

Why Local Farmers and the Food They Produce Are Important

Small family farmers act as trusted producers of healthy food. They serve as the stewards of ecosystems and watersheds. Their fields help create town boundaries that discourage urban sprawl, promote sustainable development and protect farmland.

If we cannot keep small family farmers on their farms, the land will be permanently lost to housing developments, shopping malls and other urbanized uses.

Farming as practiced by small family farmers is not just managing a business or pumping out food to make a profit. Healthy farming means respecting life, allowing the earth to move toward its own balance through minimal manipulation. Unlike their corporate counterparts, family farmers strive to create and support the life forces linking farmers, soil, food and consumers.

When consumers know the farmer who raises their food, they can have confidence that the food has been grown responsibly and safely. Buying from local producers builds a sense of trust that strengthens both sides of the transaction.

Buying locally produced food also strengthens a community's economy through the multiplier effect that spreads with each purchase, benefiting the farmer, farm employees and the local store where the food was bought. Buying locally keeps more money circulating in the local economy.

When consumers buy locally grown food it helps create a more diverse and resilient local economy, insulated from the disruptions of global capital flights, currency deflations, and recessions.

Each generation of farmers uses the specific knowledge of farming gained the hard way by the preceding generation. When a family leaves its farm, all the knowledge needed to farm in that place leaves with them. And once the family has left the farm, more often than not the land is lost to farming forever. That's why we must not only save the land, but also the families who farm it.

Buying locally grown food is good for consumers because

- They know where and how their food is grown and who grows it.
- They have access to freshly harvested food, which hasn't lost its nutritional value during long distance transport.
- They can support local agriculture, protect local farmland and contribute to a healthy local economy.
- They become more aware of their own relationship to the land and the natural processes that make our food and our lives possible.

Buying locally grown food is good for farmers because

- They can grow food in harmony with nature and then sell that food to local consumers with fewer middlemen to cut into the farmer's profit.
- They know where their food goes and consequently are recognized as being vital members of the local community.
- They are relieved of the expanded marketing efforts required to sell on national or global markets and can focus on growing food.

Buying locally benefits and strengthens the community

- Through the preservation of open spaces that would otherwise be consumed by urban development.
- By bringing together those who share healthy concerns about the future.
- By boosting the local economy with food dollars rather than supporting out-of-state corporations.

For more information, contact CAFF at (530) 756-8518 or caff@caff.org.

