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Iowa's Local Food Systems: A Place to Grow Report Shows Iowa Can Benefit if Iowans Buy Locally

IOWA CITY, Iowa (Feb. 6, 2007) – Iowans can boost their economy by producing more food to sell locally, a new report shows.

“Iowa’s leaders need to implement policies that encourage profitable local food systems,” said Teresa Galluzzo, co-author of the report and a research associate for the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project. “Research shows the state’s economy would benefit.”

Galluzzo and Laura Krouse, a Cornell College biology instructor, examined the potential for local food systems in Iowa and their impacts, and how policy makers could encourage this developing industry.

They cited a recent study by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture that projected the impact if Iowans met 25 percent of their demand for 37 different fruits and vegetables with products grown in Iowa. The study found the net value added to the state’s economy would be almost \$140 million in sales, \$54 million in workers’ income and over 2,000 jobs.

“Not only are there benefits specifically for Iowa farmers, there are environmental, health, social and security benefits for all Iowans,” said Krouse, who surveyed many Iowa local food producers and consumers.

“The primary recommendation I heard again and again is that Iowa needs to increase financing for local producers through small targeted loans and cost share for beginning farmers as well as farmers transitioning to local production,” Krouse said.

She said it is vital for the state to “increase the market access for local producers by helping to establish marketing networks and fostering links between producers and distributors.”

Other recommendations include:

- Support for programs that provide technical assistance to producers;
- Grants for processing infrastructure throughout the state; and
- Making local food systems a state priority through measures such as purchase preferences and developing an “Iowa Grown” label.

“Strong local food systems can make Iowa a better state. Policymakers at all levels from school board officials to state legislators can get started by recalling the previous state slogan, ‘A Place to Grow,’ and making it apply to the food Iowans eat,” Galluzzo said.

Krouse added the state would particularly benefit from policies that target help to “young farmers and farmers with middle-sized operations that are being squeezed by globalization and market consolidation.”

The full report is available at www.iowapolicyproject.org.

The Iowa Policy Project (IPP) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy research and analysis organization based in Mount Vernon. IPP reports cover a broad range of topics, most in the areas of economic opportunity, energy and the environment, and tax and budget issues.

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