

# Northeast Food Systems Forum Survey Summary

November 29, 2011

## Responses:

- Respondents Invited: 59
- Total Respondents Completed: 19 (32.2%)
- Partial Completes: 8 (13.6%)

## Institutional Affiliation of Respondents:

• University of Delaware	2 (10%)
• University of the District of Columbia	1 (5%)
• University of Maine	2 (10%)
• University of Maryland	4 (19%)
• University of New Hampshire	1 (5%)
• Penn State University	2 (10%)
• Rutgers University	2 (10%)
• University of Vermont	3 (14%)
• West Virginia University	4 (19%)
TOTAL	21

**Do you plan to attend the forum?** Yes: 14 (61%) No: 9 (39%)

## In which specific area will you apply your efforts for developing this multi-state research proposal?

• Local food systems and sustainability	18 (82%)
• Ethnic and other niche markets	8 (36%)
• Good Agricultural/Aquacultural Practices (GAPs)	8 (36%)
• Global food security	6 (27%)
• Human nutrition and obesity prevention	5 (23%)
• Other*	10 (45%)

\* Food safety was mentioned 3 times

## What Northeast work in Food Systems is currently underway, both in Extension and Research, that could serve as the jumping off point for further resource development?

- Ethnic and Specialty Crops Program
- Sustainability of local food supply chains

- GAP training material development
- New England food system charter
- Food business workshops
- Center for Food Safety and Security Systems
- Pest management needs of "less-conventional" growers
- Food Policy development
- Supporting farm market and direct marketing channels
- Development of beginning farmer programs
- Support for value added processing of local foods
- Development and testing of educational materials for increasing understanding of a healthy food system
- Mid-Atlantic Food Systems Analysis
- Ethnic Crop Production and Market Analysis
- Youth Farmstands
- School-based Interventions
- Community Gardening
- Farm To School
- Consumer preferences for locally-, regionally- produced foods
- Center for Food Entrepreneurship
- NIFA funded NIFA Global Food Security project

**What, if any, are the successful pilot programs that could be expanded regionally if additional resources were allocated for that expansion?**

- Ethnic crop production and marketing networks
- Performance of agritourism enterprises
- Entrepreneurial agribusiness enterprises and local food supply chains
- Farm to School Programs
- Food business workshops
- Local produce auctions
- High Tunnels and greenhouse production
- Market Ready workshop
- GAPs program for small-scale diversified farms
- Resources to new farmers through on-line opportunities

**What are the Food Systems Research gaps in the Northeast Region that need to be addressed?**

- Nutritional values of the ethnic food crops

- Enterprise competitiveness and sustainability
- Role of technological innovations in agribusiness performance
- Production systems/storage of fruits and vegetables to match school year
- Barriers to farm to institution sales
- Suburban food production potential
- Expand markets
- Expand / improve distribution systems
- Make farm land accessible to people
- Get people to value local foods, support more farmers markets, CSAs, devote time money on quality food
- More SNAP \$'s into local food consumption
- Effective marketing plans
- Safety of organic versus conventional fresh produce
- Effectiveness of GAPs in reducing contamination by enteropathogens on farms and on produce
- Vegetable and fruit production information for producers with small acreages
- Understanding of small farm value added processing to the new science/regulations regarding food safety
- Connection between local foods, availability of foods to low income populations and factors that deter food availability
- Organic pest control
- Links between ethnic crop growers and ethnic community markets need to be identified
- Farm to School and School Wellness
- Milling and processing for locally grown grains
- Local foods, food safety, basic food science and food processing principles, food laws, allergens and its reactions, and labeling regulations
- Safety of produce after flooding
- Economic viability of food hubs and chains and their role in building northeast food systems
- Impacts of Farm-to-School on child nutrition as well as farmers' bottom line

**What are the Food Systems Extension gaps in the Northeast Region that need to be addressed?**

- Pest management
- Enterprise competitiveness and sustainability
- Role of technological innovations in the performance of small and medium scale agribusiness enterprises

- Training suburban growers
- Education on the value of quality food; how to: grow food, can food, glean food, share food, appreciate food, improve health - all tied to the food system; understand and participate in food policy change
- Education on food safety, GAP, quantity production
- Help new and established farmers understand the challenges and opportunities in food production and marketing in the Northeast
- Support needed to obtain special needs labels for crop protection products
- Lack of expertise in livestock; help farmers transition to grazing and pasture management
- Ethnic/specialty crop production and market opportunities
- Healthier food (grown locally) for our school, helping local farmers get connected with local schools, and teaching students and families in school about local food systems, gardening and nutrition/wellness
- Market development
- Basic food science, food processing, food safety issues, GAPs, food allergens and labeling
- Incorporating the nutrition/consumer perspective
- Addressing food security at the community level

**Please identify any other gaps in the Northeast Region related to Food Systems**

- Analysis of the factors affecting the development and implementation of traceability in local and regional food supply chains
- Get healthy foods to limited resource families, while still helping producers be economically successful
- Farmers in rural areas being able to provide foods to people in urban areas
- Accessibility to value-added kitchens
- Understand the elements of a healthy food system and develop resources to address health problems such as obesity and it's correlates (Type 2 diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease) associated with an unhealthy food system
- Regulatory constraints and lack of knowledge
- Limited number of choices of service providers in some parts of the region
- Complete and thorough analysis of contributions of varying sized farms in order to prioritize where to put research and extension resources
- GAPs and food safety training

**What are some of the unique strengths and assets in the Northeast Region related to the Food System?**

- Fast growing immigrant population
- Value-added agriculture
- Rural economy with a potential for growth
- Ideal for analyzing sustainability issues for emerging agribusinesses
- Proximity to market
- Land and water
- Climate change may bring some benefits to us
- Interested people in farming
- Interesting food history
- Public interest in purchasing local foods
- Farmers interest in selling through direct markets
- Close proximity to FDA, USDA, specialty crop production
- Small scale farming
- Extension already works very closely and across states
- High average family income
- Diverse populations with cultural roots (indigenous foodways) that favor consumption of plentiful fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grain
- Culture of backyard food production which provides a knowledge base
- Culture of independence and entrepreneurship plus an appreciation for fresh home cooked food
- Diversity of farm type and seasonal crop production capabilities allowing almost full spectrum of foods to be produced nearly year round in the region
- Experience and innovative capabilities of region's farmers
- Land grant universities, their professionals, web information, and their extension workshops

**What are some of the unique opportunities in the Northeast Region related to the Food System?**

- High value crops
- Entrepreneurship opportunities for small farmers and local agribusiness industry
- Development and implementation of strategies for the revitalization of rural America
- Ethnic production
- Land and water
- Great market within a day's drive
- Climate change may bring some benefits to us

- Interested people in farming
- Interesting food history
- Close proximity to FDA, USDA
- More sales of locally produced foods
- Regional expertise in food production (fruits and vegetables)
- Strong expertise in communicating science based nutrition and chronic disease prevention related education to low income/diverse populations
- Pockets of food enthusiasts provide a good testing ground for new food items and products that might be expensive at first
- Diversity of market
- Seasonality
- Food desserts
- Synergizing land-use changes (Marcellus shale gas pads) and resource availability (natural gas) with year round production of high value specialty crops in greenhouses
- Alternative distribution models due to wealth and, in some areas, dense populations
- Opportunity to develop a model for the rest of the country (and the world) on growing food crops on smaller parcels of land that may not be perfectly suited for agriculture

**What organizations/agencies do you see as potential funders of joint Extension and Research proposals focused on the Northeast Region Food System? (Please specify those that apply to this type of initiative.)**

- |                                                                    |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| • USDA CAP                                                         | 14 (82%) |
| • Other Federal Agencies                                           | 11 (65%) |
| • Foundations                                                      | 12 (71%) |
| • State government Agencies                                        | 8 (47%)  |
| • Other (please specify)                                           | 3 (18%)  |
| ○ NSF                                                              |          |
| ○ SCRI                                                             |          |
| ○ SPECIALITY CROPS GRANTS FROM STATES (PASS THROUGH FEDERAL MONEY) |          |

**What do you believe are the barriers to success in garnering new resources for the Northeast Region Food System?**

- Poor collaboration among research scholars and institutions
- Small farm bias
- Time to write grants; many proposals are submitted, but few have received the investment of time necessary to be of the highest quality

- Availability of funding
- The pressures on the regional economy, Schools of Agriculture and Extension programs
- Misguided priorities and/or preconceived misunderstanding of the problems by funding agencies (too much emphasis on small/new farm programs, or defining sustainable as organic/environmental only).
- Effectively linking with existing projects
- We need "small," targeted projects that move the system toward a larger vision. In this case, "small" could still mean many people or lots of money
- Institutions/individuals with differing philosophies
- Are we talking small, niche operations or larger commercial operations or both
- Cooperative venture in food systems is lacking in Northeast
- Need to work together to show an impact of any money invested

**We are interested in your suggestions for potential keynote speakers. Please list up to three people and their affiliated organization or agency.**

- Vera Bitsch, Michigan State University
- Dan Shelton – USDA
- Ed Kee, Secretary of the Delaware Department of Agriculture, Retired Vegetable Specialist from UDEL
- Anne Palmer, JHU, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for a Livable Future
- Jim Prevor, Produce Business Magazine, NYC
- Stephan Goetz, PSU
- Ed Kee, Secretary of Agriculture for Delaware
- Jeff Tucker, General Manager, Oceana Foods, Inc.
- Dave Weatherspoon, Michigan State University
- Pat Millner, USDA
- Richard Bogard, President, Cherry Central Cooperative, Inc
- Carl Eicher, Michigan State University
- Steve Eiseler, Vice President, Cherry Central Cooperative, Inc.

**We want to provide beneficial breakout session topics. Please tell us your top three suggestions for breakout session topics.**

- Agribusiness competitiveness and sustainability
- Farm to School; more local foods in schools: challenges, opportunities, model programs and R&D Needs
- Extension program opportunities in food systems; identifying unique opportunities/needs within the NE food system that we're missing

- Food safety
- Strengthening production/pest management for growers new to production or with special needs for research and extension
- What does "food systems" mean and why is it important
- Food systems, food insecurity and developing a vision for a healthy food system
- Production challenges and opportunities for non-traditional growing areas (urban areas, disturbed land)
- Food systems research
- Issues from the consumer's perspective -- cost of food, safety of food, nutrition (obesity)
- Food security proposals
- Technological innovations in local food and agribusiness value chains
- Urban farming
- How can a food system approach benefit agricultural producers and the community
- Creating a Food System outreach system that connects producers to ALL consumers, making sustainable production complimentary to food security (and vice versa) in order to raise the economic viability and opportunity for all
- Marketing local foods to consumers: how to develop "seasonal eaters"
- Marketing of specialty crops - how to help expand the potential buyers for growers
- Entrepreneurial local food supply chains- Value-added agriculture, wineries, and agritourism
- Agricultural production issues - organic vs. nonorganic, rules and regulations (nutrient management and GAP/GHP)
- Value chain proposals

**What do you believe would be beneficial follow-up activities to the Forum?**

- Establishing academic teams to research on a common focal research theme
- Development of multi-state joint research/extension grant proposals
- Do something with the Northeast ASA regional meeting in the summer
- Northeast state Extensions would get funding to provide programs to new and established farmers to understand the opportunities and challenges to producing and marketing food in the northeast
- Summary of findings including concepts presented, opportunities and resources identified, and list of participants
- Communication via connect or some other mechanism by which there is discussion/communication of the next steps and what was the outcome of the forum
- Participants in the forum recruit key individuals from their institutions to develop modules of a regional food system grant proposal
- Better understanding of each institution's interests, strengths, etc.