

Media Relations

"Home Grown" Report Looks At Local Food's Impact On N.H. Economy

June 3, 2010

DURHAM, N.H. – As farmer’s market season launches and the interest in eating locally raised food increases, a new report finds that the local food system in New Hampshire is a \$3.3 billion industry that employs 81,000 people statewide. The report, “Home Grown”, was released recently from Food Solutions New England, a University of New Hampshire-based initiative linking farm, food and nutrition issues. It will be presented in a forum at the N.H. Department of Agriculture in Concord Friday, June 4, 2010.

The report finds strengths in the state’s local food economy– a strong retail sector and a high income population interested in buying local food – but also notes New Hampshire’s shortcomings, particularly the low profits of local farms relative to neighboring states and the U.S. average and a weak food manufacturing infrastructure. The report highlights the potential to increase the contribution of local agriculture production and food manufacturing to the gross state product by (GSP) 25 percent.

“There is clearly potential for expansion of local food production in New Hampshire, and with that expansion would come benefits for N.H. consumers and also expanded economic opportunity for N.H. farmers and local food employment,” say Ross Gittell, the James R. Carter Professor of Management at UNH’s Whittemore School of Business and Economics, who co-authored the report with Ph.D. student Matt Magnusson.

“Home Grown” analyzes the local food system in four specific sectors: local agriculture, food manufacturing, food support services (such as food distributors), and food retailers (supermarkets and restaurants).

Among the additional key findings of “Home Grown”:

- New Hampshire’s local food system contributed 5.7 percent of the state’s \$58 billion economy.
- In relationship to overall gross state product, New Hampshire was above the U.S. average in contribution of food retailers (3.9 percent in N.H. versus 3.3 percent U.S.) and significantly below average in the contribution of local agriculture (.28 percent in N.H. versus 1.0 percent U.S. average).
- Just 30 percent of New Hampshire farms had positive net income; the lowest percentage in the region and significantly lower than U.S. average of 47 percent.
- New Hampshire boasts a high percentage of direct marketing (farmer’s markets, farm stands, pick your own), which accounts for 12 percent of NH food sales, compared to just .5 percent nationally.

In addition to establishing a target for local food production based on GSP, “Home Grown” recommends forming a state food council to develop strategies and inform public policy based on this analysis.

“Good first steps would be to evaluate why New Hampshire farms have the lowest profitability in the region and also explore ways to expand food processing and manufacturing in the state,” says Gittell. “These steps could help strengthen the local agriculture sector, which could help promote expansion of land in farms and preservation of the N.H. landscape and further increase the contribution of local agriculture to the state economy.”

The complete report, available at the Food Solutions New England Web site (www.foodsolutionsne.org/), will be discussed at the Home Grown Forum Friday, June 4, 2010, 1 – 3 p.m. at the NH Department of Agriculture.

	
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"This report presents one way to answer a fundamental question: What is the value of local, healthy food, and the food system that supports them?" says Joanne Burke, a faculty fellow with the UNH Office of Sustainability and assistant professor of nutrition. "Home Grown is one example of how Food Solutions New England works collaboratively across all stages of the food supply chain to significantly improve long-term food security and sustainability within a generation."

Food Solutions New England (FSNE) is a UNH-based initiative designed to promote food systems that support sustainable farm and food enterprises and sound nutrition in New England communities. FSNE promotes comprehensive, systemic approaches linking farm, food, nutrition, and social justice issues using analysis and visualization to help improve the integrity and viability of the regional food system. Learn more at www.foodsolutionsne.org.

Funding for "Home Grown" was provided by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food, and the University of New Hampshire Office of Sustainability.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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Download the report: http://www.foodsolutionsne.org/Resources/reports-and-publications/HomeGrownReport_final.pdf

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