



Farming, by the Numbers

Michigan has the greatest diversity of agricultural products of any state save California, and Calhoun County farms verify this. What is grown (in harvested acres) around Calhoun County: corn for grain (65,608); wheat for grain (12,605); soybeans for beans (69,339); vegetables (490); land in orchards (58).

Battle Creek residents live in a county that has 1,178 farms encompassing over 227,000 acres of land (49.4% of the county's 453,760 acres) with an average farm size of 179 acres. Of these 227,000 acres of farm land, 70.4% is harvested cropland, and the average value of crops sold per harvested acre is \$214.05.

More than 34% of Calhoun County farms show sales of less than \$1,000; 3.2% show sales of \$500,000 or more.

Aging Farmers

The average age of farmers in Michigan is 56.3 years and in Calhoun County it is 57.5 years. Forty-four percent of Michigan farmers and 46% of Calhoun County farmers indicated that farming was their principal occupation.

Greater Battle Creek Food System: What we know

Where we Buy Food

Approximately 39 grocery stores, 16 dollar stores, 19 party stores and 15 gas stations sell food in the city of Battle Creek. While Calhoun County has fewer grocery stores per 10,000 residents compared to the State of Michigan, it exceeds the state's rate for supercenter/club stores and convenience stores. Calhoun County's rate of convenience stores (with gasoline) exceeds the state rate by 35%.

What's in Your Belly? How residents spend their food \$\$

In 2007, Calhoun County residents spent, on average, a total of \$1,034 eating out. As seen in the chart below, residents spent 52% of their eating-out dollars in full-service restaurants and 48% in fast food restaurants. While the amount of money spent eating out increased 15.4% between 2002 and 2007, the proportion spent on full-service vs fast-food restaurants remained the same.

Food Processed in Battle Creek

Food manufacturing is an important contributor to the economic vitality of Battle Creek and Calhoun County. Of the 12 major metropolitan areas in Michigan, Battle Creek ranks 7th in the number of food manufacturing establishments.

Planting Seeds, Sowing Progress

Battle Creek has the resources and potential to change the face of its food system. Men and women across the community across all sectors are working diligently to address the needs of all people. A key challenge is understanding the issues and developing a unified front through which these forces may coordinate their efforts.

That's where Good Food BC comes in. For more than three years it has been helping educate and activate residents and food professionals to address food system issues. The way is clear. The will is there. By harnessing committed people and institutions, Battle Creek is primed to reclaim its historic good food and wellness legacy.

To learn more, contact us at:

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Good Food Battle Creek presents...

Greening the Region

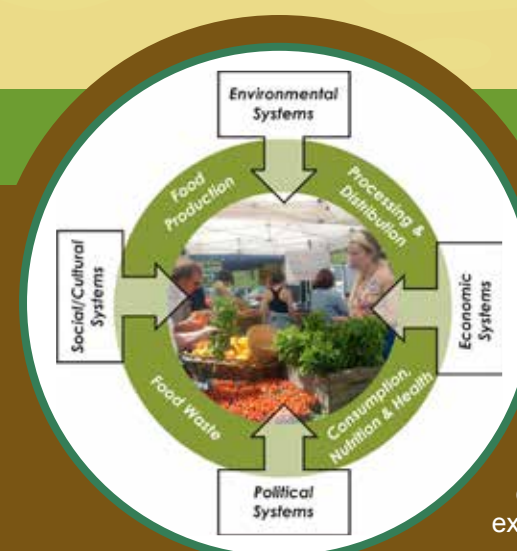
An Executive Summary

Battle Creek Community Food Assessment 2013

Assessing the landscape

This community food assessment (CFA) grew from conversations in 2010 with members of Good Food BC, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Fair Food Network and the Michigan State University C.S. Mott Group. When the idea took root, Fair Food Network issued a grant to support the effort.

By initiating an assessment of its food system, Battle Creek joins other Michigan communities, including Flint, Saginaw, Lansing, Detroit, and the five-county region in southeast Michigan in examining local food system issues. This work provides a critical foundation of knowledge that can allow Battle Creek to grow its economy through food and agriculture-based initiatives.



What's a Food System?

A food system is all the people, processes and places involved with moving food from the seed a farmer plants to the dinner table, local restaurant, or cafeteria. It encompasses everything from farming, processing and distributing to retailing, preparing and eating. It begins with the initial elements necessary for farm products to grow and extends to recycling and composting food wastes.

Good Food Battle Creek

Good Food BC is a group of organizations and individuals working together to promote healthy food choices through education, support of local producers, and creating access to good food for all people. Established in 2010, its shared vision is that all residents have access to and are knowledgeable about affordable, fresh, nutritious food, and healthy lifestyles.

Current activities include conducting monthly networking meetings, facilitating discussions and community movie nights. Recent work:

- Hosted the 2013 conference *Good Food Matters: Come to the Table* to examine food system issues across the community, and activate participants in the food movement.
- Initiated a series of 2013 anti-racism workshops that address issues including food access and security for all.
- Convened a series of 2012 Community Focus Groups as part of the 2013 Community Food Assessment.

Good Food BC Grants: a Funding Snapshot

Good Food BC offers small grants to organizations working in support of the food movement. Funding was provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation through Fair Food Network.

Grantees include:

Food Bank of South Central Michigan

Garden in a Bucket: Provide access to fresh vegetables in 5-gallon bucket ‘gardens’ for households that may not have access to land or lack the financial means to grow their own food.

Sprout Urban Farms

GreenFist: Improve fresh food access in the community by recruiting youth (age 17-22) who work on various projects.

Generation e

Offer food system entrepreneurship instruction, information about entrepreneurial opportunities, and business development support.

Leila Gardening 365

Create a self-sustaining urban farm model to provide educational opportunities for the general community.

Burmese Community Gardens

Capacity building support to erect fencing at three garden locations; install a freeze-resistant water source; purchase a commercial mower; support youth through the Free to Be Me Youth Garden.

Good Food BC Priorities

In 2011, Good Food BC chose six of the 25 Michigan Good Food Charter priorities as its initial focus. These priorities were selected as the starting point for impacting the food system in Battle Creek:

1. Expand and increase innovative methods to bring healthy foods to under-served areas as well as strategies to encourage their consumption.
2. Maximize use of current public benefit programs for vulnerable populations, especially children and seniors, and link them with strategies for healthy food access.
3. Provide outreach, training and technical assistance to launch new grocery stores and improve existing stores to better serve under-served people in urban and rural areas.
4. Use policy and planning strategies to increase access to healthy food in under served areas.
5. Encourage institutions – including schools, hospitals, colleges and universities – to use their collective purchasing power to influence the food supply chain to provide healthier food and more foods grown, raised and processed in Michigan.
6. Establish Michigan as “the place to be” for culturally based good food that is locally grown, processed, prepared and consumed.



Listening to Residents: Good Food BC Focus Groups

In an effort to acquire on-the-ground understanding of community needs, six focus groups were organized. Five were with residents of Washington Heights, Urbandale, Post Addition, North-side, and Southwest neighborhoods. A sixth was conducted with farmers, institutional food providers and others.

The purpose was to learn how residents access healthy food in Battle Creek; shopping practices; cooking and eating habits; food options in their neighborhoods; and how local farmers, institutions and others might help increase their access to healthy food.

Battle Creek Food Sources

Focus group work revealed that Battle Creek’s food system includes the variety of ways residents obtain their food. Most get their food from retail outlets such as grocery stores, corner markets, and gas stations that sell food, as well as full service and fast-food restaurants. Increasingly more people are purchasing food from farmers markets, community gardens, and community-support agriculture programs. Emergency food sources, such as food pantries are a critical food source for some residents.

GOOD FOOD BC FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS				
FOCUS GROUP	NEIGHBORHOOD	LOCATION	# OF PARTICIPANTS	DISTRIBUTION
1	Washington Heights	Dudley Elementary School Library	14	Female = 10 (71%) Male = 4 (29%) White = 5 (36%) Black = 9 (64%)
2	Urbandale	Conference Room, Over Flow Church <i>(formerly Level Park Elementary School)</i>	18	Female = 12 (67%) Male = 6 (33%) White = 17 (94%) Black = 1 (6%)
3	Post Addition	Mike's Place	19	Female = 12 (67%) Male = 6 (33%) White = 17 (94%) Black = 1 (6%)
4	Northside	First Congregational Church	13	Female = 5 (38%) Male = 8 (62%) White = 11 (85%) Black = 2 (15%)
5	Southwest	First Salem Missionary Baptist Church	16	Female = 10 (63%) Male = 6 (37%) White = 4 (25%) Black = 12 (75%)
SUBTOTAL			80	Female = 48 (60%) Male = 32 (40%) White = 51 (64%) Black = 29 (36%)
6	Food System	Battle Creek Downtown Partnership	24	Female = 10 (42%) Male = 14 (58%) White = N/A Black = N/A
TOTAL			104	Female = 58 (56%) Male = 46 (44%) White = 51 (64%) Black = 29 (36%)

Food and Health Issues

Obesity is known to contribute to a variety of diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and general poor health. In Calhoun County, a higher percentage of adults are obese (36.1%) compared to being overweight (29.6%).



According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), five areas within Battle Creek are considered “food deserts.” A food desert may be defined as a low income area where a substantial number of residents have limited/no access to a supermarket or large grocery store.

While Calhoun County has a higher proportion of grocery stores per population than either Kalamazoo or Jackson counties, it is still lower than that for the State of Michigan.

Fresh Food Opportunities for Low-Income Residents

Government food and nutrition assistance programs provide a significant source of food for Battle Creek’s low-income residents. Among them: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Project Fresh and Senior Project Fresh. A key additional resource is the successful Double Up Food Bucks program.

Feeding the Hungry

The Food Bank of South Central Michigan is the single most important source of food for most of their member agencies. It accounts for 76% of food served by pantries, 48% for soup kitchens and 43% for shelters. The Food Bank reaches eight counties in South Central Michigan: Barry, Branch, Calhoun, Hillsdale, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lenawee and St. Joseph Counties. More than 102,600 individuals are helped annually.

