

## LET'S DOUBLE LOCAL!

By Margaret Christie and Phil Korman, CISA

**C**ommunity Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) has been working to strengthen farms and engage the community in building the local food economy since 1993. Over the next 20 years, CISA's goal is to double the amount of locally grown food in the diets of Pioneer Valley residents, making local ingredients a full quarter of what we eat in communities across the Valley. A healthy agricultural economy is part of the solution to many national challenges—from shrinking oil reserves and a changing climate to increasing diet-related health problems.

As residents of the Pioneer Valley, we're especially invested in the success of local food businesses right here, but we will also benefit from a healthy regional agricultural economy. By trading with our neighbors in Vermont, Maine, and New York, for example, we can fill gaps, make good use of varied land and climate resources, and feed both urban and rural residents.

What's it take to produce, process, market, distribute, and sell more locally and regionally grown food?

**DIETARY CHANGES.** Eating more local food doesn't require eschewing treats from far away altogether. But we'll increase our self-reliance, and bolster our local economy, if we eat more seasonally. We can feed more people on our land base if we eat less meat.

**MORE FARMS, AND EXPANDED FARMS.** New farmers need support, training, and financing. Most importantly, they need access to affordable land. Farmland protection and affordability strategies are critical and, over time and across New England, some land that is now fallow or forested could be converted to agricultural use.

**FARM LABOR.** Our current cheap food system is underwritten, in part, by underpaid workers. At the same time, many farmers struggle to make a living and to find willing, skilled, and reliable workers.

**APPROPRIATE FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS.** All food carries risks, but our industrial food system has magnified them. Governmental responses should prioritize real risks and recognize solutions appropriate to the size and types of farm operations prevalent here in New England.

**INFRASTRUCTURE.** Aggregation, distribution, and processing are important for bringing local food to all of the many places where people shop—including schools, hospitals, restaurants, and convenience stores. When these services aren't in place—or were designed to serve global markets instead of the local market—farms and local foods businesses need to replace or work around the current system, often adding inefficiency and expense.

**BUSINESSES THAT PRIORITIZE LOCAL SOURCING.** These businesses can also provide the technical assistance, financing, and enthusiastic customer base they need to make it work.

*Tips for digging in to double the amount of local food in our diets!*

### TAKE ACTION WITH YOUR FAMILY

- ✓ Buy more local food.
- ✓ Cook more and use the freshest ingredients—grown by local farmers.
- ✓ Share your love of local food with friends and neighbors.
- ✓ Eat more seasonally and plan for winter.

### TAKE ACTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Think about all the roles and “hats” you wear in your daily life such as cook, shopper, volunteer, neighbor, parent, worker and citizen.

### YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- ✓ Invite others to your house for a local-foods potluck.
- ✓ Share gardening tips, tools and harvests with neighbors.

### YOUR SCHOOLS

- ✓ Help your school start a garden and make it a part of the school curriculum.
- ✓ Advocate for more buying from local farms by the school cafeteria.

### YOUR WORKPLACE

- ✓ Encourage the business to offer payroll deduction for a CSA farm share.
- ✓ Ask if your health insurance plan could cover part of the cost of a CSA farm share, as it does for a gym membership.
- ✓ Request more local food in your work cafeteria.
- ✓ Buy local food for work meetings and events.

### YOUR LOCAL ECONOMY

- ✓ Shop and invest locally, whether it is a food co-op or other food-related business that is committed to sourcing locally.

### YOUR DEMOCRACY

- ✓ Educate yourself at [BuyLocalFood.org](http://BuyLocalFood.org) and take action on state and national issues that affect your local farmers.
- ✓ Ask questions of candidates for public office about how they will help us double the amount of local food in our diets.
- ✓ Vote!

**CREATIVE FINANCING.** A commitment to local sourcing can add business expenses or require business activities that conventional businesses don't need to take on. Innovative financing strategies can help businesses achieve profitability while meeting these challenges.

**POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND BUSINESSES** ensuring all residents have access to local food. Expanding access to local food regardless of income or geography will increase the market base for farmers while recognizing everyone's right to good food.

**AN ENTHUSIASTIC AND COMMITTED PUBLIC.** That's you! Consumer demand is the biggest driver of buyer interest in local sourcing and community action can change our current food system. See the sidebar for ideas to implement in your own life.

Here in the Pioneer Valley, farmers and their customers have created a renaissance in our local food economy, one that promises long-term benefits to our health, our environment, and our communities. Food provides us with one route to recapturing our role as creators of our own communities, stewards of our land, and protectors of our family's health and well-being. Each of us may use different tools in our effort to achieve these goals—a trowel, a tractor, a dinner invitation, business plan, or town zoning bylaw. Pick up the tool that fits you the best and get your hands "dirty" to Double Local! 🌱

Learn more about CISA's efforts to Double Local at [BuyLocalFood.org](http://BuyLocalFood.org).

**Margaret Christie, Special Projects Director**

*Margaret served as CISA's executive director from 1997 to 1999, when the Local Hero program was launched, and interim director in 2008. She is instrumental in new project development at CISA and is now focused on infrastructure, financing, and support for food system businesses. Margaret grows food for her family in Whately and holds a master's degree in rural sociology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.*

**Philip Korman, Executive Director**

*Phil has led CISA since 2008 in its mission to strengthen farms and engage the community in building the local food economy. He has over 25 years' experience in management and raising resources at nonprofits. Phil grows only garlic for his family in Florence and holds a master's degree in public health from the University of California at Berkeley.*

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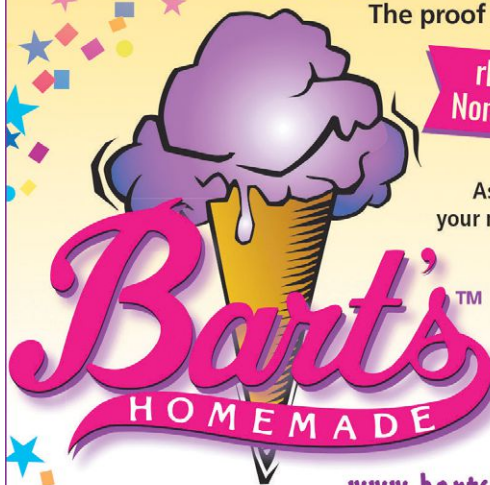
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