



# Survey of Local Food Purchasing Among Wisconsin Colleges



UWEC Economics Students: Julie Baewer, Isaac Borofka-Webb, Christina Hansen, Corey Hilber, Jared Koerten, Ellie Lutz, Jodi Neuman, Jenna Pultz & Matthew Rick  
 Faculty Collaborators: Eric Jamelske (UWEC Economics), Andrew Dane (UW-Extension)

## Introduction

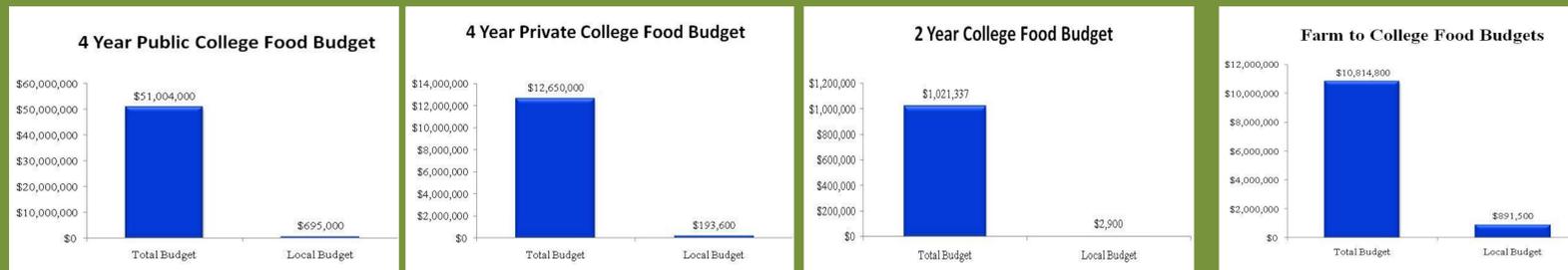
In Western Wisconsin there is a strong push to develop a more robust local/regional food system for economic development as well as for environmental and health reasons. There are many reasons to buy locally grown food. You'll get exceptional taste and freshness, strengthen your local economy, support family farms, safeguard your family's health, and protect the environment.

The UWEC Chippewa Valley Center for Economic Research and Development (CVCERD) has recently partnered with UW-Extension Baron/Chippewa Counties on a very timely research project. A \$10,000 grant was secured through UW-Extension to develop an applied local food research project. The intent of the project is to document the degree to which local food is produced and consumed in Western Wisconsin. In addition, we seek to contribute to existing efforts aimed at increasing local food purchasing and consumption in the region. This project will provide basic data and information as well as research analysis and outreach to support and tie together these efforts.

## Farm to College Survey

College food service departments have an important influence over students' eating habits and health. For many college students, the dining hall provides the majority of their meals. For this reason, we conducted surveys of colleges to examine the degree to which they purchase and serve locally raised food products in their cafeterias and dining facilities. Of 33 colleges surveyed, 28 responded. We defined having a farm to college program as buying some amount of locally raised food. Eight colleges responded saying they did have a program, 20 said they did not.

## Local Food Budgets



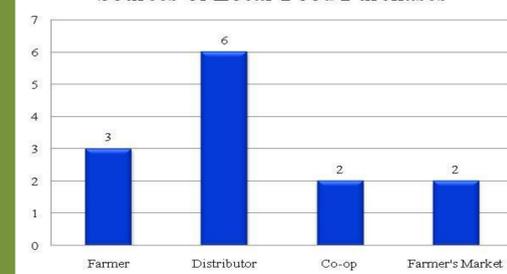
For all colleges surveyed, the average percentage of their food budget spent on local foods was 1.4%. For colleges with farm-to-college programs, the average percentage was 8.2%.

4 Year Public	Total Budget	Local Budget	Percent
\$3,000,000			0.0%
\$3,000,000	\$200,000		6.7%
\$1,200,000			0.0%
\$5,500,000	\$495,000		9.0%
\$5,000,000			0.0%
\$7,500,000			0.0%
\$2,700,000			0.0%
\$2,000,000			0.0%
\$4,954,000			0.0%
\$6,500,000			0.0%
\$650,000			0.0%
\$9,000,000			0.0%
\$51,004,000	\$695,000		1.4%

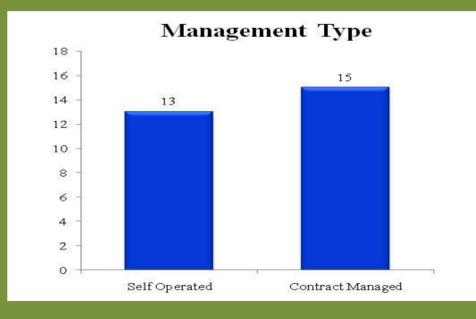
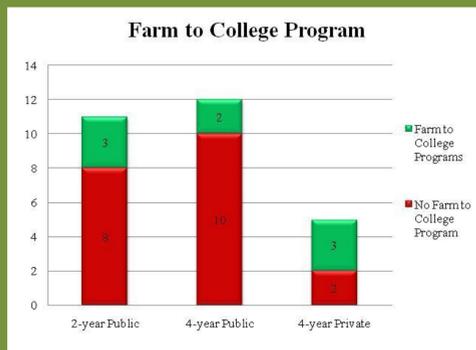
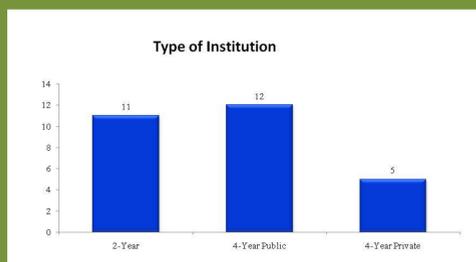
4 Year Private	Total Budget	Local Budget	Percent
\$1,200,000		\$100,000	8.3%
\$10,000,000			0.0%
\$250,000		\$9,600	3.8%
\$800,000		\$84,000	10.5%
\$400,000			0.0%
\$12,650,000	\$193,600		1.5%

2 Year College	Total Budget	Local Budget	Percent
\$26,000		\$200	0.8%
\$300,000			0.0%
\$45,000			0.0%
\$40,000			0.0%
\$320,000			0.0%
\$16,800	\$2,000		11.9%
\$125,537			0.0%
\$15,000			0.0%
\$22,000	\$700		3.2%
\$36,000			0.0%
75000			0.0%
\$1,021,337	\$2,900		0.3%

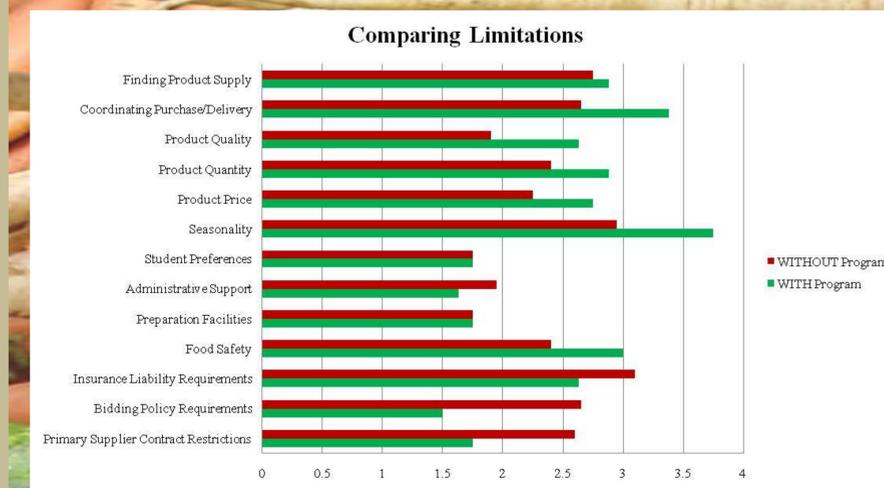
## Sources of Local Food Purchases



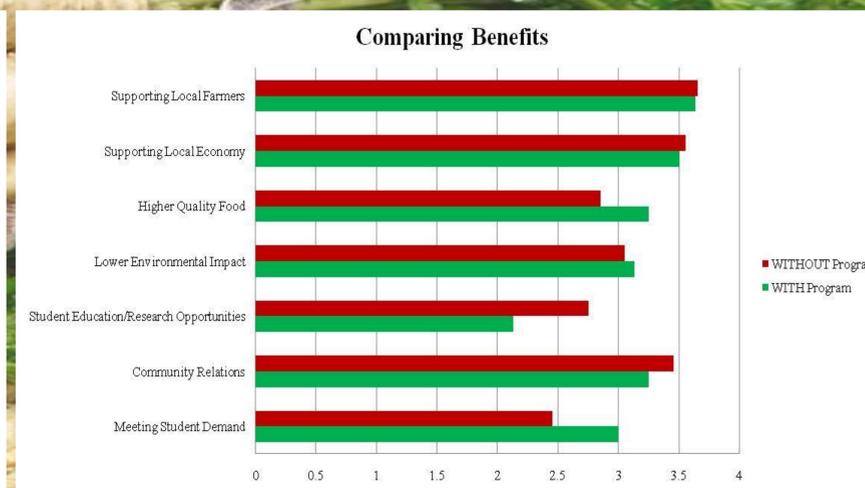
## Characterizing Institutions



## Limitations and Benefits



On a one to four scale, one being not at all and four being a lot, colleges were asked: "Please indicate the degree to which the following have limited your ability to incorporate locally raised food into your menu."



On a one to four scale, one being not beneficial and four being very beneficial, colleges were asked: "Please indicate to what degree you see the following as benefits of farm-to-college programs."

## Discussion

Our results show that very little local food is currently purchased and served in Wisconsin colleges and universities. Although only 1.4% of the total food budget across the 28 institutions surveyed was spent on local food products, there were several examples of schools making significant use of local foods.

In fact, one two-year public institution spent 11.9% of their food budget on local foods. Similarly, the largest local food budgets among four-year schools were 9.0% and 10.5% for private and public institutions respectively.

Given the low percentage of total food

budgets spent on local products, there is room for improvement for all schools. The good news is that there are examples of local food use that could serve as models for expanding local food purchasing by Wisconsin higher education institutions of all types and sizes.

We have several observations regarding the opportunities and challenges facing schools. First, the greatest opportunity exists among 4-year public institutions simply because they have the most students and serve the most meals on campus.

There are also significant opportunities

among 4-year private schools because they have the highest percentage of students living in residence halls.

The smallest opportunities lie with the 2-year public schools because they have little or no campus housing and serve the fewest meals.

There is agreement among those surveyed (regardless of if they currently purchase local foods or not) that the benefits of purchasing local foods include supporting local farmers, helping the local economy, and improving community relations.

However, there is some disagreement about the limitations of purchasing local

foods. These differences suggest that those who do not currently purchase local foods see the major barriers to be associated with insurance and contract requirements.

On the other hand, those that do use local foods have overcome these barriers to some degree. These institutions see the substantive barriers as seasonality, coordinating purchase and delivery, product quality, and price.

Perhaps the most important finding of our survey is that most of the local food purchases by Wisconsin colleges and universities is done through their regular food distributors, while very little comes

from local farms, co-ops and farmer's markets.

This suggests that there are two paths for increasing local food use. The first is to expand local markets by connecting institutions to local farmers and co-ops. The second is to increase the degree to which major food distributors are able to provide local food options.

Either way, success will require increased awareness and the formation of partnerships that currently do not exist. Some of these partnerships are currently being explored in the Eau Claire area.