IV. LOCAL FOOD POLICY ORGANIZATIONS [F-6, F-7, F-8, & F-9]

In this section you will find a historical timeline of work that has been done on local food systems planning over the past several decades written by Kate Clancy. Also, there are some summaries as well as the complete reports prepared by Ken Dahlberg on the local food policy councils in Knoxville, TN, St. Paul, MN, Onondaga County, NY, and Philadelphia, PA.

A. "A Timeline of Local Food Systems Planning." Kate Clancy, 1996. [F-6]

B. Local Food Policy Councils:

1. Knoxville. [F-6]

   - "Minnesota Food System; Slow Start, Model Concept," *Nutrition Week*, Vol. 23, No. 27 (July 23, 1993), pp. 4-5. [An abstract done by the Community Nutrition Institute of the report immediately below].

3. Onondaga County, NY. [F-8]


5. Toronto, Canada. [F-9]
   - Rod MacRae, "So Why is the City of Toronto Concerned about Food and Agricultural Policy? A Short History of the Toronto Food Policy Council." *Culture and Agriculture*, Winter 1994, pp. 15-18.
Report and Recommendations

on

The Onondaga County, NY Food System

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INTRODUCTION

This report on the Onondaga County food system and the Onondaga County Food System Council (OFSC) is the third of six on cities and counties around the country. The reports are part of a larger research project entitled, "Local Food Systems: Policies and Values Influencing their Potential." The other study sites are: Knoxville, TN; St. Paul, MN; Philadelphia, PA; Charleston, SC; and Kansas City, MO. All except Onondaga County participated in a 1984-85 project conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors to establish local food policy councils.

My interest in municipal food systems follows on from earlier work on sustainable agriculture - where the idea of localizing food systems is stressed. Curiously, the role of cities and towns in increasing the amount of locally grown food for local consumption has been neglected. This project thus seeks to explore the potential of cities and counties to be more self-reliant and more efficient in operating their local food systems. Much greater development of this potential is not only desirable, but may be required in the shorter term if federal and state funds for food-related programs remain stagnant or decline. Improving local food systems in conjunction with innovative neighborhood development projects can also help cities deal with problems of urban decay, declining tax bases, and environmental degradation, plus help to meet the need for open and green spaces. Development of this potential will definitely be required in the longer-term as fossil fuel prices increase and multiply prices throughout our energy-inefficient food system. This will be a major factor forcing the localization of food systems.

One of today's major challenges is that few citizens or officials are aware of how dependent for food their city is upon distant national and international systems (public and private) and how vulnerable those systems are. Neither are they aware of the extent and complexity of their local food systems, much less their potential and the need to develop that potential. This is reflected in the fact that no U.S. city has a department of food. Equally, few people are aware that the value of the produce from all U.S. gardens (urban and rural) is roughly equivalent to that of the corn crop (approx. $18 billion/year!).

I have sought to understand how local food systems and cycles operate at the household, neighborhood, and municipal levels. At each level I have also sought to understand the issues associated with each portion of the food system: from production issues (farmland preservation, farmers markets, household & community gardens), to processing issues (local vs. external), to distribution issues (transportation, warehousing) to access issues (inner city grocery stores, school breakfasts & lunches, food stamps, the WIC program, etc.), to use issues (food safety and handling, restaurants, street vendors), to food recycling (gleaning, food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens) to waste stream issues (composting, garbage fed to pigs, etc.). Besides the social and environmental issues associated with the above, there are also a number of ethical and value issues involved which I have also sought to understand and describe.
My visit to Syracuse and Onondaga County (July 1991) and subsequent work have been greatly facilitated by the extensive and generous help of Kate Clancy, John Kramer (Director of Extension), and Steve J. Chandler (Extension Associate).3

THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL SETTING

Onondaga County is located in central New York. Its 1990 population was 468,973, while its main urban center, Syracuse, had a population of 163,860. In terms of minorities, the county had 8% blacks, 1% Asians, and 1.5% Hispanics, while the city had 20% blacks, 2% Asians, and 3% Hispanics. 10.3% of the persons in the county were below the poverty line, while 18.4% in the city were.

Descriptions of regional attitudes included a "progressive" political tradition in state government combined with a social conservatism regarding acceptance of new trends, including food trends. There appears to be a fairly high level of concern regarding the preservation of farmland and open space.4 There are real political contrasts between the county and the city - where the county is largely Republican and the city Democratic. This may relate in large part to the mix of traditional ethnic groups found in the city (Italians, Germans, Irish, and Blacks), plus new Hispanic, Asian, and Middle Eastern groups.

Historically the county was linked into the Erie Canal. Today the NY State Barge Canal System provides access to the Great Lakes and overseas through the deep water port of Oswego. Its central location makes it a major distribution center. The county was one of the early national suppliers of salt - an industry that was later expanded into a major chemical industry. Syracuse is the location of the Central New York Regional Market as well as the State Fair. It has extensive health care and educational facilities. The Chamber of Commerce reports the major industries to include defense, appliances, and automobile parts and the major service industries to include utilities and food marketing and distribution.5

A different perspective is found in an Onondaga Citizens League report which states that "the food industry is the largest industry in Onondaga County" generating close to 13,000 jobs in more than 1,500 firms in 1985.6 The report concludes that "despite its broad impact, the food industry has, until now, remained an unexamined and 'unsung' enterprise. Unfortunately it is often overlooked because it is not viewed in the same light as manufacturing industries or the increasingly-publicized service industries.7

The county has an area of 784 sq. miles (2,021 sq. km.), which as of 1987 included 158,276 acres of farmland. In 1978 there were 184,114 acres of farmland, so there has been a 15% decrease in just nine years. The county has twelve different agricultural districts which covered a total of 186,426 acres in 1991. These districts, mainly in the western and southern parts of the county, offer farmers lower tax assessments in return for keeping the land in agriculture. The districts go through a renewal process every eight years, at which point they can be modified. Given this short review period and the policy of the County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board to honor requests from landowners to withdraw from a district, it is not clear that to date the districts have done a great deal to preserve agricultural land from development, nor to protect the rural environment.8

Other aspects of the food system include a highly developed emergency and supplemental feeding system in Syracuse. Even so, demand has been steadily increasing to where over 215,000 emergency meals are served per month. There is a high infant mortality rate and only about one-third of the requests for WIC coupons can be met. There appears to be an increased consolidation in food
wholesaling and retailing that parallels the same trend elsewhere. Access to food for inner city residents is difficult.

**BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ONONDAGA FOOD SYSTEM COUNCIL, INC. (OFSC)**

After several years of meetings and prodding by a concerned local resident, David Yarrow, the Chairman of the Planning and Economic Development Committee of the Onondaga County Legislature requested in the fall of 1982 that Cooperative Extension explore the feasibility of establishing a Food and Agriculture Task Force. Extension established an advisory committee which met for a year to discuss the need for, purpose, composition, and relation to county government of an advisory body on food issues. The committee recommended that a broad-based advisory body - called The Food System Council of Onondaga County - be established with a sixteen member board of directors (eight appointed by the County Legislature and eight by the County Executive). In addition, seven ex-officio non-voting members from county agencies and the Legislature, called Special Advisors, were recommended as liaison people and technical advisors. The recommendations were accepted and the Council was officially authorized by the Legislature. The first members of the board of directors began their terms in March of 1984. The Council was housed at Extension, but the Legislature made clear that they would provide no additional funding for the Council. Thus, space, modest mailing expenses, and any supporting staff time had to come out of Extension's limited (and declining) resources.

The creation of the OFSC in 1984 made it the second food policy council created in the U.S. (the first being the Knoxville, TN). It remains as the only county food policy council in the U.S., although the St. Paul, MN Food and Nutrition Commission is in the process of becoming a joint city/county body.

There have been three phases in the evolution of the Onondaga Food System Council. During Phase I (1984-88), the Council undertook a number of projects to map out and educate its members and public officials on the basic dimensions of the county's food system. A flow chart of the emergency and supplemental feeding system was developed along with a graphic display of the sites where people could get assistance. A directory of information sources on the local food system was also compiled. Procedures for obtaining food during any major emergency were reviewed. Finally, a series of tours to local farms, processors, wholesalers, retailers, and distributors were organized, followed by visits to the Food Bank of Central New York and several emergency feeding sites.

As these activities progressed, the Council soon realized that the efficient, but very limited staff time provided by Extension was not sufficient for them to be able to address the many problems that the Council had identified. Therefore, they determined that they needed to seek non-profit status as a 501(c)(3) organization to be able to seek outside funding - primarily for staff support. This process, which was complicated and took time, was begun in 1987. One question which had to be resolved was whether the board members of such a non-profit could still be appointed by local government.

Phase II (1988-92) can be said to begin with the shift in legal status to a non-profit corporation - symbolized by the addition of "Inc." to the title. In its new by-laws, the Council reduced its board members to eleven (with five appointed by the County Executive and six appointed by the County Legislature). The seven ex-officio members remained with the representative from the County Disaster Preparedness Office being replaced by a representative from the City of Syracuse. The mission of the Council is:
During this phase, the Council assisted the Onondaga Citizens League in preparing a report on the role of the food industry in the economy of Onondaga County above (see endnote 6). The report also recommended that the Council "act as an oversight body to encourage and follow up on the implementation of the many recommendations of the report." The Council organized a forum on food safety issues, reviewed the County's 2010 plan for the adequacy of its coverage of agricultural and food issues, and several Council members served on a City task force to study grocery retailing needs and opportunities in inner-city Syracuse. Most important, the Council prepared its own long-range plan of action. The first of its four priority objectives was that of securing funding for staff to implement the other program objectives. Funding was sought in a (successful) two year grant proposal to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. The main goals of the grant are to: 1) preserve the county's agricultural base; and 2) to improve food accessibility for local consumers, especially for lower income groups.

With the receipt of the Kellogg grant in 1992, the Council began its current phase of operation. A half-time Extension Associate, Steven J. Chandler, was hired and an ad hoc committee of the Council was set up to supervise the overall operation of the grant. In addition, an Advisory Committee that includes a number of farmers as well as board members was set up to oversee the agricultural component of the grant. It is chaired by Dr. Kate Clancy, the Project Director. Activities conducted during the first year of the grant include: 1) conducting of three needs assessments among farmers, dairy farmers, and consumer leaders; 2) holding a luncheon meeting where issues of near-urban agriculture and sustainability were discussed by a nationally-known leader in the field, Roger Blobaum; 3) planning the educational activities for the second year of the grant; and 4) conducting a range of new Council activities made possible by staff support, such as creating information packets and a Council brochure, setting up a Funding/Finance Committee to seek additional future funds, and setting up a Marketing/Publicity Committee to increase Council visibility.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS

The larger political setting within which the OFSC operates is one over which it has no control. It is also one where the political relationships between the city and the county can change either through elections, senior staff changes, or the emergence of contentious issues. The degree of OFSC involvement in city food issues has always been a sensitive matter, especially to the agriculture community.

As an organization, the first change in the status of the OFSC was from an unincorporated to an incorporated (non-profit) public advisory council to the County. The appointment of Board members by the County has remained unchanged. During Phases I and II, the Council depended upon the volunteer efforts of its board members and had only minimal staff and financial support from Extension (although this was crucial in obtaining its 501(c)3 status). While the OFSC was able to accomplish a number of things during this period (see below), it also was unable to respond fully to County requests for background information on the use of emergency and conventional food programs by low-income families in the county, for recommendations on food stamp use, and for more extensive input into the county's 20 year plan.
The Board now has eleven rather than the original sixteen members. Even so, the OFSC has consciously maintained a very healthy diversity of members. The presence of the seven Special Advisors serving as technical and liaison staff from area agencies also helps in this.13

This diversity has enabled the OFSC to avoid the problems of some food councils where representatives and the priorities of the emergency feeding system predominate, leading to neglect of many other important aspects of the local food system. Also, as a county body, the OFSC has had less direct involvement with the emergency and supplemental feeding system. The Syracuse-based emergency feeding system evolved and became vigorous in part prior to, and in part parallel to the OFSC. Thus, the OFSC has become involved with these issues only as they relate to the county.

The second major change occurred when the OFSC received a two year W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant, which has given it a half-time staff person to support OFSC activities and to pursue several new initiatives.

The addition of staff has helped to overcome some of the difficulties of the past, where there were ebbs and flows depending upon the time and energy that Board members had available. However, with the receipt of the Kellogg grant, various IRS rules governing 501(c)3 organizations were activated. First, such public organizations with a high percentage of funding from one private source cannot engage in direct advocacy or lobbying.14 Second, there is a requirement that at least one-third of such an organization's funds be locally generated. To meet this requirement, the Extension Director, John Kramer, was willing to make major organizational adjustments to have Extension house the staff person (Steven J. Chandler, who was hired as an Extension Associate) and to serve as the fiscal agent for the grant, even though the project direction in policy and programmatic terms comes from the OFSC (through its ad hoc supervisory committee) and the Project Director (Kate Clancy).15 Once the Kellogg grant expires, the relationship of staff to the Board and to Extension may need to be reexamined.

The expiration of the Kellogg grant in February 1994 presents the OFSC with its most important organizational challenge: how to find additional funding for staff support. It is unclear whether or not there is enough political support to have either the county and/or the city provide staff funding, particularly given the budget reductions they have been forced to make the past couple of years.16 It will also be difficult to identify any one large source of funds and if that were a private foundation, then the IRS limitations discussed above would remain. What remains is an approach of seeking to find enough small grants for specific projects to fund the staff person. This approach, of course, risks periodic shortfalls and does not solve the long-term problem of finding base funding for staff.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

While the accomplishments discussed below may not seem to be dramatic, it must be kept in mind that the initial years of a food council are particularly difficult. The effort is a pioneering one in several regards. It involves exploring new territory which few have thought about systematically. A significant amount of time is required for members to learn about the various sectors of the food system, how they operate, and which agencies and persons are active where. Efforts to devise a viable and locally functional structure also require a lot of pioneering effort, including trial and error.

Even when fully functional, the fact that food councils deal in large part with the informal sector - which is less visible than the formal sector - means that it is often difficult to point to specific achievements. Also, one of the key capabilities of most food councils is their ability to coordinate the activities of various individuals, volunteer groups, and public agencies so that much more is
accomplished in terms of providing/maintaining social support systems than would otherwise be the
case. This coordination and leveraging of informal and formal resources is also difficult to document
and portray.

While the five cities in this study have been able to learn of each other's experience through the U.S.
Conference of Mayors report (see endnote 2), the OFSC is unique and has had to develop its own
course. Given the above, the OFSC's main accomplishment is not only that is has survived as long as it
has, but that it has been able to incorporate as a public non-profit organization (a long and complicated
process) and to obtain a major grant to provide it half-time staff support for two years. Throughout, it
has also been able to maintain its status as an official advisory body to Onondaga County. Other more
specific accomplishments of the OFSC include (in roughly chronological order):

A. Conducting a series of food system tours for local leaders to farms, food processors,
wholesalers, retailers, and distributors as well a tour to the Food Bank and several emergency feeding
sites.

B. Preparing a flow chart of the emergency feeding system in the county along with a graphic
display of emergency food sites and retail outlets. The OFSC has also served over the years as an
informal networker for many aspects of the emergency food system and has helped in developing a
clearer picture of current needs and demands. For example, a committee with members from the Food
Bank, Social Services, and WIC is compiling data and working out ways to simplify reporting to the
state and to avoid duplication of effort.

C. Preparing a "Directory of Information Sources" on the local food system (see endnote 9).
More recently, information packets and a brochure on the OFSC have been prepared.

D. Reviewing procedures for obtaining food for the region during an emergency (such as the
1966 blizzard).

E. Having several members of the OFSC serve on the Citizen's League study on 'The Role of
the Food Industry in the Economy of Onondaga County." The report recommended that the OFSC be
the body to follow up on the many report recommendations and that the county provide the necessary
budget and staff support.

F. Undertaking with the city a study of grocery store availability, needs, and opportunities in
inner-city Syracuse. Other research has included student research on the Hartford Food System.

G. Initiating action (after a review showed the need) to link the county's 2010 Plan (as well as
other planning activities) to food and agricultural issues in the county.

H. Serving as an educational and discussion forum for food safety, preserving farmland, hunger
issues, sustainable agriculture, and the regional economics of the food industry.

I. Preparing the long-range plan which led to the Kellogg grant application.

J. Expanding its activities under the Kellogg grant by conducting needs assessments among
farmers, dairy farmers, and consumer leaders, holding an outreach luncheon to bring the OFSC to the
attention of a wider audience, planning additional educational activities, and setting up three new
committees - the Advisory Committee to supervise the agricultural component of the grant, a
**Funding/Finance Committee to seek additional future funds, and a Marketing/Publicity Committee to increase Council visibility.**

**Summary:** The OFSC has carried out many useful activities related to food and agriculture in Onondaga County. It has done less with the environmental and social aspects of the food system. It has also laid the foundations for a broad range of future activities. Whether or not it will be able to achieve its great potential will depend upon finding additional funding for the necessary staff support.

**THE SOURCES OF ACCOMPLISHMENT**

There are a number of sources underlying the above accomplishments. First, there has been a high degree of commitment and patience on the part of most OFSC Board members. Most have taken this volunteer job very seriously and have devoted time and effort to keeping the OFSC going. Many are also on other boards and thus have a good general knowledge of community needs.

Second, Extension has provided very effective and knowledgeable support for the OFSC given the limited amount of staff time and budget it has available for this. It also made creative arrangements for hiring and housing the new half-time staff person made possible by the Kellogg grant.

As mentioned above, the OFSC has consciously sought to maintain a healthy balance on the Board of people from different sectors. Current Bylaws specify that two members are to be producers (farmers or people affiliated with a farm organization or government agency), four providers (food processors, distributors, marketers, agribusiness, a government agency, or food service people), three community members (people affiliated with consumer issues, non-profits, or educational and research institutions), and two at large members from the community. Typically, there is a tendency for emergency feeding system concerns and issues to predominate in local food councils, but this has not been the case with the OFSC.

Fourth, while there has been no budget support forthcoming from the County (not surprising given the budget cutbacks they have had to implement), there has been a willingness to continue it as an official advisory body in its new non-profit status. Also, the Legislature has appointed two of its elected members as Special Advisers to the OFSC - indicating a significant level of interest.

Last but not least, Kate Clancy has played a key role throughout the history of the OFSC in developing strategies, writing reports and grant proposals, and generally encouraging the growth of the OFSC.

**ISSUES NEEDING CONTINUING OR ADDITIONAL WORK**

As indicated above, the main and immediate priority of the OFSC is to find funds to continue staff support (hopefully upgraded to a full-time position) once the Kellogg grant expires in February 1994. This is the immediate part of its need to find a more permanent funding base. In the short term, whatever grant, project, and consulting opportunities exist will need to be vigorously pursued. In the longer-term, there is still a need to develop a strategy to provide more secure base funding for staff. It would be sad indeed if sufficient funding for staff ceased just at a time when the OFSC has begun a number of important projects which will require staff time to implement.

Intertwined with the funding issue is the need to continue to pursue the broad objectives set out in the Long-Range Plan and the Kellogg grant proposal. The activities identified for 1993-94 have been consolidated into three project areas.
A- Farmland preservation. In April 1993, farmers and local officials were invited to discuss the various issues and options identified in the needs assessments conducted earlier. A presentation by a representative of the American Farmland Trust on different approaches to farmland preservation, including tax policies, was included. Several different perspectives emerged from the lively discussions: those of the farmers, who are primarily concerned about the economic viability of farming and the need to retain the option to sell off their land when they retire; those of many local officials who are concerned about maintaining and/or expanding the tax base; and those of OFSC members who are concerned about the long-term food security requirements of the region and the need to develop a sustainable agricultural base.

B. Inclusion of agriculture in local and county planning. Since there had been several previous efforts to encourage the inclusion of agriculture and food issues in the county's 2010 Plan, the OFSC decided to focus more on planning in small cities and towns. A "dialogue" was organized in June 1993 for farmers, local planners and zoning officials, and members of the County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (which makes recommendations to the county on the operation of the various agricultural districts). Given the interest in this, the Funding/Finance Committee has been working on a grant proposal for follow-on workshops.

C. Increasing consumer awareness on local food availability. Explorations regarding creation of a short video led to the conclusion that it would be too expensive, both in dollars and in staff time. Plans are now to organize a workshop or a dialogue on buying local food. This would complement the more general Chamber of Commerce program on buying local. Buyers for large institutional consumers -hospitals, schools, supermarkets, etc. - would be brought in to meet with local growers to discuss the barriers to increasing local purchases. Buying local would strengthen the local economy general and agricultural - in important ways. Part of the program would also include the issues of food access for lower income groups.

To efficiently carry out these and other activities, the OFSC needs to pay attention to several organizational issues.

D. Meeting times need to be found when more members of the Board can attend. Problems of getting a quorum have persisted over the years. The traditional luncheon meeting time of the Board does not fit well with the work schedules of farmers. Meeting times can be varied and/or meetings held in conjunction with other events (tours, retreats, speakers, etc.).

E. As the OFSC develops its procedures for choosing specific projects, it should consider using an annual retreat - as the Knoxville Food Policy Council has - to discuss these as well as other priorities for the coming year.

F. The OFSC should prepare an annual report and present it to the County Executive and to a meeting of the County Legislature. It might also report more regularly to relevant county committees.

G. In addition to the importance of maintaining diversity among the Board members, it will also be important to continue to choose projects that will engage the two broad types of people that seem to serve on such boards. First, there are those - largely from the private sector - who are task- and result-oriented. Second, there are those typically from the human resource agencies - who are more process and structurally oriented. Projects with a specific focus and clear objectives appeal to the first group, while longer-term, reform-oriented projects appeal to the latter.
H. The OFSC might consider having Kate Clancy serve as an outside consultant once her term of the Board expires at the end of 1994. Both Knoxville and St. Paul have had an outside consultant or organization that is able to provide new ideas and to offer independent evaluations and constructive criticisms. Staff are rarely able to do this both because of closeness to the projects as well as their employment status. In many ways, Kate Clancy has already performed this valuable role working within the OFSC framework and hopefully she will be able to continue it from the outside.

Beyond these organizational matters, there are a number of other local food system issues that are worthy of consideration in the longer-term.

I. At the regional level, the OFSC might consider working with the Central New York Regional Market Authority to develop a plan to maintain and upgrade the Farmers Market by integrating it into a more genuinely regionalized food system that is sustainable over the longer term - something that would involve sustainable production, processing, and distribution. Given the financial difficulties the Market has faced the past few years, this would be a difficult task. At the same time, the presence of a regional public authority would seem to offer many valuable possibilities and a joint grant, project and/or subcontract to OFSC from CNYRMA would help to meet some of the IRS requirements for public and local funding.

J. In terms of regional food production, the OFSC might expand on its current efforts and conduct a series of workshops to educate the public and help develop a white paper on the importance of conserving both regional farmland and farmers and the various ways to do this. While the county's agricultural districts are important, they might well be complemented with county and/or local agricultural zoning which would help to manage and channel suburban development and minimize the selling off of multiple parcels by farmers. In terms of conserving farmers, much of this depends upon national agricultural policy. However, local studies on the potential social and economic impacts of such things as bovine growth hormone on the number of dairy farmers can help to influence state policy.

K. Given its origins and sources of support, the OFSC understandably has been oriented towards county issues and problems, especially those relating to farmers and agriculture. However, it would appear that there is considerable potential to strengthen the links already established with the city so as to deal with food system problems that intertwine city and county.

L. Food access is such an area. Whether in the city or the county, programs are needed to provide access to various target groups such as infants, children, and the elderly. Examples include: school breakfast programs, summer feeding programs, expanding USDA supplemental food programs to daycare centers, and improving Meals on Wheels and bus shopping schedules for the elderly. Sometimes different approaches need to be taken between the city and the county, but cooperation and coordination would be beneficial.

Through the city Retail Task Force, there has already been OFSC involvement in analyzing how to try to get an inner-city supermarket in Syracuse going. By redefining this effort in terms of food access a wider range and mix of approaches could be pursued: multiple small stores; re-introducing hucksters; encouraging downtown tailgate farmers markets; trying to get convenient cross-town bus routes established to existing downtown or outlying supermarkets; etc.

Another important aspect of food access involves household and community gardens. While mainly a city matter, they offer both a source of self-reliance and community-building. Given the larger food systems perspective and approach of the OFSC, perhaps they can encourage the city and
volunteer groups to promote them more vigorously. This is especially needed in public housing and in the various neighborhoods. The city program is operating well, but is not particularly visible, nor are there efforts to expand it. There might be an inventory and evaluation of vacant land within the city to see which lots are suitable for gardens. The Public Housing Authority could also be encouraged to promote community gardens on their properties - as is done in a number of communities.

The Food Bank has established its own adjacent community garden which is run by volunteers - a very nice idea. This might be extended to appropriately located food pantries, where "pantry gardens" might be run by some of the pantry patrons (with some advice and assistance). This would likely have a number of valuable spin-offs.

M. Food safety is another important area that involves both the county and the city. Given the interest and expertise in this area, it might be useful to consider how current food safety issues fit into building better and healthier cities along the lines of the World Health Organization's "Healthy Cities" Program.

N. Another area of importance is composting. The halting of the landfilling of yard wastes in April 1992 has provided both pressures and opportunities. A food systems approach would suggest encouraging household, apartment, and public housing dwellers to develop compost systems and gardens simultaneously. This would also reduce waste transport costs and should encourage people to re-examine the risks of using pesticides on their lawns." There has already been cooperation between Extension, the city, and the Resource Recovery Agency in training Master Composters. There is also a Composting Committee that includes county legislators. Thus, the main potential role for OFSC might be to help the various agencies and groups to see how the handling of food wastes fits into the larger need to develop a more localized and sustainable food system.

**EMERGING AND FUTURE CHALLENGES**

Many current national and state trends are likely to further undermine the "safety nets" provided by the county's informal natural and social support systems. These "safety nets" include the "environmental services" which natural systems provide communities in terms of clean air and water, plus the healthy soils needed for agriculture and people's gardens. Social support systems include all of the real, but informal services which households, neighborhoods, and a wide variety of volunteer and charitable groups provide to the larger community. While the long-term decline in federal and state support to local governments may level-off somewhat with the new administration, it is doubtful that there will be any overall increases. Thus, local governments will need to increase their self-reliance. Local food systems, whether at the household, neighborhood, metropolitan, or county levels offer tremendous potential in this regard.

The challenge is to try to maintain the viability of current local support systems, while building the foundations for greater self-reliance - all at a time when most people do not see any immediate or pressing need to do so. A crucial part of this will involve a basic shift from the way we currently define food problems (as problems of hunger and poverty) and solutions (as emergency feeding programs and welfare) to new and broader concepts emphasizing the opportunities for local economic development, energy efficiency, and environmental improvement that would result from pursuing a self-reliant strategy based upon a broadened version of the World Health Organization's "healthy cities program."

A. In order to pursue these challenges, the OFSC will need to gradually gain more visibility while educating a variety of groups on the importance of greater local food self-reliance. The occasion of its tenth anniversary (March 1994) might be used to organize a high visibility event.
Leadership education is crucial to this. Given the success of the previous food system tours, repeating them in an updated form with a wider/different audience should be considered. The workshops and dialogues conducted this past year should be continued. The new brochure on the OFSC should be widely distributed.

In terms of more public education, is it important to help the younger generation realize the importance of the local food system. While the Agriculture in the Classroom program is useful, it should be broadened to include other aspects of the food system. There are a wide variety of educational and hands-on materials which can be used - ranging from the Grow Lab elementary curriculum developed by the National Gardening Association, to nutrition education, to education and experience with hunger and poverty issues at all levels. There are also a variety of useful simulation games, including the new "Food Game" which the University of Minnesota has published."

B. While the OFSC is currently precluded from direct lobbying, it can still provide leadership on policy formation and dialogue. The OFSC might consider providing information to county or city officials and lobbyists on the importance of expanded funding for: the state matching portion of supplemental WIC coupons used in farmers markets; the direct purchase funds the state provides to food banks ($600,000 locally); strengthening recycling and composting programs, etc.

C. Another challenge will be to expand the work already done to show the relevance of food systems approaches to long-term and sustainable economic development. This could be done by showing the potential for local packaging of produce and local canning operations (which could be run by steam if the proposed incinerator is retrofitted to produce steam). Also, some sort of "vision document" on what a sustainable regional food system would look like might be useful.

D. The emergency feeding system appears to be reaching its current limits. Demand has increased from 140,000 to over 215,000 meals/month in the last four years. Perhaps it would be useful to encourage a joint OFSC/Citizens League study on this, both to generate more public awareness and to explore how future needs can be met.

E. Another challenge might be to try to help low income and food stamp users to get the most (in quantity and nutritional quality) from their resources. This might be done by helping to organize a "food shopping fair/clinic" at a local school. Fun and games could be included as well as other types of useful information. The local grocer who suggested this idea indicated that he thought there would be financial support for the idea from the industry."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

As it approaches its tenth anniversary, the Onondaga Food System Council remains unique as the only county food council in the U.S. The OFSC has accomplished things of which it can be proud. More than any of the other councils in this study, focused on the issues and problems of trying to preserve both farmland and far. However, rather than doing this in isolation, it has done this in terms of the larger system of the county (and the region). By including on its Board and in its pro activities a very diverse groups of leaders and citizens, it has helped to educate of people about the importance of a wide range of food issues. It has been able from a volunteer group to a non-profit status while retaining its advisory position county. It was able to obtain foundation funding for a half-time staff person for years. It is currently vigorously pursuing a fund-raising campaign to try to retain staff position. It would be tragic and ironic to lose this staff support at its tenth anniversary. All supporters of the OFSC need to rally between now and early 1994 to make sure that the strong foundations created over the
years and the new programs potential generated the past year and a half are carried forward. Hopefully this will help in those efforts.

ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This report is based upon work supported by the Ethics and Values Studies Program of the National Science Foundation under Grant No. DIR-9022243. The government has certain rights in this material. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.


3. Their thoughtful comments and suggestions have greatly improved earlier drafts of this report and have helped me to avoid errors and misinterpretations. Any that remain are my responsibility. Also, I would like to thank all those that I interviewed and/or talked to on the phone. They gave me a much better sense of the dynamics and issues facing the Food System Council than would otherwise have been the case.

4. It is often difficult politically to translate this sort of general public support into actual policies because those who would be most directly affected by proposals for better zoning and land-use planning (farmers, developers, town planning boards) may have strong reasons to oppose changes, while those supporting them typically have only a general interest in these issues.


11. "Long-Range Plan," Onondaga Food System Council, Inc., 1990. The program objectives included: promoting better coordination and communication on food system issues through an annual conference/workshop; promoting research on an in-depth economic study of the regional food system; making recommendations on planning and policy formation; and educating target audiences on food system issues.

12. In pursuing these goals, the Council also seeks: 1) to promote civic education on food issues; 2) to improve communication on agriculture; and 3) to provide enhanced attention to the food system in planning and economic development.

13. Besides two county legislators, there are county staff persons from the Health Dept., the County Planning Agency, the Dept. of Social Services, Extension, and the city Dept. of Community Development.

14. Among the people that I interviewed, there were a small number who felt strongly that the OFSC should be engaged in policy advocacy and lobbying. The majority felt that developing background information and policy recommendations for a broad-based food systems agenda for the county as well as educating public officials and the general public on these were the main contributions that OFSC could make.

15. One consequence of this arrangement is that the OFSC Board and its Advisory Committee are not responsible for two important aspects of any organization's operations: personnel and fiscal management.

16. Even if the city were willing to provide funding (or become a partner with the county in funding the Council), this might well lead to loss of support for the OFSC by farmers, many of whom have a perception - going back to the involvement of several board members in some early projects on city food problems - that it is more concerned about city hunger problems than farm problems.

17. The Authority was set up in 1933 along with several others. Only the Authorities in Rochester and Syracuse remain. The Authority's goal is to promote agriculture and local produce in Central New York, which it does through some 300 retail stalls and 10 wholesale buildings. Thirteen appointed members from seven counties in Central New York make up the Board of the Authority. Almost all are growers, although legally up to seven could be non-producers. In 1988-89, the Authority got a planning grant. A three phase plan was developed which would have added new wholesale buildings and a cold storage facility ($1.5 million) and expanded the retail area from six to thirty-seven acres ($14 million). Two grants of $1.5 million were authorized for the wholesale phase. However, because the wholesalers strongly disagreed with the increase in rent that would be required (from $3.80 to approximately $6.00 per square foot), the grant was lost. This disagreement was the culmination of years of discontent on the part of the wholesalers who claim they have had little or no effective representation on the Board.
18. It should be noted that under a recent Supreme Court ruling, states and localities are not pre-empted by FIFRA from passing their own, more stringent pesticide rules and regulations.


20. This grocer also pointed out that many food stamp users are poor consumers (his downtown store has the least redemption of manufacturer's coupons of any in his 19 store purchasing co-op). He also pointed out that both he and low-income customers would benefit from increased purchases of private label products which are lower priced but also have a higher mark up for the grocer than do national labels.