

# Food Product Processing and Aggregation (in order to increase product value and marketing opportunities, and increase food system impact)

## THE VISION

- Small farmers would have convenient place, regardless of their food item(s) or production volume, to reach large buyers
- Economically sustainable for farmers, the hub facility, the buyers  
Simple and Seamless -- Good technology -- User friendly designed for farmers (cell phones) and buyers
  - Farm Fresh Rhode Island example for good farmer-buyer interface
- Consistency and support from the public health depts.
  - Legislation needed
- Ergonomically designed facility, using renewable resources, other sustainable practices for the facility
- Diverse – handling all sorts of food products
- Elevate the status of food workers – sustainable jobs in the food system
- Small farmers would have access to food processing equipment to create value added products – freezing, drying, food preservation, fermented products, and value-added foods
- Many local meat processors needed, and processors to make specialty meat products. Rabbit processing also needed.

## What Resources are Currently Available?

- USDA food hub publications
- IL dept of ag – 5 staff dedicated to food processors
- Guide to building successful food hub business
- Wallace Center Hub and grant resources
- UC Davis has specialists for vegetable packing sorting grading
- Michigan State's center for Regional Food Systems
- DATCP in WI
- Pearl meat factory – commercial value added food processing
- Leopold center design resources

- New Entry case study write up of how they did Leopold Ctr packing shed
- Inspected kitchens available in schools, parks and rec centers, churches, etc
- Culinary kitchen incubators
- Hardwick VT -- The Town That Food Saved –
- Upstate NY has flash freezing center
- Mad River Food Hub in VT
- UVM – farmer-gearred materials about GAP
- FarmLogix – tracking buyer and seller relationships
- Local Food Marketplace - software for buyer/seller and tracking

### What Resources Are Not Available but Should Be?

- Relationship Building – best practices
- Dedicated person(s) to facilitate, communicate, troubleshoot, mediate – between farmers, between farmers and buyers
- LANGUAGE needed
  - Contract language (template) between the Hub and the Buyers
  - Language for Planners/Zoning/Municipal folks who need to be comfortable with what a food hub is or does
- Food Safety Farmer Education
  - Tracking/tracability, liability insurance, workers compensation insurance, etc
  - Group GAP
  - Sample agreements re GAP for hub to give to farmers
- A listing of what inspected kitchens are available and where
  - Esp ones open to farmers using it and renting it out
- Specialized meat processing
- Guide to regulations
- Legal help for farmers wanting to structure cooperative agreements with neighboring farmers -- WIU IRA, Farm Commons as possible resources
- Food Hub Business with many services

## Best Practices – Wallace Center as resource

What Works?

What Doesn't?

What still needs to be explored?

- Political/structural/cultural barriers – how does local food hub/processing start and grow within current subsidized food system. How do we level the playing field?
- Profitability/Sustainability -- for profit vs nonprofit vs coop business structure for local food hubs
- Consumer-level subsidies
- Logistical aspects of rural vs urban hub situations - WV coop

### Next steps for moving forward

- Learn from current food system how to make this happen (?)
  - No shortage of hub information, but needs to be local with relationships
  - Need to have ONE PERSON whose job it is to make it happen, build a specialized team, etc – someone with the time and energy and passion
    - Resources needed to identify and pay that person
  - Need strategic plan with action plan – vision and steps to get there
  - Engage state agencies and others?
  - Case studies of the failures
  - Detailed, nitty-gritty of what needs to be done
  - Start small with shared trucking/cooling
  - For Profit Model not likely to succeed
  - Text book and college course needed
  - Access expertise from industry
    - Jericho Road project – for profit sector helps nonprofit sector
- What will be different because of this outcome?  
What will Success look like?

Who will Champion these issues?

