

# BLUEBERRY PILOT PROJECT

by

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(Under the Direction of Dr. Jack Crowley)

## ABSTRACT

The University of Georgia as a land-grant institution has evolved with increasing community engagement and a commitment to sustainability. Working with The University of Georgia Office of Sustainability, a pilot project was crafted in order to determine the feasibility of incorporating Georgia-grown and sustainably grown blueberries into University of Georgia Food Services. Through the process of identifying the product, potential farmers, and understanding the bid system at The University of Georgia, certain barriers were discovered. Recommendations for both the state-scale and university-scale are given for the future success of carrying Georgia and sustainable products on campus.

**INDEX WORDS:** University of Georgia, local, Georgia grown, sustainable agriculture, blueberries, food services, institutional purchasing, Real Food

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Bachelors of Art, University of Georgia, 2008

A Practicum Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND DESIGN

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2011

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August 2011

## DEDICATION

This practicum is dedicated to my parents who have instilled in me the value of going after your dreams. Your love and support have made me who I am today.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Julia Gaskin for her contagious enthusiasm and unwavering guidance during the process of this study. She gave me assistance when I most needed it and passion that was inspiring.

I would like to thank my committee members, Carol Couch, Jack Crowley, and Eric MacDonald for taking time out of their very busy days to assist me.

The UGA Office of Sustainability, particularly Kevin Kirsche, has been extremely supportive of this project and offered assistance throughout this process.

I would like to thank Jeanne Fry and UGA Food Services for their continued commitment to sustainable practices and setting the standard for excellence in campus dining.

A very special thanks goes to Dave Spivey for your support, encouragement, and editing assistance.

Rachel Spencer, thank you for your editing and amazing leadership in local and sustainable food in Georgia. You are invaluable in your persistence and enthusiasm.

I would also like to thank my friends, especially Sarah McQuade, who helped me stay sane for the past two years.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The interest in local food has been growing rapidly in Georgia, as can be seen in the increase in farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and the growing research and media interests. However, much of the research and emphasis has been put on direct sales to consumers and the impacts that such an increase would have on the Georgia economy. Through The Office of Sustainability, I carried out a project to determine the possibility of integrating Georgia-grown and sustainable blueberries into University of Georgia dining halls. I focused on this single item so that it could be used as a model for most other agricultural products.

The long-term viability of Georgia farms as a prime economic driver is in danger for a variety of reasons. Low-cost imports, increased costs of production, an aging farmer population, and urban sprawl are just a few of the threats. Examining the Census of Agriculture for the state of Georgia, which is published every five years, shows a decrease in farms across the board. Between 2007 and 2002, the number of farms has decreased three percent from 49,311 to 47,846<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, the acreage of land in farms has decreased six percent, from 10.7 million acres to 10.2 million acres<sup>2</sup>. Looking at a twenty-five period, between 1982-2007, 647,100 acres have been converted from

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<sup>1</sup>“Table 1. Historical Highlights: 2007 and Earlier Census,” *United States Department of Agriculture: National Agricultural Statistics Service*,

[http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full\\_Report/Volume\\_1,\\_Chapter\\_1\\_State\\_Level/Georgia/st13\\_1\\_001\\_001.pdf](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Georgia/st13_1_001_001.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>“Table 1. Historical Highlights: 2007 and Earlier Census,” *United States Department of Agriculture: National Agricultural Statistics Service*,

[http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full\\_Report/Volume\\_1,\\_Chapter\\_1\\_State\\_Level/Georgia/st13\\_1\\_001\\_001.pdf](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Georgia/st13_1_001_001.pdf).

agriculture to developed land<sup>3</sup>. This trend is a concern because when farmland is lost to development, it rarely is farmed again<sup>4</sup>.

Although certain steps can be taken to alleviate this loss from a municipal planning perspective, including farmland conservation easements, tax incentives, and zoning to protect farmland, these steps need complimentary state-level assistance. This assistance comes in various forms of growth management laws, right-to-farm laws, and the *Georgia Grown* program through the Georgia Department of Agriculture.

The most effective way to ensure that farming remains viable is to provide a market for the products. In this study, I attempt to create a new market for Georgia-grown blueberries in the hope that this study would become a model. However, I found that obstacles to purchase large amounts of Georgia-grown produce require several key steps before this can become a reality. First, a state institutional purchasing mandate is needed to provide a reliable and consistent market. In order for a large-scale increase in local food purchasing within Georgia, the state government must make the commitment that state institutions will purchase a percentage of necessary produce from Georgia growers through both direct sales and small-scale distribution networks. Until this occurs, individual state institutions must make their own initiatives to support Georgia-grown produce. Second, a Georgia mid-scale food distribution network needs to be established. Currently, there is a lack of mid-scale distribution infrastructure for intra-state production, processing, and distribution.

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3 "Georgia Statistics Sheet," *Farmland Information Center*, accessed July 12, 2011,

[http://www.farmlandinfo.org/agricultural\\_statistics/index.cfm?function=statistics\\_view&stateID=GA](http://www.farmlandinfo.org/agricultural_statistics/index.cfm?function=statistics_view&stateID=GA).

4 American Farmland Trust, *Why Save Farmland?: Fact Sheet* (Washington D.C: American Farmland Trust), 2003.

## **Methods**

To obtain the information to carry out this project, I conducted semi-structured interviews, literature review, and case studies. I interviewed personal in Food Services and The College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences during the spring of 2011. I worked with Julia Gaskin, the Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator for the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, throughout the process to identify and integrate blueberries into UGA Food Services.

Using a literature review of economic models and agriculture reports, a basic understanding of the current situation in Georgia is explored as well as the effects of increasing Georgia-grown produce consumption.

Case studies of similar large universities within the United States, state policies, and grower co-operatives are examined for their possible application to UGA and the state of Georgia.

## CHAPTER 2

### PROMOTION OF LOCAL AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

#### **Land-Grant Institution**

The promotion of local and sustainable food for campus consumption has a variety of jurisdictions. To better understand the primary mission of The University of Georgia, a brief review of its establishment as a land-grant institution is necessary. The first Morrill Act of 1862 provided land and support to institutions designated by the state that would allow all Georgians the opportunity for a college education. A primary function of the land-grant model, established through the Hatch Act of 1887, is agricultural research and extension<sup>5</sup>. The university conducts research pertinent to Georgia farmers and disseminates these findings through extension agents.

In 2001, The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities called for a “new covenant between public research universities and their surrounding communities, and for making engagement central to the whole institution, not just a handful of departments or colleges.”<sup>6</sup> This new ‘covenant’ is even more important as universities “demonstrate their public value to tax payers” through these types of outreach programs<sup>7</sup>. An example of this is seen in The College of Environment

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5 “The Land-Grant Tradition,” *National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges* (2008): 1, <http://www.aplu.org/document.doc?id=780>.

6 Karin Fisher, “Reimagining the 21st-Century Land-Grant University,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 2009), [http://www.northcarolina.edu/public\\_service/econ\\_dev/Reimagining\\_the\\_21st-Century\\_Land-Grant\\_University\\_-\\_Chronic.pdf](http://www.northcarolina.edu/public_service/econ_dev/Reimagining_the_21st-Century_Land-Grant_University_-_Chronic.pdf).

7 Karin Fisher, “Reimagining the 21st-Century Land-Grant University,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 2009),

and Design at The University of Georgia where students, led by Professor Brad Davis, designed and implemented a “learning garden” at near-by Whitehead Elementary School<sup>8</sup>. Professor Davis then mentored the elementary school students in how to plant and grow their garden.

A recent Georgia House Bill aims to do this type of outreach for agriculture by promoting “the production, purchase, and consumption of Georgia-grown farm products...so as to provide for food procurement procedures and materials that encourage and facilitate the purchase of Georgia-grown food by state agencies and institutions.”<sup>9</sup> Passage of this bill will expand extension and outreach in Georgia through a natural evolution of promoting and buying of Georgia-grown products.

### **Strategic Plans**

As stated in The University of Georgia 2020 Strategic Plan, “A sustainable university is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, “A sustainable university acts as a living laboratory where sustainability is researched, taught, tested and constantly refined<sup>11</sup>.”

In 2010, University of Georgia President Michael Adams established The Office of Sustainability in order to coordinate and promote sustainability throughout the

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[http://www.northcarolina.edu/public\\_service/econ\\_dev/Reimagining\\_the\\_21st-Century\\_Land-Grant\\_University\\_-\\_Chronic.pdf](http://www.northcarolina.edu/public_service/econ_dev/Reimagining_the_21st-Century_Land-Grant_University_-_Chronic.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> “News-Brad Davis,” *College of Environment & Design*, accessed July 12, 2011,

<http://www.ced.uga.edu/index.php/news/detail/davis/>.

<sup>9</sup> “2011-2012 Regular Session – HB 367,” *Georgia General Assembly: Legislation* (2011),

[http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011\\_12/fulltext/hb367.htm](http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011_12/fulltext/hb367.htm).

<sup>10</sup> “University of Georgia: 2020 Strategic Plan,” *The University of Georgia*, (2009): 16, <http://www.oap.uga.edu/sp/UGA2020-final.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> “University of Georgia: 2020 Strategic Plan,” *The University of Georgia*, (2009): 16, <http://www.oap.uga.edu/sp/UGA2020-final.pdf>.

university. In August 2010, The Office of Sustainability published its Strategic Plan for 2010-2015, wherein the office aims to, “Work with UGA Procurement and others to develop environmentally sensitive purchasing standards that promote the use of regional, energy-efficient and environmentally responsible products, materials and equipment<sup>12</sup>.” More specifically in regard to food services, the office will, “Engage with UGA Food Services, students, and academic departments to research and communicate benefits of local and sustainable food systems<sup>13</sup>.”

From these strategic plans, a pilot project evolved to both study the feasibility of local foods and then to incorporate Georgia-grown and sustainable food into campus dining halls depending on what this feasibility study revealed.

### **Real Food UGA**

Additionally, as of March 2011, a new student group has formed on campus called Real Food UGA. This group’s mission is to “raise awareness about food sourcing on campus, including food sustainability and justice; to incorporate the purchasing of real food within our university dining halls”<sup>14</sup>. This group represents the population of students engaged in promoting local and sustainable purchasing, so it should be included in decisions related to this area.

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12“The University of Georgia Office of Sustainability Strategic Plan 2010-2015,” *The University of Georgia: Finance & Administration* (August 2010): 6,

[http://www.sustainability.uga.edu/pdf/office\\_of\\_sustainability\\_strategic\\_plan\\_2015\\_august2010.pdf](http://www.sustainability.uga.edu/pdf/office_of_sustainability_strategic_plan_2015_august2010.pdf).

13“The University of Georgia Office of Sustainability Strategic Plan 2010-2015,” *The University of Georgia: Finance & Administration* (August 2010): 6,

[http://www.sustainability.uga.edu/pdf/office\\_of\\_sustainability\\_strategic\\_plan\\_2015\\_august2010.pdf](http://www.sustainability.uga.edu/pdf/office_of_sustainability_strategic_plan_2015_august2010.pdf).

14 “Real Food UGA,” *Facebook*, accessed June 10, 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Real-Food-UGA/208747175819729?sk=info>.



## CHAPTER 3

### LOCAL AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

#### **Definition of Local Food**

There are a variety of definitions for ‘local food’, however, the one used for this project is compatible with “The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?” a study conducted by The University of Georgia<sup>15</sup>. This study defines ‘local’ as food that is produced within Georgia. If processed, the product must be produced and processed within Georgia.

#### **Definition of Sustainable Agriculture**

Sustainable agriculture according to the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at The University of Georgia is,

“[T]he practice of growing food, fiber, feed and fuel in systems that meet the needs of both the present and future generations. Sustainable agriculture emphasizes production and marketing practices that are profitable, environmentally sound, and that improve the quality of life for farmers, farm workers and the community. Sustainable agriculture systems rely on building healthy soils and crops, enhancing biodiversity, and minimizing the use of non-renewable resources”<sup>16</sup>.

The words ‘organic’ or ‘certified’ are not included in this definition. Although certifications guarantee compliance with certain production practices as specified by the USDA National Organic Program (NOP), it is by no means guarantees that it is

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15 Kane, Kent Wolfe, Marcia Jones, and John McKissick, “The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?” *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences* CR-10-03 (May 2010): 3, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/CR-10-03.pdf>.

16 “Sustainable Agriculture,” *College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences*, last modified January 20, 2011, <http://www.caes.uga.edu/topics/sustainag/index.html>.

sustainable agriculture in regards to all these areas of sustainability. The Certified Naturally Grown program uses the USDA standards for producers who follow NOP standards but are not third party inspected and certified. Certified Naturally Grown growers are inspected by fellow farmers.<sup>17</sup>

### **Economic Benefits of ‘Local’**

A market-based approach to protect farmland is to support the farmers who use this land through increasing purchasing of Georgia agricultural products. The University of Georgia recently published a study, titled “The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?” The study examines the impacts that consumers purchasing Georgia-grown produce could have on Georgia farms and the economy of Georgia. The study finds that,

"If Georgians produced all of the fruits and vegetables that they consumed, it could provide a way to close this utilization gap (the difference between state-wide production and consumption) of over \$780 million per year. Even if this level can't be achieved, simply closing the gap in one commodity—lettuce, for example—could mean an additional \$83.6 million of direct revenue to local producers<sup>18</sup>."

It also summarizes the following findings from other studies:

1. A 2008 study by Georgia Organics and Emory University found that 80% of all the food purchased by Georgians originates out of state, and that of the \$20 billion of food purchased, \$16 billion is produced out of state.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “About CNG,” *Certified Naturally Grown*, accessed April 10, 2011, <http://www.naturallygrown.org/about-cng>.

<sup>18</sup> Kane, Kent Wolfe, Marcia Jones, and John McKissick, “The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?” *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences* CR-10-03 (May 2010): 3, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/CR-10-03.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Kane, Kent Wolfe, Marcia Jones, and John McKissick, “The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?” *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences* CR-10-03 (May 2010): 7, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/CR-10-03.pdf>.

2. Using 2002 data, the local food capacity for Georgia, which is the ability for the supply of local food to meet local food needs, was 39.3%. However, researchers in Vermont and Massachusetts found that their model showed greater potential for direct sales to consumers in Georgia.

The farm gate value of all produce grown within the state of Georgia is summarized in the publication, *Ag Snapshots: A Brief Focus on Georgia's Agricultural Industry*. It shows that for 2008 the total value of Georgia-grown produce was \$11.9 billion, an increase from \$11.6 billion in 2007.<sup>20</sup> However, as the 2008 study illustrated, the majority of this food is being exported out of state, which reduces the amount of money recirculating in the Georgia economy.

Currently state institutions, hospitals, food service providers, restaurants, and grocery stores across the state struggle to find the quantity, variety and reliability of food grown within the state of Georgia to meet the needs of their customers. The following chart shows the Georgia-grown produce that currently is either able to meet the local food capacity or is insufficient to meet in-state demand based on average national consumption.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Ag Snapshots: A Brief Focus on Georgia's Agricultural Industry," *The Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development, College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, The University of Georgia*, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/agsnapshots/pdf/AG%20SNAPSHOTS%2009.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Kane, Kent Wolfe, Marcia Jones, and John McKissick, "The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?" *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences CR-10-03* (May 2010):11, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/CR-10-03.pdf>.

Table 1: Georgia and US Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Per Capita Based on Average National Consumption

This chart is especially helpful in the situation described above, where certain products already are able to meet the demand, as designated as 'state surplus.' These surplus products should be singled out as the produce that state institutions should first procure.

Table 2: The Estimates of Final Demand for Local Purchases from “The Local Food Impact” study shows the projected effects of recommendations to increase local food sales by five percent on the total Georgia Farm Gate, and then the consumer and producer effects<sup>22</sup>.

Table 2: Estimates of Final Demand for Local Purchases

	2007		
	Vegetable and Melon	Fruit and Nuts	Total
Georgia Farm Gate Value	\$894,853,190	\$241,603,601	\$1,136,456,791
Total Estimated Sales to Households*	\$463,673,489	\$7,184,472	\$470,857,961
Capture 5% For Local Sales - Producer Value	23,183,674	359,224	\$23,542,898
Retail Value of 5%**	33,862,074	538,829	\$34,400,903

\*This figure also includes a small proportion (~1%) shown in the model to be sold to State and Local Governments. According to the IMPLAN model user manual, these purchases can be both education and non-education related, including K-12 and public universities, police protection, and sanitation. \*\*Full retail value would include costs for wholesale, transportation, etc. Actual prices received by producers for direct sales might fall somewhere between “producer prices” and full retail. The estimate of full retail value is based on the margin provided by the IMPLAN model. Calculations by authors using Minnesota IMPLAN Group, Inc., IMPLAN System (data and software), 1725 Tower Drive west, Suite 140, Stillwater, MN 55082, [www.implan.com](http://www.implan.com), 1997 and UGA/CAED Georgia Farm Gate Value Report 2007.

The interesting section to this pilot project, however, is in the small print below the chart. It states that the Total Estimated Sales to Households figures “includes a small proportion (~1%) ...to be sold at State and Local Governments. According to the IMPLAN model user manual, these purchases can be both education and non-education related, including K-12 and public universities, police protections, and sanitation”. State and local institutions have a negligible share of the local sales in Georgia; yet these institutions purchase large quantities of food.

The increase of sales by 5% not only has direct effects to the farmers and purchasers, but multiplier effects that vary based on which scenario is tested. The various scenarios are summarized in the table below and show how drastic a 5 % increase in direct sale would be.

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22 Kane, Kent Wolfe, Marcia Jones, and John McKissick, “The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?” *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences* CR-10-03 (May 2010): 19, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/CR-10-03.pdf>.

Table 3: Total Economic Impact

Description	TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT			
	(Number)	(Million)		
	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Scenario 1: 2007 Ag Census Report	132	\$4.5	\$6.4	\$14.4
Scenario 2: Increase to U.S. Avg. Sales per Farm	232	\$7.4	\$10.7	\$23.6
Scenario 3: Increase to U.S. Proportion of Direct Sales	228	\$8.1	\$11.5	\$25.8
Scenario 4: Capture 5% of Purchases as Direct Sales*	345	\$13.6	\$19.2	\$43.7

\*Because of the linear nature of the IMPLAN model, this would essentially translate to a figure for *each* 5% of consumer local purchases as direct sales as calculated under scenario four. Source: Based on data from 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Farm Gate Value Report, Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development, University of Georgia. Calculations by authors using Minnesota IMPLAN Group, Inc., IMPLAN System (data and software), 1725 Tower Drive west, Suite 140, Stillwater, MN 55082, www.implan.com, 1997.

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Examining the economic impacts of increasing direct sales by 5% reveals that a mandate by the state government to increase purchasing of local, Georgia-grown produce could spur the growth recommended by “The Local Food Impact” study.

State institutions, such as universities, schools, hospitals, prisons, and government institutions are a consistent, large-scale market. Unlike restaurants and grocery stores, these do not go out of business or have their employee numbers drastically cut when times are hard. Their purchasing power as a unit could be used through a statewide initiative to invest in agriculture production and distribution networks in order to revitalize rural economics and preserve farmland. This program is also a natural extension of the *Georgia Grown* program, since this initiative aims to increase Georgia fruit and vegetable sales.

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23 Kane, Kent Wolfe, Marcia Jones, and John McKissick, “The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?,” *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences* CR-10-03 (May 2010): 20, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/CR-10-03.pdf>.

## CHAPTER 4

### CASE STUDIES

Some states have taken the initiative to build their agriculture and food system in order to boost their economy, keep food dollars within the borders, create jobs, and ensure their long-term food security. Valuable lessons can be learned from these policy papers in how their economic arguments are framed and how they propose putting their plans into action.

#### **Illinois**

In 2007, ‘The Illinois Food, Farm, and Jobs Act’ established an Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force to develop a strategic plan for increasing the production and sale of Illinois-grown agriculture and expanding organic agriculture within the state.<sup>24</sup> In March 2009, this task force produced a policy paper titled, “Local Food, Farms, and Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy”<sup>25</sup>. The authors find that,

“Price transparency and discovery tools analogous to those enjoyed by commodities markets are likely to remain imperfect in the near future for local farm and food system markets. Instead, effective state and federal policy must build on the acknowledged relationship between production, marketing, distribution, and consumer demand by supporting business strategies, best practices for production, process-level innovation in distribution and marketing, as well as general promotion<sup>26</sup>.”

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24 “Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force,” *Illinois Department of Agriculture*, last modified April 11, 2011, [http://www.agr.state.il.us/marketing/Mkt\\_ILOFFTaskForce.html](http://www.agr.state.il.us/marketing/Mkt_ILOFFTaskForce.html).

25 “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy,” *The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force* (March 2009): 9, 14, 18, 24, 26, <http://www.agr.state.il.us/newsrels/taskforcereport-outside.pdf>.

26 “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy,” *The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force* (March 2009): 14, <http://www.agr.state.il.us/newsrels/taskforcereport-outside.pdf>.

Policy prescriptions are described in detail in this paper, including a state mandate to increase in-state purchasing of Illinois-grown food by 20% by 2020. The authors predict that this mandate could create thousands of jobs and keep 20 to 30 billion dollars within the state.

The argument used in this paper to enact this mandate is that, “the development of a farm and food system that keeps tens of billions of dollars in state will also generate the revenue” in order to “ensure jobs and incentives for farm labor...correct regulatory barriers that hinder farm and food production...encourage diversified farm production... [and] build the infrastructure to move products from the farm to market<sup>27</sup>”. These are only a few reasons that the paper gives, yet they are some of the most important issues facing the development of a state food system. One of the main reasons given for building this system is to “retain a larger share of food dollars” and ensure the long-term sustainability of the Illinois food system<sup>28</sup>.

The action points in the Illinois paper are numerous, so only a few will be highlighted.

1. “The General Assembly shall direct the Council to facilitate public-private working groups as required to eliminate unnecessary and contradictory local, municipal, state, and federal regulatory barriers to production, processing, and marketing of local farm and food products in Illinois.”<sup>29</sup>

This is an extremely important directive because numerous regulatory barriers often

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27 “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy,” *The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force* (March 2009): 9, <http://www.agr.state.il.us/newsrels/taskforcereport-outside.pdf>.

28 “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy,” *The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force* (March 2009): 6, <http://www.agr.state.il.us/newsrels/taskforcereport-outside.pdf>.

29 “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy,” *The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force* (March 2009): 18, <http://www.agr.state.il.us/newsrels/taskforcereport-outside.pdf>.



impede incorporation of local food into state institutions. These often include confusing, overlapping regulations that come from the Department of Public Health, Department of Agriculture, Attorney General’s Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Department of Transportation, and others. A committee that will streamline and create a pamphlet for growers is necessary so that understanding these will not be a barrier to selling produce within the state.

2. “Support development of regional aggregating, processing, storage, packaging, and distribution centers”<sup>30</sup>

Aggregating growers in order to process and transport their products within the state will be the most efficient way to build a sustainable and effective food system. Often there are many growers that offer similar products, but only one has the capacity to freeze or can their product, which many larger purchasers require for food products. Also, aggregating the delivery of products from a region allows lower transportation costs and competitive pricing with trucked food from out of state.

3. “Establish a local food procurement process for state institutions”<sup>31</sup>

The goal given in the report is for state institutions to increase local food procurement by 2% each year, with 10% of total procurement in 5 years and 20% in 10 years. Reasons for state institutions providing a consistent market have been discussed, but the mechanisms to implement this directive vary. The Illinois report suggests their Central Management Services should examine the needs of the state agencies and institutions and aggregating these needs in order to prioritize which food products would most likely be served by in-

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30 “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy,” *The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force* (March 2009): 24, <http://www.agr.state.il.us/newsrels/taskforcereport-outside.pdf>.

31 “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy,” *The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force* (March 2009): 26, <http://www.agr.state.il.us/newsrels/taskforcereport-outside.pdf>.

state production and processing.

As many chefs who use local food know, menus must change based on supply of various produce. The report recommends that state food staff be educated on “purchasing procedures, menu planning, and food preparation based on availability.”<sup>32</sup> This is extremely important for food staff since the current way that many institutions buy is to create a menu and assume that their distributor will find the food.

The last point the report makes is to either reduce the sales tax to 2% or give a tax credit when buying local agriculture. This is recommended not just for state institutions, but for businesses as well. This would aid overcoming the price difference in the beginning as local infrastructure is established, so that the price is more competitive with out-of-state products.

## **Montana**

Montana Made is a program by Montana State University that attempts to increase purchasing of Montana produced and processed foods in their dining halls<sup>33</sup>. Reasons behind the program include keeping food dollars within the state, providing fresh food to their customers, encouraging farming, as well as outreach with the community. The program asserts that state institutions bear responsibility not only for education and research, but also for interaction between the campus and community. The activities of Food Services provide an ideal channel for this interaction<sup>34</sup>. An outcome of the Montana Made program is that Montana State University currently buys 14% of their

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32 “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy,” *The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force* (March 2009): 26, <http://www.agr.state.il.us/newsrels/taskforcereport-outside.pdf>.

33 “Montana Made,” *Montana State University*, accessed March 30, 2011, <http://www.montana.edu/ufs/mtmade/>.

34 “Montana Made: Local Food Buying Program,” *Montana State University: University Food Service*, accessed March 30, 2011, <http://www.montana.edu/ufs/pdfs/Montana%20Made%20Brochure.pdf>.

total food purchases from within Montana, which translates to over \$460,000 to farmers, ranchers, processors, and distributors within Montana<sup>35</sup>.

## **Michigan**

In 2006, the Michigan Land Use Institute, Michigan State University, and Upjohn Institute for Employment Research published, “Eat Fresh and Grow Jobs, Michigan<sup>36</sup>.”

The barriers and recommendations found in this paper are very similar to those described in the “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy” paper: models are lacking for intra-state distribution. There is a lack of variety due to monoculture crops, and outreach to Michigan residents on the benefits of local produce is needed<sup>37</sup>.

Recommendations to increase the production and consumption of Michigan-produced products that could be applied to Georgia include<sup>38</sup>:

1. “Provide targeted market research to help farms plan for a broad range of fresh market opportunities (e.g. ethnic foods),”
2. “Support coordinated direct-market delivery, such as farms combining their supply and delivering local produce jointly,”
3. “Proactively work to direct local and state government food purchasing to local food products, including cafeterias at schools, child care centers, higher education, and prisons through modified procurement practices and ‘bonus point’

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35 “Montana Made: Local Food Buying Program,” *Montana State University: University Food Service*, accessed March 30, 2011, <http://www.montana.edu/ufs/pdfs/Montana%20Made%20Brochure.pdf>.

36 Cantrell, David Conner, George Erickcek, and Michael W. Hamm, “Eat Fresh and Grow Jobs, Michigan,” *Michigan Land Use Institute & the c.s. mott group for Sustainable Food Systems at MSU* (September 2006), <http://www.mlui.org/downloads/EatFresh.pdf>.

37 Cantrell, David Conner, George Erickcek, and Michael W. Hamm, “Eat Fresh and Grow Jobs, Michigan,” *Michigan Land Use Institute & the c.s. mott group for Sustainable Food Systems at MSU* (September 2006): 7, <http://www.mlui.org/downloads/EatFresh.pdf>.

38 Cantrell, David Conner, George Erickcek, and Michael W. Hamm, “Eat Fresh and Grow Jobs, Michigan,” *Michigan Land Use Institute & the c.s. mott group for Sustainable Food Systems at MSU* (September 2006): 8, <http://www.mlui.org/downloads/EatFresh.pdf>.

provisions.”

These three initiatives, if applied to Georgia, would greatly expand the market for Georgia-grown food. Although the paper has more recommendations for policy, production, marketing, storage and packing, and distribution, these actions could form the foundation of a shift in Georgia agriculture.

### **Virginia**

Virginia Tech began an initiative in 2009 called Farms and Fields Project that aims to incorporate local, organic, and sustainable food into campus dining halls<sup>39</sup>. The project was implemented in one of their dining halls, Owens, which sources local and sustainable food options. The main source of food comes from the university’s farm, Kentland Farm. During the summer of 2010, the farm grew approximately 23,000 pounds of food for the dining hall<sup>40</sup>.

UGArden is a student-run sustainable garden on campus that donates the produce to non-profits, including the Food Bank<sup>41</sup>. While the scale is too small to supply UGA dining halls, the possibility of using a portion of the produce in one of the Food Service retail operations on campus could be explored as a primary step.

### **Georgia**

Georgia has not yet followed suit with the previously mentioned states in creating mandates for the increase of local food. While the *Georgia Grown* program and the report, “The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?” give reasons

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39 Mika Maloney, “Sustainable dining brings local, organic food to Tech,” *Collegiate Times* (2010), <http://www.collegiatetimes.com/stories/16398/sustainable-dining-brings-local-organic-food-to-tech>.

40 “Dining Services: Farms & Fields Project,” *Virginia Tech: Division of Student Affairs*, accessed July 14, 2011, <http://www.dining.vt.edu/sustainability/farmsfields.php>.

41 “FAQ,” UGArden, accessed July 14, 2011, <http://ugarden.uga.edu/faq.html>.

to eat Georgia-grown products, there has been no legislation to give tax incentives, tax breaks, or mandates to increase purchasing. Until this happens, individual state institutions must, and have already begun, to take the lead in creating internal mandates to increase purchasing of local food.

### *Kennesaw State University*

Kennesaw State University is the third largest university in Georgia and has transitioned from a commuter-based to a residential-based university. With this transition, Kennesaw invested in building a “green” dining hall that is LEED certified, serves local and organic food, and composts all waste.<sup>42</sup> Kennesaw State’s food provider is Sodexo, a foodservice management company that also serves Atlanta Public Schools, Georgia State University, Emory, and Georgia Tech<sup>43</sup>. Although there is no clear definition of what ‘local’ means to Kennesaw State University, for other Sodexo schools local is defined as food produced within the state of the university or school.

### *Georgia Tech*

The initiative to increase the amount of sustainable food at Georgia Tech came from a student-led campaign to change purchasing standards and waste practices. In 2007, students began the dialogue with Georgia Tech Food Services, which is also run by the food provider, Sodexo<sup>44</sup>. This campaign evolved into the creation of a Sustainable Dining Committee. Through establishing this committee and hiring a Sustainability Coordinator for the dining halls, they have established relationships with Georgia farmers

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42 “KSU’s new “green” dining hall serves up culinary delights,” *Kennesaw State University: News at KSU*, accessed April 2, 2011, <http://web.kennesaw.edu/news/stories/ksus-new-green-dining-hall-serves-culinary-delights>.

43 Holly Elmore, “Sodexo Serves up Sustainability,” *The Impact* (blog), June 6, 2010, [http://elementalimpact.blogspot.com/2010/06/sodexo-serves-up-sustainability\\_06.html](http://elementalimpact.blogspot.com/2010/06/sodexo-serves-up-sustainability_06.html).

44 “Sustainable Dining Committee,” *GT Dining: Georgia Institute of Technology*, accessed April 2, 2011, [http://www.gatechdining.com/sustainability\\_committee.html](http://www.gatechdining.com/sustainability_committee.html).

to provide a portion of the needed produce and meat for campus. This committee defined local food as any food produced within Georgia, but it also focused on increasing certified organic food purchases as well, which does not have to be produced locally. While the percentage of their food items is hard to find, they boast that their “Simply Sustainable Salad Bar has 80% local and/or organic produce daily<sup>45</sup>.” During 2010, Sodexo purchased more than \$100,000 of local produce on behalf on Georgia Tech<sup>46</sup>. Georgia Tech also features participating farmers on their Food Services website, although it is not clear what these farmers contribute or the frequency<sup>47</sup>.

While these various states differ in management company, level of existing infrastructure, and scale, there are valuable models that can be copied for The University of Georgia as well as the state of Georgia. These universities started with small, incremental changes to the amount of local and sustainable food incorporated into dining halls. The council that Illinois created was not a new agency, but a group of dedicated volunteers with experience in the Illinois food system. This type of analysis of the states’ food system is one that is appropriate for the current situation in Georgia.

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45 “GT Dining Sustainability Initiatives,” *GT Dining: Georgia Institute of Technology*, accessed April 2, 2011, [http://www.gatechdining.com/sustainability\\_gt.html](http://www.gatechdining.com/sustainability_gt.html).

46 “Sodexo Helps Clients Earn Sustainability Distinction,” *Sodexo*, June 4, 2010, <http://www.sodexousa.com/usen/newsroom/press/press10/sodexosustainabilitydistinction.asp>.

47 “Meet our Local Farmers,” *Georgia Tech Dining*, accessed April 2, 2011, <http://www.gatechdining.com/documents/sustain/new%20farmers%20banner.pdf>.

## CHAPTER 5

### BLUEBERRY PILOT PROJECT

The University of Georgia recently began exploring the possibility of using local food in campus dining halls. Knowing the mission of The Office of Sustainability and in hopes of increasing the amount of Georgia-grown produce, I initiated this pilot project. Working with UGA Food Services, which runs the dining halls on campus, the Office of Sustainability identified food crops within Georgia that may be able to meet the demands of UGA Food Services.

#### **Process**

In order to formulate University of Georgia-specific guidelines, The Office of Sustainability carried out a preliminary review of peer state institutions within Georgia. Kennesaw State University and Georgia Tech are both state-funded universities that use not only Georgia grown products, but also include sustainability initiatives in their purchasing standards, so these may be referenced.

An understanding of how the University of Georgia Food Services works is vital to the success of incorporating local and sustainable food. It is a self-operated facility, meaning that they do not use a food service management company like Sodexo. The entire budget for Food Services comes from revenue from their seventeen food operations on campus<sup>48</sup>. This gives Food Services control over what is bought, but it also requires an extraordinary amount of work for the administrative staff. In order to purchase food items

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<sup>48</sup> "Message from the Executive Director of Food Services: J. Michael Floyd," *UGA Food Services*, accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.uga.edu/foodservice/aboutdining/index.html>.

for all four dining halls that include Bolton, Snelling, O-House, and East Campus, Food Services uses a bid system. The bid system varies for different items, for example, some products are on a five-year contract and some are on a quarterly contract.<sup>49</sup>

### **Identification of the Product**

Preliminary UGA Food Services concerns with purchasing from local vendors are quantity and time. To feed a university the size of UGA, Food Services must buy large volumes of food, and delivery of these food items must adhere to a strict timeline. This means that to incorporate Georgia products, the quantity must be available, so tropical fruits like mangos and pineapples are not going to work. There was also resistance to purchasing organic produce due to the price premium.

After an initial conversation with Julia Gaskin, the Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator for the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, blueberries were recommended as a potential crop that could be purchased by Food Services. Seasonality of the harvest in regards to the timing of the University of Georgia school year was one of the primary reasons. Blueberries are harvested beginning in mid-April in south Georgia and continue into August in north Georgia.<sup>50</sup> This would allow the berries to be frozen and shipped by the time the university resumed for fall term in mid-August.

However, in order to determine the feasibility of incorporating Georgia-grown blueberries into UGA Food Services, several studies had to be examined before contacting producers or Food Services. Both the “The Local Food Impact (Table 2),” and the 2007 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report indicated there was a state surplus (production is more than consumption) of blueberries with a Farm Gate Value of \$44,822,632, active

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49 Jeanne Fry, interview by author, January 26, 2011.

50 “History,” *Georgia Blueberry Commission*, accessed July 13, 2011, <http://www.georgiablueberries.org/general-info/history>.



acreage production of 10,664, and an average price of \$2.45 a pound<sup>5152</sup>. This is great news in terms of availability for supplying UGA; however, what does the blueberry crop look like more recently?

From 2008 to 2009, blueberries rose 68.2% in value, a \$41.5 million increase from \$60,921,843<sup>53</sup>. Looking at the 2009 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report, published May 2010, blueberries held a \$102,465,202 Farm Gate Value with 16,345 acres of active production.<sup>54</sup> After this initial step to determine that there were enough blueberries being produced within Georgia to supply UGA needs, I began conversations with Food Services about the specifics for the blueberry bid system.

### **Bid System**

UGA Food Services uses the bid system to purchase frozen conventionally-grown blueberries on a quarterly basis. Fresh blueberries are not used frequently in dining halls, so frozen are the primary purchase. Interested bidders must submit their contact information with name, address, phone number, and fax by May 1, 2011, for the purchase time of August 2011 through February 2012.<sup>55</sup> Food Services will then send the purchase request out to these vendors on May 6, 2011. The vendors then have until May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011

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51 Susan R. Boatright and John C. McKissick, "2007 Georgia Farm Gate Fruits and Nuts Report," *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, The University of Georgia* AR 08-04 (May 2008): 17, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2008/pdf/AR-08-04.pdf>.

52 Kane, Kent Wolfe, Marcia Jones, and John McKissick, "The Local Food Impact: What if Georgians Ate Georgia Produce?" *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences* CR-10-03 (May 2010): 11, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/CR-10-03.pdf>.

53 Susan R. Boatright and John C. McKissick, "2009 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report," *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, The University of Georgia* AR 10-01 (May 2010): 3,49, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/AR-10-01.pdf>.

54 Susan R. Boatright and John C. McKissick, "2009 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report," *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, The University of Georgia* AR 10-01 (May 2010): 3, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/AR-10-01.pdf>.

55 Brooks Oliver, email message to author, February 21, 2011.

to submit the bid back to Food Services. The lowest bidder will then be awarded the contract, and must complete the vendor profile in order to receive payment.

All bidders must have minimum liability and insurance as required by the state of Georgia. Producers must also adhere to their specifications of 30-pound IQF (Individual Quick Frozen) bags.<sup>56</sup> This type of freezing preserves the berries' texture better and keeps them frozen longer than 'slow freezing.'<sup>57</sup> They are frozen on a conveyor belt system so that individual berries are frozen instead of a large block, allowing individual berries to be used, instead of the entire 30 pounds.

Interested bidders should be able to meet the past bid for frozen blueberries in order to be competitive. The current bid is for 5910 pounds at the price of \$1.44 per pound delivered to Food Services.<sup>58</sup> Each delivery can range from 450 to 1200 pounds, and the bid winner must be able to deliver when the contract specifies<sup>59</sup>.

### **Identification of the Growers**

To identify possible growers, I consulted with Ms. Gaskin and examined the top ten blueberry producing counties in Georgia. These are Bacon (52.5% of production), Appling (14.0%), Clinch (7.2%), Ware (5.1%), Coffee (5.0%), Pierce (2.7%), Brantley (2.3%), Jeff Davis (1.5%), Irwin (1.0%), Long (0.9%), and Others (7.9%).<sup>60</sup> Once I identified these counties, I researched to see if any had the IQF capabilities that the university would need. In the largest producing county of Georgia, Bacon County, more

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<sup>56</sup> Brooks Oliver, email message to author, April 1, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> J.S. Pruthi, *Quick Freezing Preservation of Foods: Foods of Animal Origin* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited, 1999): 14.

<sup>58</sup> Brooks Oliver, email message to author, February 21, 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Brooks Oliver, email message to author, February 21, 2011.

<sup>60</sup> Susan R. Boatright and John C. McKissick, "2009 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report," *Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, The University of Georgia* AR 10-01 (May 2010): 49, <http://www.caed.uga.edu/publications/2010/pdf/AR-10-01.pdf>.

specifically in Alma, Georgia, there is a company named Georgia Berry, LLC also known as Alma Pak that Ms. Gaskin identified<sup>61</sup>. Georgia Berry also happens to be the only IQF facility in Georgia for blueberries<sup>62</sup>. The company produces conventional berries and it does not have organic certification for their IQF facility; thus, for the current time, certified organic berries that meet Food Services specifications are not available<sup>63</sup>.

Since Georgia Berry is the only IQF facility in Georgia, I planned on only supplying their contact information to UGA Food Services. However, on April 28 Julia Gaskin alerted me to a problem. John Ed Smith, the extension agent who coordinates blueberry growers in south Georgia indicated that Alma Pak was a much larger operation than previously thought. The company is a cooperative of blueberry growers who had previously contracted with Michigan Blueberry Growers Association, another cooperative based in Michigan.

The company only ships semi-truck loads of blueberries at a time. A pallet is 1,800 pounds of berries<sup>64</sup>. This is above the maximum of 1200 pounds at a time that UGA Food Services requires. The company also had issues with the section in the bid about “delivered”. The company does not own its own trucks so it must contract with a trucking company that has freezer trucks available.

All of these issues forced Julia Gaskin and myself to consider flash frozen blueberries. The difference between flash frozen and IQF berries are that the former are washed and put into 30-pound boxes, which are then put onto a pallet and then frozen. This means that the berries are frozen not individually, but as a block, so to use any you

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61 “Georgia Berry, LLC,” *Global Manufacturers*, accessed April 12, 2011, <http://www.gmdu.net/corp-30245.html>.

62 Julia Gaskin, email message to author, February 22, 2011.

63 Julia Gaskin, email message to author, February 22, 2011.

64 Julia Gaskin, email message to author, April, 28, 2011

must defrost the entire 30 pounds. Also, due to the weight of the berries, as they freeze, they may crush the bottom layer, rendering them unusable<sup>65</sup>.

Three farmers use the flash freezing method in Georgia. Julia Gaskin contacted them to determine whether they would be interested in bidding for the blueberry contract. She informed them that they must contact Brooks Oliver to be included on the bid that would go out May 1, 2011. After the bid went out, Ms. Gaskin contacted the growers to determine whether they had contacted Food Services, and if so, what occurred<sup>66</sup>.

Only one farmer responded to Ms. Gaskin with the following comments:

- This farmer contacted Food Services, leaving a message, and did not get a response.
- This farmer did not wish to adhere to the specific delivered guidelines because of the cost of renting a truck. The farmer would want to deliver one pallet minimum, which is 1800 pounds, and would prefer to send all three pallets at the same time that Food Services needs, since the cost of renting a truck is about \$500.
- Quality standards were not indicated on the bid sheet, so the farmer did not know if Food Services wanted USDA #1 or had higher standards
- The \$1.44/lb that Food Services wanted was the absolute minimum this farmer could afford, especially with the delivered clause.

Other impressions by Ms. Gaskin were that due to the busy harvest time, many farmers did not have time to bid with Food Services<sup>67</sup>. With these above issues compounding the

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65 Julia Gaskin, email message to author, April, 28, 2011

66 Julia Gaskin, email message to author, May, 27, 2011

67 Julia Gaskin, email message to author, May, 27, 2011

busy time of year, the low farmer interest is to be expected. Also, the reality of the situation where only one facility in Georgia had the IQF requirements creates a large processing problem.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS: BARRIERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

This model of identifying products and potential suppliers can be duplicated under the current situation in Georgia; however, certain changes at different scales must occur in order for successful implementation of Georgia-grown and sustainable products. While I used blueberries as my pilot, this is an indicator of many other agricultural products in Georgia. The barriers to the incorporation of local and sustainable blueberries are similar to much of the produce within Georgia. Two scales of barriers were discovered during this study, those external to UGA Food Services and those internal.

#### **External Barriers**

##### 1. Lack of Processing Facilities

The sole Individual Quick Freeze (IQF) processing facility for blueberries was one of the greatest limiting factors in this study. Having only one option means that if this one co-operative-run facility is not interested, as happened in this study, then no Georgia farmer has a chance to even apply for the blueberry bid, unless they process out-of-state.

This lack of processing facilities is part of the industrial food system that favors large, distant, and a specialized facilities. A food system, as defined by the American Planning Association is “the flow of products from production, through processing, distribution, consumption, and the management of wastes, and associated processes.”<sup>68</sup>

An industrial food system operates using economies of scale that frequently separate

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68 “Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning,” *American Planning Association* (May 11, 2007), <http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/food.htm>.

production, processing, distribution, and consumption by thousands of miles<sup>69</sup>. So that while a product may be grown in Georgia, it may be shipped to be processed in another state, shipped to a distribution center, and finally trucked to the point of sale. An effect of this type of system is that the “average food item travels at least 1500 miles.”<sup>70</sup> The advantages of this system are large quantities of food at low prices. However, as seen in this project, this favors large producers, processors, and distributors that have the efficiencies to be competitive in this market. The blueberry growers who are part of Georgia Berry LLC produce and process Georgia-grown blueberries in the Alma area. However, this co-operative previously signed a contract to market, distribute and sell through the Michigan Blueberry Growers Association in order to compete in the current globalized food system.

Additionally, if certified organic blueberry growers wished to grow and process within Georgia, they would not be able to do so. With no facility to process organic blueberries, all organic blueberries must be shipped out of state to be processed and then shipped back to Georgia for sale.

## 2. Lack of Intra-state Distribution Infrastructure

While there are distributors that operate within Georgia like Sysco, Royale, Destiny Organic, and Aramark, these operate on the industrial food system scale. As seen in this project, each delivery of blueberries UGA Food Services contracted for was less than a semi-truck, so the efficiency of a delivery was not feasible unless done by a distributor of multiple products or to multiple consumers. In order to efficiently distribute

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69 Thomas A. Lyson, *Civic Agriculture: Reconnecting Farm, Food, and Community*, (Tufts University Press: Lebanon, 2004): 30.

70 “Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning,” *American Planning Association* (May 11, 2007), <http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/food.htm>.

produce, the quantity that these companies receive and distribute must be enough to cover transportation costs.

### 3. Seasonality

As discussed in Chapter Two, seasonality played a large factor in choosing blueberries as a potential product for University of Georgia purchase. Due to the harvesting of berries in summer and the ability to freeze them for later use, this project bypassed one of the largest problems for much of the agriculture in Georgia. Summer is the time of year when there is the largest quantity of fruits and vegetables, but when there are the least amount of students and the least amount of need for food on campus.



The following chart summarizes the availability of Georgia-grown produce throughout the year. While some of the products are harvested while UGA is in session from August to May, the peak season falls predominantly in summer.

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Georgia Harvest Calendar</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">What is available and when</h3>												
Commodity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Apples												
Beans – Lima												
Beans – Pole & Snap												
Blackberries												
Blueberries												
Cabbage												
Cantaloupes												
Christmas Trees												
Collards												
Corn – Sweet												
Cucumbers												
Muscadines												
Okra												
Onions – Green												
Onions – Vidalia												
Peaches												
Peanuts												
Pears												
Peas – Field												
Pecans												
Pepper												
Plums												
Potatoes – Irish												
Potatoes – Sweet												
Pumpkins												
Strawberries												
Turnips – Green												
Watermelons												
Dates may vary due to location and weather conditions												
Peak Availability Periods												

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Figure 1: Georgia Harvest Calendar

71 “Georgia Harvest Calendar,” *Georgia Farm Bureau*, accessed July 14, 2011, [http://www.gfb.org/commodities/cfm/harvest\\_calendar.html](http://www.gfb.org/commodities/cfm/harvest_calendar.html).

## **Internal Barriers**

### **1. Publicity of bid schedule**

Under the current structure at UGA Food Services the bid schedule is not publicized to growers in Georgia. There are many reasons for this, but one of the main reasons is the way the food system is organized currently. The industrial food system not only creates external barriers, but internal ones as well. Many large distributors are aware of the bid process because they have historically provided Food Services with needed products. Additionally, UGA Food Services is a self-managed operation and must be as efficient as possible. While bid opportunities are public to any interested bidders, there is no outreach to ensure that growers are aware of the bid process, available products for bid, and bid schedule. This leaves many Georgia farmers unaware of how to even be considered for a contract.

### **2. Specifications**

The specifications for the blueberry bid were set by a pre-determined menu for the year and were geared towards to large distributor. Requiring 5910-pounds of IQF blueberries in shipments ranging from 450 to 1200 pounds is much easier for a larger distributor since this delivery is less than a semi-truck. Also, requiring Individually Quick Frozen blueberries automatically eliminates many producers due to the cost of this equipment.

The previous quarter price of \$1.44/lb was the bare minimum for the conventional blueberry grower Ms. Gaskin contacted. By requiring that the bid price include the delivery fee requires an efficient and large company that will likely be supplying several products in order to cover the cost of transportation. The ability for a grower with

sustainably produced berries to meet these specifications are greatly limited, since growing these typically is costlier and Food Services did not offer a price premium for these types of berries.

The quality of berries were not specified on the bid contract, so the grower who provided their contact information did not know what USDA grade of blueberry Food Services required<sup>72</sup>. The USDA requires all frozen blueberries to be at least U.S. Grade B, so including on the bid if Grade B is acceptable or if Grade A is required will ensure farmers are aware which quality they should submit for the contract.<sup>73</sup>

### **Implementation**

In order to overcome these barriers, an implementation strategy has been devised at both the internal scale and external scale at UGA.

*Internal: University of Georgia*

#### 1. Survey of University of Georgia Students

Due to the nature of the budget of Food Services relying completely on meal plans, the customer holds the power. If students on the meal plan wish to see sustainability and geographical standards for purchasing food, then they will have to demand it.

To understand what the student population wishes to see in campus dining halls, a survey should first be formulated and given to students, focusing on first year students who are mainly on the meal plan. Real Food UGA can formulate this survey, since they are the student group interested in bringing local and sustainable food to campus.

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<sup>72</sup> Julia Gaskin, email message to author, May, 27, 2011

<sup>73</sup> "Commodity Specification," *U.S. Department of Agriculture: Agriculture Marketing Service*, (March 2009): 11, <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5090450>.

## 2. Consensus Definition of ‘Local’ and ‘Sustainable’ &

### Goals for the Implementation of Georgia-Grown and Sustainable Foods

After this survey has been completed, a committee should be formed to develop definitions and goals in regards to ‘local’ and ‘sustainable’ food. This committee should include representatives of Food Services, Office of Sustainability, Real Food UGA, and UGA College of Agriculture. These goals should focus on small incremental changes that are both realistic and reliable. Focusing on one product, one Food Service facility, and allowing ample amount of time to coordinate these efforts is recommended.

Once these definitions and goals are formed, county extension agents, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences faculty and staff, and the various reports that the College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences has published can be used to pinpoint appropriate agricultural products and where to source them. The issue of seasonality will have to be taken into consideration when choosing products.

## 3. Evaluation of UGA Food Services Specifications

Following the establishment of goals for implementation of local and sustainable products, an analysis of UGA Food Service specifications in relation to the current limitations of farmers is needed. UGA Food Services operates on a large-scale where efficiency is critical to the financial viability of operations. Many of the specifications for the UGA blueberry contract favors large processors and distributors. Flexibility in the type of frozen blueberry and the quantity per delivery to allow for a full semi-truckload would have allowed for more growers to apply for the bid. However, any changes to purchasing standards must take UGA Food Services needs and storage into account.

An evaluation of specifications may reveal that menu changes in order to incorporate Georgia-grown items may be needed. Seasonal availability and types of processing facilities in Georgia necessitate flexibility in consumption. The UGA Georgia Center has incorporated local, sustainable food in their operations, so this would be a logical place for primary expansion of menu changes<sup>74</sup>.

#### 4. Publicize Bids to Georgia Middle-Sized Farmers and Co-operatives

In order to alert Georgia farmers to available bid contracts through UGA Food Services, publicizing these bids are critical. Working with the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences as well as extension agents, information on bids and the bid process can be disseminated. For the quantity of each product required by many bids through Food Services, small family farms are not a viable option. The use of middle-size farms and co-operatives possess the quantity needed. There is no concrete definition of what mid-size farms are, since they are in relation to the scale of small and large farms. However, focusing on farms earning between \$10,000 and \$250,000 includes the scale of farms that are mid-scale.<sup>75</sup>

#### 5. Sustainability Coordinator

While alerting farmers to the existence of available bids through UGA Food Services is an important step, the creation of a Sustainability Coordinator for Food Services is key to the long-term success of a Georgia-grown and sustainable foods initiative. Jeanne Fry is currently Food Services Director as well as Food Services Sustainability Coordinator. However, from experience in this project, the amount of time

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74 "Dining and Restaurants," *The Georgia Center: The University of Georgia's Conference Center and Hotel*, accessed July 14, 2011, <http://www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/cch/dining>.

75 F. Kirschenmann, G.W. Stenenson, Buttel, F., Lyson T., & Duffy, M., "Why Worry About the Agriculture of the Middle?," *Agriculture of the Middle*, [http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/staff/files/middle\\_0604.pdf](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/staff/files/middle_0604.pdf).

and research one must devote to coordinating and sourcing sustainable food requires a single position.

Both Georgia Tech and Emory universities have entered this new area of food sourcing by hiring full-time positions devoted entirely to sourcing local and sustainable food in accordance to their own Universities' goals and objectives for sustainability.

The Sustainability Coordinator would implement the goals for the implementation of Georgia-grown and sustainable food through working with farmers, processors, and distributors. This position would also be responsible for evaluating Food Service specifications and coordinating these with the purchasing manager at Food Services and growers.

Additionally, I would recommend the Office of Sustainability and Food Services discuss funding opportunities for this position. There are many opportunities through grants and the University of Georgia student "green fee" that may be able to offset some of the costs in the creation of this position<sup>76</sup>.

*External: State-level Recommendations*

1. The creation of a Local and Sustainable Food and Farm Task Force.

This task force will develop a strategic plan including policy guidelines on how to increase the production and sale of Georgia-grown agriculture as well as sustainable agriculture within the state. The lack of processing and distribution infrastructure within Georgia prevents the vitality of a more local food system. The scale of the obstacles necessitates the facilitation by the state to identify the specific barriers and recommend

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<sup>76</sup> "Funding," *Office of Sustainability*, accessed July 14, 2011, <http://www.sustainability.uga.edu/index.php?/site/about/funding/>.

actions to overcome them.

The proposed House Bill previously mentioned contains only vague language for the state government to promote “the production, purchase, and consumption of Georgia-grown farm products...so as to provide for food procurement procedures and materials that encourage and facilitate the purchase of Georgia-grown food by state agencies and institutions.”<sup>77</sup> If this bill were passed, a logical next step would be the creation of a council to create a report identifying barriers and action items to expand and support a more local food system. While the language is present in the proposed bill, a specific and implantable state institutional purchasing mandate is needed so that this facilitation occurs. The “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy” study crafted by The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force can be used as a model.<sup>78</sup>

## 2. The creation of regional food hubs within Georgia.

The lack of processing and distribution infrastructure in Georgia was one of the greatest limiting factors in this study. A recent paper by Craig Page, “Planning to Grow: Exploring the Feasibility of a Sustainable Regional Food Hub in Rural East Central Georgia,” details the methodology for creating food hubs through food system planning techniques. Page defines Food Hubs as, “a centralized facility with a business structure in place...that facilitates the aggregation, storage, sorting and distribution of food” (8). A co-operative, non-profit, or small business should act as a catalyst for regional food hubs within Georgia.

A model that has succeeded in North Carolina is eastern carolina organics (eco).

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77 “2011-2012 Regular Session – HB 367,” *Georgia General Assembly: Legislation* (2011), [http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011\\_12/fulltext/hb367.htm](http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011_12/fulltext/hb367.htm).

78 “Local Food, Farms & Jobs: Growing the Illinois Economy,” *The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force* (March 2009): 9, 14, 18, 24, 26, <http://www.agr.state.il.us/newsrels/taskforcereport-outside.pdf>.

This company began as a non-profit in 2004, transitioning into an LLC that is owned by participating growers and three managers<sup>79</sup>. The managers match customer demand and grower production to ensure that the certified organic growers in North Carolina that are part of the company are able to remain profitable farmers. Managers market and distribute the produce, receiving only 20% of the profits, with the remaining 80% returning to the farmers<sup>80</sup>. Eco also assists conventional farmers financially and logistically in their transition to organic. Forming a co-operative like this in Georgia would begin to address the agglomeration and distribution barriers that were encountered in this study.

## **Conclusion**

This blueberry pilot project shows that small changes can happen on an institution-by-institution basis. However, if the kinds of large-scale changes are to occur, a Georgia Local and Sustainable Food and Farm Task Force must be established to identify barriers and ways to address these. Like the Illinois and Michigan study, the state-level government must create mandates and policy to assist farmers with intra-state distribution with a wider variety that can be produced within Georgia. Until this occurs, purchase of Georgia-grown and sustainable food by state institutions will be limited based on price, quantity, and variety.

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79 "What We Do," *eastern carolina organics*, accessed July 14, 2011, <http://www.easterncarolinaorganics.com/about.php>.

80 "What We Do," *eastern carolina organics*, accessed July 14, 2011, <http://www.easterncarolinaorganics.com/about.php>.



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## APPENDICES

### CALL TO BIDS

#### **Call for Bids to Supply UGA Dining Halls with Frozen Blueberries Grown in Georgia** 4/18/2011

The University of Georgia has a strong commitment to creating a sustainable campus. As part of this effort, Food Services is interested in purchasing frozen blueberries used in the dining halls from Georgia farmers.

Food Services buys 30 lb cases of IQF blueberries. They typically purchase about 5,900 lbs of frozen blueberries in a year. The frozen blueberries are on a quarterly bid and the current price is \$1.44 per pound - **delivered**. They usually purchase anywhere from 450 to 1200 pounds at a time and the peak purchase time is from August through February. The vendor will submit an invoice that is paid within 30 days. Usually these invoices are paid more quickly than this.

We are encouraging Georgia farmers that can meet this order amount at any given time to bid on the blueberries in May. Food Services does not expect to order until July. In order to participate, farmers need to contact Brooks Oliver by May 1 to discuss bids. He prefers to be contacted by telephone.

Brooks Oliver  
Food Services Materials Manager  
706-542-1256  
[wboliver@uga.edu](mailto:wboliver@uga.edu)

If you are selected to provide the blueberries, you will need to be an authorized vendor with UGA. The vendor profile form in the link below should be filled out and submitted before orders can be placed. [http://www.busfin.uga.edu/forms/vendor\\_profile.pdf](http://www.busfin.uga.edu/forms/vendor_profile.pdf)