

# Pottawattamie County Farm to Fork

**Abstract:** Using a modest amount of seed money, the Pottawattamie County Local Food Council was able to support the development of local farmers markets, hire a local food coordinator, create the Grow Growers program, and make progress on local food system development.

## Investigators:

**Barry Deuel**  
**Shirley Frederiksen**  
Golden Hills RC&D  
Oakland

**Melvyn Houser**  
Pottawattamie County  
Board of Supervisors  
Council Bluffs

*Investigators thought a stable community-based food system in Pottawattamie County might be based on the use of a mentor program and a formalized county-based group of stakeholders. However, the mentor program was not entirely successful, but other aspects of the local food shed have been greatly enhanced and a strong coalition of stakeholders emerged.*



## MARKETING

## What was done and why?

The Pottawattamie County Local Food Council is working toward a healthier local food economy for area residents. The Southwest Iowa Farm to Food Initiative (SWIFFI) provided technical assistance for an area-wide needs assessment and gaps analysis. The Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors convened the needs assessment and asset mapping meetings in November 2007. The stakeholders who participated were concerned that the number of current producers was not sufficient to meet an increased demand for local food in the county.

The two main project objectives were to create a mentor program to increase the number of beginning producers and educate them through interaction with established producers and to develop a strategic plan with action agenda for the Pottawattamie County Farm to Fork Partner Team.

## What did we learn?

While the original project objectives were achieved, it was on a smaller scale than expected. Investigators think that more concerted efforts with 4-H, FFA, and other youth groups may be a good place to start, and immigrant groups and faith-based organizations may offer other opportunities. The models, however, remain suitable for use in other areas. SWIFFI has shared the model with other counties in the Regional Food Systems Working Group, with other groups at Leopold Center meetings and in other venues.

Overcoming the lack of new producers in the region proved more difficult than originally hoped. In early 2009, several people expressed interest in farming and two became new growers in the region. One farmer sold at local farmers markets in 2009, and planned to expand in 2010, possibly with a CSA operation. The second new local food producer started raising food crops and heirloom chickens whose eggs were a big hit at the Riverside Farmers Market.