



Michigan Association of Planning  
A Chapter of the American Planning Association

## Michigan Community and Regional Food Systems Planning Policy

Adopted by the Michigan Association of Planning Board of Directors  
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### Executive Summary

Michigan has the essential building blocks of a strong and resilient food system including: land and rich soil, clean water, skilled farmers, and a climate that supports diverse agriculture. Yet, many of these resources are under threat. The attributes of our current dominant food system also have unintended damaging impacts on our environment, our health and our communities.

Planners are uniquely suited to take steps to address the threats and opportunities of Michigan's current food system because food touches many other areas of concern for planners and impacts communities of all types and sizes. A growing number of tools and resources are available to support planners in this work.

The **Michigan Association of Planning Food System Policy** has four components:<sup>1</sup>

- A **framing document** to give Michigan planners context for thinking about food system planning in the state, and
- **Three policy statements** on critical issues in food system planning:
  - Urban Agriculture,
  - Sustainable Agriculture Practices, and
  - Equity in Food Access; Entrepreneurship; and Supply Chains.

But these policy statements do not exist in a vacuum of food system policy. MAP has followed the lead of guidelines developed by the American Planning Association (APA), The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Nurses Association, and the American Public Health Association. These guidelines can be found in *Appendix A*.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Michigan Good Food Good Food Charter, June 2010*,  
<http://www.michiganfood.org/assets/goodfood/docs/MI%20Good%20Food%20Charter%20Final.pdf>.

## Framing the Issue

### The Food System in Michigan: Threats and Opportunities

#### Summary and Background

Food touches every level of government and planning in Michigan. Most farmers are in rural areas, yet small-scale producers are also sprouting up in urban areas. Suburban and urban municipalities host businesses that process, distribute and sell food. Transport of food, and the waste generated at all stages of the food cycle, interconnect and cross boundaries. State government is responsible for regulating safe agricultural practices, processing, distribution and disposal.

As a state rich in agricultural resources and history, Michigan has the essential building blocks of a strong and resilient food system including: land and rich soil, abundant fresh water, skilled farmers, and a climate that supports diverse agriculture.

However, threats exist both to sustaining Michigan agriculture into the future and ensuring that it delivers healthy people, places, communities, and environments. As food moves through the chain of production, processing, transport, purchase, consumption, and disposal, its path affects our bodies and health, as well as our roads, economy, and environment. Michigan's food system is under threat from environmental factors, land use patterns, demographic shifts and industry consolidation. Professional planners and those involved in the planning process are able to and should counter these threats by building on the unique opportunities in Michigan.

While our global and national food supply chains are well developed, supply chains within Michigan from field to table are only now emerging. Farmers, businesses, and consumers within new supply chains face policies, rules, and practices that are designed to support global supply chains rather than more local ones. By moving towards a food system in which local, regional, national and global supply chains all complement one another, communities have an opportunity to foster local economic development and build a more resilient and equitable local economy.

#### Food System Threats

- *Clean water.* The fresh water stocks in Michigan are threatened by privatization, pollution, and invasive species. Privatization of water could lead to decreased water access for agricultural production. Pollution affects the quality of water used to irrigate crops and contaminants can pass into food. Agricultural practices, such as overuse of fertilizers, can damage the ecosystems with the lakes, rivers and streams of Michigan that regenerate and clean the water. Invasive species, such as the Asian carp and zebra mussels, have damaged or have the potential to damage the balance of life within Michigan water bodies, degrading the purity of the water.
- *Suburban sprawl and land loss.* Good soils are irreplaceable. Much of the soil best suited for growing food crops is at the edge of growing metropolitan regions. Nationally about 86 percent of high value fruit and vegetable crops are grown near metropolitan areas. As urban areas grow outward, prime

farmland has been consumed at a rate of about 30,000 acres per year in Michigan.<sup>2</sup> The spread of low density suburban subdivisions has changed the built environment, economy and culture of areas. The suburbanization of formerly rural areas has pushed out the rural institutions that sustained and passed on knowledge about food production.

- *Changing farmers.* One in five Michigan farmers is sixty-five or older. Thousands of farmers will retire in the next ten years and with them, thousands of acres of farmland may be taken out of agricultural production. Fewer farmers pass their land on to their children and new farmers are not keeping up with the retirement rate. Beginning farmers are more likely to be part-time and work on much smaller-scale farms. Urban farmers have emerged in Michigan cities and suburbs. As the age, nature and location of farmers change, training and resources available to farmers must be adapted to meet the changing needs.
- *Climate change.* Increased temperatures and unpredictable, extreme weather events will affect how food is grown locally and nationally. With the shrinking ice pack in the Rocky Mountains, scientists anticipate California, which currently supplies about half the fruits and vegetables for the country, will see falling water supplies. As energy costs increase and irrigation becomes more expensive, droughts and rainy periods in other parts of the country and world may affect global supply chains that Michigan consumers have come to depend on thereby further highlighting the urgency to protect and develop agriculture in the state.
- *Concentration and consolidation.* The U.S. and Michigan food systems have been characterized by increasing concentration and both vertical and horizontal consolidation over the last few decades.<sup>3</sup> A limited number of companies process and distribute food. For instance, four firms control 50 percent of the poultry market in the United States. This concentration heightens food safety threats, as contamination in a single facility can result in tainted food products distributed and sold across the country. Consolidation also encourages food safety policy to be written for large-scale processors, with requirements often beyond the capacity of small or start-up businesses. These trends ultimately constrain choices for both producers and consumers.
- *Uneven access.* Nearly 60 percent of Michigan residents, including those in both urban and rural areas, have limited access to full service grocery stores that offer healthy and affordable food options.<sup>4</sup> In Detroit, more than half of the community's residents must travel twice the distance to reach a full-service retailer rather than a convenience store<sup>5</sup> that offers few, if any choices in produce, meat, dairy and whole grain items. For example, in 2009 and 2010, over \$200 million in grocery purchases by Detroiters were made in stores outside the community.<sup>6</sup> The food available is highly processed, packaged, high-calorie, nutritionally poor "fringe foods", such as chips and desserts. The 2012 openings of two major grocery stores may help provide more access to healthy food but not necessarily for every resident.
- *Health impacts.* Heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer, four of the top ten causes of death in the U.S., are related to diet. Obesity has become a public health crisis with one in four Michigan

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<sup>2</sup> Michigan Department of Agriculture (2008) Accessed at: [http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1572\\_48039-202601--00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1572_48039-202601--00.html)

<sup>3</sup> See, for example M. Hendrickson, et al. "Consolidation in food retailing and dairy," *British Food Journal* 103 no. 10 (2001): 715-728.

<sup>4</sup> R.G. Craig. *Economic Impact of New or Expanded Retail Food Store Developments by Using PA 231 and Other Tools to Promote Healthy and Affordable Food Options in Michigan.* (Lansing, MI: Agriculture Development Division, Michigan Department of Agriculture, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> M. Gallagher. *Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Detroit.* (Chicago: Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> K. Pothukuchi. *The Detroit Food System, 2009-10.* Detroit: Detroit Food Policy Council, 2011.

residents being obese in 2007. The inability to access fresh, healthy, affordable food triggers health risks for multiple populations in Michigan resulting in lost wages, taxes and jobs, decreased quality of life and increased health care costs.

- *Distance and disconnection from food sources.* As food supply chains have grown longer, it has become more difficult to identify the source of our food. Without knowledge of how food is grown, processed and transported, Michigan residents and communities are not aware of the impacts of their eating choices and food policies. For some cultures or religions, how food is handled or processed is important and increasingly difficult to find culturally appropriate food.
- *Inefficient waste disposal.* Food is wasted throughout the food system, but consumers are the largest source of food waste. The EPA estimated in 2007 that almost 13 percent of municipal waste in the United States was edible food waste. Gleaning programs could bring some of that food to social services feeding the hungry, while municipal composting programs, education or pick up, could decrease the waste in landfills.
- *Food Workers.* The food supply chain would cease to function without food service workers and farm workers, but these important links in the food supply chain are often overlooked. Only 20% of restaurant jobs in the US pay a living wage.<sup>7</sup> While on the farm, nearly 58% of farm workers are migrant workers, of which the majority live in substandard and overcrowded housing, have poor access to sanitation facilities, running water, and safe working conditions.<sup>8</sup> Ironically, these food workers – as close as they work to it – still have food insecurity issues.<sup>9</sup>

These threats point to need to build a stronger, more resilient and robust integrated localized food system. Fortunately, Michigan has numerous strengths on which to build.

### **Food System Opportunities**

- *Diverse agricultural base.* Food and agriculture represent the second largest industry in Michigan, behind only manufacturing. Due to the surrounding Great Lakes, Michigan has unique microclimates, which result in the state producing a wide array of fruits and vegetables. The state's water resources, the best in the nation, and microclimates are non-transferrable assets, which cannot leave for better tax incentives or lower labor costs. Due to the water resources, Michigan growers are better buffered from some of the effects of climate change and may have increased local and regional markets as producers from other states, such as California, have challenges with irrigation.
- *Skilled labor force.* Michigan has a skilled labor force from its long manufacturing history. Skilled individuals could be utilized in local food processing and transportation as well as in developing affordable technology for small-scale growers. Michigan also has skilled, successful farmers and strong educational institutions
- *Focus on sustainability.* Michigan communities are starting to plan to become environmentally sustainable. The production and distribution of food influence the environmental impact of a community. Proper agricultural management practices protect environmental resources such as fresh water. Because of its environmental impact and reliance on fossil fuels, sustainability planners are beginning to examine how the food system works in their communities and how municipalities can foster more sustainable food systems of all scales.

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<sup>7</sup> Saru Jayaraman, Behind the Kitchen door; Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, <http://rocunited.org/>

<sup>8</sup> Michigan Department of Civil Rights. (2010). *A Report on the Conditions of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in Michigan.*

Lansing, MI: Michigan Civil Rights Commission; Michigan Department of Civil Rights. (2013). *Directors' Level Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) Workgroup Progress Report.* Lansing, MI: Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

- *Demand for local, fresh food.* The demand for fresh, locally-grown food spans demographic groups and has increased notably in recent years. Over the last 10 years, the number of farmers markets nationally has increased 84 percent to over 5,000 in 2009 (USDA). In Michigan, there are more than 150 farmers markets and each year more markets accept supplemental food assistance (Bridge Cards), which allows lower-income families to purchase fresh, Michigan-grown food. Studies have shown that market sales have increased notably as a result. Large food retailers and supermarkets are trying to capture increasing consumer demand for local food.
- *Regional planning entities.* Michigan has strong regional planning entities, including councils of governments, which can help coordinate food system policies. For example, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and Eastern UP Planning District integrated agriculture and food-based businesses into their 2009-2012 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission pioneered a regional growth strategy that seeks to preserve agricultural uses and limit urban sprawl. Numerous local planning offices in Michigan have also engaged in food systems planning.
- *Food policy groups.* Michigan has a number of active food policy groups that bring community members and organizations together to advocate for changes to improve the food system. Food policy councils have emerged across the state, including in Grand Rapids, Detroit and Washtenaw County.

Groups such as the Food System Economic Partnership and the Michigan Land Use Institute promote small businesses and economic and community development through the food system. Urban growers' coalitions like the Detroit Garden Resource Program Collaborative and Edible Flint also play a role in influencing municipal planning and zoning dealing with food production in their communities.

The UP Food Exchange is a large and diverse group of collaborators working to serve the local food needs of this entire peninsula. Their work includes advocating for increased institutional purchasing of local food, helping farmers overcome barriers to expansion through networking and training opportunities, and participating in a food safety pilot program with the USDA.

### **Related MAP Policies**

The Michigan Association of Planning has adopted three policies in recent years that address food system-related land use issues.

- The Right To Farm Act Policy, adopted February 19, 2010, addresses changes MAP believes should be incorporated into the Right to Farm Act (MCL 286.471-286.474).
- The [Agricultural Land Preservation Policy](#) articulates MAP's support for programs and policies that support the protection of productive farmland and to maintain the economic viability of agriculture in the state.
- The Transportation Policy addresses transportation and access related to food.

The Food System Policy complements these existing policies by addressing several other aspects of the food system including urban agriculture, environmental impacts of food production and processing, and the social and economic equity of food access and entrepreneurship.

## Policy Area 1

### Urban Agriculture

#### Summary and Background

Urban agricultural activities– the growing or producing of plants and animals within cities or villages – are increasing across Michigan. Planners have an important role in supporting these activities to ensure various forms of agriculture are appropriately integrated into the urban environment in a manner that respects its regional context.

Most often, urban growers raise fruit and vegetable crops in relatively small home or community gardens. However, activities may also include tree orchard cultivation, grain production, bee-keeping, raising hens for eggs, raising goats, aquaculture, aquaponics, ornamental plant cultivation, hydroponic production, rainwater catchment and compost production. Structures such as passive solar hoop houses or heated green houses are also used to produce food through the winter months. Other forms include vertical farming (the use of planters which attach to wall facades and allow plants to grow vertically) or rooftop gardens (the use of raised beds or containers on flat roofs).

Urban agriculture can occur at many different scales and in a variety of settings such as:

- *Home gardens* - relatively small areas located on a parcel along with a primary residence.
- *Community gardens* – multiple plots shared by community members which can be the primary land use on a vacant residential lot or park, school, church or other public/institutional property.
- *Market gardens and commercial urban farms* - larger production activities oriented toward sales which are a primary land use and utilize multiple lots or many acres in urban areas.

Both home and community gardens typically produce food for personal consumption, as a hobby or for educational purposes. Individuals, block clubs or school groups responsible for these gardens may choose to sell excess garden products either on-site or through nearby farmers markets. In contrast, market gardens and commercial urban farms produce food for consumption by those not engaged in agricultural activities on the property and sell garden products on site, at local farmers markets, and/or through local retailers.

Urban agriculture offers many benefits to residents, neighborhoods and communities.

- *Access to fresh food* in areas not in close proximity to large grocery stores may inspire neighborhood residents, especially children, to eat fresh produce.
- *Reclamation of underutilized land*, even for temporary uses, can take advantage vacant, tax-reverted lots, and public property at recreation centers, senior centers, churches, schools, parks, public easements and right-of-ways.
- *As a community classroom*, gardens can be a tool for teaching about science, math and the environment as well as job training venues and accessible entrepreneurship opportunities.
- *As green spaces*, urban agriculture helps reduce the heat island effect, mitigates storm water runoff and provides habitat for birds, bees, and butterflies.

- As *social spaces*, urban agricultural areas offer recreational and therapeutic opportunities, enable immigrant communities to connect to their heritage, promote inter-generational interactions, and can even reduce neighborhood crime by encouraging street-level activity.

Michigan communities have an array of different urban agriculture programs, including selling garden kits for small raised beds ([Growing Hope](#)), facilitating a cooperative for gardeners to sell at local markets ("[Grown in Detroit](#)") or to restaurants ([Our Kitchen Table](#)) and managing lot adoption processes to enable residents, churches, neighborhood associations and other groups to cultivate as gardens ([Genesee County Land Bank](#)).

The following programs, processes and policies are available to help planners assess, plan for and regulate urban agriculture:

- *Community input*. Engage residents, growers and organizational stakeholders directly to help identify which of the many forms and scales of urban agriculture are best suited to which neighborhoods or zones.
- *Land inventories*. Survey community-owned land to identify and categorize potential sites for urban agriculture activities. (See e.g. [Cuyahoga County, Seattle](#).)
- *Urban agriculture component of master plan*. Include language supporting urban agriculture in appropriate areas and recommendations for the use of urban agriculture as a temporary solution to vacancy and blight in suitable neighborhoods.
- *Ordinance reviews*. Review ordinances to assess whether home, community and commercial gardening activities, including keeping of animals, may present conflicts.
- *Zoning for urban agriculture*. Amend existing zoning ordinances to permit urban agriculture where appropriate, consistent with the community master plan and Future Land Use Plan. Many options are available and an appropriate approach should be identified based on individual community and neighborhood characteristics. For example, urban agricultural uses may be permitted either by-right or by special land use permit in appropriate zoning districts, or a city may create distinct urban garden zoning districts. Overlay districts can also be used to explicitly permit urban agriculture activities in specific areas that are appropriate according to the local master plan and other community planning policies, strategies, and/or regulations.
- *Allowance for urban agricultural structures*. Explore if and where structures associated with urban agriculture, including tool sheds, hoop houses and barns, may be allowed even without a primary residential or commercial building on site and designate them as permanent, temporary or accessory in ways that are supportive of farm and garden activities. These structures should be regulated in the same manner as other structures under existing ordinances and codes and must be appropriate for their location within the urban setting.
- *Access to municipal services*. Ensure municipal services, such as sewer, water and trash pick-up are available to market gardens and commercial urban farms in the same way that such services would be made available to other commercial or industrial uses. Similar services may be necessary for community gardens as well and, if possible, provided at a reduced cost.
- *Direct support*. Provide direct municipal support for urban agriculture through community departments, or community-run programs.

- *Compost.* Support composting programs that offer compost to urban agriculture sites or permit household and commercial composting to occur while also ensuring nuisances are not created as a consequence.
- *Long-term access to land.* Review leases, easements, trusts or other conveyances of community-owned land to promote the long-term and secure practice of urban agriculture where such a use is consistent with the community master plan and does not place an undue burden on cities to maintain under-utilized urban infrastructure (e.g., roads, water, and sewer constructed to serve more intense residential, commercial, or industrial uses).

It is important to note that the Michigan Right to Farm Act (RTFA) may override local urban agriculture regulation. However, in December 2011 the Michigan Commission of Agriculture added the following language to each of the Generally Accepted Agriculture Management Practices (GAAMPs), which must be followed in order for RFTA to apply:

"This GAAMP does not apply in municipalities with a population of 100,000 or more in which a zoning ordinance has been enacted to allow for agriculture provided that the ordinance designates existing agricultural operations present prior to the ordinance's adoption as legal non-conforming uses as identified by the Right to Farm Act for purposes of scale and type of agricultural use."



## **Urban Agriculture Policy Statements**

### *Best Practices*

1. MAP supports facilitating and encouraging urban agriculture through plans, zoning codes and ordinances in a manner that is consistent with local master plans and does not place an undue burden on local fiscal health.
2. MAP supports engaging the community in determining appropriate regulations and planning strategies for urban agriculture through an inclusive planning process.
3. MAP supports conducting fiscal impact analysis of urban agriculture to evaluate its impact on the ability of communities to support existing infrastructure.
4. MAP supports conducting land inventories to determine appropriate sites for urban agricultural uses according to soil quality and type, prior uses, lot size, slope, drainage and tree cover.
5. MAP supports developing appropriate regulations for urban agriculture that maximize the community benefits of local food production while minimizing the potential negative impacts in an urban setting.
6. MAP supports including designated garden space in affordable housing developments.
7. MAP supports establishing and expanding programs that support existing community gardens and encourage the creation of new community gardens.
8. MAP supports programs tailored to encourage community gardens that maintain traditional food cultures for immigrant and minority groups within cities.
9. MAP supports allowing sales or long-term leases of land identified as appropriate in local master plans for the purposes of urban agriculture.
10. MAP supports establishing land use policies that promote secure community garden and/or market garden/urban farm tenure on land deemed appropriate by the local master plan and determined to be suitable based on fiscal impact analysis.

### *Local Actions*

11. MAP supports accommodating urban agricultural activities in land use regulations for example, urban agriculture overlays and garden districts in keeping with community desires as determined through a public engagement process and where specific criteria are set forth to protect the public health, welfare and safety.
12. MAP supports regulations on the scale and size of urban agricultural activities as well as appropriate measures to control noise, odor and safety in keeping with community desires as determined through a public engagement process.
13. MAP supports local ordinances to allow residents to keep small numbers of chickens, goats and bees with appropriate measures to control odor and noise and maintain public health, safety and welfare in keeping with community desires as determined through a public engagement process.

### *State Actions*

12. MAP supports reassessing the allowable activities and the appropriate review processes for hoop houses in the State Construction Code (1972 PA 230). Hoop houses are currently treated like a permanent building if they house any activities, such as education programs or market stands, other than cultivation which often places an undue burden on market gardens and urban farms.
13. MAP supports changes to the Right Farm Act and the associated Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs) which are not likely to result in any threats to public health, safety and welfare and which waive the applicability of Right to Farm Act to urban agriculture, such as the 2011 waiver for communities with a population of at least 100,000 in the GAAMPs.<sup>10</sup>
14. MAP supports public education and advocacy in support of state and federal policies and programs that support urban agriculture.
15. MAP supports taxation or assessment of special fees for market gardens and urban farms to support the costs of municipal services

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<sup>10</sup> GAAMPs are revised annually and the current waiver is not a permanent exemption. Also, many Michigan communities are under 100,000 in population but have urban agriculture.

## Policy Area 2

### Sustainable agricultural practices

#### Summary and Background

Healthy people and a robust farm economy both rely on clean, healthy soil and water. Through careful planning, tracking and monitoring, and adoption of codes and ordinances, local governments have a key role to play in shaping and protecting a healthy, robust, and productive agriculture sector in Michigan.

Nationally and here in Michigan, modern agriculture practices contribute to significant pollution and environmental degradation. National and statewide statistics quoted below show where communities can improve protection of the natural environment while supporting a resilient, robust food system.

- *Water use:* Agriculture accounts for about 80% of our nation's water use and in Michigan about 65% of agricultural irrigation relies on withdrawing groundwater.<sup>11</sup> The rate of groundwater withdrawal exceeds recharge rates in most major agriculture regions (Center for Sustainable Systems), which means we are slowly depleting sources of water for agriculture and other uses.
- *Topsoil loss:* 1.8 billion tons of topsoil were lost nationally in 2003 due to water and wind combined, including 25 million tons in Michigan. Though erosion rates in the Great Lakes region are below the national average and decreasing<sup>12</sup>, the rate of loss greatly exceeds the rate of soil creation.
- *Energy consumption:* The dominant global food system relies heavily on foreign fossil fuels and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. Growing, processing and distributing and storing our food accounts for about 20% of our national fossil fuel use<sup>13</sup> and agriculture accounts for an estimated 7% of national greenhouse gas emissions. (See also APA Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability.)
- *Fossil-fuel based fertilizers:* Use of nitrogen based fertilizer is a standard agricultural practice. In 2002, agriculture in the US used 12 million metric tons of nitrogen, more than half of total US nitrogen use.<sup>14</sup>
- *Pesticides, antibiotics and hormones:* Large scale, single crop farms depend heavily on pesticides and intensive animal production on antibiotics and growth hormones. Agricultural runoff contributes to extensive damage of our nation's waterways including the Great Lakes. Use of pesticides can cause acute and chronic health effects in farmworkers and use of antibiotics in animals is a growing factor in antibiotic resistance in humans.

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<sup>11</sup> Groundwater Conservation Advisory Council. *Final Report to the Michigan Legislature in Response to Public Act 148 of 2003*. (Lansing, MI: Groundwater Conservation Advisory Council, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> National Resources Inventory (2003).

<sup>13</sup> M. Pollan. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. (New York: The Penguin Press, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> R. Schnepf. "Energy Use in Agriculture: Background and Issues." *CRS Report for Congress* (19 Nov 2004).

Fortunately, we have many assets and resources in Michigan to build upon and many examples around the state to guide the work. Michigan participates in and has developed many programs to support environmentally, socially and economically robust agriculture. Dozens of existing laws and programs affect and support environmentally responsible agricultural practices in Michigan.

Below is a list of relevant laws, programs and resources that affect agricultural practices that local planners, policymakers and advocates may use in planning efforts to promote and support sustainable agriculture.

- Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA), Act 451 of 1994 ([web](#)) created the state Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality and addresses a wide range of environmental protection issues. NREPA's implications for agriculture include water and air pollution, wetlands protection, soil erosion and conservation, hazardous waste disposal, and environmental clean-up.
- Right to Farm Act, Act 93 of 1981 ([pdf](#)) was enacted to protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits. It requires the Michigan Department of Agriculture, in partnership with other institutions, to create a set of uniform, recommended agriculture management practices. These guidelines are called the [Michigan Generally Accepted Agriculture Management Practices](#) (GAAMPS).

For more information on the Right to Farm Act and GAAMPS, see the Urban Agriculture policy and MAP's [Right to Farm Act Policy](#), adopted in 2010.

- [Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program](#) (MAEAP) is a proactive, voluntary program that helps farms prevent or minimize agricultural pollution risks through education, risk assessments and third-party verification.
- Soil conservation districts: Nearly every Michigan county has a conservation district, which provides planning assistance and other information to local landowners, residents and policymakers. The [Michigan Association of Conservation Districts](#) (MACD) provides services to all of Michigan's conservation districts and represents them at the state policy level.
- The [Michigan Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program](#) (MDA) promotes farmland preservation through development rights agreements, purchase of development rights, agriculture preservation funds, and conservation and open space easements. Many Michigan communities have adopted farmland preservation programs including Ann Arbor Township, Kent County, and Peninsula Township.

While the demand for safe, healthy, affordable, Michigan-grown food is growing, the number of farms, acres of land in farming, and the quality of soils are in decline. To effectively address these conflicting trends, Michigan's communities must engage in thoughtful, forward-looking, creative and collaborative efforts to preserve farmland and other natural resources while strengthening local and regional food systems.

## **Sustainable Agricultural Practices Policy Statements**

### *Best Practices*

1. MAP encourages municipalities to seek and collaborate with public and private, nonprofit entities to preserve and protect environmental resources. Potential partners include: land conservancies, greenbelt initiatives, food policy councils, foundations, and schools.
2. MAP supports regional collaboration among municipalities to effectively address agriculture-related environmental impacts, share resources and minimize waste, and enhance the economic development contributions of agriculture.
3. MAP support engaging farmers to collaborate with local government to create policies which sustain and enhance the agricultural economy while preserving environmental resources.

### *Local Actions*

4. MAP supports innovative local and regional programs that support new and small farms and farmers.
5. MAP encourages transparent, clear communication of regulations to protect wetlands, waterways, habitats and other valuable ecological resources and services.

### *State Actions*

6. MAP supports regulations that protect agricultural resource water by:
  - a. Managing water as a collective public resource in a sustainable manner.
  - b. Minimizing pollution and other man-made threats, including erosion, pesticides and antibiotics.
  - c. Encouraging private landowners to protect, conserve, enhance and restore wetlands.
7. MAP supports regulations that protect soil as an agricultural resource by:
  - a. Encouraging methods of agriculture that reduce or eliminate pesticides, synthetic fertilizers and antibiotics.
  - b. Encouraging the use of compost and integrated pest management practices.
  - c. Encouraging soil-stabilization practices that reduce erosion.
8. MAP supports the extension of Farmland and Open Space Protection Program to include transfer of development rights (TDR) programs.

For land preservation policy statements, please see MAP's [Agricultural Land Preservation Policy](#).

## Policy Area 3

### Equity in Food Access, Labor, Entrepreneurship and Supply Chains

#### **Summary and Background**

Access to high quality, fresh, healthy food within communities is a public health and social justice issue. Many research studies demonstrate that people who live farther from a grocery store and people with low incomes are less likely to have a healthy diet (see footnotes 15-19). Access to high-quality supermarkets is associated with greater consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Planners are charged with protecting a community's health, safety and welfare as well as ensuring that the community meets the basic needs—such as food, employment, education, etc.—of residents who live there. Promoting equitable access to entrepreneurship and business development opportunities will create the lasting conditions that enable communities to thrive.

Hunger, food insecurity, and disparities in access to fresh food are problems for many people in Michigan. In Detroit, more than half of the community's residents must travel twice as far to reach a full-service grocery store than a convenience store<sup>15</sup> which typically offers limited, if any, choices in produce, meat, dairy and whole grain items. Over \$200 million in grocery purchases by Detroiters are made in stores outside the community.<sup>16</sup> Across the state, many low- and moderate-income residents face similar circumstances. According to the USDA, 14% of Michigan households were food insecure, meaning they did not have adequate funds to buy food, between 2009 and 2011.<sup>17</sup> A number of trends have created this situation:

- *Fewer grocery stores.* Increasing concentration in the grocery retail industry has led to more superstores in suburban areas, leaving few full-service stores in rural areas and urban cores.<sup>18</sup> Smaller, convenience stores within neighborhoods generally stock limited quantities of fresh produce and other healthy foods and charge higher prices.
- *Greater automobile dependence.* Automobile transportation is increasingly necessary to reach grocery stores. Low-income households, urban residents, people of color and immigrants are all less likely to own a car than middle- and upper-income whites.<sup>19</sup>
- *Auto-oriented transportation policies.* Michigan's transportation policy and local zoning regulations are both oriented towards highways and roads rather than towards a system that facilitates multi-modal accessibility of destinations by foot, bike, bus, subway, and rail, which would improve food access for those without a vehicle.
- *Infrastructure oriented towards national and global supply chains.* Industry concentration throughout the food system, and particularly in processing, wholesaling and distribution

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<sup>15</sup> M. Gallagher. *Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Detroit.* (Chicago, IL: Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> K. Pothukuchi. *The Detroit Food System, 2009-10.* Detroit: Detroit Food Policy Council, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> USDA Economic Research Service. Food Security Status of U.S. Households in 2011. Available from:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics>

<sup>18</sup> K Pothukuchi. "Attracting grocery retail to the inner city: Economic Development outside the box." *Economic Development Quarterly*, 19(2): 232-44, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> K. Pothukuchi and R. Wallace, *Sustainable Food Systems: Perspectives on Transportation Policy*, in S. Malekafzali, ed., *Healthy, Equitable Transportation Policy: Recommendations and Research* (Oakland, CA: PolicyLink - Prevention Institute Convergence Partnership, 2009) p. 113-129.

facilities, has diminished much of the local infrastructure for these functions. As a result, many mid-scale farmers find it difficult to bring their products to local and regional markets, which in turn limits consumers' access to diverse market channels.

Without intentional planning, market forces alone too often leave many places with insufficient access to high quality, nutritious food. Furthermore, our highly concentrated food system with "just-in-time" delivery leaves many places vulnerable to crises that could interrupt long-distance food transportation. Communities could take the following steps to improve food security, foster more equitable food access and build opportunities for entrepreneurship:

- *Collect data on the food system.* Conduct community food assessments, using tools such as the [USDA Household Food Security Survey](#); analyze the connections between agri-food issues and other issues such as health, energy use and economic development; and assess the impact of decisions on food and agriculture.<sup>20</sup>
- *Plan for food access.* Planning for consistent, reliable access to healthy, fresh, and culturally appropriate food creates opportunities for economic development and encourages healthy dietary behaviors. Full engagement of the community in opportunities for food production, retailing, distribution and consumption across all demographic segments of the population will support diverse means of community food access and strengthen social justice. Food retail spaces can serve as "third places" by providing social connectivity as well as important venues for entry level jobs. Planners could also help ensure the availability and accessibility of social services that provide hunger relief and make sure that food supply is included in emergency preparedness plans.
- *Assist small and mid-scale producers.* Local government officials can assist in the creation of infrastructure for small and mid-scale producers, such as cold storage facilities, commercial grade kitchens or distribution centers. They can support existing infrastructure businesses through tax rebates, political support and food purchasing contracts. Communities can create [food innovation districts](#), to foster business growth and development and synergies across firms and activities. Planners can assess relevant state and county health regulations related to food processing to ensure that they do not disproportionately disadvantage small-scale and low-risk operations.
- *Allow and encourage multiple types of retail food distribution.* Planners should support the development of diverse types of retail venues such as supermarkets; "healthy convenience stores"; and year-long or seasonal farmers markets, farm stands (possibly at urban farm and garden sites), mobile markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) farm models. CSAs are retail models in which people pay a farm in advance for a share of produce throughout the growing season. These different retail formats can complement one another by providing multiple forms of access for many different neighborhoods and demographics. Planners can play a role in: encouraging appropriate and adequate siting and development of retail venues, particularly in underserved areas; reviewing zoning regulations to support greater access to food within multiple land use districts; and assessing the accessibility and proximity of these diverse means of food access for all community residents.

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<sup>20</sup> See K. Pothukuchi and J.L. Kaufman. "The food system - A stranger to the planning field." *Journal of the American Planning Association* (2000) 66 no.2: p. 113-124.

- *Expand transportation options for food access.* Planners can work to integrate food accessibility with transportation planning and to encourage multi-modal transportation infrastructure and connections among residential, work, and food retail locations.

### **Equity Policy Statements**

#### *Best Practices*

1. MAP supports including food system elements, particularly access to healthy food, when developing and updating community wide and neighborhood plans; urban, rural and regional economic development plans; Neighborhood Improvement Programs; Complete Streets plans; transit oriented developments; and other plans.
2. MAP supports dedicating planning agency staff time to addressing food system planning.
3. MAP supports the training of planners and planning officials with respect to community food access issues.
4. MAP supports the development of mobile kitchens, incubator kitchens, processing facilities, food hubs, consumer and farmer cooperatives, and other distribution facilities, as appropriate to community needs and desires, around regionally-based food supply chains.
5. MAP supports using existing funding and resources to improve food security and access.
6. MAP supports providing information relevant to agri-food businesses, such as permit requirements, loan programs and technical assistance providers, on a community website.
7. MAP supports coordination between transportation and agri-food planning and policy.
8. MAP supports planning for multi-modal transportation links to grocery stores, farmers markets, urban farms and gardens and other food access sites.
9. MAP supports economic development programs that allocate funds to food-based businesses including farmers, processors, distributors and retailers who focus on Michigan-grown products and strengthening Michigan food systems.
10. MAP supports local purchasing programs that connect farmers and institutions – including schools, hospitals, government agencies, and prisons<sup>21</sup> – and create long-term, mutually-sustaining partnerships.
11. MAP supports local efforts for living wages and improved working conditions for food service workers.
12. MAP supports local efforts for living wages and improved working conditions for farm workers.

#### *Local Actions*

13. MAP supports allowing and encouraging multiple types of retail food outlets within neighborhoods, including supermarkets and convenience stores, farmers markets, farm stands

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<sup>21</sup> There is a move to local food purchase, with many institutions adopting the 20% shift to purchasing local food by 2020, outlined in the Michigan Good Food Charter. *Michigan Good Food Good Food Charter, pg2, June 2010*, <http://www.michiganfood.org/assets/goodfood/docs/MI%20Good%20Food%20Charter%20Final.pdf>.



(possibly at urban farm and garden sites), mobile markets and community supported agriculture farms.

14. MAP supports the creation of [food innovation districts where appropriate](#).
15. MAP supports reviewing and modifying, as appropriate, policies and other factors that may inhibit grocery store development within the urban core, including for example, parking requirements.

#### *State Actions*

16. MAP supports policies, such as loans, tax breaks, and other financial incentives, to encourage food retail locations in underserved areas as financially prudent.
17. MAP supports regulations that ensure a safe and healthy food supply while not placing a disproportionate burden on small and medium growers and producers.
18. MAP supports changes to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act requiring master plans to include food systems.

## Appendix A

### APA Policy Guide on Community & Regional Food Planning

1. Support comprehensive food planning process at the community and regional levels;
2. Support the creation of local and regional food planning mechanisms that integrate major local planning functions (such as land use, economic development, transportation, environment, parks and recreation, public safety, health and human services, and agricultural preservation);
3. Support strengthening the local and regional economy by promoting local and regional food systems;
4. Support food systems that improve the health of the region's residents;
5. Support food systems that are ecologically sustainable;
6. Support food systems that are equitable and just;
7. Support food systems that preserve and sustain diverse traditional food cultures of Native American and other ethnic minority communities;
8. Support the development of local, state and federal legislation to facilitate community and regional food planning discussed in general policies i through vi.

### Principles of a Healthy, Sustainable Food System

*Adopted jointly by: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Nurses Association, American Planning Association, and American Public Health Association.*

A healthy, sustainable food system is:

- Health-promoting
- Sustainable
- Resilient
- Diverse
- Fair
- Transparent
- Economically-balanced

*This policy was researched and written for the MAP Government Relations Committee and the MAP Board of Directors by an ad hoc committee of food systems experts and planners including Kathryn Colasanti, Kathryn Underwood, Kami Pothukuchi, Megan Masson-Minock, Deirdra Stockmann to whom we are deeply grateful. Also special thanks to MAP Board members Paul Montagnano and Steve Schnell, and Government Relations chair Jason Ball, and past chair Charlotte Burckhardt.*