

Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Food System Planning Project



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What Is a Food System?

- A collaborative network that includes everyone involved in putting food on our tables
- Integrates:
 - Food production
 - Processing
 - Distribution
 - Consumption
 - Waste management
- A sustainable food system enhances the environmental, economic and social health of the region

Local Food Markets

Direct-to-consumer: Transactions are conducted directly between farmers and consumers



Madison
EATS
Local Food Club



Local Food Markets

Direct-to-retail/foodservice: Direct sales by farmers to restaurants, retail stores, and institutions





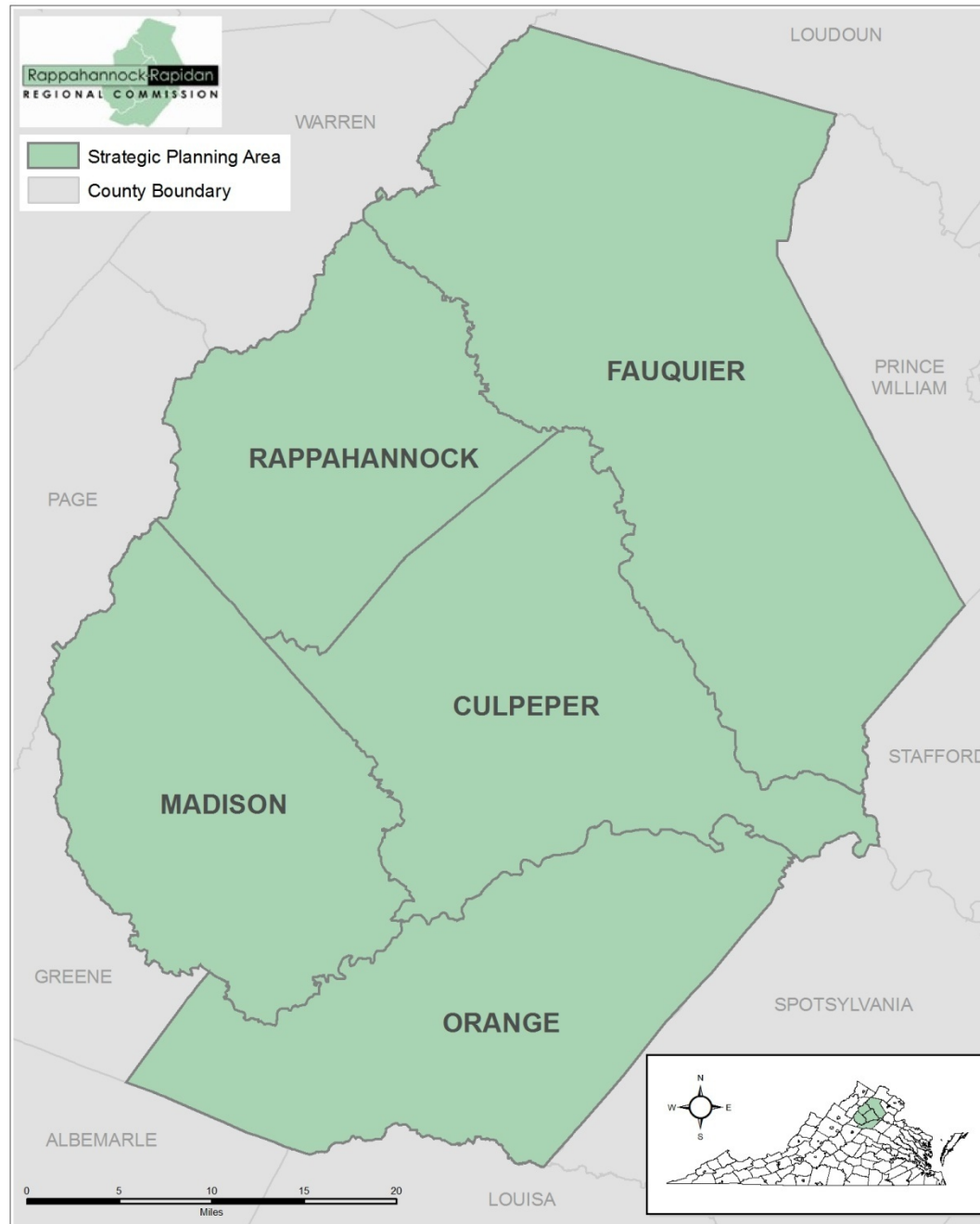
Project Goals

- To develop a regional food system plan based on existing economic data and public input.
- To strengthen the local food economy, so
 - More local dollars can be retained within the region, while
 - Promoting citizens' health,
 - Encouraging preservation of local farmland, and
 - Enhancing farmers' quality of life.



Setting a Baseline

- Asset Assessment
(www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html)
- Economic Analysis
 - Gap analysis: consumption vs. production
 - Utilize existing data available from federal and state sources
- Stakeholder Interviews



Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Food System Plan -- Project Area



Surveys & Focus Groups

- Local surveys sent via mail and email
 - Supplement data gathered from national sources via the economic analysis
 - Gauge local producers' needs and constraints
- Buyer/Seller Focus Group Meetings
- Institutional Buyers Focus Group Meeting – April 28, 2:00-3:00pm at RRRC



Regional Food System Plan

- A strategic plan, which creates a list of goals and priority projects for improving the region's agricultural economy
- Based on food system analysis, survey results and focus group meetings
- Developed through a series of stakeholder meetings
- Final draft to be completed - Fall 2015



Regional Food System Plan

- Recommended projects may include:
 - Publicly funded facilities
 - New or expanded education and marketing programs
 - Policy and regulatory changes
 - Opportunities for private investment



Current Results

- Food purchases:
 - In the region = \$421 million/yr
 - In the food system = \$7.5 billion/yr (\$4.5 billion for home-use)
 - DC metro region = \$14 billion/yr
- Food Produced in the region = \$210 million/yr
- Farmers in the region spend an average of \$47 million more producing crops and livestock each year than selling them.
- 70% of the region's farmers reported a loss in 2012



Current Results: Core Obstacles

1. Lack of labor
 2. Lack of farmers
 3. Lack of infrastructure, including need for community kitchen for value-added products
 4. Need for local food promotion/consumer education & preserving integrity of truly local foods
- Other concerns raised:
 - Local consumers desire for low prices often drives local farmers to sell outside the food system or the state
 - High land prices
 - High business taxes
 - Cumbersome food safety policies



Key Recommendations of Analysis

1. Invest in technical training in farming and food prep/safety at high school and community colleges
2. Foster ongoing and holistic initiatives to grow new farmers, not stand-alone training programs
3. Coordinate efforts to build local foods infrastructure, beginning at the farm level (i.e. farm production nodes, producer:buyer databases and regular meetings, supportive food safety and tax policy)
4. Support efforts to build a community-use processing kitchen
5. Explore hiring a local foods coordinator for the region and starting a regional food council
6. Develop local food marketing campaigns