

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COMMISSIONERS APPROVE NEW POLICY RESOLUTION, SOLIDIFY COMMITMENT TO LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

This morning, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to approve a new policy resolution which strengthens and solidifies the County's commitment to supporting the local food system citing important economic and environmental benefits.

For several years now, Franklin County has been focused on the mutually compatible goals of sustainability and economic development including the adoption of the County's Sustainability Policy in 2006, support for community gardening, the creation of Franklin County's GreenCorps program and a Healthy Corner Store initiative, approving zoning amendments for the unincorporated portions of the County which allow for bee keeping as well as making it easier for residents to raise chickens, ducks and rabbits and the development of a strong partnership with the Local Food Council.

"Supporting the local food movement is an economic development tool, supporting economic self-sufficiency for individuals," said County Commissioner & Board President John O'Grady. "Agriculture employment is going strong. In fact, one out of every seven Ohioans is employed by the agriculture industry; and, bioscience, green technology, food logistics and processing are new and evolving industries."

According to the American Planning Association (APA), local food policies are gaining popularity. The APA's website reports that, 'In response to growing concerns about food deserts, obesity rates among children, the loss of prime agricultural lands, a dwindling farmer population, and environmental problems such as soil erosion and water contamination, more and more towns, cities, regions, and states are forming food policy councils (FPCs). Through policy and programmatic strategies, FPCs help local, regional, or state governments address these food system challenges and others.'

"Our nation's economy and national security fundamentally depend on a safe and secure supply of food," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "While we have long recognized this, today's resolution memorializes these objectives for central Ohio. With this resolution, we add food production to our long established recognition of environmental sustainability as compatible with economic growth. Understanding the local food supply chain will allow us to both secure it and enhance its economic impact." She continued, "We intend to share this policy with colleagues at the State and National levels for use as a 'best practice'."

As the APA points out, childhood obesity is on the rise. Nationally, childhood obesity rates have tripled over the last three decades. In Ohio, over 30-percent of children and adolescents are classified as overweight or obese and almost 45% of those overweight children come from low-income families.

In Franklin County, 19-percent of residents receive food stamps and, through the on-going Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) administered by Job and Family Services, food assistance is offered to 232,000 Franklin County residents of which nearly half are children.

"As Franklin County's population continues to climb, poverty, obesity rates, and illness associated with unhealthy eating habits are also on the rise," said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "Local food initiatives provide people with the ability to be active while growing their own fresh healthy food and support Ohio's largest and growing employer, the agriculture industry."

In June 2013, the Franklin County Local Food Council released a Food Policy Audit, which evaluated the county's agro-food related policies and programs assessing four broad policy categories including Public

Health and Food Access and Fostering Social Equity. The Audit found that Franklin County has made significant progress toward ensuring a strong local food system and recommended that the County consider adopting a local food policy resolution to enhance efforts currently underway.

"The Franklin County Local Food Council is grateful for the good work the Commissioners have already done and will continue to do to strengthen our local food system. A stronger, more resilient local food system benefits our economy, our environment, and our own health," said Amy Bodiker, chair of the Franklin County Local Food Council.

The resolution passed today by the Commissioners furthers the Board's commitment by:

- Directing Franklin County government agencies to consider the impacts to the local food system when making decisions;
- Continuing to look for opportunities to provide job training in industries that support a strong local foods system;
- Encouraging other local governments to join Franklin County in this effort; and
- Continuing the Commissioners support of the efforts of the County's Local Food Council.

To read a copy of the Franklin County Local Food Council Audit, click [here](#).

To read a copy of the Franklin County Board of Commissioners' Local Food Policy, Resolution # 809-13, click [here](#).