



the wisconsin foodshed

Hunger in Milwaukee

Improving poor people's access to nutritious, affordable food

The number of people living in poverty in Milwaukee increased 57 percent from 1970 to 1990 and it's more difficult than ever to purchase a full market basket of food in Milwaukee's poorest neighborhoods. Those are the findings of a report by the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee. Its 1997 report, *Hunger in Milwaukee, Some Food for Thought*, also contains recommendations for a grassroots effort to increase poor people's access to a variety of affordable food.

The Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee (HTFM) is an innovator among anti-hunger organizations in its effort to develop ways to eliminate the roots of hunger: poverty and poor access to affordable, nutritious food. HTFM is in the midst of a five-year Food System Campaign to initiate basic changes within the food system serving Milwaukee's low-income residents. The campaign couples important research with action projects that promote economic development and community food security, rather than continuing to rely solely on so-called "emergency" responses such as food pantries and soup kitchens.

The Food System Campaign will investigate the development of a year-round public marketplace and a kitchen incubator. Kitchen incubators provide equipment and space (and sometimes business development and marketing assistance) for food processing and preparation start-up businesses at low cost. Project coordinators hope that an incubator and public market will spur entrepreneurship and job creation while improving access to affordable, nutritious food in low-income areas.

A UW-Milwaukee urban planning workshop will soon publish a preliminary analysis



of the potential for and location of a public market. The campaign will then issue a request for proposals for a feasibility study and business plan for the public market and kitchen incubator.

The first year of the food system campaign involved a Food System Assessment study which mapped the location of emergency, supplemental, and non-emergency food programs in relation to poor, inner-city areas. Phase one of the study revealed that poverty from 1970 to 1990 in Milwaukee has increased in a concentrated area of the city. The number of people living below the poverty level in the city has increased from 94,000 in 1970 to 148,000 in 1990. The geographic distribution of food pantries, child summer food service programs, and stores accepting food stamps matches the distribution of people living in poverty. However, these same areas lack community gardens, farmers' markets, and meal programs, and have a declining number of large grocery stores.

The declining number of grocery stores has a significant impact on poor people. Phase two of the assessment examined the price, availability, and quality of more than 50 food items. Nutritionists selected a model market basket of groceries that would feed a family of two adults and two children for a week. In general, the stores located within the poorest

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Got a dish to pass?

the wisconsin foodshed helps those working to create more sustainable, just, and local food systems to learn from and network with each other—primarily in Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest.

Although published by the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW-Madison, our vision is that it will be a place for food systems researchers, practitioners, activists, organizations, and eaters to share news, information, and activities. Which brings us to your part in the feast.

We invite you and your food systems colleagues to contribute articles, news stories, event announcements, and research or project updates to *the wisconsin foodshed*.

Please contact us if you have an item you'd like to submit (contact information is on the second page).

What's for Lunch?

news about the food system

Area farmers invade UW dining halls!

Students eating in residence and dining halls at the UW-Madison were treated to a "home-grown Wisconsin" meal October 23, 1997. The meal featured local, organic vegetables, dairy products, hamburgers, and more. Local suppliers include Home Grown Wisconsin (featured in *the wisconsin foodshed*, issue 1, February, 1997) and the Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool, in southwestern Wisconsin. Home Grown Wisconsin provided potatoes, carrots, beets, squash, salad greens, and onions. CROPP, which markets under the label "Organic Valley," supplied hamburger, tenderloin and dairy products.

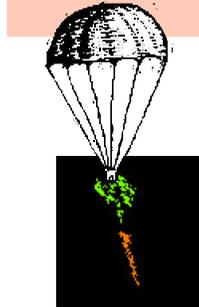
The special meal is in part a response by the UW-Madison Food Service Office to student requests for organic food. The Food Service Office made a commitment to purchase food from local farmers following a very positive learning experience during a national conference at UW-Madison in June, 1997. The Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, a co-host for the 1997 Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Conference, organized a special meal that brought together local growers, local chefs, and UW food service staff to create a regional-seasonal picnic. Local chefs used local, in-season foods. The picnic provided an opportunity for the dining hall staff to learn about the high quality of local produce, meats, and dairy products and for relationships to be made between farmers and University food buyers.

At the October 23 meal, the Center worked with the dining halls to help educate students about organic farming and local food systems while they enjoyed the locally-grown meal. Students tested their "sustainable agriculture I.Q.," had questions answered at staffed information tables, and were encouraged to pick up a "Power Eater's Guide to Organic and Sustainable Food." The Power Eater's Guide told students where they can find local, organic food in Madison, introduced a variety of food and agricultural issues, and listed local organizations to contact for more information.

The meal was served at all four UW-Madison dining halls to approximately 6,000 students. It featured the following items: roast tenderloin, grilled potato wedges and onion, cheeseburgers,

vegetable stew, pasta with spaghetti sauce, buttered beets, winter squash, cheesecake, and cream puffs.

For more information about the meal, please contact John Hendrickson at (608) 265-3704 or send a message to: jhendric@facstaff.wisc.edu A future issue of *the wisconsin foodshed* will provide more details about the event, including information on how much food was purchased and its dollar value for the local economy, and what plans the University has for using local, organic products in the future.



Sustainable food systems conference

The 7th Annual Urban-Rural Conference: Reclaiming the Sacred in Farming and Food, will be held November 22-23, 1997, at St. Peter's School in East Troy, WI. Keynote speakers will include John Ikerd, agricultural economist and state co-coordinator of extension programs in sustainable agriculture at the University of Missouri, who will speak on "Valuing the Spiritual Dimension of Sustainable Agriculture," and Odessa Piper, founder and chef at L'Etoile Restaurant in Madison, whose talk is entitled "Fruits, Vegetables, and Trace Miracles."

The conference, sponsored by Michael Fields Agricultural Institute and other supporting organizations, provides a forum for information exchange, a seedbed where constructive, creative solutions can take root and an event where people can celebrate food, farmers and the land.

Workshop sessions will explore topics such as the institutional use of local foods, the heritage of corn, local farm enterprise development, religion and the land, the power of direct purchasing from farmers, creating a conscious economy, and food as a pathway to community economic development.

There will be a Saturday evening banquet and dancing with Piper Road Spring Band and a Sunday brunch provided by area chefs in partnership with their farmers—truly a gourmet's delight.

For more information or to receive a registration brochure contact MFAI at (414) 642-3303 or send a message to: mfai@igc.apc.org



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More News from Field to Table

Wisconsin fair trade initiative records first success

Grocery store shoppers in Madison, organized by the advocacy group Consumers for Fair Trade, have recently run a successful campaign convincing local grocery stores to stock bulk Equal Exchange brand coffee—a “fair trade” product supporting small-scale organic producers in Central America.

“Fair trade” is the term applied to goods that meet internationally established criteria. In the case of coffee, fair trade means buying direct from small farmer cooperatives, paying a fair price (often above the current market price), providing access for farmers to pre-harvest credit, committing to long-term partnerships, and encouraging sustainable agriculture.

Two large supermarket chains—Woodman's in Kenosha and Madison and Copps in Madison—agreed to stock the coffee which is also available at several local co-ops and natural food stores. Over 500 shoppers let store managers know they wanted the opportunity to help small farmers by buying fair trade coffee.

Campaign organizers emphasize that this effort demonstrates consumer power in the food system,

particularly if they follow through and buy the products they requested. They urge all consumers to think about the values they want to promote through the foods they buy and to ask retailers for fair trade products. For more information, call Virginia Berman at (608) 251-9280.

Grown in the U.S.A.

The Imported Produce Labeling Act (HR 1232) has been introduced in Congress. It calls for mandatory country-of-origin labels on fresh produce sold in U.S. grocery stores. Sponsors say the bill is a “common sense way to provide consumers with basic information about the produce they may want to purchase.” A coalition of supermarket owners who oppose the bill argue the initiative is veiled protectionism and an effort to restrict imported produce.

U.S. fruit and vegetable growers are wary of foreign competition. Tomato growers are particularly concerned, citing increases in market share achieved by Mexican suppliers as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement. U.S.

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Gleanings readings on the food system

Fertile Ground: Planning for the Madison/Dane County Food System

Prepared by a UW-Madison Department of Urban and Regional Planning workshop (featured in *the wisconsin foodshed*, volume 1, issue 2, June, 1997), this report presents student research projects on the Madison food system, including the economic impact of food system employment, the environmental impacts of food and agriculture, and the potential for a Madison/Dane County Food Policy Council. Copies of the report are \$10; executive summaries are free. Call (608) 262-1004 to order.

Global Population and the Nitrogen Cycle by Vaclav Smil

This article presents a concise history of humanity's “profound chemical dependence” on synthetic ammonia-based fertilizers. Although numerous advances in agricultural practices have led to the exponential growth of the world's population, human society now depends on ammonia synthesis from fossil fuels to provide the nitrogen necessary for food production. Smil explains the consequences of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer use and the potential problems and conflicts that could arise as petroleum resources become scarcer and more expensive. Plant-based diets, stabilization of world population, and organic agriculture are suggested as ways to reduce nitrogen needs. Smil's article appears in the July, 1997, issue of *Scientific American*.

Farming on the Edge

The American Farmland Trust's study on the loss of high quality farmland to scattered and fragmented suburban development identifies the most threatened farmland in the country, including major portions of southern and central Wisconsin. To receive the complete printed report, call (800) 370-4879. Cost is \$15. Visit the World Wide Web site <http://www.farmland.org> to see the report, including maps of threatened ag land.

Can We Raise Grain Yields Fast Enough? by Lester Brown

The July/August, 1997, edition of *WorldWatch Magazine* includes a disturbing yet well-documented look at the potential for global grain demand to outstrip supplies in the near future. Demand for grain—caused by exponential population growth and rising incomes (which increases demand for grain-intensive products such as meat, milk, and beer)—has been met up to this point by tripling and, in some cases, quadrupling grain yields. However, historic trends in rising yields appear to be leveling off as scientists face what may be biological limits to increasing the productivity of grains such as rice, wheat, and corn.



More news

from page three

trade organizations such as the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association maintain that country-of-origin labeling is about consumer choice, not trade barriers.

The bill is being promoted as good trade policy based on the fact that it will harmonize labeling practices of the U.S. and its major trading partners—most of whom already require country-of-origin labels on imported produce.

—Adapted from LABELS: Linking Consumers and Producers, Vol. 1, No. 2, July 22, 1997.

Table Settings

g 30 percent of the businesses in Dane County are food related, accounting for 15 percent of total county employment.

g Milk sold in Madison is shipped an average of 180 miles and cheddar cheese 210 miles. Strawberry yogurt, including shipment of the fruit, has traveled a cumulative 2,330 miles.

g There are over 50 food pantries, free meal sites, and soup kitchens in Madison.

—Source: "Fertile Ground: Planning for the Madison/Dane County Food System," by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, UW-Madison, 1997

Hunger Task Force

from page one

neighborhoods had fewer products and higher prices than those elsewhere in the city. Inner city areas are served mainly by smaller stores rather than supermarkets. The bottom line: it's more difficult—and more costly—to purchase a full, nutritious market basket in the inner city. The sampling of foods used in this study cost 24 percent more in the smallest stores than in the largest ones.

What can be done to improve access to affordable, healthy food? The assessment study recommendations included:

g Develop farmers markets and public markets in poor neighborhoods.

g Identify vacant city lots to be used for community gardens.

g Establish a food-buying cooperative composed of small inner city convenience stores so that they might enjoy volume price discounts, like those that wholesalers offer large supermarkets.

g Establish a microcredit loan program for low-income individuals to help them start food-related businesses.

g Provide incentives to lure supermarkets to target areas.

For more information about the Food System Campaign, the assessment study, or other HTFM projects, contact Mike Salinas or Tim Locke at (414) 962-3111, extension 116. —contributed by Tim Locke

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