



San Francisco Foodshed Project

Summary

American Farmland Trust has received a grant from the San Francisco Foundation to conduct a feasibility study of the potential of the City of San Francisco to feed itself well and healthily with a minimal impact on the local, regional and global environment by increasing the share of its food consumption produced by sustainable farming methods within the Bay Area itself and the immediately surrounding agricultural areas, including the 15



counties within 100 miles of the Golden Gate. The study will examine the current amount and sources of food consumed in the city; the potential of the surrounding area to supply additional high-quality, healthy food to the city; current and possible systems for encouraging the production and purchase of more local food by people and institutions, and for assuring that low income consumers can afford it; and the potential conservation of natural resources and energy from greater local food consumption and production. The project is expected to begin in the summer of 2007 and take one year.

Background

The San Francisco Bay Area is one of the world's greatest metropolitan centers of commerce and culture. It is distinguished by its environmental ethic and social conscience, as well as by its reputation for living life to the fullest. And, perhaps like no other city on Earth, it is surrounded by unique agricultural lands that, with their Mediterranean climate, are capable of producing nearly every kind of food consumed and enjoyed in the Bay Area. But these agricultural lands are threatened by expansion of the population attracted to Northern California by the Bay Area's economic and cultural advantages, as well as by economic forces that make local farmers vulnerable to a global market they cannot control.

At the same time, the Bay Area does not appear to be taking full advantage of local food production capacity, instead relying, like cities everywhere in the U.S., on distant sources of food – on average, food travels 1,300 miles from farm to table in the U.S. -- produced mainly by industrial farms. As Michael Pollan has noted in his book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, even as we as a well-to-do society have more food choices than ever before, they are based on a system that is increasingly unsustainable and subject to disruption because of its external costs in terms of health problems, environmental impact and energy consumption. By relying on a long food supply chain, instead of drawing sustenance from local farms, the Bay Area is missing a tremendous opportunity

to reduce the costs associated with its dietary demands, even as the threat to local farms and farmland makes this option more problematic with each passing day.

Local farmers have become dependent on practices and markets that leave them vulnerable to economic stresses that could hasten their exit from agriculture -- and the sale of their lands for urban development. The heavy use of pesticides and other chemicals has necessitated regulation that, along with the increasing cost of these fossil-based inputs, contributes to ever-thinner farm profit margins. And the globalization of agricultural marketing, while creating opportunities for some farmers, leaves many vulnerable to foreign competitors whose costs of production are lower because of cheap labor and lax environmental and health regulations. So local farmers, too, could benefit greatly from expanded local markets that demand healthy food produced with sustainable methods that will pay a premium for quality and their reduced social cost.



The potential solution for both consumers and producers is for the Bay Area to eat more food grown on local farms, say, within 100 miles of the Golden Gate Bridge. As the San Francisco Sustainability Plan notes, "Using locally grown, organic food instead of shipping over long distances food grown with pesticides and chemical fertilizers will have a major impact on the country's energy budget (the energy used to transport food), regional water quality and wildlife preservation, regional land use, and last (but not least) public health."

How large are the potential demand for and supply of local food? What are the obstacles to fully exploiting this potential? And how can these be overcome to maximize the potential? The feasibility study we propose will seek to answer these questions and, as a quick investigation confirms, we expect that it will illuminate a clear path toward food self-sufficiency in the greater Bay Area.

The ability of the agricultural areas immediately surrounding the Bay Area to supply food to its growing population appears to be enormous. During its tumultuous Gold Rush days, the mushrooming population of San Francisco was fed almost entirely from sources in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, one of the first regions of California opened to large-scale agriculture. The fertile Santa Clara Valley, once known as the "Valley of Heart's Delight" because of the beauty of its extensive orchards, has been largely overwhelmed by high-tech industry, but contains important remnants of active agriculture. A bit farther south, the Salinas Valley, originally the Bay Area's milk shed (from whence came Monterey Jack cheese), remains one of the world's premier areas for growing salad greens, artichokes and other produce. To the north, the Sonoma Valley was once better known for its poultry than for viticulture and the great diversity of crops it now produces. Throughout the region, from the earliest days cattle roamed the hillside grasslands, providing, as they still do today in Marin County, dairy and meat products for the region's consumers.



Bay Area institutions already recognize the desirability of local food self-sufficiency and have begun to tap into the supply provided by farms in the region. For example, the City of San Francisco's 1997 Sustainability Plan established a 5-year goal of meeting 25% of institutional (schools, restaurants, government agencies, etc.) food demand from regional sources. Groups like the Center for Urban Education About Sustainable Agriculture (which runs the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market), Slow Food San Francisco (and 15 other Bay Area chapters), the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (Buy Fresh, Buy Local program), San Francisco Food Systems (farm-to-school program) and the Bay Area Food Banks (supplying 75 million pounds of food annually to low-income residents) are actively connecting local producers and consumers in the region. Conservation groups like the Marin Agricultural Land Trust and the Greenbelt Alliance are not only preserving farmland in the region, but also promoting economically viable agriculture through local, value-added marketing.

Despite this activity and its promise, it is not at all clear how much of the Bay Area's food needs are currently being met from local sources, let alone their potential to reach self-sufficiency. This is the gap AFT will seek to fill by partnering with other institutions (including those named above) to explore these issues and recommend a course of action to maximize the potential. And we are encouraged by the fact that our preliminary investigation suggests that we do not have to start from scratch. Studies of regional food self-sufficiency potential in the Ventura and Sacramento regions, done for the Vivid Picture project of the Roots of Change Fund, provide a starting point for an approach to gathering and analyzing data on production and consumption. The Food & Agriculture strategy outlined by the San Francisco Sustainability Plan offers a good framework on which to build a more complete strategy for the entire Bay Area region. We also expect to have the support and active participation of expert/practitioners like Michael Dimock at the Roots of Change Fund, Paula Jones, director of the Food Systems Council, and Sibella Krause, whose latest venture is the Agriculture at the Metro Edge Program, housed in the Center for Global Metropolitan Studies at U.C. Berkeley.

Implications for Farmland Preservation

Though a greater reliance on sustainable produced local food will significantly benefit the immediate Bay Area, it should also reduce energy consumption and improve environmental quality over a much broader area. However, its principal benefit beyond the Bay Area could very well be improved economic viability – indeed, survivability -- of farms and ranches in a 15-county area within a 100-mile radius of the Bay, roughly from Point Arena to the Sutter Buttes to Sonora to the Salinas Valley. The agricultural areas within this



perimeter are almost all under siege from urban development. For example, in the northern San Joaquin Valley, 29,000 acres of farmland – approximately the area of the city of San Francisco -- were paved over for urban development during the 1990's, and another 23,000 acres were retired from agricultural use in anticipation of future development. During the same period, Monterey

County, which produces more than \$3 billion in farm gate value annually, lost 8,800 acres. If the value received by farmers in these areas can be increased by direct purchases from Bay Area consumers, and if San Francisco and its neighboring communities were to contribute to conservation easement programs that offer farmers an alternative to developing their land, these trends could be slowed significantly, helping to assure that they can continue to feed the Bay Area. Our study will investigate this potential as well.

Agricultural Production in Counties within 100 Miles of the Golden Gate						
County	2002 Ag Prod (x1,000)	Veg, Fruit & Nuts	Direct Sales	Farms	Cert Organic	Farms
Marin*	\$ 43,027	\$ 1,740	\$ 1,194	29	\$ 1,795	13
Merced	\$ 1,409,254	\$ 468,530	\$ 5,436	114	\$ 5,459	30
Monterey	\$ 2,190,121	\$ 1,873,084	\$ 2,345	91	\$ 9,941	26
Napa*	\$ 429,011	\$ 422,225	\$ 729	65	\$ 452	17
Sacramento	\$ 239,266	\$ 98,103	\$ 2,054	177	\$ 61	20
San Benito	\$ 197,894	\$ 114,833	\$ 484	51	\$ 5,823	36
San Joaquin	\$ 1,222,454	\$ 684,305	\$ 8,165	200	\$ 871	34
San Mateo*	\$ 173,354	\$ 13,113	\$ 491	20	\$ 35	5
Santa Clara*	\$ 208,498	\$ 64,052	\$ 1,911	102	\$ 347	5
Santa Cruz	\$ 361,901	\$ 263,638	\$ 3,556	103	\$ 2,467	33
Solano	\$ 190,839	\$ 72,408	\$ 2,510	89	\$ 1,408	19
Sonoma*	\$ 571,710	\$ 392,029	\$ 5,866	350	\$ 6,829	105
Stanislaus	\$ 1,228,607	\$ 452,414	\$ 4,920	209	\$ 4,667	36
Sutter	\$ 250,620	\$ 152,502	\$ 812	65	\$ 2,648	32
Yolo	\$ 315,462	\$ 201,419	\$ 8,309	92	\$ 3,649	29
Total	\$ 9,032,018	\$ 5,274,395	\$ 48,782	1,757	\$ 46,452	440
State total	\$ 25,737,173	\$ 13,505,761	\$ 114,356	6436	\$ 149,137	1443
Pct of state	35%	39%	43%	27%	31%	30%
* Inner counties	\$ 1,425,600	\$ 893,159	\$ 10,191	566	\$ 9,458	145
Pct of 15 cou	16%	17%	21%	32%	20%	33%

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