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The Economic Impact of Iowa's 2014 Local Food Champions

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The Economic Impact of Iowa's 2014 Local Food Champions

Abstract

These are stories of nine local food champions who support development of local food systems in Iowa. These profiles were produced for an evaluation of the Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG).

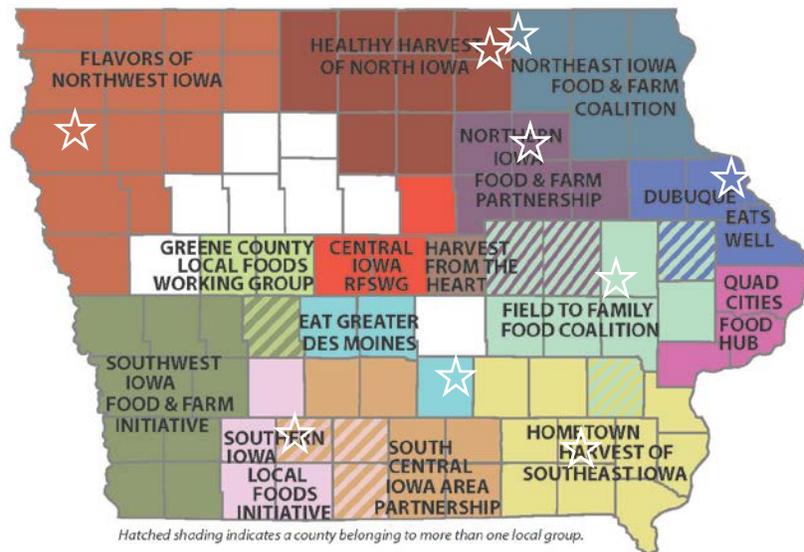
Disciplines

Agricultural and Resource Economics | Agricultural Economics | Economics

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF IOWA'S 2014 LOCAL FOOD CHAMPIONS

From northeast Iowa, where County Line Locker processes meat for area schools, to southern Iowa, where Wimmer Farms partners with local businesses to find new markets for their produce, and everywhere in between, Iowa's local food champions are finding more ways to build a more resilient regional food system.

We gathered stories from nine of these local food champions to illustrate the diverse ways community leaders are supporting the development of local food systems in their regions.



Hatched shading indicates a county belonging to more than one local group.

RFSWG is made up of 15 regional food groups. Stars indicate the location of the local food champion profiles.

Profiles of featured local food champions include:

- Jim Zaffiro, coordinating local food initiatives in Marion County
- Leroy Zimmerman, growing food with his family at Log Cabin Produce near Orchard
- Pam Oldham, incorporating local foods at Mercy Medical Center in Cedar Rapids
- Miles Breed, increasing local foods used by Clarke University's Dining Services in Dubuque
- Kim Keller, growing certified organic food at Blooming Acres Farm near Fairfield
- Dennis Wimmer, partnering with local businesses to support his new CSA in Arispe
- Lindsay Kaiser, joining her husband's family farm by adding new enterprises in Waverly
- Merrill Angell, processing pork for local schools in northeast Iowa
- Clint Brown, growing vegetables in high tunnels for the Sioux City Farmers Market

These profiles were produced as part of an evaluation of the Regional Food Systems Working Group, or RFSWG, by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Like the economic data collected by RFSWG members throughout the state, these stories are not visions of how a local food system could work but concrete examples of how local food systems are working in Iowa. The profiles were written by Leopold Center program assistant Arlene Enderton, who helped compile data for the reports.

All nine profiles can be found on the Leopold Center's "Economic Impacts of Local Food in Iowa" page: <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/local-food>. There, you will also find the statewide reports, last year's reports and local food champion profiles, and other information about RFSWG.

Eat Greater Des Moines

Face of a Food Champion: Jim Zaffiro

Jim Zaffiro, Professor of Political Science and Coordinator of Global Sustainability Education at Central College in Pella, is acting as an unofficial local food coordinator for Marion County. He sees himself and Central College as connectors, forging links between people to create a more just food system.

“My goal is, first of all, to raise awareness among more people about the benefits—economic benefits, health benefits and community-building benefits—of local food and to get them involved in that issue, whether by purchasing local food, growing it or just knowing about it.”



He recalls attending a Regional Food System Working Group (RFSWG) meeting and seeing a color-coded map of Iowa showing the counties where RFSWG groups were working. “Marion County was blank,” he says. “I took that as a challenge.”

Zaffiro already was highly involved in local food production and education. His wife, Louise, is an organic vegetable producer at Prairie Roots Farm near Otley. Jim acts as a volunteer helper for the Pella Farmers Market manager and is co-manager of the student organic garden on campus.

In order to learn more about local food, Zaffiro chose to take a year of sabbatical dedicated to learning about and deepening connections in the local food system. “I wanted to do more than just take the academic approach,” he says. “I wanted something more hands on.”

He likened his year of sabbatical, which ended in August 2014, to what Eat Greater Des Moines does but in Pella. “A helpful thing I was able to do early on was touch base with Linda [Gobberdiel] and Aubrey [Alvarez] at Eat Greater Des Moines and get a sense of how to do this and have them help me do it.”

Zaffiro worked with community partners to inventory farms in the area and list them on the Eat Greater Des Moines website, begin the process of bringing Farm to School programs to Pella and Knoxville, and start a mobile food pantry serving families in small rural communities in the county.

He now brings all of those connections back to the college, creating opportunities for students to serve those organizations. This fall he is teaching a new senior seminar course, Food Justice, focused on issues related to food, justice and human rights. “One requirement of the course is to do a 20-hour community-based learning experience where students partner with organizations in the Des Moines area, not just to serve their clients, but to help the organizations build their capacity.”

Central College is among a handful of colleges in the country that requires students to take a course on sustainability for graduation. As a result, Central offers several courses related to food and agriculture.

Reflecting on his sabbatical, Zaffiro observes, “It’s been a very interesting year for me to learn about something that I thought I knew a lot about, but looking at the on-the-ground local food scene there is a lot more under the radar. I found more problems and solutions than I ever dreamed of.”

For more information on the local foods work occurring in the Des Moines region, contact Aubrey Alvarez at 515.491.1891 / aalvarez@dmreligious.org or Linda Gobberdiel at 515.321.7853 / lgobberdiel@dmreligious.org.

In the photo: Jim Zaffiro with Mary Stark and their 2014 Upward Bound students. Courtesy Liz Vande Kieft.

Healthy Harvest of North Iowa

Face of a Food Champion: Leroy Zimmerman

Leroy Zimmerman, owner and operator of Log Cabin Produce, thinks farming is a great way to raise a family. He has four children, ranging from 4 to 14 years old.

“It’s supporting the family, but it also teaches a good work ethic for the kids,” he says. “A lot of work has to be done every day. From a family standpoint, it’s an excellent way to make a living. It’s not just about making money, but about raising kids on the farm.”

Zimmerman moved to Iowa from Pennsylvania nearly 10 years ago. He was attracted to Iowa because farmland was affordable, compared to land prices in Pennsylvania. He chose to grow vegetables because of the low start-up costs, even though he was a pork producer in Pennsylvania.

“We are a young family,” Zimmerman says. “Our oldest was four years old at that time, so we weren’t looking to spend a lot of money. We bought a 40-acre farm.”

Today the farm, located near Orchard, has about ten crops—including strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, sweet corn, watermelon, cantaloupe and pumpkins—and has expanded to 54 acres with the addition of rented land.

Zimmerman sells most of his produce directly from the farm, allowing customers to pick their own or purchase pre-picked items. The rest is sold at the Cedar Valley Produce Auction near Elma. The auction is in its 11th season and is open every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from mid-April to the end of October. The auction sells a mix of produce and other farm products, such as flowers, bedding plants and pumpkins.

Zimmerman explains that the auction is geared toward wholesale buyers, but small buyers also can participate. “You can take as little as one or two boxes to as much as a semi-load, if there is enough product.”

The local food movement has grown in the ten years Zimmerman has been in Iowa. He recalls that when he first began, many of his customers were senior citizens. In the last few years, however, he is seeing more young families. “It’s exciting that the younger generation with small kids are coming out and picking their own or buying pre-packed items,” he says. “They’re asking how to make preserves or freeze strawberries.”

The produce auction also benefits from the demand for local products. “Even the local [food] movement has driven the auction,” Zimmerman says. “The wholesale end [...] is growing. I personally think the growth has to do with the local [food] movement. Some buyers are distributors who see a demand for local produce.”

These days, Zimmerman sells his entire crop within a few miles of the farm, whereas in the past he traveled to farmers markets. “I go with the auction, because it allows me time to be home with the family and do the farming,” Zimmerman explains. “I like to be at home, farming with the kids.”



For more information on the local foods work occurring in the north Iowa region, contact Jan Libbey by phone at 515.851.1690 or by email at libbey.jan@gmail.com.

In the photo: Zimmerman and his crew harvest and load pumpkins, sold the next day at the Cedar Valley Produce Auction. Courtesy Arlene Enderton.

Field to Family Food Coalition

Face of a Food Champion: Pam Oldham

Mercy Medical Center in Cedar Rapids is a leader in the region and among healthcare providers statewide in providing local food to patients, their families and employees.

Mercy began sourcing local foods several years ago. Pam Oldham, Co-Director of Food and Nutrition Services at the hospital, shares several reasons for incorporating local foods into their patient and cafeteria meals: “The food tastes great, it supports local farm businesses and it provides patients with healthy food, which is an essential contributor to their health.”



Finding anchor farmers who could meet the hospital’s needs has been key to starting a successful local food program at Mercy Medical Center. Oldham notes that at first it was a challenge to find farmers who could supply the quantity and quality they needed.

“We go through about 250 pounds of slicing tomatoes a week; some farmers could only supply ten pounds a week,” she says. “We found a couple farmers who could supply what we needed, and once we realized farmers were there who could supply us at a cost that matched our budget, we decided we could [buy local] all the time.”

Seven core farmers supply most of the hospital’s local foods, and some have diversified their operations as a result. “The farmer growing peppers for us began growing onions for us, too, and now strawberries.” Oldham and Purchasing and Production Manager Andy Deutmeyer have visited most of their suppliers’ farms. “We’ve gotten to know the farmers and their families. It’s nice to know we’re helping them and they’re helping us.”

Mercy’s Food and Nutrition Services sources as many fruits and vegetables as possible from local farmers, as well as yogurt, beef and pork. From 2011 through 2013, on average they purchased 20,000 pounds of local produce a year and spent an annual average of \$45,000 on local foods. They hope to double their purchases of local foods by the end of the 2014 calendar year.

Patients and cafeteria customers love the fresh ingredients used at the hospital. “Our tomato usage goes up about 80 pounds a week when we have local tomatoes; they just taste better,” says Oldham.

Mercy is also a part of an organization of healthcare providers worldwide called Planetree, which is dedicated to a patient-centered care model. One of the key components of their model is food and the healing aspects of food. “They look at the connection between food and health as important,” Oldham says. “It’s an integral part of healthcare and of the health of everyone.”

Oldham and Deutmeyer have had many opportunities to share what they’ve learned about purchasing local foods with others. “We’re seen as leaders in local food, and people ask us how to get started or how to do it.” Oldham is on the board of Horizons, which provides Meals on Wheels, and recently joined the Linn County Food Systems Council. Deutmeyer is on the NewBo City Market board.

For more information on the local foods work occurring in the east-central region, contact Jason Grimm by phone at 319.622.3264 or by email at jason@ivr.cd.org.

In the photo: Pam Oldham and Andy Deutmeyer visit Buffalo Ridge Orchard in Central City, Iowa. Courtesy Marcus Johnson.

Dubuque Eats Well

Face of a Food Champion: Miles Breed

When Miles Breed became the Director of Dining Services at Clarke University in Dubuque a little over two years ago, one of the first things he did was go to the farmers market to meet the vendors. His goal was to form relationships with farmers so he might increase the use of local foods in the meals served to students.

Clarke University's Dining Services is distinctive in that it is self-operated. This gives Breed and the Executive Chef, Steve Neese, more flexibility. "We have the freedom to make our food more flavorful and more personalized to the students," Breed elaborates. Such freedom has allowed him to choose from whom he will buy food, and he prefers to buy from local farmers when possible.

Breed sees several benefits of using local foods. First, the food is fresh. Clarke buys apples from Buffalo Ridge Orchards in Central City. "When you bite into one of their apples you can taste the difference," Breed says. "It's tangible." Additionally, Breed says he feels a responsibility to support the local economy.

Students appreciate that the dining hall serves local foods because it contributes to a sustainable food system. In addition, students can get involved in producing vegetables for Dining Services through a campus garden internship program that involves two students each summer.

The garden also increases the visibility of local food on campus. The dining hall overlooks the garden, so students can see where some of their food is coming from. This year the student garden adjusted what they planted so that more of what they produce would be available during the school year. By planting more pumpkins and squash, more produce is ready to harvest in the fall after students return from summer break.

Dining Services uses local produce more so than other types of food but also sources milk and yogurt locally. Breed buys most produce from three farmers and reaches out to others for special events. For example, for the past two years he and his staff have celebrated World Food Day by preparing a local foods lunch and hosting a farmers market in the main dining hall.

"Whomever we purchased foods from for that meal is invited to the dining hall, and they set up a stand and sell their goods. It helps increase awareness of the local farmers market to students," says Breed.

In September 2014, Dining Services participated in the Farm-to-Table Dinner, which was held in conjunction with the Driftless Farm Crawl, both organized by Dubuque Eats Well. For the Farm Crawl, several farms held open houses on a Saturday. The dinner was the next evening at Four Mounds Inn Bed and Breakfast. Clarke University Dining Services prepared the main entrée, and three other businesses—The Food Store, Life's a Feast and L.May Eatery—each contributed a course to the meal.



For more information on the local foods work occurring in the Dubuque region, contact Carolyn Scherf by phone at 563.583.6496, extension 12, or by email at cscherf@iastate.edu.

In the photo: At the Driftless Farm-to-Table dinner organized by Dubuque Eats Well, Miles Breed and Steve Neese contributed the third course, bison and vegetables. Courtesy Ron and Jennifer Tigges, Digital Dubuque.

Hometown Harvest of Southeast Iowa

Face of a Food Champion: Kim Keller

Kim Keller of Blooming Acres Farm is leaving her part-time job to dedicate herself to farming. Until now, she has been splitting her time between vegetable farming and a part-time job as a horticulture specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. “Our business at home has grown so much that I need to care for that,” she explains.

Keller and her husband Steve grow vegetables, raise chickens for eggs and make baked goods on their farm near Fairfield. They added a high tunnel to their operation a few years ago, which allows them to produce greens all winter long, weather permitting. “My baking business has increased a lot in the last few years too,” she says. “I made over 30 pies last week!”

Keller first began selling produce from her home garden eight or nine years ago, after her two oldest daughters graduated from high school.

“We had time on our hands because we weren’t going to as many school functions. We had land available, and I had a garden and enjoyed gardening.”

Farming also fits into the couple’s long-term goals. “Another reason we’re gardening on a big scale is that it will be a retirement business,” Keller says. “We’re in our late fifties. If you have two or three acres and a good place to market your produce, you can get a decent income from the produce.”

While Blooming Acres Farm does supply a couple of restaurants, most sales are at the Fairfield Farmers Market. It runs all year round, providing a market for greens from the high tunnel throughout the winter. “We can do really well with retail sales because Fairfield has a good farmers market,” she says. “We’d rather sell retail than wholesale.” In the 2014 season they are testing an additional market in the region because high yields left them excess to sell.

Blooming Acres Farm is certified organic, a unique quality among small farms because many small producers find organic certification cost-prohibitive. Keller explains that her farm can recuperate certification costs because customers are willing to pay extra for the product. “People in our town appreciate local food and are willing to come to the farmers market and support local farmers. They don’t complain about the prices [...]. Our prices are comparable to a grocery store. We are certified organic; it costs us to be certified and to buy the organic seed. People appreciate that we are certified organic.”

Keller has worked extensively with Hometown Harvest of Southeast Iowa. “We belong to Hometown Harvest [...] and our name is in the [Buy Fresh Buy Local Directory]. People see us in the book and see we are organic; they wouldn’t otherwise know we are an organic farm.” She also notes that she is on Hometown Harvest’s school greenhouse advisory board and has partnered with Hometown Harvest to implement various educational events for farmers in the region.



For more information on the local foods work occurring in the southeastern region, contact Jan Swinton by phone at 641.472.6177 or by email at jan@pathfindersrcd.org.

In the photo: Kim and Steve Keller of Blooming Acres Farm work their booth at the Fairfield Farmers Market. Courtesy Jan Swinton.

Southern Iowa Local Foods Initiative

Face of a Food Champion: Dennis Wimmer

Wimmer Farms has been in the family for nearly a century but is taking on new life with Dennis Wimmer at the helm. Dennis grew up on the farm but moved to Chicago for 29 years before returning to buy the family farm from his father.

“It had been rented to a conventional farmer for 30 years while I was gone,” says Wimmer. “We’re trying to convert to organic and show that a small farm can produce enough [income] to feed a family.”

Now in his third season of farming, Wimmer and his wife grow vegetables and alfalfa on the farm. “We’ve got a couple high tunnels, and we grow a lot of lettuce,” he says. Wimmer has also planted nearly 4,000 aronia berry bushes, which are not yet in production. He plans to expand aronia berry production, eventually planting all the alfalfa ground to aronia.

Wimmer sells most of his produce through farmers markets and started a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) this year. He is happy with how his first year of CSA sales is proceeding. “Just starting out, we’ve grown relatively quickly,” he says. “We exceeded our goal for members.”

Other local businesses have proven to be valuable partners by purchasing Wimmer Farms products. Wimmer Farms sells produce to the Creston Hy-Vee, the Iowa Food Cooperative in Des Moines and a couple of local restaurants. “A small restaurant in Arispe, where we live, just opened two years ago and started buying tomatoes and some lettuce from us right away, and the Windrow Restaurant in Creston joined the CSA.” While the owner of the Windrow uses the CSA mostly for personal use, she once asked that her CSA box deliver only lettuce, which she used to cater a wedding.

Wimmer and Hy-Vee co-advertise, meaning Hy-Vee highlights Wimmer Farms in its advertisements while Wimmer advertises that his products are available at Hy-Vee. “I know the Hy-Vee in Creston wants to have a section just for our products. They’ll take everything we can give them at this point.” In addition, Hy-Vee provides Wimmer with boxes with the Hy-Vee logo on it, in which he delivers CSA shares to customers’ doorsteps. In this way Wimmer saves money on boxes, and Hy-Vee receives recognition for its partnership with local farmers.

Wimmer also partners with others through the Southern Iowa Local Foods Initiative (SILFI) Council. He is a member of the local foods council, which is working hard to increase awareness of local foods.

When asked how he has benefitted most from his local food group, Wimmer cites “more publicity.” For example, SILFI coordinator Alexi Groumoutis has written several stories about Wimmer Farms as part of a Farmers Market Promotion grant received by the Iowa League of Resource Conservation & Development.

Last year, SILFI sponsored a “food crawl,” where multiple restaurants in downtown Creston featured foods made with local products. Spinach from Wimmer Farms was used in an Alfredo spinach pizza served at the A&G Steakhouse and Lounge, and Wimmer was present to greet customers.



For more information on the local foods work occurring in the southern region, contact Alexi Groumoutis by phone at 641.782.4033 or by email at agroumoutis@hotmail.com.

In the photo: Dennis and Patty Wimmer sell at the Creston Farmers Market. Courtesy Brenda Strauss.

Northern Iowa Food & Farm Partnership

Face of a Food Champion: Lindsay Kaiser

Local food is opening doors for beginning farmers in northern Iowa. Lindsay Kaiser was able to join her husband's family farm by adding new enterprises. Kaiser Farm is a third-generation dairy farm located near Waverly that now includes vegetable and poultry production. Lindsay joined the operation in 2013, producing a variety of vegetables, while her husband Travis began producing chicken, ducks, turkeys and eggs.

"Travis's grandparents had a garden and raised poultry, but that was scrapped because of the work on the dairy, and we're working to bring diversity back to the farm," says Lindsay.

Having grown up in Iowa, Lindsay struggled to understand the state's unique farming system and her place in farming until she left Iowa. After graduating from college with a degree in psychology and French, she began working at a plant nursery and, later on, a farm. Then she moved to California and worked on farms there. "I felt healthier, because I was working hard and eating well," she says.



Lindsay came to the conclusion that California was not the best place for her to farm, however. "Sustainability—everyone talks about that in California because they are dependent on irrigation. I didn't realize until then that you don't get thunderstorms everywhere during the summer. I moved back to Iowa because the land is good and we get rain during the growing season, so it can be more sustainable."

Lindsay markets her vegetables through farmers markets in Waverly and Cedar Falls. She also uses a unique community supported agriculture (CSA) model called a "Flex-CSA," which combines pre-season payments with farmers market shopping. "People choose how much they want to invest before the season, and we add ten percent to that," she explains "For example, if they put in \$100 by May, we put \$110 into an account for them, and they use that money to shop at our booth at the farmers market." This arrangement gives customers an incentive to join the CSA and gives Kaiser working capital at the beginning of the season.

The Flex-CSA is growing faster than Lindsay expected. "We tripled our CSA membership this year and didn't even have to market it. It grew through word of mouth, a few brochures, and a Buy Fresh Buy Local directory that Rachel [Wobeter] did."

Rachel Wobeter is the former coordinator for the Northern Iowa Food & Farm Partnership (NIFFP), which opens local markets for beginning and established farmers so they can focus on farming.

NIFFP has benefitted Kaiser Farm in several ways. "The local food fair that Rachel did was really helpful," says Lindsay, referring to a fair held in the spring of 2014 at the Grout Museum in Waterloo. She also credits NIFFP with connecting her to potential buyers, starting a new farmers market on the UNI campus where Lindsay sells, hosting Buy Fresh, Buy Local networking meetings, and connecting Lindsay to the media, which has helped spread the word about her work. Lindsay and Travis also were included in the Faces of our Farmers exhibit, a collection of posters displayed in the UNI dining halls, created by NIFFP and featured in local news stories.

For more information on the local foods work occurring in the northern region, contact Kamyar Enshayan by phone at 319.273.1494 or by email at kamyar.enshayan@uni.edu.

In the photo: Lindsay Kaiser displays her pea harvest. Courtesy Travis Kaiser.

Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition

Face of a Food Champion: Merrill Angell

Merrill Angell provides an important service by incorporating local meats into school lunches in northeast Iowa. His meat processing business, County Line Locker in Riceville, began processing pork for local schools in spring 2014.

“I was always curious when people talked about local foods for schools, [but] they didn’t talk about meat,” Angell said. He thought, “Why not supply our local schools [with meat]?”

Angell bought the business in 2007. A fire destroyed the locker a year later. While this was a setback, it gave Angell an opportunity to rebuild for today’s business. “We’re probably one of the most up-to-date lockers around,” he said.



After the fire, Angell researched locker design by visiting other plants and talking to experts. As a result, County Line Locker is designed to keep animals comfortable prior to slaughter, be energy efficient and facilitate smooth employee work flow—all while ensuring a safe, quality product. The plant is state-inspected and in the process of becoming USDA-inspected, which will allow farmers to sell meat across state lines.

Since completing the new facility in 2009, County Line Locker has continually increased in business. This was made possible by a loyal, reliable workforce that came back to work after the fire.

“We kept all our employees. They went out and found part-time jobs or I helped them find work at the elevator until we opened back up,” Angell said. The locker retained the original seven employees until a year ago, when one found employment elsewhere.

Processing pork for schools began with a conversation with Nick McCann from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. With support from a Leopold Center grant, McCann had given classes and worked one-on-one with small meat processors in Iowa, which included a class for locker owners in northeast Iowa.

Angell had told McCann that his locker’s slow season is in the spring and he was looking for ways to make extra income during that time. “We tried a few things back then on a small scale, one hog at a time, Angell said. “Then he called me up last winter to talk about what we could do for schools.”

By spring 2014, County Line Locker was processing 10 hogs a week for K-12 schools and Luther College, utilizing the whole animal for an order instead of just processing cuts and selling the inventory. The pork is pre-ordered, and the hogs usually are processed into bacon, pork roasts and ground pork, and then delivered by the Iowa Food Hub.

Schools are happy with the quality of the product. “The school cooks said it smelled so much more like pork than what they were getting [before]. It’s fresh meat.”

Angell is researching tools to process pork more efficiently so County Line Locker can continue to supply schools while meeting the demand for custom processing, which increases in the fall. If he is successful, Angell expects to hire at least one new employee.

For more information on the local foods work occurring in the northeast region, contact Teresa Wiemerslage by phone at 563.794.0599 or by email at wiemer@iastate.edu.

In the photo: The Northeast Iowa Funders Network tours County Line Locker in Riceville in 2013.

Flavors of Northwest Iowa

Face of a Food Champion: Clint Brown

Clint Brown is only 23, but he is already an experienced farmer. He first planted green beans and tomatoes when he was four. By the time he was about 12, he was giving so many green beans away, he asked his mom, Audrey Brown, if he could take them to the farmers market. Audrey remembers, “He picked green beans, and we washed and bagged them, and the next day he sold them for two dollars a bag and sold out in the first half hour. I asked, ‘Now what do we do?’ And he said, ‘We’ve got to do more.’”



He has been doing more ever since. Today C. Brown Gardens produces vegetables, mostly heirloom tomatoes and peppers, in four high tunnels. Clint estimates he sold five tons of tomatoes in 2013, the majority of which at the Sioux City Farmers Market.

His first high tunnel was constructed at a time when high tunnels were uncommon. Audrey tells the story, “He started looking into greenhouses at age 12 or 13. His father and I said, ‘Those buildings cost thousands of dollars, so no.’ Someone gave him an article from the *Des Moines Register* about a gentleman [...] who had a high tunnel, which we’d never heard of. Clint went online, and he thought with the money he’d saved he might be able to put up a small one.” He built his first high tunnel when he was 14.

To determine which crop to plant first, Clint used the Leopold Center’s *Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Market Planner*, an online marketing tool that shows local supply and demand of different produce crops. Audrey recalls, “Clint looked at Plymouth and Woodbury Counties and thought he should grow tomatoes because consumption was high and the number of growers was low.”

He chose heirloom varieties, rather than common commercial varieties, because he wanted to produce something customers couldn’t find at the grocery store.

Clint’s goal has always been to produce the best quality product possible, rather than to maximize yield. “People know that what they buy from Clint was picked within the last 24 hours. It hasn’t sat on a truck for 1,000 miles or gone through three processing units [...]. People know it’s fresh. With local foods, that’s the key thing.”

Although high yield is not his goal, Clint has surprised his family by being able to support himself on a very small amount of land. “If you add it together, it’s about a tenth of an acre. In a corn or bean field, a tenth of an acre won’t bring much in.”

Today, the whole family contributes something to their farmers market stand. Audrey makes jellies and baked goods to sell alongside Clint’s vegetables. Clint’s dad, Steve, recently joined in with natural beef.

Audrey reflects on how much the family enterprise has grown, “We started out with green beans, and now we have a full line of vegetables, natural beef, and my jellies and preserves.”

For more information on the local foods work occurring in the northwest region, email Margaret Murphy at mmurphy@iastate.edu or Laurie Taylor at ltaylor@iastate.edu.

In the photo: C. Brown Gardens sells the majority of their products at the Sioux City Farmers Market, as shown in this collage of photos from their stand. Courtesy Woodbury County Extension and Outreach.