reasons. First, the traditional outreach activities were able to engage a broad range of sub-populations. These include mothers of young children (W.I.C.), seniors, and people living in affordable housing including recent inmates, veterans and people with physical/mental disabilities. The Friend of a Friend outreach model offered an interesting experiment in reaching beyond the partner organization into the community. This will provide information on the effectiveness of peer referrals in getting people to the farmers' market.

The final part of the Fresh and Local campaign was to increase excitement at the Greenfield Farmers' Market by offering a fun, promotional activity which the Market Manager could use to engage with shoppers – whether they are new, current or potential market customers. Consistent with the Fresh and Local theme, the FRCOG created a six-foot tall carrot figure under the headline "I'm Fresh and Local". Anyone at the market can have their photo taken with the carrot. In addition to creating interest at the market, photos of participants may be used in promotional materials to raise awareness of the Greenfield market and for promoting local food generally.

Project Report Conclusion

Whether by ascribing to the New England Food Vision's 50-by-60 goal or some other objective for increasing the production and consumption of local food, Franklin County is poised to contribute considerably to increased production for the region. Major challenges include developing more farmland, supporting farmers to increase production as demand rises, and supporting consumers to shift their diets to include substantially more locally grown fruits, vegetables and other food. The Action Plan at the beginning of this report identifies goals related to all three challenges and outlines next steps Franklin County can take to grow more food and to grow our consumers' knowledge about the benefits of fresh, local food.

Appendices

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Weekend Edition

LIFE & TIMES, TV LISTINGS,
COLOR COMICS AND MORE.

INSIDE



Haunting tones

1966 WALES COALMINING
TOWN TRAGEDY IN ABERFAN
INSPIRES NEW MUSICAL WORK.

LIFE & TIMES, PAGE D1

WEATHER



46/29

PARTLY CLOUDY

Grace Stewart
Fisher Hill School

PAGE A7

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April 4, 2015

IS LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE AFFORDABLE?



Recorder/Paul Franz

Merideth Lively of the Atlas Farm Store in South Deerfield, which has spring greens and root vegetables for sale.

Year-long study shows average price comparable to supermarkets

By **RICHIE DAVIS**
Recorder Staff

If the snow has melted from the fields, can the plowing, planting and produce be far behind?

As the growing season approaches, with the opening of the Greenfield Farmers Market less than a month away on May 2, a year-long project is about to wrap up, with an effort to promote local produce as a way to improve the market for area farmers.

The project plans to promote sale of local farm products, whether at farmers markets, supermarkets or farm stands, in the aftermath of a survey of 130 farmers that found many said they don't have time to find new markets for their products in Franklin County, they can get better prices elsewhere or believe that "many people can't afford to buy local produce in Franklin County."

■ State facing issues of how to increase sales of farm-related foods. See Page A8.

To test that truism, which Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planner Mary Praus said farmers have also heard from potential customers over the years, the project did a "market basket assessment" to compare prices of hundreds of local produce items at the Greenfield and Turners Falls farmers markets with supermarkets.

The survey, completed at the end of the last harvest season, included about 1,600 prices overall, but showed, for exam-

See **PRODUCE** Page A8

Produce, farming issues a statewide issue, too

By **RICHIE DAVIS**
Recorder Staff

The year-long Franklin County Farm and Food System Project may be winding down, but a more sweeping Massachusetts Food System plan is gearing up.

Several state policy recommendations are directly connected to issues raised in the Franklin County plan.

"A lot of issues at the local level are mirrored in the statewide findings," said Franklin Regional Council of Governments land-use planner Mary Prais, who is working on both projects.

Among these are getting farmers more of the kind of technical help that once was common from the state Cooperative Extension Service, cutting through state and federal regulations and adapting the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program to better

suit today's farming needs.

The Franklin County project looked at issues like the need for helping the segment of poultry producers who say they would ramp up production if they could access mobile slaughtering equipment, as well as the need for technical assistance, help with succession plans for their farms as they age, and ways to make local food more available to all economic classes of customers. Among the organizations that were part of the project were Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, Just Roots, Franklin Land Trust, Seeds of Solidarity and the Franklin County Community Development Corp.

Trying to get local agriculture into local convenience stores proved "a difficult nut to crack," said Prais, because many of those stores do their purchasing at the corporate level according to where they

make the biggest margins, or have no space or necessary refrigeration to keep local items.

In one instance, Prais offered to get apples and locally made Sidehill Farm yogurt into a store to create a tiny niche beside the junk food, cigarettes and lottery tickets sold there, "but as soon as I stepped outside the picture, it stopped happening."

The Massachusetts Food Plan, which is scheduled to develop its draft recommendations this month after eight months of gathering data, plans to present those recommendations in July, according to project manager Winton Pitcoff.

Among the areas of concern, according to Prais and Pitcoff, are the availability of farmland, which was raised as an issue in Franklin County. Adapting the rules for the state's APR purchase of farmland development rights, which set the

minimum acreage at 10 acres, could help protect smaller plots on the edge of urbanized areas. Allowing greenhouses under APR, which now limits the percentage of protected property that can be used for buildings, could also address program structure that's "not responding to the changing face of farming," Prais said.

Other areas, she said, could include:

- Streamlining the regulatory process and making it better reflect the smaller scale of farming in the state with better coordination and collaboration between agencies so there are fewer "hoops to jump through."

- Finding a way to compensate farmers for the care they provide for the environment, whether for carbon sequestration, keeping productive land for being paved over, and being good stewards of the soil and aquifer

- Offering more technical

assistance to farmers, similar to the local Cooperative Extension Service offerings that have been cut back in recent decades. "We're hearing there's a critical need, especially from young farmers," said Prais.

The Massachusetts Food System Plan, being developed with the help of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance, is scheduled to make its recommendations to the Food Policy Council by the end of the year, according to Pitcoff, to propose legislative and regulatory reforms next year as a way of boosting production, sale and consumption of Massachusetts-grown foods, creating economic opportunity, protecting the environment and reducing hunger and food insecurity.

On the Web: www.MAFoodPlan.org

Produce

From Page A1

ple, that conventional tomatoes averaged \$2.43 a pound at the farmers market versus an average of \$2.61 a pound at the supermarket, while organic tomatoes were selling at \$3.50 at the farmers market versus \$4.12 in the supermarket. Organic carrots, though, were 20 cents a pound cheaper at the supermarket and conventional lettuce was selling averaging \$2.15 a head in the supermarket, compared to \$2.50 a head at the farmers market. Corn was priced at about the same, while conventional onions were \$1 a pound at the farmers market, compared with supermarket onions at \$1.13. Organic onions were 77 cents a pound cheaper at the supermarket.

Overall, the results offered good news to farmers, said Prais, since their direct-sale prices are comparable to supermarket prices.

Using money from a \$74,000 Henry P. Kendall Foundation grant, the food system project plans to distribute coupons through Community Action to low-income customers, who also get introduced to the Greenfield Farmers Market through double SNAP food stamps benefits provided by the market.

Although supermarket buyers didn't respond to her invitation to become part of the discussions, Prais said, "It would be great if they were willing to be part of the discussion, because they're real-

ly part of the solution," and the coming promotion will be for local produce, regardless of where it's sold.

"The farmers market is not the solution for everybody, and people still need to go to the grocery store for a lot of staples," Prais said.

The Franklin County Community Development Corp.'s Greenfield Food Processing Center, which recently installed flash-freezing equipment at its Wells Street commercial kitchen, expects to be buying additional produce this season, so that may also help with some of the market saturation, Prais said.

The CDC, which sold 65,000 to 70,000 pounds of frozen vegetables last summer, recently met with 15 growers to plan what would be "a couple hundred thousand pounds of vegetables in the coming season, according to CDC Executive Director John Waite — potatoes and squash as well as broccoli, carrots, green peppers, green beans and possibly kale and onions.

Once the center installs its new freezer, expected in August, it will be able to handle roughly five times the number it pallets, with sales to schools, colleges and other institutions.

You can reach Richie Davis at: rdavis@recorder.com or 413-772-0261, Ext. 269

The cost of local food

By **MARY MCCLINTOCK**

I often think about the price of locally grown food, especially when I hear folks say it costs more to buy local fruit and vegetables than it does to buy fruit and vegetables from "away" at supermarkets. Thanks to the Franklin Regional Council of Government's "market basket assessment" comparing prices of local produce items at the Greenfield and Turners Falls farmers markets with supermarkets, we now have information that shows direct-sale prices of local produce are comparable to supermarket prices.

Considering the cost of food, I think about the people who grow and pro-

duce the food as well as the people who buy that food. Because of an economy that has concentrated wealth in the hands of a few people and squandered trillions of dollars on expensive, destructive wars, many people who grow food and many of us who buy it are struggling financially.

I thought about those struggles last week when I saw a post on the Weston A. Price Foundation's Facebook page. It said, "If you stopped spending money at the supermarket next week, they would never notice you were gone. If you took a small fraction of that money and spent it at the farmers market, you would help a local farmer pay the rent. You might even save his or her farm."

Indeed.

Along with farmers markets, I'd include farm stands, farm stores, and CSA shares. Together, each of us, buying food from our neighbors, we can help save their farms and strengthen the local economy that supports us all.

Savoring the Seasons: Enjoying local food year-round

Farm Survey In Franklin County, Mass., Shows Some Barriers To Growth

by: Jill Kaufman

MARCH 7, 2014



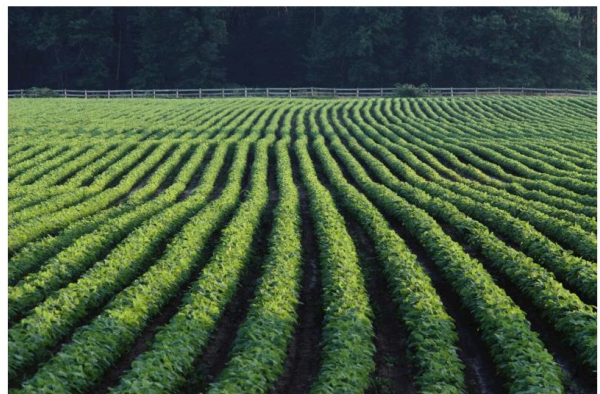
More than 130 Franklin County, Mass., farmers took part in a recent survey about the barriers and incentives to increase crop, meat, and overall agricultural production. NEPR's Jill Kaufman spoke with Mary Praus from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, which, along with the American Farmland Trust, CISA, and other groups, conducted the survey and are making plans for how to address farmers' needs.

LISTEN

<https://soundcloud.com/#newenglandpublicradio/franklin-county-farm-survey-1>

Survey of Franklin County farmers identifies where help needed to boost agricultural economy

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Farms survey feeds into resilient local food system

By RICHIE DAVIS
Recorder Staff

A new survey of Franklin County farmers is pointing the way for a "Farm and Food System Project" to boost the region's agricultural economy.

The survey, which drew responses from 134 farmers, is part of a program for which the Franklin Regional Council of Governments received a \$74,000 grant to build "a resilient regional food system."

The survey provides information that's useful in understanding the next steps needed to help farmers

remain viable and expand, says Mary Praus, the COG land-use planner in coordinating the program.

The advisory group working on the program is thinking of some "out of the box" ideas to address some of the needs.

One idea to help farmers find access to arable land is to possibly have a variation on a "speed dating" session involving people who have available land that may have been farmed years ago with farmers who are searching for land.

Another idea, aimed at improving access to healthful, locally grown foods, is to set up a farm stand at an

independently owned convenience store, Praus said.

"A lot of what's come out of this initial survey of farmers is what they need right now, what we can do right now, what's already being done but farmers just need to be plugged into. It's an opportunity for some discreet projects as we go along, and to identify what we can't do under this funding."

The 18-month grant is aimed at helping to build connections among the many groups that work with farmers, not only in Franklin County, but with other parts of western Massachusetts and elsewhere in the

state, said Praus, recognizing that regional planning agencies could and should play a role.

The program is also designed to build collaboration with a dozen or so organizations from Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, area land trusts, Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Franklin County CDC and the nonprofit organization Land for Good.

As a follow-up to what farmers called for, Land for Good has scheduled a session to discuss land access for farmers — some of them renters

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Farms: Land, marketing

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— who say they're in need of more farmland.

The 134 responses represents about 18 percent of the total number of farms reported in the 2007 agricultural census, although Praus says that for busy farmers, that's great, especially considering that it includes a broad range of farm sizes and nearly all towns in the county.

More than half of the farmers responding are between 45 and 64 years old, and most report either operating alone or with two to five workers.

The largest proportion say they sell at their own farm stands, or directly to stores or at farmers markets, and nearly half say that more than 75 percent of their products are sold in Franklin County. Asked what the greatest barriers are to selling more in the county, half said they don't have time to seek new markets, there's the perception in the county that people can't afford to buy local produce and, in a related

matter, that they "can get a better price elsewhere."

Dealing with that perception about the expense of local products, says Praus, is "a very complicated" issue that involves labor costs and other baseline operating considerations, but that the working group coordinating the program hopes to look at this further.

More than 70 percent of those responding said they are able to sell their meat and poultry products at an acceptable profit margin, and 45 farmers said they're interested in a meat-processing component at the CDC's Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center in Greenfield — something that's become a reality since the question was first posed.

More than half of those asked said they're not interested in a cold-storage center in which they could rent space, one of several key infrastructure needs that's been pointed to by CISA.

"More and more farmers are upgrading (cold storage) facilities on their farms," says



Recorder file/Paul Franz

In this file photo, Warren Facey Jr. of Bree-Z-Knoll Farm in Leyden poses with some of his cows.

Margaret Cristie, CISA's special projects director. "We're finding that the need for joint cold storage is not as great as was thought initially, and this survey confirmed that."

Even though nearly half of them are 45 or older, 67 of the farmers said they have no

transition plan for their farm, and 42 farmers say they have no successor identified.

Praus said her program has already had one session for farmers who expressed interest in getting more information, and more are planned, with land trusts, Land for

Good, CISA and other organizations that can help.

"We live in a place that's incredibly bountiful and we also live in a place where there are people who are not eating that bounty," she said. "This project was designed to touch on both of those elements."

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Recorder/Paul Franz

Acres of cultivated fields in Northfield illustrate the wealth of locally grown food in Franklin County.

Where will our food come from?

Grant to fund 'strategic food system plan' for Franklin County

By RICHIE DAVIS
Recorder Staff

With completion of a "Sustainable Franklin County" plan that calls for the region to protect farmland and expand local food supplies, a new \$74,000 grant will advance "strategic food system planning" over the next year to help build "a resilient regional food system."

The grant came from the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, a Boston-based organization that funds projects supporting healthy food

systems around the region as well as increased production and consumption of local, sustainably produced food.

Over the next year and a half, the planning effort by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments will build upon New England Food Vision 2060, a study that found the six-state region could produce 80 percent of its own food — the bulk of its own vegetables as well as about half of its fruit, from which it could also derive much of its own beverages, along with most of its

own dairy products and most of its own lamb and beef, plus its own chicken, turkey, pork, and eggs and some grains.

The COG study will also make use of a 2012 Franklin County Farmland and Foodshed study by the Conway School of Landscape Design, which recommends that the county can achieve "self-reliance" in feeding itself by focusing on what we already grow well on 34,000 acres of farmland.

"We've had a longstanding interest in farmland protection, and this seemed like a logical next step in terms of looking at the overall food system," said the COG's planning director, Margaret Sloan. "The goal is to advance production

of local food for local consumption. We're going to begin to look at ways of improving the ability to have food that's produced in the region stay in the region, and to increase production of local food."

Working with organizations like Deerfield-based Communities Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, Orange-based Seeds of Solidarity, and the Franklin County Community Development Corp., county planners will consider the need of farms for greater storage facilities, processing capacity and transportation capabilities, with the aim of seeing if there are ways to build in greater efficiencies or

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or cooperative efforts.

The COG plans on making recommendations for infrastructure projects and locations, along with identifying potential partners, community collaborations, and funding possibilities.

The CDC, which operates the Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center in Greenfield, has received federal funding to expand its freezer storage capabilities as part of an effort to encourage greater sales of locally grown produce to schools and other institutions.

The CDC and CISA, as well as farmers, town agriculture commissions, Community Action and land trusts, will be represented on an advisory board overseeing the COG study, said Sloan.

Among issues that form the backdrop to the study are the expected continued rise in cost of fossil fuels, which will likely affect the future cost and availability of food imported from across the country and around the world, as well as the lack of access to healthful, locally grown food by low-income people who can't easily get to farmers markets, farmstands or supermarkets where it's sold.

The strategic plan makes recommendations for siting potential local, fresh-food retail and farmers markets locations, identifying local and regional barriers to doing so and dovetails with the state's "Mass. in Motion Healthy Market Program" to get markets and convenience stores providing more healthy food options to customers. Pointing to the Neighbors convenience store in Ashfield, which has a fresh produce table outside its entrance in summer, Sloan said, "It would be great if more local convenience stores offered that."

Although much of the food grown in Franklin County will travel to whatever markets offer farmers the greatest return, she said part of the strategic plan is aimed at "providing opportunities for it to stay in the region by making more of those connections between farmers and local restaurants, schools and other institutions. That means working with farmers to identify those who are interested and working to make that happen."

The COG's sustainable master plan, in which 84 percent of people attending workshops pointed to farmland protection as their top natural resource priority, is scheduled to be approved by the regional Planning Board later this summer.

Working with volunteers, the COG will conduct on-farm interviews with farmers to focus on infrastructure needs, land assets, current production, and interest in growing new crops as well as connecting to new local markets.

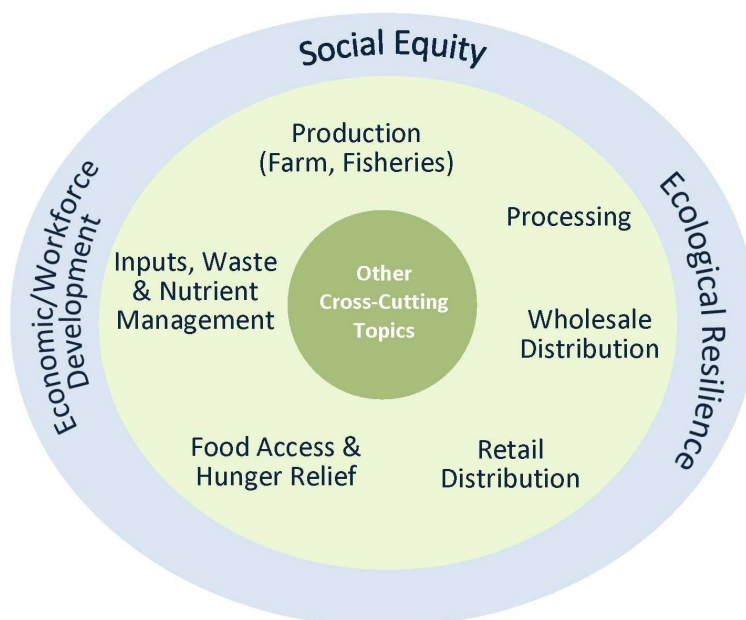
The COG also plans to work with Massachusetts food policy groups and other planning agencies to identify potential regional projects and collaboration possibilities.

Project Advisory Group

One of the significant strengths of this project has been its Advisory Group and the invaluable guidance and input its members have provided throughout the project. Members of the Advisory Group and their organizations have benefitted from the project as well. This project has given Advisory Group organizations the opportunity to shape the Farmer Survey and to get questions vital to their organizations answered. Additionally, results of the survey have provided many of the organizations with names and contact information of farmers who want to be contacted by the organizations for technical and other types of assistance.

Farm and/or Organization	Contact	Sector of Food System / Area of Interest (see diagram below)
American Farmland Trust	Cris Coffin	Land, Ecological Resilience
Bostrom Farm	Kyle Bostrom	Production, Processing
Bree-Z-Knoll	Warren Facey	Production, Processing, Land
CISA	Margaret Christie	Economic Vitality, Production, Processing, Cross-Cutting Issues
Everson Lot Farm	Larry Bruffee	Production, Processing
Food Bank of Western MA	Andrew Morehouse	Social Equity and Healthy, Food Security, Access
FCCDC	John Waite and Nico Lustig	Processing, Distribution
Just Roots	Annie Burdett	Access, Social Equity and Health, Production
Land for Good	Kathy Ruhf	Production, Land, Ecological Resilience
MA Maple Producers Assoc.	Winton Pitcoff	Production, Processing
Mary McClintock	Mary McClintock	Social Equity and Health, Food Security
Mass Food Policy Alliance	Christa Drew	Cross-Cutting Issues
Mt Grace Land Trust	Jamie Potters	Land, Ecological Resilience
New England Sustainable Agriculture Working Group	Kathy Ruhf	Cross-Cutting Issues, Ecological Resilience
NOFA Mass	Winton Pitcoff	Ecological Resilience, Inputs, Waste and Nutrient Mgmt
N. Quabbin Community Action	Kirby Lecy	Food Security, Social Equity / Health, Cross-Cutting Issues
Stone Soup Café	Ari Pliskin	Food Security, Social Equity
Wilderbrook Farm	John Hoffman	Production, Processing

The project Advisory Group was assembled with the intent to have representation from all sectors, with an emphasis on production, processing and food access. Their areas of expertise are represent many elements of the food system, shown in the diagram to the right.



Summary of Franklin County Farmland and Foodshed Study

As part of the FRCOG-authored *Sustainable Franklin County*, funded by HUD and released in 2013, the Conway School conducted a land-based study of Franklin County's ability to feed itself. The *Franklin County Farmland and Foodshed Study* used the New England Food Vision to calculate nutritional needs and calories of production per acre. The Study answered the following questions:

- Q1:** How much farmland would the County need to meet its residents' nutritional needs?
- Q2:** How much farmland is there in Franklin county and where is it located?
- Q3:** Does Franklin County have enough farmland to achieve self-sufficiency?
- Q4:** Where is there potential for additional farmland in Franklin County?
- Q5:** Should Franklin County strive for complete food self-sufficiency?

The *Franklin County Farmland and Foodshed Study* found that if push came to shove, Franklin County does have enough land resources to be entirely self sufficient. Despite those findings, the Study recommends Franklin County pursue regional self reliance, a scenario where our farmers produce food which grows best in our region, while we continue to import those products we would rather not go without (orange juice, coffee, chocolate, olive oil) and those products easily shipped (grains). The recommendations of the Study include:

DETERMINE LOCATIONS OF POTENTIAL FARMLAND

Identify priority areas to establish additional farmland such as those with prime agricultural soils adjacent to existing farmland and those that could be cleared with minimal environmental impact.

DETERMINE AVAILABILITY OF LAND FOR AGRICULTURAL USE

Assess whether land identified is under APR, Chapter 61a or is owned by a farmer to determine the likelihood the land might be converted to farmland.

CONDUCT QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENTS OF FOOD SYSTEM ELEMENTS

- ⇒ Assess productivity of existing farmland and estimate the full capacity for production
- ⇒ Determine food consumption rates of Franklin County residents
- ⇒ Identify food access concerns of low and moderate income residents
- ⇒ Assess food economy including identification of current food system-related businesses
- ⇒ Inventory existing food system infrastructure and identify needs for additional infrastructure

The FRCOG addresses some of these recommendations in this project including identifying needs related to additional infrastructure, and assessing issues of food access for Franklin County residents. This project also begins to assess the land use implications for Franklin County of New England Food Vision's scenarios.

An additional land-focused planning project conducted by the FRCOG would be very beneficial. The project should include an analysis of the need to develop additional farmland and how such development could be implemented while preserving important tracts of forestland for important ecological services such as carbon sequestration and drinking water protection.

A related land-focused project with the goals of increasing food self-reliance in Franklin County should be conducted by the FRCOG. This project should examine the potential to convert underutilized and/or open land in urban areas and town centers into farm and other food production areas. The project should also examine the barriers to increasing backyard food gardens and other non-farm food production.