

St. Louis Farm to Institution

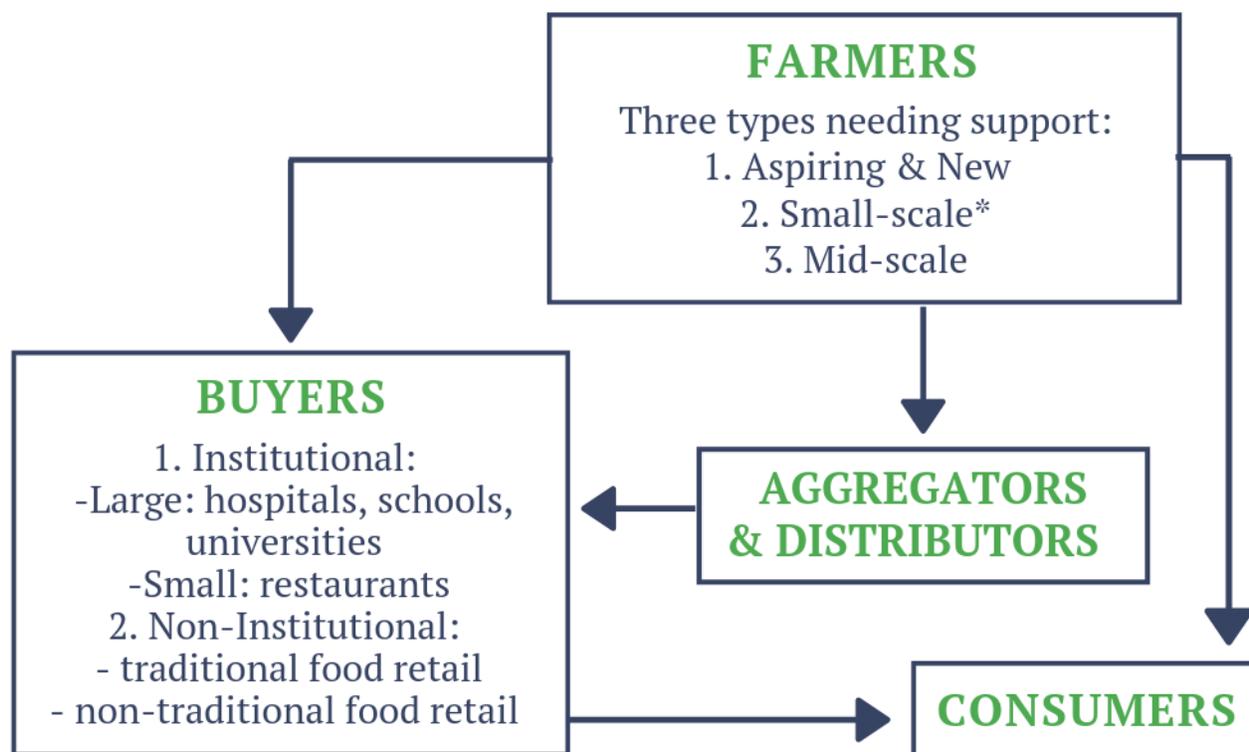
Feasibility Study

S U M M A R Y O F F I N D I N G S

This feasibility study is a project of Missouri Coalition for the Environment (MCE), on behalf of the St. Louis Food Policy Coalition (STLFPC), a coalition of organizations working to promote a thriving local food system that supports the health, community, environment, and economy of the Greater St. Louis Area. MCE is the backbone organization for STLFPC and MCE staff led this study. The study aimed to identify the level of interest of institutional buyers in the St. Louis region in sourcing ingredients for their dining facilities from the MCE farmer network of 200 farms. A summary of the study findings are below:

- ▶ Most large institutions are not ready to take on local product from the MCE farmer network due to requirements from their food service providers that most of the farmers cannot meet.
- ▶ Small institutions are more capable of and many are already sourcing from farms in the MCE network. MCE focused much of its energy during the study making connections between farmers and small institutions.
- ▶ There are several existing aggregators and distributors in the region already moving local product at varying scales and to various buyers. It is critical to work with them to determine the future of farm to institution in the St. Louis region.
- ▶ There is increasing demand for local products grown with environmentally-responsible practices from individual consumers and all types of buyers and the region needs better ways to communicate how to buy these local products.
- ▶ Farmers need a variety of resources in order to ultimately sell to institutions and run more profitable business overall in the St. Louis region.
- ▶ The region will ultimately need a food hub that aggregates local product from a number of farmers throughout the region in order to have a successful farm to institution supply chain. However, the immediate needs outlined in this study must be addressed first in order for the St. Louis region to be ready for a food hub within the next five years.
- ▶ The recommendations in this study must be advanced with all buyers and the following three types of farmers in mind: aspiring and new farmers, small-scale farmers that use environmentally-responsible practices, and mid-scale farmers.

FOOD SYSTEM ACTORS



*Only small-scale farmers that use environmentally-responsible practices

RECOMMENDED STEPS

Farmer-Identified Next Steps

- ▶ Create a farmer-to-farmer communication platform
- ▶ Develop delivery and distribution infrastructure
- ▶ Launch marketing program for environmentally-responsible farmers
- ▶ Utilize commercial kitchens for processing local product into canned, frozen, and prepared foods
- ▶ Establish rental equipment and bulk ordering program

MCE-Identified Additional Next Steps

- ▶ Increase funding to support Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification
- ▶ Offer additional training and education opportunities
- ▶ Increase land access opportunities
- ▶ Draft a business plan for a regional food hub

For more information, visit www.moenvironment.org/farmtoinstitution