

Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network Information Sheet

What are food hubs?

Food hubs are centrally located facilities with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally sourced food products (USDA-AMS working definition). Food hubs can be operated as a private business, a non-profit organization, as well as other organizational forms.

Who is partnering in this work and why?

The MSU Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) are partnering to integrate food hub and regional food commerce resources to help Michigan regional food and farm businesses succeed. The key resources in this partnership are: 1) Initial funding from MDARD in 2012 of more than \$900,000 to five food hub projects, 2) coordinated technical assistance, and 3) a Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network led by CRFS in collaboration with Morse Marketing Connections, LLC, and MDARD.

What are the goals of the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network?

1. Increased learning, innovation, and profitability for participating food hub and other regional food businesses
2. Increased access to food hub financial and technical assistance, research, and education
3. Increased business to business collaboration and trust across food hubs and other regional food businesses
4. Measureable increase in healthy food access to low-income communities and vulnerable children in order to increase health outcomes
5. Increased collaboration among food and health agencies and organizations in Michigan to support food hubs

What are the roles of Michigan local food hub consultants and where are they serving?

1. Help support, connect, and convene those who are interested in developing or assisting with the development of a food hub in your region
2. Increase awareness of food hubs within those organizations working to get healthy food to low-income communities in your region
3. Assess whether food hubs can play a role in supplying healthy food to those markets in your region

There are currently 10 food hub part-time consultants serving the following areas:
foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/file/resources/fh-consultant-map.pdf

Local Food Hub contact information and biographies are available at
foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/file/resources/fh-consultants.pdf



What is the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network doing?

1. Convening three to four statewide food hub network meetings per year to create a "space" for learning and innovation in food hubs and regional food commerce
2. Maintaining a statewide listserv and an information page on the CRFS website
3. Coordinating a network of local food hub consultants who are working with local partners to build capacity of food hubs
4. Responding to emerging food hub needs through regional and local food hub meetings, conferences, learning sessions, webinars, trainings, and context-specific tool development
5. Engaging and recruiting food hubs led by traditionally marginalized farmers and organizations representing food and health needs of low-income communities to participate and have leadership opportunities in all aspects of the network
6. Developing a best practices guide for developing successful Michigan-based food hubs and other regional food businesses (2014)
7. Developing a best practices guide for developing a statewide food hub learning and innovation network (published by Center for Regional Food Systems, 2014)

What is the National Food Hub Collaboration and how is it connected to the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network?

The National Food Hub Collaboration is a partnership between Wallace Center at Winrock International, USDA, National Good Food Network, and others. The Michigan Food Hub Network partners with the Collaboration to connect Michigan food hubs and other food businesses with educational, technical, and financial resources and expertise available across the country. MSU CRFS also is the university partner in the National Food Hub Survey.

Contact the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network co-conveners:

Rich Pirog, Senior Associate Director
MSU Center for Regional Food Systems
e-mail: rspirog@msu.edu
phone: 517-353-0694

Marty Gerencer, Principal
Morse Marketing Connections, LLC
e-mail: marty.gerencer@gmail.com
phone: 231-638-2981

Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network Webpage:

foodsystems.msu.edu/activities/food-hub-network

Statewide Contact List:

foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/file/resources/mi-fh-contacts.pdf

Resources on Food Hubs:

ngfn.org/resources/food-hubs

To subscribe to the listserv for the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network, email listserv@list.msu.edu with "SUB MIFoodHub" and your name (e.g., SUB MIFoodHub Joe Smith) in the body of the email

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KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2013 NATIONAL FOOD HUB SURVEY

Food hubs are businesses or organizations that actively manage the aggregation, distribution and marketing of source-identified food products. In 2013, the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems in association with the Wallace Center at Winrock International conducted the largest national survey of food hubs to date. The survey investigated food hubs' financial viability, economic impact, healthy food access, challenges faced, and emerging market opportunities.

Some of the survey's major findings are:

FOOD HUBS ARE FINANCIALLY VIABLE BUSINESSES.

- Food hubs with varying years of service and operational structures (including nonprofits) were observed generating a positive cash flow.
- The average food hub's 2012 sales exceeded \$3.7 million.
- Sixty-six percent of food hubs operate without grant funding.

FOOD HUBS ARE CREATING JOBS.

- The average food hub houses 19 paid positions.

FOOD HUBS ARE GROWING TO MEET MARKET DEMAND.

- Food hubs' three most commonly reported customer types were restaurants, small grocery stores and kindergarten through 12th grade school food service.
- Over 95% of food hubs are experiencing an increasing demand for their products and services.
- Sixty-two percent of food hubs began operations within the last five years.

FOOD HUBS ARE CREATING MARKET OPPORTUNITIES AND PROVIDING CRUCIAL SERVICES FOR SMALL AND MIDSIZED PRODUCERS

- Seventy-six percent of food hubs indicated that all or most of their producers were either small or midsized.
- Seventy-four percent of food hubs indicate that the majority of their customers are located within 100 miles.

FOOD HUBS ARE SUPPLYING LOCAL FOOD TO ALL COMMUNITIES.

- About half of food hubs are equipped to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, federal food assistance) benefits.
- Nearly half of all food hubs have operational commitments to equity, increasing food access, and/or community development.

A full report of the survey findings can be found on the Center for Regional Food Systems' website at www.foodsystems.msu.edu. The National Good Food Network will host a webinar highlighting key findings from the report on Thursday, September 19 at 3:30 EDT. Registration for the webinar is free and open until broadcast time at <http://bit.ly/hubsurveywebinar>.

For more information, contact Rich Pirog, rspirog@msu.edu, 517-353-0694, Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems; or, Jeff Farbman, jfarbman@winrock.org, 703-302-6610, Wallace Center at Winrock International.

