

**The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future Food System Mapping Project:  
“Exploring Maryland’s Agriculture, Food, and Public Health Landscape”**

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**Project Description:**

The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF) is developing a mapping resource tool to analyze Maryland’s food system utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology for storage, retrieval, mapping, and analysis of geographic data. The project involves the collection and compilation of new and existing data about relevant aspects of the state’s food system, including: local food production; processing and distribution; retail food sales; nutrition and agricultural institutions; and other pertinent public health information. The central purpose is to establish a new resource that brings together information from disparate sources that collectively can strengthen our understanding of the local food systems and how they work.

The food system mapping resource tool will include statewide data and in-depth information on Baltimore City. Analytical summaries and issue briefs regarding pertinent aspects of the current food system’s infrastructure will be provided to help identify weaknesses and barriers as well as opportunities for building a more sustainable system.

**Goal:**

To create an interactive resource tool for public health, nutrition and agriculture communities who are developing research and program activities to strengthen the local food systems through improving farm viability, increasing access to healthy food, and addressing health disparities and inequities.

**Phase One:**

The project starts with the creation of an accurate snapshot of the current landscape of the food system and its infrastructure throughout Maryland. Initial data will include specific information about farms, stores, schools, etc. for which we could obtain the actual addresses, combined with aggregated information from key sources such as the USDA and Census Bureau.

This project will be dynamic – data, narrative information and other feedback from stakeholders will be incorporated as it is developed. Presentations and other communication efforts about this “snapshot” will be conducted to allow the people and groups identified in the map and other stakeholders a chance to understand this project, the goals and possible applications.

**Location specific data to be included:**

- Maryland farms producing food for human consumption that sell within regional markets (identifying information will include location, primary goods produced, marketing methods, and production practices like Certified Organic)
- Food-producing community gardens within city limits
- Food processors, warehouses and distributors (their facilities and distribution radius)
- Retail food outlets: farmers markets, covered markets, restaurants – full service and fast food, grocery stores, convenience and other small food outlets

- Emergency food outlets and government nutrition program locations: soup kitchens, food bank produce drops, stores that accept food stamps and WIC vouchers
- Institutions: public schools, colleges and universities, hospitals and religious institutions
- Public facilities that serve community functions, such as city recreation centers

**Regional data to be included:**

- Relevant transportation routes (bus, metro, light rail)
- Zoning, easements and other land use designations
- Economic, Agricultural and Labor Census data
- Nutritional health data such as rates of diabetes and obesity

**Intended Map Users:**

Agriculture community: Farmers, state and local departments of agriculture, cooperative extension

Social service and advocacy organizations: Food Bank, Gleaning Network, Maryland-based foundations, public institutions, and non-profit organizations

Policy making community: City, county, and state governments; regional economic development agencies; planning departments; Chesapeake Bay and other regional organizations

Research community: Public health, nutrition and environmental health students and researchers

**Potential Uses:**

- Producer coalitions could use the tool to identify new markets – for example, farmers could locate nearby farmers markets, or schools interested in farm-to-school programs.
- Baltimore City could identify new transportation routes that would connect low-income areas with farmers markets or other outlets for fresh produce.
- Agribusiness and community investors could help small-scale sustainable producers by identifying ideal locations for new processing facilities.
- The Maryland Food Bank could use the tool to determine if their current food drop-off sites are reaching communities in need.
- Planning departments could examine zoning regulations to identify barriers or opportunities to support local agriculture and local food processing, distribution and sales.
- Researchers and non-profits may use the data to conduct food system analyses that examine geographic risk and protective factors for health outcomes, and make policy recommendations.
- Farmers and distributors working together could identify distribution routes that are underutilized, and potential new drop-off and pick-up locations for wholesale distribution.

**Preliminary Timeline:**

Development of the first phase of the mapping resource tool will be completed by January 2009. Throughout the spring and summer of 2009, maps and issue briefs will be loaded onto CLF's website and displayed in presentations to stakeholders to explain and promote the map. These resources will also be available upon request. Following this initial development phase, the map will be converted into a web-enabled format and a web site created. Sensitive and non-essential information will be protected. This web version of the map will be available to the public, but users will have to obtain a username and password from CLF in order to access the website.