

Audubon County Food System Atlas

Exploring Community Food Systems



Iowa State University
Department of Sociology
with support from
The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

Introduction to Community Food Systems



Food and agriculture systems in Iowa have been changing. A growing interest in local food systems is emerging as one of these changes. Currently, much of Iowa's food comes from a global food system.

Iowa's agriculture provides many of the commodities for the global food system, however, much of this system operates beyond Iowa. Wholesale commodity production provides some benefits to farmers and rural communities. But the most significant returns are experienced by businesses outside of Iowa communities. The food dollar multiplies many more times after the commodities have left Iowa eventually returning as retail food purchased from global businesses.

What would happen if more of our food dollars were spent on products grown and processed locally? A community food system

creates more direct local linkages among farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, consumers, food preparers, and hunger programs.



Thriving community food systems can support local farmers who practice environmentally sound agriculture. A community food systems approach can encourage local processing and retail enterprises, create jobs and re-circulate money for local economic development, and improve access to nutritious food for all people in the community.

A community food systems perspective can encourage the identification and building up of community assets. In this food system "atlas", we

are "mapping" opportunities and challenges for community food systems based on the unique qualities at the county level in Iowa.

Community food systems offer exciting possibilities for Iowa's rural communities. But community food systems only flourish when communities get involved. How are people in your county working to bring farming, food, and community together? What tools or resources might be helpful to further these efforts?

This community food system atlas highlights work already done in your county and points to future opportunities.



Johnson County Local Food Systems Project

What do we eat and where does it come from?

What do Americans eat?

	<i>one person</i>	<i>Audubon County</i>
<i>fresh fruit</i>	<i>127.0 lbs</i>	<i>434 tons</i>
<i>fresh vegetables</i>	<i>202.0 lbs</i>	<i>690 tons</i>
<i>poultry</i>	<i>66.8 lbs</i>	<i>228 tons</i>
<i>beef</i>	<i>64.5 lbs</i>	<i>220 tons</i>
<i>pork</i>	<i>47.7 lbs</i>	<i>163 tons</i>
<i>eggs</i>	<i>249.7 lbs</i>	<i>853 tons</i>
<i>milk</i>	<i>22.6 gal</i>	<i>154,358 gal</i>

This includes fresh:

<i>tomatoes</i>	<i>17.3 lbs</i>	<i>59 tons</i>
<i>leaf lettuce</i>	<i>8.0 lbs</i>	<i>27 tons</i>
<i>sweet corn</i>	<i>9.0 lbs</i>	<i>31 tons</i>
<i>carrots</i>	<i>11.1 lbs</i>	<i>38 tons</i>
<i>strawberries</i>	<i>5.9 lbs</i>	<i>20 tons</i>

Source: Economic Research Service data from the food consumption (per capita) data system on the Internet: www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption. County consumption figured by multiplying per capita consumption by county population. All data for 2000. Data accessed September 25, 2002

Where does Iowa's food come from?

Iowa imports more than 80 percent of its food, most of which travels at least 1,200 miles. We get vegetables from places like California and Mexico, fruit from Chile and China, and meat from Texas and Argentina.

Just consider apples...

We each eat an average of 47.1 pounds of fresh and processed apples each year. But where do these apples come from? The boxes to the right trace the journey of an apple through both the global and the local food system.



Did you know...

By the late 1800's, southwest Iowa had become an important center of apple production for in-state consumption and export. Seven southwest counties alone shipped one-half a million bushels in 1889.

In 1940, many apple trees were killed by frost and orchards were replaced with row crops. Iowa now grows only about 15 percent of the fresh apples it consumes. But growing conditions

The Global Apple

From farm to table takes up to eight months, traveling thousands of miles.

Tree → Truck → Warehouse → Shipping → Warehouse → Storage → Store → Consumer

Controlled atmosphere storage for eight months or longer. Shipped for international wholesale market with most profits going to multinational corporations.

The Local Apple

From farm to table takes one day to two months, often traveling at most 100-200 miles.

Tree → Orchard or Store → Consumer

Sold retail at orchards, markets, and grocery stores.

are still good for Iowa farmers to produce more fresh, local apples.

How are landscapes and food systems related?

“In a lovely spot enchanting
equaled not beneath the sky,
And the prairies that surround it,
poets picture and portray.”

Bayard Taylor, History of Audubon, 1892

Before farming began in Iowa, most of the landscape was covered in tallgrass prairie. Wildlife was abundant. Bears were seen and elk and deer were very common. Wild geese, ducks, sandhill cranes, and swans came through in spring and fall, and prairie chickens were common all year.

The most obvious of Iowa’s natural resources is the rich soil, which provides the basis for the

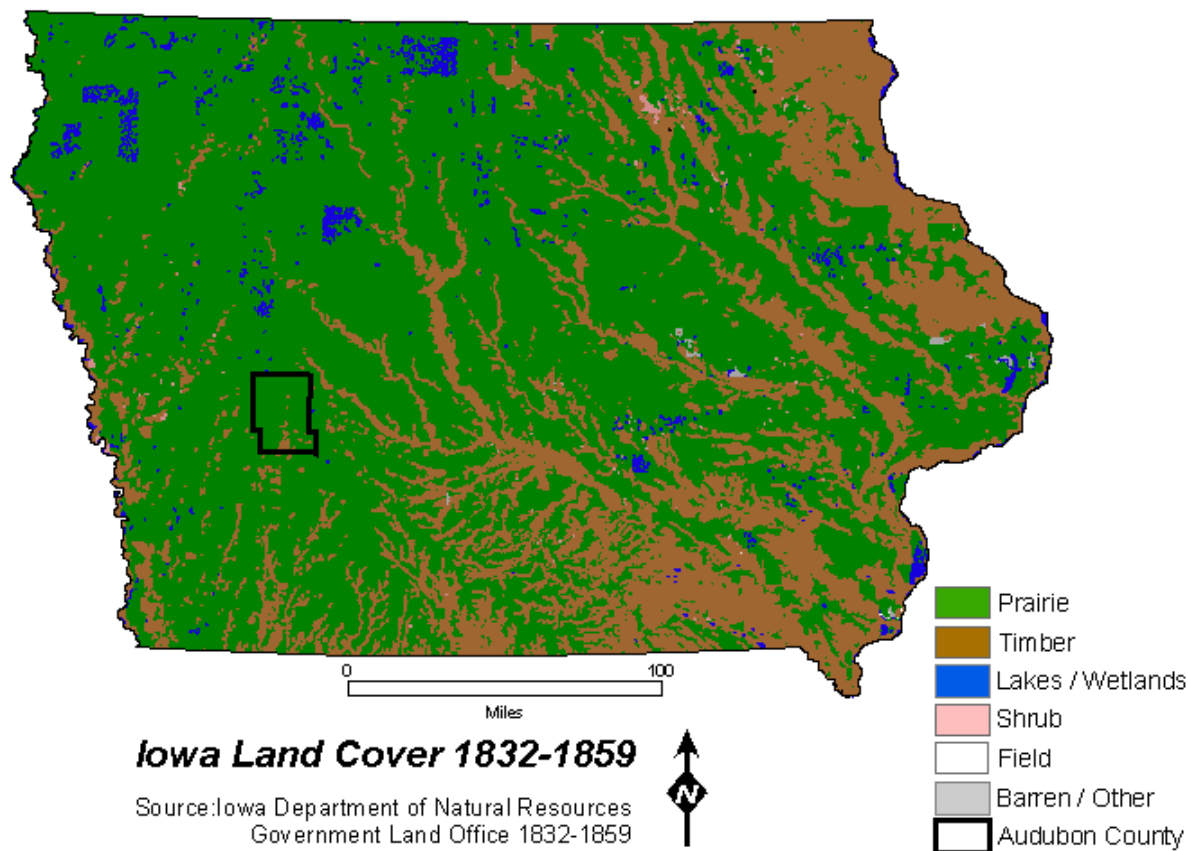


agricultural economy. That soil has been forming for thousands of years under the prairie. Every year the prairie grew, and every year rich soil formed. When people began plowing that soil, they found it to be some of the most productive land in the world.

Iowa’s soils remain some of the richest in the

What unique qualities exist in Audubon County’s landscape?

world, even though it is estimated that more than half of the topsoil has been lost from agricultural fields through erosion in the last century.



As more and more people settled in Iowa and began farming, almost all of the rich prairie was converted to cropland. Today less than half of one percent of the original prairie remains in Iowa.

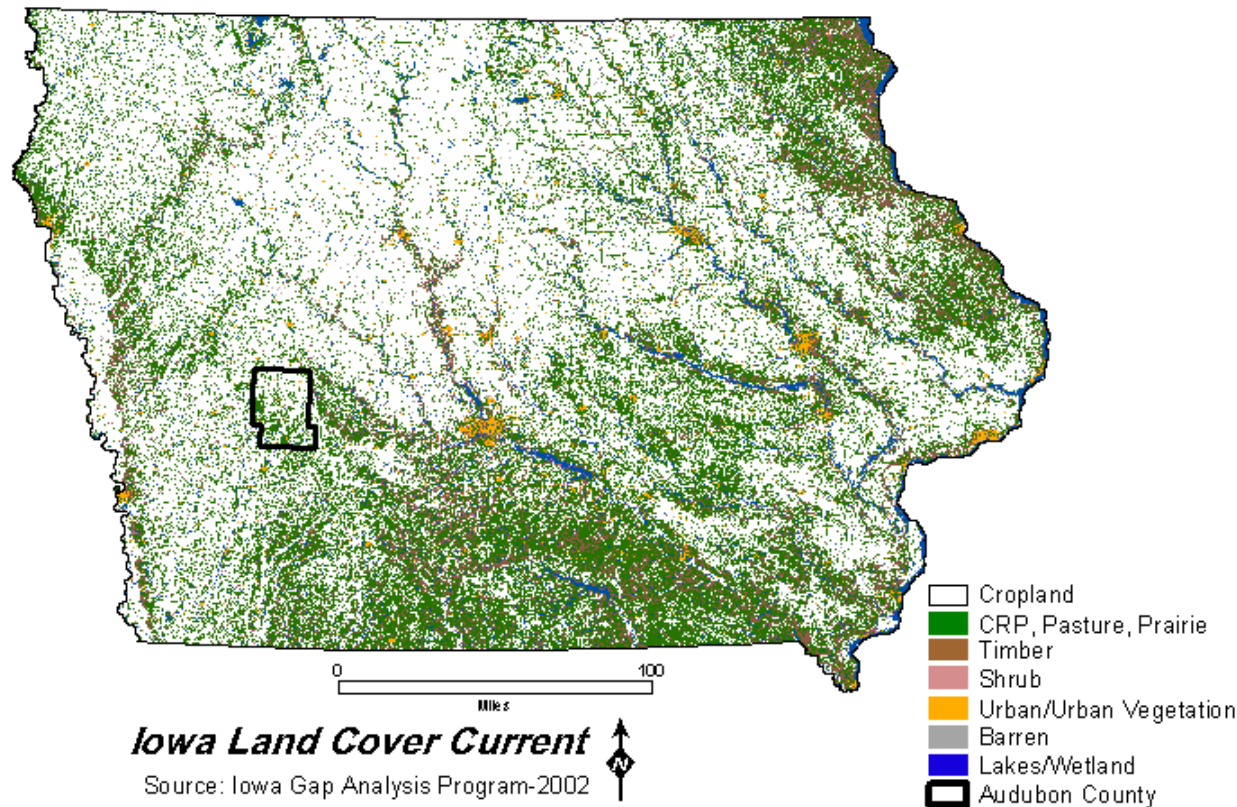
The flat, almost treeless landscape allowed Iowa farmers to use machinery and farm more and more acres while people farther east in hilly

areas still used draft animals on small fields.

As food systems expanded to the regional, national, and then global level, farm products came to be viewed as commodities to be bought in the greatest quantity at the lowest price. In response farmers needed to grow more and more bushels, and farms and machinery grew larger and larger.

Most farms began to specialize in one or two commodity crops, abandoning the old strategy of growing diverse products.

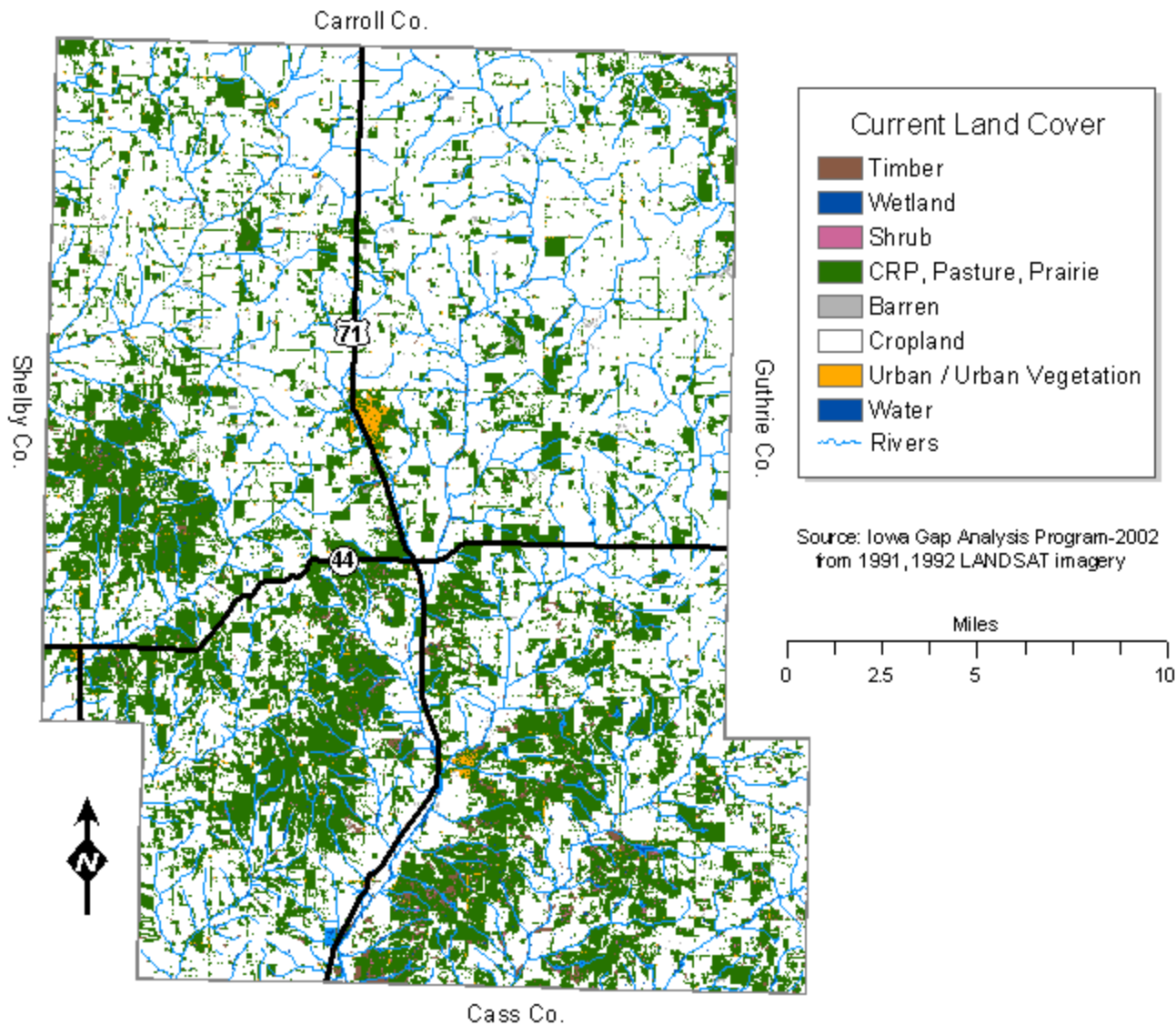
Today the Iowa landscape is dominated by fields of corn and soybeans, dotted with the beef feedlots, hog confinements, and poultry houses that consume the grain.



In what ways can community food systems improve Audubon County's ecosystem?



How is the land in Audubon County used?



The natural qualities of the land influence agricultural practices, and those practices in turn affect the land. Audubon County's agricultural land use remains more varied than many parts of the state. Therefore, unique opportunities may exist to develop diverse strategies for community development around food and agriculture.

Audubon County has a more diverse landscape than many counties in central Iowa because its hilly areas are kept in pasture, and nearly seven percent of farm acres are now in CRP, protecting the county's soil and water.

Like much of Iowa, private lands make up nearly all of Audubon County. County run Little Field Park in the southeast corner of Audubon County provides the largest public lands in the county.

Who lives in Audubon County?

Audubon County's population peaked in 1900 at 13,626. The population has steadily declined since then to 6830 in 2000, half its former size.

The county's population is also aging more rapidly than the rest of the state and nation.

This presents both challenges

and opportunities. One challenge is to retain younger residents. Another is to attract younger newcomers. Other people who have left might also return to the county.

Some opportunities for keeping people or drawing new people in may lie in services to seniors. Many seniors have comfortable retirement

What strategies could bring new agriculture, population trends and community assets together to revitalize Audubon County?

incomes or resources from farming assets, while others may have access to state and federal benefits including housing, health

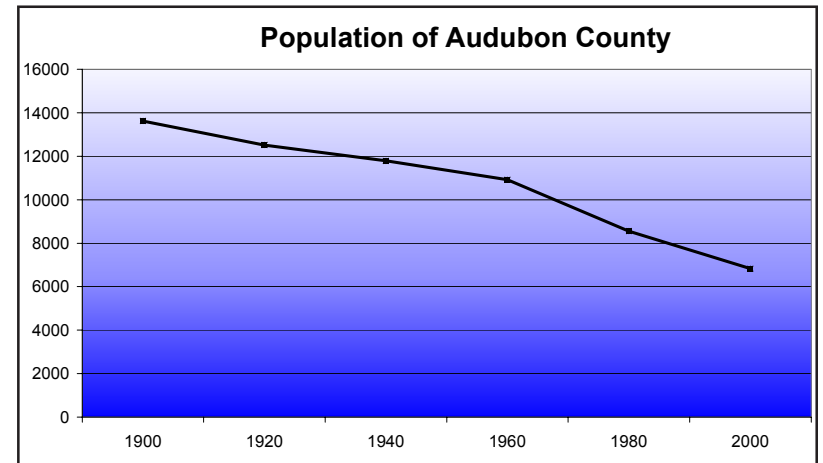
care, nutrition, and income.

Audubon County boasts a rich heritage

dating back to its early German and Danish settlements. Beyond these two early immigrant groups, Audubon County has seen little new ethnic in-migration. A local seed company in the neighboring county does attract temporary farm workers who stay in the county for short periods of employment.

However, a consistent pattern of out migration has been the theme for nearly a century.

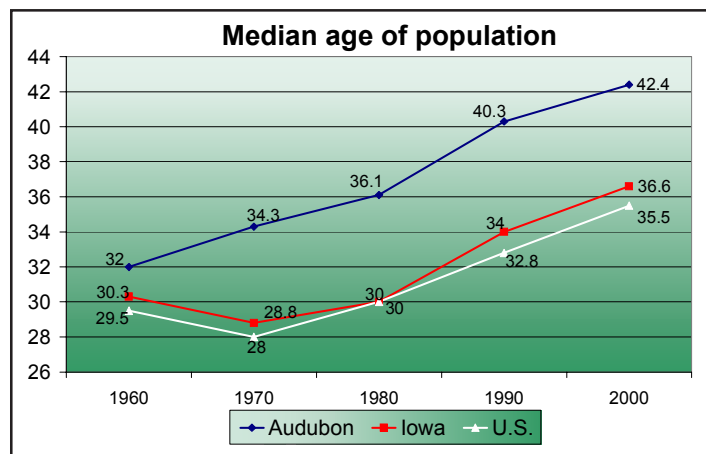
The poverty level in the county has been declining, although it remains above the state average. Audubon County's per capita income in 1999 was \$20,163 compared to \$25,598 for the state. Although Audubon County is beyond the typical 60



mile commute zone for large metropolitan areas, many residents travel to neighboring counties for jobs and services.

Farm employment continues to provide the most jobs of any industry in the county, 820 in 2000. However, farm employment dropped by over half through the last century and declined every year in the 1990s in Audubon County. Also, the median age of farmers continues to rise faster than that of the general population.

Emerging food system trends may provide opportunities to revitalize the community and increase the viability of farms.



What does farming have to do with food?

American farms once produced a diversity of crops and livestock that were marketed regionally. Today American commercial farms tend to be larger and more specialized. Most products from today's farms go to a global market. For example, the lion's share of fruits and vegetables eaten in Iowa come from California, Florida, and increasingly from overseas.

Iowa is clearly capable of raising some of these foods. Would it be economically feasible? What would be some of the benefits? What would be some of the challenges?

As the Iowa farmer's share of the consumer food dollar gets smaller, a widening gap emerges

between the growing of food and eating of food in Iowa. The opposite page shows the mix of crops and livestock raised in Iowa during the 20th cen-

What would it take to bring a job growing and marketing food back to the farm?

tury. Notice how many foods were listed as important sectors of Iowa agricultural production in 1920. But by 1997, the number had narrowed to ten.

How many of these ten products make it to

the dinner plate in Audubon County?

And of those that do, do they arrive directly as foods or do they come as inputs and components of other food we eat?

Certainly, commodity production remains important to Iowa agri-

culture and the economic health of Audubon County. Advances in agricultural technology and production have allowed Audubon County farmers to specialize in a few crops. However, these trends have encouraged an increase in farm size and a decrease in farm numbers. Are there possibilities beyond commodity agriculture for bringing Audubon farms and Audubon food closer together?

How do trends in agriculture reflect changes in what and where Iowans eat?

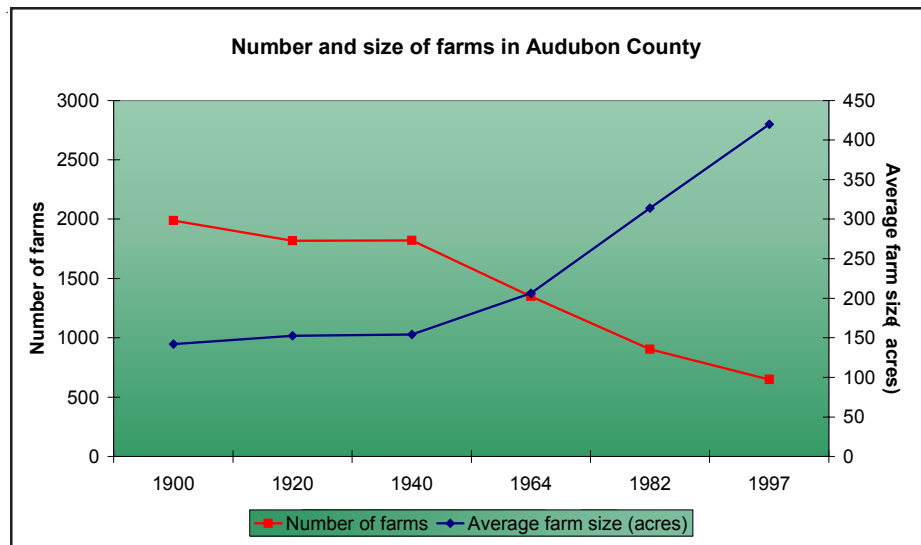


Photo by Matt Russell

Crops and livestock produced for sale on at least 1% of Iowa farms

<u>1920</u>	<u>1935</u>	<u>1945</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1997</u>
Horses	Cattle	Cattle	Corn	Corn	Corn	Corn	Corn
Cattle	Horses	Chickens	Cattle	Cattle	Soybeans	Soybeans	Soybeans
Chickens	Chickens	Corn	Oats	Hogs	Cattle	Cattle	Hay
Corn	Corn	Horses	Chickens	Hay	Hay	Hay	Cattle
Hogs	Hogs	Hogs	Hogs	Soybeans	Hogs	Hogs	Hogs
Apples	Hay	Hay	Hay	Oats	Oats	Oats	Oats
Hay	Potatoes	Oats	Horses	Chickens	Horses	Horses	Horses
Oats	Apples	Apples	Soybeans	Horses	Chickens	Sheep	Sheep
Potatoes	Oats	Soybeans	Potatoes	Sheep	Sheep	Chickens	Chickens
Cherries	Cherries	Grapes	Sheep	Potatoes	Wheat	Ducks	Goats
Wheat	Grapes	Potatoes	Ducks	Wheat	Goats	Goats	
Plums	Plums	Cherries	Apples	Sorghum	Ducks	Wheat	
Grapes	Sheep	Peaches	Cherries	Red Clover			
Ducks	Peaches	Sheep	Peaches	Apples			
Geese	Pears	Plums	Goats	Ducks			
Strawberries	Mules	Pears	Grapes	Goats			
Pears	Ducks	Red Clover	Pears	Geese			
Mules	Wheat	Mules	Plums				
Sheep	Geese	Strawberries	Wheat				
Timothy	Sorghum	Ducks	Red clover				
Peaches	Barley	Wheat	Geese				
Bees	Red Clover	Timothy	Popcorn				
Barley	Strawberries	Geese	Timothy				
Raspberry	Soybeans	Rye	Sweet potato				
Turkeys	Raspberry	Popcorn	Sweet corn				
Watermelon	Bees	Sweet Corn	Turkeys				
Sorghum	Timothy	Raspberry					
Gooseberry	Turkeys	Bees					
Sweet Corn	Rye	Sorghum					
Apricots	Popcorn						
Tomatoes	Sweet Corn						
Cabbage	Sweet Clover						
Popcorn	Goats						
Currants							

Does Audubon County reflect these trends?

Are there additional crops and livestock grown today in Audubon County?

Grown on more than 50% of Iowa farms

Grown on 15-49% of Iowa farms

Grown on less than 15% of Iowa farms

What are the possibilities for 2020?

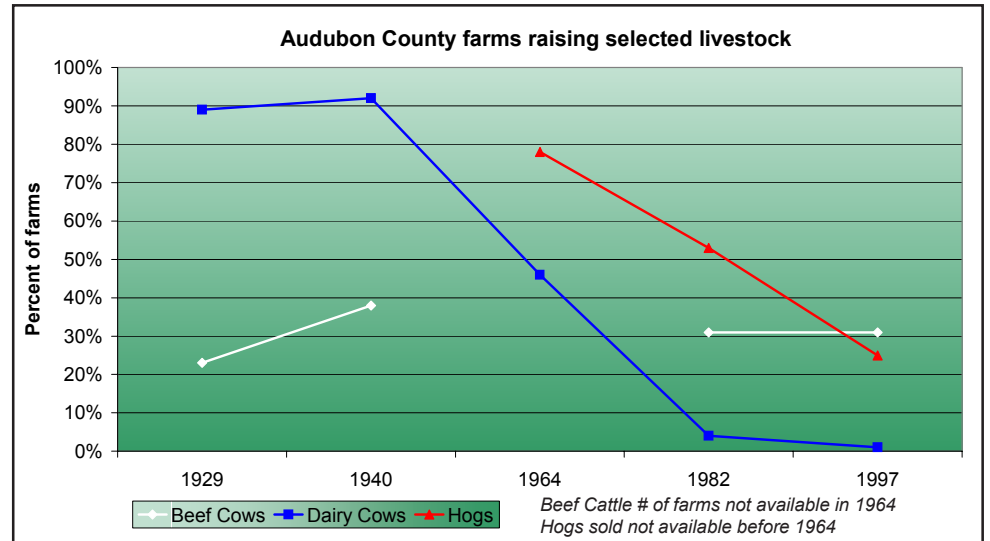
Source: Michael Carolan, Sociology Department, Iowa State University. Data from U.S. Census of Agriculture

How has farming changed in Audubon County?

One way to see change on the farming landscape is to follow the history of different agricultural commodities. We chose six products that have continued to be important commodities in Midwestern agriculture and whose place in Audubon County has changed significantly since 1929. We also looked at fruit and vegetable production.

How has technology in agriculture affected people's choices of food?

The proportion of Audubon County farms with livestock has declined since 1940, especially for dairy cattle and hogs. Dairy cattle have nearly disappeared from Audubon County. Hog numbers have remained high but are concentrated on fewer farms. Soybeans have increased from almost no plantings in 1940 to 37 percent of cropland in 1997. Considering that more than five percent of Audubon County farmland was enrolled in CRP in 1997 and corn made

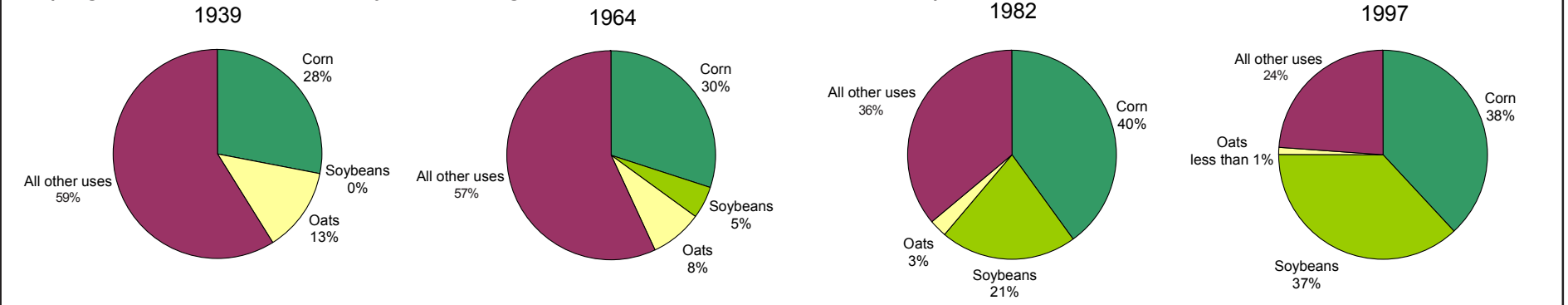


The charts and graphs of census data on these two pages show some of the significant changes in land use, crop diversity, and livestock production patterns.

up 38 percent of the farm acres, these three government supported land uses accounted for about 80 percent of farmland use.

These trends present farmers, landowners, beginning farmers, communities, and the landscape

Crops grown in Audubon County: Percentage of farmland acres for selected crops



with challenges and opportunities. Do different production and marketing practices hold some promise for creating new opportunities?

In the past, many farms in Audubon County and around the state raised fruits and vegetables both for home use and sale.

The box on this page shows the diversity of fruits and vegetables that were harvested for sale on two or more farms in the county in 1929.

We know that fruits and vegetables are still

What would it take to increase fruit and vegetable production in Audubon County?

grown in Audubon County, yet the 1997 Census of Agriculture records no fruit and vegetable

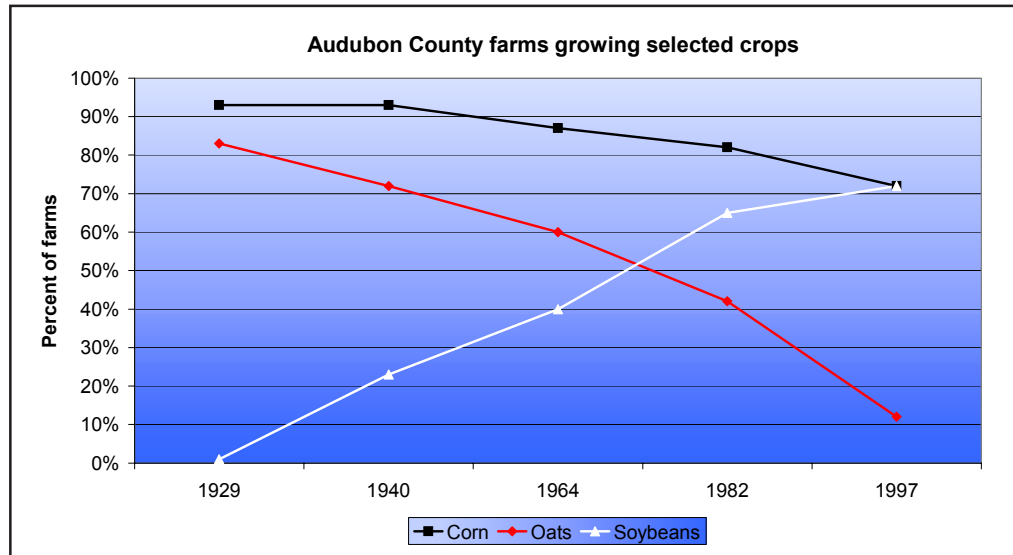
farms. Audubon County residents market a variety of fruits and vegetables including apples, tomatoes, strawberries, sweet corn, potatoes, squash, melons, tomatoes, and

also honey, for which Audubon County production is recorded in the 1997 census.

Many of these producers sell at farmers' markets. One com-

mercial tomato grower sells green house tomatoes to grocery stores in the area. And gardening for home use has continued.

Certainly the situation is different than in 1929, but do possibilities exist today for locally grown produce to become a more significant part of Audubon County's food and agriculture? What other foods and farm products could connect Audubon County dining tables with Audubon County farms?



Fruits and vegetables grown for sale on at least two Audubon County farms in 1929:

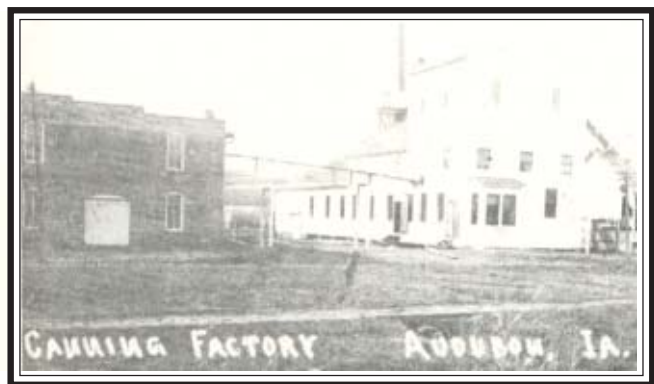
Potatoes	Cherries	Apricots
Apples	Sweet corn	Honey
Cantaloupes	Tomatoes	Green beans
Plums	Cabbage	Pears
Strawberries	Peaches	Watermelon
Onions	Raspberries	Grapes

Which of these are still or could be grown in Audubon County today?

What about food processing & retailing in Audubon County?

While recreating the past is not possible, Audubon County's rich food processing and retailing history does remind us of the county's assets and offers some clues to what might be possible in the future.

The first general store in Audubon County was started at Oakfield in 1854. In 1905, Exira had a grocery store, a creamery, and four restaurants. In its early days, Brayton boasted three general



stores, a cream station, and a meat market.

The City Dairy in Audubon started in 1916 providing dairy products to area residents. Dairy processing also occurred at Crystal Springs Creamery in Kimballton, Hamlin Creamery, and Exira Creamery.

In 1942, the Audubon Canning Company had a pack of 100,000 cases, and shipped sweet corn all over the U.S. under its own brand name. The Audubon Produce Company grew from a small egg, cream and poultry buying station to a modern egg processing and cartoning plant.

Over the years, there have been many other processing and retailing food businesses in the county. Today, grocery stores, convenience stores, and farmers' markets are found in Audubon and Exira.

Both rural and urban communities

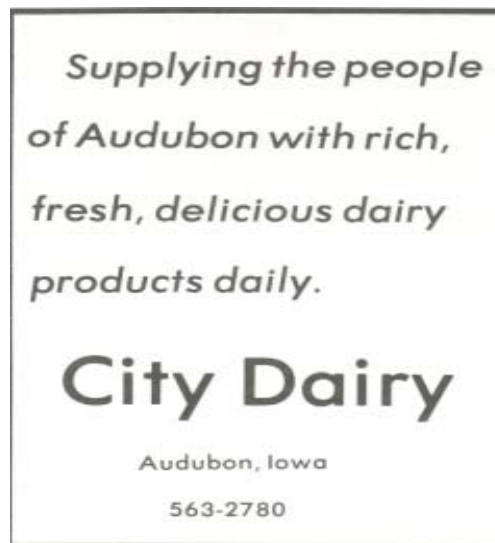
across Iowa are now successfully growing and marketing fresh vegetables, fruits, and meats to restaurants and institutional markets. One restaurant in Waterloo, Iowa, for example, buys nearly \$150,000 worth of locally produced meats and vegetables each year. Audubon has eight restau-

rants, Exira has four and there is one each in Hamlin, Gray, and Kimballton. Audubon County is also home to two nursing homes, one hospital and two school districts, all possible markets for nutritious, locally-grown food.

Additionally, Audubon County has a poultry processor, with other meat processing available in adjacent counties. There is some interest in establishing smaller scale organic dairies in the county.

The commercial kitchens at the Audubon Memorial Building and in the schools could be used for some light pro-

cessing of fruits and vegetables. Could Audubon County apples be processed into products like applesauce or apple butter? Could Audubon County develop, grow, and process its own brand of frozen sweet corn in the future?



Where are opportunities for local marketing?

Because it is vital for life itself, food is crucial in our market economy. Therefore, people argue that marketing possibilities for food are endless. While this may be true in theory, marketing food is difficult, especially in our society where food is so often taken for granted.

Fortunately, many people are finding ways to grow and sell food directly to consumers. National trends indicate a growing demand for food purchased directly from farmers. Advantages of food that travels more directly from the farm to the table include freshness, nutrition, quality, taste, and accountability. Increasingly people are interested in knowing about the source of their food.

Examples of how Iowa farmers sell directly include farmers' markets, roadside stands, com-

Some of the products that are grown, marketed, or processed in Audubon County:

Honey, candles, apples, berries, pork, tomatoes, chickens, eggs, baked goods with local produce, fruits and vegetables, sweet corn, organic soybeans.

munity supported agriculture (CSA), and sales to restaurants, nursing homes, and schools. Often, farmers work together in alliances or cooperative relationships. Legal, economic, marketing, and regulatory issues pose real barriers and significant risks. However, the benefits for successful entrepreneurs are proving to be significant for both farmers and consumers. Community and environmental benefits also develop when farmers and consumers become more connected.

Trends such as specialization and concentration in agriculture are creating a global food system in which

corporations benefit more than farmers. Farmers, retailers, processors, and consumers can work together to revitalize community food systems. These efforts



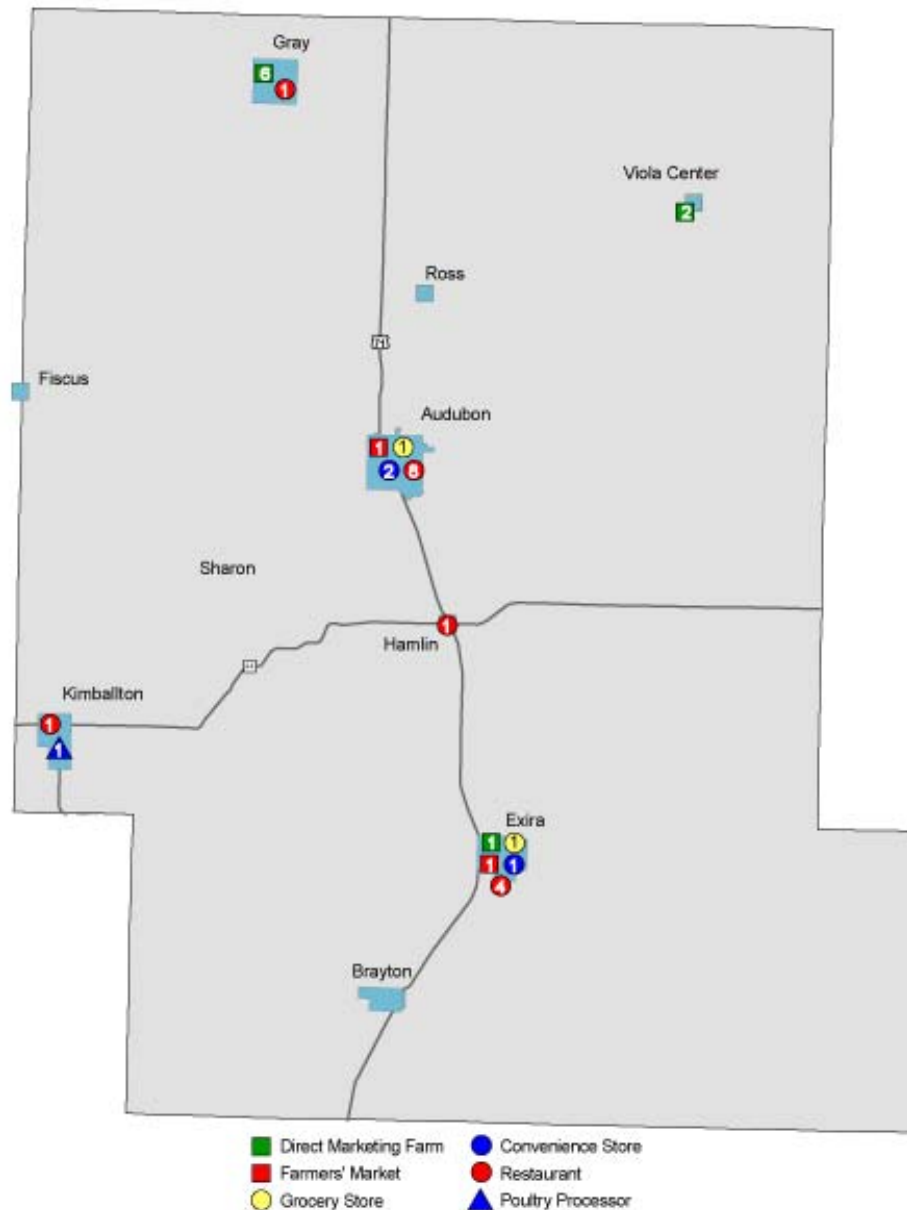
attempt to build food systems based on local assets that create opportunities for local communities. Developing local markets is crucial for strong community food systems.

Direct Marketing of Food in Iowa

Total Iowa	1992	1997
Farms direct marketing	2,235	2,174
Total value of sales	\$5,382,000	\$7,475,000

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture. Value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption in Iowa.

Where can people buy food in Audubon County?



Note: Numbers inside shapes indicate the number of such enterprises located in or associated with that community.

This food system map only tells part of the story for Audubon County. People can buy food from additional places in the county. For example, hospitals and schools usually have cafeterias that sell meals. Catering services may or may not be included on the map. Bed and breakfasts serving meals can potentially add value to local produce and meat products.

Many communities have food-buying clubs where people pool their food needs with others in order to create a demand large enough to reap discounts or improved service. As the largest food retailer in the U.S. now, Walmart demonstrates that stores with general merchandise may also sell a great deal of food.

Hospitals, restaurants, and other institutional food services are increasing the amount of local food they serve and grocery stores have increased their marketing of local products. The components of your community food system identified on this page give a sense of the number and diversity of opportunities for those with a stake in the business of eating.

Where else can people get food in the county?

Across the nation, people obtain food in ways other than buying at a grocery store or market. While hunger still persists in America, there are many publicly and privately funded programs to combat it. In Audubon County, these programs can benefit everyone, from the very young to the very old. The programs are usually based on financial need, but they fill other community needs as well. The challenge is to increase the benefits of these services throughout the county.

Some things, like neighbors lending a helping hand or backyard gardens, are difficult to map. But they have real benefits. What strategies could be designed for developing these networks of support and self-reliance?

Other services are much easier to identify. Governmental programs provide commodities and

funding for local services. These funds and food services make such programs as school lunch, Congregate Meals, nursing home food service, and Head Start meals possible throughout the county. However, the benefits are only remotely related to the county's agriculture. Very little food grown in the county makes it into these programs. Across the country and in other parts of Iowa, people are starting to connect local production to these programs. In Audubon County, for example, local farmers supply food to a nursing home.

Also important are the Farmers Market Nutrition Programs for WIC and for seniors. These programs allow at-risk residents to use federal money to purchase fresh produce from farmers' markets. The result is increased demand at farm-

ers' markets and federal money staying in the community to be spent again. What are the possibilities for developing a more integrated community food security plan that benefits the entire community: program participants, farmers, and local businesses?



Gardens provide people in the county with healthy food for very little money.

Some Extra-market Food Resources in Audubon County

SHARE Iowa: reduced price box of food in exchange for volunteer efforts (Audubon)

Congregate Meals/Meals on Wheels: federal, state, and local subsidized meals for seniors (Audubon and Exira)

School lunch: federal program for school children, can include breakfast and snacks (Audubon, Exira, and Elkhorn-Kimballton)

Head Start: federal meal/snack program for pre-schoolers

Nursing homes: commodities and programs for meals (Audubon and Exira)

WIC (Women, Infants and Children): food assistance, includes Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program for Seniors: one time program combining federal funds for food purchases with state funds for administration

Caring and Sharing: food pantry provided by the churches in the county housed in the Memorial Building in Audubon and stocked entirely by donations (Audubon)

Community Opportunities Outreach Center: food pantry staffed with federal, state, and local resources but stocked entirely by donations (Audubon)

Food Stamps: federal program providing food assistance coupons based on financial need

How are food and agriculture promoted and celebrated in Audubon County?

Promoting and celebrating agriculture is an important way to build community spirit and to educate



Photo by Shelly Gradwell

people about where their food comes from.

Audubon County held its first fair in 1861. The county fair is still held every August and continues a long tradition of youth education and experience in agriculture through the 4-H program.

“Albert, The World’s Largest Bull” was built by the Audubon Jaycees to recognize the prime beef cattle industry for which Audubon County is noted.

Operation T-Bone started as an idea to “ride herd with the cattle” on the trains from Audubon County to the Chicago stockyards. The Audubon County Beef Producers now feature “T-Bone Days” as a celebration of the cattle industry with a parade, rodeo, and a cattle sale in September. In a similar promotion of the pork industry, the

Audubon County Pork Producers organize “Pork Chop Days” each March.

Exira hosts the “Bringing Home the Harvest” festival in September. Gray organizes a Fall Craft



Audubon County Extension Office

Fair and features its Heritage Rose Garden. The Audubon County Historical Society manages the Nathaniel Hamlin Museum, named after the County’s first settler. The museum features living history demonstrations and holds festivals in June and September. Its restored prairie provides a habitat for elk, which were plentiful in the early days of Audubon County.

In 1933, about 25,000 people attended the Iowa State Cornhusking contest, which is still held in October near Kimballton. The festi-

ties include machinery displays, pioneer craft demonstrations, food stands, and a general store museum. Julefest also celebrates Danish food and crafts in late November in Kimballton.

The Homeplace LLC provides hunters with a unique pheasant hunting experience, lodge accommodations, and restored habitat areas, on a century farm near Audubon. Many of the pheasants are donated to area food pantries.

The Audubon Co. Beef Producers, Audubon Co. Pork Producers, Audubon Garden Club, Audubon Co. 4-H and Boy and Girl Scouts also have agriculture and food related programs. Both Audubon and Exira High Schools have Agriculture Education Programs and offer FFA programs. Audubon High School has a green house and experimented with raising tilapia fish.



Photo by Shelly Gradwell

How are people making community food systems work?

Audubon County Family Farms

Audubon County Family Farms (ACFF) has been experimenting with direct marketing of farm products since 1997. ACFF member-producers offer a variety of products. In addition to pork and poultry, they market apiary products (beeswax candles and honey), orchard products (frozen and fresh tart cherries, cherry preserves and apples), herbs and dried floral products.

The group, with assistance from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, researched direct marketing and educating people about it. ACFF decided to focus on the Des Moines Farmers' Market. While the Des Moines Farmers' Market has become the main outlet for ACFF, the group remains committed to marketing at the Audubon farmers' market as well.

ACFF has gained a reputation across Iowa for innovative use of "relationship marketing" that includes bringing urban-based customers to the farms of Audubon County for social and educational events.



Bluegrass Gardens, Audubon

Gene and Mary Lou Johansen began growing and selling greenhouse tomatoes in 1991. They sell their Bluegrass Garden branded tomatoes at farmers' markets in Omaha and Des Moines and to two local grocery stores in Audubon and Panora. The Johansens have carved out a local niche market by planting their tomatoes in De-



Practical Farmers of Iowa

market.

Their greenhouse and shop sits on Highway 71 and is easily seen as one passes through Audubon. They sell everything they can grow with little additional advertising. They take advantage of their location by offering an unattended roadside stand that sells peas, potatoes, sweet corn, gourds, pumpkins, squash, cucumbers, and green beans on the honor system.

cember and selling tomatoes in April through July, ahead of the normal local tomato

Beaver Creek Farm, Viola Center

Beaver Creek Farm sells a variety of honey and orchard products wholesale to specialty shops, direct to consumers at farmers' markets through Audubon County Family Farms, and at fall festivals. But their best money maker is the unattended roadside stand where they sell nearly half of their apples and a good supply of their Prairie Song Apiary branded liquid and creamed honey.

Charles Carpenter and David Tousain claim the success of the roadside stand depends on the fact that they have created an opportunity where people can be completely honest. People pay for the produce themselves and even make change. The stand evolved from selling a few items from the tailgate of their pickup. Today, people begin calling in late summer to find out when the stand will go up. It is usually open for six to eight weeks in September and October.



Practical Farmers of Iowa

What about economics in Audubon County's food systems?



Current Production Situation

In 2000, Audubon County sold \$109,201,000 of farm products and received government payments of \$19,635,000. Net farm income was \$14,520,000.

In 2000, Audubon County's farmers spent \$116,356,000 raising farm products. Many of these purchases were made from distant rather than local suppliers.

Opportunities

Local grain and livestock farmers can meet changing regional demands more quickly than large international corporations. Audubon County farmers could find ways to distinguish their specialty products as unique in the market to bring higher economic returns.

Current Consumption Situation

Each year, Audubon County's 6,830 residents spend more than \$8 million on food purchases and more than \$5 million on eating and drinking away from home. Even though most of these food purchases are currently made outside of the county, there are many ways to capture more of these dollars locally.

If just *five percent* of the food purchased by Audubon County residents came from local farms, this would generate more than *half a million dollars* per year for Audubon County farmers, businesses, and entrepreneurs. This money would stay longer in the community instead of moving rapidly out of the county.

Opportunities

If farmers, processors, store owners, restaurants, nursing homes, hospitals and schools worked together to create more community-based food systems, the food dollars could multiply in the local economy to create a more thriving Audubon County.



Local Harvest CSA

Some Community Food Systems Resources

Iowa

Ecumenical Ministries of Iowa, Des Moines, 515-255-5905, www.iowachurches.org

Agricultural Law Center, Drake University, Des Moines, (800) 44-DRAKE x2824 or (515) 271-2824, www.law.drake.edu/centers/agLawCenter.

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), Bureau of Horticulture and Farmers' Markets, 515-242-5043, Direct Marketing Specialist, 515-281-8232. www.agriculture.state.ia.us/horticulture.htm

Iowa Local Food Systems homepage, www.ialocalfood.org

Iowa Network for Community Agriculture (INCA), Jan Libbey, Coordinator, 641-495-6367, libland@frontiernet.net

ISU Extension Value Added Agriculture Program, 515-294-6946, www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/valag

Iowa State Sustainable Agriculture Extension Program, Dr. Jerry DeWitt and Margaret Smith, 515-294-1923, <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/sustag>

ISU Organic Agronomy/Horticulture Program, Dr. Kathleen Delate, 515-294-7069, kdelate@iastate.edu, <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/organicag>

Taste of Iowa, atasteofiowa@ided.state.ia.us, www.atasteofiowa.org

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University, 515-294-3711, leocenter@iastate.edu, www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/leopold

National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Des Moines, Carol R. Smith, Director of Community Resources for the Ligutti Rural Community Support Program, 515-270-2634, csnrcrc@aol.com, www.ncrlc.com.

Practical Farmers of Iowa, Robert Karp, Gary Huber or Rick Hartmann, 515-232-5661, robert@practicalfarmers.org, www.pfi.iastate.edu/PFIhomenew.htm

Slow Food, Iowa City, Kurt Friese, 319-337-7885, SlowFoodIowa@Devotay.com, www.devotay.com/SlowFoodIowa%20Main.htm

Women, Food, and Agriculture Network, Denise O'Brien, Coordinator, 59624 Chicago Rd., Atlantic, IA 50022, 712-243-3264, hnob@metc.net

Regional and National

Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, National Agricultural Library, Rm 304, 10301 Baltimore Ave, Beltsville MD 20705-2351. 301-504-6559

Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS), 1450 Linden Drive, Rm 146, UW Madison, Madison WI 53706. 608-262-5200, www.wisc.edu/cias

Community Food Security Coalition, P.O. Box 209, Venice, CA 90294. 310-822-5410, www.foodsecurity.org

Land Stewardship Project, 2200 Fourth Street, White Bear Lake, MN 55110, 651-653-0618, www.landstewardshipproject.org.

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, W2493 County Rd ES, East Troy, WI 53120. 262-642-3303, Fax: 262-642-4028

Small Farm Program, USDA, Cooperative State, Research, Education, and Extension Service Stop 2215, Washington, D.C. 20250-2215. 800-583-3071. smallfarm@reeusda.gov, www.reeusda.gov/smallfarm

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE), USDA, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Stop 2223, Washington, D.C. 20250-2223. 202-720-5203, www.sare.org

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program—North Central Region (NCSARE), University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 13A Activities Bldg., P.O. Box 830840, Lincoln, NE 68583-0840. 402-472-7081, www.sare.org/ncrsare

Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), Hills Building, Room 10, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405, www.sare.org

USDA Farmer Direct Marketing Website www.ams.usda.gov/directmarketing



Photo by Bob Atha

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Iowa State University

Department of Economics

<http://ia.profiles.iastate.edu>

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History of Exira website by John Walker

www.metc.net/jwalker/exira/exirahistory

Audubon County Family Farms Project Evaluation Report, Iowa State University Department of Sociology.

Farm Fresh Directory and Iowa Family Farm Meats Directory Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship www.agriculture.state.ia.us

“Comparing Apples to Apples: An Iowa perspective on apples and local food systems.”

Rich Pirog, Education Coordinator

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/leopold

For more information about this community food systems study of Audubon, Benton, Johnson, and Marshall counties in Iowa, please contact Clare Hinrichs, Dept. of Sociology, East Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011. September 2002.

This county food system atlas is one product of an action research project (2000-69) funded by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and directed by Dr. Clare Hinrichs, Dept. of Sociology, Iowa State University. The three-year project has involved assembly of secondary data and primary field research about multiple facets of community food system development and change in four Iowa counties. A “community food system” may not perfectly match a county’s borders, but counties are still good places to begin due to the availability of county-level data and prevalence of county organizations and affiliations in Iowa. ISU researchers and people working in and concerned about agriculture and food in this county came together at a workshop held the first half of 2002 to discuss information and ideas in an early draft of the atlas. The workshop experience promoted dialogue and improved shared understandings of the county’s food system. The present version of the atlas incorporates comments and concerns of community members and ISU researchers.

Credits

Research and assembly by Shelly Gradwell, Matt Russell, and Wendy VanDyke Evans, Iowa State University.

Geographic Information Systems Maps by Patrick Brown, GIS Analyst Iowa State University GIS Lab.

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Historical photo and advertisements from *History of Audubon, Iowa*.

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