



Local Food Industry Development

Far too often, existing food systems (referring to all the processes, infrastructure and activities related to feeding a community) in the state of New Mexico contribute to poor nutritional outcomes for individuals and families, especially those considered low income. Not only does New Mexico have among the highest obesity and diabetes rates in the nation as a result of these significant shortcomings, the systems in question also contribute little to the state economy, with as much as 80 percent of all money spent on food and nutrition leaving the state, according to the New Mexico State University Extension Service.

Primarily because of these nutritional and economic challenges, McCune supports development of market--based alternatives that will ultimately produce better health outcomes and contribute more directly to the economic wellbeing of New Mexico citizens and communities. While agriculture is one of the largest contributors to the state's gross domestic product, it can be a tough business for new generations of entrepreneurs to succeed in if they aren't already a member of an old, established farm family or if they don't have the backing of a large, corporate farming operation.

Despite this, a stronger, more locally based food industry has been growing in New Mexico communities for the better part of this century. Grassroots efforts such as farmers markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs not only provide training for new farmers and germination of new businesses, they also provide the public with greater options for feeding their families nutritional, locally grown fruits, vegetables and meats. This movement has been critical to the shift in people's ideas about what it means to eat healthy, and what it means to support local agriculture. Local food systems development also drives increased interest in protection of land and water - essential for local food production. All of this, in turn, allows for more small business creation and a deeper statewide economic impact.

Local Food Industry Development Key Leverage Points

Market development, driven by community based programs that build and maintain relationships between consumers and small farms and other food producers, to support small-scale food entrepreneurship in New Mexico is aligned with the Local Food Industry Development priority. Additional priority will be given to approaches that increase profitability and revenue for small farms and producers around the state. This includes programs that support sharing resources in order to build a broader market, as well as a deeper level of market engagement among small and new farms. Other innovative market engagement and development approaches will also be considered.

Shared infrastructure can refer to equipment and facilities as well as administrative and operational functions and capabilities. Organizations that develop, implement and/or maintain shared infrastructural elements that support multiple farms and producers are well aligned with this priority. The Foundation also supports development of new strategies and technologies that improve farm profitability, management

training or increased access to consumers.

New farm/farmer development

emphasizes expansion of the capacity of new farms, both in terms of agricultural practice and competence with standard business practices. As the demand for local and sustainable agriculture grows among consumers, the development of new farms and new farmers will present an opportunity for economic development as well as an avenue to uphold and maintain the state's longstanding agricultural traditions — particularly in vulnerable or rural communities where tradition persists despite the wide range of challenges that families face. In addition, new models of capital development to support emerging agricultural businesses will also be prioritized. Recognizing the deep link between agricultural practices and land conservation and management, the Foundation also prioritizes efforts to develop and support practices that increase the health of land, soil, and water systems.

Nutritional health education

interventions address the need to engage and influence broader audiences through conversations about nutritional health in parallel with opportunities presented by the growth of a more localized food industry. Having such programs directly connected to locally grown produce can provide even greater impact. The Foundation supports programs and organizations focused on creating mechanisms that connect vulnerable populations with healthy, fresh local produce, as well as dairy, meat and other food products.

Policy and advocacy supports the Foundation's interest in development of new, innovative policy approaches that could drive greater demand for the products created by local farmers and producers. As such, the Foundation is aligned with organizations that drive development of policy for the benefit of emerging local food industries around the state. Advocacy efforts that support heirloom and indigenous crop and seed varieties to maintain genetic diversity within our food systems in the face of climate change is also prioritized.